

So, you want to be a radio host?

I say “go for it”! AND “be fully aware” of your surroundings and situation as you enter this brave new world.

These words are coming from a woman who’s been “on the air” nearly every week for, dare I say, 29 years.

From the years 2003-2008, let me paint a picture the radio show I hosted. It was called “Vital Women Radio” where I interviewed strong, accomplished females from my community (Southern New England) and around the country (Gloria Steinem, Sarah McLaughlin, Marianne Williamson). This show aired in two decent sized markets, specifically Providence RI and Worcester, Massachusetts on 50 thousand watt, FM radio stations. The shows aired on Sundays to (depending on the time of year) a market of 5000-10,000 listeners. It’s also important to note that these stations paid ME to conceptualize, produce, direct and host this program.

Now that you understand this premise, please also understand that the basis for this article is ultimately to protect you. Please note: Hosting Vital Women was extremely life enhancing. It brought me five years of personal and professional development. I would not trade my time there for anything and am thrilled that I was able to bond with such interesting and down to earth women. However, it’s also important to know that it was quite a struggle trying to grow my show to a point where it could help me earn a living. In fact, that never happened.

So, what I suggest you do before becoming a radio host is ask yourself the following questions:

1. Who is listening (demographics)?
2. How many are listening?
3. Are there statistics to prove these numbers?
4. Will the show be recorded?
5. What will the recorded audio quality be like?
6. Can I edit that audio?
7. Will alignment with the show be profitable for my sponsors and guests?
8. Am I doing this for the money, connections, raw audio or just the education and experience?
9. What’s my RIO (financial, professional, personal)?
10. Is it worth the investment of time and \$\$?

There are so many unique radio opportunities these days, many of which are “AM” or internet based. But please be aware that that means that the share of “the pie” has been split in literally hundred of thousands if not millions of pieces. If you are being asked (and tempted, oh that ego!) to host your own radio program, do your homework first. If you are being invoiced for your airtime rather than compensated, these questions are even more important.

My time on the air has brought me great strength (fight those fears!), incredible connections (hanging out with Elton John, 1986, Lenny Kravitz, 2002, Jane Pauley 2007) but I must say that I'm glad that I was a pioneer in the industry rather than someone just delving into the business now. While there are so many more radio positions available, please make sure that you're positioning yourself for success. And most importantly make sure that you are well aware of what that success means for you.

Donna Mac, August 2009

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