

THE METHOD TO THE MADNESS

Radio's Morning Show Manual

by The American Comedy Network



70 Personalities Tell You What it Takes to Have a Funnier, More Creative, and More Successful Morning Show,
with a Foreword by Don Imus.



THE METHOD TO THE MADNESS

Radio's Morning Show Manual

ACN

The American Comedy Network

The New Way to Win in the Morning

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Left to Right

David Lawrence
Bob James
Andrew Goodman
Mechele George
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The American Comedy Network dedicates this book to morning radio personalities everywhere.

Only YOU know how hard it really is.

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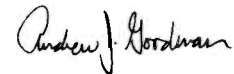
John Arthur, WNCR-AM/Columbus, OH (completed survey while at WZOK-FM/Rockford, IL)
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Bob Cooper, KWEN-FM/Tulsa, OK
Jack Daniels, KRNQ-FM/Des Moines, IA
Bob DeCarlo, WIQI-FM/Tampa, FL
Gary DeGraide, WPJB-FM/Providence, RI
Corey Dietz, WRVQ-FM/Richmond, VA
Rob Dillman, WOCC-AM/Middletown, NY
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Paul Douglas, WCIT-AM/Lima, OH
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Mike Fiss, WYYY-FM/Syracuse, NY
Jade Gartside, WFYV-FM/Jacksonville, FL
Steve Gibbons, KRNT-AM/Des Moines, IA
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Andy Tutin, KCMQ-FM/Columbia, MO
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Rick Ward, KNRY-AM/Monterey, CA
Patti Wheeler, WZZK-FM/Birmingham, AL
Scott Woodside, WRQX-FM/Washington, DC
John Willis, WERZ-FM/Portsmouth, NH
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Zip Zipfel, WAAF-FM/Boston, MA

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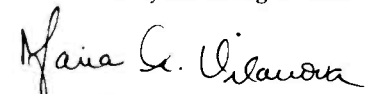
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(June 1985)

Foreword

THE METHOD TO THE MADNESS: Seventy personalities tell you how to have a funnier, more creative, more entertaining and more successful show. Terrific.

Begin by stealing everything in this book. I mean, if these people were naive enough to turn over their best bits to goons for publication, they deserve to be ripped off. However, you did buy this book, didn't you? So, hey, the way I look at it, you've paid for this junk. You'll notice, by the way, that none of my material is in here. Charles McCord and I haven't spent the last ten years writing so that somebody else can cash in on it. No, our book's coming. The things you haven't already lifted from us you'll get then.

I'm often asked where I get my ideas. From other radio shows, where else? But seriously, what's funny? "Funny" is what's serious. We all take a perverse delight in the misfortunes of others, now don't we? And in show business in particular. We resent their triumphs and we gloat over their flops. So, while it is therefore impossible to applaud their successes, we can ridicule them — while we dwell on their disasters — couching everything in the guise of humor, of course. "Of course."

Humor is most often discovered in truth and tragedy. Take the Eldridge Cleaver look-a-like contest I ran in 1970 . . . please. It got me famous, but fired. In fact, I got so famous that when I now do Claus Von Bulow trial updates, read over the haunting strains of "When Sunny Gets Blue," they don't dare fire me. I'd wreck 'em. As a basic tenet of my approach to humor, I always try to slam-dunk a little sex and violence into an otherwise boring Barry Manilow world.

From Will Rogers to Bob Hope, people have become famous by making fun of people who are famous. There's been a panoply of bozos available; The Roosevelts, Kennedys, Johnsons, Nixons, Fords, Carters, Reagans, Ferraro-Zaccaros (Jesus!), the Liz Taylors and Barbara Walters. From their loins sprang out Mort Sahl's, Chevy Chases, Gilda Radners, Joan Rivers and Eddie Murphys. Wait a minute. He must've sprung from somebody else's loins. Maybe Jessie Jackson's.

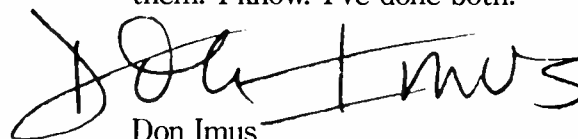
The fodder is all right there in your morning paper; Watergate, Abscam, combustible negroes, Roxanne Pulitzer, Vanessa Williams, Edwin Moses, Bernie Goetz, they're all begging for our attention. And have you noticed how everytime we

catch one of these slime-balls red-handed, they find Jesus! Jesus, I'll bet He's thrilled . . .

Ted (SCREEEECH-CRASH! GURGLE-GURGLE) Kennedy will always occupy a warm spot in my heart. When former Congressman Wilbur Mills got caught with stripper Fannie "The Argentine Firecracker" Foxx, dog-paddling in Washington D.C.'s Tidal Basin, I speculated that he probably telephoned Kennedy and asked, "Okay, I got her in the water, now what do I do?" And when George Wallace was running for the Presidency, I suggested that we end political violence in America: "Put somebody in the White House who's already been shot."

More recently, we had Liz Taylor and the "Husband of the Month" centerfold, Dennis Stein. (What? Oh.) Sorry, make that Liz Taylor and OCCUPANT. Jesus, this woman's been around more times than a wheel on Cale Yarborough's Chevy. And how about the Mayflower Madam? A young woman who traces her ancestry to the Mayflowers pilgrims, hence her nickname. She's a Philadelphia blue-blood and accused (horrors) of operating an, ah, "escort service." You're familiar with their slogan: "We make money the *oldest* fashioned way. We fuck for it!" And the number of stars stampeding toward the Betty Ford Dry-Out Clinic looks like the start of the Boston Marathon. Betty now offers mid-week rates and kids stay free in your room. "Go out to the pool now, Billy. Mommie's gonna climb the walls." I loved Geraldine Ferraro's Pepsi commercial, but felt it would have been more appropriate, somehow, if she'd done one for H&R Block. John DeLorean had last years big hit video — Candid Camera category: "unfortunately, John couldn't be here tonight, so accepting on his behalf here's F.B.I. Director, William Webster" . . . and Joanna Carson says life just isn't worth living on \$44,600.00 a month. The "We are the World" gang must've really touched her. And then, a recent issue of the National Lampoon asked, "how crazy can somebody be who wants to shoot Ronald Reagan and hose Jodi Foster?" Good Question. You get the idea.

Remember, you can always sell cars. Or steal them. I know. I've done both.



Don Imus
New York

Introduction

Everyone in radio readily acknowledges that the morning show is the key daypart behind a station's success. It stands to reason that the person (or people) responsible for that show will have a great deal to do with the station's eventual success or failure. And yet, to the best of our knowledge, this is one job for which there is little or no formal training. Certainly there are schools that teach you how to run a board, books which address certain formatic issues, and even a few seminars here and there; but when we asked our 70 personalities what training *they* received or were simply aware of, the answer was a uniform "None!"

And this lack of education is a continuing phenomenon. Since morning shows tend to be unique, most people believe (and rightly so) that no one kind of training or education can adequately address every morning talent's needs. And even if such a program existed, it is unlikely that stations would allow their personalities time off to attend.

So, it is in this vacuum of ideas and information that a book such as this may begin to provide some help. Admittedly, morning shows are different . . . their needs do tend to be unique. But at the same time, there *are* some universal rules that apply no matter what size market, what target demographic, or what format you're dealing with.

And if there was ever a time for such a book, it is now. With the re-emergence of "personality radio", many morning talents who had been told to "shut up and play the hits" are being told to open up the microphone and "have fun!" But it's just not as easy as that, and the manager who's just told you what to do may not be able to tell you *how* to do it. The need for some kind of training, some kind of investigation into the intricacies of personality radio has become greater than ever.

This book has brought together 70 morning personalities in what amounts to a round-table discussion of excellence in morning radio. It is *not* the definitive last word on how to create a funnier, more creative, more successful morning show. Rather, we hope this will be the *first* word in discussions you carry on at your station with your colleagues. If our information helps to create (or reinforce) a solid foundation for your show, then this book will have served its purpose.

Who should read this book?

If you are the host, co-host, producer, manager, or are in any way associated with a morning radio show, this book is probably for you. We say "probably" because there is one proviso: we will be dealing with that form of personality radio where humor and creativity are two of the most essential elements. For the reader who is "the morning person" (and we use the word "person" because we're dealing with men *and* women), we hope to offer some specific suggestions on how to inject more of these elements into your show. For the Program Director and General Manager, we'd like to help them find ways to create the environment in which such a program can flourish. And for the industry in general, we hope to raise the level of appreciation for the combination of art and science that goes into a consistently winning morning product.

How was it put together?

In assembling this book, we began with the common-sense assumption that no one knows more about morning radio shows than morning show hosts themselves. So, we designed a questionnaire to get a group of veteran personalities thinking and talking about their shows: what they put into it, what they get out of it, and above all, what their listeners got out of it. That questionnaire appears in the Appendix of this book. (We recommend, incidentally, that you look this over and ask *yourself* these same questions. That process alone may get you thinking creatively about your own program.)

This questionnaire was distributed to all the morning personalities within The American Comedy Network, and was the basis for telephone interviews conducted with personalities outside our network. As you can probably tell by the list

of personalities in our Acknowledgments, we looked for representatives of several formats (e.g. Adult Contemporary, CHR or Top 40, Country, AOR), from all market sizes. Many of the names you will recognize, some you will not — but all these people have one thing in common which became apparent to us as we reviewed their responses. They are individuals who care a great deal about their shows. They have thought about every single element that goes into them, and continually seek ways to improve them. In short, there really is a “method to their madness”. Their thoughts and advice are well worth reading and we have passed them along to you here with as little “filtering” as possible.

What Is This Job All About?

I get up at two. I'm on the air from 5:30 until 10. I try to get out of here by two in the afternoon so I can beat the rush hour . . . but often times I don't make it, which means I just hang around until after the rush hour. A lot of times I'm around here until 7:00 at night.

Larry Lujack, WLS-AM (Chicago)

A morning show is like no other 8-hours-per-day, 40-hours-per-week job, mainly because it's rarely 8 hours a day or 40 hours a week. As Dick Purtan of WCZY-FM says, "You're always tired", and virtually everyone we interviewed agreed. It's four (or more) very physically demanding hours on the air, and many more off. Consider one morning person's typical weekday schedule:

■ *I'm up at 4 a.m. and in the office by 4:30. I start with breakfast and CNN Headline News before I leave home. I meet with my producer (PD Reggie Blackwell) and we go over the schedule breaking it down by quarter hours. At 5, I meet with the newsman to be ready with an update of what's happening locally. By 5:30 I'm ready and raring. When I get off the air, I sit down for a while just to catch my breath and then do my promos for the rest of the day. Three times a week I do special prepared bits. I go over my tape every day. I'm out of the office by 12:30. I make 6 appearances (at least) a week and those can happen anytime. I try to get to the malls a couple of times a week, plus I watch my VCR of soap operas, news, and do a lot of reading in the afternoon. At 4 I take a nap until 6, and then I get up, have dinner, and then work out (if I'm not appearing somewhere), watch the hot TV shows after "Entertainment Tonight". I'm in bed by 11 p.*

B.J. Hunter, KOPA-FM (Phoenix)

And all of that is just *before* and *after* the show. What goes in between is, as Brad Krantz of WZOU-FM calls it, ". . . a different animal from other shifts." Every personality we contacted emphasized how different their station is between 6:00 a.m. and 10:00 a.m. (the standard morning show shift) and the rest of the day. Invariably, if there were informational elements (e.g. weather, sports, traffic) or room for more "personality", they were in the morning product, and sometimes exclusively in that daypart. And *that* creates a lot more responsibility for the morning person, to the listeners . . .

■ *Mornings require you to relate more, in more ways: time, temp, what is my day going to be like? What should I wear? When should I drive, and where? Can I count on you to run the news, sports, weather at the same time so I know what time it is without you telling me? Some (listeners will be) showering, some working, some driving, some leaving to jog, some staying home and sending everyone else out. I've got to relate to them all and fill each one's need.*

Bobby Gunther Walsh, WAEB-AM (Allentown)

. . . and to the station:

■ *The morning show not only has got to be entertaining, but I think the biggest thing that a morning show has got to be is a cheerleader for the rest of the day. So, the morning guy has not only got to spoon-feed basic information and be funny; there's got to be an element of cheerleading for the rest of the radio station.*

Chris Evans, WKCI-FM (New Haven)

But the one point everyone kept coming back to as they reflected on the unique aspects of the morning shift was the relationship between the personality and the morning audience. Bobby Walsh commented on some of the specifics above, but it was interesting how many people saw their role in more general terms; saw their responsibility as simply to get people going forward into their day with a smile or a laugh . . .

■ *The best thing about being a morning man is that when you wake people up, you literally have them in the palm of your hand. You can make somebody's day by just really being high energy and having a good time and a great sense of humor.*

Charles Laquidara, WBCN-FM (Boston)

Of course, the morning shift is not only a terrible schedule and awesome responsibility to the listeners and station. It's also the highest profile position on the staff; consistently the highest paid; and by many accounts, the most fun. For financial and ego gratification it's tough to beat. And, as Scott Woodside summarized:

■ *It prepares you to do anything in entertainment: stand-up comedy, acting, hosting. It gives you confidence, personal pride. And it's great to be able to influence people in a positive manner.*

Scott Woodside, WRQX-FM (Washington, DC)

Being “The Morning Personality”

My mother tells me, when I was 6 years old, I used to take the microphone which you could plug into the radio, and I would go into a nearby closet. I would stand in there and read the news.

Dick Purtan, WCZY-FM (Detroit)

The hours are lousy, the work's too hard, the pay's too low. So why are all these people working the morning shift? They love radio. An almost irrational dedication to the medium runs through all 70 of the people we interviewed, and most trace this feeling back to their very beginnings in the business. It's hard to imagine Larry Lujack as a young kid, scrambling to hear his own voice on the airwaves . . . but he did:

■ *I can remember my first job in Caldwell, Idaho. If I recorded a commercial, I would look at the next day's log to see when it was going to run, and I would write the time down so I could hear myself on the radio.*

Larry Lujack, WLS-AM (Chicago)

This level of dedication and commitment to radio in general is worth thinking about, because if you can't find it within yourself, chances are you won't be able to put up with the demands of the morning shift. And even if you can, if you're not *enjoying* it it's still not worth pursuing:

■ *Enjoy it. When you no longer enjoy getting up at 3 a.m. to go to work, and when you no longer enjoy your shift on the air . . . chances are your listeners will not enjoy it.*

Spike O'Dell, KIIK-FM (Quad Cities)

If you're still with us at this point, we'll assume that dedication is not an issue. But it's not the end of the story either. Alright: you know what the job demands and you're ready to deliver. But *who* are you? What kind of personality do you have and how are you going

to project this on the air? We asked these questions to all 70 personalities and everyone had an answer, but it was remarkable how many admitted they had never thought about it that specifically, and had never been asked to write it out before we asked them. If you haven't (or the person you work with or manage has not), it's useful to think about it right now and write out a brief description of precisely who you are on the air. To help get you started, consider the following sample, written by ACN's own Bob James while a personality at WWDC-AM in Washington, D.C.:

Bob James is both sophisticated/urbane and down-home corny. He'll use a slick set-up for a corny punch line. Bob James is "Steve Allen-like" in his approach and delivery. When you listen to him, you get the feeling he's constantly putting you on. All forms of humor (puns, one-liners, non-sequiturs, baby-blue lines, poetry, song parodies, etc.) make up his repertoire.

Though he's written all the jokes and practiced them, when the phone rings or the door knocks (to introduce a character), Bob invests total credibility in the character so the listener will believe that the character — and not Bob — actually controls the show. Bob is no longer the aggressive joke-teller; the characters are, and Bob assumes the same "reactive" status as his listeners.

Bob James is predictable, consistent, and sincere. Listeners know when he's on the air there will be lots of laughs and good company; and that he would sooner down himself than insult a listener. He relates to the 18-49 demographic because he talks about and jokes about all the same problems and situations they encounter.

That's about as close to a "job description" as any manager could ever ask for from the morning talent. A lot of these descriptives, however, may not apply to you due to the unique demands of your format and audience. So, as a final thought-starter in this area, consider these brief summaries which morning talents from all around the country used to describe themselves:

■ *A smart-ass type. Slick one-liners, but at least once a day my "slick" self gets into trouble (e.g. a bit backfires).*

Rick Ward, KNRY-AM (Monterey)

■ *Loose, controversial, opinionated, sarcastic, irreverent. I do a lot of politically oriented humor.*

Chris Jones, WFYV-FM (Jacksonville)

■ *I find myself in the second banana role with our show . . . it is of importance beyond words. You have to be aware of every word and thought coming from your partner, and be ready to respond at a moment's notice. My style is one of support and humor; and when looking at the news, to do so in a human style. If I make a mistake, I cover it — by an instant reaction, either laugh at myself, or in some other way to make it sound human.*

Jade Gartside, WFYV-FM (Jacksonville)

■ *(I sound) like I don't know what's going on — and most of the time, I don't! Anything can happen or be said.*

Jay Thomas, WKTU-FM (New York)

■ *I try to be natural, real, irreverent, and relate to every day individuals. I want to be able to relate to young adults in a hip and bizarre fashion. We call it "controlled insanity".*

Paul Barsky, WCAU-FM (Philadelphia)

■ *Cynical, satirical, some (things) planned, most spontaneous. Absurdity is the root of (my) humor.*

Scott Woodside, WRQX-FM (Washington, DC)

■ *A morning . . . show is just talking like you talk to your wife, your boyfriend, your friends, around coffee at a breakfast table.*

Gary D., WUSN-FM (Chicago)

■ *I try to put myself about halfway between David Letterman and Robin Williams. I'll try to be the glib, straight type in the midst of chaos (like Letterman, Bob Newhart, or Jack Benny) . . . but I will also bounce off the nearest wall as a goofy character in the style of Robin Williams (e.g. impersonating Julio Iglesias doing "Honky Tonk Woman").*

Tim Boyle, WMT-FM (Cedar Rapids)

■ *I don't have a specific style. I couldn't give it a name. I do what I think is funny. Since it's my show and my responsibility, I use my judgment as to what to use. I'm a wise-ass, but in a nice way.*

Steve Cochran, WMXJ-FM (Miami)

■ *Highly-energized entertainer, giving my listeners a side order of ham with their eggs in the morning.*

Kemosabi Joe, WZYQ-FM (Frederick, MD)

■ *On one break I'll hold your hand, and another I'll be absolutely off the wall.*

Ron Chapman, KVIL-AM (Dallas)

■ *You try to build a relationship to the point that people will accept it like they will from their friends . . . like the Johnny Carson show. When he bombs, people love it, because they look at him like he's their pal. One of the main qualities is an honesty that people can really get a handle on. I have found that it's much easier to be me than to assume some character.*

Don Bleu, KYUU-FM (San Francisco)

■ *My personality on the air is the same as it is off the air. If you're going to be different on the air, then that's phony and I think that — in most cases — it's too easy for the listeners to pick up. It's just so much easier to be yourself.*

Larry Lujack, WLS-AM (Chicago)

■ *You end up taking a little bit from a whole bunch of different people and putting all of that together . . . and that becomes you. The secret is knowing who's good and who's not!*

Dick Purtan, WCZY-FM (Detroit)

■ *I think today's successful morning person must be issue-oriented. If there's a humorous twist, explore it. Plus, I tell a lot of stories from my family and things that happen to me every day. (I'm) caring, but crazy.*

B.J. Hunter, KOPA-FM (Phoenix)

■ *Even though it's the humor that gets them and attracts them, it's the little, warm human bit — the glimpses of myself — that people seem to remember me for.*

Dr. Don Rose, KFRC-AM (San Francisco)

■ *Family man trying to survive the kids (I relate to Bill Cosby). I'm basically an overweight, hairy faced, maladjusted DJ playing decadent rock and roll.*

Jack Daniels, KRNQ-FM (Des Moines)

■ *Empathetic . . . someone to take them by the hand and help them around early in the day. Maybe kind of like their seeing eye dog until they're aware and awake.*

Mark Osborne, WKSQ-FM (Bangor)

■ *Warm, witty, whistle-clean and wonderful.*

Bob DeCarlo, WIQI-FM (Tampa)

■ *I'm warm, very human, basically laugh at myself. Always looking for a date. Rotten housekeeper, and very unconventional. In short, I'm myself, and I do consciously reinforce this by what I do on the air.*

Patti Wheeler, WZZK-FM (Birmingham)

■ *Big Mike is a friendly guy who likes to have a good time, is well-informed, honest, self-deprecating, and funny. I do a lot of phone bits to emphasize this. I also discuss topical items with my newsman and sports man in this way.*

Mike Fiss, WYYY-FM (Syracuse)

■ *Warm, friendly, sincere . . . humor slightly sarcastic. They tell me I come off like Dagwood Bumstead: the foil to my own jokes.*

Richard Sloane, WMIL-FM (Milwaukee)

■ *My personality is positive and upbeat, with occasional provisions for serious and somber notes. I'm 33 years old — the perfect age to relate to my audience in terms of lifestyle. I talk lots about the everyday (e.g. taxes, kids, hassles) happenings of life, and try to position myself as your next-door neighbor.*

Bob Cooper, KWEN-FM (Tulsa)

■ *The image I portray on the air is a community person, a husband, a father . . . a middle-American yuppie. But I do add things which make it bigger than life.*

Corey Dietz, WRVQ-FM (Richmond)

Whether you choose to be the “slick, smart-ass”, the “Dagwood Bumstead”, or someone in between, one element that should always come through is a **positive** approach. Your audience wants to like you, and they want to connect with you on an emotional level. You make this infinitely easier if you come across as essentially a positive person. (Just think about the people you like the most — isn't this integral in their personalities?)

That doesn't mean you have to be a cross between Pat Boone and Mr. Rogers. Only that you should be aware of every message you convey and *how* you are conveying it. And this is not really a complicated or overly philosophical issue. It can be as simple as reading the weather a certain way:

■ *One thing that I must always be aware of is that it is always “partly sunny” and not “partly cloudy”. There must be a warmth always present no matter what.*

John Willis, WERZ-FM (Portsmouth, NH)

Another universal is **consistency**. Whatever persona you project on the air — stick with it! Reinforce it constantly. If you are the diligent, community-minded citizen, keep your involvement in civic charities, events, etc. reg-

ular. If you're the irreverent nothing-sacred wise-guy, go after *all* sacred cows at every reasonable opportunity.

Finally, a third universal to be aware of is **energy**. No matter what personality you project, how positive it is, or how consistently you try to reinforce it, if you don't bring enough raw human energy to the job, you won't be able to pull it off. This doesn't imply you have to be screaming every minute; rather, that you make sure you have the energy to make the right decisions whether it's screaming out of a record or keeping your mouth shut into one. The audience can feel the energy in your voice, and when you're tired it will show. If you allow yourself to be tired on the radio, you cheat your audience and, worse, yourself.

Remember: think about who you are. Do all that you can to bring out the positive qualities in this personality. Keep reinforcing this personality on and off the air (and we'll discuss a few ways to do that in the following pages). And *always* take care of yourself physically so you can have enough energy to accomplish each of these goals.

Understanding Your Audience

Say goodbye to your late-night friends . . . and make friends with your audience.

Bob Rivers, WAAF-FM (Boston)

By now you should have a better idea of what the morning shift is all about and what you need to know about yourself to tackle it. There is a third link in the chain, however, and it's as vital as the first two. If you're going to do a successful morning show, you'd better understand what the audience is all about, too.

■ *Get a clear definition from your bosses of your target audience, and then do everything possible to find out about them. Hang out, read, shake their hands. Listen to the phone line at work and the check-out line at the grocery store.*

B.J. Hunter, KOPA-FM (Phoenix)

There's an excellent place to start. Get the raw numbers from your PD or GM (and if you *are* the PD or GM, make sure your personality has seen them). You should have a perfect understanding of where you are (in terms of current audience ratings) and where your station intends to be. Inevitably, this breaks down into target demographics, so make sure you know whether it's Men/18-34, Women/25-54, or some other cell that is *your* target. (And while you're at it, look into the *psychographics* of your target, as well. The Women/25-54 "life group" that listens to an A/C station can be very different from the Women/25-54 group which prefers modern country. Just knowing the age-and-sex parameters isn't enough these days.)

Once you push all the ratings mumbo-jumbo aside, it boils down to one simple challenge: entertain this group of people. And as B.J. advises, that means meeting them, talking to them, and finding out what

makes them tick. And you can accomplish this even when you're not out shaking hands:

■ *I try to watch a "Movie of the Week." I look down the dial and think, "What would the majority of Americans be watching?" And then I pick one of those things and watch it. You can get a lot of material from something like that.*

Jonathon Brandmeier, WLUP-FM (Chicago)

Thinking about your audience should be a constant process, especially when you're on the air. "You always have to keep in mind what the audience has just heard on your show", says WCZY's Dick Purtan; and John Willis puts it this way:

■ *I try to put an image in my head . . . somebody getting up or driving to work . . . and many people aren't in a good mood because they'd rather be sleeping. So, (I) consciously try to cheer these imaginary people up with some humor, a smile, and a good attitude.*

John Willis, WERZ-FM (Portsmouth, NH)

That raises another fundamental point which is too often forgotten or neglected: thinking of the audience in terms of the individual. You may be talking to thousands — even millions — but they're not all listening together. In fact, practically all of them are listening to you by themselves. It may seem natural to say "Good morning, gang!", but when your average listener

looks around him there's no gang there, and you've given him the opportunity to feel like you're not really talking to him. "Relate one on one with your listeners" advises KCCY's Dave Moore, and he's absolutely right. Radio remains the most personal of the mass media — every aspect of your presentation should reflect this.

■ *Develop an internal star quality and let it shine through. People look at us as celebrities, and I find fulfilling that expectation fun and profitable.*

Bob Cooper, KWEN-FM (Tulsa)

It's also worth noting that the audience *will* regard you as a celebrity, and that this can work positively for you beyond the ego stroke. A Radio Advertising Bureau survey revealed that 86.6% of respondents claimed that their favorite radio personalities advertised good products. In this same group, 64.3% said that — all things being equal — they would purchase a product the personality recommended. And that's not because they think you're Ralph Nader, David Horowitz, and *Consumer Reports* all wrapped together. With celebrity comes influence, and in our medium, that means a greater ability to sell products. So, cultivating the celebrity image is not necessarily narcissistic.

This can be tricky ground, however. On the one hand, your audience perceives you as larger than life and places more value on your recommendations. And on the other hand, they must believe you're very much like them — a regular guy — if they're going to identify and emotionally connect with you. If you go on a "star-trip", you'll lose that connection and have *no* influence; but that doesn't mean you can't become a legitimate celebrity:

■ *I've always tried to be as much myself on the air and not talk down to people. You become a much bigger "star" by doing that than by acting like a star. That also makes for longevity.*

M.G. Kelly, KOST-FM (Los Angeles)

In fact, your ability to recommend and sell products may flow more from your "regular guy" image than any celebrity status:

■ *On the air, I'm talking just like I'd talk to a friend. And if I'm telling (a listener) about a product, he'd buy it because he's my friend and he believes me.*

George Hamberger, WGR-AM (Buffalo)

So, when the temptation arises to climb up on that pedestal, remember who's *really* the boss: your audience. They may be your fans . . . they may be subject to your influence . . . but they have very high expectations of you as a result:

■ *The audience doesn't really want to know you had a bad day and it's not going too well for you. They want you to be "on" every single day. That's why they listen to you. They have bad days, you don't.*

John Lanigan, WMGG-FM (Tampa)

Humor in the Morning

I'm not here to save the world. I'm here to make people laugh at breakfast.

Ron Chapman, KVIL-AM (Dallas)

No matter what format you talk about, radio people agree that humor is a universal "lubricant" that makes a morning machine hum. In our survey, 83% of the respondents classified humor as at least "Very Important" to the success of their show; and almost a third categorized humor as the "Most Important" element.

Once you get past this consensus, however, you'll find a hundred different opinions on how best to use it. Humor is one of the most subjective entities there is, and what's funny to one person can be deadly dull to another. Each jock should have his or her own set of standards as to what they can effectively pull off, what's appropriate for their station, and — most importantly — what's appropriate for the audience. It's not imperative that these guidelines be written, but it might be handy as a reference point (particularly when things get sticky with management). When we asked our 70 personalities for their criteria, here's what they told us:

■ *There are 3 things that people like to hear about on the radio: they like to hear about your family . . . they like to hear about animals . . . and they like any sort of reference, however obscure, to sexual impropriety.*

Dr. Don Rose, KFRC-AM (San Francisco)

■ *One — is it relatable to my audience?
Two — is it acceptable to my audience's standards?
Three — am I prepared?
Four — is it, for the most part, positive?*

J. Bruce, WFTQ-AM (Worcester)

■ *One — often use understatement.
Two — often make myself the target.
Three — primarily, I want laughs from genuine humor rather than shock value.*

Bob Cooper, KWEN-FM (Tulsa)

■ *Keep it topical. Keep it local. Keep it quick.*

Andy Tutin, KCMQ-FM (Columbia, MO)

■ *Keep things really short. Plan (it) out, know how it will end, and get out of it in a hurry. If it's funny, you'll leave them wanting more. If it's not very funny, it ended faster. Also, find somebody you can go through a bit with ahead of time and say "Did it make sense? Did you know what I was getting at?"*

Paul Robins, KPOP-FM (Sacramento)

As diverse as these criteria are, the personalities listing them did tend to fall into one of two camps: those who were going for the out-and-out laugh, and those who just wanted to make their audience smile. Representative comments from two "laughers":

■ *In Top 40 or "Hot Hits" there's not a whole lot of time to do sophisticated satire. We use bludgeon humor.*

Ross Brittain, WHTZ-FM (New York)

■ *I've described (my style) before as "pornography with panache."*

Robert Murphy, WKQX-FM (Chicago)

And from the "smilers" . . .

■ *If you can make (your listeners) smile, that's what they remember most. Folks like to smile more than think about heavy bits.*

John Arthur, WNCR-AM (Columbus)

■ *I'd rather make people smile than laugh. A laugh is a quick fix, necessary ingredient of a morning show. But the smiles make people love you.*

Mark Osborne, WKSQ-FM (Bangor)

Of course, sometimes you'll do a little of both; going for the smile on some subtle bit . . . or for the big laugh on an outrageous zinger. Your delivery and timing will be big factors here.

No matter which camp people fell into, though, one message came through loud and clear: be original. Chris Evans explains:

■ *I know someone's not going to call me up and say, "I heard that last week on David Letterman", or "Imus said that on Tuesday". And that's important to me. I'd rather be funny once a morning on my own than know I'm ripping somebody else off.*

Chris Evans, WKCI-FM (New Haven)

That doesn't mean you can't listen to or watch the masters. Gary Owens recommends that radio personalities watch "The Tonight Show":

■ *Disc jockeys should not use Johnny's jokes, because that's a tip-off of not being very bright on your own. But they should study his form for the topical monologue.*

Gary Owens, Gannett Broadcasting

We asked the personalities if there were particular kinds of humor they favored or, conversely, avoided; and how they handled potentially controversial bits. That raised 4 new issues, each of which we'll discuss in the following sections.

Political Humor

In general, political humor was considered a fairly safe area and an excellent source for material. Very few personalities said they would not use political humor; the only objections centered around perceived problems with listener awareness, comprehension, or reaction:

■ *Political humor is good to a certain extent. Sometimes you'll get over your listeners' heads being political. You're better off doing things people can relate to day-to-day.*

Mason Dixon, WRBQ-FM (Tampa)

■ *We don't do much political humor, per se, because there's not much awareness of politics. There's more awareness of Eddie Murphy than there is of Edwin Meese.*

Brad Krantz, WZOU-FM (Boston)

■ *I guess I just finally realized one day that you'd piss off half of the people you're talking to, and I don't like those odds.*

George Hamberger, WGR-AM (Buffalo)

One way around these objections is to use political stories as the *inspiration* for funny bits, and not necessarily as a reason to make a pointed comment. For example: the President's awkwardness at White House press conferences is a familiar issue. With those conferences coming monthly now, it's fairly predictable that every 30 days or so your listeners will be asking each other, "Say did you see the President last night? He really seemed uncomfortable."

So, on the morning after a conference, you go on the air and make just such an observation. Then you boldly state that *you* could handle those White House reporters ". . . just like that!", snapping your fingers on "that". Well, at the snap of your fingers, a bunch of "reporters" come scrambling into the studio and start firing questions at you. Unfortunately, you come off as a stammering, stumbling boob, and the reporters dash out a minute later laughing at your incompetence. (Hopefully the audience is laughing, too.)

ACN distributed this exact bit (under the title, "The Instant Press Conference") to all its affiliates, and the reaction was consistently positive. (Author's note: ACN distributes "Evaluation Forms" along with our weekly mailings of produced bits. Any statement about the response a particular bit received is based on a tally of these forms.) Using the President's difficulties with live news conferences as the starting point, our personalities ended up deflating themselves; and their listeners were not subjected to any heavy-handed political message.

The majority of personalities responding to our questionnaires, however, agreed that political humor was worth using, as long as you were fair with it. Attack

“Reagan’s 74th Birthday”

ANN: February 6th is President Reagan’s birthday. Now I heard on TV that he’s gonna be 74, but my boss, Rob Barnett, told me at lunch yesterday he’s going to be 73. There’s only one way to find out for sure, so . . .

(SFX: phone pick-up, touch tone dialing, ringing)

ANN: (continuing over effects) . . . I’m just going to call his private line at the White House and see for my—

(SFX: phone pick-up, RR coming on mic)

RR: Oh well, let me just try Gromyko again . . . (SFX: touch tones)

ANN: (trying to get RR’s attention over tones) Hello! Sir? Mr. President?

RR: Oh, hello! Gromy? This is Ron. So how the hell are you?

ANN: Sir, this is Bob Rivers of WAAF in Boston calling, and I was having this argument over lunch yesterday, and I—

RR: Launch? Launch! Well, Andre, this could cause World War . . . uh . . . er. . . lemme see now . . . one, two, buckle my shoe . . .

ANN: (chuckling) Mr. President . . .

RR: . . . three, four, *nuclear war!*

ANN: No, sir — wait! I’m just calling to wish you a Happy Birthday. How old are you today?

RR Oh, well . . . (breathing easier) thank you. I’m 74 years young, but — as you can probably tell — I still have all my wits about me.

ANN: (slightly sarcastic) Yeah, I can see you’re still sharp as a tack.

RR: Attack? Attack! Oh no! Somebody call Bernhard Goetz! He’ll know what to do! Nancy — get my jelly beans! Ohhhh! (SFX: rattling hang-up)

both major political parties, all interest groups, and anybody who puts himself into a position suitable for satire:

■ *I love to do political humor as long as people are aware that you're not doing it out of malice. I don't think that the casual listener to my show, after listening to a dozen political gags, would know my political persuasion. And I really prefer it that way.*

Dr. Don Rose, KFRC-AM (San Francisco)

■ *I always say I have a red, white and blue neck. I pick on everybody. It's safer that way.*

B. J. Hunter, KOPA-FM (Phoenix)

It's worth noting, though, that picking on the President is not necessarily a violation of this comedic "fairness doctrine". If you're doing a truly irreverent morning show (and that word is increasingly popular these days), speaking out against the system is a legitimate part of your act. And no one person is more representative of our system than the Chief Executive. It helps, however, to avoid the heavy policy issues and derive your humorous bits from his personal foibles (e.g. relying on Nancy for answers to tough questions). Again, use him for inspiration more than for specific subject matter.

On the issue of national political humor versus local political humor, the majority preferred the local angle:

■ *Everyone in the area seems more affected by local politicians, and many listeners know them personally. National political humor can be funny, but it's not as unique.*

Dave Moore, KCCY-FM (Pueblo)

■ *Always go for the local shot first — local is our number one priority. We're in the capitol city, so the Governor is right here. We know you're safe because most people think politicians are bozo's anyway!*

Corey Dietz, WRVQ-FM (Richmond)

Local political humor does have one major disadvantage over the national kind, however:

■ *In (the Quad Cities), a lot of the politicians control a lot of the money our sales staff sees!*

Spike O'Dell, KIIK-FM (Quad Cities)

Sexual Humor

If there is a common thread running through everyone's sense of humor it must be sex. Whether we talked to jocks on conservative A/C's or hot-rockin' CHR's, everyone admitted that sexual humor was in their act somewhere. "Sex is too important *not* to have fun with it", say Chris Jones in Jacksonville, and on the opposite coast, we heard the same thing from M.G. Kelly in Los Angeles: "It's something that everyone can relate to; and that's the whole idea. People laugh at what they relate to."

So, given that sexual humor will be used *how* do people use it? Two methods kept cropping up:

■ *Certainly sexual entendre and innuendo are the bastions and bywords of successful radio.*

John Landecker, WCKG-FM (Chicago)

■ *Innuendo all you want. (The audience) wants to make sure you're really dirty so they'll keep listening to you.*

Brad Krantz, WZOU-FM (Boston)

■ *We use "perfect" double entendres — that is, you can say something and it really does mean two things. When the Richmond Braves had their opening day, we were joking about Reagan throwing out the first ball . . . and I wondered if Nancy kisses his balls before he throws. Well, if anyone wants to get really upset, I just say, "Where's your mind?"*

Corey Dietz, WRVQ-FM (Richmond)

With sexual humor, the trick seems to be dancing on the edge of acceptability without falling into something that is terribly sexist or obscene. And in this regard, the actual words may not be as important as your delivery and timing:

■ *It doesn't take talent to tell a dirty joke. Everybody does it. It takes talent to come up to the line, to use finesse. It's like making love: you don't want to rape your audience, you seduce your audience.*

Gary D., WUSN-FM (Chicago)

■ *Bosses will say to me, "I really should get mad at you, but when you say it, it sounds O.K." It's completely delivery and style — the mumbled throw-away, soft and low, can do it all. My listeners tell me they'll turn up their radios just to hear that.*

George Hamberger, WGR-AM (Buffalo)

“The Weather Girl — Today’s Temperature”

ANN: Ten minutes past 8 here on K92FM, I’m Ron Bisson and—

(SFX: door knock/open, footsteps approach)

ANN: Uh-oh . . . it’s Angel, my Weather Girl.

WG: Hi, Ronnie . . . (SFX: big kiss) Guess what the temperature’s gonna be today.

ANN: 90 degrees?

WG: (sexy) Lower

ANN: 85?

WG: (getting hotter) Mmmmm, lower!

ANN: 80?

WG: (getting even hotter) Lower, lower Ron!

ANN: 75?

WG: (approaching climax) Oh . . . ahhh . . . lower!

ANN: 70?

WG: (bingo) Oh yes! Yes! That’s it! Right there! Ohhhhhh

(SFX: footsteps run out, door slam)

ANN: I never knew finding out the temperature could be so exciting . . .

(Copyright 1985 – ACN)

With sensitive subjects that have a great potential for sexual humor, sometimes the best bet is to let the audience do the talking for you:

■ *The Ann Landers survey (on "cuddling" vs. "sex") is a good example. We just laid it out there and let the audience do the rest. And they ran with it faster than we did!*

Coyote McCloud, WYHY-FM (Nashville)

There remains one great trap: sexism, specifically sexual humor that offends your female audience. Our personalities were very aware of the dangers in this regard, but it's interesting to review two examples of what they thought "would fly" and what wouldn't — and here it's helpful to note that 68 of the 70 are male.

In July 1984, ACN distributed a fake commercial for "Krapco's Dating Tapes" which worked along this premise:

ANN: Krapco is back, and now we're fixing the dating game! Yes, it's Krapco's moneysaving "Dating Tapes" . . . from Krapco! Hey guys, why spend big bucks wining and dining a woman who'll only feed you the same old lines you've heard a million times before?

(SFX: restaurant ambience)

WOM: Today's men are so threatened by an assertive woman. Don't you think so? Yes or no!!!

ANN: Now, with Krapco's "Dating Tapes", you can hear these exact same lines in the privacy of your own home. Just listen to this!

(SFX: cassette clicks on)

WOM: (eq'd, from cassette) You insensitive pig! How dare you hold that door open for me!

(Copyright 1984 — ACN)

Krapco has always been a popular "sponsor" among our affiliates, but "The Dating Tapes" got unusually high marks and was used widely. More importantly, no one seemed overly concerned about the reaction of female listeners. Within our own offices (where we regularly "test-market" our material), however, the female response was less than favorable. "Why isn't there a Dating Tapes for *women*?" they asked . . . and with a measure of indignance. This spot apparently was offensive to them — albeit mildly — even though the men who wrote it and the personalities who aired

it didn't think it would be. ("Krapco's Dating Tapes for Women", incidentally, was issued the following month.)

Now, consider this example: in December 1984, ACN issued a fake commercial for a new monthly TV show called "PMS Magazine". The spot opened like this:

SM: Hi, I'm Susan Moody . . .

BS: And I'm Brenda Swelling. And don't miss this month's edition of "PMS Magazine"!

SM: First, in our Mood-Swing Department, we'll take you to Hormonè World where we'll ride an Emotional Roller-Coaster!

(SFX: roller coaster with WOMAN in background)

WOM: (yelling) I love you! I hate you! I love you! I hate you! Aaaaaaaaah!

(Copyright 1984 — ACN)

We knew we were getting into extremely sensitive territory here, so we test-marketed this bit heavily before sending it out. Much to our own surprise, our female audiences *loved* it; and it's worth adding that the concept for "PMS Magazine" came from ACN's own Mechele George. The ACN stations, however, were reluctant to play it. "Now *this* will be offensive to women," the personalities said, despite our report of successful test-marketing.

Perhaps they were right — our audiences may have been exceptional. But these 2 examples should show how difficult it is to predict what will and what will not offend your female listeners. Your own judgment may not be the best guide in this category (even if you are an "enlightened male") and we strongly recommend test-marketing of your own.

Ethnic and Religious Humor

Reaction to these forms of humor was more mixed and much more emotional. Some personalities preferred to stay away from it entirely . . .

■ *You're bound to get some complaints. I know Imus does a lot of that stuff and a lot of guys do. But I just don't think it's worth the hassles. There are other things you can do where there will be no hassles.*

Larry Lujack, WLS-AM (Chicago)

. . . while others maintained that genuine irreverence extends to *all* subjects:

“The Word on ‘The Book’ ”

(SFX: big thunder crash, chorus of angels)

ANN: What the —? Who’s that? Who’s there?

GOD: (deep reverb) C’mon . . . who do you think? Thunder, lightning, angels. What do you need, a burning bush?

ANN: My God!

GOD: At least we’re past the intro’s. Now there’s something that’s annoying me and I want you to fix it! Have you seen those tacky TV ads for “The Book”?

ANN: You mean the ones with Donna Summer and Dick Butkus?

GOD: Exactly! (SFX: thunder crash) It’s not “The Book” — it’s the Bible, for cryin’ out loud. They’re trying to trick people into buying my book!

ANN: Well, what can I do?

GOD: Tell ’em to cut it out! (SFX: big crash) It’s “The Bible” and I want it to stay “The Bible”. You don’t change *my* title!

ANN: O.K., alright . . .

GOD: And one more thing: I’m tired of all these football coaches telling everybody they’ve got a personal relationship with me. You tell Tom Landry to stick it in his hat!

(SFX: huge crash, angels up and out)

(Copyright 1985 – ACN)

■ *Nothing's sacred when it comes to race, religion, and creed. We get into stereotypes and, of course, 90% of the time our audience takes it the wrong way, but they're used to it.*

Paul Barsky, WCAU-FM (Philadelphia)

There's no doubt that religious and ethnic jokes — even when handled carefully — can get you into trouble. Gary D. told us, "I've been accused of being a bigot and a racist, but I was just holding up in the public eye how stupid it is." But then a situation arises that simply cries out for satire and you're left wondering: do I or don't I?

That will always be a tough judgment call — and only you can really know what the market will accept — but there are ways to deliver such jokes that help take the sting out.

First, it helps to be part of the joke. Paul Barsky of WCAU has no problem with Jewish humor because he's Jewish. Elliott and Woodside of WRQX-FM generally avoid religious jokes, but if there are two sides to the story, Elliott (who is Jewish) and Woodside (who is Christian) will let their religious beliefs become part of the fun.

Another technique is to create characters who can do the talking for you. At WFYV-FM in Jacksonville (and we're talking serious Bible Belt here), Chris Jones is regularly visited by the Reverend Ernest Lee Angelic of the First Heavy Metal Church of the Rude. The Reverend, accompanied by organ music and "Ernie's Angels", delivers a 1-2 minute sermonette on whatever pet peeve happens to be on his mind that day (e.g. slow drivers in the fast lane). Chris acknowledges that the Reverend has generated some heat in his area, but Chris has the advantage of being removed from the character and is somewhat insulated thereby from any severely negative reaction. We like to call this the "Hey-I-Didn't-Say-It" defense, and while it may actually be your words (and even your voice on tape), it works. Make absolutely certain, however, that you invest in your characters the same credibility and consistency you'd expect from a real person. If you rely on stereotypical, one dimensional foils for your jokes, you won't save yourself from any criticism. This doesn't mean the characters can't have some color and do foolish things; only that allowing them a little humanity goes a long way to supporting their comic purpose.

In general, however, treading the ground of religious and ethnic humor is like walking through a mine field. There will be times, though, when you'll have to go through the "field" to get to a certain point; and at those times, it's a good idea to keep the following bits of advice in mind:

■ *What I try to do is put myself in the place of the people we're joking with, and if it doesn't insult me, then I go for it and hope for the best.*

Charles Laquidara, WBCN-FM (Boston)

■ *I think it's O.K. in some markets, strictly taboo in others. The jock needs to know his station and his city. In all instances, it should be thought about twice before airing. It should also never be down-grading or condescending.*

Steve Cochran, WMXJ-FM (Miami)

■ *You have to be a little bit careful with that. I would advise young guys: if they're only going to tell one joke a morning, you don't tell an ethnic joke. But, if you have worked for a long time and built up your credentials so that people know you're basically a decent human being, they will allow you to do these things.*

Dr. Don Rose, KFRC-AM

Gay Humor

A few years ago, gay humor wouldn't have been a real issue. The jokes being done were fairly lame (i.e., the stereotypical lisping, limp-wristed stuff), and the gay community was not as visible or organized as it is now. In the 1980's, however, gay characters appear regularly in prime time television shows — the bellwether of public acceptance — so gay humor has evolved into a category the personality must deal with at one time or another. And like the previous category, it is a divisive issue. Some jocks have had outright bad experiences:

■ *The quickest way to find out how many "homos" listen to your station is to tell a gay joke. I had a gay guy on the air with me once, and he was telling me how sexist I was. I got mad and told him to sit on a parking meter and violate himself. The switch-board was shortly ringing off the hook.*

Spike O'Dell, KIIK-FM (Quad Cities)

“The Gay Team”

(Music: tympani roll up and under)

ANN: This fall we've got it all!

(Music: Theme similar to “A-Team” up and under)

MR. TEE: Shut up fool! Time for me to redecorate! The colors clash, and you need a window right there!

(SFX: machine gun burst)

ANN: The baddest dude in TV is back . . . but he's a whole new man!

MR. TEE: Gimme that sofa! I say it looks better over here! (Grunts and throws sofa with man on it)

(SFX: man screaming as he's thrown across room, crash)

ANN: Yes, the toughest guy on television is now the most sensitive interior decorator in San Francisco!

MR. TEE: Look at those samples, chump! (Growls)

(Music: show theme up big and under)

ANN: He's on “The Gay Team”, bustin' outta the closet and comin' your way this fall!

MR. TEE: Pity the fool who don't kiss me on the lips! Mmmmmmm!

(Music: up and resolve)

(Copyright 1984 - ACN)

On the other hand . . .

■ *My experience in a largely gay market (Charleston) is that they — the gay population — have a great sense of humor about it. Also, a couple of gay co-workers “test marketed” a couple of bits for me that I might have had doubts about and gave them (approval). Avoid tasteless bits about AIDS, herpes, or V.D.*

Steve Cochran, WMXJ-FM (Miami)

John Landecker told us that it would be unfair *not* to do some kind of gay humor from time to time:

■ *I certainly do tons of heterosexual humor. It's almost reverse discrimination not to do homosexual humor.*

John Landecker, WCKG-FM (Chicago)

And this seems to be a prevailing sentiment. As Steve Cochran said, there are certain topics which are simply not funny no matter how open-minded your audience wants to be. If you can avoid the traditional stereotypes (which no longer apply anyway), and can apply Laquidara's Law of “If it doesn't insult me. . . .”, then go for it!

Local versus National

We asked our morning personalities to express in percentages how much of their humorous material related to local people and events, and how much to national people and events. We had certain expectations as to how these results would come out, incidentally, and almost without exception, our expectations were wrong.

First, we began with the overall expectation that there would be a heavy emphasis on local material by all markets averaged together. The actual average of our respondents: a perfect 50-50 split. Some did believe in localizing everything . . .

■ *My effort is always 100% to try to localize the material. That is even though some remarks deal with national people/events, I still try to relate the material to local people and institutions.*

Mike Fiss, WYYY-FM (Syracuse)

. . . but many countered that the conventional wisdom of “being local” wasn't necessarily appropriate for an unconventional show:

■ *Some people would say that I'm not local enough, but I've thought there's a certain over-emphasis on that. While the nice thing about radio is that you can localize the media, I don't think you have to localize them to death. People want to laugh. They'll laugh any way they can. They don't necessarily have to laugh at something around the block.*

The Greaseman, WWDC-FM (Washington, DC)

Market size was not a determining factor. We assumed that the larger markets would create such a wealth of material that jocks would use national subjects only when they were extremely important. In New York on WKTU-FM this held true (75% local vs. 25% national), but not on WCAU-FM in Philadelphia or KFI-AM in Los Angeles (50-50 split in each case).

At the same time, we thought smaller markets would have to rely on national stories to supplement the meager news output of the typical small town. True for Lima, Ohio (WCIT reporting an 80% national vs. 20% local bias), but not for Worcester, Massachusetts (WFTQ-AM, 90% local vs. 10% national) or Frederick, Maryland (WZYQ-FM, 80% local vs. 20% national).

There just weren't any predictable trends, and at least one personality thought the entire issue was moot:

■ *It's a global village out there. I don't think “local” means much anymore.*

Patti Wheeler, WZZK-FM (Birmingham)

Taking the Chance

Finally, we asked our personalities: if you have a funny, but potentially “hot” bit ready to air and you're not sure whether or not to go ahead with it, how do you ultimately decide? They were asked to rate 3 elements in the decision process, and to rate each one along a 1 to 5 scale (1 for least important, 5 for most important). The average results from our respondents:

Your own gut instincts:	4.75
Past audience reaction:	3.72
Management input:	2.27

Ross Brittain of WHTZ-FM (a station known for taking chances with its comedy) tells us, "It always goes on the air at least once. It's the complaints that determines if it stays on the air." And Robert Murphy shared a bit of wisdom that jocks have whispered to each other — out of the earshot of management — for years.

■ *I usually strike first. I certainly never run it by anyone in management. My motto on that is: forgiveness is easier to get than permission.*

Robert Murphy, WKQX-FM (Chicago)

But a cautionary note is provided by the Greaseman — an outrageous performer himself, but a veteran who understands the nature of the beast.

■ *It's one thing to do anything you want on the air . . . but you still have to be able to sell it. If sponsors are afraid to be associated with it, then in the end you will lose.*

The Greaseman, WWDC-FM (Washington, DC)

Preparing for the Show

Somebody said one time, “How long did it take you to prepare this morning’s show?” And I said, “About 26 years” because everything I’ve ever learned I try to put into every program.

Dr. Don Rose, KFRC-AM (San Francisco)

A morning show personality is forever limited by time. In most cases you have 4 hours within which to perform. Delete the time taken by music, commercials, news, sports, traffic, weather, and everything else, and you have a handful of minutes that come in 15 and 30 second bursts. The recent re-emergence of personality radio has opened up the clock somewhat, and there is occasionally a solid 60 seconds — or even a few minutes — exclusively for the personality, but that remains the exception. More often than not, the morning talent is like a traffic cop in Manhattan at rush hour and it’s all that you can do just to keep your charges from crashing into each other.

Given this pressure-cooker environment, how can you make the most of those moments when the action stops and you are the show? The answer: preparation. 86% of the personalities we surveyed called preparation at least “Important”, and half felt it was “Absolutely Critical” to the success of their show. Many of the comments we got back sounded like these:

■ *A produced show sounds better than a non-produced show.*

Chris Evans, WKCI-FM (New Haven)

■ *I don’t think there’s ever a time from the end of one show to the beginning of the next — or even during, while you’re on the air — that you’re not at least open to an idea that could end up on the air. It’s almost a continual process.*

John Landecker, WCKG-FM (Chicago)

■ *Nothing’s worse than going in and flying by the seat of your pants. It’s scary as hell!*

Gary D., WUSN-FM (Chicago)

■ *My approach is to be informed to the hilt, be prepared, and that allows you to be totally spontaneous. That sounds like a contradiction, but it isn’t. About 60% of my humor is ad-lib, top-of-the-head zingers.*

Bobby Gunther Walsh, WAEB-AM (Allentown)

■ *Prepare for every hour on the air, one hour off the air. By thinking ahead and making careful choices, you prepare your own luck.*

Gary Owens, Gannett Broadcasting

Physical Prep

There are different kinds of preparation to consider, however, when we talk about getting ready for a program. Larry Lujack tells us:

■ *I think the best preparation for a morning show is 8 hours sleep. I wish to hell I could get my life in order so I could get that 8 hours sleep before every show, but it rarely happens.*

Larry Lujack, WLS-AM (Chicago)

In fact, after “More money!”, “More sleep!” appears to be the second most sought-after goal of the morning personality. In our interviews, it was remarkable how much significance was attached to getting the right amount of sleep:

■ *I'm in bed by 9 — doesn't matter who's there or what — I'm gone. I never miss 7 hours sleep and that's plenty for me. I actually feel sharper with 7 than 8.*

M.G. Kelly, KOST-FM (Los Angeles)

While everyone readily admits the necessity of 7-8 hours of sleep, not everyone is able to arrange their schedule so all these hours fall together. So, naps can become an important part of the daily routine:

■ *I refuse to go to bed by 8:00. I want to stay up with the adults! So, I have to take a nap, usually for two hours between 1 and 3. I'm in bed by 11, up at 4. Weekends I revert to a normal human being, and it's not unusual to see me in bed around 9 or 10 in the morning.*

Jack Elliott, WWSW-FM (Pittsburgh)

But even finding time for naps can be difficult; and for some people, they're just not a good alternative at all:

■ *No matter what I do, by Thursday I'm losing it. I get about 5 hours sleep each night. If you take a nap in the afternoon, you're wide awake at the wrong time of the evening. And if you're a family man, it gets tougher.*

Corey Dietz, WRVQ-FM (Richmond)

There's no real way around needing the right amount of sleep; but there are things you can do to keep yourself from becoming a walking zombie . . . even with limited sleep. Exercising regularly can be a tremendous boon to your general well-being, and many of our personalities reported feeling "less tired" when they incorporated exercise into their weekly routine. How you choose to do this — jogging, weight-lifting, racquetball — is up to you; but if you haven't considered committing to some form of regular exercise, now's the time to start. And while we're on the subject of changing your life, consider this final piece of advice:

■ *The best thing you can do to keep from being tired all the time? Quit smoking! What a difference!*

Scott Woodside, WRQX-FM (Washington, DC)

How much should I prepare?

We asked our personalities to tell us if they map out each show entirely before they go on the air, select the elements they know they'll use (e.g. pre-recorded bits, trivia, one-liners) but slot them on the fly, or just handle things as they come. Here's what they told us: (Note: percentage total exceeds 100 since the personalities were allowed to check more than one category if there was a little of each in their approach).

Map out entirely:	29.7%
Select elements:	62.2%
Do it as I go:	18.9%

The general inclination was to leave some room for the unanticipated. As Kemosabi Joe put it:

■ *Preparation is important. Certain bits just can't be pulled off without it. However, you must always be able to take advantage of a situation that arises, e.g., a phone call while you're on the air, a guest dropping by, etc. And, of course, some things do just come off the top of your head.*

Kemosabi Joe, WZYQ-FM (Frederick, MD)

How far ahead should I plan?

We asked our personalities to tell us if they worked a month ahead, a week, a day, hours, minutes, or not at all. The results are below (and again, the percentage may exceed 100 due to overlap between categories).

One month:	—	A few hours:	14.3
One week:	25.7	All (at times):	2.8
One day:	71.4	None of above:	2.8

What resources can help me prepare?

There are two distinct categories here: resources generated by the media that everyone is exposed to; and resources within our industry designed especially as aids for radio personalities.

Media Sources Here are the publications and programs that you *must* see regularly if you're going to know what your audience is thinking and talking about. And within this category, newspapers are the greatest single resource according to our 70 personalities.

Almost 97% consulted USA Today regularly in preparing for their show. That exceeded the percentage who read through their local papers each morning — which is surprising — but not by much. 91% check the city dailies before walking into the studio. And even the so-called “scandal sheets” such as The National Enquirer were cited by 67% of the personalities. Bobby Gunther Walsh appears to be particularly thorough when it comes to gleaning information from his home town paper:

■ *I read the morning newspaper before going on the air and keep it handy while on the air. I then take the same paper home and re-read it with a fine-tooth comb for interesting tid-bits (and) funny articles. I look for dumb “Letters to the Editor”, articles or questions sent into Dear Abby that are funny or were sent by someone from Allentown. (Even) the funnies called “There Oughta Be a Law” often has someone writing in from Allentown. Many things in the paper I just read. I may never mention them on the air, but they add to (my knowledge) of the market.*

Bobby Gunther Walsh, WAEB-AM (Allentown)

Gary Owens sees newspapers as an ongoing tool as well . . .

■ *Set aside a certain amount of time each day to go over the newspaper. Look at all the news stories and see if you can write 20 jokes about each news story. You must train your mind to think funny.*

Gary Owens, Gannet Broadcasting

Television was the next greatest resource, with “Entertainment Tonight” being mentioned by more personalities (35%) than any other single program. 21% said they watched the network news each night, and 15% caught CNN at some point in their day — usually right when they wake up. Despite the late hours, both “Late Night with David Letterman” (15%) and “The Tonight Show” (9%) received several mentions, and we suspect the advent of the VCR has a lot to do with this. Other television offerings specifically cited were MTV (9%), “Lifestyles of the Rich and Famous” (6%), “Sixty Minutes” (3%), and “Solid Gold” (3%). Popular series and sitcoms were noted by a few, but most mentioned these as a collective category instead of naming specific programs.

Among magazines personalities consulted regularly to stay “plugged in”, *People* was the clear leader (36%), with *Us*, *Time*, *Newsweek*, *Playboy*, and *TV Guide* tied for second (12% each). Other magazines receiving at least one mention included: *Rolling Stone*, *Reader's Digest*, *Money*, *National Lampoon*, *Cosmopolitan*, *New York Magazine*, *Sports Illustrated*, *Redbook*, *Esquire*, *US News and World Report*, and *Consumer Reports*. (Industry trade magazines were not counted in this survey.)

Overall, then, it appears that *USA Today*, “Entertainment Tonight”, and *People* rank as the foremost arbiters of disposable culture — and, as such, make ideal resources for virtually any morning show.

Industry Sources Here are the comedy services, calendars, joke sheets, and all the other tools created for radio personalities — and in some cases, morning radio personalities. Unlike the Media Sources which your audience shares, Industry Sources are not necessarily used to keep you aware of stories which your audience may be interested in. Rather, they allow you to introduce new topics, offer unusual perspectives on familiar ones, or just help you have some fun in the morning. Of the people we surveyed, 95% use at least one such tool, and over half use more than one.

(Author's note: in the following review of services, ACN is not included. The respondents in *this* statistical base were exclusively current ACN affiliates; so, our emergence as the “most mentioned” service would be assured. However, if we can pat ourselves on the back for a moment, we will note that nearly a third of those surveyed (31%) said they did not use *any* service beside ACN. Now, back to being objective . . .)

One of the oldest tools, “The Electric Weenie”, remains one of the most used: 47% consult it regularly. Danny O'Day's “O'Liners” (25%) was also highly rated. The Copley News Service's “Wireless Flash” and “Chase's Calendar of Annual Events” were mentioned by 11% each, and “Contemporary Comedy” was cited by 11%. Also receiving multiple mentions: “One to One”, “Phantastic Phunnies” and “Orben”.

From wake-up to on-air

The hours (minutes?) between waking up and going on the air can be critical to the success of your show that day. This is the time that you get both your mind and body cranking; it's a time when some of the best ideas come; and it's your final chance to absorb any information about the previous day and night.

We asked our 70 personalities to briefly describe their schedules during this period, and there was a remarkable similarity to their routines:

■ *Wake up call at 3:30 a.m. Take a brief jog to get my mind and body together and head for station (only 10 minutes travelling time). Prep time for show: read two newspapers (local and national) and plan out the times and bits we're going to play for the show.*

Paul Barsky, WCAU-FM (Philadelphia)

■ *The usual post-sleep necessities, listen to weather-radio, eat a bowl of cereal. Twenty minutes to work, get coffee, check wire, sports, morning papers, select any carted bits I may want to use. Cart up any "late-breaking" bits or effects if needed, then hit it. This is a 4:30-6:00 a.m. span.*

Chris O'Brien, WKRQ-FM (Cincinnati)

■ *Up at 4:45 a.m. Shower, watch VCR of previous night's Letterman. Go over today's show notes briefly, head for the studio at 5:50a. (Five minute trip)*

Steve Cochran, WMXJ-FM (Miami)

Don Bleu of KYUU-FM acknowledged that 4:30 to 5:30 a.m. was a very creative time for him and that frequently he would write song parodies while riding into work. He would use a hand-held tape recorder to do this, which raises another interesting point:

■ *I use a lot of hand-held recorder stuff. It's convenient, quick, and I like to think of myself as being spontaneous. And just saying something into a recorder is much more along the lines of how it would end up on the air . . . as opposed to sitting down and writing it out word for word.*

John Landecker, WCKG-FM (Chicago)

This kind of "planned spontaneity" is the goal that most of our personalities seem to be striving for in their show prep, and it strikes us as a worthwhile one. They use their media sources, their industry sources, and their own personal skills to build a solid framework within which to perform *without* unduly constricting themselves. At ACN, we like to use the "Monkey Bars" analogy. Your tools are like a set of steel pipes. Put them together too closely, and you've built yourself a jail. But assemble them with enough room to support you at one end and let you swing freely at another, and you have a jungle gym that makes a morning show a playground.

On the Air

The most important thing in the morning show is that very first set. The very first word you utter on the radio had better be damn good because that sets the pace for the whole morning.

Dr. Don Rose, KFRC-AM (San Francisco)

A four-hour performance in morning radio is not unlike a four-hour performance in any other field: you want to get off to a good start, but you also want to finish strong. And that requires some attention to pacing.

Pacing

The ideal for the morning shift is to hit the ground running, go full tilt throughout, and hand off to the next shift with all the energy and enthusiasm that went into your first stop-set. John Arthur likens this to a good concert performance:

■ *I think it's much like playing music on a stage. The whole show has got to be as great as you can make it. You've got to put out all the time, or someone at some time or another will catch on that you're not as good as the show the day before. Some things will sound better than others, but they all have to be as good as possible.*

John Arthur, WNCR-AM (Columbus)

That does not mean, however, that you're a screaming idiot for four hours; and Ross Brittain believes people still need to recognize that distinction — particularly when “screaming” can be a part of the delivery:

■ *Some people think of (our show) as screaming. There's a way of moving through the stop-set so you don't pause and stop. The flow of the show is much more important than most people believe. And if you manage to keep the flow going correctly, then you keep your listener with you.*

Ross Brittain, WHTZ-FM (New York)

The ideal is rarely achieved, though. While most personalities agreed in principle with Arthur's approach, their descriptions of their shifts ran more along these lines:

■ *I'm on from 5-9 a.m. For the first hour, I'm tired and everyone listening is tired. I won't bullshit anyone about it, so we just kind of wake up together. At 6 a.m., and after 3 cups of coffee, I'm getting wound up, so the show is very up after that.*

Spike O'Dell, KIIK-FM (Quad Cities)

■ *From 5:30 to 6 I'm very up, but not cute. Just the facts, ma'am. 6 to 8 we really cook, doing something different every quarter hour. 8 to 9 we repeat our hot bits from 6 to 8, or if we're on a hot topic we'll just continue with it. From 9 to 10 we're back to our more music format.*

B.J. Hunter, KOPA-FM (Phoenix)

■ *6-7 a.m., easy does it. 7-8a, pour on steam. 8-9 a.m., roll on full throttle. 9-10 a.m., ease on down to 10a jock tempo.*

Rick Ward, KNRY-AM (Monterey)

Sam Yates of WYNG-FM typified the response from the smaller markets: “I'm so busy in that control room there's no time to stop!”

Does this mean that effective pacing isn't really possible? No, only that additional attention may have to be paid to those fringe times when the personality is either "still heating up" or "cooling down". And that may be accomplished in advance by addressing the construction of each hour.

Divide and Conquer

While a morning show is a four-hour event each day for you, none of your listeners experiences it this way. So, besides the consideration of pacing, it really serves little or no purpose to think of it in these terms. Better to divide it up into manageable segments.

In his travels around the country, consultant E. Karl has seen the morning shift divided into two shows: one running from 6-7:30a, and a "repeat" of this same 90-minute show from 7:30-9a. (As you read in the samples above, most stations move into a "more music" mode after 9:00). Since there is so little audience duplication between these two time spans, it makes sense to approach the shift in this way and recycle your material in the same way music, news, and other elements are routinely recycled.

Another approach is to break the shift into even smaller parts:

■ *I break my show down into hours. Every hour should be a different show. If you continue something you did from 6-7 all the way til 9-10, the guy from 9-10 just waking up doesn't know what you're talking about.*

Jonathon Brandmeier, WLUP-FM (Chicago)

But even that may not be going far enough. If the average listener is catching you for only 15-20 minutes each day, that chunk of time has to become your focus. E. Karl spells it out this way:

■ *In the morning, if you get your listeners listening for an average of 15 minutes an hour, you're doing pretty well. So, look at each hour as a package that has FOUR 15-minute shows in it: the top until quarter after, quarter past til the bottom, the bottom until forty-five, and quarter til to the top of the hour. In other words, break each hour into 4 quarter-hour segments, and have each segment contain all of the key elements you would have in any one whole hour of a morning show: entertainment, music, news, weather, and other services. At virtually every quarter hour break, you start all over again.*

E. Karl, "State of the Art" (January 1985)

So now your challenge has been narrowed down considerably: given four 15-minute shows each hour, it's up to you to make your contribution as entertaining and effective as possible. And that means doing at least one creative thing *every* 15 minutes to accompany the scheduled doses of music, weather, etc.

Slotting Material

Several stations reported to us that this is precisely how they attack each hour. Here are two examples:

■ *I scale bits on "power" potential, taped or otherwise. I position one of each approximately at :10, :20, :40, and :50 hourly. Based on our drive-time listening habits, the FM listening span argument doesn't hold here . . . so I have the same high turnover AM does: about 20 minutes per listener per day. I want everyone to have one thing to take with them.*

Bob Cooper, KWEN-FM (Tulsa)

■ *We use stop-sets, and since we only have 4 non-informational sets each hour, that's where the material goes — :07, :20, :38, and :50.*

Bob DeCarlo, WIQI-FM (Tampa)

These stations have opted for a degree of predictability each hour, but that's not necessarily a negative . . . for the audience, or the personality:

■ *By planning prepared bits at certain "anchor" times throughout the show, it gives opportunities for forward promotion. (It) holds the listener's interest and keeps me psyched.*

Mark Osborne, WKSQ-FM (Bangor)

Now the question arises: where *within* your break itself is the best place to put the bit? One strategy is to hook your best bits to your strongest record or a hot music set. The music will bring your audience up, and the bit will give them the payoff and the emotional release they need. So, in this system, the bit would be the first element in the break, coming right out of a record (with a brief set-up from you if necessary).

There may be times when the bit relates to an element within the break, and the two should be tied together. For example, if you are regularly visited by a sexy "Weather Girl", her arrival is keyed by the forecast. So here, your material may actually fall right in the middle of the break.

But most of our personalities — assuming that the bit could be played anywhere — slotted it as the *last* element in the break, and here are some brief explanations why:

■ *95% of the time, I'll make the funny bit the last thing before the spot. It's your last impression before commercial business. Leave 'em laughing, leave 'em wanting more. It would be anti-climactic to go from something funny to something straight.*

Jack Elliott, WWSW-FM (Pittsburgh)

■ *I usually come out of a record with the time, a brief weather synopsis, and then the bit. The bit should be the last thing a listener hears before the commercial because if there's ever an opportunity to tune you out, that's it.*

Coyote McCloud, WYHY-FM (Nashville)

■ *Always put a bogus spot before the real spot. That way, (the audience is) in a "commercial mode" and before they know it, they're into a real one.*

Corey Dietz, WRVQ-FM (Richmond)

No matter where you choose to put the material within the break, be wary of over-loading. John Lander of KKBQ-AM/FM told us that if he knows he's about to run a funny song, he'll precede it with a relatively straight break. Along this same line of thought, if he's going to run a parody commercial at the end of his set, he won't conduct any funny business earlier in that same break.

As you think about slotting your material, another rotation to consider is what we call the ACN "Test Pattern". This has been designed to give sufficient exposure to a fixed number of weekly bits, and to genuinely "test" their entertainment value for your audience.

Assume that going into a week, you know you'll have 5 bits (e.g. fake commercials, drop-ins, song parodies, etc.) to work with. Assume also that you'll slot these within a 6:00 to 9:00 a.m. time span (again under the assumption that most stations will be going into a "more music" mode after 9:00). We'll label these bits "A", "B", "C", "D", and "E", and assume that you'll run them in the same position each hour. Now, here's your rotation schedule:

The ACN Test Pattern

	Mon.	Tue.	Wed.	Thu.	Fri.
6-7a hr.	A	B	C	D	E
7-8a hr.	B	C	D	E	A
8-9a hr.	C	D	E	A	B

Consider the advantages: the average listener, tuning in for roughly the same 20 minutes each morning, will probably hear all 5 different bits at least once each in a given week. If he or she listens for *more* than one hour in a given day (unlikely, but it happens), he or she will hear 2 different bits that day. Each bit has been guaranteed a minimum of 3 airings, and should play to 3 different audiences. By the end of the week, you'll have given everyone who listens to you a chance to hear the bit, and you'll have a much better idea whether it's an "evergreen" or a candidate for the circular file.

The "Test Pattern" may not be right for everybody. Several stations expressed a desire to avoid any form of predictability:

■ *We prefer to place (our bits) whenever and wherever. So, when a listener tunes in, they'll always be entertained and never know what to expect next.*

Scott Woodside, WRQX-FM (Washington, DC)

And a few others described their preference for a middle ground:

■ *6:30, 7:30, and 8:30a for the pre-rehearsed, written, and/or produced stuff. Give 'em something to expect each day. I also do a lot of other bits on a rotating basis. Give 'em something to miss ("Hey did you hear?") That encourages longer listening spans.*

Warren Krech, KJMO-FM (Jefferson City, MO)

However, the general inclination among the 70 we surveyed is towards some kind of consistent structure. Again, like the "monkey bars", something you can rely on each quarter-hour, but with room to "swing".

Power-packing

There is another important consideration when thinking about your show as 4 separate hours, and that's the audience that each hour possesses. All hours are not created equal, and if you have not done so already, check your latest Arbitron to see how each of your on-air hours compares to the others.

A full 80% of our respondents reported that the 7-8a hour was their biggest. The 8-9a hour was second (34%), and the 6-7a hour was third (23% — total exceeds 100 due to overlaps). This raises another question: given that one hour plays to more people than the others, should you load — i.e., “power-pack” — this hour with more material and/or your best material? Over 69% of our personalities said “Yes” — fire all of your guns when the sky is full of birds. However, the 30% which said “No” were adamant. They asked: what about the guy who can't catch me from 7 to 8? Should I give him less than my best?

Both sides make reasonable points, and there really is no definitive answer here. The best stance is probably somewhere in the middle. Establishing a rotation such as the ACN Test Pattern guarantees your material equal exposure to all your listeners; and throwing a few extra goodies into the mix during your key hours plays to the demands of a larger audience.

Making the material work

All the most thoughtful scheduling in the world won't make a difference if you don't take the time and effort to make your material work. Whether it's a one-line joke, a telephone bit, or an elaborately produced taped piece, *you* will be the factor that makes it a success; and this requires work both on and off the air.

Pre-Production Say, for example, that President Reagan's birthday is coming up. For the morning of the day, you plan to “call the White House” to personally offer your best wishes. You have a funny script prepared, and a talented impersonator ready to perform the President's lines on the telephone. You're all set, right?

Not necessarily. If you go live with this bit, you leave yourself open to all sorts of problems: a bad phone line (if not a missed connection all together) . . . a flat performance . . . missed timing . . . and worse. You may get it right on the first “take”, but you've played long odds in doing so and that's not a gamble you have to take.

By producing the bit in advance, you eliminate all the possible calamities. You give yourself the opportunity to rehearse, to miss a line, to rehearse some more, and to try again. You retain absolute control of the technical quality, and the value of that should not be underestimated. Even if the President's half of the conversation comes to you already produced (as it does for ACN affiliates) and you only have to edit in your lines, you should still pre-produce. As the joke goes, “What's the most important thing in comedy? Timing!”

Enjoy It Audiences respond better if you really get into a sketch as you perform it (whether you're pre-producing or doing something spontaneously). You should not be afraid to laugh and chuckle at the jokes — even if you wrote them. In many cases, you'll actually be teaching your audience how to respond, leading them through the bit to the final punchline. Television provides the reactions of a live audience (or a laugh track) to accomplish this, but in radio — you're all they've got! And if you're doing a running joke, your “Uh-oh, here we go again” line cues them to this, and everyone likes to feel like they're in on the joke. Remember: if you're not enjoying it, why should they?

Promoting Ahead Back to the Reagan phone call for a moment. It's the morning of his birthday and everyone listening to you is aware of this because it's in all the daily papers and in all your station's newspapers. Since you've built a bit around this, you should pre-promote it like hell. You've devoted time off the air to creating a great moment for your show, so it pays to spend time on the air building the audience for it. And this holds true for any bit which the audience should know is coming. Do you have a silly sponsor (such as ACN's “Krapco Enterprises”) who's always introducing ridiculous new products? If so, promote ahead: “Coming up after this break, Krapco is back with the amazing new Inside-the-Cow Cream Whipper!” You'll be assuring your regulars that one of their favorite bits is on the way, and enticing newcomers to stick around . . . through the quarter hour. And that's the real name of the game, after all — keeping that one come body around just a little bit longer.

Not Promoting Ahead Consider another example: you have a fake commercial ready to air for a new breakfast place called "Slam-Dunkin' Donuts" (for the "Breakfast of NBA Champions"). The audience has no expectation that this spot is coming, nor has anything in the news created an expectation for this spot. By dropping it into a real commercial cluster, you can catch them totally off-guard and get an even better response. At the same time, you've created another reason for them to stay with you through a commercial break. In fact, you've heightened attention for the entire break itself, which is a point worth making to your sponsors. With some bits, you'll have a choice to pre-promote or not; sometimes, it's a good idea to just let it happen.

Respect The "Laugh Zone" Imagine that you are telling a joke to a friend, face to face. After you deliver your killer punch line, what do you do? Do you turn and walk away? No. Do you immediately change the subject and start talking about yesterday's ballgame? Of course not. Do you tell him another? Not right away. In all likelihood, you simply sit back for a moment and give your friend a chance to laugh and appreciate your brilliant sense of humor. You respect the "Laugh Zone".

Delivering a joke or a bit on the air is virtually the same thing, but not every personality respects the Laugh Zone, and this can ruin the best material. You must give your audience a chance to digest and appreciate the material before you blast into something else. Transition elements such as a jingle, an instrumental intro to a song, or just your own laughter can give your listeners the time they need to enjoy, catch their breath, and ready themselves for the next element.

Approaching the basics creatively

Weather. Time. Traffic. Sports. News. The morning personality is inevitably linked to all of these, whether providing them yourself or handing off to someone else. Just orchestrating the prompt delivery of these basics can fill up every break the morning personality has, and it can be a real burden. But it can also be an opportunity.

Weather Giving the forecast can be one of the most important listener services you perform each morning. If you do it the same way every time, however, it can become rather boring for you . . . and when it's boring for you, it may be boring for the listener as

well. Many of our respondents were adamant about leaving weather forecasts alone, saying they were too important an element to take chances with. But just as many others shared some of their creative approaches with us:

■ *We had at WSSX-FM a meteorologist named Belinda Bubblehead who was supposed to give the forecast but never quite got around to it. You see, she's an idiot.*

Steve Cochran, WMXJ-FM (Miami)

■ *Since everyone in Phoenix has a traffic copter, we have a weather helicopter with a gay (Biff Lacy) and black (Charles Washington St. Laurent) announcer who always gets into topical trouble every morning, ending the weather with "Sunny and 58!"*

B.J. Hunter, KOPA-FM (Phoenix)

■ *We used to have a weather bird (who would say), "Ca-ca-ca-ca, hot! Hot! It's going to be hot! Put on your underwear! Put on your underwear!"*

Charles Laquidara, WBCN-FM (Boston)

Bob Rivers and Zip Zipfel of WAAF-FM have been letting "God" deliver the weather for the past few years, and they report this is their most popular continuing feature. Chris Jones at WFYV-FM gets calls from a "Kinky Weather Lady" who always tries to talk dirty while Chris is trying to deliver the forecast. Karl August of WOKD-FM tapes his forecasts and plays them at a slightly higher than normal speed for a "Quick Look at the Weather". And Spike O'Dell of KIIK-FM gives his forecasts a religious flavor by reading them directly from "The Book of Opinions, Chapter 1, Verse 2, The Gospel According to Me."

Believe it or not, through all of this, the forecast does come through, and probably with greater impact than a conventional delivery could supply. And even when the forecast is being handled by someone else, the opportunity still exists to get creative. Tim Boyle of WMT-FM works with a staff meteorologist who isn't the liveliest guy in the world. This could be a real tune-out, but Tim has turned it into a positive:

■ *(He) gives me something to play off. I will occasionally give him a huge brass fanfare similar to the 20th Century Fox opening.*

Tim Boyle, WMT-FM (Cedar Rapids)

Time Like the weather forecasts, time checks are another staple ingredient of the morning show. A morning personality might give as many as 20 updates in an hour, so if there was ever an opportunity for a basic to become repetitive and boring, this must be it. Sprinkling in a few creative time checks every so often is an excellent way to keep this service alive for you and your listeners.

This does not have to be an elaborate process, either. In fact, the shorter the better (after all, the payoff will still only be the current time). Rivers and Zipfel at WAAF are regularly visited by a Gandhi-like character who delivers "non-violent time checks" (with a ridiculous Indian accent, of course) and then gets punched out. Chris Jones of WFYV-FM uses the drop from the Mel Brooks film, "Young Frankenstein", which says, ". . . at the sound of the knockers, it will be . . ." Steve Gibbons of KRNT-AM is visited by cheerleaders who run into his studio screaming "Give me a 6! Give me a 15!" Rob Dillman of WOCC occasionally says, "It's 325 minutes past 4:00", which is an unusual way to say it's 9:25, but if you stop and think about it, Rob's achieved his goal. And Charles Laquidara of WBCN-FM will say "At the sound of Reagan's economy rising, it will be 9:00", but then there won't be any sound. There's a time check and a political comment together!

Traffic Here's another opportunity to take one of the standard basics and have some fun. Many personalities reported to us that their stations didn't do any serious traffic reporting — so they created fictional characters for some very un-serious reporting. John Arthur (when at WZOK-FM) used "Sky Queen and His (or Her?) Dog, Gram". Rivers and Zipfel have Dick Lexia, who speaks backwards at critical points in his traffic report. And B.J. Hunter told us:

■ *We do traffic twice an hour. We started out with a traffic jogger (humorous, but over the listeners' heads), and then we had a traffic buzzard. He left, so now we're looking for a new person.*

B.J. Hunter, KOPA-FM (Phoenix)

Music was used by several personalities to inject some fun. Scott Woodside of WRQX-FM uses the "Damn this traffic jam, oh how I hate to be late" drop from James Taylor's "J.T." album. In Boston, where the "T" is the heart of mass transit, Laquidara re-wrote Rockwell's "Somebody's Watchin' Me" to "Waiting for the T". And in San Francisco Don Bleu has a few beds ready to go depending on the occasion:

■ *I've got several music beds. One is "At the Hop", which is now "On the Bridge", which is a traffic statement. So, if there's a traffic problem on the (Golden Gate) bridge, it's "On the bridge, bridge, bridge!" Highway 17 is a real big road here, so (we use) Janice Ian's "At 17".*

Don Bleu, KYUU-FM (San Francisco)

And, for the more adventurous, there are always sound effects:

■ *Charleston has a reputation for bad drivers. (When I was at WSSX-FM), I would occasionally check traffic by playing a 30-second cart of about 18 cars crashing together. It tended to wake people up.*

Steve Cochran, WMXJ-FM (Miami)

Sports Tying into the local professional or college teams is a ploy which many morning shows have used with great success. In Phoenix, for example, the Arizona State University Sun Devils are the biggest team locally. So, morning man B.J. Hunter of KOPA-FM has added the "Arizona Scum Devil" to his morning show team. In Syracuse, the Carrier Dome is the hub of all local sports activity. On the "Big Mike Show" (WYYY-FM), the "Dome Ranger" appears (in full costume complete with mask, mind you) to help deliver the sports.

In Rockford, Illinois, on the other hand, there isn't a whole lot of sports happening locally. Nevertheless, when John Arthur was doing mornings at WZOK-FM, he took regular telephone reports from "Gym Nasium — the Sports Man in the Sports Can". Gym reported from restrooms in stadiums all across the country since no one would allow him a seat in the press box.

We received numerous examples such as these from both big sports towns and tiny markets where there isn't even a girl's field hockey team. Again, it points up the fact that opportunities for humor in a morning show are where you choose to find them.

After the Show

When a personality steps off the air, you are usually deluged with responsibilities: produce commercials . . . meet with management . . . meet with clients . . . make personal appearances. Although your day is more than half over (and your body clock is sticking firmly to this schedule), you step into the middle of a day that's just begun for everyone else. That can create problems and can pull a personality's attention away from the real priorities: such as getting ready for the next day's program.

In this section, we're going to focus on the things a morning personality can do when he or she gets off the air to make their morning program (and their working life) better.

Files

■ *Don't ever throw away a gag. I've got gags that go back that I used for President Eisenhower . . . that I rewrote for Kennedy and Johnson and Nixon and so on. There aren't any new gags.*

Dr. Don Rose, KFRC-AM (San Francisco)

For a business that processes as much material each day as a morning radio show, it would seem mandatory that the personality keeps at least some simple kind of file. And yet, 53% of the people we surveyed admitted that they had no files whatsoever. They were airing as many as 10 different bits per show, and were throwing in numerous ad-libs and one-liners, but was any system in place to keep track of all this for the future? No!

There were many reasons given for the lack of files: I just haven't gotten around to it . . . my boss won't pay for a computer . . . I'm just not that organized. Some had tried and given up:

■ *I used to save stuff, and then . . . I kept building up these stupid files. And I noticed that I was never going through these stupid files and if I wanted to find something in the files it took so damn long it wasn't worth the effort. So, I just chucked it all and now I don't save anything.*

Larry Lujack, WLS-AM (Chicago)

And there's the key: keeping your material in a file isn't the solution. Keeping it in a file you *can* and *will* use is. You don't have to be a super-organizer either. Many of our personalities file their material in a straightforward chronological system:

■ *I keep notebooks of the show on a day to day basis. Then, year after year, you can refer back to what you did last year.*

Chris Jones, WFYV-FM (Jacksonville)

Several classify their material by subject instead of date. If that system appeals more to you, consider this advice:

■ *Give every person involved with your morning show a 3-ring notebook to carry with them wherever they go. Break the book into sections, with blank pages in each section for notes: movies, TV, people, one-liners, bits, jokes, showbiz gossip, interesting stuff, off-the-wall junk, miscellaneous. Encourage the team members to carry the notebooks with them all the time and to write down everything that comes to mind that could go into a morning show. Just think of all the great material that is lost because a note wasn't jotted down.*

E. Karl, "State of the Art" (January 1985)

Bobby Gunther Walsh combines a couple of organizing techniques:

■ *The comedy services I file in alphabetical order, and within the service (bits) are filed by month. So, every December I pull all the December services and presto! Tons of Christmas jokes (with) just rewrites to update.*

Bobby Gunther Walsh, WAEB-AM (Allentown)

And Chris Evans keeps it simple: write it down, let the computer do the rest:

■ *I keep a pad in the studio, and things that I think have worked well I will write down, make a note, and put in the computer. I'll punch up and see how long it's been (since I last used it). If I did a bit and it worked real well at quarter to nine, I'm going to bring it back two weeks later at 6:30.*

Chris Evans, WKCI-FM (New Haven)

No matter how busy you are or how little space you have for files, you'll be doing yourself a disservice to go completely without. So, if you'd like to have a simple, effective file system, we recommend you look at, and consider, the following diagram.

1. Before you go on the air each morning, map out each hour of that day's show using a single page for each hour. At the top of each page, enter the date of the show and the hour you'll be charting out (e.g. 6-7a), and then break the page into 4 equal parts for each quarter hour.

2. For each break, list all the events planned (including items such as newscasts, sports, weather, traffic, your bits, and commercials) in the order they will occur. In our sample, we're assuming one break per quarter hour.

3. As you go through the show, pencil in any changes so that this log will be an accurate record of what really transpired on the air. Note down funny ad-libs, unusual phone calls, anything you didn't anticipate in making out the original hourly schedule.

4. When the show is over, review the hour-by-hour sheets. If there are bits, one-liners, or other elements which can be recycled, copy each one down on a separate 3 × 5 card. Each card should have the following information:

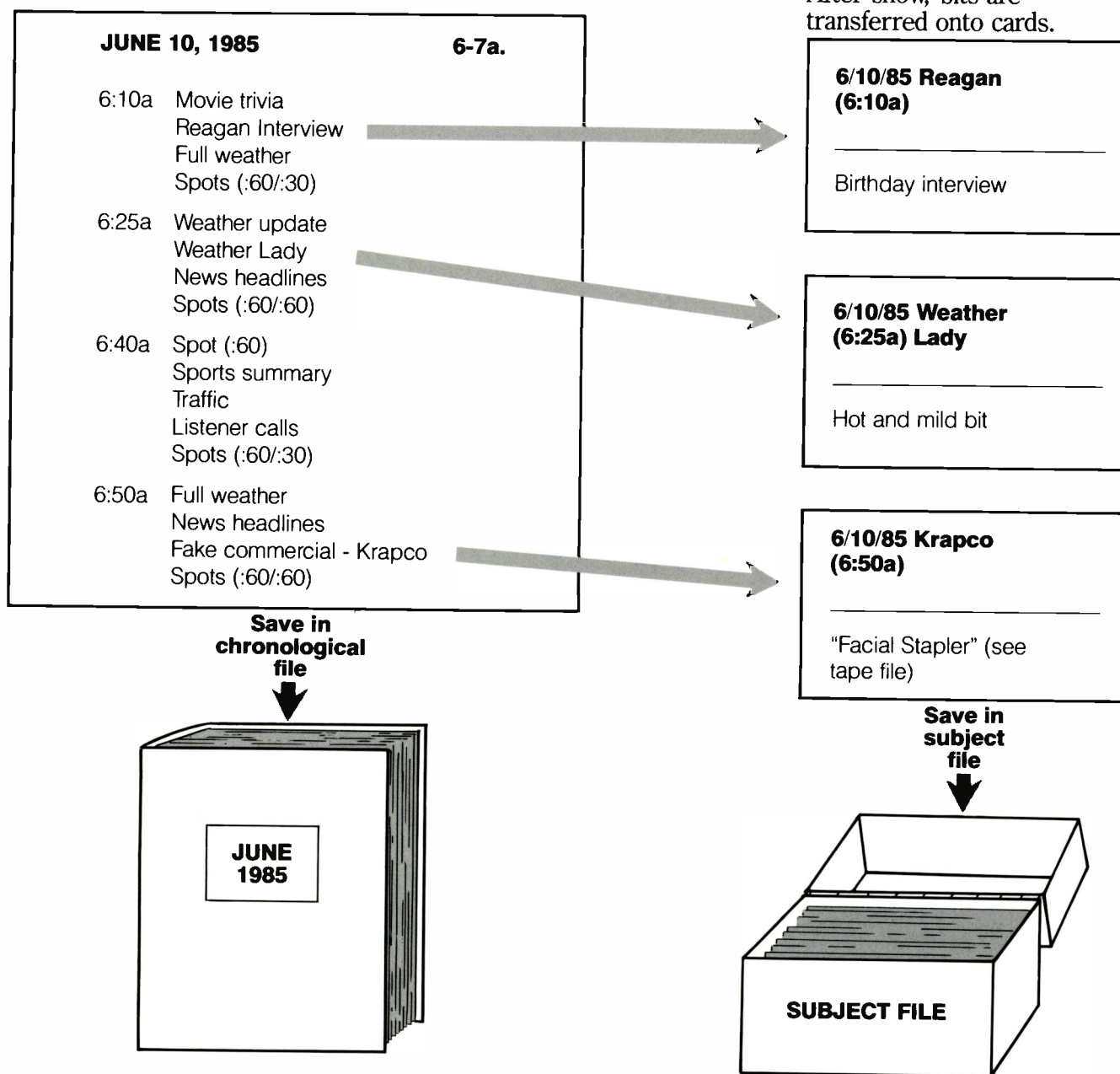
- a 2 or 3 word title, or "slug" for the bit (e.g. "Reagan Interview")
- the date and time of its most recent use
- a brief description (if the slug alone won't tell you what it was about)
- notes on any audience response
- if it's a taped piece, a note on where that tape has been stored

5. The hourly show sheets can then be filed in a loose-leaf notebook labelled with the current month. This will be your chronological file. Next year at this time, you can pull this notebook and recycle the material from that month.

6. The 3 × 5 cards should be filed alphabetically (using the first letter of your slug as the guide) in your file box. This will be your subject file. If you wish to know, for instance, the last time you did a Reagan bit, you can just look under "R" and one card will have all the information you need.

The ACN Chronological/Subject File To put together this system, all you'll need are some 3 ring notebooks, 3 × 5 cards, and a small filing box.

Hour-By-Hour Schedule Sheet: Prepare in advance, take into studio and update as hour progresses.



In the long run, files save time and effort — so what you invest now in getting a system going will pay back handsomely next year when you're polishing and re-writing topical material instead of scratching your head trying to recall, "What did I do on this last year?"

Airchecking and Critiquing Yourself Almost 90% of the personalities we surveyed regularly aircheck and critique their shows, with the majority reviewing the tapes at least once each week. This kind of evaluation is extremely worthwhile since it lets you experience your show from the listener's standpoint. It can be a humbling experience after a show that seemed wonderful while you were doing it, and it can be reassuring after a show that felt like a disaster in progress. To get the *most* out of your airchecks, consider listening to them in *two* ways:

First when you want to evaluate the fine points of your delivery (e.g. How many time checks did I do? Did I enunciate clearly on a certain spot?), a telescoped aircheck is sufficient. This allows you to focus quickly on specific techniques you're attempting to improve.

When you want to "play the listener", however, it's better to use a full 20-30 minute segment of your show (complete with all the music, commercials, etc.) — in other words, an exact duplicate of what an average listener would catch on a typical morning. Listen to this sampling while you are doing something else, such as eating a meal, driving around, working out, what have you. The idea here is to listen *exactly* as the audience does, and then to see just how much you cut through the typical distractions. If you sit and stare at the tape player — hanging on your every word — you won't get a true feeling of what the listener experiences. So, after you've been through the telescoped aircheck, try a "casual listen" to a random (but complete) 20 minute segment of your show. That combination of airchecks will help you *hear* your show better.

Publicizing Yourself

■ *Be active and visible within the community. Do theatre, play in a softball or basketball league, join a club, stand on a street corner and shake hands. Promoting yourself just on the radio won't cut it — in effect you're already "saving the saved", reaching people who already have some idea who you are. Get to those people who are potential listeners by dealing with them in a face-to-face situation. People love to know the face and personality behind the voice they hear.*

Tim Boyle, WMT-FM (Cedar Rapids)

There's not much we can add to that recommendation because Tim has just about summed up your task. But it bears more thought since the responsibility of getting out there and meeting your audience is immense. And there are many ways to do it.

Personal appearances are the most straightforward and probably the most effective. Shaking hands and looking people straight in the eye is what this job is all about. Politicians say that every hand you shake is a vote, and there's a correlation here for radio:

■ *When Brian (Wilson) and I were in Atlanta doing mornings at Z-93, the last year we were there we did 300 public appearances. And our ratings went up 3 points. The station did zero billboards, zero TV, nothing!*

Ross Brittain, WHTZ-FM (New York)

Television won't provide the actual physical contact, but that's about all it won't do. Appearances on public TV fundraisers, music video shows, late night movie programs, local news weather segments and the like were common among the people we interviewed. And they all considered this exposure extremely beneficial. TV fundraisers in particular were mentioned due to the additional benefits:

■ *It's a great way to meet the movers and shakers of your community . . . plus it can't hurt one's image.*

B.J. Hunter, KOPA-FM (Phoenix)

Speaking engagements, newspaper columns, remotes, MC gigs, teaching jobs — all were submitted as excellent ways of meeting the public and keeping your face and name visible. And several personalities told us they spread their involvement over as many as possible:

■ *We recently counted over 200 public appearances made by the WSSX-FM morning show in 1984. Over half were for charity. I also co-hosted a video show with my partner on a local TV station. I did stand-up comedy once a week, all year, at the local comedy club.*

Steve Cochran, WMXJ-FM (Miami)

There are also ways to get the most out of your local media. Dan O'Day suggests 6 techniques for generating cross-media attention for your show:

1. *Invite the daily newspaper's media critic to sit in on your show. (Even if your paper doesn't have an official critic, it has someone who writes about television or radio)*
2. *Invite the newspaper's media critic or entertainment editor to dinner.*
3. *If you're a controversial personality, pull a stunt that's guaranteed to cause controversy . . . and alert local TV newspeople so they can run footage of the fracas.*
4. *Start a running feud with a local, highly visible TV weatherperson: "Did you see Wilmer Freud last night? That guy can't even pronounce cumulus, much less predict the weather. Why I could do a better weather forecast blindfolded!"*
5. *Respond in writing to your local paper's article on rock/country/pop music on radio. If you disagree, do so dramatically and eloquently. If you can't find anything to disagree with, write a letter complimenting them on doing such a fine job of reporting and adding some other piece of information they might find of interest.*
6. *Volunteer your on-camera services for your Public Television station's local fund-raising drive and/or auction. (But make sure in advance you'll be used on-camera).*

Dan O'Day, Radio and Records (12/21/84)

And as a final thought-starter, consider these suggestions from ACN's own David Lawrence, who has used many of these to his advantage in supporting his Saturday midday show on WKCI-FM in New Haven:

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- Suggest remotes *during* your show. You can get your picture and voice into car dealerships, store openings, etc. and reach new audiences while you're doing your regular shift;
 - Conduct contests with client tie-ins, e.g. giving away records from a local store which will post your picture and calls at the registration point;
 - Work to develop your audience — those high school and college functions pay off when these people move into your target audience (if they're not already there);
 - Tie in with national promotions, e.g. StarSearch, Lip Synch, Dance America;
 - Try to become the record reviewer or entertainment editor for your local "PM Magazine";
 - Get your station to push your show in local free entertainment guides;
 - Participate in all rallies and parades; if you can't be in the parade, bring a tape-recorder and interview the spectators. You'll meet a lot of people and probably get some interesting sound for your next show;
 - If station clients will be running print ads for an event where you'll be appearing, make sure your name and call letters are included in the ad.
-

Station Relations

General managers, I find, generally have more time for you if you're the morning man. The sales department actually talks to you in the hallways if you're a morning man.

John Landecker, WCKG-FM (Chicago)

After all the challenges of being a morning person (that we discussed so far) are met, there is still one more. And while it may seem to have the least to do with putting on an excellent show each day, it has a great deal to do with your career and your future in this industry.

Dealing effectively with the people at your radio station can make your work easier . . . and your life longer. We asked our 70 personalities to comment on how they got along with their General Managers, Program Directors, Sales Staffs, and fellow air talents; and their observations follow. In each category, we heard about the unique problems that come with being "the morning person", but we also heard some excellent words of advice. This book is dedicated to morning talents, but this section should be read by everybody!

The Air Staff

If any group at the radio station should be able to empathize with all the demands put on you, it is the other air personalities. But doing the morning shift can set you apart, financially and socially:

■ *Sometimes you feel a little coldness from the other air personalities. I think it's a general rule of thumb that the morning man is going to be paid more than most other air personalities on the station.*

Robert Murphy, WKQX-FM (Chicago)

With most of the attention directed to you by management and (in some cases) with promotional dollars concentrated around your show, it's only natural for there to be some resentment. Recognizing this phe-

nomenon and dealing with it, however, can save you a lot of time and grief:

■ *Morning men are like television anchors. They're by far the highest paid person on the air staff. They seem to get the most of — if not all of — the recognition and favoritism. I think it's up to the morning personality . . . to show that (he's) regular people and not a star.*

Chris Evans, WKCI-FM (New Haven)

How you do this is up to you, but it's worth making the effort. At WTVN-AM in Columbus, Ohio, Bob Conners short-stops any friction through consistency and hard work:

■ *First of all, you have to work your ass off so the others respect you. That alone can eliminate the problem. And I cross-plug all the other guys whenever I can — I don't give them a reason to knock me. It all comes down to just showing that you know that WTVN is on the air 24 hours a day, and that I need the overnight guy's audience as much as anybody else at the station needs mine.*

Bob Conners, WTVN-AM (Columbus)

In Houston, where everyone talks about "The Q-Zoo", John Lander makes an extra effort to insure that the rest of his air staff gets exposure in the community:

■ *The Q-Zoo is such an easy handle and it does get promoted so much that this is a real problem. What we try to do to compensate for this is to make*

a conscientious effort to get all of our DJ's involved in . . . promotions. We'll send the afternoon guy to happy hours, get the evening DJ to a dance. We know the morning show can't win in the 12+ column by itself. . . and all of our dayparts are (rated) pretty equal as a result.

John Lander, KKBQ-AM/FM (Houston)

When a personality becomes a self-sufficient island at a radio station, their show can attain "island status", too — and that can mean less cross-promotional and informational support than other, more integrated dayparts receive. Station policy and management directives may legislate against this, but people are people and you've undoubtedly seen this happen yourself. At the very least, be aware of the external forces that can pull you away from your on-air colleagues.

The Sales Staff

A radio station is an unusual blend of art and commerce. Unfortunately, most personalities see themselves at one extreme (where the art is happening) and see the sales staff at the other extreme (where the art-less commerce is happening). Many complained of a general lack of understanding and appreciation for their work on the part of the station's account executives:

■ *They want me to be as sparkling and hilarious on all their spots as I occasionally am on the air. They think if you were funny once, you can be funny infinitely and endlessly.*

Tim Boyle, WMT-FM (Cedar Rapids)

While the sales department literally brings in the money that finances the station, the feeling that they are a "necessary evil" still prevails. Commercial production takes away from show production . . . weekend remotes take away from personal R-and-R. And again and again we heard, "They just don't understand what I do!"

This is not a situation from which you can just walk away. As the Greaseman told us, "No matter how talented you are, you've got to have someone just as talented sell you" — and that simple realization is a good place to start. If people on your sales staff don't

understand what you do, make the effort to educate them:

■ *Let them understand the creativity that goes into the morning show. I would recommend, for instance, having the sales department sit in on a morning show meeting.*

Bobby Rich, KFMB-FM (San Diego)

When the air staff at WRVQ-FM in Richmond felt some distance growing between them and their sales staff, they made a plan:

■ *We all decided one day to "Adopt-a-Salesperson" for a week. We would take them out to lunch, sit down, get to know them, and find out what's going on out on the street and with them. Our jocks would take out 1 salesperson a week until we'd gotten to 4 or 5 different people. There were improvements in communication.*

Corey Dietz, WRVQ-FM (Richmond)

One of the areas where push can come to shove between the personality and sales is special client promotions. But here, too, there is a way to keep problems from escalating:

■ *We're finding that the big link — regarding time management — between sales and programming is the Promotions Director. He can really be a buffer or go-between. We can let him know, "Here's all the stuff we're doing this week" and before any promotion gets off the ground, he lets the sales department know how committed we are; and then nobody has to say "no".*

Paul Robins, KPOP-FM (Sacramento)

Finally, it helps to realize that salespeople can create terrific opportunities for the personality to make extra cash. Yes, they may ask you to re-cut a spot for the millionth time . . . or have lunch with such-and-such big shot client . . . but that's not *all* they can do. . . .

■ *(Your sales staff) makes money from you and a smart morning man will learn how to make money from the sales staff, e.g., remotes, speaking engagements, etc.*

Spike O'Dell, KIIK-FM (Quad Cities)

■ *If you want to get voice-over work (and that's a great way to make extra cash), you need to get close to the agencies and bigger sponsors. When a salesman asks you to go to a lunch with a client, that could be a great opportunity to do just that. You're helping him and you're helping yourself!*

M.G. Kelly, KOST-FM (Los Angeles)

Management

No one at the radio station (with the possible exception of a partner) will have more to do with your future than your manager. If they're good, they can help you grow as a performer and as a professional and facilitate your next move up. If they're bad, they'll facilitate your move *out*, whether it's due to your decision or theirs.

When our personalities reported about "good" experiences with managers, one thought kept coming up: respect.

■ *One of the best experiences I had was working with Joe Montione (formerly of WFIL and KHJ), my PD for 2 years at WILK. He left me alone, gave me tons of freedom, and therefore when he had a meeting with me, I knew it would be worthwhile, not nitpicking at minor details, but at something that was a major flaw, or crutch, or attitude that didn't fit mornings in the market. I have tremendous respect for him because he had respect for me and gave me freedom . . . trusted my judgment . . . and treated me as an equal. More PD's should have his attitude. That doesn't mean he never yelled. It just means when he did he had a reason and he meant it.*

Bobby Gunther Walsh, WAEB-AM (Allentown)

■ *People who have given me the latitude to do my show, people that have trusted me to get in there and do the job — they've been my inspirations. I worked for a guy in Florida named Stan Kaplan, who told me the first day I ever went on the air at his station: "Grease, you can't be too outrageous for me."*

The Greaseman, WWDC-FM (Washington, DC)

Enlightened management of this kind is becoming more common, but there is still a long way to go. Many personalities see room for improvement even if they are successful and work in good environs:

■ *There is still a general rule in radio: jocks are second class citizens. An occasional trade for dinner, a contest for prizes (or dollars, much like the ones always going on in Sales) among the jocks, and the all-important raise or bonus would mean a lot. From the morning man's standpoint, standing behind a jock when a listener is hot about something he said is important. Also, a pat on the back for a good show helps.*

Steve Cochran, WMXJ-FM (Miami)

Improving relations with your manager (whether it's the PD or the GM) begins with accepting their role as such. As Brad Krantz told us, ". . . once you decide you're above being critiqued, you're in trouble." The respect you give your manager should be returned in kind (but be patient — this can take time). And if you want them to genuinely appreciate what you do, spend some time thinking about what *they* do, too:

■ *GM's are not ogres who just don't want to have funny things on the air. Sometimes they're just a little afraid of calls when citizen groups are picketing their advertisers.*

The Greaseman, WWDC-FM (Washington, DC)

Accept the fact that there will be run-ins. If you're doing a truly creative and entertaining show, you're going to be goring an ox or two each week; and your GM is usually the guy who finds the dead oxen lying on his doorstep. If you can let him know that trouble may be coming (and this warning can be held til after your "hot" bit has aired), you can take some of the sting out of an angry phone call. When such run-ins become a regular event, the challenge to prove that your creative choices are right becomes more difficult. But consider it a challenge and not a burden:

■ *It's your job to change their standards by convincing them, probably through ratings success, that you're right. Yes, you can go a little further than they thought!*

Dick Purtan, WCZY-FM (Detroit)

How Management Can Help

The goal of this book has been to help the morning personality do a funnier, more creative, and more successful morning show. In this pursuit, however, there remain certain things the personality cannot do alone. Even if you follow all the guidelines discussed so far, it may still be up to the station management to provide the few additional items which ultimately create a successful show. So, this Chapter is for them.

In our questionnaire and interviews, we asked our 70 personalities: what could your station's management do to improve your working conditions, enhance your performance, or just generally support you better? Their responses fell into 5 major categories: the 5-day week, positive reinforcement, being "the shield", material support, and personnel support.

The 5-Day Week

Two issues emerged as most important, and this was one of them. In as creative and as physically demanding a job as the morning shift, several personalities told us that their 6-day week was a killer:

■ *I'd be much more productive during the week and my performance would be a little sharper if I had weekends off . . . or at least, rotating weekends. It's important to get a weekend off, and it would be nice to spend a few holidays with the family.*

Mike Fiss, WYYY-FM (Syracuse)

The general feeling was: if Monday through Friday, 6 to 10 a.m. is *the* key daypart, why take anything away from it by making the personality put in an extra day on a less important shift?

■ *We give an extra effort 5 days a week, because Saturday mornings 6 to 10 . . . who cares? Nobody's up anyway! And this frees us up for Saturday appearances which are important.*

Corey Dietz, WRVQ-FM (Richmond)

Even "Saturday appearances" (in lieu of a regular shift) can create problems, though . . .

■ *Working a 5-day week is invaluable. The last few weeks we've had major promotional events on a Saturday, and it just burns you out.*

Paul Kinney, KPOP-FM (Sacramento)

You'd be hard-pressed to find a morning talent who *didn't* think a 5-day week was critical to the success of their show; but managers are still coming around to this way of thinking. The 6-day week persists for several reasons, foremost among them . . . money:

■ *I think it's great if that radio station at that point in time can afford the luxury of doing it. But that's the reality of it — it's a luxury.*

Bobby Rich, KFMB-FM (San Diego)

There is also tradition — it's been done for years, the argument goes, so why stop now? And then there's the familiar refrain: if I do it for you, I'll have to do it for everyone.

In today's radio marketplace, those arguments may not stand up as well as they used to. As stations invest more and more in ambitious (and admittedly expensive) morning shows, it would seem reasonable that they'd be more diligent about protecting their investments over the long term. The money that pays for a part-

timer who covers that 6th-day shift (instead of your morning talent) could be viewed as “insurance”—insurance against the creative burnout that compels station after station to add new players (or put an entirely new team) in the morning shift.

The re-emergence of personality radio should counter the “tradition” argument. What went before (“Shut up and play the hits”) is not like what’s being asked for now (“Have fun and play the bits!”). In fact, it’s like two different jobs which just happen to occupy the same time slot. Today’s morning personality must deliver more — particularly in a creative vein — and that requires more time to rest and recharge.

And similar reasoning answers the assertion, “. . . then I’ll have to do it for everybody!” Other shifts are *not* like the morning show, and do *not* place the same demands on the personality (in most cases; there are exceptions). If management believes every air personality is doing essentially the same amount of work, some education needs to be done (and having them read this book is not a bad place to start).

There are few things on which all morning talents agree, but this is clearly one of them: the 5-day morning star burns brighter and longer.

Positive Reinforcement

Along with the 5-day week, the need for positive reinforcement was highly valued. A simple pat on the back, a compliment for a good show, a thank you for extra work — these are the little things which cost nothing yet mean so much. Managers should not infer that their personalities don’t want to be criticized: rather a fair balance of praise and constructive criticism was viewed as one of the best services a manager could provide:

■ *The thing that has served me best is positive reinforcement. By god, if you do something well, management needs to say, “Gee, that was swell!” But not being critical at all doesn’t serve me at all because then I start to doubt their judgment.*

Jack Elliott, WWSW-FM (Pittsburgh)

■ *The support has to be real. A lot of managers feel that support equals a stroke, or support equals salary. But support is really ongoing input, and it has to be positive. They have to really show they are backing you up by either giving you what you need, or at least explaining why you can’t have it.*

Bobby Rich, KFMB-FM (San Diego)

When it comes to constructive criticism, there is one important proviso: *don’t* give it while the personality is on the air! That quick call on the studio hot line or friendly jaunt into the studio can create bigger problems than the one you’re hoping to solve:

■ *If you come into the studio and criticize someone when they’re on the air, you can devastate them, even over the smallest thing. Your guy will be on a creative high — if he’s doing it right — and you can blow a whole hour or a whole show and send him right into the toilet. Wait ’til he’s off the air.*

M.G. Kelly, KOST-FM (Los Angeles)

Regular critique/review sessions supplemented by spontaneous praise and shows of support will provide the right mix. And this doesn’t take much time. Just a little effort and empathy will do wonders.

Being “The Shield”

In a typical station, a personality will have people coming at him from all directions: civic groups wanting public appearances . . . listeners with requests or great ideas to improve the show . . . salespeople needing company for a client lunch . . . the production director wanting help on a spot . . . a local politician looking to avenge that last bit you did about him. This chaotic situation could give anyone an ulcer; but it can also provide the Program Director or General Manager with a tremendous opportunity.

When the PD or GM can step into this mess and *shield* their morning person from those time-consuming tasks which take away from real show prep, they perform an invaluable service. They also create a bond between themselves and the talent that is difficult to break. At WRVQ-FM in Richmond, for example, Corey Dietz sits at the helm of one of America’s first “Morning Zoo’s”. His show generated a lot of heat when it first went on the air, but the GM made it his responsibility to handle the angry calls:

■ *Our GM is a great example of someone who committed to something controversial and stood behind it. He fielded a lot of criticism and complaints, and a lot of stuff never even got back to us.*

Corey Dietz, WRVQ-FM (Richmond)

Within the station, the manager who simply keeps the lines of communication open between his morning talent and the rest of the staff will be serving all his employees well. In Tampa, when Jack Strap encountered a problem within WYNF, he saw his GM as the potential problem-solver:

■ *Last Saturday I had to race motorcycles on a dirt track . . . and I had been told (by the salesperson) that all I had to do was hang out there for a couple of hours! I'd like to see (my manager) get more involved with the sales staff and educate them as to what we do . . . and what we're able to do for them.*

Jack Strap, WYNF-FM (Tampa)

Of course, if the personality turns the manager into the person who's always "cleaning up after the elephants", the trust that the manager has made an extra effort to create is abused. However, if you can show him that you are a hard-working professional who has the best interests of the station at heart, then it's fair to expect some help. And that can mean keeping you out of unnecessary meetings; restricting your responsibilities in the production studio; and generally keeping your working environment fun and creative. Creative people need to let "the child" within them roam freely — managers need to find "the parent" within themselves to give their "children" the love and support they need.

Material and Personnel Support

Improvements in the physical plant, more information resources, and "extra hands" were also mentioned by several of our respondents. Some of these items may seem minor, but they *do* affect two things: the quality of the show, and the personality's perception of how much management cares about the product.

■ *Air conditioning in the booth never seems quite right. It seems little, but the temperature really affects you. If it's too hot, I start to doze off.*

George Hamberger, WGR-AM (Buffalo)

It's remarkable how often complaints like this came up. The studio is the very heart of any radio station, and yet again and again we heard about problems with the heating or cooling system, bad lighting, squeaking chairs, misfiring cart machines, etc. Rarely did the

repairs needed seem costly or elaborate — they just weren't a priority. If a manager would like to display his commitment to the morning product, attending to problems in the studio is a good place to start.

(A funny aside in this regard comes from KKBQ in Houston. John Lander and the other personalities there were having problems with the studio door — namely that people were barging through it while they were on the air, and frequently bits would be ruined by the distraction. As PD, John decided to attack this matter head on, and he put his engineers to work. Within a short time, they had rigged a system wherein the door would automatically lock whenever the personality either turned on the microphone or pressed a play/record button on a cart machine. The whole system costs less than \$200, and as John said, "It ended all our problems!")

■ *It's important that (management) supplies you with information sources — USA Today, local papers, whatever's available. That kind of support, getting me what I feel will enhance my program from an informational standpoint, is important.*

Coyote McCloud, WYHY-FM (Nashville)

Station subscriptions to the local paper, USA Today, and a few key periodicals (as we discussed earlier) can go a long way towards showing a real commitment to the morning product. And once more, here are relatively inexpensive items that are valued highly by the personalities themselves.

Finally, an extra pair of hands to help produce the show was also highly ranked — and here's an opportunity to add manpower at no cost. High school and college intern programs have been a great training ground for students interested in our business; and at the same time, they've created a pool of free talent for the stations. (Please be aware, however, that just as there is no such thing as a "free lunch", there is no "free talent" either. A legitimate intern program at a radio station should be coordinated with a sponsoring high school or college to insure that the working student

receives compensation — in the form of school credits — for his hours at your station. If you're interested in starting a program at your station and would like more information please contact ACN.) If a morning personality needs help clearing the phones during the show, clipping articles for on-air bits, keeping files for the future, or just running errands that consume time, interns are an excellent and widely available resource.

Naturally, no morning talent can reasonably expect every need to be filled — and it would be the rare manager who'd have the time, energy, or budget to fill them all. But personalities should be able to believe that their problems will at least be addressed, and that management will identify those problems which can be solved, prioritize them, and begin solving them in order.

If you are a manager and you haven't done a thorough "needs analysis" recently with your morning talent, schedule a meeting to do one as soon as possible. You may find that his list is short and contains items that cost nothing (e.g. a little positive reinforcement) or very little (e.g. a subscription to the local paper). You *will* find the very process of sitting down to be a positive one. And when you drive into work a few days later, and you hear just a little more "zip" in your morning personality's presentation, you'll know who put it there . . . and how easy it was.

Advice

Towards the end of our interview with each personality, we asked them: "If you had to give just one piece of advice to a friend who was about to become a morning person, what would you say?" These answers follow and provide the final chapter of this book.

■ *Work your ass off meeting people.*

Bob DeCarlo, WQI-FM (Tampa)

■ *You've got to be spontaneous. The old line, if it don't fit, don't force it. If you don't feel funny, don't be funny.*

Mason Dixon, WRBQ-FM (Tampa)

■ *Be prepared! People really will turn you off faster than other shifts because you start their day.*

Rick Ward, KNRY-AM (Monterey)

■ *It's a lot tougher than it looks. If you're serious about it, be ready to work your ass off. The rewards will come.*

Steve Cochran, WMXJ-FM (Miami)

■ *Enjoy yourself. Be yourself.*

Chris O'Brien, WKRQ-FM (Cincinnati)

■ *You are your own best critic. Fight the frustration and keep working at it. Don't give up.*

Chris Jones, WFYV-FM (Jacksonville)

■ *Learn to like yourself because no one else will be able to live with you.*

Paul Barsky, WCAU-FM (Philadelphia)

■ *Create from within — narcissism isn't always a negative, but always remain flexible. Stay open to other ideas.*

Gary DeGraide, WPJB-FM (Providence)

■ *Preparation is most important. All the big-time major market morning personalities prepare endlessly and they developed these good work habits in*

the smaller markets. Also, don't forget the basic needs of the morning audience: time, weather, information. If these basic services can be delivered within a unique package, you'll be a success.

Mike Fiss, WYYY-FM (Syracuse)

■ *Work only for someone who believes in you and will help you and support you. Otherwise, forget it.*

Richard Sloane, WMIL-FM (Milwaukee)

■ *Read!*

J. Bruce, WFTQ-AM (Worcester)

■ *You're the first voice some folks hear on any given morning. Be up, bright, happy.*

Buzz Bowman, WQXY-FM (Baton Rouge)

■ *Do things your own way. Be yourself. Don't let people's opinions about your performance (good or bad) affect you too much. Be funny, be awake, and get rid of your drinking buddies.*

Paul Douglas, WCIT-AM (Lima)

■ *Start by doing news for background. Dabble in telephone talk for communications skills. And then wait for a morning gig to open at your present station. The fastest way to get into the mornings is . . . where you are.*

Jack Raymond, WEIM-AM (Fitchburg, MA)

■ *There are 2 things you have to do to be a successful morning disc jockey. Number one: you have to learn what you can do. Then, you have to take that little nucleus of things and polish it and make it better. The other side of that is: find out what you can't do and, for God's sake, don't do it!*

Dr. Don Rose, KFRC-AM (San Francisco)

■ *Don't try to be a "super jock" just because you have a super shift, i.e., be natural. Consider differences in people's attitudes in the pre-work hours as opposed to full waking hours.*

John Van Pelt/Steve Smith, WDCG-FM (Raleigh-Durham)

■ *Be topical and conquer the basics before you even try anything else. You should be a good programmer in order to be a good morning man.*

Johnny Burke, WTRX-AM (Flint)

■ *Try to be . . . who you are, but let people get past what you say and really start listening because they know you. (They will accept) a lot of the things you say because they know you.*

Don Bleu, KYUU-FM (San Francisco)

■ *Just remember that if you're a good morning man on a major station, you influence a lot of people. And hopefully you'll remember what's going on in the country and the world today, (because) you're one of the people who can actually change it.*

Charles Laquidara, WBCN-FM (Boston)

■ *Keep informed and keep an open mind. It'll help you handle all the changes that people can put you through if you're not God walking on ratings water.*

John Landecker, WCKG-FM (Chicago)

■ *Don't be discouraged by people who tell you you're not worth a damn. Don't give up. Don't go sell shoes. Stick with it because eventually, if you're any good, it's going to work out. It just takes a long time to get it going.*

John Lanigan, WMGG-FM (Tampa)

■ *Be honest with yourself. Were you the life of the party growing up? Always cracking up your friends? If you weren't, chances are you're not going to make it as a morning man.*

Jonathon Brandmeier, WLUP-FM (Chicago)

■ *Be ready to take the heat.*

Brad Krantz, WZOU-FM (Boston)

■ *Strive to be different.*

The Greaseman, WWDC-FM (Washington, DC)

And if we might, let us add one piece of advice of our own: keep this book handy. No matter what field you work in, it's wise to sit down and think about "the basics" every so often. And this book was designed

to stimulate precisely those thoughts about morning radio. If you're just starting out in the business, this can help point you in the right direction. And if you're a veteran of many years, it can refresh your memory. Most of what this book has had to say is common sense, but that can be in short supply in the frenzied atmosphere of the average radio station. When you finish reading this book, put it down . . . but not away. Look at it every few months, perhaps once a year. It will only take a couple of hours to review (at most), but it will be time well spent. And you'll insure that the "common sense" stays *common*.

Finally, always remember that being a radio performer puts you at the center of a most curious paradox. To function at a stable, consistent artistic level, daily creating magic moments in the minds of your audience requires you to be a thoughtful, sensitive, talented person. Yet, broadcasting is a hard business that moves quickly and thrives on change and turbulence. Sometimes there's no just time for skill, art, and forethought. So, the sensitive individual is usually the first casualty.

To survive such tumult, you need to have a tough mental attitude. Those who have it develop a personal appreciation and respect for their own creative abilities which carries them through radio's rough and changing times. They adapt. They fit in. But their special creative talent remains intact . . . supporting them, challenging them.

Now we've all known wonderfully talented radio personalities who simply gave up and got out. The frustrations of low pay, indifferent management, or lack of creative opportunity were just too much for them. We lament how many truly special moments in radio were lost because the right person for the job just didn't give himself or herself the chance. We've all stood at this dark crossroad and have had to make an important career decision — some of us more than once!

So, if you really believe in yourself and your basic talent, then believe as well that all it's going to take is a little time for the world to catch up with you. Hang in! Don't give up! When times get tough, stop . . . regroup . . . and keep on trying. Remember, the little minds — the people who will tell you "It can't be done!" will always be there, but so will you: that special person who has the courage to pursue his or her creative ideas, and who has the heart to breath life into art. You give the world a great gift — the gift of laughter. Stay with it!

The ACN Morning Show Manual *Questionnaire*

The following questionnaire was distributed to ACN affiliates and provided the basis for interviews with non-affiliates. Some questions have been deleted because they dealt with matters pertaining only to our affiliates. As we noted at the beginning of this book, it might provide a helpful exercise for you (or the morning person you work with) to answer these questions, preferably in writing.

Philosophy

1. Who have been your inspirations? Is there anyone you've consciously modeled yourself after?
2. How important is humor/comedy to your show?
(Circle one)
 - a) It's the most important aspect
 - b) Very important
 - c) Somewhat important
 - d) Not very important
3. If you feel humor/comedy is important, how would you describe your approach to it? Do you have a specific style, or is it something that just . . . happens?
4. Are there certain types of humor you use more than others? Are there categories of humor you will not use? Please talk a little bit about each of the following categories:
 - a) Political humor
 - b) Ethnic humor
 - c) Religious humor
 - d) Sexual (i.e., "blue") humor
 - e) Gay humor
5. What percentage of your material relates to local people/events, and what percentage to national people/events? Please approximate:
National _____% Local _____%

6. What determines if a potentially "hot" (or controversial) bit makes it onto the air? (Please rate each of the above on a 1 to 5 scale, 1 for non-factors and 5 for very important factors. They can all be 5's if you feel that way.)
 - a) Your gut instincts _____
 - b) Management input _____
 - c) Past audience reaction _____
 - d) Other (please note on back) _____

Preparing For Your Show

1. Do you have any help (please circle which you have):
 - a) partner
 - b) producer
 - c) engineer
 - d) writer(s)
 - e) "characters"
 - f) other (please explain on back)
2. Briefly describe your schedule between waking up and going on the air:
3. What newspapers, magazines, TV or radio programs, or other sources do you use to stay "plugged in" both locally and nationally? (Please list items such as *USA Today*, *Entertainment Tonight*, *National Enquirer*, etc.)

4. How specifically do you plan each show? Circle the one that best describes your approach:

- a) Map out entire show, hour-by-hour, in advance
- b) Select the elements I know I'll use, but leave slotting until I'm on the air
- c) Do it as I go

5. Do you pre-produce material for your show, and if so, please note the kind of things you produce in advance.

6. How soon after you're off the air do you begin preparing for the next day's show? (Please note off air time and approximate hour when preparation begins)

OFF AIR AT: _____ PREP BEGINS AT: _____

7. Do you have a file system (computer, 3 × 5 cards, notepads) for your material, and if so, please describe how it works.

8. How important is preparation to the success of your show? (*Circle one*)

- a) Absolutely critical
- b) Important, but not critical
- c) Important at times
- d) Not very important, in general

9. How far ahead do you plan for a typical show? (*Circle one*)

- a) One month
- b) One week
- c) One day
- d) A few hours

Doing The Show

1. A personality show requires a great deal of energy, and four hours is a long time to maintain that kind of energy. Do you pace yourself over the four hours? If so, how do you do this? (Please use space on next page for answer)

2. How does listenership vary hour to hour in your show? Which hours (if any) receive the highest listenership?

3. If some hours are "bigger" than others, do you "power pack" them in any way?

4. Do you blast right out of the blocks when you hit the air, or is there a period of warming up each day?

5. How does a morning show performance differ from an air shift later in the day?

(Questions 6, 7, and 8 are for those morning talents who use taped material or other planned "bits")

6. Do you slot your taped segments or bits in a fixed position each hour? If so, what positions do you use, and why?

7. If you have a successful bit, which of these will you do? (*Circle as many as are appropriate*)

- a) Air more than once in a given hour
- b) Air more than once in a given show
- c) Air more than once in a given week
- d) Save and repeat over subsequent weeks (if still topical)

8. Assuming you do believe in repeats, is there a number of replays which you think is the maximum before a bit is overexposed? Please note the maximum in each situation:

- a) Per hour _____
- b) Per shift _____
- c) Per week _____
- d) Per month _____

9. Having “God” deliver the weather is one creative (and controversial) way to handle one of the daily basics. What creative methods have you used to intro or deliver these basics:

- a) weather
- b) time
- c) sports
- d) news
- e) music set
- f) contests
- g) traffic

10. How would you describe your personality on the air? Do you consciously do things on the air to reinforce this persona?

After The Show

1. Describe your schedule from the time you get off the air until you call it a day.

2. Do you aircheck and critique yourself? If so, how often?

3. How often do you sit down with the PD to review your performance? Does this help?

4. Has being the morning talent affected your relations with any of these people (and if so, how?)

- a) other air personalities
- b) the PD
- c) the GM
- d) the Sales Department
- e) your family

Miscellaneous

1. Which (if any) services do you use for your show? (Please list services such as ACN, O’Liners, Electric Weenie, Wireless Flash and note how valuable each is to your show — use the back of this page).

2. Besides your show, what else do you do to keep yourself in front of the public (e.g. personal appearances, TV, newspaper column)?

3. If you had to give one piece of advice to a friend who was about to become a morning person, what would you say?

4. The morning shift is a tough one, physically. Do you do anything special to be ready for it each day? We’re interested if you keep a certain sleeping schedule, take naps, work out regularly, or take coffee intravenously to handle it.

5. What’s the best thing about being a morning person?

6. What’s the worst thing about being a morning person?

7. What could your station’s management do to improve your working conditions, enhance your performance, or just generally support you better?

8. If you weren’t in this business, what would you do?

9. Where would you like to be 5 years from now?

Customizing Survey

When ACN is called upon to customize material for individual stations, we ask the station to complete the following survey. This gives us a basic overview of the market and helps us integrate words, names, and phrases that create that “local touch”. We’ve included it here because it’s a good guide for the information any morning talent should have on hand, particularly if he’s new in town.

Geography

Most-traveled streets:
Major highways/interstates:
“Good/bad” sections of town:
Notable features (e.g. lakes, hills, rivers):

Media

Local TV personalities:
 TV News (anchors, weatherpersons, sports reporters — please note station)
 Talk show, PM Magazine hosts
 Commercial pitchmen, (e.g. used car dealers)
Newspapers, Magazines:
Major radio stations (note formats):

Business

Major occupations (what do most people do?):
Largest local business (biggest employers):
Shopping centers/Malls:
Particularly “hot business” (e.g. computer software company or retail store)

Entertainment/Sports

Hot local spots:
Clubs/Hangouts:
Major participatory spots (e.g. fishing):

Entertainment/Sports (Cont’d)

Annual events:
Local music interests (e.g. jazz, punk, new wave, classical):
Movie theatres (and “art houses” or repertory theatres):
Legitimate theatres/Dinner theatres:
Restaurants (fancy):
Restaurants (cheap):

Education

Local public schools (grammar-high):
Colleges/Universities:
Private/Prep schools:

General Background

Notable political figures:
Famous residents (e.g. old money, nouveau riche, well-known bums):
Weather trends (hot summers, long winters, no spring?):
Transportation (are there buses, taxis, subways?) — name any systems/companies:
Fads/Trends (what’s in and out?):
Major town projects (e.g. City Hall refurbishing, interstate extension):
Scandals old and new:
Historical lore (e.g. local legends):

If you would like to order additional copies of *THE METHOD TO THE MADNESS: RADIO'S MORNING SHOW MANUAL*, please complete the form below and mail it to this address:

**The American Comedy Network
Park City Plaza
Bridgeport, CT 06604-4277**

**Enclose \$14.95 plus \$1.50 postage and handling.
(Conn. residents add 7.5% sales tax)**

(Please print or type)

NAME _____
TITLE _____
STATION/COMPANY _____
ADDRESS _____
CITY/STATE/ZIP _____
PHONE NUMBER _____

I would like to order _____copies of *THE METHOD TO THE MADNESS* and have enclosed a check or money order made out to The American Comedy Network in the sum of \$_____.

- I am also interested in receiving more information about ACN's weekly morning show service. Please send me a current sales kit and demo!
- For some bizarre reason, I don't want to order additional copies of this fine book, but I still would like to learn more about ACN. Rush me the kit and demo!

(Please allow 2-3 weeks for delivery of all materials)

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About the Authors

Andrew Goodman, *President and General Manager*

Andy brings backgrounds in both advertising and broadcast management to his position at ACN. He served as Creative Director for a Philadelphia advertising agency for 2 years before joining the CBS-owned station there (WCAU-AM) as Executive Producer of their talk shows. He also served as Program Director for Susquehanna Broadcasting's WKIS-AM in Orlando. Besides overseeing the operations at ACN, Andy co-writes all material with Bob James and Dale Reeves. Andy also serves as a Vice President within the Katz Broadcasting Company.

Bob James, *Vice President and Creative Director*

Before joining ACN, "The Real Bob James" was heard on WGAR-AM (Cleveland), WWDC-AM (Washington, DC) and The Voice of America. In television, he created and produced "The Cleveland Comedy Company" for WEWS-TV and won 5 local Emmy's in the process. He has appeared as a correspondent on "Entertainment Tonight" and has performed stand-up comedy at The Comedy Store in Los Angeles. Bob co-writes all ACN material with Andy and Dale Reeves, and with David Lawrence guides the production.

Dale Reeves, *Vice President and Project Director*

Formerly Program Director and morning man at WKTU-FM in New York, Dale has worked in 4 of the top 10 markets as either a morning or afternoon personality. Before joining ACN, Dale left fulltime radio to pursue a successful commercial voice-over career. His endless variety of announcer styles, impressions, and character voices has been heard on hundreds of commercials, promotional spots for all 3 major television networks, and in shows as diverse as "Saturday Night Live" and "Captain Kangaroo". Dale performs the majority of voices featured in ACN's National Features Service, and co-writes all material with Andy and Bob.

David Lawrence, *Executive Producer*

A successful career in radio at stations including WGAR-AM and WGCL-FM (Cleveland), WNCI-FM (Columbus) and WKCI-FM (New Haven) was highlighted between 1978 and 1980 when Billboard selected David as its "Disco DJ of the Year" for 3 consecutive years. Still, David is even more impressive behind a production board. With backgrounds in both Broadcast Communication and Computer Science, he launched his own company, The Lawrence Design Group, at age 18. With Bob, David participates in all aspects of production, and as an accomplished synthesist composes and plays many of ACN's musical beds and effects.

Mechele George, *Director of Marketing and Sales*

Co-founder of one of the largest production houses on the East Coast, Mechele is well experienced in writing, producing, and voicing radio commercials, TV commercials, and audio-visual presentations. She has garnered several Clio Awards and is an accomplished singer, studio performer, stage and TV actress. Besides her responsibilities marketing ACN, Mechele regularly appears in most of ACN's National Features.

Maria Vilanova, *Office Manager*

Maria came to ACN from across the hall — literally — where she worked at Katz Broadcasting's WEZN-FM. Although having only 2 years experience in broadcasting, she has also worked within the performing arts and has extensive backgrounds in both advertising and marketing. Her present position at ACN is multi-faceted: besides running the office, she is involved in Marketing and Sales with Mechele and is primarily responsible for maintaining close contact with our affiliates.

Who is The American Comedy Network?

Topical material, concise writing, a remarkable voice library, and superb production are the hallmarks of ACN. Our work has been covered by CBS News, The Washington Post, USA Today, The Wall Street Journal, National Public Radio, PM Magazine, The Larry King Show, UPI, Paul Harvey, and many more.

Each week, as part of our unique "National Features Service", we produce 7 short features lampooning the most talked-about events of the day. Using song parodies, fake commercials, telephone interviews, drop-ins, and a wide variety of innovative formats, we help radio stations — and morning shows in particular — create talk as well as laughs.

If you would like more information about The American Comedy Network, please contact us at the address or telephone number below. Find out how you can become part of America's newest and funniest network.

ACN

The American Comedy Network

The New Way to Win in the Morning