

# COMMUNICATION STRATEGY

## How can we reach a listener with the Gospel?

"We are indebted to Far East Broadcasting Company (FEBC) for their work in developing training materials on this subject. This module is excerpted from 'Radio Programming Roles' (pp 49-62) by Frank Gray and Ross James (1997) and is used by kind permission of the authors. Full text is available on the website [www.febc.org/training.html](http://www.febc.org/training.html)"

### Know your Listener

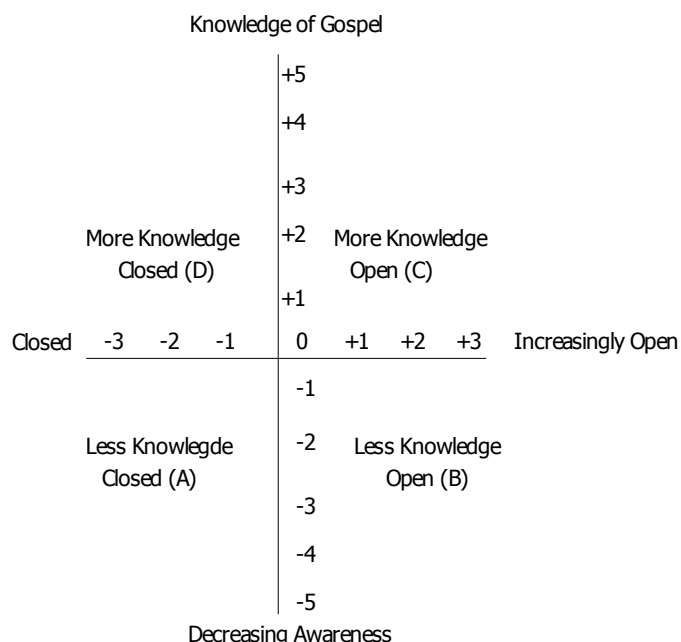
To be close to the listener implies that we know them quite well, want to talk their language and make radio programs for them. We certainly don't want to be found saying the wrong things -- or saying the right things in the wrong way. This could even cause them to tune away from our station and never come back.

### A tool to help us

This tool has come to be known as the Gray Matrix. It has proved useful over many years to those who develop media strategies for evangelism and church-planting.

The Gray Matrix had its origins in the Engel Scale which usefully structured stages of understanding and Gospel awareness that a person goes through in coming to a saving knowledge of Christ. The Matrix, however, more completely expands our perception of the process into a full, two-dimensional model. It separates out the cognitive elements into the vertical x-axis (if we use mathematical nomenclature) while attitudinal dimensions belong to the horizontal (y-axis). A notable difference, also, is that in keeping with mathematical cartesian coordinates, positive numbers are represented upwards and to the right, while negative are the reverse.

### The Gray Matrix



The levels of -5 to +4 and -3 to +3 merely illustrate possible stages or phases, and do not imply a strict representation of the process.

The vertical scale depicts a person's awareness and knowledge of the Gospel, from a minimal awareness level of -5 through to a nominal +4 where the centre-point of 0 might be considered the conversion zone. (Zone is a preferred term since it is not always clearly defined. It might also be noted that the point at which a person's attitude moves from negative to positive is also not clearly defined). The peak of +4 is purely arbitrary, not intended to convey the impression that a person has arrived once a certain level of knowledge has been attained. It is a continuing process....

The horizontal axis depicts a person's openness to the Gospel and Christian teaching. On the left side we have those who are closed or who are rejecting it. To the right are those who are open and desire to know more. Expressed in another way we could say that those on the left are moving away from Christ, while those on the right are moving toward Him.



## People like this in the Bible:

**A** In the Old Testament Jezebel and Ahab (1 Kings 16-22) resolutely turned their backs on anything to do with God. A New Testament equivalent might have been king Herod who had John the Baptist beheaded. On the Matrix they might be at (-3,-4) in the Less Knowledge/Closed quadrant (A). •

**B** The Woman at the Well (John 4) would clearly be in the Less Knowledge/Open quadrant (B) -- though her spiritual understanding was far more than minimal. Her openness to receive Jesus' teaching demonstrated an appetite for spiritual truth that developed as their conversation progressed. Put her at (+2,-3). •

**C** Who should we nominate for the More Knowledge/Open quadrant (C)? How about one of the disciples -- John? Or we could choose the apostle Paul as he moved from (-2,-3) in the Less Knowledge/Closed quadrant (A), say, to (+3,+4) in the More Knowledge/Open quadrant (C) and beyond. In fact we could name a wide variety of individuals who were totally committed to serving Christ.

**D** The O.T. prophet, Balaam (Numbers 23-24), might serve as an example of some in the More Knowledge/Closed quadrant (D). Or perhaps even king Saul in his older days.

These are, of course, guesses to illustrate the point. In a real life situation today we need to be more careful in our assessment of where people are at. Guessing is not very objective and can easily reflect a poor understanding of the audience and where they are -- both spiritually, and in their real openness to the Gospel. To conduct a research study would be much more enlightening.

Our overall purpose in our communication is to move our listener toward the **More Knowledge/Open quadrant (C)** so that he can grow in Christ as a member of a local fellowship of believers.

## This involves two components:

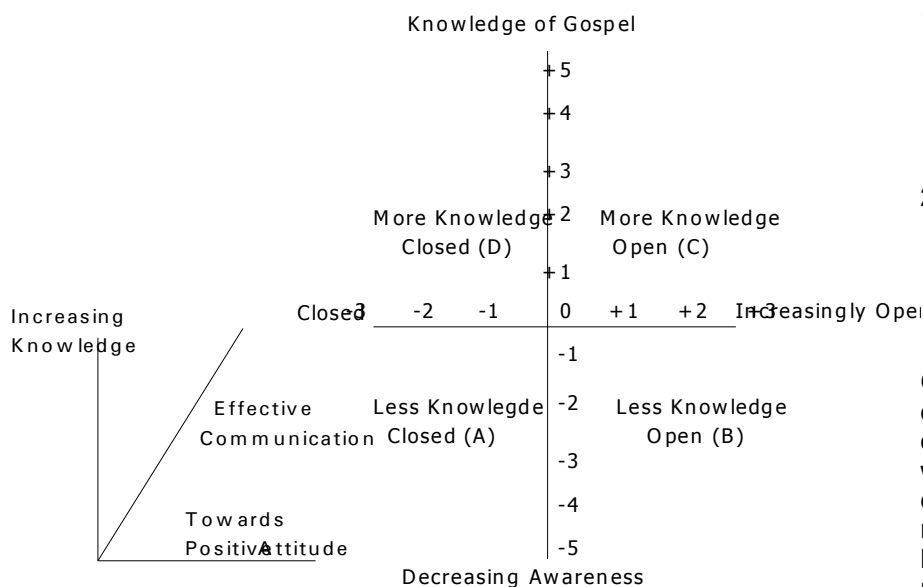
1. the vertical component (a person cannot come to faith without a basic understanding, although this will vary from one person to another)
2. the horizontal (which indicates that for a person to come to faith they must have an open attitude to the Gospel and toward God.)

Once we can identify with a degree of certainty where our listener is located then we can begin to design our evangelistic strategy. This may be by radio alone (if we have no other options) or preferably by using a variety

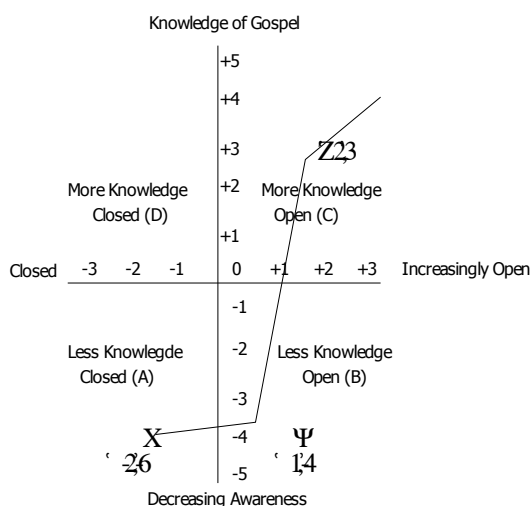
of media or forms of outreach, each contributing its own relative strengths in the communication strategy.

## What can Radio do?

Many people involved in using radio for the Gospel have unrealistic expectations about what their broadcasts can accomplish. While radio has decided strengths (such as immediacy, going behind barriers, being non-



confrontational, personal, etc.) it also has many drawbacks. It cannot provide face-to-face contact or dialogue, it cannot touch, it is transitory and cannot provide much detail without special types of educational techniques, etc.



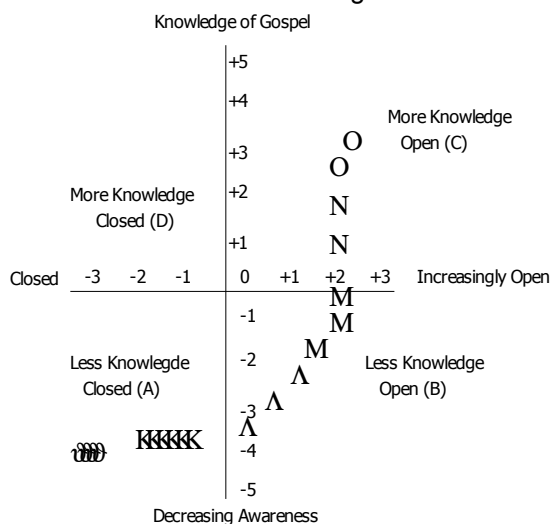
Now let us consider again listener X at (-2,-4) in the Less Knowledge/Closed quadrant (A). How can we help him move toward Christ and into the Kingdom, in the More Knowledge/Open quadrant (C)?

We need to look at our overall communication strategy, identify goals that are consistent with the role of radio programming and provide a range of programs that meets the diverse audience needs at different stages represented in the quadrants.

For example, we might suggest a very valid but modest goal as being to move our listener from (-2,-4) to (0,-4). This means the program would serve to break down the listener's prejudices toward the Gospel (and Christians?) and make him more open. This could be a valid goal in a long-term strategic plan -- and one which lends itself very well to radio. In one country, a key objective for a radio program was to demonstrate that listeners were loyal citizens and had something intelligent to contribute to the nation, contrary to the misinformation given out by those antagonistic to Christians.

As the Holy Spirit moves people toward Christ, our radio programs can lay a pathway over which they can be moved. The nature of the pathway changes during the process, and it may look something like this:

But what is that pathway made up of? If we look more closely we may find the following:



Different programs (Program J, Program K, Program L, Program M, Program N, Program O) all helped pave the way for his attitude toward the Gospel, together with his awareness, knowledge, and understanding of it, to grow as part of a process. These programs correspond to the Informational, Entertainment, and Instruction roles as described earlier.

To use biblical terminology we might say that programs J-L constitute SOWING, WATERING is program M, while program N is REAPING. NURTURING is done by program O. (For biblical background read John 4:35-38 for process and I Cor.3:6-9 for sowing and watering.)

Each of Programs J to O has very specific goals, and fulfils a different role from the other.

It caters to a different audience with a different set of needs (as well as being further along in the spiritual growth process).

Obviously this is an over-simplification, in order to make the point. Reality will inevitably be a lot more complex as various other factors come to bear in a person's life, bringing him to that point of commitment. The Holy Spirit determines the ultimate mix of ingredients needed for each individual.