Our Plan for 2012

Summary

This plan lays out a broad strategic view for RadioDNS, and suggests what the organisation should do to achieve its goals. In particular, it looks at what resource the organisation has, and could expect to have in the next 1-2 years, and how that could be invested. This plan is informed by the last 3 years of RadioDNS activities, both informally in the run up to its formation in April 2010, and since then.

A Hybrid Radio Ecosystem

RadioDNS exists to bridge two powerful technologies with contrasting capabilities.

Supporters of RadioDNS believe that broadcast radio is a cost-effective and appropriate way of getting radio to the mass-market, and that the demand for radio will remain high for the foreseeable future. However, we also recognise that both listeners (and customers) are being drawn deeper into an IP connected world, in which they have better media experiences. Whilst it's theoretically possible to distribute radio in a pure IP environment, most existing broadcasters serving large audiences know that it would be expensive, unreliable and inefficient to use IP to do the job of broadcasting radio to mass audiences. There's also anecdotal evidence that mobile IP networks aren't keen to carry radio to millions of people on 3G either, which is driving some "off-loading" strategies (with WiFi, WiMax) in some countries.

So in broad terms, many people think combining broadcast radio and IP creates a flexible technology platform that protects the core values of radio (free, simple to use, ubiquitous) but also brings the opportunity to expand radio, in terms of its user experience, its range of content, its interactivity, and its value as an advertising medium.

A Simple Goal, A Simple Role

RadioDNS' goal:

"RadioDNS Hybrid Radio devices will deliver benefits to broadcasters, manufacturers, network operators and listeners through a combination of broadcast and IP"

RadioDNS' role:

"RadioDNS will provide education and support to help our stakeholders overcome objections and invest in new devices and services and will create and promote standards to help support a hybrid radio ecosystem."

Challenges

Here's a summary of the main challenges we face in reaching our goal:

Education

Explaining hybrid radio to broadcasters, manufacturers and IP network providers.
Explaining why hybrid radio is better than broadcast radio or IP alone.
Demonstrating that the concept is technically sound.
Establishing RadioDNS as trustworthy and reliable.
Creating a sense of success and growth around the project.

Evangelism

Positioning hybrid as a exciting new development in broadcast radio
Growing enthusiasm with manufacturers and broadcasters to build devices and services
Cultivating a buzz / must-do sense around hybrid

Support

Enabling the creation of open-source technology standards.
Providing technological support to make hybrid radio globally ubiquitous.
Providing marketing guidance to improve communication to listeners.
Sharing best-of-practice and success stories.

The Past

Since the first idea of RadioDNS, the project has run with volunteer input from a small number of people, plus practical contributions (like software and prototype devices) from some of the member organisations. That's how we've provided education and support until now.

In context, we have achieved a great deal. The initial technical concepts have stood up to increasingly demanding requirements, and detailed research by interested broadcasters. By bridging the gap between IP and broadcast radio, we're seeing time to deploy new functionality drop dramatically, and now new applications can be created by people with only "Internet skills", not just people with specialised knowledge about specific radio platforms. Real consumer devices are being produced, and the technology is being integrated into silicon and modules for other manufacturers to include in their projects. More broadcasters are either using, or looking to use one or more of the project's officially supported applications (RadioVIS, RadioEPG, RadioTAG), and the amount of work undertaken by the technical teams is growing.

We feel one of the most important parts of the project is spanning radio systems; RadioDNS integrates consistently against HD Radio, DAB/DAB+/DMB and FM Radio. It provides a common development environment with the potential for global scope. This kind of consistency makes it easy to talk to global manufacturers, and particularly mobile network operators and handset manufacturers, and we believe this will become a key part of our future.

In 2010, RadioDNS was formed as a trade association, and received membership fees each year.

Today

The goal and the role haven't changed, but the scale of the challenges have greatly increased.

We need to grow faster.

To reach the critical mass that makes the whole project worthwhile for everyone, we need to focus our efforts in growing the project.

Growing Faster

What does "growing faster" mean for RadioDNS?

In the simplest form, it means:

More broadcasters providing services that use RadioDNS
More manufacturers producing more devices that use RadioDNS

Some objectives we should aim for include:

Education

Improve our visibility, and spread our message wider and more frequently.
Follow up on initial interest much better, and understand how we can get people from interest to involvement with the project.
Allay some of the concerns about RadioDNS's independence or motives, which involves spending more time with people individually, addressing their concerns.
Improve our presentation, so that people are confident in RadioDNS and its operation.

Evangelism

Engage with people on the right scale - directly with key influencers in manufacturing and broadcasting in key territories
Effectively promote best of practice - showing how hybrid is successful
Cultivate a buzz about hybrid - ensure it is a must-have topic at conferences.

Support

Provide more practical tools (software examples, HOWTO guides, basic testing) to allow people to move easily from interest to involvement, or to reduce the initial costs.
Actively link up people with problems to people with solutions, and ensure the ecosystem of businesses around RadioDNS are actively operating.
Protect RadioDNS from mis-use, but give more help to people who want to use it.
Show how RadioDNS can make radio and devices more valuable.

One of the project's biggest challenges is to ensure we dedicate specific resources so these objectives can be fulfilled.

We also need to make sure that RadioDNS stays accessible. RadioDNS will work well if we have many broadcasters (both public and commercial) and many device manufacturers involved. As RadioDNS has its roots in the Internet, our aim has always to emulate organisations like The Mozilla Foundation, and have a large number of people contributing small amounts, rather than have a few big members providing the funding and potentially excluding valuable smaller organisations.

Currently we have 26 members, each paying CHF2,000/year (GB£1,350, US$1,950, €1,475). Our mid-term intention is to charge a small fee to each radio station listed in RadioDNS, alongside the membership fee.

RadioDNS in 2012

We start 2012 knowing that the members who have contributed in the past are prepared to keep doing so this year. We must ensure we use their time more effectively, and bring in new resources to support them.

Key plans for this year include:

A robust marketing plan; which events we will attend, who will be there, how we will be presented, and how we will follow up on interest generated.

Improve the website; increase the amount of information and improve its presentation, more practical tools, more opportunities to connect to solutions providers and more case studies and demonstrations.
Improve our communication; more regular information, and encourage more of our supporters to contribute to our communication.
Decide our position on “localising” RadioDNS, and provide appropriate ways for “local” groups to operate under the umbrella of the main organisation.
Formalise our trademarks and licences.
Operational backup and administration.

Marketing

We’ve benefited in the past from being offered space at important exhibitions like IBC (Amsterdam), NAB Show (Las Vegas), NAB Radioshow (Various US), as well as speaking opportunities in the UK, France, Germany, Italy, Spain, Portugal, Denmark, Sweden, Ireland, Canada, Australia. We’re very grateful to our members who help us out like this - it’s very valuable to us. Historically, we’ve minimised cost as much as possible, and covered only direct costs associated with those events.

In 2012, our plan is to be represented at these events:

February	EBU Digital Radio Week	Geneva	Speaking / General Assembly / Hackday *EBU confirmed supporting*
March	RadioDays Europe	Barcelona	Speaking *James Cridland invited to speak*
April	NAB Show	Las Vegas	Exhibiting / Speaking (tbc) *NAB confirmed supporting*
May	RadioCamp	Hamburg	Speaking *Member presenting for us*
June	Broadcast Asia	Singapore	Exhibition/speaking
September	IBC	Amsterdam	Exhibition *Part of EBU stand*
October	NAB Radioshow	Dallas	Exhibition / Speaking *Exhibiting*
October	ITS World Congress	Vienna	Speaking (tbc) *Joint proposal with iBquity*

We're happy to receive more suggestions of events we should be at, and what kind of presence we should have.

Wherever possible, we'll encourage members to include RadioDNS in their own exhibition space, marketing and speaking slots, and to make this easier, we will prepare marketing materials (both digital and physical) that people can ask for.

Website

Our website is potentially our most valuable education tool and must reflect the developments and informations provided by RadioDNS and its members.
Work has begun on a plan to restructure the website, and has been assigned to a specific project manager. The revised site will be laid out in sections relevant to each group of users (broadcasters, manufacturers, network operators, service providers etc.), and will also hold our organisational information (like meeting dates, minutes, statutes) better. We hope to link the site up with a good tool for managing the technical discussions, and we'll be looking for recommendations for what

this should be. The website should enable easy discussion and best-of-practice sharing. We've also considered how to accommodate different languages and countries within the site structure.

We have already started asking supporters to start writing "guest articles" for the site, and the site will be more regularly updated with news and information.

One feature we should include in the website is a suite of tools that can be used to demonstrate and test RadioDNS. We often find we have developers and manufacturers in places where there is no broadcaster providing RadioDNS, and we recognise how difficult it makes progress. We can build a demonstration set that anyone can use, and we would host. This would take some technical development, but the value to the community could be immense.

"Localising" RadioDNS

We know that some of the objections to the concept of RadioDNS (as opposed to the concept of hybrid radio) are linked to our use of DNS to turn broadcast information into a URL. In particular, it's always been our stated aim to allow each country to adapt their implementation of RadioDNS to fit their market, subject to staying within the key rules of the organisation. This is done through the Territory Specific Process, although none have been formally published yet.

It needs to be an easy process for broadcasters to adopt RadioDNS as "their" solution in their country, otherwise we risk countries pursuing parallel projects. Having different ways of hybridising radio isn't generally a good idea, unless there are differences that can't be resolved.

This year, we need to decide how much independence we should offer to individual countries; for example, should we arrange technical delegation of the entire operation of the DNS server for a country? Once we've decided this, we need to identify who the key people in each country are, and help them take responsibility for RadioDNS and write their TSP.

Formalising our Trademarks and Licences

RadioDNS has already got a set of logos and names which are gaining recognition within the industry, but do not have any formal registration or protection.

We need to make trademark registering applications in 2012 and also produce licences for people who want to use them. As a guide, the Mozilla Foundation has a set of licences for their trademarks (like Firefox and Thunderbird) which can be referred to.

The trademarking and license creation will cost money for legal fees and filing. If possible, we'll ask a member organisation to help with some of the legal work, but some costs will be unavoidable.

Operational Backup

RadioDNS works at the moment through ad-hoc effort; it's up to the Secretary and Chairperson to find time to deal with the day-to-day operations - and it's not an efficient use of their time to manage all of the projects that need to be undertaken.

We propose to bring someone into RadioDNS (on a freelance basis) to handle the organisation and operation of the organisation, leaving more time for the Chairman, Secretary and Steering Board to concentrate on strategic issues and quality engagement. We will be looking for someone organised, familiar with the radio industry, and who we believe can effectively manage our time, events and website.

Conclusion

RadioDNS has had a very promising start, and we must continue to build on this, improve our performance, and reflect the growing interest in the organisation.

We believe we understand how to make RadioDNS successful, and how to achieve our goal, and now is the time to put more resource behind doing that.

Nick Piggott
Chairperson
January 2012