

On Air philosophy, by Evan Elrod

Disc Jockeys have very much evolved from their creation. The most notable is the fact that they don't "Spin Discs" anymore... hence, becoming surprisingly politically correct, wanting to be called "Air talent" or "on air personalities" instead of DJ's or Jocks. But much like everything that evolves, they start to come in different shapes, sizes, colors, and personalities. One thing that has also changed (and maybe not for the better) is the insignificance of personalities on the air.

The majority of listeners now, could probably not recognize or even be able to name all the jocks at your station(s). Sure, they may know the morning crew, and might recognize the sound of a different afternoon personality on their ride home. But this is partly because the radio has become background noise instead of an interacting experience with listeners. (With the exception of a good morning show) Sure, there are always exceptions to the rule, but there's got to be solutions to this problem. If you find it a problem... and you should... we can come up with a solution, right?

I once tried to explain what I wanted my airtime to be, to a programmer. He described it perfectly when he said, "You want a show, not a shift." Another words, not just "card reading, station promo, back sell, front sell, weather, time, temperature, and mindless background dribble".

When listeners tune in, chances are they're craving entertainment. Other than playing the right music or programming they want to hear, what's the best way to entertain? Interaction, involve the listener. This brings the radio from the background, to the foreground instead. It keeps the "Dial Dancers" from searching for better entertainers, and it will give your advertisers an edge up too! There are these and many other advantages to keeping your listeners, actually listening to your station. Your goal should be to make your audience come back, not just for your music/programming, but also come back for the entertainment and information aspect instilled by you, the air talent.

Now this isn't to say that an entire air shift should be wasted with mindless chatter, discussing things that don't matter to the listeners. But everything that is said without listener interaction should still try and pertain to something they care about. The first time a listener says to himself or herself, "I don't care about that!" And changes the station, the chances of them coming back to stay get slimmer and slimmer. Try to make things interesting, give information, have interviews with interesting people, and when you talk about the station, tell them why they should care about what you're saying to them.

Lastly, when you work for a station... have fun. People have lost a lot of fun in radio. Radio has made a sway towards business. And trust me, it reflects to your listeners. Why do you think people are going to Satellite radio? Because Satellite radio has put business in the background for the most part... it's just hardcore entertainment for anyone that will pay for it. But at the same time, they don't have that great opportunity of local interaction like we do. So have fun like you used to in radio. After all, that's why we're in it right? Because it's supposed to be fun... and if it's not fun to you, it's not going to be fun to your listening audience either. If you can take advantage of a good format by making these simple entertaining changes... you may have just found the best of both worlds, and you could be one step closer to having everything fall into place for your station(s).