



NCDXF newsletter

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From the President's desk

SO, DO YOU DREAM OF BEING AT THE SHARP END, THE production end, the DX end of a pileup? Or maybe you have been there once or twice and are looking for ideas to improve your rate and increase your fun. Or maybe you are one of thousands calling at the broad end of the pileup? Would you like to get through more easily? Are you willing to actively help the DXpedition operator get you in his log?

In any of these cases, or even just for the vicarious pleasure of armchair DXpeditioning, I highly recommend that you read and then reread this article by pioneering DXpeditioner, Martti Laine, OH2BH. Martti distills his lifetime of experience into this short master class. He teaches us simultaneously at beginner, medium and expert levels. His paper is full of anecdotes, ideas, comments, suggestions and informed opinion.

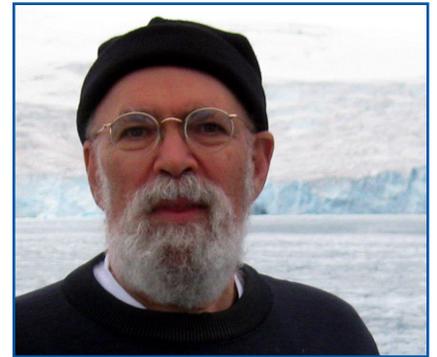
Much of Martti's material is focused on the case of an EU SSB pileup. This is a case which is dear to his heart and which many US DXpeditioners find difficult to control and work. Martti tells some truths about language, about culture, and gives concrete advice on establishing, controlling and

satisfying the pileup. If it only covered that one case, this report would already be an immensely valuable addition to DX literature. But the wisdom and sage advice given here can be applied with appropriate modifications to pileups in any mode, from any geography, and by operators of any nationality.

This article is an essential reference for DXpeditioners. It can usefully be reread during the planning phase of any DXpedition and then studied again on the plane or boat en route.

If you can incorporate even a few of Martti's techniques into your own operating, you will be more thoughtful about Amateur Radio, have more fun and work more DX more easily.

See you in the pileups, *Tom ND2T*



IT TAKES TWO TO TANGO

Working Europe from the Rare Ones Can Be Difficult, Here's How to Do It

Martti J. Laine, OH2BH

introduction by Wayne Mills, N7NG

IN ANY DXPEDITION PILEUP, EFFECTIVE COMMUNICATION between the DXpeditioner and the DXers is critical. Everyone should understand the DXpedition op's directions. He must convey where to call, when to call and when someone else is being worked or called. Lack of understanding leads to inefficiency and differences of opinion. Differences of opinion in turn lead to chaos and a breakdown of order. The result is often a complete lack of control by the DXpedition operator – and that's not fun.

Worse, breakdowns lead to acrimony among participants. Such displays of intolerance observed by non-DXers are damaging to our hobby. We know how they appear, and we worry that they are not lost on IARU and ITU officials.

In his 1991 book "Where Do We Go Next?" Martti Laine, OH2BH, put forth the following fundamental principle: "The pileup accurately mirrors the DXpedition operator who runs the show." That is, the DXpedition operator's skill is primarily responsible for the effectiveness of the operation.

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This is true because the alternative, expecting several thousand callers to be disciplined in such a way that the pileup runs smoothly no matter how the DXpedition operator behaves, is irrational. The DXpedition operator must facilitate efficiency. He must be effective and in charge.

Martti Laine is generally recognized as perhaps the most successful DXpeditioner of all time. His smooth, low pressure, casual style has put many a DXer at ease when working for that special new country counter. He instills confidence. You know that you will work him. All told, he has successfully activated and efficiently provided QSOs from 12 “new ones.”

Martti’s paper was written in cooperation with the DX University founded by myself, N7NG. It discusses subjects that have

been with us for decades. The paper describes proven methods that can be utilized by DXpedition operators for better coordination, thus maximizing the efficiency of the whole exercise. Many of the methods and procedures are common and well known by today’s top DXpedition operators. We cover these for the sake of completeness.

What we have added to the discussion is a unique consideration of the differences in DXers’ language, culture and temperament that exist around the world — particularly in Europe. While we do not dwell on culture and temperament, we include references as “food for thought.” Language, however, is very important. To all of these, we have added a section on the DXpeditioner’s attitude. As in many aspects of life, a good, positive attitude is extremely important. These additional considerations are only an introduction. They are a work in progress, asking for further thoughtful consideration and study by the world’s DXpeditioners.

Working Europe by those from outside the continent is, and has been, difficult for decades — ever since the birth of the major DXpedition pileup. Some DXpeditioners excel at working Europe and these operators usually come from Europe. But increasingly, DXpeditioners are pointing to European operators as the cause of QRM and lower QSO rates. Some DXpeditioners have become so frustrated with Europeans that they have threatened to work no Europeans at all.

Some of the techniques that follow apply uniquely to working Europe. Others simplify and enhance operations aimed at all DXers, in addition to those from Europe. Note that these 10 theses have been written primarily for SSB (Voice). Morse (CW) operating is somewhat different, and while some of the material here is applicable, additional discussion is required. We do recognize that there are additional hurdles — not under the control of the DXpedition operator — that block the efficient production of QSOs. Still, much of the outcome is under the control of that operator, and that is what is addressed here.

— Wayne A. Mills, N7NG



Wayne Mills, N7NG, is in charge of DX University (DXU). There is no university without a science department. Here, the department is temporarily established in Juba, South Sudan, signing Z81X.

I: Learning & understanding the differences of the world

When working DXpedition pileups, understanding the basic features of the pileups of major population centers is very important. The nature of North American pileups is reasonably consistent. The character of Japanese pileups is even more consistent. The quality of European pileups, on the other hand, is marked by diversity. So, the first thing we have to understand about working Europe is that the pileups have very different characteristics depending on the area of the continent being worked. In order to understand the pileups in Europe, it is necessary to understand how the people are different from one country to the other or even within one country, as different languages, religions and behaviors divide many countries.

And, indeed, they are different — as different as night and day. An understanding of the drivers that give rise to the varied kaleidoscope of differences opens up the gates to fundamentals, which ultimately facilitates the handling of complex duties such as pileups in a way that serves both parties, those providing DX as well as those seated in the audience, the thundering EU pileup. Working Europe can be simple and rewarding. Understanding is the key.

Language makes all the difference — DXpedition pileups, for the most part, are conducted in English with perhaps heavy dialects and accents at both ends of the circuit. The English language with its various dialects does not dominate the European scene. Meanwhile, being one entity with the same language gives US DXpedition operators a huge advantage when working their countrymen. Assuming that all operators worldwide are even marginally proficient in English is a serious mistake.

If each European country were served in its own language, all instructions given by the DXpedition operator would undoubtedly be perfectly understandable and QSO rates would soar, but with no common language, Europeans are understandably less accountable for what they do or say.

Interestingly, there is a similar advantage when non-native English speakers listen to other non-native English speakers since their “language filters” are set much wider in order to accept strangely spoken “English.” As a matter of fact, what you think is poor English is, in many cases, not English at all, but just a bunch of poorly defined phonetic phrases.

Many European operators have learned the phonetics, and that is about all they have. Please do not talk to a non-English speaker who is off the road; you have to understand that it is no use talking to him. Acting clearly with a firm commitment to do what must be done is the only “language” many Europeans can deal with. Often, just your way of speaking substitutes for the actual language.

You do not have many options other than sticking to clear and simple QSO content with reasonable speed and clarity. Have you made any effort to learn any of the 30 or so languages used in Europe? If not, you must talk to the European using the same, limited phonetic phrases that he has adopted from English — you have to use a language scaled down from its full potential.

So, you already get the point: There is no country or group of individuals that you might call “European.” When it comes to Europe’s languages and cultures, there are as many groups as there are countries, maybe more. Some Europeans understand the DXpedition script in English better than others. In some countries, English is not at all among the languages people learn in school or use in everyday life. If you chastise an operator in a language that is unclear or even unknown to him, he is likely to thank you for the QSO and give you a hearty “five nine, thanks!”

I do not wish to bring up any particular cultural settings or temperaments



OH2BE & OH2BH: For each and every DXpeditioner — and those who would like to be one — there is always a lady securing a happy and supportive home front. It may be worth another paper in order to present the life of a DX(CC) widow.

except to say that they drive people’s behavior to a dramatic extent. Each and every country has its own sense of pride for a reason. They all proudly honor their cultural heritage and may have a hard time understanding cultures of a different variety or with a much shorter history. Things change in Europe at a much slower pace since Europeans have a longer history thus slowing changes.

You can group the languages and the cultures somewhat along these lines: the Nordic bloc; the Baltic bloc; the Benelux bloc; Central Europe, such as Germany, Austria and even part of HB9; the large Eastern Europe bloc; Russia, itself, and its historical allies, and the Western Europe bloc, including United Kingdom, France, Italy, Spain and Portugal. Even the cuisine in these blocs is so different that Greece and Turkey may sometimes be referred to as the kebab zone.

As many Americans have their roots in Europe, they are anxious to look for their early history in order to tangibly identify themselves with a different culture and language. If such is done, a world of diversity opens up creating interaction where it is natural to experience thundering pileups with a massive flow of Europeans being processed in the most efficient way.



Mike Schwab, OE6MBG, a multilingual language professor, interrelates languages and cultures in a variety of ways of responding to orders while here dressing for an occasion of 75M evening opening.

together: aspetta un attimo, espera por favor, pazhalsta, ein bisschen Ruhe, bitte. Thanks (danke) – it works!”

II: Attitude is everything when serving a global audience

Can a European pileup be worked down like other pileups? It can be done easily and enjoyably, but it definitely takes a “yes, we can” attitude along with considerable practice. Unfortunately, the complexity of multiple languages and multi-ethnic audiences drives many DXpedition operators nuts. These operators start feeling that it is something they cannot do, and they compensate by denying Europeans any semblance of fair service. They point a finger at Europe as a whole or worse yet, they turn their beams elsewhere and start thinking that they should serve other continents simultaneously, making the struggle even more miserable. When trying to work Europe one should work Europe — working others at the same time is like shooting yourself in the foot. It is not a solution.

The ultimate truth is that those who are dedicated enough to adopt the right attitude will be prepared to face the European pileups, and they will succeed. Because of their diversity, European pileups are more challenging, but when your competence and your dedication reaches a high level, you will

Understanding the world is the key to coping with it.

Japanese understanding of instructions or suggestions given in English is extremely marginal on average, but there the cultural background comes to the rescue as it encourages the Japanese to sit back and not voice their lack of understanding.

In many European countries, on the other hand, the cultural tradition provides an impetus to loudly express one’s dissatisfaction and/or lack of understanding. In Italy, for example, it is not only people who talk loudly and wave their hands, even cars have their discussions at busy roundabouts. Those coming to Europe are often fascinated by the rich history of the Old World while at the same time eyeing the many branded luxury items – such as sporty Mercedes-Benzes and annual fashion fairs in Paris. One needs to take Europe as it is since we cannot change its basic setup.

Europeans love to work Yanks (Americans) but not all DXpeditioners love to work Europeans. Hence this discussion.

On languages, Mike Schwab, OE6MBG, says: “In Europe, we have more languages per square mile than in any area of the world. Another language means another culture; another culture means a different way of responding to instructions.

“Hierarchical and/or sociological structures are different in EU countries, causing diversified pileup behav-

ior. English is not the dominant language in Continental Europe but there is a recommendation for all European educational institutions, at secondary level, to teach three foreign languages to young Europeans. Thus the English language may gain wider acceptance. Even though English proficiency may improve among the future youth, the current DX population represents people beyond 50 years of age. You can help the situation by instructing the offending stations with a few phrases of their language instead of yours.

“Instructing wandering men in their own language will clear up the traffic, and suddenly Europeans start moving in at a good rate. Let’s start right here

Jerry, WB9Z at Malpelo, HKØNA, is happy to be heading home. Even considering the unique landscape, ultimate heat with no sleep adds to the cause. Jerry stands well even for European disorder.



suddenly appreciate the Europeans. In the contesting world, those who handle Europeans efficiently become winners. Who said DXpeditioners are looking for an easier life?

Let's have a conversation on the subject with Jerry Rosalius, WB9Z:

Q: Jerry, you are credited as one of the best from the US to run Europeans smoothly, how come?

A: Most of the good DXpedition operators are contesters by their nature. I have been contesting for over 40 years. A contester's goal is to move fast, work everyone and maintain clarity and accuracy — that is also the DXpedition script for the most part.

Q: Why do you think that [your] EU rates are lower than those for the US?

A: I can sometimes work double the US stations in an hour. Some of that may be due to similar language, but in general, US stations give their call once or twice and are more "snappy."

Q: What kind of EU rates you can typically achieve?

A: I try for an average of at least 120 per hour.... when I can do better, I am happy.

Q: What would you say to those that are up for the EU pileup challenge?

A: What is most important is to stay "cool." Do not yell at the pile up. Be a gentleman... the best you can. Remember you are on stage and the whole DX world is probably listening. Try to keep the pileup moving and flowing like beautiful music. If you only get a partial call, come back to what you have, and give the signal report. Let the station repeat his call, then CONFIRM his call and say THANK YOU. Keep it all short and sweet.

While European QSO rates may rise to no more than 100 Qs per hour in the beginning, they start ramping up steadily and can reach 200+ per hour in no time. Of course, a DXpedition is not a contest and therefore clarity and pleasure for your EU partners will take its toll in rate. Do not be disappointed in yourself or your partners if your EU rates are much lower than those with your countrymen. Eventually, there will be parity — and you will find it enjoyable.



Ralph Fedor, KØIR, has approached a variety of rare DXCC landscapes with all means of transport. Here he is up for a helicopter flight to KIN, Navassa Islands, surviving two weeks on MRE meals.

At the same time, those who have plenty of practice should aim for the 200 mark. Go with the "can do" attitude. You should work NA, AS and EU exclusively at the times your propagation, your overall strategy and the statistics suggest. Exclusively means that you make sure that your pileup hears, feels and sees that you are fair and the man in charge. Slipping in a few friends and countrymen out-of-turn here and there may soon cause everyone to be your "friend" and then the boat will sink and you will be left with very little, chaos and poor rate included.

On each team, there are those who are good with Europe and those who are good with others. That goes for both CW and SSB. You should not only put your best EU operator resources where they yield the best results, but also use them to "Elmer" those who cannot perform equally well toward EU. The "EU-minded" operators should act as EU pileup Elmers who will share their tricks and positive attitude so that others will soon adopt the same.

The tricky part often is that those who cannot handle high-speed CW end up on the SSB team even with marginal SSB skills, just because they can talk. Additionally, many seasoned operators enjoy running

rapid-fire US pileups and therefore the marginal operators come face to face with the EU challenge long before they are really capable of handling that chore.

There are many elements that must be in place in order for a DXpedition to be successful. Perhaps the most important element is team selection. After team selection, scheduling and operating resource allocation are needed in order to ensure optimum performance. As the range of operator skills varies a great deal, it is extremely important that each operator should operate where his skills are best utilized. He should feel comfortable that his rates and skill levels are compatible with different geographical areas near and far — from strangers with hard-to-understand dialects to easygoing home folks.

Here is Ralph Fedor, KØIR on resource utilization:

"When a DXpedition asks for and accepts financial assistance from DXers, clubs and foundations... they have a responsibility, and it becomes mandatory that the DXpedition do the best job possible. To accomplish this, the DXpedition must focus on three main, interrelated factors that will determine the success or failure of the DXpedition: propagation, the team and how the team's talents are utilized."

III: How to go about it in an actual situation

Masses of people are entering the tube at once — which brings us to the relationship between throughput and pileup width. Entering the tube? Yes, so we say in Europe when we enter a busy subway train. To me, this compares well with people queuing to get onboard and working a new one in no time. Remember that subway behavior may be very different from country to country and from culture to culture. Now that you understand Europe better and have a positive attitude, we are ready to board a crowded subway train. No more dry textbooks.

Ask some questions about yourself: Have you ever run a European SSB pileup and logged a minimum of two to three QSOs per minute? If your answer is “no,” you had better figure out who the “lead SSB operator for Europe” is within your team. You should accept guidance and direction from that operator and even form a sub-team with him. You should also volunteer for an EU shift and determine on which bands working Europe is easiest; where a wider split can be used.

Here is your first opportunity to try it out, in order of events, and do it in an orderly fashion:

A: Position yourself on your announced transmitting frequency and GO!

B: Never respond to any stations on your transmitting frequency. Period.

C: Use a fixed split — and a single listening frequency — for a while, say up 5 kHz, to check propagation. Indicate clearly where you are listening: “Up 5 kHz.” You may check propagation into several geographical areas for a few minutes. Ask for certain areas. You should get an idea of your coverage and signal strengths.

D: If necessary, go for a wider window in steps. Try a 10 kHz window. That is listen up FIVE to FIFTEEN kHz. When the window becomes crowded, go for 20 kHz. **Go as wide as is reasonable for a given band and the existing propagation.** If you are on a popular band like 20 Meters, establish your EU window at say

14120-14140 kHz. Remember, the wider the window, the better chance you have of reaching and maintaining your desired rate. Here are some points to remember:

How wide can you go? Is it 20 kHz or 100 kHz? This is a very important issue, it affects whether you succeed or fail. The listening window is a dynamic feature, and you have to take it that way. It is not a constant. The width of the window is not chiseled in stone. The window can even vary on the same band. A wider window

Go as wide as is reasonable for a given band and the existing propagation... The wider the window, the better chance you have of reaching and maintaining your desired rate.

will allow you to pick up calls faster. The key parameter that determines the rate is how quickly you can pick up a call sign and go back to him. Three per minute only results in a rate of 180 QSOs per hour. Talking or sending faster will not help your rate.

To keep the caller density low and the rate high, don't forget to move your receive frequency within the listening window. Work several stations and move on, but stay within your window and establish a systematic pattern.

If you are operating from a Top 20 country, you can go wider than in the case of operating from another household DX spot. People will usually understand and react with tolerance, although with some non-DXer exceptions. Don't worry too much about those exceptions, if you know what you are doing, but use your best judgment as creating extensive disagreement could be a source of DQRM.

In multi-band operations, however, exercise care when using a large

spread on narrow bands. The DXpedition operator should use as much band space as necessary to ensure a smooth operation. But, using too much width on 12 Meters and 17 Meters can quickly generate a negative response from non-DXers. Jamming and other vitriol will likely result. In some cases, it may be better to avoid these narrow bands early in an operation.

Remember, each band should have a split window that fits the volume of callers. You may listen for geographical areas that will immediately help you with your rate. More on this area division later. The width of the split window is not fixed but should be set so as to serve its purpose at any given time. Go as wide as seems reasonable to maintain your rate. Remember that there are two variables: the width of the window and where it is located — the split.

Remember the unique bands, openings and coverage areas. 10 Meters or 12 Meters may be open from your area to one geographical area at a time — you are the only one they can work and they may not even hear each other. You can listen from 28600 to 28700 kHz and enjoy a clean high-rate pileup. Why not listen from 28500 to 28600 kHz? Even with no propagation to many places, this is considered a prime segment and therefore shows your audience that you care in grabbing 100 kHz out of the hottest portion of the band.

Each band and opening requires its own consideration. Go as wide as you can or divide the pileup geographically and make your life comfortable to get calls logged quicker. If there is propagation into several areas at once, it is fairness and statistics that will count. Try to be as fair as you can and make use of the propagation peaks to achieve good rates. As a DXpedition operator, you should not be a band-hopping operator; instead, establish “your band slots” and build your experience in those slots along the way.

Get close to the operator responsible for scheduling and help him; share your specific knowledge, and contribute to this most important job to ensure the team's success. Be positive toward the whole world, Europeans included.

It was you who volunteered and even paid for this unique experience. It is hard work and presents unique challenges that cannot be replicated at the pileup end.

IV: The dynamics of filling the window and moving along

Why does a 14200-14220 kHz window have the peak volume of callers on 14200 kHz at the beginning of the window? How can you fix it? Now that your windows are systematically selected, your next challenge is what to do in the actual window. Do not become the guy who has an adequate window but has his receiver glued to one spot. There are *far* too many of those. Indicate the range over which you are listening and *then do it*. Don't say "spread out" and then fail to move your receive frequency. *Tune*. The whole pileup is at your fingertips, on your VFO knob. I repeat this: Where people are calling is entirely up to you; you are the guide. You should have an operating strategy for picking up callers instead of crying or complaining. It is you who are in charge at the production end of the DXpedition.

Here is your first set, again in order of events.

A: "QRZ 14260 to 14270.XX1XX". Suddenly you have 90% of the multitude calling on 14260 and you have no copy. It's a wall of sound. So, try 14270 to 14260 kHz. Now you have only 60% on 14260 and 40% on 14270 kHz. Magic. While the majority is calling, you may quickly identify a clear spot frequency, say 14.265. Say it! Those who are listening will jump to that frequency and be in the clear, for a few QSOs.

What you are doing, in fact, is taking those who are smart enough to move to about 14265 kHz. This is pileup dynamics. You must attempt to spread people over the entire window. When the traffic gets stuck, the window is too narrow and you should take the next step, which is to widen the window.

B: If you realize that you have several populated areas calling at the same time and copy is hard, you should divide the pileup into geographical

areas such as EU, AS or NA. If you do this, you must tell people clearly how much time you initially plan to spend with each area. Here the ultimate fairness comes into play. Be careful as you are now on the next sensitivity level.

Here is where your homework on propagation can work marvels. When you switch from one geographical area to another, you may spend a short time on VK/ZL, Africa or South America. At all times, you and only you have to be in full control of the overall situation. When the pileup gets mad and your unstructured management falls nothing short of unfair behavior, the game is over for the most part. This type of situation seems imminent if the performance is not to the liking of those you are supposed to serve. The more your pileup is stressed, the more you will appear to be unfair or slow to move. Here the boys are separated from the men.

C: When you have the basics set correctly and you start moving along at a reasonable rate, you may decide an operating pattern in which your audience will be happy to follow. That pattern can now emerge. Your systematic movements, up or down, where smart operators readily await your next step, and the whole effort becomes an art form. Tail-ending, when properly done, is one of the finest for those who have tuned their instruments and technique to a perfect pitch.

Working a comfortable SSB pileup unquestionably requires a good transceiver in terms of its filter shape factor and other receiver characteristics. But these issues are only discussed over a pint of beer and are not the main focus of this write-up.

V: Splitting the pileup fairly and making no exceptions

Determining how to split the pileup and stick firmly to fair play boils down to balancing a complex and dynamic matrix of many variables. The result is a question of winning or dying.

If even one populated area is too much for your maximum window, you still have bullets to keep the rate up. You can go by numbers. This works well with the US and up to a point with

Top 15 EU countries and their share (26%) of total 140,009 K1N QSO base

Ranking	DXCC	Total	Share
1	DL	6,708	18%
2	I	6,130	17%
3	UA	3,447	9%
4	SP	2,987	8%
5	EA	2,873	8%
6	F	2,658	7%
7	G	1,744	5%
8	UR	1,723	5%
9	OH	1,705	5%
10	OK	1,485	4%
11	SM	1,227	3%
12	ON	1,203	3%
13	PA	947	3%
14	HA	849	2%
15	LA	809	2%
Total		36,495	100%

Europe. This is a highly challenging scenario but it can be managed successfully, if you are sufficiently experienced. Experience is needed in many ways. For example, you should assign a weighted value to the numbers. The fact that the fourth call area represents more than 20% of US licensees and the US sixth and seventh call areas each about 14%, while the US third area has only 5% and the first call area less than 5% of the total should be taken into account. JA1s (Tokyo area) in turn add up to more than the rest of Japan together, and even in Europe numbers nine and zero are in a small minority compared with other numbers.

Some people will tell you not to go with numbers, but kindly ignore them since those who look at the matter from the audience point of view have absolutely no idea of what it all sounds like at the DXpedition end. Never do Europe by countries unless you are absolutely forced to do so. Openings are rather short to Northern Europe and when everything is seemingly gone, you may still have many EAs and Italians calling you.

Make no exceptions. If you work



The DX pileup is multicultural, multilingual and multitalented. FT5ZM was considering the strategic elements also at the DXpedition end and provided perfect match, great results with multinational offering: FT5ZM had American, Canadian, Columbian, French, Russian, Norwegian and Tajik, seven cultural elements for internal learning and international offering. DXing is the definition of embracing multiple nationalities and cultures. It is what we do with every DX QSO. A DXpedition, in its purist form, therefore includes team members from multiple cultures and nationalities. Everyone benefits: the team members, the DX audience and everyone in between.

Europe, you work Europe and ignore the others. If you say you will work EU number three, you work EU number three and ignore other numbers. If you work the US, you work the US. Any deviations, any allowances you make, only begs for serious trouble. And your friends? Any departure from the strict principle of no exceptions will see everyone becoming your “friend.” How about working your girlfriend? Tell the audience that you now have a girlfriend or an ex-girlfriend on line — it’s called home traffic. You may move off the DXpedition frequency to conduct home traffic, but it absolutely should be minimized.

Do you speak any of the European languages? Yes, high school German. Forget it, as that is just one of the many tongues spoken in the Old World. **Do not go into wordy English, rather, use clear-cut phonetic phrases and short sayings.** Using radio English is the only way to serve the thundering,

language-rich EU. Going with your high school German may drive all other language groups mad and provoke them to throw tomatoes at the players on stage. Do not follow the Japanese practice, which we all admire, for the rest.

Determining the approach for logging DXers at a reasonable rate may require trying a variety of available options. If one option does not provide the desired results, do not panic. Rather, try your next option. Don’t stay too long with something that doesn’t work. Remember, however, that it may take a minimum of five minutes to establish a solid and orderly pileup, whether it is by geography or numbers. When the parameters are established, you may enjoy it for a longer period of time. Ultimately, make sure that the rhythm, wording and QSO structure are all within your desired framework, and that you maintain maximum consis-

tency and fairness. If you get up to Europe number 4 and cannot do more today, say it clearly that you will start from number 5s tomorrow. You then transmit hope and a good feeling.

Anything you say to the Europeans must be well thought out. You can speak faster, show your emotions and use your own accent when talking to your countrymen, but you should express yourself with great clarity and in fewer words when talking to others, especially those in Europe. In fact at times, it may be better to say it twice.

To cite an example of misunderstanding, you may want to say: “XX1XX, if you call me on top of my QSOs I will not work you at all,” as many operators do. But at this point, if there is no clarity because of language difficulties, XX1XX may think that he is in QSO with you. “Thanks for the QSO – you’re five and nine”, he says. For you, understanding is equally important, and in fact at times

it may be better to say nothing than to be misunderstood.

VI: A conversational style – while maintaining the rate

Let us remember that a DXpedition should be a happy occasion for all — at both the production and collection ends. To quote WB9Z, it is like good music, ensuring a happy re-entry to normal life with good feelings and great memories. Working the country that the DXpedition provides may be a once-in-a-lifetime occurrence.

My own crowning experience was when a DXer was happy about the performance even though he did not make a single QSO. Let the opportunity to create a euphoric occasion be our target, and let us understand that we have lots of tools to make it happen.

Running contest-style, rapid-fire QSOs should not be our aim.

Rate is important, but it is not the whole thing. If we move so fast that we miscopy our partner's callsign, we may be missing the point altogether and just creating bad feelings. If we do one continent for hours on end, without giving hope to others standing by, we are not treating our audience fairly. Our objective should be to make everyone feel that his QSO is just around the corner, even if that corner comes in the next 30 minutes or the following day when a better propagation window opens up again. The waiting window is a critical time period. If further information is not available, someone's blood pressure may shoot up and the EU pileup may get angry. There are many ways of ensuring the happiness of all by doing small things that we often do not even come to think of.

Communicate with the pileup. When you take care of the necessities of life, fueling the generator, getting a cup of hot tea or a snack, or just taking a toilet break, be a little informative about your plan and inform your audience of how long it will take and what

you plan to do next. "Taking coffee, back in 10 minutes and then will do NA for a few hours." Far too many ops just suddenly disappear, leaving the audience idling. That's terrible. You are like an actor on Broadway, and you should not leave the stage without telling people what act comes next. Lack of visibility is often a major source of unhappiness.

If you plan to do EU for the next three hours, say so, clearly and upfront. In this way, you will let the NA crowd go on with their life and family chores or perhaps try for other band points, if the DXpedition runs multiple signals. Your DXer audience will appreciate

Rate is important, but it is not everything. Try to establish a 'conversational' style. Our objective should be to make everyone feel that his QSO is just around the corner.

knowing when their next opportunity comes, as they have other things in life to do as well. If you think another band is better for serving EU while you are doing NA, please let the pileup know it. Giving your pileup a positive picture of the offering is the best service you can provide. The pileup needs to have a sense of hope, and you are expected to remain calm. Since many DXpeditions are not well coordinated and their daily news releases can be sporadic, try to be communicative. Try to establish a "conversational" style. Keep the DXers informed.

"A great morning here and I am ready to work you all today," will convince everyone on frequency of your positive attitude. Occasional brief news items will enliven the whole procedure and confirm that you are a man of the world, calm and ready to come up with a positive experience. You can do lots of things without hampering the rate. Those few extra minutes spent providing **information** and **encouragement** are worth the effort and in the end may increase the rate.

How about approaching a fluent

Spanish operator, quickly but politely, and asking if he would inform southern Europe that you will work them tomorrow for five hours starting at 1400 UTC? You will give rise to an interesting conversation that is heard by everyone on frequency as you appoint your QSO partner to be at service, making it all easier and more enjoyable.

You disagree about delaying it until tomorrow? Certainty is a wonderful thing. One alternative is to expect your EU pileup to wear thin in a matter of hours if you just keep them there idling; the other alternative is to allow them to relax and be ready for tomorrow's solid five hours.

Of course, you must keep your promise and be there at 1400 UTC. Otherwise more harm will soon come your way.

Using this conversational style, you maintain a dialogue with your pileup; you give them lots

of hope, but allow the pileup to go on with a balanced life for the duration of your DXpedition. In my book "Where Do We Go Next?" I cited the example of K6XJ calling Bouvet for a whole week only to finally make it on the last day of the operation. Perhaps if the operation had been more focused on certain optimum openings to the West Coast, Perry might not have spent so much time calling, and his XYL, who seemed to be off visiting friends somewhere along the way, might have stayed closer to home.

Note that the conversational style can also be applied effectively to individual callers. Where a particular caller from Europe might be somewhat "out of order;" calling out of turn, for example, the DXpeditioner can effectively deliver a message to the caller — as well as the whole group — by politely informing the individual of his errors and asking him to cool down with a precise QTX indicator. While you are working North America, the out-of-turn caller may be asked to wait until a more acceptable time. You, the DXpeditioner, can create a positive



various DXpedition and human-behavior-related issues will help you with your demanding task. Yet, if you begin to feel that you can dismiss a European pileup as unruly or unmanageable, you are challenging your own ability to use all your hard learned skills. Dismissing a European pileup as incompetent or unco-

operative defeats all you have learned. Remember, the pileup is a reflection of your operating.

tone by advising the caller that his region will be called in one hour. A negative approach — bashing the caller — will probably be unproductive and may lead to intentional QRM. **Note that informing the offending caller will be much more effective if the message is delivered in his native language.**

VII: The DXpedition operator in control of a thundering pileup

This section can be short and slick. It boils down to the question of who is in charge of your pileup. You can control the behavior of your audience and bring your experience and skill-set to bear during those thundering moments when the pileup is running on edge. If you believe me about only one of the elements in this article, this is it. Thank you for your trust. Once again, *“The pileup is a reflection of the operator on the DX side.”* – said Dmitri, RA9USU, too!

There are many individual tactics that can be used to accomplish the goal of full control. Most of these are well known and are usually employed by top DXpeditioners. Though it was mentioned previously, one tactic stands above the rest as essential and should be reiterated: The DXpedition operator must be consistent – using the same methods and timings consistently throughout his efforts during any particular session. Inconsistent operating disrupts the rhythm, causing callers to be all over the place, seemingly calling out of turn, etc. Callers must be

able to predict what the operator wants and when he wants it. Consistency is an essential element of good QSO mechanics. Operating consistency should be an aim for all DXpeditions.

Signing the DXpedition callsign after each QSO is probably overdoing it, while signing the callsign each 30 minutes may be another extreme. Yet only rarely does a DXpedition agree to a standard, thus being consistent. Well thought out QSO content and QSO components will greatly increase understanding and clarity.

When working EU, whether justified or otherwise, a DXpedition operator may find it necessary to accept a rate lower than with the US for the reasons presented here. He may also have to intentionally reduce his rate in order to maximize clarity and order. There is no set rate target, however. Clarity and order is more important than rate.

We have now covered a variety of tactical elements. A knowledge of

Bernie, at 4W/W3UR, next to the gunfire in East Timor. DXers should not underestimate the stress factors at the DXpedition site. Rare DX countries are rare for a reason.



dle the masses in an orderly fashion. You can study and practice in order to become a better operator, but your efforts to make your audience and the world better may not be within the scope of your ongoing DXpedition unless you can be in control of your

which I later realized were not being understood by the many different EU operators.

“Martti, OH2BH, was listening to me as the train wreck began to take place and suggested to me that this was to be fun and not another war in

float and can observe many of these success factors.

Those who are contest types will accumulate useful experience as they aim to work EU for additional points — maximum multipliers — and confront the elements where the boys are separated from the men. As the bands are often very crowded during a contest weekend, that activity may give you an authentic feeling of “the window being packed.”

I wish to underscore the fact that contest types run the contest as contest machines. Their aggressiveness in contest situations explains why they are not considering the human touch to the extent needed for a truly pleasant and efficient DXpedition performance. A DXpedition is not a contest, but contesters can adapt if they wish to do so.

Those who have a chance to go on rare or semi-rare DXpeditions can learn faster by doing and observing. Learning DXpedition skills requires a humble attitude, and you should take note of those ops on the team who you feel are doing better than you. Listening to the pros for hours on end will give you a glimpse of the variety of tools and methods they use. Additionally, picking out their mistakes and noting the opportunities for effectively handling each demanding situation can earn you more points when you finally reach a land where a complex set of DXpeditioning talents is required.

I cannot emphasize enough the fact that following, talking with, listening to and making friends with those who have gone through the humble learning cycle can be quite rewarding to both parties. Those who once took the trouble to learn are ideal partners for those who now want to become good at all this strategic operating.

Maybe a DXpedition should recognize the group’s most experienced operator and have him brief the whole team about key operating challenges that a specific DX outing faces. This will make for worthwhile pastime activity en route to the DXpedition destination — at least for those who are not seasick. The operating expert is not necessarily the leader of the DXpedition, as he may have been selected because of his other leadership talents.

**A DXpedition is not a contest,
but testers can adapt to
DXpeditioning if they wish to do
so. Learning DXpeditioning skills
requires a humble attitude, observing
and taking notes about those that are
more successful than you.**

pileup. At the end of the day, the fine line between success and failure in running your DXpedition/pileup is drawn by your successful control of the radio performance.

At the time the three-letter Q-codes were invented, traffic was not as heavy as it is today. Perhaps some new Q-signals should be promoted. How about “XX1XX PLEASE QTX 15,” meaning “my friend, please pause transmitting for 15 minutes.” It is friendlier and less nerve-racking than “XX1XX QRT” which suggests that you should pull the plug since you are just about to go overboard.

Bernie McClenny, W3UR was on his first DXpedition. After working a thundering EU pileup, he decided to stop it and work the Far East on a spot frequency. Unfortunately, some Europeans thought that this was the frequency for them to make a QSO. Soon, Bernie was in a new one-way “conversation” with these few lost souls. Let’s have Bernie explain the episode in his own words:

“I remember my first DXpedition well. It was to Gaza, Palestine — an all-time new country — as E44DX. Early on in the DXpedition I was on SSB and felt overrun by the EU operators, who I thought were not paying attention to what I was saying. Things quickly fell apart as my rate went way down and I was yelling at the EU pileup giving wordy instructions,

the Middle East. It was essentially my first DXpedition time-out.

“It took me about 30 minutes to cool off and realize what I had done wrong. We sat down and I learned several very important lessons from those that handled EU pileups calmly and orderly.

“I realized that the chaos I was receiving from the Europeans was my own fault. I had essentially shot myself in the foot. This was a very important lesson to learn, and thankfully I did so during my first DXpedition as these issues would only appear with a positive, learning attitude. Many DXpeditioners never learn. They continue to yell and get angry at the pileup, when actually they should be looking in the mirror and learning what they do wrong to avoid this problem and to absorb how to work the many different facets of EU.”

VIII: The profile of an ideal DXpedition operator

Working pileups down smoothly and becoming the most popular operator of the whole DXpedition is not something that you can achieve simply by reading a handbook. You can read about and understand the critical factors and potential routes to success, but ultimately you need to take the plunge, jump into the deep water and learn to swim. You may need help and assistance, but eventually you will

IX: Setting a clear strategy and balancing statistics

A: Planning Human Resources for an Optimum Outcome – Evaluating Operator Skills

Each large DXpedition typically comes with four categories of human resources:

- Those who think they can handle pileups — and they can.
- Those who think they can handle pileups — but they cannot.
- Those who think they cannot handle pileups — but they can.
- Those who think they cannot handle pileups — and they cannot.

By early investigation, track record analysis and questionnaires, the DXpedition organizers can perform this critical mapping. It is like selecting a football team. Each participating radio operator should have a suitable role. The absence of a comprehensive plan is the surest way to DXpedition failure, partially or maybe even totally. Mapping of the necessary EU talent may require a specific round of operator evaluation. European DXpedition operators as such should not be given any particular advantage as EU SSB talent should be expected from those who have had experience with Europe in the past, regardless of their own origin.

Singling out the CW ops is probably the easiest task; sometimes SSB ops are difficult to pick as the assumption often is that all those who can talk are qualified SSB ops. The best SSB core group, which includes those with a good attitude and proven success with Europe, should be deployed.

Operators in the fourth group consist of those who will need additional training. They should be placed accordingly on the less hectic bands. The second group is often the source of on-site chaos that may even suggest another chapter. At the very least, their allocation requires special care. Those allocating the resources and other on-site duties face a highly demanding task, and they should be given all the help they need to succeed. Their success equals DXpedition success.

On manpower allocation, Ralph,

KØIR says, “So now we have a DXpedition team. They are like chessmen. We assemble them on the ‘chessboard of propagation’ and each chessman is of value. We move them with a plan — schedule them — so that the outcome

If we’ve built our team wisely, each team member can meet those scheduled challenges with excellence. The ultimate happiness of the DX audience and the operating team is the underlying key factor.

of our game (our DXpedition) is positive and represents our best possible effort. We place our best CW and SSB operators on high rate bands. We find the operators with good ears, patience and persistence for the low bands. Operators who know the multiple, unique nuances of RTTY fill those slots on the schedule. There is a specific purpose and place on the operating schedule for every DXpedition team member. And, if we’ve built our team wisely, each team member can meet those scheduled challenges with excellence.”

B: Planning for Propagation and Band Offerings with Available Operator Expertise

Low-banders truly make up a different bunch. High rate runners correlate with bands and tactical elements such as well-defined listening windows and sub-grouping of callers, e.g., those in Europe. Assigning available resources to the most suitable propagation segments and bands will make the operating strategy multi-dimensional and very challenging. Some operators want to be band hoppers and experience a bit of everything, and the DXpedition leaders may have to decide which

strategy will apply to them.

On propagation, Ralph, KØIR says, “We cannot control propagation, but we can study it, and by so doing, know when openings to various portions of the world are likely to occur, the strength and length of those openings, and what underlying and equally important minor openings may be obscured by the major openings. Propagation is the foundation of a DXpedition. You must understand it, build upon it, plan operating schedules based on it, and extract every possible QSO from it. If a DXpedition ignores propagation data, that DXpedition will not be as successful as it should be.”

The ultimate happiness of the audience and the operating team is an underlying issue, and therefore the scheduling matrix is important. Providing propagation information as part of educating the calling audience is a nice feature, but it is even more important that the DXpedition itself should be aware of all the odd openings. Often the DXpedition creates its own propagation on those bands that are not typically activated.

C: Using Numerical Statistics for an Optimum Result

Knowing the population centers in terms of the numbers of DXers and connecting them with specific QSO targets should determine the bands and hours where and when the desired QSO numbers can be achieved. Certain areas can be covered on multiple bands while the most critical areas may be worked on only one band by making use of the best and most suitable operators.

Understanding the most difficult target area with all its parameters and making a detailed resource plan accordingly can be quite rewarding. Often two out of the three populated centers can be handled with a less concentrated effort while there is always that third area that needs a special strategy and corresponding talent. More often than not, Europe on the whole becomes a critical target area where success in working down the EU pileups with acceptable results requires a special plan.

More recently, working Europeans

has become a major topic of discussion, but the causes seem generally misunderstood. It appears that this may have to be considered as another strategic element since working EU needs its own dedication and positive attitude. Working Europe requires a different range of talents than working the US or Japan. Because of Europe's diversity, East and West assume a different set of emphases — no wonder South and North do likewise. But as regional borders are not well defined in Europe, we may have to swallow the whole shebang and use our own toolkit.

X: Do you trust the author or challenge his theses?

Now indeed you have more questions than answers. You want to challenge this and that. Fine. There is no single truth which tells you how to deal with the masses — Europeans specifically — and leave them all with a smile. Even the DXpedition operator's smile can be quite marginal. No, I am not here to post my theses on the door of All Saints' Church in Wittenberg as Martin Luther did in 1517. I just want to trigger a discussion that

engages every DXpeditioner and challenges those who want to think about these complexities to formulate their own answers.

The specific solutions that you select to address the issues presented here really do not matter as long as you are aware of those issues and have your own well-thought-out responses. But as they say, "Blessed is the man who believes." He must have faith.

My own experience comes from many decades of activating rare ones — a dozen of them ATNOs with the thundering and demanding pileups. My observations only refer to those. If one issue is different from the rest, it is that I have had the privilege of having people with a good track record coming along. This has certainly been helpful in handling the pileups in such a way that the number of "dead bodies" on the battlefield is usually minimized.

My recent efforts have been focused on DX spots where no permit has yet been issued and/or where, for example, the country is so small that a lack of multiple operators/radios is likely to cause the entire DX world to crowd one and the same frequency.

Acknowledgements

Simplifying. Making everything clear. Not pointing a finger at anyone. Being fair and being determined to say and do what makes sense. All this is essential for this paper and what we do in the actual DXpedition performance.

I am pleased to have been assisted by the highly regarded experts listed below. They were part of the process of creating something that may well, in turn, point DXing toward something that even non-DXers can be proud of. Thank you.

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