

...BULLET POINTS...

Celebrity Guests

How to Book Them and How to Treat Them

We picked the brains of some experts in the field – Amy Sugarman, who is an Executive Producer with Clear Channel L.A. (books guests for Ryan Seacrest, Jamie & Danny, Valentine, Charlie Tuna, et.al.) and Frank Murphy, morning show host and former producer for Kevin & Bean, Mark & Brian, Don & Mike and others.

You don't have to work in New York or Los Angeles to book celebrity guests on your morning show. The key is to form good relationships with the people who will bring celebrities to your market.

Work to establish the fact that you have a lot of guests on your show, not only with your audience but also with the publicists, the PR firms, the networks, etc. Don't expect to go instantly from no guests to A-list celebrities...you will have to work your way up and build those relationships. For shows starting to establish the fact that they do interviews, a good place to start is with reality shows. Their "stars" are easier to get, and many of the shows do very well in the ratings. Also, don't forget about daytime television, particularly if your target is female. Soap operas have a lot of well-known actors to interview.

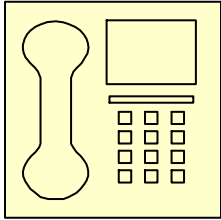
Develop a rapport with the entertainment shows like Access Hollywood, Extra, etc. Get to know some of their air personalities. You're often able to get them on the air and get their take on what's going on in the world of celebrities, which can add credibility and insider information to your show.

Work to establish relationships and then build on success based on the following:

- How well you did the interview
- How well you treated the celebrity (more later)
- Efficiency -- immediately that day send an MP3 of the interview to the publicists, the network, etc. and make sure they know how many times you replayed it.

When trying to book celebrities you need to work all of the angles. There are 3 tiers...go to all of them:

1. Network person who handles radio
2. The TV show itself has a publicity person
3. Individual actors often have their own publicists or PR firms



Call the network, ask for publicity, then you may have to, for example, ask for “Arrested Development”, then keep digging.

Timing is important too. A month ahead of time is too far – go 1-2 weeks in advance. Don’t be a pest, but follow up a few days later if you don’t hear anything.

Most of the time celebrities don’t want to get up early and don’t want to come to a radio studio. You can increase your chances of getting a phone interview with a star by being able to tape a phoner later in the day, especially if you are on the East Coast.

Many times there is more than one way to find a specific star. Amy uses Celebrity Service, which is a 411 for getting publicists, agent numbers, etc. (323) 957-0508. It costs \$2000-4000 per year, but they have all the numbers. The Guest Exchange offers a weekly newsletter with great contact information. Sign up for either the pay version or the free version at www.guestexchange.com.

Here are some other sources to mine:

Websites: When Frank Murphy was booking guests for a feature called “Where are They Now”, he was able to track down guests was through their official websites. He wrote a simple, direct request to the celebrity, inviting them to be on the show. Sometimes the stars themselves wrote back, other times an assistant or publicist replied.

Local TV Stations: Each TV station has a publicity or promotion director, just like radio stations. They are the ones who will arrange for their network stars to do interviews with the local newspaper or any local TV talk shows. Keep in touch with them, especially before the start of “sweeps” ratings periods in February, May and November. In addition to network stars, use them to arrange interviews with your local news anchors. Sometimes local newscasters go on to bigger things. For example, Don & Mike had a good relationship with Katie Couric when she was a local reporter in Washington, D.C.

TV Networks: All the networks have publicists who each handle several series. Frank feels that NBC and CBS are the best at utilizing radio to publicize their shows. Don’t forget the WB, Comedy Central, Food Network, A&E, TLC, HGTV, etc. They are often more willing to promote their shows than the broadcast networks. Generally, the network publicists for entertainment shows are based in L.A. and the network publicists for news shows are based in New York. Obviously *Saturday Night Live*, *Late Night With Conan O’Brien* and *The Late Show With David Letterman* all use New York based publicists.

TV Studios: Look on the Internet or just watch the credits of a show to see where it is taped or filmed. Many are made at Warner Bros., Paramount, 20th Century Fox and Sony studios. A lot of sitcoms are taped at the CBS/MTM studios in Studio City. ABC, CBS and NBC have production facilities too, used mainly for game shows, soap operas and talk shows. A call to the main number at any of the studios can get you in touch with the show’s production offices.

Series Publicists: In addition to network and studio publicists, many TV series also hire an outside public relations firm. Most are based in L.A., but some have New York offices too. Some of the best-known firms are mPRm, The Lippin Group, Bragman Nyman Cafarelli, and Rogers & Cowan. Many of these firms also work as personal publicists for celebrities.

Movie Studios: The major movie studios have publicists responsible for different regions of the country. You can call the publicity department at the studios in L.A. to find out who handles your region. The film companies also hire advertising and public relations firms in local markets. Find out from your radio station's sales department who places buys for movie spots. Your salesperson should be able to put you in touch with someone at the agency who can schedule interviews when celebrities come to town.

Personal Publicists: Most celebrities hire their own personal publicists. The stars usually pay a flat monthly fee instead of a percentage of their income. When you ask the publicist to arrange an interview, you'll sometimes hear "He isn't doing any publicity right now," which can mean, "He isn't paying us to deal with your request right now." Publicists for the bigger stars spend most of their time declining requests, while publicists for unknown actors spend most of their time emailing bios to producers.



Performers' Unions: Many celebrities you may wish to contact are members of the Screen Actors Guild. A call to the Agency Department at SAG's Los Angeles or New York offices will provide you with the names and phone numbers of an actor's theatrical and commercial agents. A call to one of the agents will provide you with the name of the actor's publicist. The American Federation of Television and Radio Artists (AFTRA) can also provide agency listings for members, but you have to fax your request and wait for them to fax back to you. Although you usually have to wait on hold for quite a while when calling SAG, it may be quicker than writing to AFTRA.

Record Labels: This may seem like an obvious idea to music stations, but artists can make terrific guests for other formats too. For example, Tori Amos always sounded great during her appearances on talk station KABC-AM. Depending on the politics at your station, have your music director or your producer find out about artists' availability from the local label representatives. Ask the labels to have the artist perform an acoustic set in our studio.

Go to R & R, CRS, Billboard Monitor and other music conventions and form relationships and even friendships with people at the record labels. "First day of the spring book, we really need some help, do you think you could get so-and-so to call us?"

Record labels keep track of where CD's are sold. You may be able to leverage this if the artist you are trying to book has sold more CD's in your market than in some bigger market.

Venues: Stars are often more willing to do radio interviews when they're getting a percentage of the gate. Don't overlook concert promoters, concert halls, arenas, comedy clubs, theaters or summer "sheds" like the Hollywood Bowl or Wolf Trap Farm Park in Virginia. You should get on all their mailing lists and make contacts in the

promotion or marketing departments at the venues. Check www.pollstar.com to see who is coming to your area.

Offbeat Methods: Several radio shows have had great success offering a prize for the most famous person to call their show. Your listeners do the work for you, by calling their famous (and not-so-famous) friends and relatives. A slight variation of this method can work when a specific star is in your town. Back when he was famous, Garth Brooks was signing autographs at Target headquarters in Minneapolis. A Target switchboard operator asked him to call a radio station so she could win \$100. Garth called the station from his limo on the way to the airport and gave the deejay the name of the lucky Target employee.

You can develop a network of hotel workers who will tell you when a star is in their hotel, but they can get fired if anyone finds out. If you want to keep getting good information, you must keep their identities (and the name of the hotel) confidential.

Prepping the Interview

New artists are sometimes not very good at interviews. Do your homework and prep for the interview, and not just by jumping on the internet and looking at the bio.

- Do searches on Google for internet chats they've done. In the chats you will find a bunch of questions from listeners. Most are lame, but sometimes you'll find one that's really good, where the star then said, "I'm so glad you asked that."
- Tease the interview the day before and get listeners involved. Make an appointment with listeners: "Lee Ann Womack's going to be on at 8:30 tomorrow morning." When teasing for the next day you can make a bigger deal out of it, solicit listener questions, do a little 'prep' on the air – what do you want to know, let's vote on what we should ask her, etc.
- Recycling the interview. If you run it twice and you think your whole audience heard it you're mistaken – only 5-10% of your audience will have heard it. Run it back in different hours on different days, even 4-5 times during the week and maybe a couple times on the Best Of if it's a good interview. Make sure the label or publicist knows how many times you ran it.

How to Treat Them Once You've Got Them

At Bootcamp, Tony and Kris (US95-7 San Diego) conducted a session with Lee Ann Womack highlighting how to treat celebrities and artists. We got some good insights and an inside look from a celebrity... Some of the points they made:

- ✓ Make them comfortable.
- ✓ Make sure they're having a good time.
- ✓ Don't waste their time.



- Most celebrities want a conversation. When artists feel like they've 'hung out with a couple of your friends' rather than 'taking a test' then it's been a good interview. What's crucial is how you get the interview started, put the celebrity and the listeners both in the mood to have a good time.
- Grab listeners' attention right off the bat or they're going to move on. Avoid starting interviews with questions like "who produced your record"? Listeners don't care about the "tone" the lead guitarist got on the 3rd song on the album. Think of the artist, think of the listener.
- Avoid the cliché question like "What's it like having to combine motherhood and career?" and instead ask quirky questions like "What does Willie Nelson smell like?"
- What about when the morning show wants you to be part of a bit? You have to feel out the artist on this. If you have a relationship with that artist then you can feel free to ask more of them. Also, be careful not to waste the artist's time. If you only have a few minutes with them, don't do a 5-minute bit where they have a minimal part.
- Don't make the artist sell his or her own record. Make sure you do talk about the single – remember why they're there. One way to do it is to reset about every 2 minutes with something like "We're talking to Lee Ann Womack this morning, her greatest hits is in stores today, it's really great... so, Lee Ann, tell us...." Do that 7-8 times during the course of the interview. And of course play the single at the beginning or the end of the interview. The artist will appreciate it, but also the record label will appreciate it and send you even more artists for interviews.
- It can sometimes work to line up listeners to ask questions. As long as they're prepped so you don't get someone saying "hey, remember me from that concert...I was wearing blue..." Anytime you can bring the listener in that's huge for them, and it helps your show because they'll tell all their friends.
- The celebrity's time is valuable. Keep the studio "closed" and don't let staff come talk to or see the artist (asking them to talk on the cell phone, sign autographs...) or it can end up taking up too much time.
- Don't try too hard. This is also the case with meet and greets where a DJ will go backstage and try to be funny. It makes it hard on all the radio people coming after you...Kris: "No wonder they treat us like shit, because we sometimes act like jackasses."



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