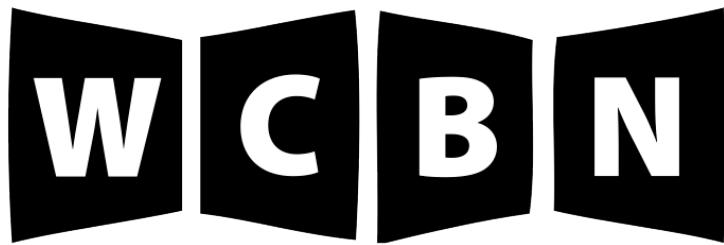


# FINAL REPORT



## WCBN-FM: User Training Consultation

Name of Contact: Robert Li

Fall 2018

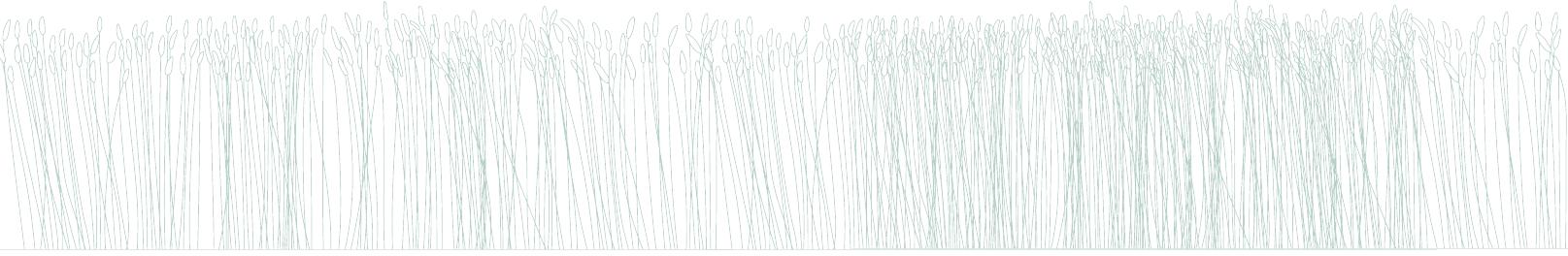
SI 501: Contextual Inquiry and Consulting  
Foundations

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# Executive Summary

WCBN, the University of Michigan's student-run freeform radio station provides "alternative broadcasting" that exposes "listenership to things they can't hear on other radio stations."<sup>1</sup> WCBN is a public resource that provides training and experience for students and community members. Its freeform nature allows members to express themselves and create a broad range of programming. One of the station's greatest tools for diverse programming comes from the ability to utilize Production Studio A (Prod A) in a variety of ways including for podcasts, live sports broadcasts, talk shows, live performances and electronic shows that utilize the station's DJ equipment.

The station executives asked for assistance in analyzing the training and scheduling of Prod A. Without the standardization of stage 1 and 2 training, we found training for Prod A was inconsistent. Member's names are written haphazardly on the studio's door when training is complete, but there is nothing to guarantee they have received the same amount of training as fellow Prod A users. Without documentation to guide trainers as they provide training trainees received inconsistent guidelines as to how to use Prod A. The sports department was cited numerous times as providing less training than members who use Prod A for other programs. Without up-to-date documentation members have been left to figure out the use of equipment through some trial and error. However, the WCBN community is tight knit and happy to provide advice to others. Members feel comfortable asking for help and feel a sense of collaboration in their goals of providing inventive and experimental programming.

In order to address the station's inconsistencies and to implement a transference of institutional knowledge as member's leave the station we recommend creating training documentation. Specifically, a physical copy that is kept in the studio along with a digital copy on Google Drive that is accessible to all members. This guide should address the basics of using Prod A along with supplying troubleshooting information for common problems. Additionally, the guide should include who to contact if members come across a problem they are unable to solve. This guide should be created through collaboration with members who use Prod A in order to encompass the knowledge of members who use the studio for all types of programming. Furthermore, training should make clear how to use the chosen web platform to schedule studio time and provide access to this resource upon training completion. Through standardization of documentation and scheduling Prod A can be utilized to its fullest extent as a creative outlet and resource for innovative programming.

# Background Information

## Our Client

WCBN is a student run freeform radio radio station located on the campus of the University of Michigan. WCBN aims to educate students, volunteers and members of the greater Ann Arbor community in engineering and producing radio content for broadcast on their frequency, 88.3 FM. WCBN is a student-run, non-profit organization where student directors act as department heads and make decisions in conjunction with an executive board that features both students and non students.



photo credit: [www.wcbn.org](http://www.wcbn.org)

## How This Report Came to Be

WCBN applied to work with the School of Information's graduate level contextual inquiry course (SI 501) to address internal procedures that they wanted to improve. **Contextual inquiry** is a "semi-structured interview method to obtain information about the context of use, where users are first asked a set of standard questions and then observed and questioned while they work in their own environments."<sup>18</sup>

WCBN requested a user-centered review of their Production A training procedure which has been a historically difficult problem to approach within their organization. They believe that their current method of training for Prod A equipment (mixing live music, talk show recording, and editing) is not as efficient or effective as it could be. They hoped that by requesting insight through working with a student user-centered research team, they would receive new suggestions that could ease the issues surrounding Prod A training.

# Background Information

## What Is Our Role?

For our 501 project, we chose WCBN out of multiple clients in order to review and suggest opportunities for alteration in their Prod A trainings. We thought that this was an interesting opportunity to dig into and that we could help solve a problem for a student run organization that does great work within the campus community and beyond. We set out in this process to help mend WCBN's Prod A issues from the inside out with user interviews and background research.

For the review we used contextual inquiry methods to interview members at the station who fell into three categories. We interviewed people who were considered "Trainers", "Trainees" along with the Station's Engineer. We asked interviewees specifically on their input, pain-points, and overall experience with the Prod A training room and process at WCBN in order to better understand the overall processes and how best to improve Prod A in particular.

## College Radio in Context

According to our background research, College Radio stations have, like many other organizations in and around Universities, had problems with structure, processes and institutional knowledge. WCBN is not alone here. According to findings discussed in one particular paper, "Managing college radio: Understanding American college stations through their management practices," institutional knowledge is cited as critical to the success and preservation of the college radio existence.<sup>10</sup>



Photo credit: Doug Coombe, Concrete Media  
[www.secondwavemedia.com/concentrate/features/wcbnfuture0257.aspx](http://www.secondwavemedia.com/concentrate/features/wcbnfuture0257.aspx)

In this research their conclusions state that it's difficult for management to pass along knowledge to predecessors if systems for these protocols and procedures are not put in place. With the emergence of accessibility to computers and electronic storage systems, the institutional knowledge problem could be solved with proper accessibility, protocol, and member's understanding of the tools that are available to them.

# Background Information



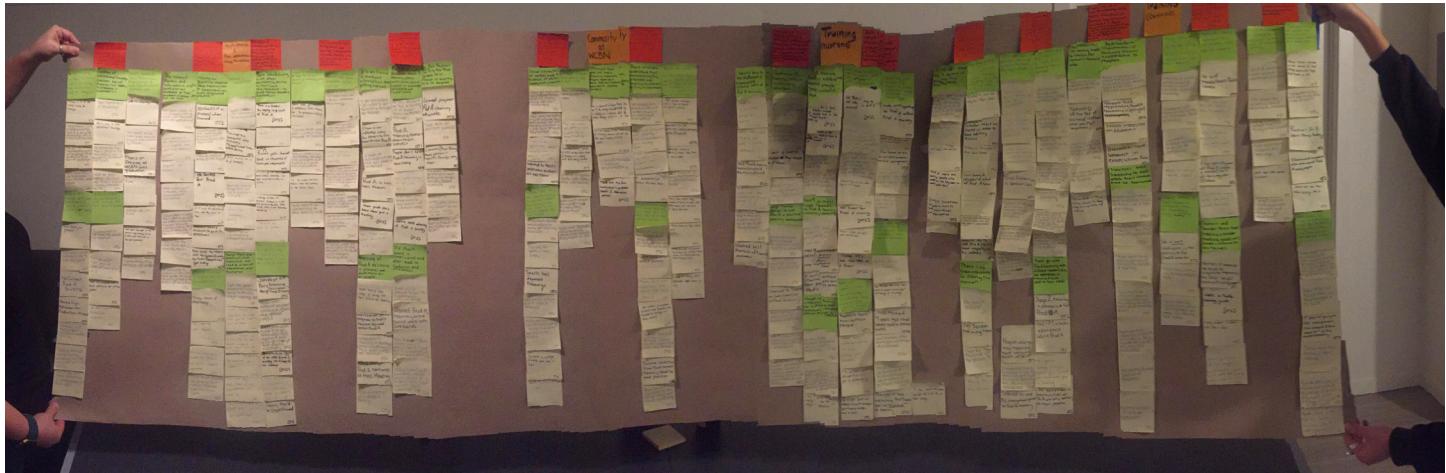
Photo credit: Doug Coombe, Concrete Media  
[www.secondwavemedia.com/concentrate/features/wcbnfuture0257.aspx](http://www.secondwavemedia.com/concentrate/features/wcbnfuture0257.aspx)

## What is our Focus?

We went into this project looking to make the best recommendations within the context of WCBN. We worked to understand who the members at the station are and their needs, how the leadership functions and how the structure and flow of information and organization worked structurally. We believe that all of these factors are critically important in framing the issues presented to us in order to decide what recommendations will be most applicable for WCBN in terms of implementation

Over the past three months, we have worked in and outside of the station to gather as much data as applicable from first hand WCBN sources and scholarly research in order to make the subsequent suggestions and recommendations that will improve processes for Prod A now and into the future. In this document we're presenting to you the entirety of our process including: framing, methodologies, findings and finally our recommendations based off of the synthesis of data that we collected.

# Methodological Overview



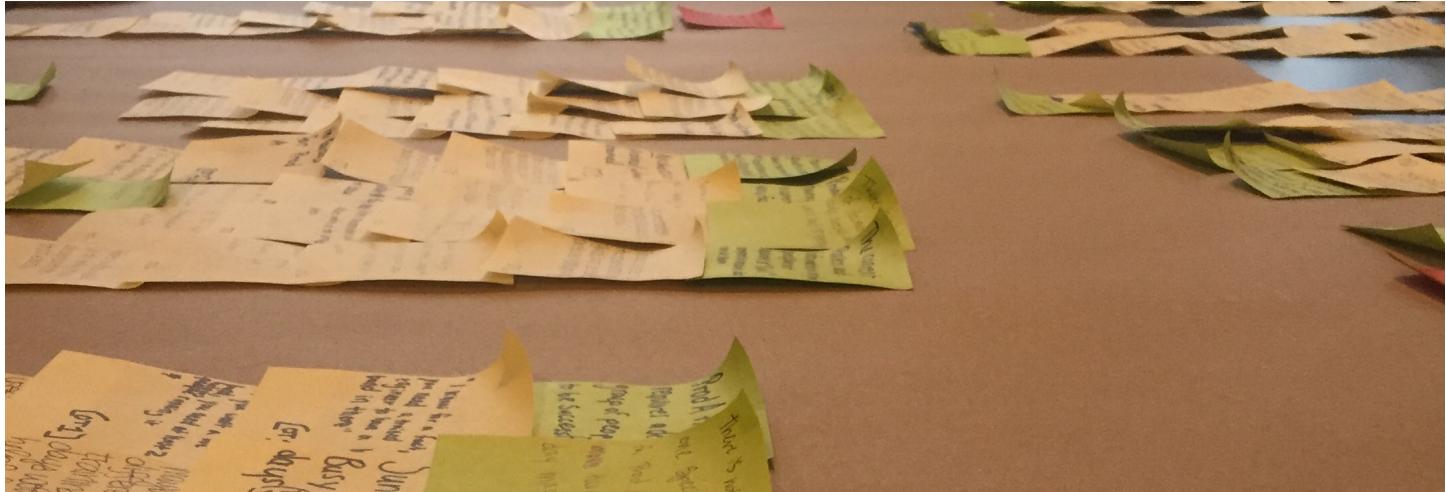
Our organization of snippets from interviews. Used to find common themes across interviews.

In order to best analyze the needs of WCBN, we utilized contextual inquiry methodology. This included collecting data by completing background research and semi-structured interviews. In our semi-structured interviews we utilized pre-written questions as a guide, diverting from our written questions based on any information of interest an interviewee provided.

We each did a thorough examination of different topics in order to have a member on our team become an expert on specific areas we found pertinent to this consult. These topics included a history of WCBN, a history of college radio stations, common training processes, and the best communication practices for organizations similar to WCBN. We then used this background knowledge in order to create questions for our semi-structured interviews.

General management gave us a list of staff members who would be available to interview. We contacted multiple team members via email and scheduled interviews between October 29th and November 5th. We verbally received informed consent and interviewed a total of six of WCBN's staff members, including community members and undergraduate students with varying levels of involvement with Prod A training. Each interview took approximately 45 minutes and examined potential challenges with Prod A training. We then analyzed our data by listening to audio recordings of our interviews as a group and breaking them down into smaller snippets of pertinent information. These segments were transcribed onto post-its, which we clustered together in order to organize ideas into larger concepts. These larger concepts gave us insights into what recommendations were best to assist WCBN.

# Findings



After analyzing our interviews with WCBN members we found the feedback we received centered around four main areas of the station. These responses provided insights into the strengths of WCBN and current Prod A training along with what changes members believe could be implemented in order to make training more efficient, effective and enjoyable.

## Community at WCBN

One of the strengths of WCBN is the sense of community felt by members. WCBN gives students the ability to collaborate with others and learn from more senior members. However, interviewees also reported that different departments have individual expectations and these divisions have led to fragmentation.

- **Members feel comfortable at WCBN.** If members are unable to fix a problem they are confident asking for help from anyone that is available.
- **WCBN members are willing to give back to the station.** Members will allow others who are curious about Prod A to shadow their programs that utilize the studio.
- **We received feedback that emphasized the sports department's separation from "the rest of WCBN".** The sports department still uses and is responsible for caring for the same equipment in Prod A as other members, but members of the sports department were described as receiving less thorough training. This detachment leads to gaps in knowledge and differences in how the room is maintained.

# Findings

## Communication

WCBN is composed of many departments, members, and runs at all hours of the day. With so many components and people communication is necessary to keep everyone up-to-date on what is happening at the station. Google Calendar is utilized to document the use of Prod A, but this tool isn't being used to its fullest extent.

- While we found that members feel comfortable asking for help when they need it, they also reported not always knowing who they should address questions to.
- The currently vacant position of production manager has led to confusion about who is in charge of Prod A training.
- Without a current production director to lead the training and oversee the use of Prod A there is a lack of standardization.
- The training scheduling in person and online with google tools is inconsistent and leads to confusion. People want a more defined scheduling process. Not everyone has access to the Google Calendar. However, members also reported that they have not experienced any hostility if they are in Prod A and someone who has scheduled time through Google Calendar has come to utilize it.
- Outside of member's Stage 1 and 2 training there is little advertisement of how or why members would want to use Prod A. There should be larger discussions about how to access training and the skills that can be gained from using Prod A. Emphasis should be put on what skillset Prod A provides that can be utilized for creativity and use outside of WCBN.
- It is up to trainees to seek out information about Prod A training. By not reaching out to potential members who may be interested the station misses out on creative opportunities that would benefit the station's mission of "enrich[ing] the University of Michigan and Ann Arbor communities" through increasing the diversity of programming on the station.<sup>3</sup>
- Due to a lack of training documentation, tacit knowledge is not shared throughout the station which is especially notable when people graduate.

# Findings

Qualified Production Room A Engineers		
If you are not on this list, you do not have access to Prod A.		
David	Talbot	as of 03/12/2016 dtalbot@umich.edu
Alex	Belhaj	alexbelhaj@gmail.com
Alex	Huryk	huryka@umich.edu
Andrew	King	aklist04@gmail.com
Becca	Fisher	refisher@umich.edu
Brando	Kierdorf	brandonkierdorf@gmail.com
Cameron	Bothner	cbothner@umich.edu
Chad	Gombosi	signofzeta@mac.com
Chill	Will	djchillwill734@yahoo.com
David	Johnson	davidj@davidj.org
David	Marroquin	davidmarroquin@gmail.com
Greg	Pratt	kulanova@gmail.com
Isaac	Levine	iclevine@umich.edu
Jack	Rosette	jackrosette41@gmail.com
Jason	Voss	jason.adam.voss@gmail.com
Jeff	Tenza	jmtenza@gmail.com
Jim	Dwyer	d2wyerj@hotmail.com
Jim (Tex)	Manheim	texmeister2@yahoo.com
Justin	Wona	

3/21/19 Tom Flynn  
Peter Endres  
Zach Curian  
Robert Li  
Patrick Ahimovic  
Caroline Owens  
Jason Young  
Tarek Tiba

Bella Isaacs 1/28/2018 -Cameron Pjohn  
Faulkner Bodbyl-Mast 10/1/17 - CLB  
Laura Vicini AM82 lauravici@umich.edu

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8

Current, disorganized verification of who can use Prod A

## Current Training

Through feedback provided by members about the station's current training practices for Prod A we were able to discover what parts of the process are working along with gaining insight for how to improve upon them..

- The information learned in Prod A training is best learned through practice, but the time commitment for trainers is hefty and student trainers don't have enough time to do it all.
- Without a dedicated leader or thorough documentation training is disjointed, with different trainers providing varying levels of insight.
- One member said they learned about how to use Prod A through trial and error. Though members emphasized the helpfulness of hands-on training, a trainer should provide guidance in this process and documentation should show solutions to common problems.
- When members are unable to solve a problem in Prod A and if no one is around to help they sometimes revert to using the FM studio. By not utilizing Prod A both WCBN members and the station miss out on creative opportunities.

# Findings

## Desired Training

Members provided a number of ideas for future training along with emphasizing what they enjoyed about the current process. They also expressed what they feel is feasible for WCBN. WCBN's Constitution states "we develop students' skills in management, fundraising, communication, technology, digital media, teamwork, web design, and research" and training is a crucial part of fulfilling to these standards.<sup>3</sup>

- Members were unaware of the existence of formal training guides or up-to-date documentation leading to inconsistencies and disjointed processes. Guidelines within the studio list a date of 2003 on them. It is unclear whether these instructions are current. Members we spoke to said the comic-style poster in Prod A was not helpful to them because of its simplistic nature.

It addresses problems they feel very confident in their ability to fix on their own.

- Trainees did not feel that refresher training sessions were necessary, but did concede that if new equipment were added that some training should be conducted surrounding how to use it.

- Trainees felt that hands-on training is an obligatory part of Prod A training and should be heavily emphasized.

- In addition to covering the basics training needs to address troubleshooting, perhaps with a written guide that focuses on what to do when encountering a problem and who to ask for help.

Members like to have an adaptable training process so they can learn what they want, but Prod A training still needs structure because there are non-negotiable topics to be taught.

- Trainees shared that their understanding of how to use Prod A was expanded through shadowing programs of interest to them. Shadowing more senior members who host programs that center around their area of interest should be a required part of training for Prod A.

# Recommendations

People today take communication for granted because of how easily accessible it is to communicate through common technologies such as texting, tweeting, face-timing, and e-mail messaging.<sup>2,9</sup> The difference between regular communication and effective communication is the exchanging and understanding of information.<sup>9,12</sup> For all types of communication, the messages should be purpose-driven, consistent, relevant, clear and concise to the audience.<sup>9</sup> Kathy J. Lang, the Chief Information Officer at Marquette University in 2015, provides her tactic of keeping herself focused on providing effective communication by asking herself five main questions: “1) What is the event, issue, or information I want to communicate? 2) What do I need or want to say about that event, issue, or information? 3) Who needs to hear the message? 4) Who needs to deliver the message? 5) What tools and format should be used to deliver the message?”<sup>4</sup> These questions can be helpful and applied to any task WCBN may need within their organization.

WCBN’s General Manager, Jason Young, mentioned that the organizations’ turnover is high due to graduating students. Having effective communication is one of the key factors in making any organization successful.<sup>11</sup> Effective communication is important and can increase member’s loyalties and ties to the organization.<sup>11</sup> WCBN can have an effective communication amongst the executives and production teams by providing thorough, effective communication and scheduling training sessions open to all members of the organization. Research shows that when executive members practice leadership in communication it can play an integral role in developing and sustaining volunteer’s commitment.<sup>11</sup> Communication between executives or production teams and members are critical because poor communication reduces coordination and cooperation within the organization.<sup>12</sup> Ineffective communication within an organization can create confusion, mistrust, and inconsistency and reflects poorly on the organization.<sup>12</sup> Establishing positive relationships depends primarily on competent leadership skills providing firmly grounded communication abilities such as listening to feedback provided by the members and community, coaching, and information-sharing.<sup>11,12</sup>

# Recommendations

Research has also shown good leadership communication can improve through training.<sup>11</sup> Having effective communication improves relationships by building trust, respect, and professional skills, creating environments where creative ideas, problem-solving, and collaboration can flourish.<sup>9</sup> WCBN has mentioned the executives and various production teams already utilize private Slack groups. Adding a free-form discussion chatroom in Slack, Google Groups, Facebook or Twitter as an open forum to all members could be an effective communication style. Public chatrooms can allow the organization to receive feedback from external listeners and internal organizational members, as well as promoting their upcoming programs and fundraisers, bridging and creating an effective and transparent communication between the organization and the local Ann Arbor community.

In addition to an open forum for effective communication within the organization and its community, possible solutions to selectively focus on solving the Production A Studio training could include providing an option of voice-based chat rooms with video camera features or easily accessible video recordings posted on YouTube. Since Prod A offers various programs not all equipment in the studio applies to every member of the organization. Members who have gone through training provided by WCBN might sometimes need a refresher throughout the year. Having the option to connect with another member of the team specialized for the member's purpose using a voice-based chatroom with the camera feature turned on, such as Google Hangout or iPhone FaceTime, would be another option for effective communication. While voice based chat could provide some help to members, video features are necessary to include the visual cues found in face-to-face interaction.<sup>16</sup>

Additionally, video features are helpful for senior members to provide aid in helping solve equipment problems within the studio. Assigning someone to be available for contact in case of arising inquiries would be a solution for the organization. A 2011 industry report conducted by Training Magazine reveals a majority of training has evolved into some form of technology such as web-based training instead of face-to-face training, allows for more customization and flexibility.<sup>8</sup> Since the current generation often relies on learning through visual another possibility of training or refreshing those already trained to use the Production A Studio, would be to create 2-minute-long videos uploaded onto YouTube or Vimeo. The videos would target specific and specialized training. These would be available at any time and would provide members with the ability to access them themselves rather than relying on the availability of other members when problems arise.

# Recommendations

## Public Access of Documentation

As much as we hope for computer-based solutions to solve our scheduling needs, human contributions still requires effective scheduling performance.<sup>7</sup> There are various forms of scheduling such as devising personnel rosters, administrative timetables, and production scheduling.<sup>7</sup> Creating a shared public calendar which includes scheduled slots of consistent training sessions for Prod A provides transparency amongst the executives or production team and members of the organization. The purpose of preparing a training schedule is ensuring a smooth, organized and timely mannered training process. WCBN is currently still looking for a Production Director, tasked to plan and manage the training and reservation slots of the studio. The manager's primary role is not to carry out sequencing or allocation decisions but should be mainly involved in goal-directed activities with objectives. Using roles to enable the tasks and fill the gaps between schedules and relationships between the production teams and radio station contributors. Along with monitoring all the scheduled activities being aware of what is going on in the Production A Studio.<sup>7</sup>

Free applications such as Google Calendar ([www.google.com/calendar](http://www.google.com/calendar)) require a lot of manual input. The WCBN Assistant to the General Manager, Robert Li, advised us that the executives and production teams currently use Google Calendar, but not everyone utilizes the calendar equally. Doodle ([doodle.com](http://doodle.com)) provides various languages and allows calendar integration. It would be useful in order to find the most available time for trainers and trainees to conduct meetings. Doodle can be used to find a time to create a consistently scheduled training session for each semester. In 2017, Trello ([trello.com](http://trello.com)) became acquired by Atlassian an Australian enterprise software company. Trello provides a free registration of unlimited boards, lists, cards, members, checklists and attachments, allowing users to manage projects with ease, freedom, and flexibility. If the WCBN executives and production teams have not been using it already, this scheduling application could be used to make the organization more transparent, alleviating members from answering the same questions repeatedly. Another similar scheduling application, Float ([www.float.com/top-10-resource-scheduling-software-float.html](http://www.float.com/top-10-resource-scheduling-software-float.html)) provides a comprehensive set of editing tools allowing users to schedule easily by dragging, dropping, inserting, replacing, splicing and duplicate any task with your mouse or

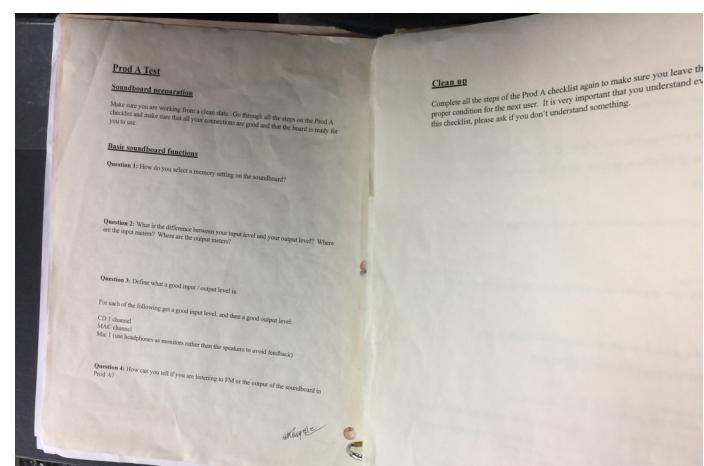
# Recommendations

keyboard shortcuts. Provides live schedule updates allowing the organization to be updated anywhere at any time. They also have a report feature populating data of scheduled events created in the application. This feature could be a useful tool for the executives and production teams to rehash and analyze their productivity and scheduling trends per semester.

There are other scheduling application sites similar to Trello and Float but to have more customizable choices and booking spaces requires more money per month ranging from \$10-\$100 depending on the scheduling system. A widely recommended and advertised website is 10 to 8 (10to8.com) used by various businesses it integrates multiple applications such as Google Calendar, WordPress and Facebook. Since WCBN is a student-run and volunteer organization with no paid positions for the executives or production teams, 10 to 8's free sign up option for small businesses could be a good scheduling application for the WCBN-FM. The free option includes 100 appointments per month, two staff logins, text messaging, and online support. The executives and production teams could share one login and provide the second login for the volunteer members of the organization. The desktop computer that is currently under-utilized within Prod A could be placed outside of the Production A Studio and logged into the scheduling software. The production director could be tasked with overseeing the booking of appointments within the application for training session.

## Printed Documentation

WCBN currently uses a physical list tacked on the door of the Production A Studio's window to verify who has access to the room. Prod A also has a printed binder with dated about how to use the studio. These both should be organized, with executives and members verifying that the information is correct and current. While it may not be feasible to conduct this verification of information while the studio is already scheduled for



Current binder with out of date training information. Multiple interviewees reported never consulting it because they didn't know it existed

# Recommendations

the next semester incentives should be put in place to contribute. Such incentives could include the inability to use the studio next semester until each member has contributed to the training guide. Such collaboration is necessary to ensure that all member's specialized knowledge is included. Once information is confirmed to be correct it should be added to the station's Google Drive and accessible to all. A printed, physical copy in a binder should also be kept in the studio for quick reference and as a backup in case someone doesn't have access to Google Drive. This binder should be updated by the Production Director at the start of each school year to ensure it is still current, or when new equipment is added. The Production Director should also keep in mind to schedule extra time before and after each program or training session to alleviate possible booking problems such as last-minute contingencies and emergencies for unplanned interruptions.<sup>17</sup> As previously mentioned, moving the current in-studio computer to outside of the Production A Studio would allow members to easily access the daily, weekly or monthly schedule and contact information of those who have booked the studio. If WCBN decides to use the Float scheduling manager, they can collect data and manage the scheduling of the studio productively. If they choose to stick with Google Calendar, a particular extension would need to be created that provides the scheduling data statistics including checking in and out of the Production A Studio.

## Training

Breaking information down into smaller groups where learners are divided into groups according to their skill level would eliminate boredom by being told information that they already know, nor will other members become overwhelmed by being presented with too much information. This feeling of being overwhelmed can be seen in WCBN's current training sessions, which when done fully can last for an hour. While training needs to be thorough members reported being unable to retain information when training was conducted over a long time period. Likewise, people who are familiar with the basics of how to use the sound board but would like to learn how to mix audio in more detail would not be likely to participate in the same training session again.

Similarly, by breaking trainings into smaller groups based on the interests of volunteers, they are more likely to "cultivate their role identity", meaning that they

# Recommendations

feel connected to their role and understand its importance to the organization.<sup>15</sup> This improves the potential for volunteers to fulfill their “initial motivations for participating”.<sup>14</sup> Volunteers have specific goals in mind when they choose to volunteer for an organization, and by teaching volunteers about what they are specifically interested in learning, volunteers are more likely to have a positive training experience. Furthermore, research has shown that the training volunteers receive must be applicable to what they will be doing.<sup>5</sup> If a training session covers too much material at one time, trainees are likely to become overwhelmed by the vast amount of information being taught during a single session.<sup>6</sup> For instance, if a trainee is interested specifically in learning how to use the sound board, but the majority of their training covers other topics, trainees may become disinterested during the training and not learn things that they are expected to learn during the session. In contrast, by focusing on a specific type of task (e.g. mixing audio), volunteers are able to see how the training applies to them, making them more likely to engage in the process and retain the information.<sup>5</sup> Further training would allow trainees to learn how to perform other tasks of interest and would add value to their volunteering experience, especially if formally recognized through certification.<sup>5</sup> If WCBN were to have specific trainings and certifications for tasks at the radio station, such as DJing or recording live music, trainees would be more invested in the material they are learning and better retain the information that is taught. Alternatively, if members are resistant to additional training WCBN should formalize trainees shadowing programs of interest to them. While members have previously put this into place on their own, not all members have and shadowing that includes hands-on use of specialized equipment would be a way to effectively use trainees and trainers time.

Trainings that use an interactive approach have greater trainee engagement and learning.<sup>13</sup> By trainers taking on the role of a facilitator rather than teaching in a way that promotes solely memorization, trainees are more likely to relax and engage in the learning activity.<sup>4</sup> The goal of any training session is to effectively teach a potential volunteer how to properly perform a task, and by facilitating an interactive learning experience trainees are more likely to learn how to apply the information they have learned.<sup>10</sup> A study by Demikhova et al. found that by giving students an example patient case and asking them for solutions that students’ interest in

# Recommendations

“learning increased, [and] their motivational component increased.”<sup>4</sup> By proposing an example situation that trainees might encounter, they are more likely to learn how to apply what they have been taught and to retain the information. WCBN could use this technique by engaging in a conversation with the trainees to learn specifically what they are interested in, then teach them about those particular aspects of the radio studio. The trainer could then ask the trainees how they would behave under certain circumstances (e.g. they want to increase the bass of a track they are recording) and guide the trainees in conversation towards a correct response. If trainees get distracted and off-topic, it is important that the trainer not scold the trainees, but rather bring them back to the topic about which they are learning.<sup>14</sup>

# Conclusion

WCBN’s Prod A Studio scheduling can be implemented realistically if the executives and the production teams can have effective communication amongst themselves and the other members of the organization. Providing various technological ways of accessing training procedures or equipment usage can also give WCBN’s executives and production teams opportunities to focus on other essential aspects of the organization. Furthermore, by creating more detailed documentation of specializations within Prod A, senior members could then allow new trainees to be paired up with a member who has more extensive training in an area of specific interest. Effective communication and transparency between everyone related to the organization can create a stronger sense of community and hopefully provide a slight decrease of turnovers in the organization and to make the Prod A Studio manager an attractive position, giving them ease in monitoring the roles and tasks of the studio bookings and training sessions.

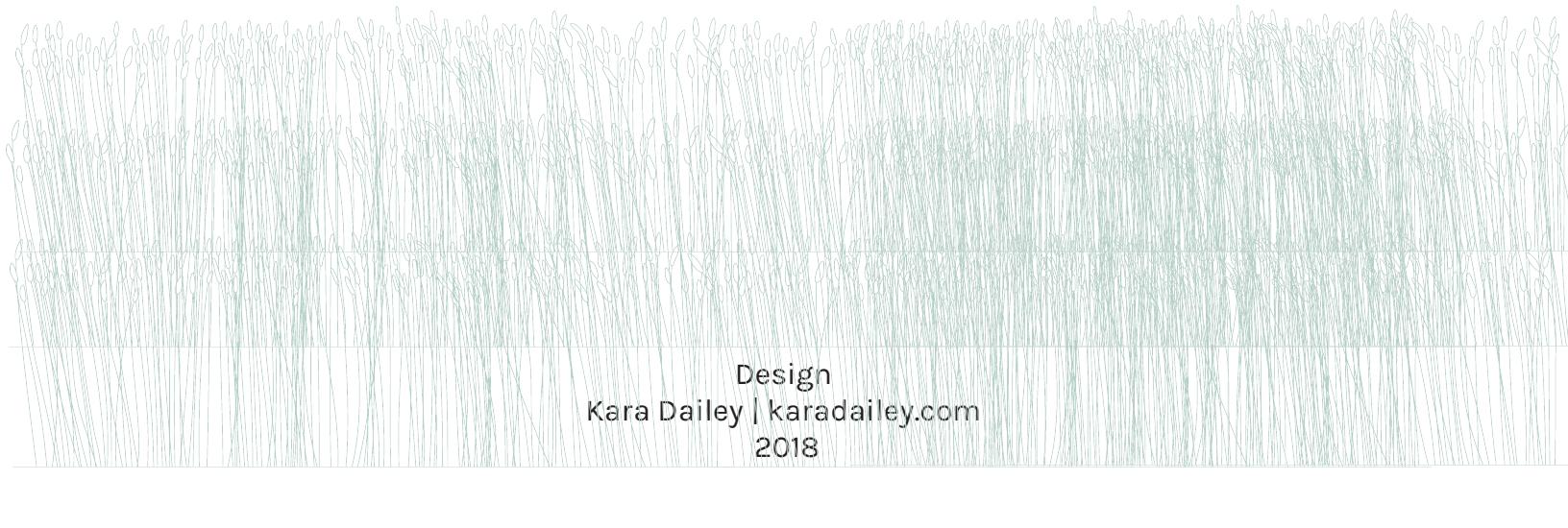


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