

# RFI ON ANY PHONE

It couldn't be simpler: you broadcast and AudioNow connects your stream to the caller. You don't have to manage the technology, carrier relationships or customer service. In the words of its Managing Director Elan J Blutinger, venture-backed AudioNow is at the forefront of the convergence between radio and mobile technology for the masses. In fact, demand from broadcasters exceeds the company's own projections, and they are in a position to select partners that they can build a long-term strategic relationship with.

In November 2009 Radio France Internationale, which broadcasts French world news round-the-clock on FM, shortwave, as well as cable, satellite, the internet and mobile phone, signed an agreement with AudioNow to broadcast its French programmes on the telephone network, 24 hours a day, in 11 US cities: Boston, Chicago, San Francisco, Miami, New York City, Lafayette, New Orleans, Dallas, Seattle, Los Angeles and Atlanta. AudioNow is a leading provider of mobile phone broadcast radio distribution in the US using its proprietary technology which allows any fixed or mobile phone to access live audio programming without any downloads or data networks.

It was Pompeyo Pino, RFI's Head of the Americas, who set the deal in motion, realizing that AudioNow is particularly suited for international broadcasters that do not have national coverage in the US through local broadcasters and who find satellite radio too costly and limiting.

When we spoke to RFI's Executive Director Geneviève Goëtzing (pictured) she said initial results had been very good. The beauty of AudioNow unlike any "smart" application like those that run on iPhones is that it was designed from the consumer's perspective - simple, reliable and easy to use without software downloads. All the listener needs to

do is call a local access number - generally free of charge in the US - and they are connected live to the RFI broadcast.

## KEEPING TABS ON LISTENERS

Since AudioNow concerns telephone communication, it is possible to know how many people are calling and how long they are listening to each radio station in each city, but the sociological profile of those listeners would

"We don't know exactly who our listeners are but we know what they are listening to - the morning news." Geneviève Goëtzing

need a complementary survey.

24/7, RFI keeps listeners updated with a ten-minute news programme and a three-minute newsflash. The AudioNow numbers are certainly impressive - on an average day in December there were just under 30,000 listeners with an average listening time of 28 minutes. In Chicago in particular in October around 500,000 callers dialled RFI. Demand is strong in major cities.

## INTERACTIVITY

As far as interactivity with the listener is concerned, there is no limit to what the AudioNow system can do with listeners including opinion polling, sampling, and advertising. Blutinger says the company wants to keep the system simple to reduce barriers to adoption.

For the moment, RFI's programmes on AudioNow are only available in French, so this partnership is targeting some major cities which concentrate a significant amount of French-speaking people. It is the same concerning Monte-Carlo Doualiya (MCD), the subsidiary radio station in the Arabic language of RFI group, which launched on AudioNow in Detroit last December.

There is scope for reaching out to other US target areas and possibly adding other languages. RFI and MCD are now studying new developments on AudioNow in



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some other American cities. As far as extending the service to other areas of the world, AudioNow is exploring that possibility with other international broadcasters. The challenge is that local telecommunications costs are often artificially high as a result of little to no competition and state-run monopolies.

## BUSINESS MODEL

At present RFI does not pay to make content available, nor does it get anything in return. There is potential in the future for revenue sharing from advertising.

AudioNow's Elan Blutinger says the company is constantly fine-tuning its model and testing various formats, monthly fees as well as paid sponsorships.

The results are good, with no real marketing spend so far, so for RFI it has proved a very good way to reach new audiences. Goëtzing says actively marketing the service is an important task for the coming months.

"We are just at the beginning. We must do more marketing, I am sure of this. We are now really working on mobile access everywhere in the world, not only in the States. It is important for us to reach listeners and keep in touch with them via mobile all over the world." Geneviève Goëtzing