

Online Radio School



20 Common Community Presenter Mistakes!

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1. A very common community presenter mistake is distortion on the microphone. In other words, broadcasting far too loud. When this happens, it means the presenter is doing one or two things.

A. They haven't checked their levels before opening the fader.

B. They're chatting away paying no attention to the levels on the meters as the song is playing.

Always check any levels of any item / person BEFORE you open the fader. And always listen to the output in your headphones.

Constantly ask yourself questions like:

Does this song etc. sound lower or higher than the last item?

Always listen to your output and always analyse your output WHILE presenting. Keep one ear on your levels and one eye on your meters throughout your whole show.

2. When presenting, always speak to the "individual" and not the group. Avoid generic phrases that speak to a large group etc. Phrases like: "*Hello you guys out there*" exclude the listeners.

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Think about your listener as “one person only.” Speak to your listeners as though you’re only talking to one person.

People always listen to the radio as an individual. If you present your show as though you’re presenting to a ‘group’ of people, then you can create a distance between yourself and the listener. During my radio training days, the message “radio is a personal medium” was always drummed into me. So think of your listeners as one person only.

3. Don’t crash the vocals of a song. If you’re going to speak over a song opening, then make sure what you have to say is: a) relevant to your point and b) it’s actually interesting. Ruining a song opening with boring waffle such as time checks, “you’re listening to” etc. won’t be easily forgiven.

4. Don’t bring the fader down so low that you can’t even hear the music underneath you.

5. Don’t “fader fiddle”. That is, pulling the fader down over the music and then speaking, then pushing the fader back up again for more music, then bringing the fader back down again for more bland chatting, then pushing the fader back up again etc. This sounds tacky.

6. Don’t waffle. Make everything you say interesting and relevant. In other words, don’t just talk for the sake of talking. Have a point to make or have something interesting to say.

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Remove all unnecessary words and communicate your point in the shortest possible way.

7. Don't make every second word an "ermmm" and "ummmm" etc. in your links.
8. Avoid using "filler" words in your links such as "*like, basically, well, but, sort of*" etc. This can annoy listeners. We use these words in normal everyday life when we're trying to think of what to say next. However, using these words on radio can be quite annoying. Our links need to be focused.
9. Always make a show for your listeners. Don't make a show as a self-indulged piece for yourself. Many community radio presenters make self-indulged shows. "*Here's a show on film theme music etc.*" Also, don't choose or talk about a subject that only interests you but has no appeal to your audience. A segment on the problems of Mexican immigration in the US will have no appeal to an audience in south London. Always remember your target audience. **Make sure that whatever you talk about is relevant to your target audience.** Many community presenters forget this point. At the hospital radio station that I managed, we had a "gold" format as most of our patients were old. Many of our presenters wanted to make trans based, hip hop, techno, heavy metal shows that had no relevance to our audience. *Remember your target audience.*

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10. Get the most important information in at the beginning of your link. It will let people know who or what you're talking about from the start. As a basic rule (for beginners) keep it to one thought per link.
11. Don't give out lots of information (events etc.) in the style of a massive list. Listeners don't sit by the radio with a pen and paper. Mention two to three events and then redirect listeners to the website.
12. Keep your speech conversational. Everything should be explained on air as if you're explaining it to a good friend.
13. Consider the point that every time you open the mic there maybe somebody new listening. Everything you say must make sense as a self contained link.
14. Never repeat the production (jingles etc). Don't say something that a pre-recorded jingle already says for you.

Example:

You: And here's the news...

Jingle: And here's the news...

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- 15.** Always know how your song / jingle etc. ends. This is so you can tailor your link to the ending. Does it stop dead? Does it fade out? If it fades out, then how long is the fade for? Do you have time for a link over the fade out? It means checking the ending before you play it out live.
- 16.** Always have the timer on a countdown, so you know how long you have left on the song. I've been caught out on that a few times when the song has suddenly stopped!
- 17.** Always close the fader after the song has finished. The song may have something at the end of it, or the song may continue into the next song. If you don't close the fader, then you can get confused with what item you've just played. You may end up playing it twice! (Yup I've done that!) Closing the fader is a good visual stop to let you know where you are.
- 18.** **START YOUR SHOW ON TIME!** If your show starts at 6 pm, then be in the studio at 5:45 pm and be ready to sit in the chair at 5:55 pm. Don't roll into the studio at 5:59 pm and then go on air at 6:05 pm. This is just unprofessional, and I still see many community presenters doing this. Starting a transmission late as a BBC studio manager was a sackable offense. If you do have access to an empty studio, then get in there thirty minutes before your show and start setting up.

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19. GET OFF AIR ON TIME! If your show ends at 8 pm, then start playing your last song at 7:55 pm. Next, get out of the studio ASAP. Let the next DJ sit down and set up for their show. Giving the next presenter no setup time is very unfair on them. You wouldn't like it if someone did it to you. Therefore, don't do it to someone else. Often presenters get sucked into their shows and end up talking to 58 past the hour. Then they play their last song. Next, they slowly move from the chair and slowly pack up. This gives the next presenter no time to set up. Play your last song on air at 55 past and then get out of the studio.
20. Make your show technically great because no one wants to listen to a technically poor show. Radio shows where the levels are all over the place aren't the best to hear.

BONUS POINT:

When you're not speaking, then always look down and make sure your mic is SWITCHED OFF! It's very easy to leave your mic switched on, which then records everything that you're doing in the studio. This, of course, has never happened to me because I'm a professional..ahem!

If you'd like to learn how to be a great community radio presenter or learn how to interview people for radio, TV or the web, then find out more about at [The Online Radio School](#).

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