



dear john

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## With so many new opportunities for TV presenters online and elsewhere, what are the key dos and don'ts for success?

Whether or not they are critically acclaimed, there is no doubt that every new TV talent show is guaranteed to get would-be singers and dancers thinking about the possibilities for making their own screen debut.

But what must be even more exciting for aspiring TV presenters is to see the growing number of supplementary programmes both on air and online that now seem to be as vital a part of the multimedia packages as the prime-time shows themselves.

The reality of all these fresh opportunities for

presenting becoming available is that there has been an equivalent upsurge in presenters hoping to break into the industry, ranging from young people who are new to any branch of performance to established names from performing or other fields aiming to add another string to their bow.

To give some tips on how to get seen in the midst of all the applicants, so that you might eventually get the chance to be seen on camera, here are two guests who have a great deal of experience from both sides of the studio floor.

*what the experts say...*

### Michelle Watt

Michelle is an experienced TV presenter, having hosted and co-hosted many lifestyle and light entertainment programmes, including ITV's 60 Minute Makeover, STV's New Year Show, STV's Appeal show with Lorraine Kelly, STV's live, daily chat show The Hour, STV's dating series Club Cupid, BBC's National Lottery Daily Play, and Sky's property series Around The World.

"I've worked in television for a number of years now and have found that it's very important to be mindful of the two Ps – persistence and pestering. But be careful, as there is a very fine line between the two. Of course, it's important to show eagerness and persistence when you go after your dream job. However, the second you become an overzealous pest to a producer, you can wave your opportunity goodbye.

"The good news is, there are ways to show keenness with an understated, more subtle approach. My key advice here is: do your research. Don't turn up unprepared and hope that your fly by the seat of your pants approach will get you through. The truth is, it won't.

"Knowledge is power. If you research who it is you are meeting or what the job is all about, you will feel more relaxed and the conversation will flow, allowing you to shine and show your full potential. A producer needs to feel comfortable in your company before he or she believes that the viewers will.

"I remember chatting to a producer at Endermol, who told me that the reason he fell in love with Fearnie Cotton's demeanour back when she was starting out in the industry was because, although she was different and edgy, she was comfortable being different, so people automatically felt



at ease in her company. So don't be afraid to own your identity as opposed to trying to conform to what you think producers are looking for."

### Glenn Kinsey

Glenn Kinsey heads up The Positiv Group which has been providing coaching, courses and showreels for both new and experienced TV presenters. As well as being regularly engaged by producers to 'up the game' of big-name presenters and celebrities, a large proportion of the presenters and media stars currently on TV screens first unleashed their talents courtesy of Glenn's training.

"While onscreen talent might keep you there, it won't necessarily get you there. In other words, particularly when you're starting out, the difference between success and failure is often the ability to put yourself in the right place at the right time

"This means you need to understand the industry and how it works, learn who makes the type of programmes that suit your style or brand and get to know them. Your big break typically rests on the decision of a single individual – find that person.

"Target yourself correctly. There is little point in going for a job as a sports presenter, for example, if you are not passionate and knowledgeable about sport. Or searching out a job fronting a youth-orientated music programme if you have scant knowledge of youth culture and are twice the age of your target audience.

"A great showreel might get you the audition but it won't get you the job. You've got to be able to pull it off in the screen test. This means that technically as well as creatively, you need to be on the ball – different jobs demand different technical skills, from talking to time to reading autocue, dealing with talkback to delivering strong interviews. This is where a good specialist training course can help.

"Don't perform, be yourself. This is where actors in particular often struggle, typically trying too hard and playing the part of a presenter rather than just letting it flow. The current trend is for presenters that



connect with their audience, just feel right and deliver with an effortless authenticity. The ad-lib nature and style of most presenting jobs mean that too much performance equals a lack of consistent believability. Audiences want to feel they're seeing all facets of your personality, not a polished portrayal of a stylised presenter."

*dear john sums up...*

Reflecting on Michelle's very useful summing up of the two Ps of presenting, I am tempted to add a third – perspective, which I think is a common theme in both her own and Glenn's contributions.

Specifically, I was reminded that while the plethora of new technology and platforms that make it possible for presenters to get on the air quicker and more easily than ever before may have expanded dramatically, it would be easy to assume that being able to perform well via this new technology would have become equally effortless.

In fact, one thing that has not changed since the days of live broadcasts from Ally Pally is that there is still nothing quick or easy about the preparation needed to ensure that when you do get on the air, by whatever means, it will be with something worth watching.

Something else that hasn't changed, and which applies just as much to live performing as it does to working on camera, is that the degree to which someone manages to be himself or herself is usually not the result of winging it but of putting in all of the hard work we have already discussed.

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