IKIMfm: A decade educating and entertaining the soul

KUALA LUMPUR: ‘Sedekad mendidik dan menghibur jiwa.’ (A decade educating and entertaining the soul).

The tagline is a familiar one for the loyal listeners of the radio station that has been on air for over 10 years.

In fact, educating and entertaining seems to be the winning formula for the radio station sponsored by think tank Ikim (the Institute for Islamic Understanding). Its station, IKIMfm, was launched on July 6, 2001.

IKIMfm: A decade educating and entertaining the soul

The tagline is a familiar one for the loyal listeners of the radio station that has been on air for over 10 years. "Since IKIMfm first went on air 10 years ago, it has strongly held on to the themes of educating, entertaining and informing when formulating its programmes," Nik Roskiman said any deviation might only be from its presentation and arrangements.

He said what was evident was that in educating the masses, IKIMfm cannot resemble an educational radio station that is only suitable for schoolchildren.

"To educate the masses, teenagers and adults, we need different approaches. It calls for the 'adult learning' approach."

"Our biggest challenge is figuring out ways to present a heavy issue in a manner that is entertaining, casual and interesting."

He noted that 75 per cent of IKIMfm’s programmes are educational, 20 per cent are entertainment and another five per cent are informative. Nearly 90 per cent of the programmes on IKIMfm are interactive, to allow listeners to share their views, offer comments and ask questions, as well as to make these programmes more entertaining.

"For those needing counseling, the station may provide a good avenue to seek solutions," said Nik Roskiman.

Not only can IKIMfm listeners call, they can also send SMSes, post their views on the station’s Facebook page, and share comments via Twitter, e-mail or Skype. Besides interacting live with programme hosts or guests, they can also post feedback on the programmes.

"The feedback we receive is that our loyal listeners see IKIMfm as a knowledge portal."

"Those who love knowledge and tuning in for the first time will find it hard to switch to other stations," he said.

The programmes on IKIMfm target several age groups.

The programmes ‘Alam Ria Si Kecil’ (The Fun World of the Little Ones), which airs every Saturday (8pm) and the Arabic language programme ‘Dunia al-Aftal’ (the World of Children), on air every Sunday at 2pm, are for children.

Nik Roskiman said such programmes were designed to attract children to listen to IKIMfm from a young age.

IKIMfm also puts some thought into the time a programme is aired. A programme for students and teenagers is slated after 10pm, when they have finished with classes and homework.

Radio deejays or programme hosts are also carefully selected. For example, the young and glib DJ Faiz hosts programmes for teenagers.

"The programme for teens, which airs every Tuesday at 10pm, would see us inviting teenagers to the studio to share their views and opinions. We also open the lines to get the comments of listeners and we invite motivational experts over," he added.

For 2012, IKIMfm introduced a new slot called ‘Suara Siswa’ (the Voice of Undergraduates), targeted for students of institutions of higher learning. The programme airs every Wednesday from 10 to 11pm.

IKIMfm’s segment for women covers a variety of programmes. According to Nik Roskiman, the programmes begin at 10am. Besides ‘Islam itu Indah’ (Islam is beautiful) with Prof Dr Mohd Na’im Mokhtar, a senior lecturer at Universiti Islam Antarabangsa Malaysia (UIAM), there is also a special segment for senior citizens through IKIMfm’s programmes ‘Pondok wijayata’ (the retirement village).
Warisan', which discusses the 40 Hadiths, 'Fiqhus Sirah' (The Seerah of the Prophet SAW) and 'Al Furqan', a study of the Arabic language.

Improving IKIMfm is an ongoing effort. According to Nik Roskiman, among the ways of improving the station is by monitoring international radio stations, such as the British Broadcasting Corporation in the United Kingdom, National Public Radio in the United States, and several other stations in which the majority of the programmes are academic.

He said what was most important was for IKIMfm to remain updated and relevant.

However, he said some quarters tended to view anything related to Islam as negative, backwards and orthodox.

"In terms of employing the latest technology, I'd like IKIMfm to be on par with entertainment-themed radio stations, if not more popular."

"IKIMfm cannot depend solely on the regular terrestrial broadcasting system, as the younger generation mostly uses the iPhone, iPad, Blackberry, android and other smartphone platforms," he said.

"Technological advancements also enabled IKIMfm to increase the number of its listeners via the internet.

Previously, it was only limited to 50 listeners. Today, 2,000 listeners can tune in at one time, and soon it will be upgraded to allow 4,000 listeners to tune in simultaneously.

"We are now even receiving feedback from listeners in Djibouti, while some are writing in from Dubai, Qatar, Japan, and other parts of the world," he said.

Nik Roskiman said working at IKIMfm was not a regular 9-5 job, but a da'wah effort that extends beyond office hours.

He also mentioned another upcoming project Ikim TV, that can be viewed on the internet via www.tvikim.my.

IKIMfm is also working at getting the station to be broadcast via satellite TV and Telekom Malaysia's Hypp TV.

Nik Roskiman said such efforts to take IKIMfm mainstream would definitely involve a high investment.

"We are a bit constrained in this respect, but we will continue to strive for the best. Our staff and DJ are all committed to bring IKIMfm to the forefront.

"Our goal for the near future is to place IKIMfm in the top 10 list of radio stations in the country, with an official number of listeners exceeding one million."

- Bernama

To educate the masses, teenagers and adults, we need different approaches. It calls for the 'adult learning' approach. Our biggest challenge is figuring out ways to present a heavy issue in a manner that is entertaining, casual and interesting.

Nik Roskiman Abdul Samad, IKIMfm Director.