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| **ANNOUNCER APPROACH**  WHY AM I HERE?  What's the point to this program/this break? What are my goals in being on the radio in the first place? Education, illumination, companionship, entertainment, to provide a few seconds between each song? Fame? Big bucks?  WHO IS THE AUDIENCE?  How many of them are there? How much do they know about this music? What are they doing while they listen? Where are they? Why have they tuned to this station?  WHAT'S THE POINT OF ALL THIS?  What are the ultimate goals of the station? Why does it exist and why does it sound the way it does?  **PERSPECTIVE**  Radio stations, be they non-commercial, commercial, college owned, city-operated, music, sports, or talk are all services. Therefore you, as an announcer, are on the air to serve the listening audience. How that service is best provided is decided by folks who wear ties. The weirdest thing about radio is that, while you're working for the station, you're serving the audience. At any given moment you are talking to only one person. Orators work the crowd. Radio announcers communicate one to one.  The audience doesn't need to pass a test in order to listen to the service. Anybody can be listening. They may be listening with bated breath or they may be doing homework. They're in the car, the living room, at work or in the shower. They have WPPB on because they like the general sound of the station. Save yourself a bruised ego later on by realizing now that your one audience member is very much like a casual, somewhat easily distracted acquaintance with a frustratingly short attention span. That person likes you but hasn't much time for you.  Once a station's service has been decided, its aim is to get as many people as possible listening to it. Whatever it takes to accomplish that end will be done. Economics, community needs and even politics all contribute to the station's mission. The announcer is but one aspect of the service. The person behind the mike is the front line soldier who gets the most glory and is the most vulnerable.    **ANNOUNCER TIPS - "DO"**  SMILE  Literally! The person on the other side of the microphone may not be able to see your face, but they can certainly hear you when you crack a smile, In addition to the great music, listeners are tuning in for companionship. Be a friend rather than a scholar.  PREPARE  Think of each time you crack open the mike as parachuting. Just as you'd never jump out of a plane without having first prepared the chute and checked every piece of gear (twice), you'll want to know what you're going to do (engineering) and say before each and every break. Full scripting can be too restrictive but a list of items is vital.  (FOR EXAMPLE: OUTRO, ID, TIME CHECK, WEATHER, STORY/PROMO, INTRO TO SONG).  STRIDE  Having prepared adequately, tie each segment together in a conversational - not billboard - manner. Each break element should move logically forward to the next element whenever possible. Here's an example: "It's twenty before one on this sunny Thursday afternoon but you may want to bring the umbrella with you if you’re going out this evening, There's a 40% chance of rain tonight. . . ."  EDIT  Tell your audience only a fraction of what you know about the artist or song. Make it a point to build your introduction around one item and tease the listener with it ("Next on WPPB we'll hear a from an artist that loves to tour our area of the country and will be coming to town again soon"  CONNECT  Treat artists as if they lived down the street. In other words make them accessible. Place their activities/histories in ways that will make them human beings. Recreate for your listener the excitement, passion or ordinariness of these people's lives. Read everything you can about music and musicians, and especially be on top of local happenings.  GLIDE  Be confident in your words. Know the pronunciations of names, etc. and sound like an expert. It will make the audience feel comfortable with you.  LISTEN  When outroing a slow song, one kind of energy level is required. Quite another is appropriate coming out of a rock song. This is obvious, right? Then why do so few announcers adhere to it? Were we perhaps doing something else and not listening? If we expect the listener to pay attention to our show, shouldn't we join them?  PAUSE  Dead air is, indeed, a Program Director's worst nightmare, but when discretely applied it can also be a listener's best friend. If a dramatic song or segment has just aired, a heartbeat or two may be in order. A non- silent pause may also be introduced by using your voice (quietly) as a transition vehicle from music to announcing. This is the place for the editorial comment that can be tossed off.  ACT  Love you they may, but the listeners don't really care if you're having a lousy week. Even if it hurts, you have a responsibility and that responsibility is to entertain and enlighten. Plaster that smile firmly on your face and put the quibbles behind you. An open mike is not the place to air your grievances about co-workers, management, boyfriends/girlfriends, etc. If you are having a chance to be on the radio, life isn’t really that bad, is it?  ENJOY  The art of effective communication with a mass audience takes years of practice. You're being given the opportunity to learn the skills needed to go on with broadcasting as either a career or as a vital tool applicable to just about any field you can name. Relish your hours behind the mike what stories you'll collect for your golden years!   **ANNOUNCER TIPS - TRY TO AVOID**  PREACHING  The audience is not taking a musicology course. They just have the radio on in their car or at home. Avoid giving yearly chronologies of the artists' lives or their 24-city tour schedule. Keep it short and exciting.  SINGING  When an announcer feels tentative, it comes out in a condition known as sing-song. This phenomenon has the effect of making the announcer sound as if they've just come off the boat from Scandinavia. If your sentences and phrases generally end on an upswing, you've contracted sing-songitis. The cure: better preparation, five deep breaths and relaxing.  JUDGING  Let the listener decide if a song is great or not. Sure, we all want to hear some more Carly Rae Jepsen, but you don’t need to say that. And don’t say things like an artist is way better live than on recording, etc. Assume that the listener will figure it out eventually anyway or didn't really care to know one way or the other in the first place.  FAKING IT  If you don't know something, do one of two things. Either 1) Don't bring it up or 2) Admit it. Who likes hearing a bad liar?  REPEATING  Announcers often succumb to the temptation of becoming word junkies. It starts off innocently enough, with the random beautiful and the occasional great but soon the announcer finds it impossible to get through a break without five or six magnificents, wonderfuls, greats, splendids and, in the most progressed stages of the disease, even bodaciouses.  COASTING  One of the easiest traps to step into is the cruising syndrome. As we get comfortable within the format, small mannerisms creep in. Here are a few examples of cliches:  "Now we'll hear music by…” Redundant.  "Next is the music of ..." All of it?  ". . . .That was Summertime by Will Smith. It's a winter afternoon, though, here at WPPB. . . ." Stretching too far to connect.  ACCEPTING  Especially the above suggestions - blindly, anyway. The best in any field are the ones who break the mold. If, eventually, your creativity is stifled by conventions, give yourself the freedom to stop a moment, question your motivation for wanting to go your own way and then, if sufficiently confident of the defensibility of your reasons, go ahead and cut that new path.      **SUMMARY**  You have one of the cushiest, awesome, most desirable, powerful and maddening jobs in the whole wide world. Use the privilege well and enjoy. You can touch a person's life or a community's history in ways beyond your imaginings. Enjoy the learning, the growing (even the criticism) and the sheer thrill of knowing you are in a justifiably enviable position - the ubiquitous guest in homes, cars and offices throughout the region. |
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