

# The currency of trust

By [Geraint Crwys-Williams](#)

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When Unesco proclaimed World Radio Day in 2011, it was to recognise radio's unrivalled ability to celebrate humanity in all its diversity. Today more than 10 years later, radio is still one of the most widely consumed mediums on the planet. And World Radio Day on Sunday, 13 February reminds us of the important role we as radio broadcasters continue to play.



Geraint Crwys-Williams is the chairperson of Primedia Broadcasting and Primedia Group chief business officer

This year the theme for World Radio Day is "Radio and Trust". Trust is something I've been thinking a lot about lately. As fake news and misinformation spread, the impact is far-reaching, influencing the global and local discourse on a massive scale. Trust has become a currency we all need more of - in our dealings with each other, in the media, in our political landscape. So today, as we celebrate World Radio Day, we also celebrate how radio consistently shows up as a trusted medium.

People often ask me why my fascination with radio. What absolutely enthralls me about this medium is its ability to touch peoples' lives and the responsibility that comes with that. We have the opportunity to help shape a much more informed and connected society and a much more prosperous country - one conversation at a time.

## A level of intimacy

I believe the value of radio lies in its ability to foster a two-way dialogue. Unlike the other traditional mediums, radio is unbridled, unscripted and transparent. Radio affords a certain level of intimacy as we invite presenters into our homes, our cars and our lives daily. It is this level of intimacy that can only be built on trust. This basis of trust has allowed radio to create an extended connected community, which has become a lifeline for many, especially through the pandemic and various isolation levels.



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The dual role of radio is to entertain and inform. It allows us to hold up a mirror to the issues challenging society, and importantly, it provides a platform to air out in public what would otherwise fester in the dark in closed groups. Freedom of speech means freedom of debate. Facilitating an on-air conversation allows both sides to really hear each other, as human beings offering different points of view.

### Get the facts right

We're fortunate to have Eyewitness News in our stable as a broadcaster. Their reputation for independence and credibility has been hard-earned for over 14 years.

Eyewitness News editor-in-chief, Sibusiso Ngalwa makes the point that radio's role worldwide has never been more critical: "The prevalence and spread of fake news is not a uniquely South African story. We see a worldwide trust deficit. With the advent of fake news sites, trolling, social media platforms, and individuals who spread misinformation, we need to work harder to safeguard the trust our audience places in us.

Everyone is a publisher, even without credentials. We focus on truth-telling, not just news reporting as a news brand. Our job at Eyewitness News is to tell the truth, verify the news, not necessarily break it. We don't have to be first on a story, but we have to be right."



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In staying true to our listeners, we need checks and balances to ensure we can walk the talk for all programming, not just news. We do this through independent, verifiable research. People who work in radio often have an inherent sense of what will work or not. We're not taking the gut feel out of the equation, but in a rapidly shifting reality, we need to fact check even ourselves.

Is our way of programming reflectively of what's happening in the listener's world?

To answer these and our client's questions, we've launched rolling listener surveys on all our brands to fact check precisely that. We can never sit on our laurels and think we know our world. The radio landscape, and the South African consumer, are too dynamic for that and demand more than that.

Radio also has an important role to play in being reflective and committed to diversity, particularly in South Africa. This is not only in terms of race and gender but also in terms of diversity of thought and opinion and respecting and celebrating differences. Developing diversity requires investment in up and coming talent.

As we secure a fit-for-purpose future for our organisation, we are committed to providing the next wave of audio broadcasters with opportunities, and building a talent pipeline to support the dynamic environment in which we operate.

## ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Geraint Orwys-Williams is the chairperson of Primedia Broadcasting and Primedia Group chief business officer.

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