

Your BTR Show Production & Promotion

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Introduction

Before we get started, let me say that every last one of BlogTalkRadio's more than 3,000 active hosts is playing a critical role in the growth of this network.

Together, you have produced 100,000-plus shows on a vast array of topics, ranging from entertainment to sports to parenting to politics to self-help to technology and beyond.

And you know what? *We appreciate it.*

In June alone, those terrific shows generated 3.3 million-plus downloads; and year-to-date, BTR has enjoyed double-digit growth on the new-listener and new-host fronts.

Now we're poised to break out of the pack, to do to the steaming-audio sector what YouTube did to canned-video a few years back: own the space - and become a household name.

But to get there, we've got to crank it up a notch. That means producing more entertaining, informative and newsworthy shows. It also means working harder to promote them.

Which brings us to the topic at hand. What follows is a guide that I hope will - you guessed it - help you produce better shows and promote them.

1. Producing Your Show

One of the beauties of being a BlogTalkRadio host is that you have the freedom to produce however and whatever you want.

At the same time, it's in everyone's interest that you continually expand your listener base. So be aware that, at any point, someone who may have recently heard or read about you may be tuning in to check you out for the first time.

As such, you don't want them sitting there not knowing what's going on - and possibly tuning out. So here are some tips for capturing listeners' attention and helping ensure they come back for your next show.

Show opens

Keep your show opens short. I've heard a number of BTR shows that begin with a piece of music that runs upwards of *five minutes*. And that's before the host has said a single word.

While it may be tempting to play the full version of a song you like to open your show, listeners may be wondering, Is this just a streaming-music channel? When does the show actually *begin*?

(Also be aware that copyrighted music is not permitted on BTR unless you have the artist's permission. Podsafe and royalty-free music, however, are fine.)

If you want to open with music - which is great, and which I do recommend - a good rule of thumb is to play a cut no longer than 15 seconds before some voice (canned or live) comes on to announce it's showtime . . .

Intros

. . . And when that voice (be it you or your trusty announcer) does come on, there's certain info you want to get across quickly and concisely. Naturally, the tone and style of your intro will vary depending of the nature of your show. But that said, here are the elements you should include (though not necessarily in this order):

- Show name
- Host(s) name(s)
- Date
- Dateline (i.e., city & state you're broadcasting from; or city country, if it's outside the U.S.)
- Show topic(s)
- Guest(s)

For example:

Welcome to BlogTalkRadio's Politics Today for Monday, July 14. I'm your host, John Smith, coming to you live from Washington, D.C., as I do every Monday at 8 p.m. Eastern Time.

We've got a fantastic show for you this evening. Joining us later will be presidential frontrunner Barack Obama, who'll be taking your calls and questions - so be sure to email us at PoliticsToday@BlogTalkRadio.com. We'll be talking with Senator Obama about his newly chosen running mate, John Edwards.

But first we'll chat with a former commander in chief - Bill Clinton - about how he sees the race playing out. Welcome, President Clinton .

. .

Again, that's just one example, but you see how we've laid out the agenda, so listeners know what to expect, including "teasing" our best content.

Teases

In the above example, even though Senator Obama wouldn't be coming on until later in the show, the host teased his appearance to let the audience know to stay tuned in. This is a classic - yet still effective - tool you can use any time you have multiple guests and/or topics.

Also, don't be shy about teasing hot content throughout your show, say, every 15 minutes or so. In other words, if you've got it, flaunt it.

Backup content

In the event a guest doesn't call in or gets dropped from the line or some other technical difficulty arises during your show, it's a good idea to have other material ready to go immediately while things get sorted out. This might be an email from a listener, a new topic you want to introduce, a backup guest who's waiting in the wings - anything, really, so your show isn't plagued by dead air.

Outros

These are your show sign-offs, during which you'll want to do a number of things, such as:

- Thank listeners for tuning in
- Thank all guests for appearing
- If guests have a website they want promoted, be sure to clearly state the URL
- Promo your next show, and invite listeners to tune in
- Sign off with (as you did in your intro) your name, show name, dateline and date

You can also run your theme music under your outro, or bring it up after your sign-off, then fade out slowly.

2. Guests

Booking

If you're of the mindset that, mediawise, BlogTalkRadio isn't a "player," take a look at this presentation titled "[Where Social Media Meets Significant Exposure.](#)"

(Yes, I'll wait . . .)

OK, so now you know: we're a hot network that's getting hotter by the moment.

My point is, there's no reason you can't go after big, newsworthy guests. In fact, when making your pitch, feel free to email the potential guest or his/her rep this presentation.

If you can't find a rep contact for a potential guest you're trying to reach, there's a service called [IMDbPro](#) that costs about \$13 a month and is an excellent source of such info.

All of which is not to say you shouldn't work to develop a stable of guests who are perhaps lesser known but are equally intelligent, informative and/or entertaining. If you can find such guests, fantastic - book them on a regular basis. Because you never know: you could be helping thrust them into stardom, which on turn could help raise your show's profile.

Research & Interviewing

Great, you've booked a big guest. Now it's time for some research. Because just having a great guest on doesn't necessarily ensure a great interview. You've got to know which questions to ask.

Nine times out of ten, a big guest will agree to come on because he/she's promoting a project, like a new book, movie, CD and so on. Or maybe it's a politician who's running for office. That's fine - we *want* our guests to get their messages out, just as listeners often want to hear those messages.

But after asking a few questions about this new project, try to (politely) slip in a question that no one has ever asked before, something that could elicit a never-before-told anecdote, perhaps involving a famous acquaintance of the guest.

To illustrate, consider these real-life examples from some fellow BTR hosts:

- **Bob Andelman, host of *Mr. Media***, recently interviewed Katherine Fugate, who's executive producer of the Lifetime TV series *Army Wives*. Now, by reading up on Katherine, Bob found out her aunt is Barbara Eden, star of the classic 60s sitcom *I Dream of Jeannie*. So Bob made a reference to Katherine's famous relative in his intro, which prompted her to chuckle and say, "I don't know how many men I've dated who were trying to get to her."

The irony, of course, was that even though Barbara's 73, guys still have the hots for her - and will stop at nothing to try and meet her. And Katherine's quote was picked up the next day in the *New York Post*:

NEW YORK POST
June 4, 2008

THE STARR REPORT
By Michael Starr

Dream on: Katherine Fugate, who created Lifetime's "Army Wives," has a famous aunt - "I Dream of Jeannie" star Barbara Eden, 73. "I don't know how many men I've dated who were trying to get to her," Fugate told BlogTalkRadio.

- **Marty "The Paisan," host of *Sunday Night Sauce Pot***, recently interviewed singer/songwriter Joe Dolce, whose 1980 single *Shaddup You Face* hit to No. 1 in 15 countries. At one point, Marty asked him, "You were big in the 80s - a real pop star. Did you ever party with other pop stars?" To which Joe replied, "I once ran into Cher at a hotel. She asked me to ring her up - but I didn't because I had a wife!" Another great anecdote, which made for a popular post on our BTR blog and got picked up by other pop-music bloggers.

- **Brett Cohen, host of *World Talk Live***, recently had disco legend Gloria Gaynor on. About halfway into the show, Brett asked her to sing her classic hit *I Will Survive*. And you know what? She did! So we popped the sound bite in our new show, *The Daily Mix*, which, every Monday, features great moments from BTR shows.

Another tack is to pick up on interesting leads that guests open up themselves. One BTR host was recently interviewing Dwayne "The Rock" Johnson, who was talking about a foundation that helps troubled teens. Dwayne said something to the effect of, "I can relate to those kids, because when I was their age, I got into my share of trouble."

That, of course, would have been the perfect time for the host to say something like, "Is that so? Well tell us, what exactly did you do that got you in trouble?" If Dwayne had come back with a colorful example, it would have made a great sound bite.

Now, here's where the research comes in. Before interviewing a high-profile guest, it's helpful to read up on him/her on Wikipedia.org, IMDb.com, etc., as well as do a Google search. Also be sure to search Google News, to find out what (if anything) the guest has been up to recently, as well as read recent posts on the guest's blog/website.

Look specifically for interviews the guest has done in other media outlets. Why? So you'll know not to ask all the same questions.

When formulating your - let's call them - "money questions," think about trying to elicit never-before-told anecdotes. Another good strategy is to ask about the guest's famous friends/colleagues, as we saw in Bob and Marty's examples above.

3. Specials

Certainly, every BTR show you air should be as informative, entertaining and well-produced as possible. But there are times when opportunities for "special editions" of your show will present themselves. Such as?

Say you do a mommy/parenting show and summer's coming up - which mean's the kids will be getting out of school. Then how about a "School's Out" special?

That's what Marla "The FlyLady" Cilley did recently. And to make things more newsy, she conducted a survey of her large listener base (which was done for free on SurveyMonkey.com). The result was of course a great show, but she also generated some press for the show, like this item:

**Charleston News & Courier
(Charleston, SC)
June 24, 2008**

Attendance up for summer camp FlyLady and Friends Show

Marla Cilley, host of the BlogTalkRadio FlyLady and Friends Show (www.blogtalkradio.com/stations/flylady/flylady), revealed the results of her "School's Out" survey. Cilley found the number of parents planning to send their kids to summer camp this year will rise 3.5 percent over last year. According to the survey, "the single biggest problem" parents say they face in terms of kids being home from school is not that families "don't have enough money for travel and other fun activities" (25.5 percent); it is the kids "have too much time on their hands and are bored" (32 percent). The survey found kids will be working to earn extra money (30 percent) and taking part in free or inexpensive activities, such as spending time at the library or visiting friends/relatives' houses (20.5 percent), vs. going to movies or theme parks (13.5 percent).

So seasonal events - New Year's, Christmas, Valentine's Day, July 4, Election Day, back to school, etc. - are all excellent hooks for hanging a special on.

Also, tragic as it is when beloved figures pass away, when it does happen, fans often want to have a place to go to remember them and talk about them. Recently, "Meet The Press" host Tim Russert and comedian George Carlin left us unexpectedly. In response to those passings, several BTR hosts produced tribute shows. Again, sad, but made

for good radio.

At this point, you might be saying, So what?

Well, here's what: every time you book a great guest, get a great sound bite and/or produce a great special, it's an opportunity to promote your show.

Which leads us to . . .

4. Promoting Your Show

Yes, great topics, great guests and great sound bites can make all the difference in raising your show's profile. So assuming you've got the goods, let's talk about getting the word out.

While new media-distribution channels are always opening - and should be explored - here are some of the strategies/outlets I encourage you to use.

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Media advisories

If you've recently launched a BTR show (or are planning to do so) and the show could potentially have an impact on your local geographic community, consider writing up a media advisory and sending it to the local media.

A good example is Robert Affolter, a chiropractor in Washington state who hosts *Intelligence-Based Living*. Because medical professionals treat patients in the local community, chances are that people living in Robert's area would want to hear his thoughts on their health problems. His local newspaper felt the same way, so recently ran this item:

**The Bellingham Herald
(Washington)
April 6, 2008**

Bellingham chiropractor hosts BlogTalkRadio show

April 6, 2008 - Bellingham chiropractor Robert Affolter is now host of an online radio show on BlogTalkRadio. The live show, "Intelligence Based Living," airs from 9 a.m. to 9:30 a.m. every Saturday morning. Affolter will talk about health conditions, like back pain and headaches, and will give his insights about the health-care system and other topics of interest. The show may be heard at www.BlogTalkRadio.com/DrAffolter. Information: Call 733-1660 or e-mail DrBob@AffolterClinic.com.

Other examples of programming that might generate similar coverage could include shows about local parenting groups, local environmental efforts, local education and so on. (On the other hand, if you're launching a show about fashion trends or Hollywood movies or hedge-fund investing - and you live in, say, Des Moines, Iowa - chances are your local media will not be interested.)

Click here for a [sample media advisory](#) you can use to announce your show to the local media, as well as inform them of specials and high-profile guests from time to time.

Traditional media outlets

Most cities have at least one daily newspaper and one weekly newspaper, which will be your best bets among the traditional media for getting mentioned. There are also local and industry-specific magazines the might be interested. And if you feel you have a very strong community story, you can always try your local TV newscasts. Most all of these local media outlets can be found via a simple Google search.

(Needless to say, traditional, or "terrestrial," radio stations will likely see your show as direct competition, so approach them at your own risk.)

Social-media outlets

Before we get to these, here's a tip that will make finding your Internet content easier for everyone: Write everything for search engines (or as the pros say, SEO, which stands for search-engine optimization). Specifically:

- **Show titles:** It's much easier to rank well in Google (and Technorati) if your most important keyword phrases are part of your show title. When people link to your show, the keywords are part of the underlined link. That link carries a lot of weight. For example, *Southern Gardening with Jenny* will rank better than *Jenny's Ramblings*.
- **Title tags:** Show titles also appear in page-title tags, which in turn appear in the blue bar at the extreme top of your browser. Title tags are given heavy weight in determining search rankings.
- **Show description:** When writing these, be sure to include the two or three most important search phrases for that show. If you prefer a short, one-line description, use the most important phrase that searchers would enter in the Google search box. That same description will likely appear as the Google blurb when your show appears in the rankings. (Note: using vague and competitive terms like "politics" will have much less value for you than more specific terms, like "Liberal Texas politics.")
- **Blog posts:** These rank very well in Google, and can rank even better with a few tweaks. When you write a blog-post title, be sure to use the keyword phrase you want to rank for as part of the title. For example, *Random Thoughts on Sports Problems* has less value than the same post with *Steroids: Sports Problem or Non-Issue?* Note that not only are the phrases of the post used, but the title is also more descriptive and easier for potential readers to choose to click.

Now for some social-media tips:

- **Hang our your cyber-shingle:** If you don't already have a blog or website, get one, Also, set up a MySpace page or Facebook group dedicated to your show. These are excellent outlets for posting notes about upcoming show, quotes from guests who have appeared, and other related info. And, of course, post the BTR flash player on your blog/website.
- **Use Gigya:** This tool, which can be found on your Profile page, allows you to post the BTR flash player on all your external sites, including MySpace and Facebook. It automatically updates to play your most recent show whenever users log on.
- **Join the social conversation:** BTR has communities on MySpace and Facebook, including, Books, Business, Entertainment, Health, Politics, Sports, Technology and Women. These are other good venues for promoting your show info.
- **Canvass the homefront:** Send promotional emails about your show to your friends, family and clients the day before or day of your show. Be sure to include a link (URL) to the show.

BTR outlets

Now for our in-house venues. As you may know, there are four outlets on BTR itself for promoting your show:

- **Featured scroll:** This is the horizontal series of 12 images that appear atop the home page and briefly describe upcoming shows. If you have a very special guest or topic and want to be considered for this section, submit a "Feature" request at least five days in advance at:
<http://www.blogtalkradio.com/host/featuremyshow.aspx>

Since BTR is a live network, feature selections are made according to volume of requests and other daily content considerations. So we're unable to confirm featured slots in advance. Also note: don't

"cry wolf." That is, save these requests for your very best shows, as opposed to submitting every single week.

Now, by submitting a feature request, the information is automatically shared with our editorial team for consideration in any one of the other three BTR outlets, which are:

- **BTR's *Daily Mix*:** Hosted by Shaun Daily, this new, weekly show features great sound bites from recent shows in any/all categories. Click here to hear [recent editions on-demand](#).
- **BTR Blog:** This weekday publication, which is housed on our home page, regularly features more detailed notes about hot upcoming shows, as well as quotes and news items from guests on those shows after the shows have aired. Click here to [read the BTR Blog](#).
- **BTR Newsletter:** This monthly publication, which goes out to listeners and hosts, regularly features news items about hot shows that have recently aired.

But remember: No need to do anything to be considered for BTR's *The Daily Mix*, blog or newsletter; our editorial team is always on the lookout for content for these outlets.

Beyond BTR

Finally, if you have a guest on who says something really newsworthy - or really funny - we have the resources to funnel that content to the appropriate general-news media. But how do you decide when you've got content of this caliber? Here are a few examples: Say a friend of **Prince Henry's** comes on your show and talks about, while visiting the U.S. recently, how he and Henry snuck into a Walmart in St. Louis and bought some underwear because their luggage had been lost. A member of the British Royal Family shopping at Walmart? Sure, that could be a great news item for the entertainment press.

Batman flick, comes on and talks about working with the late Heath Ledger on the set. Well, almost no one in the industry has talked about working with Heath on his final role. So that could be great as well.

- Say **Rob Reiner** comes on and says he wants to make a serious bid for the governorship of California in the 2010 race - and he has never said that publicly. That could also be big news.
- Say comedian **Chris Rock** comes on your show. And he tells you he's currently trying out new material for an upcoming national tour. And you ask him to give you a sample bit or two from the new act. And he does. That's newsworthy, too.
- Or say a former Scientologist comes on with a never-before-heard tape of **Tom Cruise** doing a Donald Duck impersonation at a Scientology event. Now that's entertaining radio - and probably news as well.

In the event you get something good like this, we definitely want to know about it. Click here for a [transcript form](#), which you should fill out and return to us as soon as possible after the show. But be sure your transcription is accurate, because we will double-check it. Also be sure to include the time codes (so we can quickly locate the sound bite), as well as put something like this in the subject line of your email: "Newsworthy Transcript: Tom Cruise does Donald Duck."

5. Signing Off

That's all for the moment, hosts.

But in future editions of this newsletter, I'll be offering more production and promotion tips. In the meantime, feel free to email me if you have any questions or suggestions.

Until then, happy hosting!

Philip Recchia

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