

## ...BULLET POINTS...

### ARE THE TALENT DRIVING YOU CRAZY?

Talent's value to a radio station has never been greater than it is today. Music has become so accessible that music formats have become commodities. Personality brands represent a huge opportunity for profitable growth. Radio personalities are an unbeatable anti-commodity.

Programmers can block, duplicate and flank music formats, as every station's song-to-song flow is available 24/7 online. They can't counter program or duplicate a personality.

But working with creative talent can be daunting for a programmer or manager who doesn't understand the way creative people think. "They're children, they're animals, they're crazy — I can't even talk to them!" Here are some tips to help understand creative people and how to better relate to them.

#### Characteristics of Creative People



1. **They are vulnerable.** The first thing you need to realize is that good air personalities are putting a lot of themselves and their lives into their performance, which makes them vulnerable. There is a lot of emotional risk involved in being on the air.
2. **They want to be liked.**
3. **They are seeking approval.** Give them genuine and specific praise and you will save yourself money at the bargaining table when their contract is up. If there are no sincere compliments, that means 'you don't care and you don't like the show'.
4. **Since there is no studio audience, they thrive on feedback.** Talents need constant reinforcement of what they do best. No feedback = they will do anything to get attention, including being destructive and self-destructive.
5. **They don't value their creative gifts.** They think they're normal and everyone has them.
6. **Most creative talents are introverts and are uncomfortable in crowds.**

7. **They don't like to be told what to do.** Asking is always better than telling. Develop the art of asking the right questions so talent sees the point themselves and they have ownership of it.
8. **They are child-like.** Comedians will tell you that the key to staying on your game is to continue to look at the world through the eyes of a 7-year-old.
9. **They are non-linear.** Most managers are more analytical thinkers looking at the sequence of things; creative people are looking at the whole picture. Anytime you can, communicate information in a fun way (metaphors, analogies, humor, etc. vs. a long memo) to get across your point.
10. **Self-esteem is the life force of a personality,** and if that is suppressed or diminished, then so is the person and their performance.



## Establishing an Environment that Allows Talent to Grow

1. **Remember the Pygmalion Philosophy, that management expectations = performance by the employee.** If you expect them to do well, they will.
2. **Make the radio station a safe environment to make mistakes.** Help them feel that if they make one they will not be yelled at. Be supportive, even when they fail, so they feel safe trying new ideas.
3. **Expect and even be happy when you get listener or client complaints.** That means that people are noticing and listening and that there has been some sort of emotional connection made. Also realize that the vast majority of people who complain to radio stations are not typical or normal listeners. Client complaints are usually a ploy to get a lower rate.

What you don't want to do is argue with someone. They are usually pleased to even get a response. Be a good listener, thank them for their comments and tell them you will be sure to look into it.

4. **The most successful companies thrive on experimentation and encouraging creativity among their employees.** Allow employees to use 15% of their time experimenting, working on personal creative projects that could benefit the company, trying new ideas, etc.
5. **Listen to anyone with an idea and encourage them by looking for ways to make it a reality.**
6. **Agree to an open and honest relationship with air personalities based on mutual respect.**
7. **Encourage people to ask questions and even challenge you in a respectful way. Play devil's advocate in order to get the best content on the air.**

8. **Make the station a fun place to work.**
9. **Give talent their own work space/office** (email, business cards, equipment, etc.) that's conducive to the creative process.
10. **Invest in talent through seminars, conventions, workshops, etc.**
11. **Address technical problems quickly that can negatively impact the show.**
12. **Involve talent in decisions that impact the show.**
13. **Praise talent often, in public and privately.** Reprimand when needed (always in private). Forget it, move on.
14. **Call them during the show only when they do something good** (unless it absolutely cannot wait). Keep reinforcing their strengths.
15. **Listen to the show regularly** and make specific comments. Personalities will immediately smell the generic "Hey, sounding good" comments.
16. **Be a great listener, that's the key to communication.** Make sure it's a dialog, not a monologue.



## Creative Habits

Some people are more prone to be creative than others, but most creative people set up patterns and techniques – ‘creative habits’ -- to help them. Try being more creative yourself:

1. Think like a kid.
2. Be more random.
3. Spend time in nature every day.
4. Color outside the lines – break the rules, think outside the box.
5. Meditate – practice ‘brain parking’.
6. Exercise.
7. Write in a journal every day.
8. Watch comedies.



## Final Note

**The best way to judge the overall health of a radio station is by how much fun people are having.**



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