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DON'T MISS OUT ON THIS CHANCE TO BUILD YOUR SKILLS, GROW YOUR BUSINESS, NETWORK WITH YOUR PEERS, AND PARTY IN VEGAS!
Six Keys to Creating a Successful DJ Training Program

By Mike Walter

You've decided you want to train some talent. Congratulations. It's an exciting process that can literally change both of your lives. Your trainee will learn new skills that will enhance their lives (and wallets) and you may possibly add a superstar to your roster which will enhance your life (and wallet). So now the question is, what do you teach them?

Step one is to decide what makes you so special. You're obviously in demand and your calendar is full. (If not, you shouldn't be looking to expand). That means people love what you do. So, what are the thematic talents that have gained you such a great reputation? Are you an awesome music mixer? A dynamic MC? An incredibly interactive DJ? You need to pinpoint this first, before you even think about moving forward.

Next, find someone who can become a "mini-me." I'll let you in on a secret. I've had tremendous success training DJs for over 25 now, but it's all because I stack the deck in my favor. I don't just train just anyone. I work with people (as an assistant) for months before I handpick the ones I want to invite into training. So think about the skill set that you need in a recruit and then go find someone who fits that description before you decide to start training.

Then, it's time to break it down. If you want to teach anything, you have to break the task down to its simplest steps. Let's say, for example, you want to teach a trainee how to lead "The Cupid Shuffle." First, you need to break the dance down so they can learn it, step by step. Then you need to give them a script, an example of what to say to set the song up. Along with the script should be pointers about where to stand as an MC so everyone can see you and how often you should be counting off the steps.

Next, it's rehearsal time. Any form of performance needs to be rehearsed before it's really ready to be done in front of a live audience, and DJing/MCing is no exception. This is why it amazes me when some DJs say their entire training program consists of a newbie shadowing the owner for a few events. In my humble opinion, that's just not enough. MCs need the opportunity to get on the microphone and say what they're going to say, repeatedly, before they are exposed to real parties. And that can only happen in rehearsal. Whether you have a warehouse space or can barter with a local banquet hall for use of a room or a basement big enough to set up equipment and practice (I've held training sessions in all three locations, by the way) you need to get your trainees on the microphone and behind the gear and let them rehearse. And you need to offer feedback and constructive criticism that will help them improve.

Once they've demonstrated excellence in rehearsal, it's time to let them get some live experience. The best way to do this is to put them on an event you are DJing and let them co-MC. Once I get deep into training a new MC they work with me often and I'll give them opportunities to get on the microphone or mix some songs. I'm still the main headliner on the event so the client isn't going to wonder where I am, but allowing a new DJ to perform some of the things they've been practicing in a real-world setting is critical to their growth.

And then, finally, it's time to "let 'em go!" This is the scariest part, because even if everything has gone perfectly in training and when they've been out in the field with you, it's a leap of faith giving a new DJ their first event under your company name. It's so scary in fact some business owners refuse to do it. They'll never let anyone else DJ for them, and I respect that. It goes against what I believe is the best way to be successful in this industry, but I also know how hard it is to grow and manage a staff of DJs, so no one should attempt it unless they really want to do it.

I have trained about a hundred DJs through my years in this business. I've seen some people come into this industry for a brief time, working their way through college and leaving when their careers take off, and I've seen others make DJing their careers. Some are still working for me decades later, while others have moved out of New Jersey and taken their talents elsewhere. It's a very rewarding experience to take someone who has no experience in the art of DJing and MCing and to teach them how to be awesome in this industry. If you've got the desire to do it, but never tried it before, I hope I've given you a road map of how to get started. Good luck!
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I don’t know when it started, but over the past several years it has become popular for even leading industry pros to take potshots at those who have been working in the industry for years and years and tout their experience. Recently in an online forum, one commenter posted that “experience” amounted to nothing more than repeating the same show for years and years. Others said that if someone is doing something poorly, but they do it for a long time, then they’re simply experienced in doing bad performances.

LEARNING BY DOING

Meanwhile, in my other life, I took on a faculty position at Irene’s Myomassology Institute. I was offered the position a week before I graduated, and have since also become a clinical events coordinator. I purposely chose to assist in the applied class, which for me was the most difficult, information-intensive part of the course. The instructor is simply brilliant; she just won a national award as Massage Therapy Instructor of the Year and has probably forgotten more about massage than I’ve learned since I began! (Can you say “intimidating”? Yet for the past four semesters since my graduation, I’ve purposely assisted in that class. While my main goal is to help the students, of course, the biggest benefit for me is...experience. The absolute BEST way to learn anything is to TEACH it. Humans learn by repetition. (Especially us older ones!) This part of my life resonates with these controversies in the DJ world.

Back when I began my DJ service in 1979, there was no Mobile Beat. There were no expos. There were very few books, and most of those were aimed at radio DJs. I learned mostly by trial and error—A LOT of error! But I managed. Soon, I met people in the electronics industry who taught me about mixers and how to use them. Being lucky enough to live in the Detroit area, I got to know some pretty incredible DJs. (I won’t drop names, but you WOULD know some of them!) I also liberally ‘borrowed” from bands, who at the time ruled the wedding reception roost. Having dozens of venues minutes from my home, I could often watch three or four in a single weekend. And I learned.

EXPECTING THE UNEXPECTED

When you do a lot of “borrowing” and putting your own spin on various techniques, as well as trying new innovations, it becomes a process. One that doesn’t stop. Learning is ongoing. Just as it is with my brand new massage therapy career, even though I’m an instructor and work in the industry, not a day goes by that I don’t learn something new. Just as I devour every new issue of Mobile Beat, I rabidly digest Massage & Bodywork, the industry trade magazine for LMTs. The learning is continuous. And, I’m happy to say that, being something of a pioneer in the DJ field, many of the things I “invented” as I grew into the profession have become accepted industry standards. I remember walking into a venue somewhere around 1980 and having the manager compliment me on wearing a tuxedo in a day when jeans and tour shirts were the standard DJ attire. A small thing, but the first of many as the industry, and my local piece of it, evolved.

So let’s get back to our “hack”—the “experienced” guy who has simply been doing the
same, tired show over and over for decades. (This is classic strawman, by the way, but for the sake of discussion, we'll leave that aspect alone.) How many of us have never encountered a problem along the way? How many times have we had to troubleshoot a technical glitch, and had that alert us to better ways of doing things? How many of us got a bad review? Or customer suggestions? Did you listen to them? How many of us either helped out a colleague or were a guest at an event and watched another DJ work? Did it inspire? Or make you think?

Life is not a single path that everyone follows, but a tangle of multiple pathways that makes each of our lives unique. Even if you have a “formula,” and follow a well-entrenched script, life itself is going to throw you curveballs. Frequently. And over time, all of that amounts to experience. And, face it, if you’re in your third, fourth or even fifth decade of working regularly in the DJ industry and people are still willing to pay you for what you do, then you must be doing something right!

ONE LAST WORD: CONAN
No, not the barbarian warrior… Conan O’Brien, the late night comedian who notoriously had the shortest ever run as host of The Tonight Show. I’ve often heard him criticized for doing the same show repeatedly; and to a degree those critics are right. That is his framework—the skeleton on which he hangs his show. (And you will notice that ALL such hosts have one.) This allows certain aspects of the performance to be “automatic” allowing Conan to focus on the new elements; the guests or skits that are unique to that show. I had a similar framework when I worked as a DJ at Detroit’s infamous Wooly Bully’s; the music (oldies, Motown and classic rock) pretty much took care of itself. The format was set in stone. This allowed me the freedom to focus on the clientele; the other DJs and I ALWAYS had them doing crazy things! Some of the best club nights of my life were inside the ‘57 Chevy DJ booth at that crazy little bar.

Bottom line: By all means, go to the expos. Learn from the pros. Up your game! Take the workshops and work to improve. But never disparage experience, because it will show you everything that isn’t in the books, magazines and seminars. Build on what you learn. Maybe someday your own experience and innovation will propel you towards teaching seminars of your own. That is, of course, where all of the experts come from.

Until next time, safe (and edifying) spinning!
Open Yourself Up to Criticism

A DIFFICULT BUT ESSENTIAL WAY TO IMPROVE YOUR TRIVIA EVENTS

By Rob Johnson & Thomas Dorsher, President of DigiGames

For most of us, it’s one of the hardest things to do in life: Listening to someone criticize what you’re doing—even if it’s constructive feedback given in a positive way. However, if we don’t listen, we may be setting ourselves up for failure. Here are some ways to get helpful feedback and some reasons why it’s important to do so...

WHY DO IT?

If you don’t open yourself up to criticism, your shows are possibly eventually going to be:

Stale. Do you like stale food? Of course not! Stale means you are rehashing old material and presenting it as new again. It is easy to fall into the cycle of “Here is a great thing I have for you (that you’ve already seen before):”

Boring. If you rehash old material, you are going to lose your audience, because it is likely that your own material is boring YOU first. Even if you are slightly tired of your own material, that small amount of boredom will be amplified when you are in front or your audience. If even the host is bored, why should they bother participating?

Predictable. Some predictability is good. People will expect you to play trivia, give prizes at certain points, do tournaments, etc. But if their mouths are moving before you have even said the words then you know you have a problem. (Ok, so that is a bit of an exaggeration, but you get the point.) If week #1 you do Movies, TV and News trivia, then perhaps week #2 you do Celebrity, Music and Video trivia. Don’t get stuck on the same topics unless this is by prearrangement with the client or your particular crowd demands it. Even still, don’t be predictable, even with repeat topics. And throwing a curveball from time to time keeps people on their toes.

WHAT TO GET FEEDBACK ON?

With the “why” clarified the answer to “what” is quite straightforward. You need to be getting feedback on anything and everything. Get feedback on your presentation, the questions, the equipment, the choice of venue, the timing, the night of the week, the pace, the control of cheating...you need to be getting all these areas right, so the more info you have on your performance, the better.

HOW TO GET FEEDBACK?

There are several ways to get feedback. Obviously social media is key these days. You should have a good presence across Facebook and Twitter; and don’t overlook YouTube—so you should have a good following there as well. You can add a simple poll to get feedback.

Provide a feedback card in the quiz itself. Design a simple flyer or feedback card with all your questions on. You can have a system where you give a series of topics and you get the players to rank you between 1 and 10 (10 being “You’re the best!” and 1 being “You should probably give it up.”) Do this once every few weeks and you will get a good reflection of how your players are feeling.

Building rapport with your local competition and agreeing to evaluate each others’ shows is only going to strengthen trivia in your market, and build up all your shows. Stop worrying about “What if my competitor steals my client, or steals my ideas?” That’s the point of building rapport FIRST. Build that friendship and they will only refer people to you on nights they are too busy, as opposed to viewing you as a threat.

WHAT TO DO NEXT?

It is pointless to get the feedback if you are not going to do something with it. Don’t just put it into a file for later; read it right away and take action. If it’s only the one odd comment here and there, maybe just keep an eye on the issue; but if several people are saying the quiz is too long, or there isn’t enough variety, or the music round is too dated, then these are clearly things that need remedied immediately, otherwise you are definitely in danger of losing your gig!

It is hard to give full and proper advice on how to really handle the criticism until you know what that criticism is (and believe me it can be about anything and everything—major and minor issues alike). But if you take the above guide as a rough idea on what to do, you will be fine. Make sure you are getting feedback and be proactive in applying the lessons learned to improving your trivia events.

Rob Johnson is back writing a monthly article for Mobile Beat after taking a year or so off. The main focus is to touch on “midweek money” and how you can increase your bottom line. Rob has been the Spokesperson for DigiGames for over 10 years; he has been in the entertainment business for over 25 years and full time for 17. If you have any questions, please feel free to email rob@digigames.com or call 701-710-1657.
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Why I Love DJing at Sea

By DJ Dayna

What do you love about it? When I’m asked this question about my DJ voyaging, so many things come to mind that make my smile widen and eyes twinkle as I think about them.

What’s not to love about waking up every day to ocean views and smelling the salty ocean air? Or watching the burning orange sun that never paints the same shades on the sky every night as it dips into the blue horizon. For me, the ocean has an instant calming effect and makes my soul feel rejuvenated, so to be around it each day is a blessing. Besides the pure enjoyment of the living environment and being surrounded by earth’s natural beauty every day, here is a list of all the other things I love about DJing on cruise ships.

TRAVEL
I get paid to DJ while living on a floating mini-city that sails to a variety of amazing places where I experience adventure and learn about the history and culture of other parts of the world. Enough said.

FOOD
I don’t have to cook or go grocery shopping and I’m fed like a queen every day! Needless to say, I never go hungry since there is food everywhere and it’s offered all hours of the day— even when I’m done DJing in the wee morning hours...Hellooo 24-hour room service! The food does vary ship to ship, so when I am asked which cruise line is “the best” out of the ones I’ve worked on, I’d have to give that reward to Crystal Cruises. 2nd place would be Celebrity Cruise Lines. On Crystal, I love that I can order a double Americano and dive in on frozen yogurt or Ben & Jerry’s ice cream with an array of toppings to choose from, every day! (My favorite ice cream is the Coffee Buzz with macadamia nut topping) (in case you were just dying to know—yum!) And not to mention, the presentation of the food receives a 5-star award in itself.

SERVICE
I am so spoiled by the onboard service. Wherever you sit down on the ship, someone is standing by your side within a few minutes asking if you want something to drink. “Why yes, I’ll take a Mojito.” An excellent stateroom attendant cleans my cabin every day and makes my bed for me in the morning and turns down the bed at night. I have to mention that the beds are so incredibly comfy that your body just melts into them like a hot marshmallow right off a campfire stick. Because of this, it does get difficult to get up in the mornings and I look forward to my afternoon snooze. (Haha.)

FITNESS CENTER
When I’m home, I’m a pretty avid gym buff. So having an enticing 24/7 fitness center onboard with personal trainers that are easy on the eyes is a bonus! I have a pretty fast metabolism, but still there is also no way I can work on a ship for a month or more and not try to burn off all that rich food, liquid calories, and afternoon trips to the ice cream and fro yo station. I may see a different number on the scale when I disembark, but thankfully I have not had to buy a new wardrobe and of course my heart and other organs thank me for keeping them healthy.

PEOPLE: CREW AND PASSENGERS
Where do I even begin...My heart holds a very special place for all of the pretty incredible human beings I’ve met from all over the world on cruise ships. When you meet someone on the ship, there is a special connection that I can’t describe. It’s a unique life, its own little world, and with that there’s an automatic mutual understanding, appreciation, and connection. You become instant friends and are considered part of your shared “ship family” even though you may not even know each others’ last names. I’m not on the ships for long, so for me I can compare it to my background as a military brat. You make the most out of the time you have.

MAKING MUSICAL MAGIC
I love that I have a job that allows me to enhance the guests’ cruising experience by mixing music. Music speaks to people on many levels: Whether it’s at events back home or when I’m DJing out at sea—it’s no different. My hope is that the music I play helps them forget about their worries back home, brings back good memories or makes new memories with new friends, helps them dance to celebrate a special moment, or just inspires their souls shine brighter.

DJ Dayna has been entertaining at nightclubs, social events, college and corporate events and much more, for more than a decade. After working in event marketing, hosting DJ battles for Astro, LA’s original DJ store, and doing a weekly show on Hollywood’s 99.3 KCLA, she returned to her Ohio roots. She has built a highly successful solo operation and has also traveled as a guest DJ for Disney, Celebrity and Royal Caribbean cruise lines.
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Interchangeable capsule options
Yes, I’m a voracious reader, consuming about 70 titles per year. I’m a student of a variety of disciplines: performance, marketing, economics, history, art, finance, biographies, etc. Though I graduated 23 years ago from Colorado State University with a degree in Business Administration (concentration in marketing; minor in economics), every few months, I reach out to my favorite marketing professor (Lon Camomile). We grab breakfast and just chat. It’s during these times we talk about ideas, ponder “what if’s,” explore creative solutions to problems, and swap book titles. At one of these sit downs, he suggested Real Artists Don’t Starve: Timeless Strategies for Thriving in the New Creative Age by Jeff Goins. It’s good...really good! Definitely a must-read for every DJ.

Goins addresses that fact that you shouldn’t have to starve to do your work. Today, we have more opportunities than ever to share our creativity with the world. We just need a new model for art and business to intersect, so that our work allows us to flourish.

TENACIOUS ARTISTRY

The fact is, whether you accept it or not, you ARE an artist! You spend your time doing what matters the most to you. You don’t need someone else’s permission to create. You aren’t doing your best work in secret hoping to get discovered. It means that others are taking you seriously. You ARE an artist.

We all have creative gifts to share. (See my article “The Art of Being a DJ” in MB, January 2016, p.36) The world needs your work—whether it’s an idea for a book, the birth of a business venture, paint on a canvas, or a sparked dream for your community. The world needs you!

To illustrate: once upon a time, there was a successful, prolific artist. At a gallery opening, he was asked by a wealthy patron, “What made you start painting in the first place, and what made you keep going all those years?” The painter stopped and thought about it for a moment. Then, with calm poise, he simply said, “I just love the smell of the paints.”

Therein lies the key to success: persistence. (By the way a fantastic book on this topic is called Relentless: From Good to Great to Unstoppable by Tim Grover. It will rock your world!) We must focus on the work, not the results. The results will come if you are doing the right work with the right attitude.

We have to “love the smell of the paints,” just as Michelangelo did. Love the music, enjoy the events, celebrate with the people.
for the right reasons. We have to do the work. Fall in love with the process, and the results will come. The result of your creativity is built one event at a time. It is continuously refined, buffed, and polished, then stripped down and rebuilt with each and every performance.

Creativity isn’t magic. Rather, it’s that persistent effort to continue to do what is needed to fulfill your role and walk in your full identity. Yes, I’m talking about a mindset. Jeff Goins talks about it in the first four chapters of his book, a section called Mastering the Mindset. We must break the status quo of the term artist (disc jockey) and the baggage that goes with that label. First, create yourself and grasp the identity of who you are: an artist. Take it firmly, look in the mirror and know that only then can you fulfill your role, with the power to do that in your own way. Then walk in your identity and go with confidence!

Let’s face it. Today’s technology makes it easy to become a “DJ,” at least in name. A few songs on a cell phone, a microphone and some speakers, that’s about all you need. Society has reduced the term to little more than pushing buttons and being an occasional announcer. That’s okay for some. Not for me. Is it for you? Do you exude “Event Professional, Master of Ceremonies and Master Entertainer?” Do you embrace those roles, responsibilities and confidently exhort the authority as the master of your craft? Only you can make that choice. Only you can change what you become, or how you are seen. Only you can determine how you are known or respected.

Attitude and confidence are how great entertainers are made. Great entertainers are continually creating, then recreating themselves, their performances, and perfecting results...but they’re never satisfied. (Goins has a great story about comedian Chris Rock in his book about this very subject.)

We must be diligent in all we do, all the time.

Creative success is more often the result of hard work and persistence. You must be courageously tenacious when things don’t go according to plan. Do what must be done. And when it doesn’t work out, still be persistent. Keep showing up, regardless of the outcome. Opportunities may come and go, but hard work is all we can measure. And if you lack in experience, make up for it in tenacity. In Steve Martin’s book, Born Standing Up (also a great read), he says: “Thankfully, persistence is a great substitute for talent.”

CHOOSING YOUR PATH TO SUCCESS

The fact is, that sometimes living the life of your chosen craft doesn’t necessarily fit the script you’ve been given, or the story you want to live. The rules you are following may have been set by somebody else, but you still have a choice of what you become in the process. You can be great or you can mediocre. Ordinary or extraordinary. You choose.

At any point, you can change your narrative. Embrace the idea that weddings and events need you to be awesome, to be memorable. You have a special and creative gift to share with the world. You can become the world class performer you want to become, to the point that building a life makes creating your best work not only possible, but actually inevitable.

Learn to train your mind, refine your craft and live differently. Don’t starve for your work, but rather, help it thrive, as many others (who Goins points to in “Real Artists...”) have done. Learn from Michelangelo, George Lucas, Led Zeppelin, Dr. Dre, Michael Jackson, Vincent Van Gogh, Jim Hensen, Prince and a host of “every-day Joes” covered throughout the book. Read about what they did, and how they succeeded.

Goins’ book is both intriguing and engaging. It’s a fun read filled with real examples that give the reader a “can do” attitude in “the Rules of the New Renaissance.” Frankly, it was a great kick in the pants for me—definitely something DJs need to hear.
For example, deep down, many artists (DJs) hang on to the notion that art doesn’t matter, thus their work doesn’t matter. If that mindset is correct, then it doesn’t warrant a fair payment. Goins explains in principle #9 why an artist (DJ) should NEVER work for free. A huge part of turning your passion into a paycheck is convincing yourself that your work matters. If it matters to you, then it has value and it’s worth charging for. Consistently charging for your work is a good first step to accomplishing that.

YOU CAN’T THRIVE IN ISOLATION

Places and people shape the success of your work far more than you realize. Goins says, “Creativity is more likely in places where new ideas require less effort to be perceived.” Find the places in your community, look for people, then create a network. “Without a network, creative work does not succeed.” The reality is, being part of the right network can accelerate your success like few things can. Consider the “The Inklings” (described in detail in the book), a creative cluster that included names like C.S. Lewis, J.R.R. Tolkien and others. They made each other better and they all thrived. If a network of creative minds doesn’t exist in your area, then create your own group, just like Goins did. Creatives today are not lone geniuses, but rather, we all thrive by collaborating with other like-minded creatives. (Yes, look outside the DJ or entertainment realms as well.)

“Great work does not come from a single stroke of genius, but by the continual effort of a community. When the right people advocate for your work, your success becomes more likely. Being good is necessary, but it is not sufficient. Skill is a prerequisite for creative success, but talent is only part of the equation. The rest is network. A network is your insurance against anonymity...the key to economic growth lies in the ability to translate the underlying advance of the Creative Class into creative economic outcomes.”

Goins says, “We first approach out art not with our hands, but with our minds. We all develop thought patterns and limiting beliefs that prohibit us from being where we want to be in life, and creative work is no exception...Thriving artists do more than bloom where they are planted; they put their work where it has the greatest potential to succeed, because even the most generous audiences will not tolerate an amateur.”

GETTING PAID TO BE CREATIVE, GETTING CREATIVE TO GET PAID

When we sincerely offer our gifts to the world, not through hype, false promises or chicanery, but practice in public, the audience often repays us by taking notice and then responding with loyalty. As we get better, earning an audience one event at a time, both our persistence in improvement and compensation allows us to continue to create. (From chapter 9.) Simply said, “Make money to make art.” Creating and staying in business takes money. You have to find a way to pay for it so you can keep making it.

Yes, we all know: It is the amateurs who make it hard for the professionals. It always has been, and always will be that way. But getting paid to do what you love to do allows you the creative success and awards the opportunity to do your work without constraint. Charging your worth brings dignity to your work. It validates your offering to the world—and it allows you to continue working.

Creative people live in the world of ideas and possibilities (hence the value of creating a network outside of just DJs). Income may not be the goal, but continuing to create is the thriving artist’s common thread. When we find ways to make money, it buys us time and gives us the opportunity to continue to create even more.

You have a choice: You can continue on the path of the tired, frustrated artist (DJ) who struggles to keep creating and just getting by; or, you can choose to embrace a challenging truth that might set you free. You don’t have to starve. You too can thrive! Your clients and guests are waiting for you to create your best work. A great first step is to read Real Artists Don’t Starve: Timeless Strategies for Thriving in the New Creative Age by Jeff Goins.

(Oh, by the way, if you are looking to add to your creative network, please contact me at Matt@MattMartindale.com. I’d be honored to part of your network and help you create, collaborate and thrive however I can! –MM)
Aretha Franklin (God rest her Motown soul) sang it best with her hit song “Respect.” It’s something we all strive for in life and work. We’ve all heard the phrase that respect should be earned and not given. Is that always true? Do we really give respect to others and applaud their achievements when it is readily deserved? It’s no secret that our industry is primarily an ego-driven boys club. Did that remark hurt? It should.

Don’t believe me? Just read any one of a dozen DJ forums. Who has the best setup, the best lighting, the best gear, photo booth...squirrel, squirrel, squirrel. All the banter is like a bad rap fight between M.G.K. and Eminem. It just detracts from the main issue of how we serve our clients and each other.

And this brings up the question about how DJs relate to one another: Do female DJs have a harder time earning respect in our industry than their male counterparts? I turned to rising star DJ PonFetti for help with this topic.

In just five short years DJ PonFetti (a.k.a. Michele Ponseti) has rocketed from working small gigs to making hit edits for BPM Supreme, on top of being a premier DJ for Peavey Electronics. Her journey has not been an easy one. Michele’s career is a juggling act of gigs, studio time and family, while simultaneously walking a tightrope between maintaining her public “DJ” image and personal life. She fully understands the challenges female DJs face every time they spin.

**MC:** Have you had to work harder to prove yourself as a DJ?

**DJP:** I feel like I do have to work harder for people to respect me as a DJ. When I was first buzzing outside my own state I was on the cover of the Peavey Electronics DJ catalog. People would refer to it as my “modeling pics.” I’ve never modeled. Peavey was showing me as a DJ, just like they’ve shown male DJs on the cover of their catalog. This year I’ve had a lot of my own edits featured on the BPM Supreme record pool. (Definitely check those out!) I feel like that has helped other people, especially DJs, see me as more than a “model DJ,” because when they download my edits there is no image, just my creativity.

**MC:** That’s a great point. Creativity—we should all be judged on that first. Do think most people in our industry look at you as a girl first and a DJ second?

**DJP:** Yes. If you look the part, most people in the industry won’t take you seriously as a DJ until they’ve actually seen you rock a party. Some people will book you because they like the novelty of having a female DJ but don’t really expect you to be as good as the males. Being a girl in this industry can work both ways, sometimes in your favor and sometimes against you.

**MC:** I get that. Do you feel that you get judged more on how you look than how you spin?

**DJP:** Yes and no. I feel like if I don’t look on point, people aren’t interested in booking me enough to even check out my Sound Cloud. After getting these gigs, I also get a lot of shade from people who think I got booked off looks alone. If my sets aren’t on point, I’m getting judged for that too. Sometimes I hear people say that my success was handed to me because of my image, but they don’t realize I had to work just as hard on my image as I had to work on my craft. Growing up I wasn’t good at doing my hair or makeup, so getting into this industry I definitely felt a lot of pressure to learn those things, and just staying fit and eating healthy with my crazy schedule. It’s like when you are a male DJ you are expected to learn how to DJ. When you are a female DJ you are expected to learn how to DJ plus maintain an image that people will want to look at.
MC: Guys do have it easier in that respect. Is this an issue for other female DJs?

DJP: I think it’s a bigger issue in the club industry than the mobile industry, but to a certain extent it happens in both. I network with a lot of female DJs, and I remember one in particular, who can rock almost any crowd, telling me that she started getting more bookings after getting back in shape. This is more of an issue in the clubs than mobile gigs because generally if a bride is booking you for a wedding, she isn’t looking for a female DJ who will steal everyone’s attention. If a school is booking you for a prom, they are more concerned that you are knowledgeable about the music the kids like. If an owner/manager is booking you for their club, they are looking for someone who will attract a crowd, and I think sometimes they feel like booking an attractive female DJ will do that.

MC: Very true. The club scene is a whole different ball game from mobile gigs. What are some examples of bias or barriers you’ve had to overcome in your career?

DJP: I remember one club I wanted to spin at telling me they had a bad experience with a previous female DJ, so they were hesitant to put me on. They were basically lumping all female DJs in the same category. It wasn’t until I won a contest showcasing my skills at this venue that I was offered a gig there. I think a lot of people booking DJs think of females as less experienced even if they don’t come out and say it.

MC: That seems pretty unfair, but I imagine that happens a lot more than we know.

Who inspires you?

DJP: I would say different DJs inspire me in different aspects of our industry. Lately I’ve been really into making my own edits, so one DJ/producer who really stands out to me is Mr. Collipark who does a lot of his own remixes.

MC: Great, now I have “Ms. New Booty” stuck in my head. Do you believe there are double standards in the DJ industry?

DJP: Yes. Wanting female DJs to look on point is a double standard because you see all types of male DJs getting booked, regardless of their looks. Also, I am more of a mashup/blend type DJ than a turntablist. I’ve had people accuse me of spinning prerecorded sets when I don’t use the turntables, but there are plenty of male DJs who also only mix using cues, and no one seems phased by it.

MC: I think you proved to everyone that you can rock it when you mixed at the Peavey DJ takeover in Vegas. How do we as an industry overcome these stereotypes?

DJP: Don’t assume a DJ is less talented just because she’s a girl. If you are booking DJs, don’t look past a female DJ just because she is less attractive. Not every guy you have spinning in your club is super attractive, so don’t hold females to a different standard. Male DJs: Stop criticizing female DJs for using their looks to get ahead. Understand those are expectations society (mostly males) have placed on us, and we sometimes wish we didn’t have that added pressure.

MC: (Guys, please reread that last answer—twice) How has your career impacted your personal life?

DJP: It’s sometimes hard to have a personal life. It’s hard to separate real friends from networking acquaintances. When I do have free time I usually try to disconnect from the club scene. I’m probably not as social as people think. I’m a pretty private person and am careful about leaving certain details off social media. I put a lot of effort into branding myself as DJ PonFetti, but only a few people really know me as Michele.

MC: I totally get that; especially with social media. I don’t know how many DJs I’ve unfriended over the years. What advice do you have for ladies just starting out?

DJP: It’s hard because I want to say just be yourself, kill it in the club, especially to young girls, but sometimes there’s more to it than that. Learn how to market yourself. Don’t rely on your looks alone, but be the best version of yourself. Be creative. Put effort into your craft. Don’t let people’s negative comments get to you. A lot of these come from male DJs who are threatened by a female DJ’s appeal. Also look out for each other. When I’m booked and have a second gig to pass on, I have two female DJs I hit up first. Don’t just look at other female DJs as your competition. There’s enough room in the industry for all of us to be successful, and we can help each other.

Michael Cordeiro is the owner of M.C. Entertainment, a small multi-op in Rhode Island. He has been on TLC’s Four Weddings, hosted an episode of Toddlers & Tiaras and has opened for many celebrities. He has a degree in Entertainment and Event Management from Johnson and Wales University.
It’s no secret that the workforce and the nature of work itself are rapidly changing. Many organizations, particularly large ones, are like an ocean liner that can’t turn on a dime. If an organization is not actively promoting and integrating the following eight elements, that organization is already behind and will experience negative impacts as the workforce shrinks and traditional management practices continue.

The root cause is that traditional management practices and H.R. policies have been created to catch the “bad apple.” Let’s start with the premise that the vast majority of employees are good people—we might even say 95% fall in this category. That leaves the small minority of five-percenters or bad apples. Often this group occupies a much larger percentage of management’s time and attention. To try to rid the organization of these people, penalizing and insulting policies are created that often catch good people in their net. When treated the same as a five-percenter, ninety-five-percenters feel embarrassed and de-valued. What’s worse, they create a bureaucratic system that makes it nearly impossible to get rid of those for whom the policies were created.

The following eight elements are common sense and uncomplicated; the absence of them will seriously hurt organizations in the near future.

1) POSITIVE ASSUMPTIONS ABOUT PEOPLE
Dealing with the five-percent unconsciously taints your assumptions about people. If leaders have spent time dealing with someone who lies, lays out, does the minimum required and tries to get away with as much as possible, that experience can create a distrust and desire to micromanage and control everyone. Evidence of these assumptions is seen when there is restricted access to specific areas for certain groups; doors, cabinets and tool cribs are locked; managers accept performance minimums vs. maximums; information is guarded; and self-management is a distant concept. It becomes irrational for employees to feel like valued adults and in return, the organization receives compliance, a lack of passion and a check the box performance.

Leading with positive assumptions about the quality and integrity of the majority of the workforce promotes pride, passion and accountability.
2) IDENTIFICATION AND ELIMINATION OF NEGATIVES

A negative is defined as “anything that minimizes vs. maximizes a person’s feeling of VALUE to the organization.” Many of these are almost invisible to the people who have the power to eliminate them. Examples include: free water or coffee in some areas and not in others, reserved parking for executives, punitive policies that apply to one group of employees but not another, differences in holiday and vacation schedules, late performance appraisals and wage increases, etc.

Most of these negatives are easy to eliminate. Leaders only need to put themselves in the shoes of their hourly-paid employees to see and feel them—and then get rid of them.

3) MUTUAL TRUST AND RESPECT

Major headway in creating an environment of mutual trust and respect can be achieved by doing the first two elements. And, if a company wants to be able to unlock supplies and equipment and treat people as responsible adults, there must be recognition that there will probably be some theft and deceit until the five-percenters are gone. However, it will be worth it to have created a high trust environment for the rest of the workforce. In addition, create the standard that trust is a required attribute in order to receive a job offer. Clearly communicate trust as a core value and treat any violation of trust as a dischargeable offense.

4) OPEN, TWO-WAY, ADULT-TO-ADULT COMMUNICATION

In essence, share information, be open, and avoid secrets. Speak to everyone at every level as you would a neighbor you like. Remember that people, regardless of the type of work they perform, have the same desire for involvement and respect as managers and senior leaders do.

5) EMPLOYEE ENGAGEMENT

Visionary experts in areas of organizational development predict the end of hierarchies—at least as you know them today. If it can be agreed that the people doing the jobs are the ones who know the jobs the best, why aren’t leaders empowering employees to solve problems and create continuous improvement in every organization?

6) TRAINING

A company’s investment in training reflects its value for people and a clear belief that good people only get better and produce greater results with an investment in their development. Manufacturing companies often have a substantial budget for preventative maintenance on equipment, but limit (or even reduce if revenue is low) the necessary dollars for maintaining each person’s potential capacity.

7) COMPETITIVE WAGES AND BENEFITS

In a high-performance culture, the objective is to make wages and benefits a “non-issue.” If people are challenged, valued and fairly compensated, they are reluctant to take another job for more money. Fairness is perceived and achieved by regularly checking the market value for all jobs and paying competitively (meaning around and often somewhat above the market midpoint), sharing the survey data if someone is interested and being transparent about ranges and the compensation structure. If a company is providing competitive pay and benefits, there shouldn’t be any mystery around this topic.

8) HIGH EXPECTATIONS

Many leaders will admit that they have employees who are only doing the “minimum.” In most traditional companies, job descriptions are specific with regard to the tasks to be performed. Instead, write job profiles that set high expectations for the results versus the tasks involved. And replace that common phrase at the bottom of those descriptions that says, “All other duties as assigned” with “Proactively support the team and company in achieving its objectives.” Now the person who just waits to be told what to do is no longer meeting the minimum.

When leaders don’t set high expectations, they shouldn’t be surprised when average results are achieved. Further, high expectations give people a purpose for their work along especially when their leaders’ believe they will be successful.

START NOW

There are many applications under each of these elements that convert the words to tangible actions and practices. If any of these eight elements is missing within an organization, it’s time to take action.

It’s valuing employees and doing the right thing that leads to exceptional performance. It really isn’t complicated.

Leading with positive assumptions about the quality and integrity of the majority of the workforce promotes pride, passion and accountability.

When leaders don’t set high expectations, they shouldn’t be surprised when average results are achieved.

Sue Bingham, founder of the HPWP Group, is a master coach, speaker, and author of the forthcoming book, Creating The High Performance Work Place: It’s Not Complicated to Develop a Culture of Commitment. At the forefront of the positive business movement, Sue supports leaders as they achieve their vision of success, and designs commonsense systems that make people and organizations more effective. For more info visit www.HPWPGroup.com.
A Tale of Two KS Audio Systems,
Part 2: SAT 3 System

By Arnoldo Offerman

Tightly packed sound systems (like the MICROcSAT system I covered in the last issue) certainly help put the “mobile” in mobile DJ. But if you are looking for a matched system on a larger, louder scale, KS Audio offers the SAT 3.

The SAT 3 has a bigger subwoofer (18”) that kicks out 2000W RMS into the sub and two tops (134db peak / 128 cont) and add another 1000W if you add another passive sub to it. Well, that’s not much louder on paper—what gives?

The throw. This system doesn’t use KS Audio’s innovative coaxial design, but it does use some witchcraft called HDSP. Imagine having four speakers perfectly timed so the back of the room sounds about as loud as the front. In a nutshell, that’s HDSP, but add a -.75° slope in the sound. Place these speakers up high and proudly; no tilt is needed.

This system not only cut through at a prom but also delivered clear and concise audio for speeches and light dancing. It’s LOUD but not overpowering, and distortion is just simply not an option. This is not a “rattle the walls” system, but this subwoofer packs a nice punch that’s hard to get out of other subs.

You may have noticed that I’ve repeatedly mentioned the idea of a “complete system” providing balanced sound. KS Audio has created a collection of such systems, unlike any other brand. These are NOT mix and match components. The SAT 3 is basically a system that you purchase based on your needs, it’s built to order, and you literally plug and play. The amps offer very little beyond a volume knob and bass level control. There is no EQ, crossover, or slope. The system does the work for you. Now, the SAT 3 has a USB port that allows some tweaking, but...why? The system sounds amazing out of the box. To quote Apple: “It just...works.”

Now here’s an experiment for you. Set up your system and crank it up. If you tuned your system right you should hear crisp vocals, nice highs, and punchy lows. Now turn it down to cocktail level. Notice the bass is almost nonexistent? You can somewhat hear it, but it got quieter in a deeper slope than the highs/mids did.

So here’s the KS difference, as I experienced it. Like some kind of voodoo magic the bass was still punchy even at whisper-quiet levels. It was literally like my volume fader brought the volume up evenly for all audio frequencies and not just a few. Plug and play magic.

These are not cheap speakers. These aren’t the loudest speakers nor the most bass-heavy subs. What this is, however, is a system that requires ZERO thought to create an amazing sound. As for customer service, Norbert and his team are perhaps the most dedicated audio individuals ever. He’ll personally walk you through everything if you let him and will leave you feeling like you’re their biggest customer. That’s worth something. A lot, actually.

www.ks-audio.de

Arnoldo Offermann is president of 4SchoolsOnly, a school dance powerhouse in Florida, and an trusted authority on school dances. He has distilled the essence of this success into a popular video series, Master School Dances. Arnoldo is also an industry educator, offering seminars on topics such as marketing, lighting design, video mapping, DMX software, and more. You can check out his YouTube channel at YouTube.com/DJCrossFire and Master School Dances at MasterSchoolDances.com. His latest venture, GearFirst.com, features video product reviews and tutorials.
All Hands on DEX

A QUICK TOUR OF PCDJ’S LATEST: DEX 3.11

By Kevin Freese

After speaking to the folks at PCDJ about the company’s history and their latest developments for the last issue of MB, I was fortunate to also receive the latest release, DEX 3.11, to take it for a spin.

The first thing you’ll probably notice after launching DEX 3.11 is one of many colorful graphic images located center screen, waiting to become reactive when you hit the music. The implementation of computer visualizations known as “shaders” is one of the many new features included in the latest upgrade of PCDJ-Digital 1 Audio’s DEX DJ software program. Pre-loaded with nearly 10 shaders, you can choose from visualizations such as the groovy “dancing stick figures” or the minimalist “simple audio bar.” There’s also the “twitchy fractal” shader that will make your guests feel as though they are entering hyperspace when you touch them. Luckily, the basic components of DEX 3.11 are easy to use. Within minutes of downloading the software I was up and running. My music library was quickly integrated into the program, and I was soon searching for tracks to drag and drop onto one of its four decks. While I think many DJs will enjoy using the four-deck feature, I gravitated towards the two-deck option. Like this choice of deck configurations, many of the features in DEX are customizable.

Excited to try out the system, I found myself quickly mixing through songs that I had selected. At the same time, I enjoyed building a sidelist of tracks that I could play later or incorporate into an automix. The wide-array of FX features -- looping, autopan, echo, and more -- soon added to the experience.

While many of the features are not unfamiliar in DJ software, the format of DEX 3.11 makes them stand out because of the way they are designed and organized. And for those DJs more studious than I, PCDJ has an expansive network of support for its users including in-program assistance, online tutorials, and live customer support. With all the help they offer, it is quite evident that PCDJ is invested in knowing that you understand the software.

Regarding other new features that are part of DEX 3.11, I believe my karaoke hosting friends will enjoy a lot of what the software has to offer. You can now better manage your singer rotation list by storing singer/song history. It is also possible to apply key to a singer’s performance and store that key change in the singer’s history. For those seeking the latest in karaoke releases, DEX 3.11 continues to support the Party Tyme Karaoke subscription service.

Given the popularity of Party Tyme, users of the DEX software will be happy to know that Digital 1 Audio is exploring potential partners to offer a commercially legal in-app music subscription for DEX 3. The company hopes to have something later this year or in early 2019. Any partner offering a music subscription will use a DJ-centric platform that’s legal for live performance.

Speaking of the future, it’s important to know that all core upgrades to the DEX software are available at no additional cost to users. Along with free upgrades for life, users can install DEX on up to three computers, including Mac and PC. Also of note, PCDJ writes all of their own code instead of using third-party programmers for their current products. This allows DEX 3 and future upgrades to be highly self-contained, while offering continuity between platforms such as Mac, Windows, and IOS.

Ultimately, DEX 3.11 fits the bill if you are looking for a reliable, all-in-one, live performance software program. Compatible with over 90 controllers, it is software that’s ready to fit into virtually any setup. I was happy to find the system easy to use to the point that I’d feel comfortable walking into a gig with it in short order, and confident that I will be able to hone my DJ skills with it in the future, as I explore more of what DEX has to offer.

The suggested retail price of DEX 3.11 is $179, but it is available for a limited time at pcdj.com for $149. A free trial is also available on the website.

www.pcdj.com
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