

# How to Book Radio Shows and Be a Great Guest

by Larry James



## ***Radio Station Checklist:***

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## **"Stuff" You NEED to Know and Do BEFORE You Go on the Air!**

It is estimated that every day, more than 10,200 guests appear on approximately 6,000 radio talk or interview shows across America. In addition, there are about 988 TV shows to consider for interview possibilities. Ninety-four percent of the guests are authors who do not have recognizable names. Radio and television talk shows need interesting guests to attract listeners and viewers. Authors are interesting people. The general public thinks that authors are experts and celebrities.

### **Why do radio talk shows to promote yourself or service?**

- ✓ Most radio interviews can be done by telephone, with no travel required.
- ✓ Most interviews are live, and allow for Q & A from the listeners.
- ✓ With interviews ranging from five to sixty minutes, this forum provides adequate time for you to talk about yourself, book or service.
- ✓ A guest can give out a toll-free number, website, or direct listeners to a bookstore to make a purchase.

### ***Talkers Magazine* describes the average talk radio listener:**

- ✓ A majority of the talk radio audience is 35 to 64 years old.
- ✓ Economically, talk radio's audience is considered to be among mass media's most affluent. 42% of the talk radio audience has a household income in excess of \$60,000 per year and 62% earn over \$50,000.
- ✓ Relative to other forms of mass media, the talk radio audience is clearly one of the most educated with a notably high percentage of listeners who have attended one or more years of college. 35% have graduated with a four-year college degree.
- ✓ The gap between men and women in the radio audience has narrowed by two more percentage points, bringing it to 54% male and 46% female.

If you are available to do interviews with the media to promote your book or speaking business, the following checklist will prove helpful. Always remember, while you are there to promote your stuff, you must also provide entertaining content for the radio audience.

Talk show hosts will seldom invite you back if you do not first have their audience in mind. In other words . . . your book will get you on, then you must have something interesting to say that is unique, controversial or fascinating (besides an occasional mention of your book).

The very first thing you must ask a producer when you get them on the phone is: "Are you on deadline?" Why? This will drop their guard and let them know that you are interested in their deadlines. This is a good way to lay the foundation to build a solid relationship with them. If you push forward with the purpose of your pitch without asking if they are on deadline, their goal will be to get you off the phone as soon as possible.

Those four words demonstrate two things. To repeat . . . first, they show that you respect the producer's time. Second, they show that you know their jargon and can identify with them. This builds instant rapport and shows that you're not a newbie. If the producer says that they are not on deadline, continue with your pitch. If they are, ask for a better time to call back. Make a note and call back then.

Remember, a phone call to a producer is like a mini-audition, so be prepared and very energetic from the get-go. Producers receive stacks of books and press kits every week, so make yours stand out and fit their topic. Be unique in your attempt to get noticed. If you already have a pitch that works, don't change it. The Media likes "different."

Resist the urge to talk about yourself and your credentials in your pitch, rather tell the producer how you can increase their ratings. Tell them how you can give information to solve the problems of their listeners. Talk about their show and their listeners, because that is all they're interested in.

*Here is a "Hot Tip" from [Rick Frishman](#):*

Get on early morning news shows. The best TV shows to be on are at 6:00 and at noon. The shows at 6:00 am, right before the Today Show and Good Morning America, have slots for you appear. They are short but they are golden. They want you to talk about what is in the news today. You can get a great 3 to 5-minute segment that you can put on your site. And here is the good news - often there are 3 or 4 you can get on in every market. NBC, ABC, CBS, FOX, and cable. Call the producer when she/he gets off the air, around 7:15 am and give your "pitch." Send your press kit, show the producer that you can react to what is in the news and voila—you are on!

## Communicating with Radio Stations

Here are a few bits of information that you must get before your interview that will prove to be invaluable during and after the interview:

- ☑ Date of initial call. Be prepared to follow-up. If you do not receive a call-back after the 2nd call, send a book cover postcard, give them time to receive it and call again.

[Rick Frishman](#) used to be a radio producer in New York. He says, "I got hundreds of calls a day from publicists. I called back about two! Publicity is all about follow-up. If you don't call or email a producer at least seven times you are not doing your job. And yes, it is about relationships, too."

Don't be a pest. If you get a producer on the phone, ask if now is a good time to talk and then do your pitch in 30 seconds. Your job is to whet their appetite and get them to ask for material or even better just book you (or your guest) right there on the spot. If you get a no that is OK, but it is only a no for now! You may be able to turn it into a yes in three months if you don't burn your bridge with the producer."

Schmooze with the receptionist. Be polite and respectful.

On one occasion I was having trouble getting the producer to return my call. After several conversations with the receptionist we were getting to be good friends. I sent HER a signed copy of my book and hinted at passing it by the producer. The day after she received it the producer called and booked me as a guest.

Pitch your niche! If, having heard your pitch, the person at the other end says, "Sorry, I don't think this one is right for me," don't argue, and don't try to talk the producer into anything. You should, however, take the opportunity to ask who else at the station might be appropriate for your story. Sometimes the second or third person along the line will pick it up, but even if not, you still may have the opportunity to add a couple of names to your media list and make valuable contacts.

If you cannot make contact with the right person or get a positive response after the 2nd or 3rd call, give it up, shout, "NEXT!" and call someone else.

- Producers name. The producer usually books the show, however you should try to talk to the host if at all possible to get a feel for how the interview will go. The receptionist is a valuable source for learning the correct pronunciation of the producer's name.
- Best time to call the producer if not in?
- Radio station call letters, i.e., WOR, KXAM, WLW.
- Frequency of the station, i.e., FM 96, 1020 AM, Power 92.
- Complete address
- Office phone number
- Fax number

- ☑ Emergency phone number. Keep this handy in case they or you cannot get through on their regular phone line.
- ☑ This is very important: Will they call YOU or will you be calling THEM? What phone number? Be sure the producer has your direct phone number and be sure you know exactly when they will be calling you or if you will be calling them. Generally speaking the producer will call you.

***NOTE: No Cell phones, please! The quality of the call is often questionable and the drop-out rate is unacceptable!*** You may want to give them your cell number in case of emergency; however cell phones are out for doing the actual interview.

- ☑ Host's name. Will there be more than one? Verify spelling and pronunciation. It is also a good idea to have this in front of you during the interview so you can refer to the show and to them by name. Mentioning the city occasionally is good.

Listen during the commercial breaks for jargon, things that trigger thoughts, or anything that will help the listeners relate to you better. Keep a pencil handy to jot down this info.

When I hear a major book store commercial, when the interview continues I will usually say, "I'm happy to know that Barnes & Noble (or whoever) is a sponsor of the Paul Gonzales Show. Your listeners can find my books there."

- ☑ Type of programming, i.e., music (rock & roll, jazz, easy listening, country) & talk, or only talk radio.
- ☑ Demographics, e.g., audience mix; 25 to 34, female, etc.
- ☑ Date of interview
- ☑ Time of show, i.e., 6:00 a.m. to 10:00 a.m., etc. Your time or their time zone?
- ☑ Length of interview
- ☑ EXACT time of the interview. EST, CST, PST, MST, etc. Double check the time if there is a time change. I live in Scottsdale, and Arizona is one of only several states that does not adhere to Daylight Saving Time. Here is more information on [Daylight Saving Time](#) than you'll ever need to know.
- ☑ Be sure to get the host's e-mail address.
- ☑ Website. Exploring their website can help you to get to know the host(s), format and more. If you really want to impress them, bring up an issue from their city that relates to your topic.

- Will there be call-ins? Are you willing to take call-ins? Talk about this in advance.
- Ask if it is okay to give your 800 number, web site, e-mail, etc. I say it this way, "It's okay to give my 800 number isn't it?" Most will say yes, and IF THEY FORGET, remember to mention it.
- Would the host like several books to give away PRIOR to or during the show? I often will offer a book or two to give away. I ask them to send me the winner's name, address and phone number by e-mail.

I personally sign the book and mail it to the winner. I make a note of which book they won and add them to my mailing list. When I mail the book, I include information about other books, cassettes, video, seminars, etc.

- Would the host like to have a prerecorded promo for use before the show? You can do this on the telephone.

**Example:** *"Hi, this is Larry James, author of How to Really Love the One You're With. Listen for some stimulating conversation about relationships on the Joey Reynolds Show on WOR radio this Monday morning at 1 a.m."*

- Ask if they have a book store sponsor that you can call about your appearance on their show? (Name, address, phone number, etc.) Call the book store and ask them to order lots of books! If the book store knows you will be interviewed on the radio, it is much easier to schedule a signing at their store. Read: [40+ Ways to Make Your Next Book Signing an EVENT!!](#)
- Ask if there are any specific do's and don'ts for their station!
- Ask if they will record the interview and send you a recording or CD. Do not call the producer for a recording of the segment "after" the segment. Ask the question during the pre-interview about how you can get a recording or CD of the segment. Most stations have a protocol; some stations do not tape for you and you need to know if this is the policy in advance. You may be able to purchase the segment from an outside taping source.
- Ask if the show puts links to stories or guests on their Web site. Ask for the name of the webmaster, call him/her and ask if you can e-mail contact info related to the story. Go to their site to see the length of the blurbs that are already posted. E-mail your info to the webmaster and they'll add it to the site. These links often stay up for several months or longer. This also works well for TV appearances.
- Ask the producer if they have ever read about you on one of the radio discussion boards.

Unless you know your name has been mentioned on the boards, you don't really expect to hear them say yes. However, since you brought it up, and if they like your interview, they may post a nice comment about you there. This could lead to more inquiries for interviews.

Radio broadcasters from all over America and Canada have posted favorable comments at <http://prepnet.radio-online.com> about the interviews they have had with Larry James.

## What to SEND to the Host

- ☑ A letter of confirmation (guest proposal or thank you letter). If you are sending a guest proposal letter, be sure to let them know how their listeners will "benefit" from hearing you on their program.
- ☑ Your bio. One of the most important things you can do is to prepare the interviewer to interview you.
- ☑ If you have a website, be sure the host knows where to go to get your latest bio and relevant info. It's smart to have a special page especially for talk show hosts. See [Media Press Pass](#) as an example.
- ☑ Send a "thank you" e-mail to the host and include a link to your links page on "your" website that shows that you have posted your appearance on their show on your site. I have a page especially for this purpose called, "[The Venue Menu](#)."
- ☑ Copies of your book(s). Most hosts will want to read them (or at least skip-read them) before the show. Be sure to personally sign the book.
- ☑ Book marks with endorsements. (You DO have book marks, don't you?)
- ☑ Sample questions for the host. This is a list of frequently asked questions or questions you would like to be asked. Never ask the host, "What questions are you going to ask?" This makes you look inexperienced or fearful. Instead, email "suggested questions" or talking points to your contact ahead of time or bring them to the interview. Many reporters pride themselves on not using canned questions, but some have not had time to do their homework and appreciate the help. Some hosts are better than others. Most appreciate having questions to use as "thought starters".
- ☑ A sheet of paper with your book title(s), 800 number, E-mail and Website printed in a large font. Receiving this will help them to remember to announce the titles and the 800 number correctly.

- Endorsements for your book from celebrities, industry experts, authors who have written similar books, ministers and others.
- Endorsements from other talk show hosts. Most people who have been in broadcasting very long know their competition. This is often helpful. Some will inquire about other shows on which you have appeared.
- A brief preview of what is in the book(s).
- A business card
- Your newsletter, brochure, one-pager, news release, newspaper & magazine articles featuring your work or anything else that will help them make a favorable decision to schedule you as a guest.

### **Follow-up**

If you send your stuff to a producer, be sure to follow up with a brief phone call to verify that they received the info. My experience has been that I am mostly like to book an interview during the follow-up call.

### **Be Prepared**

Have your cheat-sheet with your keywords and book(s) in front of you. Be sure to have answers (sound bites) written out for the sample questions you sent the host. Most radio interviews are by telephone. If you go to the studio, take your stuff with you!

### **Check Out the Host**

Before appearing on a radio interview, check out the radio station's website. You may be able to view a picture of the host, a bio, listener's info and more, all of which will help you sound like you're a long-time listener, even though you've never heard the show. If the website features audio streaming you may be able to listen to the show before your appearance. The more comfortable you sound with the host, their format and their listeners, the better the interview and the more likely you will be invited back.

- When you are interviewed, always ask the reporter for a link on their Web site. Many will post a link if you ask.



Here is a list of radio stations who have websites and broadcast on the Internet. You can browse by state for their websites. Go to [www.GebbieInc.com](http://www.GebbieInc.com).

Also check out [American Journalism Review](#) and [NewsLink](#) - They feature an expansive list of radio, TV and print media links plus the latest in journalistic news.

You can use the [Radio Locator](#) to locate all of the radio stations near a U.S. city.

- ☑ A good book to read: "**SoundBites: A Business Guide for Working with the Media**" written by my friend Kathy Kerchner (Savage Press - ISBN 1-886028-30-3). More details, plus a book review - Click [here](#).

Make comments like: "As I said in my book, Red Hot LoveNotes for Lovers, blah, blah, blah." or "My books are available in major book stores however I'm sure your listeners will want to know where they can get a signed copy of my book, blah, blah, blah." Never answer a question by saying, "You'll have to read about that in my book," without giving the audience a taste of what is in the book. To tease without sharing makes it obvious that you value self-promotion above the listener's well being.

Be sure to mention the station's call letters when you are on the air. Also call the host by name several times during the interview. Write it down so you get it right.

- ☑ **Always say your best stuff first.** A special "Thank You" to my good friend, Gregory J.P. Godek, for this excellent tip. This is very important. If you don't, you may not have a chance to get your message across later. Do your best to bring up things in your answers to questions that lead the host to ask you questions about what YOU want to talk about. Since most radio interviews are on the telephone, you will find that it helps to have several key words written in front of you.

The above tip came in handy for me recently. In February, 2003, I was the National Spokesperson for the Hilton Hotel Corporation's "Romantic Weekend Get-Aways." Had I not "said my best stuff first," my sponsor would have been upset. The radio show was a network show and on a tight schedule. Little did I know when the interview began that it would only last 59 seconds. It was the shortest radio interview I ever did AND. . . I got everything I needed to say for Hilton Hotels plus a brief plug for my book and Website.

### Referrals

If you know other speakers or authors who would be a good fit for the show you were on, refer your friends to the host, then call your friends and give them the referral. In your "thank you" to the host, include their names and phone numbers.

If the interview went well, ask for a letter of praise from the host.

- Actual examples. . . "My interview with Larry James was the most fun and entertaining interview I have ever had!" - Jim Horn, WSBA, York, PA.
- "I rarely review or endorse books on my radio program. Larry James' 'Red Hot LoveNotes or Lovers' made a believer out of me!" - Dr. Toni Grant, Ph.D., Nationally Syndicated Radio Talk Show Host, Author, "Being a Woman"

The BEST time to ask is IMMEDIATELY after the interview. Most hosts will agree, especially if you tell them you would like to use their endorsement in your promotional material. (It's okay to appeal to someone's ego). Ask them to send it by e-mail. In a few cases, I have offered to write a few good words "for" them and asked them to rewrite or edit and return them to me.

**IMPORTANT:** *If your book is not ready for you to send to those who want it or if it is not already in the book stores when you have the interview. . . YOU ARE WASTING YOUR TIME AND ENERGY and allowing your ego to rule. Save it for later is a better idea.*

The more experience you gain from interviews, the more selective you can become in choosing the stations you would like to be on. In the beginning I was always ready when anyone called regardless of whether the station was "right" for me. That's one of the reasons I developed this checklist.

Remember that the length of an interview has nothing to do with its impact. Many people feel that short interviews don't pay off, while longer interviews do. Keep in mind that whatever length the interview, the host and the audience are accustomed to that format. They "will" get something out of the interview as long as you are prepared.

In sales it is important to qualify the buyer. I believe it is equally important to find out as much about the station, their format, the hosts, the music (if any) before you say yes. At first it may be difficult to say no. After you have gone through this checklist with them, if it doesn't FEEL right, have the courage to say no.

Always send them a "Thank you" for having you on their show, preferably using your book cover as a postcard. This gesture helps you "stand out" from all the rest. It had helped me to get repeat interviews; one station. . . five appearances!

## *After the Interview*

Always call the station's receptionist after the interview to provide information about your book, because listeners who don't remember your name or your book's title may call the station for additional information. The receptionist is the first and very often the only person the listener will ever reach. Ask for the fax number and fax a full information sheet with your name, book title, phone number, Website and complete ordering information.

After the interview, always send a "Thank You" note. Personalize the note! Be sure to write the note in your own handwriting and make sure you mention something that went on in the interview. Let them know you enjoyed the opportunity and give them your cell phone and e-mail address and let them know that you will be available again on short notice.

## *How to Be a Great Radio Guest*

The tips below were gathered from personal experience (appearances on more than 650 radio talk shows) and from other speakers and authors who have coached me on improving my on-the-air presence while being interviewed by radio talk show hosts. In addition, as the former Associate Producer of the MarsVenus Radio Talk Show with hosts, Dr. John Gray, Ph.D. and Michael Najarian, M.A., the following guidelines are those that I recommended for guests who appeared on our show.

Why is radio so **HOT**? Radio is an outstanding way to create awareness, influence trends and introduce new concepts. You can reach millions quickly. Radio is done via telephone adding to its desirability. It's easy to do, with no travel required, yet the outreach is tremendous! Radio is also very supportive in mentioning your book and website plus you get more time to share your message - interviews can be from five-ten minutes up to one hour.

- ☑ Be sure you have written the time, date, length of the interview and any other details on your calendar. If you miss a scheduled interview or have to cancel or reschedule an interview you risk losing it forever.
- ☑ It's showtime! Before you go on the air, have your book and notes handy. Isolate yourself prior to the call. What is your point? Make sure and write down four or five key points that you want to cover during your interview so you always stay on track. Strengthen your points with anecdotes, humor, and statistics so that they are more memorable and entertaining.

Take a few minutes to focus on the key points you need to make to make your message stand out. Know your mission and your message.

- ☑ Spend no less than 5 to 10 minutes alone before a phone interview. Relax. Breathe slowly and if it's early in the day and your voice is not yet up to speed, hum a couple of bars of "Kum Ba Yah" or read aloud some of your notes to warm up your vocal chords. Sip some tepid water. Remember that it is not only what you say, but how you say it. Read them aloud with a smile on your face. People can hear your smile, and it puts energy into your voice.
- ☑ Being interviewed is giving a performance. Do your best to appear natural, spontaneous and unrehearsed. This takes some practice. If you know your stuff, the uneasiness usually disappears when the first words have been spoken and the answers begin to flow.
- ☑ Prepare several pages of notes for each of your topics, books, etc., (including your 800#, contact info, etc.) and put them in clear plastic page protectors. Have them available on your desk during the interview. They will be useful to "scan" to help you stay focused as you speak. When on-the-air, never "read" from your notes, "speak" from them. Do your best to sound as natural as possible. Keep them close by in a file folder for use for your next radio interview. You cannot be too prepared for a radio interview.
- ☑ Be careful of every word that comes out of your mouth! You cannot un-ring a bell. One slip can ruin your career (Remember Imus?). When you are talking to a reporter or a radio or TV host, remember, nothing is off the record.
- ☑ To sound and be more credible and powerful on radio and on TV, delete the words "I think" from your vocabulary. "I think" dilutes your message and causes you to sound uncertain.
- ☑ Think carefully about the words the producer uses to explain what they want in the interview. Even though you are the expert, they will often come up with a new slant on your topic that you have never considered. This is a gift.
- ☑ If you want to be ready on "short notice" for radio interviews, place a flip chart on an easel near your telephone. Write bullet points that will help deliver your message more clearly when the media calls. This keeps you from scrambling around your desk looking for your media info sheet.
- ☑ When preparing your talking points (sound bites) always ask "who cares"? Your message has to resonate with your listening audience to have maximum impact. Save your serious topics for morning drive time. Most producers are looking for light, fun topics for afternoon drive time because commuters are tired, less alert and producers want to lift their spirits.

- ☑ Sound bites should be no longer 10 to 20 seconds for radio and television. Practice reading your sound bite aloud. Change whatever sounds awkward. Use descriptive words. Your words need to be intriguing to the media. Sound bites must seem to be spontaneous and natural, full of excitement and certainly not rehearsed.
- ☑ Research the audience you want to reach and the radio stations that broadcast to that audience. Design your remarks to the audience you are speaking to. Be sure to customize your sound bites for special occasions and for specific audiences. Another good reason to listen to the radio station before you call to get a "feel" for the talk-jockey's style. If you are not in the same city, listen on the Internet. Many radio stations have streaming audio on their Websites.
- ☑ Do your best to remove all distractions around you; deactivate call waiting, remove pets, turn off fans, TV, Cell phone and any other noise makers. Close the door and post a "Do Not Disturb - Radio Interview" note on the door. Turn papers on your desk face down to avoid the temptation of being inattentive to the host or preoccupied with something you must do later. Unless you will be viewing information relative to the interview from your Website on your computer during the interview, turn off your computer. Never use a cell phone or speaker phone for an interview. They are not broadcast quality and unreliable!
- ☑ Romance the producer. The producer is often neglected because the focus is on the host. Believe me, the producer does all the hard work behind the scenes and in many cases is the person who will make the decision to book the interview. Ask questions about the host. Give the producer your full attention, your best ideas and your gratitude. If you are sending a book for the host, ask them if they would like you to send a copy to them. Make a note of their full name for your file and be sure to sign the book to them.

You "must" spark the producer's interest. Stay up on the news. Listen to the radio, read newspapers, watch TV. That helps you figure out what's in the news and how your message might tie in with it.

Most producers will listen carefully to what you have to say and *HOW* you say it, so be at your best. Your passion for the message is what makes you believable, plus its timely connection to current events or a personal challenge will make it relevant and newsworthy.

Answer their specific questions carefully and always bring the answer back to your own key message.

- ☑ In a radio interview, an answer has 3 parts. State the problem, give an example of the problem, and define the solution. Don't fail this test. Be fiercely opinionated. Be who you are! Offer your input and perspective. Be inspiring, provocative, believable, different and memorable. Look at this opportunity as an audition; a genuine tryout for a real on-air performance. Speak to them in your very best [sound bites](#).

[Wikipedia](#) says, "A soundbite is an audiolinguistic and social communications phenomenon. It is characterized by a short phrase or sentence that deftly captures the essence of what the speaker is trying to say. Such key moments in dialogue (or monologue) stand out better in the audience's memory and thus become the "taste" that best represents the entire "meal" of the larger message or conversation. Soundbites are a natural consequence of people placing ever greater emphasis on summarizing ever-increasing amounts of information in their lives."

- ☑ Always be ready for the interview early. If you are going to the studio always allow an extra half an hour travel time for delays over and above the time the producer tells you to arrive. For radio telephone interviews, be ready and waiting at your telephone for the producer to get you on the line at least five to 10 minutes before your scheduled interview time. Producers like to know you are on the line before they commit you to their audience.

I have a list of nearly 40 relationship articles on various topics on my Website and will always have my computer tuned to the "articles menu." I use them as "thought-starters" for when a host suddenly changes the direction of the interview. Expect the unexpected! Motto: "Be Prepared." (Hmmmmm. Heard that somewhere before!)

If the topic is about something that I have written about, I will casually mention the article title and mention that detailed information is available by reading the article listed in the "Relationships Articles Menu" on CelebrateLove.com (my primary website).

It's okay to quote briefly from your book or about your speaking business or product. I use "red" tags that label various relationship topics on the pages of my books for easy reference. If a specific topic suddenly pops up, I can flip right to it.

- ☑ Weave the name of your book into the conversation so it sounds like it is a necessary part of the conversation. Do not say, "As I said in my book. . ." without mentioning the title. This takes some practice to keep from sounding like your only intention is to promote. Radio producers and hosts love to interview guests who know how to be promotional, that is, mention the name of their book without sounding like a commercial. Practice using the name of your book as if it were a person not a thing to promote.

When you say "in my book" you may come off as a pushy author. Instead, use the title of your book and give some helpful tips. You are there to teach, and the more you teach the more the listening audience will want to buy your book. Teach the audience at least several things that will make their life better. Make sure the host gives your Web site (or you do too) and send the audience there not to "buy" your book but to get a "freebie" from your Website.

- ☑ It's also a good idea to mention the host's name now and then. Write their name on a Post-It note and put it where you can see it during the interview. This allows you to call the host by name during the interview and helps you relate to the listeners. Research the host. Go to the radio station Website and read their bio. Do a Google search. Call the producer of the show and ask some questions. The more you know the better. Then slip it into the interview. Make sure they know that you have done your homework.
- ☑ Be sure to describe your book in a way that emotionally engages the audience and causes them to want to buy it and read it. Select several adjectives that capture the tone or style of your book so they get a "feel" for it.
- ☑ While you are on the radio to promote your books or other products, you must also provide entertaining content for the radio audience. Talk show hosts will seldom invite you back if you do not first have their audience in mind. In other words. . . your book or the "hook" you used to get the host's attention may get you on the show, however you must have something interesting to say that is unique, controversial or fascinating (besides an occasional mention of your book).

Talk show hosts will be more interested in having you as a guest if you can promise to deliver what you've learned about your topic and how other people can benefit from it. If you can tie-in a local angle to a national story, that's good too.

- ☑ Give the radio audience several "to-dos" they can do today that will change their life or make it better. Never sell your books or seminars when you are on the air. **Teach.** The more you teach them, the more they will want to buy whatever you are selling.
- ☑ Put aside any prepared agenda you may have and let the host lead with questions. Listeners who listen to talk radio are smart. They know when someone is trying to "sell" them something. They want to be entertained and informed, not "pitched." Say things that make them think. Listeners (and hosts too) become quickly annoyed with guests who constantly repeat the title of their book, your website or name of your business and will often tune out. The key is balance.
- ☑ If you are a speaker, a radio interview is not a stage to speak from. It is an interview. Resist the urge to go on and on, never pausing long enough to allow the host to ask another question. If you are unfamiliar with the talk-show format, make it a point to listen to some of the top talk show hosts and pay attention to how they do it.
- ☑ If you get a host who is inexperienced and is asking non-relevant questions. . . answer the question as best as you can and bring up another point that may lead the host to another question or ask the host a question.
- ☑ Better yet, in advance of your appearance, provide the host with a list of at least 10 questions that you deem important or may be questions that you are frequently asked. Put



them in the order of importance or relevance as to why you are being interviewed. Make a copy for yourself with a few short answers to use as thought-starters if your mind goes blank. Most hosts welcome this idea because they rarely read your book and often will scan your media kit or list of questions just prior to going on the air. Do not focus your energy on what the questions will be when giving the interview, focus on giving your best answer to the questions you have provided them.

- ☑ Develop questions that are hard-hitting, perhaps a little edgy and benefit-loaded for the listening audience. Producers and hosts love questions that will intrigue their audience (a hint of controversy) and glue them to their radio dials. Make each question better than the one before. Producers don't want anyone switching stations.
- ☑ When creating a list of questions for the host to be asked during an interview, keep them benefit oriented to your audience. Remember that the interviewer is there to get a good interview, not to "make nice" with warm and fuzzy questions. Avoid the question, "Why did you write the book" but rather weave this info into your answer and ask more compelling questions that command the audience to "stick around" for your answer!
- ☑ A compelling final question on your list might include something like: "Do you have any final words for our listeners as we wrap up this segment?" Be prepared for a memorable sound bite for this question; one that includes your Website and where they can buy your book. Practice your sound bites to keep them short but extremely meaningful and you will be an excellent guest!
- ☑ When you mention your Website, be sure to list a specific reason to visit. I will mention the Website, then say, "You will find a list of over 40 FREE relationship articles. Look for the "Articles Menu."
- ☑ Keep answers and explanations simple. If it's short and gets their attention, it buys you more time to deliver your message. Complex information tends to lose or bore interviewers and audiences. People want a capsule of information delivered in a few seconds that is easy to swallow and switches on their mental light bulb.
- ☑ Once you have your questions for the host, run them through with a good friend - preferably someone who can be objective. This will help make sure there aren't any questions you missed or duplicate answers to questions you have listed.
- ☑ Unless you are experienced at giving interviews, it is better to be cautious than candid. You can't un-ring a bell. Once you say it, it's too late. It is far better to be rehearsed and deliberate. Off-the-cuff comments intended as candor or humor may not translate that way to the listeners.
- ☑ There is no rule that says you have to respond to every question. If a question is loaded, rephrase it in a more neutral manner and answer the re-phrased version. Never use the



phrase "no comment." The public perceives it as an avoidance technique and many see it as an admission of guilt. Rehearse several clever ways to avoid answering the question without saying, "no comment."

- ☑ Be who you really are. Never worry about what you think someone else will think about what you say. When you worry about embarrassing yourself or saying the wrong thing you usually will. Besides, you have no control over what someone else will think. They will think whatever they think and there is nothing you can do about it.
- ☑ Act naturally. You need to be a powerful guest. You cannot be a powerful guest when you are concerned about what you don't want to happen. You need to sparkle while on the air. Enthusiasm speaks loud and clear, so in order to keep the audience attentive you need to maintain a high level of interest throughout the interview. Have fun with it. Focus on your mission and your message and deliver it well.
- ☑ Do your best to make the host look good! This is especially important if you want to be invited back. Never try to steal the limelight from the host or interviewer. Your job is to make them look good, while getting your main points across.

As a former broadcaster who helped introduce the "stand-up when you speak" concept to broadcasters in the Midwest, I have learned that you can speak more clearly and project your voice much better when you stand during a radio interview by telephone.

- ☑ Standing raises your energy level and will help you be more focused and alert. When you do radio interviews from your office you have that luxury. When you sit, often the tendency is to slump and take short breathes. When you stand, you can breathe more deeply and project from the diaphragm. Remember to take a deep breath before you begin speaking.
- ☑ I also suggest that you buy a telephone headset so you can speak "hands-free." "Never" use a speaker phone (the broadcast quality is unacceptable). Holding the telephone or cradling the phone on your shoulder for an hour can cause stress to your neck. Many professional speakers use their hands when they speak to emphasis points. Using a headset allows you to act and speak more naturally.
- ☑ If you spend lots of time on the phone during the day, it's easy to let your guard down when doing a phone interview. Mistakes happen when you allow yourself to be "too casual." Remember, the listeners do not know what you are going to say, so if you do make a mistake, don't call attention to it. . . keep going.
- ☑ Before the interview begins, find out who will be the interviewer and the correct pronunciation of their name. Jot their name, the name of the show, the station call letters

and the city on a large piece of paper, put it in front of you and remember to use this info often during the interview; especially their name. It creates a more intimate conversation that draws the audience in.

- ☑ When they ask a particularly insightful question, pass along a compliment. "That is an excellent question" or "I'm glad you asked that question" works. It also helps to draw in your audience. Even hosts like to be acknowledged and appreciated.
- ☑ Look for a local angle or make an effort to make a local observation and mention it during the interview. Local talk show hosts especially like to hear that you are relating to their audience. If a major news event has just happened in the city where the interview will be heard, if it's appropriate or ties in with your topic, talk about it. Know how your book ties in to breaking news.
- ☑ [www.50States.com](http://www.50States.com) is a terrific source for information, trivia (click on "Fast Facts"), and much more on every state in the USA. It has great info that can help you connect with your local audience and make you sound really informed.
- ☑ Tell the truth. Hosts value real experiences so use some stories from your own life to embellish your message. Listeners love stories. Whenever possible, sprinkle anecdotes or stories into your interview. Have them ready and "rehearsed" so you can recount them accurately. If you have experienced a personal struggle or triumph, tell the story and be sure that it is relevant to the topic you are there to talk about.
- ☑ Hosts also value brevity. Keep your comments as brief as possible and give them the opportunity to ask more questions. However, "never" answer a question with a simple, "Yes" or "No" unless you are prepared to add more words to your answer. Take a breath now and then. Make every word count. You would be wise to rehearse answers to questions that are frequently asked. Be prepared but don't sound canned. Speak from the heart.
- ☑ Never judge an interview by its length. Any interview is a terrific opportunity. Be prepared to pack a lot of information in a brief amount of time and with as few words as possible. This will take some practice. If you must, write them down, then practice, drill and rehearse. Most important. . . "don't read it, speak from it."
- ☑ Be a clock watcher. If your interview is scheduled for 10 minutes, begin to wrap up at minute 8 by mentioning where they can buy your book, your website and any other information you would like them to have.
- ☑ Unless you are a comedian and are known for being funny. . . don't try to be funny. A good sense of humor is an asset, however it comes off better if you relax and allow for humor to emerge during your conversation. Allow for spontaneity.

- ☑ While there are some hosts who will verbally attack you and do their best to create controversy, do your best to keep your cool. If the questions get tough, remain calm and collected. Even minor traces of irritation exaggerate themselves greatly on the radio and especially on TV, and can appear to be aimed at the listener.
- ☑ It is better to speak from the heart rather than to allow a host to rattle your cage and cause you to say something you may later regret. Roll with the punches. You may want to prepare some "come-back" lines for such emergencies. The real pros never hang up on a host. "Be" the expert you are. Engage in the conversation. Know your stuff!

One favorite media tactic is to allow a lengthy pause that creates awkward silence. This is done so you will continue talking, usually because you are blissfully digging yourself into a hole. Do not fall for this media trick. Pause until the host continues. In an era of the "sound-bite," any awkward silences can be edited out. Hosts do not like "dead air." He brought it on, so let him fill in the gap.

My belief is that it is much better to have your purpose of doing radio interviews be to reach out and help others. With this as your highest priority, the promotion of your books or products will have more value to the listener. The listener needs to know the benefits of taking action to purchase your products before they will buy.

One of the best pieces of advice I received about being interviewed came from my good friend, Gregory J.P. Godek. In preparation for appearing on ABC TV's "[The View](#)" with Barbara Walters, he told me to be sure to "say your best stuff first." That came in handy. Learn to work what "you" want to say into the conversation in the beginning because you may not have the opportunity later.

Remember, the person who is asking the questions is in control of the conversation. Had I not followed his advice, it is quite possible that I would not have been able to mention my Website on national TV. This goes for radio too. Barbara Walters was a pro, however one of the other hosts of the show would often interrupt before I had finished my sentence. Rude? Perhaps, and it was their show. Be prepared.

When a host asks you a question and you do not know the answer, it is far better to admit that you do not know than to "make something up" and sound foolish. If this happens to me, I usually respond by saying, "That is a very good question, I'll have to do a little research on that so I can give you a good answer. Next question."

- ☑ When you go to a break and the info is close by, get it and let the host know that you have the answer, etc. If the answer is not close by, make a note to remember to send the information to the host after the show is over. This is more acceptable than to "wing it" and look stupid. While the host may never bring it up later, they will be impressed that you kept your word.

- ☑ Talk show hosts are not interested in "fluff." If you have written a book, you are considered to be an expert on your subject. Act like one. They want people who can not only answer their questions but who can present solutions for their listeners. Be prepared to explain and state your position and to follow with a solution when it is called for.
- ☑ Do your best to match the pace of your conversation with the pace of the interviewer. Don't be a lazy talker. Be energetic. If you speak too quickly, the listeners won't be able to understand you. Make sure to enunciate so that listeners will stay interested. Radio hosts love it when you demonstrate enthusiasm for your topic. Listeners can sense your interest and enthusiasm. However, if the host appears easy and laid back, be easy and laid back. If they talk fast, talk fast. If they sound excited, you better sound excited too.
- ☑ A great way to raise your confidence level is to practice answering difficult questions in advance. Ask yourself: "What is the question that I least want to answer?" Practice that one. Use a friend as a sounding board. Rehearse a response until you are comfortable with it. I am often asked that since I am not a therapist, what makes me such an expert about relationships? I know exactly what I am going to say and the answer usually helps continue the conversation in a very positive manner.
- ☑ An experienced host can usually tell if you are a novice at being interviewed. Speak up. Be loud and clear. Be enthusiastic, and be careful; don't overdo it. Expressing a passion for what you do is contagious. If you have an accent, it is wise to speak a little slower so as to be clear and easily understood. Be articulate. If you know that you need some help with your grammar, get help. You are often judged by the words that you speak and by the tone of your voice.
- ☑ Imagine that you are speaking to only one person when you are on the air. Listeners listen that way. Be conversational. Be a friend of the host and the listeners.
- ☑ Do not speak the jargon or techno-terms of your industry! This is very important. Listeners need your information to be understandable and presented on a layperson's level. Keep it simple and to-the-point, and don't try to impress the host with your vocabulary.
- ☑ When doing a TV interview, be sure to make good eye contact with the host. Never look at the camera. Let the camera technicians do their job. Talk "to" the host, don't look around the room. The TV anchor has established a long-term relationship with the audience viewing at home. You don't. They have permission to look into their living rooms. That is not your job. Your job is to help the anchor inform and entertain the audience by being engaging and charismatic.
- ☑ If you're doing a radio or TV interview, take care not to wear or bring anything that beeps, rings, jingles, cries, barks or otherwise makes noise on its own. If you are doing an interview from your office or home, close the door to avoid any interruptions. Turn off radios, TV, music, cell phones, phones, fans - anything that might make noise - and lock

the pets in the other room. My media coach, [Ellen Kaye](#) asked me to remove a gold bracelet I was wearing before my appearance on "The View."

- ☑ If you've written a book or have product and are appearing on TV, bring samples with you. Sign them to the host (radio hosts too).

While appearing on KTVK-TV 3 in Phoenix, I not only brought all three of my relationship books, I brought an 11 x 17 poster of my best-selling book. Dan Davis gladly put in on the table and the TV camera panned it several times during the interview. My philosophy is "self-promote or disappear!" [Shameless?](#) You bet. AND... it worked!

- ☑ I used to worry when there were no call-ins if call-ins were accepted. No longer. Heavy call volume is not necessarily a good gauge for how well you are doing. If you are an informative and entertaining guest, listeners will often stay riveted to the radio and will not call. Just be your best at all times and say things worth listening to.
- ☑ When you hear the music come up when you are talking, that means the break is coming up or the end of the show is near. That is the time you want to bring your comments to a quick close. It is wise to have a few brief sentences that you have rehearsed well with which to close.
- ☑ When the host says he's going to break for a commercial, if you can, squeeze in a quick teaser to tantalize the audience to make them want to continue to listen. Say something like, "When we come back I'll tell you how to (fill in the blank). . ." It works best to have several teasers already prepared for instant use.
- ☑ Also remember that listeners channel surf. According to statistics I've read, the average listener only listens in 20 minute segments. They often flip around the radio dial until they hear something that grabs their attention. Be an "attention grabber."
- ☑ Frequency counts. The more times you can sneak your book title or Website into the conversation, the better. However, do it with finesse! AND do not overdo it. Mimicking William Shatner's eccentric character, "Denny Crane," on Boston Legal doesn't work.
- ☑ Say your book title at least three times in every interview. Yes, there will be times when this is impossible, and there will be times when this is tacky, but if you make it a rule and stick to it, you will sell more books. Erase the words "my book" from your vocabulary, and always use the full title to refer to your work. This is one easy way to sell books in an interview without sounding like an infomercial.

I usually close by saying, "This is Larry James reminding you to Celebrate Love." I pause briefly and quickly add "Dot com!" Wheew! Got another plug in for my website and it was the last thing they heard me say. Remember to say your name several times too. If they remember your name, they can usually do a Google.com search and find you.

- ☑ Have fun! Enjoy yourself! Lighten up! Let your passion and enthusiasm for your book or topic shine through. Listeners truly resonate with enthusiasm and will often buy your product or service based on emotion.
- ☑ After the interview is over, ask the host, "Who else do you know who might be interested in having me as a guest?" Most talk show hosts often have valuable contacts in other markets and if they were pleased with the interview and say so, they will refer you.
- ☑ Ask the host to take a moment and jot you a brief note on their station's letterhead. Use this when you solicit other radio stations for interviews or to post on your media page on your website.

### *Additional Tips*

- ☑ Pitch your niche! Include a sheet in your media kit or on your website listing all media appearances by category (radio, TV, newspaper, magazines) and update it regularly. Send the list, along with your "pitch" letter, to editors, reporters, talk show producers and news directors, to let them know you aren't a media novice. Media professionals identify newsworthy items by testimonials from media peers before your self-promotional comments.
- ☑ When it comes to stories, each producer or host has a unique personality and unique needs. Ask lots of questions. Dig into what they are currently working on. Then make them look good by designing your pattern to fit their needs. Learn everything you can about the show and about their competition. Let them know you care about their listeners. When you help make a host's job easier, they will often come back to you for more quotes and other interviews.
- ☑ Design a "Holiday Hook." When pitching a holiday, put a non-traditional twist on a traditional idea. What can you offer that would be something completely different? Your job is to ignite interest. Plan a different spin on an existing idea. Be creative.
- ☑ Here's a novel idea. Pitch them something they're already interested in. That could be something in the news, or maybe a current reality show or movie, celebrity mishap, or

seasonal item. Celebrity tie-ins usually get more air time. Topical ideas with a twist will get their attention.

- ☑ Remember to tell clients and print reporters in the station's listening area to listen to your interview. If you are a guest on an out-of-town radio show, call the newspaper in the city where the show is airing and ask if they would like an interview, too. Be sure to give them no less than a two week advance notice.
- ☑ If your interview was successful, it is sometimes possible to segue into another interview with their sister station down the hall. If they don't have any other stations in the building, ask if their affiliates in other cities might be interested in interviewing you. It is best to make this request and ask for the contact info while you have them on the phone.

**NOTE:** *A radio station whose owners own more than one station in a market is referred to as a company's co-owned (# of stations)-station cluster. For example, Clear Channel owns an 8-station cluster in the Greater Phoenix area.*

**R**adio interviews should be an important part of your overall media strategy. Never, ever turn down the opportunity to do a talk show. You can learn from every interview. Inexperienced with being interviewed on talk shows? You need to know how to be a professional guest. You'll need guidance and training to create excitement, share valuable info, make your point quickly, avoid tangents, be promotional yet responsible and learn the do's and don'ts of being interviewed.

#### A few tips from [Marsha Friedman](#):

- ✓ Radio talk shows, in contrast to TV, communicate through words rather than pictures. It's conversational, so your message should lend itself to a discussion about the problem your expertise can address.
- ✓ Like TV, radio talk shows vary from morning to night. Morning shows, as you might suspect, generally have shorter interviews during "drive time." With news, weather sports and traffic, talk show hosts don't have time for 30-minute interviews.
- ✓ Midday shows, now run the gamut of topics since so many people listen to the radio at work. Today, you'll even find lots of business shows airing during the work hours.
- ✓ After work is the second "drive time" of the day. Listeners are more relaxed then, and it's more conducive to a longer interview.
- ✓ And don't discount those overnight shows. Think no one's listening? You'd be mistaken. Evening and overnight interviews reach a broad audience of listeners, including 2nd and 3rd shift workers, public service employees, truckers and many people who work overnight.

Media training is a major plus and will give you a tremendous advantage as you can learn the techniques and strategies to giving a great interview as well as promoting your interests during the interview. It gives you the opportunity to practice your materials and receive top quality, professional feedback. Call the [coach](#)!

### ***Finding Radio Stations***

Many of the radio stations in the USA have websites. Before you agree to an interview, it might be a good idea to listen to the host. Here is a list of radio stations who have websites and broadcast on the Internet. You can browse by state for their websites. Go to [www.GebbieInc.com](http://www.GebbieInc.com).

You can use the [Radio Locator](#) to locate all of the radio stations near a U.S. city.

For a list of the Top 50 United States Cities by population, go to: [www.infoplease.com](http://www.infoplease.com). This list will assist you in determining major radio markets. (Update: The latest census show Phoenix as #5 and Philadelphia as #6).

Also check out [American Journalism Review](#) and [NewsLink](#) - They feature an expansive list of radio, TV and print media links plus the latest in journalistic news.

### ***Have you considered pitching Internet radio?***

If not, maybe you should be. According to a study done in 2004, over 28 percent of Internet radio listeners are likely to buy a new product vs. 17 percent of regular radio listeners. Internet radio listeners are also "hip" meaning that if you're targeting the 12-35 year old crowd, this might be a place you want to promote yourself. Try heading over to WS Radio at [www.WSRadio.com](http://www.WSRadio.com) and Blog Talk Radio at <http://www.blogtalkradio.com/> check out their shows, you can pitch most of the hosts directly from their site!



## About Larry James



**Larry James is a professional speaker and the author of three relationship books and one business networking book:**

- *How to Really Love the One You're With: Affirmative Guidelines for a Healthy Love Relationship*
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