

DRM Enterprise Africa award for Radio Pulpit

Radio Pulpit 657AM and its digital radio development partner, Broadcom International have jointly been awarded the 2017 DRM Enterprise Award (Africa), for its contribution in actively promoting the DRM standard across Southern Africa.



Radio Pulpit award.

The announcement was made by the DRM Consortium at the International Broadcasting Convention in Amsterdam, Netherlands on 15th September 2017.

Digital Radio Mondiale (DRM) is the universal, openly standardised digital broadcast system for all broadcasting frequencies. The DRM standard comprises of two major configurations: 'DRM30' is intended for broadcasts on short, medium and long wave up to 30 MHz and providing large coverage areas and low power consumption.

The configuration for the VHF bands above 30 MHz is called 'DRM+', tailored for local and regional coverage with broadcaster-controlled transmissions.

The award aims to stimulate interest in the DRM standard in various parts of the world that would benefit from the full introduction of digital radio (medium wave). Radio Pulpit 657AM (member of the Pulpit Media Group) and Broadcom International, made history by leading the South African radio broadcasting industry into the digital era with the first live digital medium wave broadcast and, thereafter, the first medium wave broadcast trial in Southern Africa.

DRM30 measurements were conducted successfully on 1440 kHz, using a 10kW DRM30 transmitter with the purpose to present test results to ICASA. The trials were also supported by Sentech. Results of this trial have been released less than a year ago and because of its success, the trial report has recently been included in the documentation of the International Communication Union as reference document.

Regulators, such as ICASA, will find that DRM30 solves frequency congestion and scarcity issues as it supports SFN (Single Frequency Networks). It is spectrum efficient with three to 24 different audio services plus data per frequency, depending on the digital technology used. This means that listeners will have a far greater choice to select from.

Cost savings

Medium Wave Broadcasters in South Africa can look forward to cost savings as only one transmitter per site is necessary. DRM30 requires lower transmission power (using less electricity) to cover the same area as equivalent analogue transmitters, resulting in it being green and energy efficient.

In future, listeners should be thrilled with excellent audio quality. Imagine listening to crystal clear 5.1 surround sound in stereo on your favourite station (with no distortion). In addition to this, listeners will be able to tune automatically in to radio stations by station name and say goodbye to manual or automatic frequency re-tunes when leaving a coverage area.

Other advantages include an emergency warning and alert system, warning listeners about possible disaster. Receivers will have screens for multimedia applications and text messages (visible on the receiver screen) and an Electronic Program Guide (EPG) providing information about what's on – now and next.

Listeners will also be able to search for programs and schedule recordings; up to four programs on one frequency will make multilingual programs possible, providing a wider choice of programs. This also offers increased opportunity for revenue generating streams through advertising.

The DRM SA Platform (of which Radio Pulpit 657AM is a founding member) has already engaged with the motor industry in South Africa and various suppliers regarding the availability of digital receivers. A number of cars have already been fitted with DRM radios.

The platform is confident that the respective communications ministries and ICASA will speedily establish policies and guidelines for the implementation of digital radio in South Africa.

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