

**Title:**

4 Secrets To Becoming A Guest On Top Tv Talk Shows

**Word Count:**

856

**Summary:**

The phone rings. You hear an authoritative voice say, \*Hello, I'm the producer of...Good Morning America or Oprah, or Larry King Live\* or any other top talk show, you name it. This is your big moment, the break you've been waiting for. After you catch your breath what do you do?

Producers make an instant assessment of you in thirty seconds--or less. When you get that coveted call from a producer, you aren't just \*talking\* to him: you're auditioning. You are being screened...

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**Article Body:**

The phone rings. You hear an authoritative voice say, \*Hello, I'm the producer of...Good Morning America or Oprah, or Larry King Live\* or any other top talk show, you name it. This is your big moment, the break you've been waiting for. After you catch your breath what do you do?

Producers make an instant assessment of you in thirty seconds--or less. When you get that coveted call from a producer, you aren't just \*talking\* to him: you're auditioning. You are being screened to be accepted or eliminated as a guest on their show. How can you pass the audition?

**Secret #1: Ask Before You Speak**

Before you even open your mouth to start pitching yourself and your story to the producer, ask them a simple question: \*Can you tell me a little bit about the kind of show you envision?\* In other words, ask the producer the angle he is planning to take.

Doing so has two advantages. First, it gives you a moment to overcome the shock and to collect your thoughts.

Second, once you hear the producer's reply, you can gear your pitch to the type

of information he's seeking. Listen closely to the angle that he's interested in and tailor your points to it. Publicists often use this technique to get their clients booked on shows. They \*get\* before they \*give\* - so they are in a good position to tell only the most pertinent information about their client.

## Secret #2: Wow the Producers with Brevity

Follow the advice of jazz musician Dizzy Gillespie: \*It's not how much you play. It's how much you leave out.\* Keep your list of talking points by the phone when you call a producer (or a producer calls you), so you'll be succinct. You will already have rehearsed your points so that they'll sound natural and inviting. Be prepared with several different angles or pitches, different ways to slant your information. \*Nobody gets on these shows without a pre-interview,\* says publicist Leslie Rossman. \*Be a great interview but don't worry about the product you want to sell them because if you're a great guest and you make great TV, they'll want you.\*

And keep in mind the words of Robert Frost: \*Half the world is composed of people who have something to say and can't, and the other half who have nothing to say and keep on saying it.\*

## Secret #3: Prove You're Not a Nutcase

If you are a nutcase on the air, the producer will lose their job. What constitutes a nutcase? You may think it's a positive trait to be enthusiastic (and it is), but anyone who is overly zealous about his passion is considered a nut. Best-selling author and screenwriter Richard Price talks about this phenomenon as \*The dangerous thrill of goodness.\* He says, \*What happens is you can get very excited by your own power to do good.\* Don't get carried away by this thrill.

One way to tell if you're being too zealous is that you're hammering your point at top speed with the energy of a locomotive pulling that toot lever non-stop. I remember a man calling me up about how he was single-handedly taking on Starbucks - who, he felt, had done him wrong. He wanted me to promote his cause. While this could have been a great David versus Goliath type story, he was long on emotion and short on facts. Some statistics or figures would have tempered his mania.

But he also never checked in with me to see if he had my interest. By talking loudly and barely pausing for a breath, he appeared to be a man who wouldn't take direction well. His single-mindedness was off-putting, not engaging.

When you're talking to a producer speak for 30 seconds or so and then check in

by asking, \*Is this the kind of information you're looking for?\* Listen for other verbal cues, such as encouraging grunts, or \*uh huhs.\*

Secret #4: Can You Mark \*The Big Point?\*

Contributors to the popular radio show \*This American Life,\* hosted by Ira Glass, have taken to calling the wrap-up epiphany at the end of a story, \*The Big Point.\* This is the moment that the narrator gives his perspective on the story in an attempt to elevate it from the mundane to the universal.

Another radio personality, Garrison Keillor, is a master at it. He tells long, rambling stories (not good advice for you), then ties up all the story strands in a coherent and satisfying way. As a great guest, you want to illuminate your story with a big standout point that helps the audience see the significance of your story in their world and the world at large. Rather than hitting them over the head with a two-by-four, you want to share your insights with a feather-like touch. By framing your story you alert the producer to the fact that you're a thinker and can contribute great insights and clarity to a story thus increasing its appeal.