

Open Mic



By Ken Johnson



Ken Johnson

Experience: 30 Years in Radio

On air: Morning drive, Afternoon drive
Nights and Overnights

Formats: Oldies, Jazz, Main Stream
Urban, Urban Adult, Gospel & CHR

Markets: Boston MA, Washington DC,
Wilmington NC, Atlanta GA,
Philadelphia PA, Birmingham AL.

Highlights: VP of Urban Programming
Cumulus Media overseeing as many as
35 radio stations in 16 markets
including the Caribbean, Director of
Urban Programming ABC Radio
Networks, Director of Urban
Programming Clear Channel-
Philadelphia, Operations Manager
music formats Cumulus Media
Birmingham*

*Current position



Talking Points

- ◆ Being an on air talent today
- ◆ Show Prep you're the producer
- ◆ Before you open the mic or using a golf metaphor, pre-shot routine
- ◆ The interview
- ◆ Don't Forget about the music
- ◆ Goals
- ◆ Teams
- ◆ Features

Being an on air talent today

- ◆ The most interesting thing to me about radio and being on air today is how similar it is to the past. When I think back to the personalities I grew up listening to: Donnie Simpson, Wes Party Johnson, Candy Shannon, Melvin Lindsey, Chuck Davis, Jeff Leonard and Gene “The Rockstar” Phillips, they all made it sound so easy. They shaped not only the personality I wanted to be but the personality I look for today. A while back I was writing about job hunting and I said “don’t take it personal if a PD doesn’t hire you.” Good Programmers or Brand Managers, they have their station playing in their head and with it, the sound they want their personalities to have. You just may not fit that sound.

Being an on air talent today

For me there are **5 key elements** to being a great on air talent today:

1. Find personalities that you like and take a piece of each and make it your own.
2. Transitions
3. Have a pre-shot routine
4. Be humble
5. Prepare

Being an on air talent today, *Five Key Elements con't.*

Find personalities that you like and take a piece of them and make it your own

This is not easy to do today. All of the personalities I named previously aren't on the air anymore. But there are still great personalities out there on radio and TV. One great example is David Letterman. There was always a little of what he did in my past morning shows. I called it organized chaos. A second example is Big Boy on Power in LA. If I was on the air today I would want to interview people the way he does. It comes so natural to him. More about interviews later.

Being an on air talent today, *Five Key Elements con't*

Transitions

This is a key factor in being a great personality. You should practice moving from element to element in a break. I used to practice weather into a feature, a pre-promote, stop set, news or traffic or a song. Being compelling is the foundation of a great personality. Some information you have to give may not be compelling but you still have to deliver as if it is. While I don't believe in a timer on talk brakes, getting it all in with 140 characters is a good thought process. But here is the thing even when there is only a 140 characters there is a way to get out more info. You web page or Facebook. More on this later.

Being an on air talent today, *Five Key Elements con't*

Have a Pre Shot Routine

At least 3 things you think about before you open the mic. Before for I started playing golf this was just a road map for my break. This is so much cooler. Your routine could be as simple as the elements: back announce, temp weather promote next song, smile. Have a plan going into each break. While I have never scripted my breaks and for some early on it may help, but at the very least know how you want to get in and get out.

Being an on air talent today, *Five Key Elements con't.*

Be humble

At the core of being a great personality is you have to get people to like you. Even for Howard Stern, Glen Beck, Bill O'Riley and Bill Mahr, more people have to like you than not.

Being an on air talent today, *Five Key Elements con't*

Prepare

You are your show's producer as well as the host. Are you talking about what your listeners are talking about? Are you up on what's going on last night and today? The show prep material that still exists is OK but go a step further. Look through the log for songs coming up in your show. Check recent tweets of artists, where is their song on the charts and if it's a classic artist when and what was their last charted song. Tell your listener something; inform them uplift them.

Social Networks

The stations platforms come first

- ◆ Facebook - This is where you can test out topics and find out what's being talked about. Is it interesting to your demo and your listeners.
- ◆ Instagram – The obvious is to share photos of you and artists who visit but more importantly of you and listeners, such as winners at events.
- ◆ Twitter – This is where you can get topics to test through Facebook, find out what your listeners, peers, celebrities and artists are talking about.
- ◆ All others – Pintrest, Google Hangout. You should share cool things with your listeners; sponsor hangouts with them while you're on air as well as before and after your shift. Bring in an artist from time to time. Watch a popular TV show together. Create unique experience of it. That is only available for your social network followers.

The Interview

- Some of the best interviewers: Big Boy, Donnie Simpson, Arsenio Hall, Jon Stewart, and David Letterman,

Some of my favorite interviews



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