

Getting more PR value from your awards event

Nobody does this - maybe you should

So, your venue is booked, the host, AV and crew have the diary date, the request for nominations has gone out, the client loves the way it's going and interest is starting to build within your industry: **it's going to be a good awards event.** Have you missed anything? Is there an angle, a wrinkle, a new way of spreading the word and reaching more people so your event can be bigger and better known than last year - and even more so next time around?

Well, if you're doing an industry awards then the trade press and the big hitters in the field will already be aware of it, but wouldn't it be great to get it on the radio as well? You've tried and it's not that easy - true, but did you know about the whole new tier of radio stations in the UK who are desperate to tell their listeners about your event? There'll be one near you: there are over 200 **Community Radio** stations across the country and that number is rising.

We're not talking about pirates or internet-only. 'Proper' community radio is licensed by Ofcom, has an FM frequency, a public presence and a line in its licence that says it must broadcast a certain amount of speech content that is appropriate to its audience - in other words, about the local area and the people and businesses on its 'patch'. That's your opportunity, and we can make it happen for you.

How to get their audience to hear about you? Simple. Curly Radio is embedded in the Community Radio area and has years of experience and broadcasting skills to make proper professional radio, and we also have many years of experience in the staging of awards shows.

All we need is the details of the nominees for your awards and where they're based. Before the event we interview someone high-up in the client's organisation and deliver a short speech item to the stations that'll have a local interest, as in "local man/woman/company is up for an award at a glittering ceremony next week...", and suggest the station contact them for a direct interview.

On the Big Day we attend the awards with recording device in hand and grab some audio of the opening of the golden envelope and "the winner is...", then do interviews with the winners, etc. This is swiftly mixed together into a 3 minute 'package' about the event, with specially tailored versions for the stations local to the winners (and the venue - local angle again) and a more general piece for any other station that wants it. Having the contacts we do means we can send it to exactly the right people, who'll be expecting it, will know what it's about and that they can be sure of getting quality radio showing your event to best advantage.

Who pays? Your client. There's the rub. Community radio stations have a budget of very near zero, what they do have goes on the Ofcom licence and studio equipment: they certainly aren't able to buy material - even with their obligation to broadcast that kind of material. Think of it as indirect advertising: your event gets admiring mentions and the client gets to talk about their business: then the award winners get their moment in the spotlight relayed to their local audience, this increases their local profile and therefore the client's too.

All right then, how much? Two pieces as outlined above would cost you £500 and a bit of your time to relay the information we need, plus arranging a high-up to be interviewed for about fifteen minutes. That's a small part of the budget for an event like yours, and tiny compared to the average magazine advertorial...

The people involved:



Phillippa Sawyer is a 'Speech Content Curator' for community radio, building on twenty years in sales and marketing with an active role in the Community Media Association: she knows people at all the stations, what they need and how to supply it. She's also Programme Controller and mid-morning presenter at Wycombe Sound, as well as a commercial 'voice'.
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Jonathan Pagden gave years of his life to BBC Radio and now does voiceovers, specialising in live 'Voice-of-God' for awards shows (and is available for your show!). He's a skilled audio recordist and editor and presents on community radio whenever the opportunity arises.
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