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# Pack 101, Item 4

Type: Broadcaster how-to document

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**Gathering regular feedback from your audience**

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Gathering regular feedback from your audience is one of the most important things you can do. Feedback helps you in many ways.

* First, it tells you if you are achieving your purpose.
* Second, it helps you make improvements to your program.
* And third, it lets you tell your sponsors, donors, advertisers and even the station director that your program has a loyal audience.

Your audience's needs and interests will change with time – which is why it is good to find out what people appreciate and what they think could be better about the program on an ongoing basis.

There are several ways you can gather feedback from your audience.

Some types of feedback – such as letters to the station, phone-calls, text messages and in-person feedback – can be encouraged quite easily. Listeners will send in their comments if you prompt them to. Find time at the end of your program to announce the station address, phone number and ways listeners can reach you. Remember to tell listeners to address any message they send to your specific program.

One way to build relationships with fans of your program is to read some of their feedback or suggestions on the air. You could also send them a postcard with a photo of the station or your program production team, thanking them for their feedback.

It’s important to capture this kind of feedback. You can create a "feedback logbook” in which you write key information every time you receive feedback. Whatever process you use to record feedback, make sure everyone at the station knows how to do it. Make sure you record:

* Who the feedback was from – man or woman, where they are from, their age, etc. (if you know it).
* The date the feedback was sent or received
* The program topic or the episode that the feedback refers to
* How the feedback was sent to the station (letter, phone, SMS, in-person by visiting the station, in-person meeting them at the local market, etc.)
* The feedback itself – summarize what the audience member said
* Follow-up that was taken: Did someone call or write back to the audience member? Was their letter read on the air?

Another way of getting feedback is to use ***flash voting*** to find out what people think of a specific episode or an item within an episode.

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| Example | If you aired an item about how farmers can increase soil fertility and you want to know if listeners found the item useful, you could give them two mobile phone numbers. Tell them to call the first number and hang up if they found the item useful (this way they will not need to pay anything). Tell them to call the second number if they didn't find the item useful. By counting the number of missed calls, you will get a sense of what your listeners thought of the program. You could also call some of them back to get more information about why they found the program useful or not. |

 Other ways of gathering feedback require more work.

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| Example | ***Listener groups***are excellent sources of feedback about your program. If you can arrange for a few groups from different communities to listen to your program on a regular basis and provide feedback, you will learn a great deal. There may already be active listener groups in your area that meet regularly to discuss what they hear on the radio. If not, then you could make a plan to start one. You might want to begin by meeting with a local farmer's organization or community leaders to find out if they are interested in such a group. If they know that their feedback can make your programming more helpful to them, they will probably want to participate. It might mean providing the group with a radio so they can all listen to it together. You will probably find that it is easier to encourage an existing community group (women's group, farmers' group) to listen to your program and provide feedback than it is to create a new community group that only meets to listen to your program. |

***Visiting communities, public places***: Your work or your personal life may take you to different communities or markets, a church, a mosque, or a school. You can use these opportunities to ask people what they like about your program, what they've learned by listening to it and what could be improved.

All of these methods can give you important information about how some listeners feel about your programs. But they don't tell you how big your audience is or anything about your audience’s general impression of your program. For this, you need to conduct an ***audience survey***. There are several ways of doing this.

* First, if independent research firms conduct large national media surveys, you can pay them to add some questions about your program to the survey. This can be expensive, so you may not be able to do it very often, but the information will give you a good measure of your audience size and loyalty.
* Second, you can conduct your own audience survey. This can be extremely helpful and give you rich information about very specific aspects of your program. But you will need the help of some researchers to make sure you follow good research methods and have a good survey tool. This kind of research can be even more expensive. However, it helps you attract new sponsors, advertisers or donors, so it might be worthwhile.

Remember, gathering feedback from your audience is only the first step. You then need to use that feedback in order to improve your program!

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