



your **MOBILE
DISCO
BUSINESS**

Foreword

Over the last four years we have been helping and advising mobile DJs on ways to promote and develop their mobile disco business. After numerous requests, we have collated this information and added some new ideas into one complete book.

We sincerely believe that the advice contained in this book will benefit mobile DJs everywhere; from those just starting out through to the veterans who are still keen to learn. It includes many gems of information which will either add something new to your business and performance or reinforce your current practices.

The Alliance of Mobile & Party DJs (AMPdj) actively supports four charities and we are delighted to announce that all profits from the sale of this book will be shared between them.



Three members of AMPdj are guide dog users. We have first-hand experience of the invaluable service that Guide Dogs provides.



Offering help, support and information to enable those suffering from diabetes to lead a full and active life.

fundraising in aid of



A number of members, or their families, are affected by multiple sclerosis and are helped by the MS Society.



This is a charity close to the hearts of many DJs as hearing loss or tinnitus are occupational hazards.

Acknowledgements

A special thanks to the following for their contributions to this book:

Andy Lovell, Steve St John, Ian Holmes, Jim Duncan, Naineesh Patel, Mal Williams, Mike Newell, Nicki Elworthy, Dale Watts, Aidan Dougan

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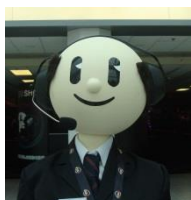
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Introduction

About the Authors

DJ Hank



Superstar and iconic figure, DJ Hank, is a legend in his own lifetime (or should that be leg end in his own lunch box). He has starred in over 20 short videos 'The Trials & Tribulations of a Mobile DJ' and he writes regularly for 'Pro Mobile' magazine. As the mascot of AMPdj he has a lot of responsibility to get it right on the night – something he does manage from time to time.

Paul Smith

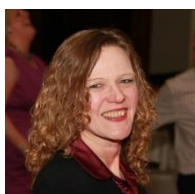


Paul started his DJ career at the tender age of 13 and is still entertaining guests some 40 years later. In 2008 readers of a bridal magazine voted Paul 'Best Wedding Entertainer of the Year', the first time a DJ had beaten a wedding band for this coveted award.

In 2007 he founded the Wedding DJ Association (later to become the Wedding DJ Alliance) and two years later, in partnership with Sandy, they launched the Alliance of Mobile & Party DJs (AMPdj). This has grown to become the largest dedicated organisation for mobile DJs in the UK.

Paul has written many articles for both 'Television' and 'Pro Mobile' magazines and has been featured in numerous other publications over the years.

Sandy Sounds



Sandy has an established background in music, education and marketing; skills that she has used to help 100s of mobile DJs with their own businesses. She is also an accomplished entertainer and is in demand as a mobile DJ on the wedding circuit.

Over the last few years Sandy has travelled to many countries, including New Zealand and America where she has attended seminars and training courses on DJing and marketing.

Sandy has written numerous articles and web site copy relating to all aspects of being a mobile DJ, from the business side through to performance and equipment; many of these have been included in this book.

Section 1

Your DJ Business

If your mobile disco earns you money, then it is a business. In this section we look at business related issues from stationery to image.

Chapter 1.1 - Your Business Image

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Chapter 1.1

Your Business Image

Mobile DJing is great fun and sometimes it can be hard for other people to look on it as a serious business. However, as many DJs around the country can testify, it is possible to make a living from it as a full-time jock or to supplement another wage (quite well) by working part-time. Even if you are currently a hobbyist, you may at some point want to earn money from your hobby and that's when you need to consider the business side of things. One aspect of this is your business image.

When thinking about your image, firstly consider what your target market is and who you want to appeal to. If your area of expertise is 18th/21st birthday parties and club type events, your image would need to be modern and up-to-date to fit. On the other hand, bright, jazzy colours with a figure spinning vinyl isn't the best choice of design if your target market is corporate and black tie dinner dances. To appeal more to the wedding market, you will need to be 'bride' friendly and have a business image that attracts the fairer sex!



Ideally, your stationery, logo, website and business cards need to be in the same colours with a uniform design, giving your company a recognisable identity. Consider use of colours carefully. A black background with use of bright colours tends to portray a party or club DJ. Someone who specialises in weddings would need to look at more neutral colours that would attract a potential bride. To appeal to the corporate market, a more formal look with a white background may be more appropriate.

When choosing your disco name there are many things to consider. Firstly, a clever play on words can seem fun at the time, but you may have to spell it whenever you tell someone - examples are Soundz, Danse, & Discoz. Secondly, it is likely that you will have a website incorporating your disco name in the URL, which will help with on-line searches. For example, www.fred-bloggs-mobile-disco.co.uk, not only tells everybody who you are but could be



picked up on searches for Fred Bloggs and Mobile Disco. More information on choosing web site addresses can be found in [Error! Reference source not found.](#)

Logos



The most effective logos are often simple. Again, when thinking about your logo, bear in mind your target market. Not all of us can spot a winning design, but you can access a whole host of forums and self-help sites about logos on the internet. There are also companies who will design one for you. When you've settled on the artwork, show it around first and ask for honest opinions.

Business Cards

They are a very important part of your identity and affect how potential clients perceive you. It's a small space that needs using wisely. Designing and getting the most out of your business cards is covered in more detail in [Error! Reference source not found.](#)



Website

Consider using a similar colour scheme on your website as you do on all your other material. A simple, clean design can often come over as much more professional than a lot of bells and whistles. From a client's point of view, you become easily recognised from your branding. For more detailed advice see [Error! Reference source not found.](#)

Stationery



Headed paper and booking forms with your logo convey professionalism. Also consider sending emails using the same design as your headed paper. Utilising your website banner at the top of your headed paper and placing your contact details at the bottom of the page works very well. By having your stationery printed professionally, you can have the design right to the edge. If you'd

rather not go to this expense, or you feel you don't have the need to use headed paper more than a couple of times a week, you can set up the layout as a template on your computer, bearing in mind many home computers are unable to print to the edge of the page.

Printing

Business printing need not break the bank. Many companies do 'offers' based on the quantity order; the higher the amount, the lower the cost is per sheet/card.

There are a number of factors to consider when preparing your business material for print so that the end result is exactly how you'd intended.

- Quality or thickness of paper/card.
- If you want your artwork to go right to the edge, make the design bigger than needed. This is called 'the bleed'.
- Allow an imaginary margin round the edge to ensure your writing or logo isn't chopped off by mistake or too close to the edge when trimmed.
- Monitor colours (RGB) are different to print colours (CMYK). Many photo editing programs are able to convert from one to the other.
- Images and photos should be print quality. Pictures taken from websites tend to be low quality to help with speed of loading. An image should have a minimum of 300 dpi (dots per inch).

Always refer to the print company's guidelines on exact measurements for bleeds and the file format they require the design (artwork) sent to them.

Phone and Email

It's not just your material things that need to portray business professionalism and instil confidence in your potential clients, but also the way you respond to them by email and telephone. A child answering the call on your behalf, or you answering with 'Yes?' could be off-putting. You may use your family phone for business too and, if this is the case, consider having a standard reply using your name; your friends and family will soon get used to it. Answering enquiries by both phone and email are covered in greater detail in [Error! Reference source not found.](#)

Avoid replying to emails with a one-line quick note (especially enquiries). Replying formerly and in a friendly manner during each step of the process assists with building confidence and helps to create a positive perception of you and your company. [Error! Reference source not found.](#) offers guidance on replying to enquiries.

Not only do first impressions count but they last a long time too.

Chapter 1.2

Does Your DJ Service Have Unique Value?

'If your mobile DJ service has no unique value, you will be selling on price alone'

For every commodity or service there will be a variety of prices and, in some cases, a massive range from dirt cheap to reassuringly expensive. The mobile disco industry is no different.

Perceived Value

So why doesn't everyone choose the cheapest in all cases? For example, everyone knows that Lidl and Aldi are possibly the cheapest grocery shops, but why do some people still shop in Tesco or Waitrose? A favourite phrase is, 'it's too cheap to be any good'. People are often wary of going for the cheapest and will pay a little more for a similar product; hence perceived value.



When we, as DJs, are pricing our disco service we need to bear in mind 'perceived value'. There will be clients who may look at the cheapest quote and dismiss it as 'too cheap'. If quoting the lowest price still doesn't secure the booking, we need to look at other aspects of our service that could persuade a client to choose us.

What's Special About You?

Clients often start a conversation with you by asking what you charge. Many have never booked a DJ before and often enquire about price first, not because it's the most important thing to them, but because they don't know what else to ask. To secure the booking it's important that the client is aware of your service, what you offer, and most importantly, how you can make their function memorable.



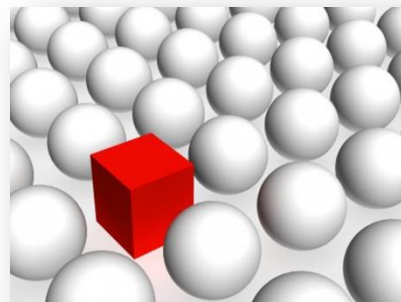
As DJs we are very fond of our equipment and it is extremely tempting to tell a client about our latest sound system or lighting effect. Whilst a fellow DJ would be hugely impressed, a potential client wants to know how you'll get people dancing and enjoying themselves. They need convincing that you are reliable and easy to contact and that you'll play the music all their guests will appreciate.

The other way to look at it is why do some people choose a more expensive item such as a television or washing machine, over a cheaper one? It is often because the benefits of the dearer item are explained to the customer and this convinces them it is the better option for satisfying their needs. We can do the same with our disco business. When replying to a client enquiry, be sure to sell yourself in respect of the service you offer and the benefits.

It is very tempting, while trying to bestow the reasons for booking you, to talk negatively about what disasters could occur and that, by choosing you, you'd ensure this didn't happen. This negative type of marketing could be counterproductive so it is important to talk about the positive benefits that you could bring to their function.

USP

Your unique selling point could be that one small part of your service that makes you stand out from everyone else and secures the booking. You're probably thinking, 'I'm a good DJ and that's it'. Think back to previous functions where the client has congratulated you at the end of the evening or sent you a letter of thanks after the event. Look for any compliments. These may include playing the guests' requests, interaction with the guests, thoughtfulness to their needs and wishes, creating a fun atmosphere, etc. Take these compliments and use them as your USP when answering enquiries.



Other things that could help you stand out from the crowd are hidden talents such as being a musician or singer, specialising in a type of music, familiarity with dance styles such as Ceroc or Ceilidh, being able to offer magic or providing children's entertainment alongside the disco.

In summary, the price should be the last thing you quote. Ensure your client knows what your USPs are, and the unique professional service you provide.

For a more in-depth look at replying to enquiries, see [Error! Reference source not found.](#) . Guidelines for pricing your mobile disco business are in the next chapter.

Chapter 1.3

Pricing Your Mobile Disco Service

The subject of how much to charge for your service is one that always results in different points of view. How can one DJ charge £450 whilst another only earns £150 for a similar event?

There are a number of factors that can affect price, not least supply and demand.

Supply

Get to know your 'competitors'. This has been placed within inverted commas because, although they are in competition with you for business, they can also be your allies by passing work your way and vice versa. There are some DJs who prefer to go-it-alone and find out what their rivals are charging by making fake enquiries; this is a practice that is not recommended. It is far better to get to know them and then simply ask!

So now that you know how much other discos in your area are charging, why not just undercut them and take their work? Before doing so, however, take into account that we're in a service industry and most people relate cost to quality. Of course there are those clients who always want the cheapest of everything and if you want to provide for this sector (nothing wrong with that), keep your prices at rock bottom. If not, then you need to charge more, and offer a service that reflects this extra cost, because one thing that doesn't work well is trying to be all things to all people.

Demand

The next item to look at is close by you right now; your diary. How many enquiries are you receiving? How many of these translate into confirmed bookings? If it's close to 100% then you could consider raising your prices and, if it's as low as 10 - 15% you may be attempting to charge too much. The term 'may' has been used because those who target the very top end of the market, which is relatively small, don't require a high conversion rate.



Next, how many times are you out each month? How many gigs would you like to do? You may want more, or less, depending on your circumstances. Of course there

are many factors that will affect the number of enquiries you receive such as how you promote your business, referrals and advertising. These are covered in-depth in the following chapters.

Another way your diary can come in useful is to ascertain how many enquiries you have to turn down for a date after it is booked. Most businesses have peaks and troughs during the year and you cannot expect to be as busy in January as you are in August or December. However, if demand is sufficient to increase your prices, you could then consider offering a discount for off-peak periods.

How Much to Charge



It's always a good idea to periodically take a long look at your business and also plan for the next 12, 24 & 36 months ahead. Pricing should be included in this. Only you can decide how much to charge for any individual event based on your own level of expertise, supply, demand and your clients' requirements, but included below is one method which may help ...

The Price Formula

Add up the number of bookings you did last year (A) and also all your expenses (B). Include CDs, repairs, vehicle costs, insurance (include PLI!), ProDub, advertising, roadie and equipment purchased. If you spend roughly the same amount on new equipment each year include the total figure, otherwise use a percentage of this figure (33-50%) and include the same percentage in next years' calculations. Divide the total of all your expenses (B) by the number of gigs you did (A) and you have your starting point (C).

Next, you need to decide how much you would like to earn per hour (remember this bit is taxable). Take into account not just the disco hours but client meetings, preparing for the event, travel, set-up times, waiting around etc.

Add this to your expenses (C) and you'll have a good indication of what you should be charging to make your disco financially worthwhile.



Examples

Total gigs 2012 (A) = 100

Total expenses for 2012 (B) = £5000

Total expenses per gig (C) = £50

Say you require £15 per hour (about £10.50 after tax and NI deductions - assuming you've used up your tax allowance)

5 hour disco, 2 hours prep, 1 hour travel, 1 hour set-up/breakdown, 1 hour waiting time = 10 hours

10 hours x £15 = £150 + £50 (C) expenses gives a total of £200. With your earnings coming to about £105 net.

A more realistic figure may be £25 per hour (£17.50 after deductions). A total of £250 with your earnings totalling £175 net.

If you want £40 per hour (£28 after deductions) the total is £400 from which would earn you £280 net.

Of course you could charge a different hourly rate for travel etc. and another for DJing but, whatever system you choose, as long as you're earning the amount you want and you've taken into account supply and demand for your area, you should end up with enough work at a price to suit both you and your customers.

Conclusion

There will be some readers who are of the opinion that they could never earn more than they do at present. There are others who are charging the same now as they did ten years ago because they believe that their business would suffer if they dared to raise prices. If you're content with the way things are that's fine; if not, review your pricing structures now. By this time next year you may be pleasantly surprised with the outcome.

Chapter 1.4

Payment for Your Service

To avoid any problems with payment for your disco service, it's best to have a clear strategy for dealing with the money side of your business.

Deposit/Booking Fee

Whether you call it a deposit or booking fee, it's advisable to have one! The proportion of the full price is a personal preference. Some DJs ask for 20%, whereas others ask for 50%. Alternatively, you could opt for a set amount such as £50.

A deposit confirms your commitment to the event, and also that of the client. By taking a deposit, you are less likely to be in a situation whereby the client changes their mind and cancels at the last minute or double books you. People tend to remember when they have parted with hard cash!

Make it clear to the client that the deposit/booking fee is non-refundable. If you have had an expense such as a meeting with the client or checking out the venue, then you will not be out of pocket if they subsequently cancel the event.

The Final Balance

There are two schools of thought on when to take the balance payment.

The first is payment at the event. It is prudent to only accept cash on the night as cheques can take several days to clear into your account. If it bounces after the event, you have the problem of chasing the client. Always insist on monies being paid at the start of the night, not at the end. It is worth, when chatting to the client beforehand, to ask who will be holding the money so that you will know who to approach. If your fee isn't paid before guests arrive, be prepared not to start the evening. After all, no one else works for nothing.

The second option is to take payment a few weeks before the event. Many clients, especially brides, prefer having all suppliers paid in full before the day, rather than having to carry a large quantity of cash on them. It also allows clients to pay using a variety of methods such as bank transfer, cheque, PayPal, credit card or cash. It also means that you can arrive at the venue with your 'DJ head' on, rather than your business one.

Payment Terms

Whichever method you adopt, make your terms of payment clear on your contract/booking form and also in your terms and conditions. Bear in mind that, if you work regularly for a hotel or agent, they may have their own terms. This is often 30 days from the date of the function.

Not Been Paid?

If you opt for payment on the night or you work for an agent that pays after the event, there is always a possibility of non-payment. It's very important that all your paperwork is in order; it might be needed at a later date. Ensure you have a copy of the signed contract and that it clearly displays the fee and your payment terms. Always use mail or email, never phone, so that you have a record of the correspondence between you.

Firstly, send a letter giving clear guidelines as to how you expect this problem to be resolved and a time scale. You also need to include an invoice that details the date and times of the performance and the amount owed including the date the invoice needs to be paid by.

Example Letter:

(Send by signed delivery with your disco name, own name and contact details at the top)

Dear xxxx

I have been advised to write to you requesting payment for the outstanding invoice regarding my performance on (put in the date) for (name of client).

I hereby give you 14 days to pay the balance owed of £xxx. If I do not hear from you within this time scale, I will issue civil proceedings against you without further notice to recover the monies owed, plus any additional expenses incurred.

Yours faithfully

yyyy

Example of Invoice

INVOICE
Date of performance
Event
Fee
To be paid by xx/xx/xx. Cheque to be made payable to yyy. For BACS transfer, please contact me for bank details.

This is normally enough to prompt payment. If, however, at the end of the 14 day period the money is still outstanding then you will need to submit a claim via your local County Court. It will cost from £25 (£16 in Scotland, £30 in Northern Ireland) to file the claim. These costs are dependent on the amount claimed however, this amount can be added onto the initial bill along with any other reasonable expenses.

For more information go to:

England & Wales <https://www.gov.uk/make-court-claim-for-money/overview>
or for Scotland <http://www.scotcourts.gov.uk/taking-action/small-claims>
and for Northern Ireland <http://www.courtsni.gov.uk/en-GB/pages/default.aspx>

Chapter 1.5

That's all for this sample!

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