

D3

TV hosts with the most

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Sometime back, a number of TV people were polled on the outstanding attributes and skills a program host should have to do well in the demanding job.

The move was well-intentioned, because competent hosting is a key component of good TV production. But, the replies were full of unhelpful motherhood, fatherhood and "blatherhood" statements.

Even more ironically, some of the "experienced experts" who were consulted were less than competent and creative TV show hosts *themselves!* So, where's the *beef?*

Fact is, outstanding or even just plain proficient TV hosting is more the *exception* than the operative rule in these parts.

Since TV producers want as much "star value" as possible to boost their shows' appeal and viewership, they try to transform star actors or singers into program hosts overnight—with predictably and lamentably *insufficient* and sometimes even risible results.

Challenge

They convince the stars they want to hire that all they need to make the grade is to be able to read scripted spiels in a "lively

and exciting" way, and to feel upbeat and gung-ho about their show's offerings for the day or week.

Believing that the challenge is as easy as pie and a breeze to pull off, the new "star-hosts" come off as "TH," awkward and overly jerky and loud—but, it's too late for them to back out.

Or, in the case of some cooking shows, the "damage-con-

trol" people step in and try to solve the problem of good cooks who can't talk well—by adding a more voluble and "colorful" comedian, usually a "B" talent, to make the program at least more loquaciously eventful.

But, this often *complicates* the problem, because many comedians don't know how to co-host a TV show well *either*—so the sorry situation goes—from the frying pan into the fire! Uh, any *other* ideas?

Instead of fiddling around with insufficient and half-baked measures, TV producers should realize that the use of "star-hosts" is *not* the way to go, because, in many cases, their potential to do competent work is *limited*. It's *not* what they've been trained for and what they're best at, OK?

More capable

But, if the producers *insist* on "star value" at all cost, then they have to look for stars who are more capable of *ad-libbing* in an interesting and entertaining way.

If they can't find such natural talents, they have to *develop* them, with monthslong workshops that require the stars to ad-lib their spontaneous view-

on a wide range of topics.

After training, say, five such stars, producers can go with the best of the lot, with better chances of success. Going the "scripted spiels" route is *not* the way to do it.

Finally, producers should also train star-hosts to interestingly and *interestedly* interview their guests for the day or week.

That's right, the key is for the host to be genuinely *interested* in his guest, and know how to bring out his thoughts and feelings so viewers are attracted, charmed and affected.

This can be an art form in itself, so nobody should think it's a sure thing, even after a lot of training.

But, *realizing* how tough it is is the *first* step in eventually producing—the TV host with the most! INQ

*TELEVISION