

PROFESSIONAL



APM Project Professional Qualification

Example paper

Scenario and questions based on Professionalism and
Managing Others module

Question – This question has two parts. Answer both parts.

Question 1a

Topic area Leadership

Question The station manager has had discussions with several people who are respected in the industry. Some have suggested Sean Brown as someone ideal to lead the sports team as he also has experience of online broadcasting at another of the stations owned by Golden Airwaves. After contacting Sean and informing him about the role, he has requested a meeting with the station manager and you to discuss the characteristics and current working practices of the sports team, and how this aligns with the needs of the project. You realise that, if appointed, Sean will need to empower and inspire the sports team through a period of potentially difficult change.

What aspects would you make Sean aware of when you and the station manager meet with him to discuss the sports editor role and ideas for improving team performance, and why?

Marks 15 marks

Question 1b

Topic area Team management

Question Sean applies for the role of sports editor and is appointed.

Explain with justification what you would do to benefit team development before Sean's arrival, and then during the project in terms of the required interactions with Sean.

Marks 10 marks

Question 2 – This question has two parts. Answer both parts.

Question 2a

Topic area Ethics, compliance and professionalism

Question After a football commentary on a Saturday afternoon during which there were technical difficulties with the interface to the online broadcast equipment, the attending technician made a formal complaint against Dave Blake. He accused Dave of unprofessionalism, of harassment, and of using foul and abusive language off-the-air during the transmission. However, another commentator who was in the vicinity stated that it seemed like Dave was responding to the technician's inability to use the new equipment properly which had caused difficulty during the broadcast. On the Monday afternoon, Sean Brown as Dave's new line manager notified Dave of the complaint, and asked him to come into the station for a chat. By the Thursday morning, Sean had still not received a response. Sean put one of the junior members of staff, Jo Mitchell, on standby to cover the next Sunday's game if needed. Jo wants to move into this area of work and has covered football commentary previously. Sean has asked you if this situation poses any risks to the project.

How should you respond to this situation?

Marks 15 marks

Question 2b

Topic area Team management

Question In the event, Jo Mitchell did commentate on the following Sunday's football game. Sean judged her commentary as excellent, and the station received emails from prominent advertisers praising her.

Jo has been carrying out other work involving social media and use of the online equipment with technicians, in addition to her normal duties. There has been a sickness bug going around the station and several people have had to take time off. Jo has been filling in for some of them, not just in the sports team. She is becoming skilled in using the online broadcasting equipment, a skill you would want from everyone involved with the project, but she is working way beyond her contracted hours.

Jo has now contacted you to say that she has ideas to help improve training on using the equipment, through the sharing of good practice. However, she has a worry that unless this is done in a coordinated and collaborative way, she might be taken advantage of by the station.

What can you do to recognise Jo's efforts and concerns, and who else should this involve?

Marks 10 marks

Question 3 – This question has two parts. Answer both parts.

Question 3a

Topic area Conflict management

Question While working with the output scheduler and Sean to confirm September's programmes, you foresee a difficulty. On the first Saturday in September, both premier-league football teams, as well as the basketball team, will have afternoon games. Normally this would be fine as the football would use the radio frequencies, and the basketball could be broadcast online. It is not an ideal arrangement, but it works. However on the first Saturday in September, a local non-league football club that Mary Hughes used to manage is playing a qualifying match in a national competition, and she has made it known that she thinks this should get the online slot because of the local advertising possibilities which could be developed. Geoff Harris believes that the basketball should be broadcast online because it is higher profile than non-league football and may attract listeners not limited to the radio broadcast area. It is not technically possible to broadcast two events live online so there is a question as to whether the basketball or non-league football should be chosen for online broadcast.

How will you determine which sport should be broadcast online, and how can you help Sean to minimise the possible conflict in the sports team?

Marks 15 marks

Question 3b

Topic area Ethics, compliance and professionalism

Question As part of a strategy to engage with the local community, you have encouraged station staff to give talks in local schools and to host school visits to the station to see how things work. During one of these visits a school teacher observed that there was no person with a disability working in the sports team, and that there was negligible coverage of disabled and Paralympic sports. That teacher subsequently wrote a letter to the local paper suggesting that the radio station has no interest in people with disabilities. This was brought to your attention by the station manager.

Should you add to or modify the project requirements in light of the teacher's actions, and what information would you need to provide justification for any change?

Marks 10 marks

Question 4 – This question has two parts. Answer both parts.

Question 4a

Topic area Team management

Question With six months still to run of the project, you are happy with the contribution of Sean Brown as sports editor and the progress of the team, which has greatly benefitted from enhanced coordination and performance management, increased personal development, and an improved team ethos. This has meant that many of the project benefits have been realised in terms of attracting a larger audience and more local advertisers, and in developing the profile of Chat Sport.

To generate better awareness of the transformation that has taken place, the Board of Golden Airwaves has asked you to prepare a submission to the APM Awards for 'Project of the Year'. Sean Brown and the sports team have never been involved in an award submission before, and the station manager is worried that preparing a submission will be a distracting and time-consuming process and will not get buy-in from all parts of the radio station. As project manager you believe that participation in this would generate positive publicity, but a lot of the aspects needed for a successful submission would come from the radio station, and from Sean and his team.

Before committing to this new project requirement, you want to be sure that both the radio station and the sports team are willing to participate in this endeavour.

You have been asked by Golden Airwaves to outline how you will take this forward. Who do you feel needs to be involved and what interventions will be required?

Marks 15 marks

Question 4b

Topic area Team management

Question You decide to take the APM award submission forward, and allocate some of the work to Sean with his agreement. After a few days, he comes back to you and says that he cannot take on the additional workload as this was not in his original remit, and suggests that you get Jo Mitchell to help you. You recognise that she has been a great asset to the project in the past. You also recognise that Sean is coming to the end of his contract, and may be looking for future career opportunities.

How would you address Sean's suggestion, and why?

Marks 10 marks

****END OF QUESTIONS****

Scenario – Copy of scenario as previously provided

Your role

You have been appointed by a commercial radio franchise, Golden Airwaves, as project manager for the delivery of a pilot project that they have called 'Chat Sport'. This project will be delivered within Radio Chat and Ball, a radio station that Golden Airwaves has recently purchased. Golden Airwaves has several radio station brands with different target audiences depending on their locality, but none of these brands are aimed at the over 50's demographic that corresponds with Chat and Ball's core audience. Chat Sport will be used to investigate the viability for expansion into other regions of the UK through a range of radio stations owned by Golden Airwaves, and with an emphasis on developing live online broadcasts that have never been offered by Radio Chat and Ball.

Radio Chat and Ball has been in decline in recent years, but its sport coverage has remained popular keeping the radio station afloat to some extent. You have been given a project budget that can be used for purchasing online broadcast equipment and for people development, but must be separate from the salaries and budgets used by the radio station itself. You need to ensure you do not go outside the terms of the existing broadcasting licence from the regulatory body, Ofcom, but otherwise the board of Golden Airwaves has given you free reign to deliver the project as you see fit.

Overview

Radio Chat and Ball was established in the summer of 1994, when the government increased the number of radio stations it licensed.

The station is located in the North of England and serves two major cities and a large rural area. It broadcasts on FM, AM and DAB. The station's target audience is people over 50. Its offering focuses primarily on local issues and community interests, providing a speech-based service of news, information and debate, with the speech output being complemented by music.

Sport has been a major part of the station's output since launch, and this continues to be the case. The region has a big love for sport: it has two premier-league football teams, a lower-level full-time professional team with a strong support base, a premiership rugby union team, a semi-professional rugby league team, a county championship cricket team, and a major athletics club with a stadium that hosts international events. These high-profile clubs attract large numbers of spectators. The region also has a reputation for high levels of participation across the whole sporting spectrum. Radio Chat and Ball broadcasts sports events live, with the two premiership football teams having the highest priority in terms of coverage. When more than one sport or game is on at the same time, the station utilises its different frequencies to cover all of the events, which normally works well.

In its early days the station made a commitment to engage with the local arts community, but the audience numbers for arts-related programmes were not sufficient to warrant major expenditure. This strand of activity was effectively allowed to decline naturally, and it is now only very occasionally that the station broadcasts arts-related programmes.

Overview cont.

Radio Chat and Ball's programming was initially very successful. The station's active news team earned a reputation for getting stories on air quicker than rival broadcasters, and they created local interest programmes that proved to be very popular. Listener figures published by RAJAR (Radio Joint Audience Research) were very good initially and maintained this status for the next 10 years, attracting the advertising revenue needed to stay in business. However in recent years audience figures and advertising revenues have dropped to the point where the station has been facing severe financial difficulties.

Requirements and potential solutions

Golden Airwaves have undertaken an initial review of Radio Chat and Ball's offering and have agreed to take forward the following required outcomes:

- 1 There is a requirement to improve the radio station's appeal by renewing the focus on high quality news items and by providing more local journalism. This means:
 - A focus of effort and resources on breakfast and mid-morning programmes, which have the potential to attract the most listeners.
 - Setting targets to measure quality through new and existing channels that provide content which is original, challenging, innovative and engaging.
- 2 There is a requirement to attract more local advertisers, to be achieved by finding more effective ways to serve local audiences. This includes:
 - Developing a better local agenda with a keener focus on the stories, analysis and debate most relevant to the local area.
 - Introducing a range of improvements to the regular news, travel, weather and sports bulletins throughout the day, including local bulletins on the hour up to 7pm.
 - Embrace digital and social media platforms to enhance advertising opportunities.
- 3 There is a requirement to make the radio station's outputs more distinctive. This requires:
 - A focus on people over 50 years of age as a core audience, but embrace the societal evidence of a seamless society with age not necessarily being the defining metric.
 - Ensuring that, as a speech-led station, the output comprises 100% speech at breakfast and drive time.
 - Limiting new and recent chart music to no more than 15% of weekly music output.

Recognising the importance of sport in the area, the Chat Sport project will use the sport team at Radio Chat and Ball as the focus for the process of change. The station already has agreements in place that enable live broadcasts of the region's football, rugby union, rugby league, cricket and basketball games, but you want to give sport a much higher profile online, and in the news bulletins featured in the breakfast, morning and drive-time programmes. Alongside their normal sports coverage, the Chat Sport team will need to deliver:

- Interviews with local sports people, at least once a week initially, with a view to moving to every day once the local sports coverage timetable has been agreed.
- Provide a 2 minute sports bulletin ready for the news desk at the start of each day.
- Lead a phone-in sport debate every Friday morning as part of the requirement to become a speech led station.

Project team

The increased emphasis on sport and online broadcasts will be a major challenge for Radio Chat and Ball's sports team, and it is possible that there will be a need to bring in an additional member of staff to cover the output requirements generated by the more comprehensive coverage.

The sports team are an interesting group. They vary in age from early 20's to late 60's. For some it is their first job and all they have known, while others bring a vast array of world and work experiences ranging from sales to university teaching.

Within the team there are five commentators who cover the live broadcasts. Two are full-time, one of whom reads the news and does occasional presenting, one is a junior, and the other three are freelance who do the sports news bulletins during weekday breakfast shows and interchangeably present a Saturday afternoon sports programme. The team is supplemented occasionally by two additional freelancers who do recorded sports news bulletins as and when needed. Broadcasts are appropriately supported by technicians and equipment available within Radio Chat and Ball, depending on whether these are studio-based or outside broadcasts.

Dave Blake is a full-time employee and primarily a football commentator. He is a challenging individual who has on several occasions made unrealistic demands on people he is working with. He has also been involved in some significant disciplinary issues, and is seen by his colleagues as being unhelpful and lazy. On more than one occasion he has been reported being helped into a taxi from a particular city centre bar next to the football stadium, unable to walk unaided. He came to Radio Chat and Ball ten years ago after disciplinary problems led to him being asked to leave another radio station. Radio Chat and Ball's station manager, acting as the line manager for all staff in the sports team, maintains that Dave's indiscretions and the problems they have caused within the team are worth putting up with because he is so well-known and so well-connected. You suspect that some dysfunctional aspects within the sports team may be linked to the immunity Dave appears to enjoy.

One of the freelance commentators, Geoff Harris, is very influential in the region. Geoff is a basketball commentator who has been involved in the game at local and national level for many years. He is a very good commentator, and the station generates additional revenues by allowing other stations to simulcast his live commentaries. He is semi-retired from his position as professor of business strategy at the local university, and is well respected by the university and the local business community. He still does occasional consultancy work. He works for the station because of his love for and desire to promote basketball in the local area. He keeps the station's sports social-media platforms up to date and enthusiastically promotes the station.

Project team cont.

Another freelance commentator, Mary Hughes, covers the non-league football having previously been a player and manager. Whilst loving the game, she admits if she were not getting paid to do commentary she would not do it. She can be very outspoken, but the station manager feels her heart is in the right place. Occasionally the station does full-match commentary of local non-league football games, but mostly inserts updates into the Saturday afternoon programme, with a results round-up after the games have finished.

The sports team is currently working without a sports editor due to internal recruitment constraints, and the responses to any queries and guidance have come from the station manager. Without a coordinating influence, sports team meetings rarely take place. Staff members have limited interaction with others but manage to maintain consistency of the station brand across the various outputs. A sports-specific silo mentality has thus been allowed to develop over time, and there has been little or no formal performance appraisal or development. None of the team members has any experience of using online broadcasting interfaces, and the technicians at Radio Chat and Ball do not have familiarity with the preferred technology used by other radio stations linked to Golden Airwaves.

You have had individual discussions with members of the sports team, observed how they work, and sought the opinions of others who have to interact with them. After some analysis, you have pressed the station manager to appoint a temporary sports editor to help give the team direction and focus over the duration of your project, paid for from your project budget. There are team members who may have the qualities you are looking for, but you would prefer to make an external appointment.

****END OF EXAMINATION BOOKLET****

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