

When and How to Grow
By Joe Bunn
for Disc Jockey News

Potential clients keep calling and emailing you asking if June 11th is available. You are personally booked, as are the three other DJs that you have on staff. You have to pass. How bad is that feeling? You're leaving money on the table, and even worse, that person might end up with the wrong DJ and have their entire event ruined. Not having enough staff members is a problem that many DJ company owners I know have. Heck, sometimes even I don't have enough DJs! In this article, I will address growing and how to go about it the right way.

I'm writing this article in May. If someone were really calling me for a popular wedding date in June, I couldn't hire someone and have them ready by June. There's no way. Even if they are an experienced DJ (which I pretty much only hire, sorry Mike Walter), they still wouldn't fit the "Bunn mold" for the summer show season. Maybe for a corporate event or a graduation party, but not the big dog weddings we do. I would estimate that it takes about 3-4 months minimum for someone that has DJ experience to fit into our standards and be "wedding ready". We do in-office trainings and they go on countless "shadow" gigs following myself and other DJs around to different shows, then they do the easy gigs, then they eventually graduate to a wedding (which usually book 6-12 months in advance) so they still have more time to get even better.

I'm often asked "Joe, when do I know if I have enough DJs?" The answer is NEVER! You should always be looking for more talent to expand your roster. There are several approaches to take when trying to find talent:

Craigslist. Believe it or not, I have some of my best and longest employed DJs with me now that came to me from a Craigslist ad that I post from time to time. As I mentioned before, we hire experienced DJs here so the ad asks a few key questions:

- Have you ever DJ'd a wedding?
- Do you have your own equipment?
- Do you have a great music library?
- Do you have reliable transportation?

If I can get a YES for each of these, then I'll get them on the phone for an interview. If that goes well, then they will sit down with myself and one other veteran DJ for a face to face interview. I'm not going to lie, I've been through 50 before to get 2, but that's the way it goes if you want the best of the best.

Website. Depending on how many inquiries you want to get, it's important to leave a permanent "Now Hiring" link on your site. It can direct to a text block that says something like "We are seeking the best of the best DJs in the XXXX area. If you would like to be considered for employment, please fill out this contact page or

contact us at this email address”. Again, then get them on the phone or in person for the real interview.

Hit the Streets. Sometimes there are DJs in your area that are either single-op or maybe just club DJs. These guys are free agents in my eyes. Go out, see them DJ, check out their appearance, listen to their mixes and ask yourself, “Could this guy work for my company?” If the answer is yes, tell him/her you love their set, quickly swap cards, and then follow up with them on Monday to arrange a lunch or coffee meeting to talk more (outside of the club/blaring music environment). Many of these folks want to fill their calendars and with the amount of leads you’re getting, you could do that for them! Side bar-I don’t try to pilfer talent from other local DJ companies.

Network. Sometimes, like I said, you just have to pass on a gig. You don’t have the gear or the guys to do it. It stinks, but at least try to give the caller a company or two to call that you trust will do a good job. The only way to do that is to get out and meet with other DJ company owners. I have met great friends in the local DJ business by joining organizations like NACE or ILEA (formerly ISES). I also started a local DJ group years ago that led to some amazing connections. Trust me, the next time they get overbooked, they’re going to be calling you because you sent them that June 11th wedding we talked about earlier.

As a multi-op owner, finding talent will always be one of your biggest battles, but once you reach a certain level, DJs will find YOU! They will want to work for you, especially if you live in a region that everyone wants to move to. Luckily for me, Raleigh tops those “Cities to Move To” lists every year so we get a nice influx of folks from all over. That’s good for business (more events), but also good for hiring (more DJs leaving the cold weather cities for the beautiful South)! I hope this article helps and reach out to me if you want a list of some of the interview questions we ask. I’ll be glad to send you a PDF. Happy Hiring!