

HOW TO MAKE A RADIO PODCAST



BACKGROUND

The scenario today

The number of children along with youth and adults are facing a major setback in attending the schools because of Covid-19 uncertainty. Although temporary, school closures have had unfortunate consequences not just upon their education but have affected the social and mental health of these children. They are facing isolation, anxiety about this deadly virus, and uncertainty about the future.

In order to make learning possible even in these difficult times, Pratham initiated “Karona Thodi Masti, Thodi Padhai” with various activities, fun games to make children learn, play and utilise their time through initiatives such as Radio, TV and SMS.

Pratham partnered with 12,000 communities and 14 State governments in order to make learning possible in the times of education crisis by making young minds engaged in easy fun learning ways. Pratham has adopted different approaches to ensure that no matter what children will continue to learn through fun-filled activities that are practical yet enjoyable. Pratham started to deliver the learning content through Radio from May 1, 2020. Under the aegis of Radio initiative, Pratham has reached across India to help bring some fun and some learning to young minds.

NEED OF THE HOUR

The education sector is facing unprecedented challenges. There is a need to adapt and find solutions to keep children motivated. In the time of crisis, there is a remarkable impact on learners, even more so in vulnerable and underprivileged contexts. Considering that they lack resources to sustain learning during the times of school closures. Pratham leveraged its 25 years of experience to come up with solutions to ensure that there is no stopping to their learning experience. It has been possible to do so without bringing in new technologies and using easily available materials and resources for learning.

How did Pratham respond to this?

The monumental challenge posed in front of Pratham at this hour was “How will children continue to learn in this adverse condition?” Internet penetration is still a major roadblock in the country. Access to basic amenities among the urban poor is relatively lower. Among the poorest of households, only 2.7% have access to a computer and at most 8.9% can avail the basic Internet facilities. Therefore, it became important to deliver the existing content by exploring the unconventional yet powerful technologies so that each and everyone can have equal access to these learning facilities. Pratham has found a solution to deliver existing content by exploring “outdated” technologies to let children learn and have fun together at the same time. Pratham has partnered with the state governments of Maharashtra and Uttar Pradesh to ensure that educational endeavours continue with the use of “old” but useful technology such as Radio and as per the government estimation, the program had a reach of 700,000-800,00 students in May 2020. Radio posed as one of the alternate mediums to disseminate content among children in the remotest parts of India. Implementation of Radio as a mass medium under this core initiative has reached across 12,000 communities in India. More than 10,000 youth members have supported the initiative by ensuring proper outreach and delivery of the broadcasting content. There are weekly broadcasts for the children available in their regional languages to deliver the content necessary for their age groups and the follow-up activities are being taken care of by parents and children together.

Principle behind using radio as a tool for learning

1. Radio is often called “Voice Without Face”. Listening to such digital broadcasts, a sense of imagination and connectivity establishes into the young minds.
2. Simple yet old, it can be found in every nook and corner of the village.
3. It appeals to a large audience including elders and old age people. It brings in curiosity as “you can close your eyes, but you can’t close your ears”.
4. Being cost-effective, it is easy to use and reaches out in an ad avoidance world.

The joint initiative with Maharashtra government - A case study

The Maharashtra state government and Pratham closely worked on the process of disseminating content through low-technology based resources, such as radio, to ensure there is continued learning during the times of school closures, as well. The understanding was that the effectiveness and the reach of Radio to the remotest of the communities will act as a productive tool to ensure sustained and continued learning.

While initiating the program, it was realised that the success of the program hinged on the involvement of the community members. In order to ensure the same, letters were sent out by divisional headquarters and district administration across all the villages. Secondly, how this initiative will actually reach to the beneficiaries in each household was prepared through the following ways:

- Rigorous data collection,
- Consultation meetings at state/divisional/district/block level by contacting Akashwani of Nagpur and Mumbai,
- Marketing of Prasharbharti’s ‘News-on-Air’ mobile application,
- Publicity through social media platforms, official letters, radio promos and most importantly through radio content and production.

Eventually with the completion of the background processes, the Radio program was launched on May 1st, 2020, which happens to be Maharashtra Day.

Initially, there were 6 districts in the Nagpur division comprising 7175 villages where content was being disseminated through the radio. Recently, Akola, Sindhudurg, Ratnagiri, Buldhana, and Yeotmal have also initiated the program.

More than 185 personnel from Pratham are engaged in the entire process. How the process works is that simple activities are sent through WhatsApp and SMS to the learners six days a week under the initiative of Shale Baherchi Shala (School, Outside School). The Radio program is then broadcasted every Tuesday and Friday at 10:30 A.M. for half an hour. The program is broadcasted with the purpose of addressing every activity which is provided to learners through WhatsApp and SMS. The Anganwadi workers, school teachers, sarpanch, and other community volunteers are part of the ecosystem along with parents who help the learners engage with the broadcasting of radio programmes.



The joint initiative with U.P. government - A case study

Pratham collaborated with the Uttar Pradesh Government to initiate learning via the medium of Radio in the state. The first episode was aired in June, and since then over 100 episodes have aired till now. The episodes are aired every day (in Agra at 10.30 A.M, and in Lucknow at 11.30 A.M.).

In Uttar Pradesh, the episodes for Radio broadcasting are divided into two sections:

1. for Classes 1 and 2 and
2. for Classes 3 to 5.

The topics differ depending on the age group of learners and the grades they are in. In order to maintain the entertainment value and retain the interactivity of the learning process among the children, Pratham has introduced various characters enacting different roles such as, Chacha ji, Chachi ji, Komal and other supporting characters. Every character tries to provide knowledge with a little pinch of fun. The fundamental nature of their regional languages is also maintained, so that the children listening to the Radio can feel the sense of familiarity with the surroundings.

Each episode approximately runs for 30 minutes. The content is delivered through Baal Geet/ Kavita (Poem), Kahani (Story) and Khel (Game).



STAGES OF DEVELOPMENT

Pratham has designated team of individuals who work upon each aspect of the procedure to ensure a smooth flow throughout the stages of Radio episodes expansion and development.

PRE-PRODUCTION

Ideation:

This stage deals with the question of what is to be produced. It consists of allocating resources and curating specialised content for the programs to run smoothly.

Segmentation:

This stage entails putting scripts and screenplay in place. The format and blueprint for each segment is decided during this stage. Initially, a rough script is prepared, with multiple rounds of editing and modifications to arrive at the final script. There are certain things to be mindful of while putting down the script, such as, no repetition of dialogues, no crude words which can offend listeners on the basis of caste/race/culture/gender, transitioning between the characters, etc. To put it simply, trying to make Radio episodes without scripting and screenplay would be similar to trying to cross the ocean without any navigation. Therefore, this is the most important phase in the entire process.

Roles and responsibilities:

Under this section, roles and responsibilities are handed over to each team member according to their areas of expertise. For example, a person having voice clarity will serve as a vocalist and a person skilled with technological skills will be collecting and saving all the necessary dataset. All the detailed information is shared among the team members at every stage before further processes are taken place so as to avoid any confusion which can lead to a remarkable setback.

DURING PRODUCTION

Recording:

There are different characters and each one of them is provided with a different vocalist during recording, so that learners imbibe the actual scenario of what is being taught. The exercise of recording is done by the vocalists in their houses or any other available spaces near them.

Data procurement:

After preparing all the raw contents, the team members ensure collecting and saving of the data. Everything is done with ultimate carefulness so as to ensure that no content is missed.



POST-PRODUCTION

Data sharing:

Under the data sharing stage, Pratham team focuses on arrangement of data in script sequences and ultimately all the arranged data is shared with the editor.

Editing:

Here, the editor prepares the full episode by correcting, condensing or otherwise, modifying it.

Final cut:

This is the final and ultimate stage where the editor shares the first draft with the team. After taking feedback the final touch is given by the editor.



DETAILS OF CONTENT

Through initiatives, such as Shale-Baherchi-Shala in Maharashtra and Karona Thodi Masti, Thodi Padhai in Uttar Pradesh, Pratham is encouraging innovative ways to ensure that the children do not stop learning.

The contents are created with the aim of making them creative. The sections are divided into two to initiate learning for two different categories of learners - one, for students who are in grades 1-2 and other one, for grades 3-5.

Each episode starts with a song which is meant to uplift the spirits of the students. Each episode portrays different characters interacting and learning with each other in their respective regional languages, so that it is easy to understand for the children.

Bal Geet/Kavita (Poem) is narrated in every episode. Kahani (Story) is also narrated in between the episodes. Once the narration ends, questions are raised by the characters and are answered by other characters of the story. The section of Khel (Game), consists of fun-filled activities or games like "Shabd ki antakshari and Shabd se vakya banao", which helps in fostering the learning environment of continuous engagement and collaboration within the community.

This, in turn, results in providing a great knowledge with some elements of fun in it so as to keep children curious and excited throughout the stage. It becomes important to develop curiosity and excitement as it is currently the need of the hour to keep the children engaged. All these elements work as an essential and engaging material for the children to get their education going.

Also, this type of learning through activities revolves around things present around them so as to limit the dependency on other materials in this adverse situation.

CHALLENGES WHILE CREATING

The most prominent challenge was having only one medium i.e. “SOUND” to disseminate content and keep them engaged. In order to ensure that it is used effectively, the following steps were undertaken:

- **Voice Modulation** to break the monotony.
- **Local dialect** for the children to feel connected and be involved throughout.
- **Crystal clear voice** without any background noise, so that it can be heard by children properly.
- **Melodious sounds and background music** for soothing hearing and captivating their attention.
- Follow-up activities to be done in the easiest manner. Having to deal with the nearby environment or surrounding, so that learners can lend their imagination and get fascinated quite easily and **create visual out of audio**.

TECHNOLOGY TIPS AND TRICKS

- Every planning during pre-production level is done through Zoom and Google Forms to ensure that everyone in the team is on the same page.
- At the mid-production stage, all vocalists record their voices for certain assigned characters in a quiet atmosphere, with no ticking of the clock or the sound of the ceiling fan. Some audio files have been recorded in children's voices with the help of telephonic conversations. In order to tide over the issue of every recorded and collected dataset was saved carefully at regular intervals.
- Post this, all recorded voices are collected and uploaded carefully into Google Drive and then sent to the Editor before finalising them.



MONITORING AND EVALUATION

It is the most crucial part of the process in terms of ensuring that the efforts are creating the intended impact in the communities.

- In case of Radio programs, the feedback is collected by the youth facilitators. The facilitators regularly hold meetings with sarpanchs, school teachers, anganwadi workers and most importantly with parents and learners to understand the effectiveness of the programs.
- The facilitators upload pictures and videos of learners and parents from time to time, showcasing the activities that the children participate in.
- The facilitators from time to time call the parents whose numbers are recorded in the database of Pratham. For instance, 937 calls were made by the 3rd week of May, 2020 itself in Maharashtra. And it was found that 67 percent (628) of the parents had received messages under the Shale-Baherchi-Shala initiative. Out of the 628 parents, 98 percent (614) of them said that they find the messages comprehensible and easy. 30 percent of parents informed that they sit with their children when the episodes are being broadcasted.
- According to government estimates, the program had a reach of 7,00,000 – 8,00,000 students in May 2020 in Maharashtra.
- This experience with the Maharashtra government helped Pratham forge a similar partnership with the Uttar Pradesh government where a Radio program has been initiated with slightly modified structure since mid-June in collaboration with Akashwani Uttar Pradesh in Hindi.

