

It's Not About You **By Joe Bunn for Disc Jockey News**

It's not easy to find great DJs to work for your company. I've interviewed possibly hundreds over the years and only kept a handful. The good news is that, for the most part, I've kept the great ones for many, many years. I have DJs on staff with me that have been there for 12+ years! They are well paid which makes them very loyal soldiers to Bunn DJ Company. One thing that we do differently from a lot of other DJ companies is that we only hire experienced DJs. I don't care if they were working in a skating rink, on the radio, or doing weddings. If you're good, I want you on my team.

Once they go through an interview and I decide I like them, then I send them out to shadow some of my veterans. After that, they go out with me for shadowing. So now they have seen exactly how I like Bunn DJs to operate. However, I still don't turn them loose yet to do shows for my company. Why? Because they still aren't ready, regardless of how many years of experience they have under their belts. The next phase of training is a full day session at our office or a local hotel. I have them set up their complete DJ rig and run through everything from a mock introduction to how they do the bouquet and garter tosses. In addition, at that training, we go through how we sell our services, discuss playlists, turning in paperwork, and much more.

So now you see a little behind the scenes of how we work at Bunn DJ Company. Now on to the point of this article and why it's titled "It's Not About You". Over the years, I've hired DJs from all types of backgrounds with all sorts of personalities. Many times when they come in for that first interview, they'll mention something like "I specialize in country music" or "I used to DJ swing music clubs in the 90s" and I say, "I don't care...you play what the client or crowd wants to hear".

Let's be real here for a minute. Do you ride around in your car and crank "Brick House", "We Are Family", and "Cha Cha Slide"? I doubt it. However, do you play them most weekends at events? Probably. I know that I do. I don't spin any of my favorite bands and artists at shows. It just wouldn't work. What I love and listen to in my car, on runs, and in my headphones on trips just doesn't rock a packed dance floor.

The bottom line is that we are mobile DJs. We are a service business. If you think you're an "artist", then doing weddings and private events might not be for you. You may want to look for a club residency and pray that the club owner lets you do whatever you want (highly doubtful). I've had DJs on staff in the past that simply didn't get this concept. They wanted to play the songs that they liked, and didn't want to play to the crowd. Guess how long they lasted? Buh Bye.

At the end of an event, I base my success off how many people were on the dance floor! Did I have half or more up all night from the minute the dance floor opened until the last song? That's a successful party to me. How did I get them up and keep them there? By playing to the audience, reading the crowd, sticking to the playlist

that the couple or client created. It's not rocket science, but it does take experience to get to the point where you know what song to pull next. I don't play chess but I compare DJing to it often. I'm always thinking two to three songs ahead about what I'm going to play next.

As I mentioned before, I hire experienced DJs and then mold them into Bunn DJs. That means that they do have some sort of idea of how to read a crowd. If you hire inexperienced DJs, it can still work, but you just need to train them the right way. Explain from day one that it's about playing to the crowd, and that the job is not about their personal musical tastes. In addition, you can work with them to show them what songs work well together. One of my favorite games we play at our monthly DJ meeting is something that I stole from Mike Walter. I have written most of the DJ Event Planner Top 200 songs on the backs of Jenga blocks (yes, that stacking game). I ask my DJs to group them into groups of five or six songs that would work well together. It's fun, interactive, and it gets their wheels spinning about seeing how other DJs do sets that they may have never thought about!

Whether you have a team full of veterans or a squad full of "newbies", just remember to train them well before you throw them to the wolves and Lesson 1 should always be play to your crowd, not yourself!

*****NEW BYLINE*****

Joe Bunn is the owner of Bunn DJ Company in Raleigh, NC. He is available for consulting and speaking engagements. His DVD "Marketing the Music" is now available at www.djjoebunn.com.