

# IAB's Digital Audio Committee members on the future of digital audio broadcasting

By  Juanita Pienaar

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For our April radio and podcasting feature, IAB's Digital Audio Committee members, Gavin Kennedy (Solid Gold Podcast Studios), Francois Retief (Iono FM) and Julian Jordaan (365 digital) discuss the role Covid-19 plays in the current digital audio broadcasting space and what the future holds for the industry as a whole.



The IAB's Digital Audio Committee members, Francois Retief (Iono FM), Gavin Kennedy (Solid Gold Podcast Studio) and Julian Jordaan (365 Digital).

## ■ What do you think the future holds for digital audio broadcasting?

**Retief:** Digital audio on the internet is democratising audio broadcasting, bringing the same benefits in terms of low barrier to entry as happened in other publishing instances on the internet.

“ Though traditional broadcasting is going to be with us for quite a while still, I think it's quite clear that there will be a gradual but steady conversion to digital audio broadcasting. This is clear from how home speakers are replacing radios in developing countries. Car entertainment systems would either integrate directly into your phone or come out with digital options. Anecdotally, how many kids under 20 still listen to traditional radio? The mobile phone and other personal devices are replacing the traditional broadcasting mechanism. ”

Right now digital audio is still a bit of a 'Wild West' case with various players all doing their own thing. I think it will become more standardised and regulated in future, but that it will also become the norm.

**Kennedy:** Humans are inherent story listeners and storytellers. For millennia, we had only oral histories and we can easily listen while doing other tasks like driving, cooking or exercising, without any difficulty. Radio has been around for over 100 years now, and we're all familiar with how to listen to the same broadcast as those around us, but the ability to choose exactly what we want to listen to, when and where is technically harder to achieve. Thankfully, most of the friction in this process has been removed by the advent of podcasts, which can be downloaded when in Wi-Fi range, and managed and listened to easily on almost any mobile phone.



Carmen Murray 15 Nov 2018



Amazon is projecting that their audible audiobook downloads will exceed e-book purchases in 2020. Think for a moment just how significant that is. Many people who disliked reading (or struggled to do so) as children are now starting to listen to books they previously avoided. Podcasts have often been cited as the 'gateway to e-books' by gently introducing people into the ease of listening to content they love.

I believe the massive shift from broad- to narrow- or niche-casting is going to continue unabated for quite some time. One only has to look to YouTube (where there are over 23 million channels) for an indication of how much appetite people have for hyper-focused content. By contrast, Apple Podcasts only has around 1 million channels. The removal of most of the barriers to free or cheap easy audio listening (data costs remain a challenge, partially mitigated by Wi-Fi downloads) has started an exponential growth path for podcasts, so before too long, we can expect there to be more podcast channels than there are YouTube ones. After all, audio is cheaper and easier to produce than video and, unlike video, can be consumed while doing something else.

■ **What do you think is key for brands to remember when connecting with audiences via audio?**

**Retief:** Digital audio is much more personal. It's typically consumed on a personal handheld device, by a discerning listener who chooses to engage with your content. This is a much more loyal audience but also one with much more choice – also crucial for traditional radio. Content on demand frees you from the tyranny of the radio clock. You suddenly have much more freedom. Radio people often forget this.

**Kennedy:**

“ Brands now need to expand their corporate and brand identities beyond what is just seen to what is heard. What does the voice of McDonald's sound like? And no, I don't mean which voice-over artist do they use to make an advert – this is different; this is the brand speaking and having in-depth, meaningful conversations with their audiences. Is it a young voice? An old voice? A deep voice? A gravelly voice? What does your brand sound like? This is a new question to deal with. ”



Gareth Cliff on brand interaction via podcasting

Juanita Pienaar 16 Apr 2020



By the way, audiences can be internal and external and public or private. There are no limitations to how many channels

you can create, and podcasting allows us to create a channel for broad public-facing consumption or narrow inward (or private) channels for teams and staff. Each of these can and should have their own 'soundscape' of music, effects and voice.

Very importantly too, you have to be authentic. A podcast is not a commercial, advert or 'spot', though they certainly achieve marketing objectives.

It's your voice and it must be real and you!

**Jordaan:** The big upside of digital audio is intent and attention. We don't play a podcast by accident or put a playlist together of our favourite songs to cook to, without being engaged in song selection.

In today's highly mobile and connected consumer environment, advertisers are investing in digital audio for its deep immersive qualities, strong measurability and listener-level targeting and availability of rich user data. The combination of audio as a medium and digital as a distribution channel enables brands to forge unique lasting emotional connections with consumers in the most personalised way, effectively bridging the gap between linear audio formats and digital consumption channels. What a win!

### ■ **Definitely! What role do you think Covid-19 plays in the current digital audio broadcasting space?**

**Retief:** We've definitely seen an increase in online listening across many of our content publishers. On average, podcast listening remains the same and stream listening has increased by around 10% more listeners and also listening sessions. The demand for advertising on digital audio has increased significantly.

**Kennedy:** Several immediate lessons come to mind, and others will keep occurring no doubt. Very quickly people realised that some content cannot be delivered in short sound bites. Some information is complex (or even complicated) and requires time and engagement to communicate, explain or discuss to achieve meaningful comprehension and cognitive engagement. This is practically the definition of what podcasts are great at.

Similarly, a lot of Zoom/Skype/Meet video conferences were hastily convened, only for it to become apparent that they didn't really need to be bidirectional. They were better suited to being delivered as one-way audio (with an opportunity to mail or WhatsApp questions after listening), and since the podcast players are now built into all phones, it's a no-brainer to replace those calls.

**Jordaan:** Consumption habits have been a significant shift since the lockdown in South Africa. We have seen an increase in digital audio consumption, especially in the news and talk formats since the lockdown, as listeners seek relevant information on the economy and the latest news pertaining to Covid-19. According to Primedia's Primeconnect Lockdown Survey, 39% of their listeners agreed that they are listening to more radio now during the lockdown and that 35% of their listeners have increased their radio usage over this time. Triton's Webcast Metrics streaming measurement service showed a 27% increase in the share of streaming attributable to news- or talk-formatted radio stations.



Tessa van Staden: 'Storytelling remains key'

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### ■ **Comment on podcasting as a trend and how it has taken off in the last few years.**

**Retief:** Looking at podcasting as digital audio-on-demand, and taking into account how video on demand has increased, it has always been a safe bet.

**Kennedy:**

“ In the beginning there were blogs and they went crazy with practically everyone starting a blog. Millions born, only thousands survive and thrive. Before the portmanteau of iPod and broadcasting was coined, these audio files were called 'audio blogs' and were a pain to listen to. One had to subscribe on iTunes, download, plug your iPod in with a cable and synchronise before listening. Is there any wonder they took so long to get popular? ”

Once the iPhone removed those challenges, and subsequently, the entire mobile ecosystem can now do the same, the exponential growth started. The arrival of the recent pandemic has, if anything, accelerated the production and consumption of podcasts for the reasons given above.

We're busier making podcasts for existing and new clients since the lockdown started, as the need for long-form communication was highlighted.

There are some counterintuitive challenges that the 'old order' are still firmly attached to. Like audience size as an indication of success. Podcasting is not radio. A successful radio show reached millions of people. If I create a podcast targeted only at the CEOs of the Top 100 JSE-listed companies, what value is there in reaching thousands of people? And if I don't reach any of the 100, there's no value.

What if we think about it like this instead? It doesn't matter how many people you reach, but that you reach the people who matter.



## How brands can use podcasting to attract new business

Juanita Pienaar 23 Apr 2020



**Jordaan:** Podcasting in many developed countries has moved past the fad stage and is very much part of peoples everyday lives. When it comes to the South African population being aware of podcasting, we are at least 12 years behind that of the United States, according to Infinite Dial South Africa 2019. The United States has seen linear growth in the adoption of the medium since 2006, where they now have 71% of the general population aware of podcasts. In South Africa, we may just see exponential growth in this area over the next few years as data costs are being driven down and the accessibility and prevalence of smartphones increases. According to that same Infinite Dial study, 74% of all podcasts are consumed at home, and in this lockdown period, we will only but see these figures increase.

### ■ Which podcast(s) are you listening to at the moment/are your favourite and why?

**Retief:** I listen to a wide variety of podcasts, some business-related, and a lot about things I find interesting, like history and the world around us. Some include *Without Fail*, *How I built this*, *Radio Lab* (always a favourite), *Tides of History*. *Conquer Local* with George Leith is a good marketing podcast. I also love the things Malcolm Gladwell is doing like *Revisionist History* and also sub productions like *Cautionary Tales*. Oh, and love Dan Carlin's *Hardcore History*. My children (6 and 12) also love podcasts. *By Kids, for Kids* is a brilliant local podcast and one of their favourites.

**Kennedy:** I'm biased toward some of our own [clients](#) :)

### Like

- I'm loving the new Herman Singh book (released daily during the lockdown), [Di-Volution](#).
- Mike Stopforth's [The One-Eyed Man](#) is amazing. He's smart and insightful and thinks deeply.
- And [The IN with TWO Outsiders](#) (Carmen Murray and John Vlismas) goes where most others don't in their conversations.

### Other podcasts

My listening took a big dip when I stopped having to drive (it'll bounce back when our new routines settle though) and usually includes 99% *Invisible* (full disclosure, I have a serious voice-crush on the host) LOL!

### Also...

- *Planet Money*
- *Ologies* (Allie Ward is cool)
- *Tim Ferriss* (excluding the exercise episodes)
- *Revisionist History*
- *Art of Manliness* (don't be fooled by the title)
- *Hardcore History* (I wish I'd had this at school, I would have taken History for sure!)

Oh, and basically any podcast Stephen Fry makes! #ftw

**Jordaan:** Sho, I listen to quite a lot but on the top of my lists have to be *Freakonomics Radio*, *Courageous Parenting*, *Revisionist History* (Gladwell) and Judah Smith. What I really enjoy about these is the unforced and almost conversational style of presenting that feels like I am having a discussion right there with the presenter. But for a good laugh, give *The Ron Burgundy Podcast* a listen - it's quirky, off-balance and edgy.

Connect with Kennedy [here](#) or via the Solid Gold Studios [website](#), with Retief on [LinkedIn](#) or via the Iono FM [website](#) and Jordaan, either on [LinkedIn](#) or visit the 365 Digital [website](#). You can also visit the IAB [website](#) for more information on the Digital Audio Committee.

## ABOUT JUANITA PIENAAR

Juanita is the editor of the marketing & media portal on the Bizcommunity website. She is also a contributing writer.

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