

.....BULLET POINTS.....

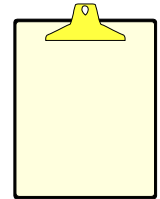
The Morning Show Producer Job Description

Particularly in the last couple of years the demand for morning show producers has become enormous, regardless of market size. It is no longer considered a luxury position -- having a producer is crucial to the success of a morning show. In this article, we outline the job description for a morning show producer and list the skills necessary to do the job well. We then have pointers on how to find and keep a good producer, and also offer alternatives to get the job done if a producer is not in the budget at all.

The typical morning show producer job is broken down into four major components:

1. Organizational Skills

The producer turns ideas into reality – is able to take an idea from the talent or PD and “produce” results. If the talent says “let’s dress up in armor and have listeners hit golf balls at us on a driving range,” he or she finds the armor, the driving range, and everything else.



- Keeps the talent organized and on schedule
- Participates in the show’s planning process daily, may run morning show meeting
- Responsible for finalization of the show’s prep sheet
- Maintains a weekly planner
- Maintains a computer “bit” file; librarian for bits, production, etc.
- Keeps updated lists of regular callers, celebrities, experts, etc.
- Lines up guests for the show
- Coordinates appearances with promotion/marketing department
- Serves as liaison with all other departments, including legal and risk management.

2. Morning Show Director

This can be as simple as indicating when to take a break or change topics, and should include a knowledge of basic radio formatics like teasing upcoming topics in order to increase time spent listening.



- Makes the talent look good
- Directs the talent through the game plan during the show (time to move on, news, breaks, etc.)
- Helps review what worked well and what didn’t. The best way to do this is to take a problem and present a solution. For example, instead of saying “that bit isn’t funny”, say

"I don't think the payoff really works here – why don't we try X, Y or Z? What do you think?" This involves the talent in brainstorming a solution and keeps the producer from sounding critical.

- Sets up and screens phone calls during the show (many shows have a separate phone screener)
- Is the talents' visible audience during the show

3. Production

- Edits tape, phone conversations and bits, etc.
- Pulls audio for the show, sound bites, etc.
- Produces drop-ins, beds, "best of" shows, lifts comedy service material, etc.
- Runs the board
- Sets up remote broadcasts
- Produces morning show promos with production director

4. Creative Talent

- Helps write bits, skits, promos, etc.
- Participates in conversations, bits, etc. as self or a character role
- Provides laughter at the appropriate times (when something is funny)
- Contributes ideas and content for the show
- Hits the street in station vehicle to do live call-ins, stunts, etc.
- Gets the show talked about
- Finds inventive ways to do routine things

In order to be successful, a producer will need to:



1. Be aggressive.

2. Be a detail person. Keep files on each day's program.

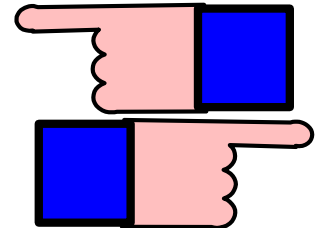
3. Do the research – find offbeat stories, phone numbers, guest bios, etc. Use the internet, research books, whatever is necessary. Go deep *and* wide: "set the buffet table" with more than enough choices so the talent can select the best possible material

4. Stay informed – read newspapers & magazines; watch TV, movies

5. Educate the talent – be an extra set of eyes and ears to make sure they are aware of pop culture, current events, etc.

6. Let the talent know when something is tanking. Help the talent be aware of how something feels on the air, how listeners are reacting, when to get out of a bit. To communicate that a bit or interview is going nowhere you can use an IFB. Talk into their headsets and tell them hey, this is bad, or try and take it in this direction.

7. Book interesting guests – deal with pitches from publicists; go after bigger names. The secret to getting through to big names is sounding like a real person. They are getting emails and phone messages all day long. You need to come across as a real person, rather than Johnny DJ from Toledo wanting an interview.
8. Make the most of guest bookings. For example, after having an author on, monitor Amazon and the sales of the book. It is a trip to get an author on and an hour or two later see their book go from 937 to 41, and have it happen during the show. Or, if you've got one of the rejects from TV's Beauty and the Geek show, don't just talk to her, line up geek callers to ask her out...
9. Make a remote broadcast sound as seamless as a studio show. Work with engineering on details.
10. Help plan stunts. When it comes to stunts you have to think much, much bigger now. With all the reality shows and stunts, dropping a pumpkin off a rooftop isn't really exciting anymore. Get yourself in the middle of a topical situation. For example, when Star Wars premiered, Rich Shertenlieb (Kidd Kraddick Show) went amongst those in line at midnight pretending he'd seen it already and throwing out spoiler plot points. He ended up causing a scene, being thrown out by security...
11. Free up the talent to be creative by “running interference” with sales, programming, promotions, engineering, etc.
12. Use discretion – to encourage or discourage an idea before it hits the air.
13. Walk the tightrope between talent and management. Respect things that are said in confidence; use diplomacy. Talent must be able to trust the producer.
14. Earn the respect of the talent by being strong – it's not the producer's job to be “best friends” with the talent.
15. Know how to do everyone else's job on the show. Fill in when necessary and be willing to do the stuff nobody else on the show wants to do.
16. Learn to delegate – just ask for help and then be really appreciative when you get it.
17. Have the support of management. If the talent thinks that they don't have to listen to the producer, they won't. Often the producer plays the role of “acting PD” in the studio -- the PD and GM must give the producer their complete support.



Finding and Keeping a Good Producer

- One place to look for a good producer is the radio station's promotion department (Frank Murphy came from his station's promotion dept.).
- Hire and develop interns for this role.
- Look to T.V. and steal their producers. Although radio producers are not generally well paid for the amount of work they have to do, T.V. (especially news segment producers) are even more poorly compensated.

Once you have a producer, build rapport and engender loyalty whenever possible. Treat your producer with respect. Find out what motivates him or her most and feed that need as actively as possible (or at least make sure they know you're *trying*).

Motivations:



Money – This is the obvious one. If the straight compensation is not making the producer happy, try frequent small bonuses. One morning show made it clear to their producer that whenever they were anywhere he would never have to pay for anything himself (dinners, etc.) – they always picked up the tab. Small gestures can actually go a long way toward building loyalty.

On-air opportunities – If this is a strong motivator in line with his career goals, look for ways for the producer to have an on-air presence. In general, however, a producer should be the “invisible” person behind the talent. The producer can in some cases be used successfully as part of a bit, but not times it just distracts from the goal of keeping the talent focused and directed.

Praise - Verbal and written accolades, telling everyone how great your producer is, thanking him all the time (especially for the drudgery and extra-mile work) can actually go a long way towards engendering loyalty.

If there's not a budget for a producer at all, consider trying the following:

1. **Someone else on the staff** – often this is the overnight person who's paid to stay on through the morning show.
2. **Interns** – they usually don't cost anything and are eager to get inside a radio station. Many high school and college students get their start in radio this way. The downside is that you have them for a limited time and have to switch people at the end of a semester or school year.
3. **Hire someone part-time** – many people will even work for minimum wage to get the experience.
4. **Solicit other staff members** – find people at the station who are creative, such as weekend jocks, sales assistants, etc. Be open to people from any department who happen to be organized, creative or both.
5. **Create a network outside the market** – many morning talents trade bits, characters and ideas. Network with people who can participate in a phone conversation, play a character or share a production piece that's universal.

Look for everyday people you meet...people at the station, friends, people you run into who are real “characters” and can contribute to the show. The Program Director is also an ideal person to help you create and produce a more effective show. Hopefully the P.D. will contribute ideas or even be part of the show when it's appropriate. The more help you get producing the show, the more entertaining the show will be.

Fall Into The Gap

Eckhart Tolle, author of *The Power of Now*, explains that the creative process is always a combination of “mind and no mind.” Creative ideas and thoughts arise out of a continual shifting back and forth between thinking and not thinking or “no mind” as the state is called in Zen.

Ideas actually originate in the gap between thinking, not from the mind itself. When gaps occur in thinking you are totally in the present moment and in a state to receive. The mind then takes the idea and gives it structure and form.

Even highly creative people may not be conscious of this process. The next time you’re stalled out creatively, stop and close your eyes and just be in the moment. Once you can still your conscious mind by parking it on an activity (such as observing your breathing, driving, walking, etc.) you open up your subconscious and allow ideas to come to you.



Programming Tip: Why is Structure Necessary in the Morning?

The way people get through that first hour and a half in the morning is by following consistent patterns and rituals that make them comfortable. Brains are not engaged yet, no one wants to make decisions or have to work in the mornings – people crave structure at this time of day because it makes things easier.



2660 Townsgate Rd. Suite 800 Westlake Village, CA 91361
Randy Lane: (805) 497-7177 Fax: (805) 497-9858 Email: randy@randylane.net
Stan Main: (585) 313-3070 Email: stan@randylane.net