

HOW  
TO  
BREAK  
INTO  
BROADCASTING!

by  
Jim Hawthorne

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## P R E F A C E

Having worked with Jim Hawthorne for 22 years, I know every complex convolution of his feverishly-creative brain; hence, the following pages are no dazzling revelation to me. Jim explains, with his usual insight, exactly how to burst into broadcasting. Frankly, it was I who taught him everything he knows about the business; so I have one tantalizing question – HOW COME HE'S MY BOSS? Perhaps I'd better have another look at my OWN monograph, "The Intelligent Disc Jockey's Guide," which starts off, "To be a top drawer DJ requires flawless enunciation, which is best achieved by cramming a dozen marbles into your mouth and then reciting the Gettysburg address backward in Gaelic. Each time you complete the oration, remove one marble. When you've lost ALL your marbles, you're a Disc Jockey!" I have to go now. The pains in my head are starting again.

10 May 1963

Bill Ballance KFWB, Los Angeles,  
6-9 PM Quip Jockey; graduate of  
the University of Illinois; former  
Marine Corps Captain and a per-  
fect example of Child Labor, Ruth-  
lessly Exploited.

## **"HOW TO BREAK INTO BROADCASTING" by**

**Jim Hawthorne**

I am probably asked more often than I am asked the time, "How can I break into your business?" Obviously, radio and television are magnets that attract the imaginative multitude. There are many reasons. In addition to the relatively luxurious working conditions – after achieving success, good pay and prestige – there is a certain magical aura radiated by the industry. That lure is comprised of intriguing surroundings . . . familiarity with the stars . . . communicating with thousands of people . . . being recognized everywhere . . . being seated immediately in restaurants . . . in short, being a "big man".

How do you achieve this exalted status in broadcasting?

It's not easy! And yet, many reach this lofty position yearly. In the following pages, you will find the secret of "cracking" the broadcasting business. However, one word of caution – the plan **WILL NOT WORK** – – **UNLESS YOU DO!!** Getting to the top is by no means an easy, simple matter. Many hours of intense, soul-searing work will be expended on your career before you even see a glimmer of hope. There is a definite possibility that you will **NEVER** get to the top! It is entirely up to you. But, if you really want to be a **SUCCESSFUL BROADCASTER** – whether it be in management or performance – then you have a chance!

First allow me to give you a little test. Answer the questions carefully and truthfully.

**Do you really want to be in broadcasting?**

**Yes**

**No**

If the answer is **YES**, then the following questions and answers are vital factors to reaching your final goal. If the answer is **NO**, then I would suggest you waste no further time and pass this document on to someone who does have an interest in being a broadcaster!

Now, answer the following questions.

**1. Have you finished high school?**

**Yes No**

The answer had better be YES, for without a basic high school education, you are doomed. It is possible to "get by" with just a high school education, BUT you will have to spend endless hours absorbing additional information and factual data to succeed in your position. You will be called upon hundreds of times for decisions that you will be able to answer only IF you have had the proper intellectual background, preferable formal education combined with your own efforts at acquired precise knowledge. You must be well-informed, particularly on current events.

**2. Have you finished college?**

**Yes No**

If the answer is NO, you had better make plans right now to somehow obtain a college degree or its "do-it-yourself" equivalent. As I pointed out above, it's impossible to get into the business without a HIGH SCHOOL education and even with a high school diploma it's mighty tough, if not impossible. If you feel that I'm over-stressing the importance of education, you are dead wrong! I CANNOT over-emphasize the seriousness of the situation. A thorough education is the fundamental prerequisite for a career in our industry.

**3. Am I willing to live in an area I dislike?**

**Yes No**

Show me a successful broadcaster and I'll show you a person who has spent many long months or years laboring in a station which was situated in some miserable place that makes him feel as if he had been sentenced to an electronic Siberia for some heinous crime. It's true! I'll explore this aspect later.

#### 4. Are you prepared to "starve"?

Yes No

It may seem a little far fetched, you say, to "starve", but I know of many friends in the business who have skipped countless meals to enable them to hover near some station that might eventually have a position open. I know of many men who have spent their last buck to reach a small town only to find the rumored job filled an hour before! And, even after getting a job, the salary has been delayed "for a little while" and they have had to accept the financial vacuum. It's not all peaches and cream, this great industry, but if it's going to be your career, then it's certainly worth it. When you have finished reading and studying this course, you will have to make up your own mind as to whether you have the drive, the "guts" to come out on top.

So much for the questions and answers. Now, let's explore the **hows** and **whys** and **wherefores** of "Getting into broadcasting!" Maturity is vital. And, yet again, I've heard of young men 16 or 17 obtaining fairly good jobs in broadcasting. These jobs were behind the scenes, and although the tasks were menial, **THEY WERE BONAFIDE JOBS IN THE INDUSTRY!** So, how do you go about getting into a station with a job of some sort -- any sort??

Step one may sound as if it were just too simple; yet, it is one sure way to "get your feet wet" and start you off on the road to a gratifyingly successful lifetime in the radio or television industry!

Start at the bottom! Ask for ANY kind of a job in or around a station. You may be a part-time janitor, record librarian, keeper of useless information, a news-apprentice . . . . BUT, you are IN! And then you learn by observation, by asking questions, by studying techniques and by forming logical conclusions that will carry you through a successful tour of the broadcasting world.

You may well wonder why I have not yet mentioned professional schools as a method of getting into broadcasting. Well, I haven't for a very good reason -- there is no school that can

guarantee you will find a job and be successful . . . no school can! A school can train you in basics and help you get your first class FCC ticket, but it cannot give you the vital experience that actual on-the-job training can. And this sort of training can be obtained only via the above mentioned "ANY JOB" route!

A first class FCC ticket may be helpful in getting you a job as a "combo man" in a small market radio station. BUT you must have all the other abilities, either overtly or latently. Therefore, the fact that you have a first class ticket does not positively guarantee you a job. First Class licenses are desirable, but they are not a necessity. You need not have one . . . . thousands in the business do not have them.

What is important is the DESIRE to learn and achieve – the willingness to start at the very bottom and work your way up. As corny and implausible as it may sound to you, this is the SURE WAY to get started and reach the top of the industry, "plateau by plateau"!

I will now outline exactly how you should apply for a position . . . your first . . . in radio or television.

(a) Select the market you prefer to work in. In other words, if there is a radio or television station in a city where you would like to work, let them know it!! Get acquainted with employees of the station; tell them you are interested in working in any capacity at the station – just anything; even if it's going for coffee and running errands for the deejay or announcer. This gives you an entree to the premises and gets you acquainted with the other employees; it gives you the opportunity to show the executive echelon that you are interested in their organization. You can be certain they will be aware of your presence. Your hiring may not be immediate – it may take days, weeks, months, maybe even years (depending upon the need for your capabilities). But is a sure way to get started! This is the time when one of your most vital needs is patience and the ability to "sweat it out".

Now, what do you do after you've earned a job within the organization? WORK! Work at any

and all tasks! NOTHING should be too menial! For instance, if there is help needed in any department, **volunteer** your time and energy! This will not only demonstrate your abilities in certain areas, but it will also prove that you really want to become an active member of the "team".

As for pay — don't worry about it! If you get only carfare or expenses and possibly not even that — accept it gratefully. Your compensation is the best possible . . . **EXPERIENCE** . . . in all phases of broadcasting!

After you serve this apprenticeship for a matter of months or years (depending upon the breaks) you will have decided in which area you are qualified for to best utilize your broadcasting "know how". This is an important decision to make, for you will have to fit into a totally different environment and adjust to people who may not understand you; and conversely, you may not understand them. It is up to you, however, to make the necessary personality-changes. This is the best method of learning the business and enabling you to evolve into "the big time"!

So what comes after you serve this "learning" time? During your hinterland training period, you must decide precisely what you want to do and where you want to do it. In other words, you must settle on the specific job you want in the industry and where you want to perform it. Therefore, it is imperative that you make your plans **BEFORE** you leave the station where you have acquired your experience. One word of advice: **DON'T BE A FLOATER!** Probably the most harmful practice of the beginning broadcaster is never really settling down and concentrating on himself, but allowing restlessness to control his good sense. Of course, if you feel that you have learned all you can from your current job and have given it everything you are capable of giving it, then obviously it is time to "move on". However, you must be absolutely positive that this is the case and that you're not just the drifter type — the kind of person who flits impulsively from job to job just because he has the urge. This



is fatal professionally and seldom, if ever, do those in this category succeed. No one wants to hire someone who has had twelve jobs in twelve months, and believe me, this is frequently the case! I have had applicants list countless jobs on their applications and when I asked them about it they had no explanation other than "Oh, I don't know, I just like to move around"! Needless to say, this is NOT the type of man to be hired because no employer wants to have an unstable, unreliable worker walk out on him after dabbling in a job for a couple of months!

So now, what about the opposite? This is the "solid citizen" type. He's reliable, stable and eager to contribute to your success as well as to his own. This is the man who usually gets hired. If this is YOU, then you are on your way!

What is the proper approach to attain an interview? I have at least four or five applicants daily, so obviously I cannot see all of them. Therefore, whom do I select? To make the choice, I must evaluate every facet of the application. Did he take the trouble to write me or did he take the easy way out and telephone? As you may know, if there is an opening, then there is an advantage. You probably will be considered. But, what if there is no position open, but you are being interviewed as a courtesy – which is usually the case – then you must make a good impression. You must spend time **PREPARING** your presentation! Now, let me dwell upon this thought for a while. Preparation is the most important factor in your entire career in broadcasting. Prepare with precision. Don't settle for half-done presentation. Many times I have refused to listen to more than 30 seconds of a tape presentation audition because I instantly detected a lack of preparation. I will go into greater detail concerning this factor of preparing for a position in radio or television. But, the basics are **WORK** and **PREPARATION** in every written or spoken word.

What happens to your presentation? If it impresses the listener in a way that he feels that the applicant has tangible talent, then you, the applicant, may be considered for an inter-

view. So you're called. Your first meeting with your future boss is crucial. How you look, how you act, how you present yourself are critically being observed. You must be sincere in your approach. You must speak up and shut up. A busy broadcasting executive is no different from any other busy executive. He must evaluate you immediately and start forming his opinion of you within the first moments of your conversation. Therefore, if you fail to be PREPARED, then unquestionably you will not be accepted. It's that simple. Competition for the job you are seeking is intense. Those who are seeking the same job you are will be eliminated based upon the very concept I have outlined above. Why is there such a stringent restriction placed upon you? The answer is obvious: The market is glutted with "half-finished" individuals, and that's precisely what you are if you fail to fulfill your obligations to yourself by failing to PREPARE and present the BEST of you.

Qualifications? In addition to the above mentioned background, you must have had sufficient on-the-job experience in a market smaller than the one you are seeking to enter. I have never heard of anyone being accepted for a job in a major market sans this background. The act of proving oneself fit for a job is one that has this actual, physical, background of experience.

Don't try to get a job in a higher echelon of broadcasting UNTIL YOU HAVE PREPARED YOURSELF FOR IT! You will hurt no one but yourself! It may set you back years in your career . . . and is certain to mar your self-confidence.

Pages could be filled with what you DON'T DO in preparing yourself for the big time! But how many pages can you fill with what YOU HAVE DONE IN PREPARING YOURSELF?

A return to the school situation is in order here. I will outline the schooling available to you and how to utilize it in your quest for success.

First of all, your basic high school education must revolve around the ingredients necessary to future endeavors. A public speaking class will enable you to present yourself to audiences. It will give you the opportunity to understand people – a most vital part of working in broadcasting. Also, a public speaking class will give you the chance to try out your abilities, or develop same, in regards to creative writing. You will be requested to prepare (there's that word again) written material for presentation to a critical class. This will come in handy when, later, you will be called upon to write copy for an advertiser or promotion material for a station. A course in public speaking is only one tiny portion of your education for broadcasting. It will be a necessity for you to matriculate in every possible class that might somehow contribute to your career. There is no class that will not help you in some way towards self-preparation. Obviously, classes in clay modeling might be less desirable, say, than mathematics, but you must have a well-rounded education in all aspects of life, for you will be called upon to demonstrate your abilities to pronounce difficult words, compute a rate card for selling advertising, devise contests for air promotions, write announcements, write and deliver news, ad lib your way out of difficult situations, sell advertising to a reluctant client, answer the telephones and talk intelligently to the public on subjects about which you may know nothing and generally be able to convey the impression that you are a "know all see all" individual!!

Possibly by now you are saying to yourself: "This sounds too tough . . . I don't know whether or not I want to go to all the trouble"! If you have come this far and the answer is negative, I would suggest you select some other occupation. Broadcasting is a demanding, specialized, difficult, heart-breaking business BUT – as is all show business – it is rewarding, satisfying and fun!

Now a word on how to prepare a tape for audition, provided you are heading for an announcing or personality job. First, a DON'T! DON'T offer a tape that is a mere air-check of a mediocre, run-of-the-mill hackneyed, day-in-

day-out program. This is the fastest way to reach **FAILURE!** Here you have the opportunity to be heard, and all you do is present yourself in the worst possible way to a person who is looking for something that sets you apart from the usual! What do you put on tape that "grabs" the listener and puts you in good competitive posture for a position? — Once again that magic word, **P R E P A R A T I O N ! !** Sit down with a pencil and paper and make an outline of precisely what you have that makes you **WANTED!** Put down the plusses you can offer. If there are none, then you had better stop right away and go back to the training ground for it's obvious that you're **NOT READY!** But, if you do have something different to offer, then list those ideas and start shaping them into a produced tape. Seek the different way to do the usual. Be resourceful and creative! This is the way you will attract attention. This is the **ONLY** way you will have an opportunity to talk over the most important thing in your life: **YOUR CAREER IN BROADCASTING.** I can't tell you how many hundreds of tapes I have returned to the sender after spending only seconds listening — the reason being a transparent lack of interest on behalf of the person submitting the presentation, a lackadaisical approach so obvious that I ask myself "why should I waste a moment on him, when he dosen't spend an extra moment investing in himself"! The auditioner's lack of interest reflects in his work immediately; hence, the same "lack of interest" is manifested by me, the program director.

So, if that attitude exists in yourself, do one of two things. One, make up your mind to **FIND** the way to do it differently or, two, forget the whole thing and get a job in some simple, less-demanding field that expects only the average.

This selective approach may sound ruthless to you, and that's precisely what I mean it to be. There are too many energetic and talented hopefuls in broadcasting who are seeking success and who are determined to achieve it. Therefore, why should you literally waste your time — and the time of broadcasting people — when you, yourself, do not really want to get

ahead? So, forget it unless you have a burning desire to fight your way to the top!

If, after demonstrating on a tape audition that you have talent and you are then asked to "bring in another tape and this time spend more time on it", you probably have your greatest opportunity to "crack" the entertainment world via broadcasting. So what do you do now? Don't do what more than 90% do in this case, and never come back with that requested tape because it's just a little bit too much work for you and you feel you might just as well not do the requested additional work. This is another positive way to reach the negative. Put YOURSELF in that position. What do you do now? You start your imaginative processes going again and come up with new ideas, new approaches, new sounds, new ways of doing the same thing! – in brief, think in new categories! Take the re-polished product back to the person requesting it, and anticipate a positive result. Possibly you may be asked again to rework or embellish the presentation. If so, DON'T QUIT! Do go after it again and keep coming up with what is needed! The only CAUSE of failure is YOU!! Never blame the "breaks" or the executive who could hire you! You and only you are responsible.

Now, after you have read this far, you must have an opinion . . . and questions about that opinion. Either you have decided that broadcasting is for you or you are not for broadcasting. If the answer is in the affirmative, then your questions, I will presume, are among the following. I will answer the questions most likely to be asked.

**Q:** About education . . . what kind of courses should I take?

**A:** Anything and everything . . . that will help you in your career.

A liberal arts background is a necessity. History, contemporary and ancient—graphic arts will help you with a sense of the visual, if television is your selection; if radio is your course, then the knowledge of this form of art

training will also become important to you in the area of printed advertising, design, elocution and the ability to project a penetratingly pleasant personality.

Q: How about schools?

A: **First, assuming you have finished high school, check out the Junior College or College that has a strong program in broadcasting.**

A “theory” type of curriculum is not as attractive as that which gives you actual experience with equipment, including the use of microphones and spinning your own records. This is an extremely vital factor in your training so be positive that you select the best available school. Ask broadcasters in your community for help. Often they know which schools give the most realistic training. Take note that I used the plural above, i.e., broadcasters; not the singular. Form your opinion **ONLY AFTER** you have talked to or written to those involved directly in the broadcasting profession. It may take a little more time, but this is your entire future. Trading a few hours of research for many successful years as a professional is obviously the least you can do to “get rolling”.

Q: How about private schools?

A: **The same principles apply. If the private school is of a practical type – that is, you ACTUALLY PERFORM the physical motions of broadcasting, then theory method becomes secondary.**

Many private and possibly some public schools give enough instruction so that you are able to win your radio-telephone operator’s (first class) FCC license. However, as I pointed out earlier, a first class ticket does not guarantee you that you’ll be hired – it is merely a plus factor that may mean the difference between hiring you or someone who does not have the license in a radio or TV station. In 99% of these cases, the market is in a small town.

**Q:** So I've gone through the schools as outlined above, now what do I do? Do I go to a small town or head immediately for the big time?

**A:** To crack the big time takes the background of the small town operation. I have never heard of someone breaking into the major markets who has not spent years of training – both in school and in practical application (working in a small market) gradually working up to the major market.

Pick up broadcasting magazines and look through the ads. If you qualify for any of the jobs, dispatch a letter or telegram instantly. Rapid action is imperative. Competition is intense. So **MOVE WITH SPEED!** As I said before, (again) the job may be in a small, remote market, in dismal surroundings at a station with primitive equipment. **BUT IT'S A START!** so, go after it!

**Q:** "After I spend my "apprenticeship", then what"?

**A:** By the time this is an accomplished fact, you will have made your contacts in the business. These contacts are people in all related fields.

You may talk with a turntable or amplifier salesman who spends 50% or more of his time in the field. This man has the contacts you want; he has just left a town that has an ideal opening . . . he tells you about it . . . the town is about twice the size of yours and could very well be an upward stepping stone . . . you decide you would like to go to work there . . . you contact the manager who says, "send me a tape" or "I'd like to talk to you"! Then you're on your own. Use the methods as outlined earlier. You're on your way. One admonitory note: When you resign from your first station in your climb to success, give notice – and thank the manager for his having given you your first break. This is not only professional courtesy; it is common sense, for one day, he may again be in a position to help you!

**Q:** So, now I've read all your words and am not sure that I want to get into radio or television. Now what do I do?

**A:** Forget it! If show business is for you, you'll know it after you ask yourself that question!

Any intelligent person is capable of getting somewhere in radio or television. To be sure, all of you will not go to the top. Some of you will. But wherever and however you spend your life in the industry it will be a fascinating, generally rewarding life and it will never be dull!

Most of these words have been written with the idea in mind that you were seeking the talent end of the business. However, the concept is the same if you are interested in the business or "management" field of broadcasting. One word of caution. Either is very difficult to achieve; therefore, you should spend the same, meticulous care in preparing yourself for your future. Hours of study, application and physical work are ahead. **ONLY YOU CAN DO IT . . . .** no one is going to do the work or absorb the know-how for you!

Whichever phase you are interested in, make your decision as soon as possible, but only after you have worked in the industry long enough to make up your mind. In other words, if you are unhappy in your particular job as Management or Talent, then change as soon as you are positive which way you want to go. Always keep in mind that all men are created equal – but it's what they're equal to that counts!

I leave you with eight significant words . . . **"Good luck – and don't send me any \*tapes"!**

**JIM HAWTHORNE,**

**\*Unless they are painstakingly PREPARED!**