

New audience measurement system for radio

The radio industry has taken the first step to future proof the radio audience measurement system with the announcement of GfK as the preferred service provider for radio audience measurement surveys from 1 January 2014. Mobile data capture and online recruitment and data capture will be key new features of the next radio audience measurement contract awarded to international research company, GfK, Commercial Radio Australia (CRA) announced today.

“This is an exciting time for the radio industry and marks a new era for the future of radio audience measurement in Australia ensuring currency continuity, a multi-mode approach to data collection including plans for the testing of electronic measurement enhancements,” said Joan Warner, chief executive officer of CRA.

The new three year contract with GfK will be negotiated to begin 1 January 2014 and introduces an e-diary for computers, tablets and mobile phones, synchronised across the internet and compatible with all operating systems. It will be necessary for GfK to conduct further successful parallel pilot testing throughout 2013, prior to the new contract coming into force. This will ensure validity of the new processes and multi-modal data capture methods and comparability with the existing currency.

From the first survey in 2014 there will be a minimum of 20% of survey participants recruited online and completing the e-diary. This percentage will be closely monitored with the aim of reviewing and possibly increasing the percentage for year two. Also included in the new contract is real-time management and monitoring of the personal placement of diaries to ensure that population potentials for difficult to reach youth demographics are closely reflected in the sample.

“As part of the new relationship, GfK will utilise their worldwide expertise and work closely with the industry to conduct leading edge and innovative trials of electronic devices in the first 2 years of the contract. The aim being to integrate the best and latest form of electronic measurement into the radio audience measurement suite of tools by the end of the first three year term”, Ms Warner said.

GfK will also launch a new radio audience behaviour panel which will go beyond the surveys and examine key issues for the radio and media industries including consumption of radio via the internet, platform usage trends, the role of radio in people’s lives, mobile and headphone listening. This panel will be made up of 5,000 respondents per year with quarterly reporting of key insights.

These innovations together with the Gold Standard for radio analysis software that will be in place for 2014 will ensure a very exciting future for radio audience measurement in this country.

Ms Warner said that as well as the training on the new system that would be provided by GfK to stations and agencies, before the start of the new contract, CRA will offer comprehensive briefings to agencies and advertisers on the new survey methodology and the progress of pilot tests.

“GfK was awarded the new audience measurement contract after a five month tender process. GfK was chosen by the industry to move radio audience measurement forward in the immediate future due to its extensive international experience, reputation for research excellence, and innovative but rigorous approaches to the measurement challenges ahead. This new relationship marks an exciting transition for the Australian radio industry.”

GfK operates radio ratings, including an electronic diary, in several countries overseas including the Netherlands and Germany. Gary Lamb, Managing Director of GfK said: “This is a big day for GfK, and we fully appreciate its importance for the Australian radio industry. We are thrilled to be working together with CRA to future-proof radio audience measurement by bringing exciting innovations to recruitment and data-collection techniques, new software for data analysis and advertising optimisation, and fresh perspectives on listening behaviour.”

Ms Warner said trials in 2012 of e-diaries were very positive leading to the significant changes to be made to data collection in the next contract.

“E-diaries have been met with high levels of acceptance among listeners both overseas and also in trials conducted for CRA in Australia in 2012. People’s increasing use of technology has meant listeners are now more willing to record their listening habits online and while on the go.”

“Australia already has one of the most robust and reliable radio audience measurement systems in the world and the new partnership with GfK will bring even further improvements to this world class system. It should also be remembered that radio’s major strengths - its mobility, ubiquity and reach into all situations - conversely, provide some of the major challenges in developing a robust and reliable radio audience measurement system,” Ms Warner said.

“At this stage, no electronic device has proved to be reliable or robust enough as the sole measure of radio audience measurement given the scale and complexity of radio’s requirements. However the industry is committed to investigating with GfK in the first 24 months whether there is a device that may be integrated into a multimodal approach and would be both feasible and cost effective.”

Ms Warner thanked the Australian Broadcasting Corporation (ABC), the Media Federation of Australia (MFA) and the Australian Association of National Advertisers (AANA) for their participation on the Tender Committee and in the often exhausting and time consuming tender process. She also praised their commitment to continue as part of the Research Committee to oversee the pilot tests and the move to the new survey provider.

Ms Warner thanked Nielsen Media, holder of the current contract, for its long service to the industry through the provision of radio ratings for the past 66 years in Australia. The current contract for radio surveys, held by Nielsen, does not expire until the end of 2013.

The new ratings system will include:

- eight surveys a year in Sydney, Melbourne, Brisbane, Adelaide and Perth as well as three surveys a year in Newcastle and the Gold Coast, two a year in Canberra and additional markets such as Wollongong and Central Coast (NSW).
- real time management of fieldwork information to ensure quotas for difficult to reach demographics are met to deliver representative sample composition;;
- proven and tested online and e-diary system used internationally;
- parallel trials throughout 2013 to ensure validity and reliability of new data capture methods
- the establishment of the Gold Standard for radio analysis software allowing for certification of software used for radio audience measurement reporting;
- a 24-hour diary system that will, initially, include 20% online recruitment and data capture;
- formation of a new 5000 member panel to track audience behaviour;
- testing of electronic measurement in the first two years of the contract

Rhys Holleran, Chair of Commercial Radio Australia and CEO of Southern Cross Austereo said, “Networks and radio stations across Australia should welcome this decision given the significant changes to come with plans to include the e-diary and to investigate electronic data collection. It will also be good news for advertisers who have been encouraging radio to explore additional data collection methods to position us for the 21st century.”

The Chair of the industry Research and Tender Committee and CEO of Fairfax Radio, Adam Lang said, “Extensive time and effort went into ensuring the winning tender gave Australian radio audience measurement a world class evolution and positioned the industry well for the future.”

Media contact: Jenny Stevenson – 0402 214 039 or Melissa Fleming – 0417 499 529