

Blackburn independent local radio licence applications

Questions and responses: 2Day FM

These are the responses from 2Day FM to the non-confidential questions asked by Ofcom regarding the group's application for the Blackburn licence.

1. Please define the level and type of involvement that each of the executive directors would expect to have with the service. In addition, could you clarify whether the Programme Controller or one of the aforementioned executive directors would be in overall control of the station on a daily basis?

Norman Walker is the Chairman of Blackburn 2Day FM Limited. We have defined him as executive because he will hold a part-time sales post at the station. Norman's skill set is with local networking and with the ImagePlus initiative which has worked exceedingly well for The Bay and at 2BR when he was with them. He is currently responsible for ImagePlus at The Bay on a part-time basis and will use his skills to launch the initiative at 2Day FM in Blackburn. Due to his excellent reputation in Blackburn and his extensive knowledge of the area, Norman is the ideal candidate for Chairman being in the unique position of not only understanding Blackburn and its surrounding area but also having an in-depth knowledge of radio. Whilst Norman is the Chairman with a part-time executive role, he is not responsible for the overall day-to-day running of the station.

Bill Johnston will be the Station Director with day-to-day responsibility for the station. He will be stationed at Blackburn prior to launch and until the station is properly up and running. The infrastructure underneath Bill, at The Bay, is strong enough to allow him to dedicate considerable time to launching 2Day FM. In fact, there are staff members at The Bay that we would be in danger of losing without the prospect of the career progression this opportunity would present. We have already identified staff that would be suitable for promotion to the two senior posts at 2Day FM. A station this size cannot afford the luxury of a station director without portfolio. Once the station has been successfully launched and doesn't require the day-to-day attention of Bill Johnston, the Sales Manager is of sufficient calibre to deputise for Bill and deal with issues that may arise.

Bill has the support of Julie Fair during the launch period. In reality, Bill's skill set of launching and operating small-scale radio stations is more than adequate for the task in hand and Julie will provide valuable executive cover at The Bay, should it be required. Mike Vitti also lives locally and will make Blackburn his base for the period 3 months before launch to 9 months afterwards. He will implement the programming strategy and pass on knowledge to the Programme Controller. Bill will take care of administration and sales.

We believe this the most effective use of our resources and ensures the best small-scale operator in the group is deployed to launch the station.

2. Given the following claim “2Day FM's core values will be its speech programming – this will define our difference from other commercial stations” (p.16), why has the group chosen not to include a minimum speech level in its Format?

On reflection, this was probably an oversight. We reviewed many station Formats during the application process and found that it wasn't usually a pre-requisite to include a minimum speech level. However, we would be happy to do so and could quite comfortably have included a minimum speech level of 20%.

3. Could you please clarify whether 2Day FM would be locally produced and presented 24 hours a day as is indicated on page 22 of the application, or 18 hours a day as indicated in the Format (p.24)?

Yes, Blackburn 2Day FM will be locally produced and presented 24 hours a day. The Format should have included 'live' which would only be for 18 hours a day. Therefore, it should read:

24 hours a day (at least 18 hours to be live, locally produced and presented).

4. Notwithstanding the finding that “57% of all radio listeners in Blackburn believe a new station should incorporate specific programming for the Asian community” (p.17), how confident is the group that, in light of the finding that the catch-all Asian music genre (the only specifically Asian element tested) proved to be the least popular music category, its proposed Asian programming will not alienate some sectors of its target audience?

When we tested the catchall Asian music genre in our market gap research, we found that 87% of all Asians liked it or liked it a lot. Whereas, amongst non-Asians, 73% stated they didn't like it or didn't like it a lot, 23% abstained and 4% liked it.

This is precisely why our programmers made a conscious decision not to include Asian music in our daytime format. We believe to do so could be very dangerous and encourage tune out amongst the 64% of respondents that indicated they disliked or disliked it a lot.

Rather than worry about the vast majority of our target audience not listening to our station each weekday evening between 19.00 and 22.00, we are more concerned that the wishes of the community are acted upon – 57% stated they believed there should be Asian programming specifically for the Asian community. This more than compensates for the possibility of a lost non-Asian listener, indicated by the minor disparity in the propensity of our target audience to listen to a station that will devote some time over to Asian programming.

By signposting the fact that some of our weekday evening programming will be devoted to Asian programmes, we are alleviating the problem other stations may entail through immediate tune out in prime time because of a

strategy to include some Asian tracks in their overall playlist. This was the premise on which we tested the format with Asian programming.

We fully expect an integrated community such as Blackburn's, which at worst tolerates and at best embraces Asian culture, accepting that they will hear music that appeals to them for only 21 hours a day.

We firmly believe our policy is one of catering for all members of the community and bears no difference to other local radio stations that prefer not to play too many tracks like Khia 'My neck my back' during the day for fear of alienating anyone over the age of 25, yet devote 3 to 4 hours a night playing just those tracks because that presents the greatest available audience at that time.

We also believe that the usual policy adopted by most stations of targeting younger listeners in the evenings is a financially sensible policy in most areas. But in this area, where Rock FM is already providing that service, our proposition is a much better use of a scarce community resource.

It is our opinion that this programming policy will in fact lead to additional reach for 2Day FM. For instance, Star 106.6's audience attracts 18% of the non-Asian population and 35% of the Asian population, enabling a total all adult reach of 21%. During the daytime (06.00-19.00) 19% of all adults listen to the station, 18% of non-Asians and 28% of Asians. Whereas in the evenings (20.00-23.00), 8% of all adults listen comprise 6% of non-Asians and 17% of Asians. The Asian evening programming attracts 5,000 additional Asian listeners to the station.

If these results are compared to 96.4 The Eagle next door to Star, but with a much lower Asian population, it has 24% of non-Asian adults listening during the day and only 6% in the evenings, the same percentage as Star 106.6. However, Eagle only attracts 16% of Asian listeners in the day and 8% in the evenings. This suggests that Eagle's lack of Asian programming reduces its ability to attract Asian listeners but does not necessarily improve its audience amongst non-Asians.

5. Given that 2Day FM appears to be basing its Asian programming proposals on its experience at Oak FM rather than its research please elucidate how Oak provides a successful model for cross-over Asian programming within a mainstream format.

Our Asian Connections show at Oak FM is an ideal and successful model to base our Asian programming on. The success of the Sunday night show can be gauged from:

- ✚ The fact that Dee and Oak FM's Asian Connections programme won a Special Award at Guru Nanak's Gurburb 2000 Media Awards.
- ✚ Under the category of Arts, Dee Bahra has won the Millennium Achiever's Award 2000, presented by the Muslim Women's Organisation in association with Loughborough University and the Millennium

Commission. She is seen as a role model in Loughborough, providing inspiration to other young Asians wanting to work in the media. Dee has helpers on her show who she willingly trains to assist with production, do voxpops, answer the phone lines and provide studio support.

- ✦ The number of phone calls Dee Bahra gets when she opens the dedication and request line or the phonelines for a competition. There isn't a time when all 5 lines are not full and as soon as she takes a call, there is another one waiting on that line. Dee speaks, on average, to 30 callers throughout her show.
- ✦ The fact that our Asian show has recognition in the Asian community as Dee is invited by organisers to attend many different community events such as the Loughborough Mela which she is expecting to host next year.
- ✦ The fact that awareness of the show is continually increasing and indeed two Asian advertisers alone were signed to the station last week, one of which was as a direct result of listening to Dee's show.

We can, therefore, assume that the structure of the show is right for its target market. Dee includes a broad range of Asian music, festive greetings, dedications, in-depth coverage of all the local religious festivals (Eid, Diwali, Ramadan, Baifakhi), movie reviews, Top 10 Asian tracks, interviews with Bollywood stars and singers, recipe of the week, competitions and more.

On advice from Dee and our local Director, Amar Abass, this structure for an Asian programme met all the broad entertainment requirements to capture the Asian community. However, because of the size of the Asian community in Blackburn, we felt compelled to integrate their needs as much as possible and felt that a show once a week would not do this, hence providing more regular Asian output. Our provision of Asian programming in Loughborough reflects the population composition in the area, 6% of all adults, and goes out once a week on Sunday evenings. Therefore, as there are only 6,000 Asians in Loughborough, it does not provide a comparable model for arguing how much programming output 2Day FM should allocate towards the Asian community in Blackburn, where the Asian community is 14% of the adult population of a much larger TSA. Our decision to provide Asian programming during week nights as well as first thing in the morning is born out of a need to recognise the demands of as many sub-sections of the community as possible.

Our commitment to Asian programming at Oak shows no tangible signs of affecting our audience of 24% reach 12.5% market share, and we would refer you to our analysis of Star 106.6 above, with regards to the affect of evening Asian programming on overall station audiences.

6. In light of 2Day FM's finding that BBC Radio Lancashire has a strong following in the licence area (p.16) does the group have a specific plan to target these listeners?

Our market gap survey showed that BBC Radio Lancashire listeners value the station primarily for its news, travel and what's-ons. The station's scores for music, DJs/Presenters and its breakfast show were not as high as other stations and we believe this to be its weakness. If we can match, or even exceed, BBC Radio Lancashire's news, travel and what's-ons provision, with a better music offering we believe we can win significant numbers of listeners from the station.

Despite its history with Blackburn, BBC Radio Lancashire is a county-wide station and its remit is to serve that much larger area. It does not have the luxury of concentrating solely on listeners in Blackburn and Hyndburn. We will and we believe this will be to our advantage in attracting its listeners to our station.

The proof that BBC Radio Lancashire listeners are likely to be appreciative of our programming proposals lies within their responses to our tastes and interest questions, where they indicated they were interested in the following speech features on radio:

- + 99% were interested in local news & information – 8% more than all radio listeners
- + 92% were interested in world & national news – 13% more than all radio listeners
- + 85% were interested in local weather reports – 13% more than all radio listeners
- + 71% were interested in local what's-ons & entertainment news – 13% more than all radio listeners
- + 71% were interested in traffic & travel news – 3% more than all radio listeners
- + 63% were interested in topical phone-ins – 76% more than all radio listeners
- + 49% were interested in sport - 4% more than all radio listeners
- + 65% were interested in competitions & quizzes – 13% more than all radio listeners.

Speech alone will not do, but we do expect our music offering to have significant appeal as well. With regards to music programming:

- + 91% liked or liked a lot hits from the 70s – 40% more than all radio listeners
- + 76% liked or liked a lot hits from the 80s – 21% more than all radio listeners
- + 59% liked or liked a lot hits from the 90s – 1% less than all radio listeners.

The benefit to 2Day FM in attracting Radio Lancashire listeners is that they are heavy radio users, being 11% more likely than all radio listeners to listen to the radio for more than 1 hour a day. They are also 11% more likely to listen to the radio at breakfast and 14% more likely to listen at evening drive.

Our demand survey suggested we will be able to attract a good deal of listening from BBC Radio Lancashire listeners:

- ✦ 65% of BBC Radio Lancashire's 7 day listeners stated they liked our daytime format, 55% liked the one with Asian programming. 42% will listen to the radio for longer to listen to 2Day FM and 15% will stop listening or listen less to BBC Radio Lancashire altogether. 66% will listen at breakfast, 6am to 9am and 39% between 9am and 1pm and 40% between 3pm and 7pm. 61% will listen at weekends.
- ✦ 64% of BBC Radio Lancashire's most often listeners stated they liked our daytime format, 58% liked the one with Asian programming. 45% stated they will listen to the radio for longer and 12% stated they would stop listening or listen less to BBC Radio Lancashire altogether. 64% will listen to 2Day FM between 6am and 9am and 43% between 9am and 1pm. 54% will listen during the day at weekends.

Therefore, 2Day FM will target BBC Radio Lancashire listeners who have proved to be extremely receptive to local programming initiatives. BBC Radio Lancashire listeners make-up a good majority of our target audience and as such will be highly receptive to our marketing and promotion campaign which will consist of advertising on bus backs, at the football club, direct mail and a newspaper wrap as well as attending many local events to raise awareness.