

Bazaar Ham Publicity

Applying the Bazaar Approach to Ham Radio

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Amateur Radio is not a hobby that has a single central controlling body, like the Catholic Church. Yet many people think of the hobby as if it did have a single body with the will and resources to publicize the hobby. This paper describes some new ways to think of the hobby, and presents some ideas to publicize it.

This is NOT a technical paper. It is intended to provide ideas on how other technical concepts can be marketed to the world.

Introduction

Amateur Radio is facing some major challenges as wireless digital communications extends into every part of our lives. We are to the point where the lack of enforcement of part-15 licensing in the 2.4 GHz band is starting to have a detrimental effect on our hobby. With this in mind, we all need to take charge and educating the general public about what our hobby is and what it does.

What I am proposing in this paper is to use the Bazaar model where everyone is responsible for their own publicity, and the message gets through with loose coordination of the message, rather than with a formal PR department.

Why Market?

Pepsi Australia had a problem a few years ago – where males in the 16-35 age group were not buying Diet Pepsi, nor were they buying normal Pepsi. Males thought that

Pepsi was fattening, but thought that Diet Pepsi was for women only.

Rather than attempt to market Diet Pepsi to men, they decided to create a new product for this market – Pepsi Max. This produce was essentially Diet Pepsi with some minor modifications to add more flavor, and was marketed as ‘All the flavor without the sugar’

What happened was that this new product was VERY successful, and it is still selling well today. This shows how powerful marketing can be when you work out what the problem really is, rather than what people think the solution is.

Bazaar Marketing

Bazaar Marketing is a term that I have devised in response to the book ‘The Cathedral and the Bazaar’ By Eric Raymond. Eric used the terms ‘Cathedral’ and ‘Bazaar’ to describe the commercial software industry and the Open Source community respectively.

In the Closed Source community, there is a string corporate structure with a distinct chain of command – somewhat reminiscent of a cathedral with the priests and the worshipers. People come to listen, not to participate reducing innovation. More importantly there tends to be only two types of publicity – Bad Publicity, and Paid Publicity.

On the other hand, the Open Source community is more closely based on the concept of the Bazaar – the chaotic shopping districts common in the Middle East. In the Bazaar approach there is very little inherent organization, and everyone is responsible for doing their own thing. In this model, there is only one type of publicity – free.

Bazaar People do their own publicity

An example of Bazaar Publicity is the case of Kim Poulsen from the Java development team. When she was sure that her team was ready to release Java, she realized that it would be easier to get forgiveness than permission.

So she organized her own publicity. She contacted the San Jose Times and gave them the story of Java, and expected this to appear in the computer section of the paper the next day. When the paper came out she could not find the article anywhere, not in the business section, not in the computer section – until a co-worker pointed it out – ON THE FRONT PAGE.

This brought the type of publicity that they could not buy, and her boss was VERY happy. The value of the publicity was immeasurable.

Some Questions...

At this point we need to ask ourselves some questions. Who is our target audience? What perception do we want to influence? What is our message? What is our product or service?

Of all these questions, one is by far more important than the others...

Who is our Market?

In marketing Ham Radio there are actually three separate segments that we need to target. They are

- Outsiders
- Ourselves
- Our Relatives

We need to market to each group separately since each has different needs, expertise, needs and requirements.

Each market needs to be targeted for us to be successful.

External Marketing

In the external market there are a number of categories of people who need to be contacted. They include

- Potential Hams
- People who will never get their license, but are legislators
- People who sway public opinion.
- The general public.

These people already have a negative perception of Ham Radio. They think that we are the ones who interfere with their TV sets, who want to listen to cell phones, who use Morse code, and who decrease property values with 100' masts.

But what they don't realize is that listening to phone calls is boring, CB'ers interfere

with TV sets, Morse is disappearing, and the HF antenna is just for show.

Morse

Morse is still an issue. When I was originally producing this paper I found two people in a week that would have got their license sooner if they knew that Morse had been dropped for some licenses. It is still *perceived* to be an issue.

The best publicity is Free

As we saw earlier, the best publicity can be free. But obviously the TV stations are not going to provide us with free advertising, and the New York Times is not going to give us a two page spread are they? Well, they might

Print Media

The print media today is overworked and underpaid. They are working to tight deadlines, and the editors cannot afford to send their reporters out to cover minor stories. So we need to make it easy for them to write about us.

How? Write the article for them. Put it onto a single colored sheet of paper and send it to them. Include words like 'Exclusive' and give them a release date – a date that is far enough into the future so that they have time to write the story. Include real photos, or a CD-ROM with a selection of photos. Most importantly include a lot of quotes, and provide contact details.

Above all, treat them with respect. They are helping you, and they do not owe you anything. You are doing this for a hobby; they are doing it for a job.

Post Publication

After the article is published, PERSONALLY present the paper with a 'Thank You' certificate. Make sure their camera man is available since this could also become a story.

Also offer the paper any assistance you can in the future. Make sure that they know that they can come to you at any time for advice on radio issues.

The idea here is to create an environment that the paper will come to you if there is bad publicity about to hit, which you can then turn into good publicity.

What turns the General Public Off?

There are a few items that turn the general public off these days. They include HF Contesting, QSL Cards and 'Talking Around the world'. These are concepts that the modern consumer does not get excited about.

What Excites the General Public?

Many things excite the public, such as stories with a twist, emergency work, new technology, satellites, the Space Station and the shuttle.

But what is often missed that excites people is the human involvement and interaction. People can use cell-phones whilst driving to work, but what if they could make new friends, and talk to 5-6 people at once. That has the potential to excite them.

Answer the Great Question

What has ham done for me lately?

The problem here is that most hams do not know the answer. So the answers might include

- We designed the protocols behind WiFi (AX.25 and MACA)
- We developed microsatellite technology
- We are an integral part of weather forecasting as a partner of NOAA with CWOP.
- We provided emergency communications at Ground Zero and the Pentagon.
- We were there to assist with recovery of Shuttle parts

Sample Headlines

So what sort of headlines could we use?

‘Locals assist in Pacific Island rescue effort’
talking about using HF to contact islanders thought to have been wiped out following a cyclone

‘Community Club assists local high school’
talking about a ham club coming to a school talking about communications.

GB4FUN in Person.

The RSGB in the United Kingdom has developed a marketing device for the general public – operating under the callsign GB4FUN.



The idea is that this light truck is set up with a multitude of modes and frequencies – from HF to Microwave, SSB, FM, Packet, APRS,

Satellite. The vehicle is totally self contained, including antennas, radios, computers and even a generator.

This vehicle is available for free loan from the RSGB for events, under one condition – **IT MAY NOT BE USED FOR A HAM RADIO EVENT.**

That is, it **MUST** be used for marketing to the wider world. What also makes this vehicle unique in the UK is that unlicensed people can actually talk on the Ham Bands legally, which is a special condition of the GB4FUN ham license.

The idea is to expose the general public to the hobby. Last year the vehicle had about fifty bookings and made a huge impact. Imagine if each ARRL region had a van like this.

Internal Marketing

In order to keep the hobby alive, we need to market new ideas within the hobby. This is just as important as marketing outside the hobby, since these people already know about it, and it is easier to keep them than to recruit new members.

The aims of internal marketing should be

- Support others so that we all know what we are doing is making a difference
- Provide some justification on the outlay of time and money
- Provide other people with ideas that they can experiment with.

So how do we market to ourselves?

Ham Radio Clubs

Probably the best way to market internally is through local ham radio clubs. Clubs are

always looking for people to speak at club meetings – people who are not experts, but who have something to say.

What I have found is that often the best way to learn about things is to explain the concepts to others.

Getting Gigs

Assuming that you want to give talks to Ham Clubs how do you go about getting a talk? It is not that hard. Type up a form letter, offering to give a talk on a chosen subject, and send it to all the local clubs.

Make sure you explain who you are, what you want to talk on, and when you would be available. Leave it up to the clubs to contact you when they work out when they have time available

Giving Talks

Once a talk is arranged you need to work out what to say. I have found that a Laptop running PowerPoint is the best for me. I ask for the club to arrange a video projector or computer monitor, and they usually oblige.

Use the presentation slides to talk from, and make sure you use big fonts so everyone can see – and use lots of relevant photos and screen dumps if possible. But please stay away from Clip Art.

If no laptop or projector is available, use PowerPoint anyway, and talk from it. You can also use it for handouts.

The Talk

There are a few steps in a good talk

- Introduce yourself
- Tell them that a copy of the PowerPoint will be available from

the club later so that they do not need to take down notes

- Tell them what you are going to present to them
- Present the information
- Tell them what you have just presented to them.
- Thank them for your time

Live Demonstrations

Where possible DO NOT give a live demonstration. In most cases, a canned demonstration can work just as well with a live one. Almost every time I attempt a live demo something goes wrong – and this is not through lack of planning and testing.

Rather than a demonstration, have toys to hand round. Things that people can touch will leave a greater impact than a demo anyway.

At one conference I gave this talk, I followed it almost immediately with a talk on 802.11 networks, and I decided to show people how bad the Pringles antenna was. This demo backfired. It is the only time I have ever found the Pringles antenna to actually work.

If you must do a demo, have a backup plan in case it fails.

Issues in Talks

When doing a talk not everyone will agree with what you are saying. Do not spend time on it. Ignore it if you have to.

Make sure you Stay on track – Offer to answer the Grandpa Simpson ‘When I was a boy’ stories after the talk.

And most importantly use the talk for yourself somehow – as a way of learning to

present great ideas, get people interested in a mode you are passionate about or even as a *subtle* marketing attempt for your small business.

Magazines

There are a lot of magazines out there marketed at the Ham who are always looking for articles. Many of these magazines actually also pay for original articles. Those that do not pay will often offer something in return for an article if asked, even if it is just a free subscription.

The important thing with magazines is to speak to them first to pitch your idea, and then to understand their target audience.

The writing style of magazines is different from almost any other medium. In magazines they like short paragraphs, and lots of pictures.

Marketing to Relatives

The final major market is our relatives. They can be our biggest supporters or our biggest critics.

Our relatives are generally not interested in the technology, but they want something different. They want to see how Ham Radio is benefiting the world. They love the human side of things.

These are people who could be hams, but are probably even better as support people. They need our care and attention.

Resources

- ARRL Public Information Officers Handbook
<http://www.arrl.org/pio/handbook/>
- TAPR PowerPoint Archive
<http://www.tapr.org>

You just need to remember that a 2KW linear is no substitute for a room heater.

Sources of New Hams

New Hams can be found in a number of places. Some suggestions are

- Engineering Students
- High School Science
- Friends at work
- Clients
- People at trade shows
- Community Wireless groups

Community wireless groups may be a good target since they have some technical skills, are in plentiful supply, are young and love wireless.

In all these points you need to ask yourself some questions

- Who are you attempting to attract?
- What are their needs?
- What can you do to meet those needs?
- What will scare them off?
- What support for they need?
- What resources can you provide them with?

Conclusion

During this paper I have attempted to provide some ideas on marketing of Ham Radio. This is not a technical article. It has talked about how to market technical ideas to the community.

