





By Editor in Chief Ed Ryan

DEDE

IN THE

MORNING

HOST

DEDE

MCGUIRE

THE  
BRAIN  
BRAIN  
AND  
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BRAIN

**DeDe McGuire is often called the hardest-working woman in radio. And she's a leader in one of radio's smallest clubs: successful female morning show leads. It's a position dominated by men in all formats, all across the country.**

**McGuire started her radio career as a receptionist. When she was asked to join a host on the air to describe a toy during a Christmas auction, everyone listening knew she was destined for radio greatness. DeDe knew she wanted to be in radio, and she knew she wanted to be on the air. And nobody was going to outwork her.**

**When she did get on the air, she worked in several markets before landing as co-host with Doug Banks. They started out in mornings and then moved**

**to afternoons, working together from 1998-2014.**

***DeDe in the Morning* launched on KKDA (K104)/Dallas in January of 2013. The show caught on with the Dallas market quickly and became a dominant morning franchise, consistently beating head-to-head competition and then dominating all key demos in the market.**

**Compass Media Networks partnered with Service Broadcasting to launch *DeDe in the Morning* into syndication in July 2018. The show already has 40 affiliates.**

**Here is our cover story interview with DeDe McGuire, along with her producer, Gary Sanders, and K104 head of content and operations George Cook.**



DeDe in the Morning host DeDe McGuire



KKDA (K104)/Dallas Director of Operations and Brand Manager/  
Program Director George Cook

### Radio Ink: How did you get your start in radio?

**DeDe McGuire:** I worked at a Country radio station, KOOV, in a small town in Texas. I started as a receptionist. They were doing a Christmas toy auction and the afternoon guy called me into the studio and said, "Would you describe this toy?" I got on the mic and described it to the audience, and when I did, he and I had great banter. The wife of the station owner heard us and said, "You need to train your receptionist. She has a great personality and voice."

### Radio Ink: Then what happened?

**McGuire:** I would go into the production room on my lunch and during weekends to practice. I made a tape and sent it across the street to KILZ, the Urban station. They said, "You have no experience, but we like you, so we'll give you middays." I did that in the Killeen-Fort Hood area for one year. Then I went to San Antonio for one year.

Then I came to Dallas, to K104, for two years. I had just turned 21. When the PD at the time called me, I hung up on him because I thought it was a joke. To get to

K104 was the biggest thing ever. He hired me to do afternoons. I did that for two years and left to go to an AC station in Chicago, WPNT. Then I left and spent three years in Philadelphia at WIOQ, the CHR station.

While I was in Philadelphia, Russ Parr called and said, "Doug Banks is looking for a co-host for his nationally syndicated morning show. Are you interested?" I flew down, and we worked together for one day, and he said, "You're it." Doug and I did mornings for 10 years, and then we ended up going to afternoons. What nobody knew was as soon as we went to afternoons, K104 called me back, and the rest is history.

### Radio Ink: Tell us what it's like to get that call about going into syndication.

**McGuire:** While I was working afternoons with Doug, my producer, Gary Sanders, called and said, "Our new guy is out. Can you fill in mornings for three days?" I said, "I'm doing afternoons with Doug Banks, but I'll come in." I went in on a Wednesday. Gary called me that night and

said, "They're going to offer you a job." I said, "I have a job." He said, "No, they're going to offer you one in the mornings." I said, "I'm not interested, I have a job doing afternoons with Doug Banks."

When I got in the next day, they made me an offer I couldn't refuse. I did double duty – I did Doug Banks in the afternoon and mornings at K104 as a co-host. Ratings started going up, and George Cook came into the picture and took over as the PD. There was a guy doing mornings, but that wasn't successful. Geo called and said, "You have to be the host of the show."

**George Cook:** We were carrying Doug and DeDe on a station called Hot 98.9, where I was doing afternoons and programming, with Charlamagne on at night. It's interesting for things to come full circle. He looked up to DeDe with great respect.

**McGuire:** I did both for five years. Eventually, they gave me the show. I learned a lot from Doug Banks and I didn't want to leave his show, but the responsibility of being the host of a morning show

“This is a seminal moment for morning drive radio. Our beloved industry needs spectacular talent. Years from now we will look back and see how the launch of DeDe in the Morning into national syndication ushered in a new chapter of success for our industry. We are thrilled to support Dede, her team, K104, and all our affiliates and sponsors.”

**Peter Kosann**  
**CEO**

**Compass Media Networks**

“Radio helps drive reach and awareness of our brand message. We believe in the power of radio and specifically the influence and engagement that radio personalities like DeDe have with consumers.”

**Theresa Thornton**  
**Media Strategist**  
**Procter & Gamble**



is a lot. I needed to give it all of my attention. Eventually, Hymen Childs [owner of K104 in Dallas] made me another offer I couldn't refuse.

**Radio Ink: Geo, it's clear you saw talent in DeDe. Can you talk about that?**

**Cook:** DeDe is an incredible talent. Everyone in the industry looks up to her. There is no one in radio that gets in and out of a break better. She beat Rickey Smiley for over three years. She has a unique brand of content and humor, a real strong community connection and culture.

It's feeding a revolution of perception of how women can lead and dominate ratings in morning drive. She's authentically herself. We're blessed to have a talent that shares and reveals herself with the audience in such an authentic way. It's a deep connection she's created with listeners in Dallas.

**Gary Sanders:** When I worked with her on The Doug Banks Show, sometimes when he would go on vacation, DeDe would slid into the big chair, so I knew and convinced

Hymen when we had an opening that she could hold it down. She was already doing it nationally; we weren't heard in Dallas. As soon as we put her in the big chair, it took off, and the response has been overwhelming.

**McGuire:** Well, they're not telling you the whole truth. There were a few hiccups. I had to go to PPM school. One of the things going from co-host to host of the show, there was a transition. I had to make sure I took control of the show. They worked with me on doing that. They allowed me to make mistakes as well. There is a transition.

**Sanders:** The personality was always there. When she was on Doug's show, she would cover all the awards shows. We would go out to these red carpet events, and there were many times where CNN and others would position their microphones around DeDe. As the stars would go down the carpet, they would stop – Beyoncé, Jay-Z, etc. People were gathering around DeDe because she knew the





DeDe in the Morning's Mike Shawn, DeDe McGuire, and Lady Jade

questions to ask, what the styles were. She always had the skill set.

**Cook:** She can make anyone interesting. DeDe loves to get in people's business. It's different than other shows — there's no gotcha games. It's a natural, authentic connection with people; she's able to make them comfortable enough. She gets the artist or celebrity to say what the people want to hear, and not in an offensive way.

**Radio Ink:** In addition to having a connection to people you interview, you have to have that connection with the audience. How do you do that?

**McGuire:** I am a person who loves the culture. I love entertainment. I'm not a person who loves nice restaurants; I'm a simple country girl at heart. I'm inquisitive. I grew up in the military and lived in Germany on a military installation, which is a melting pot of people. It's all cultures living together, like family. I think that helped me be able to connect to a lot of people.

**Radio Ink:** It's such a different world now, with social media and easy ways to stay connected. What is your interaction today with the listeners compared to when you were working with Doug?

**McGuire:** One of the differences is they're DM'ing us, whether on Facebook, Instagram, or Twitter. They have more of a personal touch with us, more so than back in the day. I post a lot with me and my husband or my mom. I do behind-the-scenes here at the station.

They get a more intimate feel of us, and vice versa. There are more direct conversations, much more now than back then. Before we could only have that with our audience if they called in and maybe if we were at a business they work in, now it's 24/7.

**Cook:** I think DeDe operates with a unique approach; she wants to add to the dialogue that's happening in pop culture every day. It's about conversations and connectivity. She filters things through the idea "Is this piece of content going to be useful and unique to the audience?" We're

seeing the results from that.

**Radio Ink:** What are your thoughts on why there aren't more women in the lead role on radio morning shows?

**McGuire:** I'm not sure we can make it about gender so much. We're in a situation with radio, I don't know if the training is out there, if the interest is out there. Nowadays people want to get into radio thinking they will be a star, but don't want to put in the work. I came in during an in-between time, before radio changed totally. There are a lot of women who would like to have their own show, but there's a training issue.

**Cook:** It was more of a strategic decision. Not only did she have the talent and pedigree of working with Doug, and being around legends like Tom Joyner, she had a unique approach. She had the talent, and we were looking for points of differentiation, having a female lead.

When we first started talking about it, peers around the industry didn't think it would work. You have women who talk

“To call DeDe in the Morning a syndicated show diminishes the strength of the partnership. DeDe is part of the Jammin’ 98.3 family and a friend to the audience. She and her staff bend over backwards to weave themselves into the fabric of the station and connect with the audience. She’s like a best friend who just happens to live in another state. The ratings? Well, they speak for themselves.”

**Annmarie Topel**  
**President**  
**Milwaukee Radio Group**  
**WJMR-FM (Jammin’ 98.3)**



“She is a very creative person who will work very hard to be number one in her field.”

**Hymen Childs**  
**Owner**  
**KKDA (K104)/Dallas**

to their besties, mothers, friends, and co-workers all the time, and a lot of these stations are targeting women. What’s better than a woman talking to other women? It makes sense.

Her success has given other programmers the confidence to put women in morning drive. Even the show we just dismantled — because of her success both locally and nationally, they did a local morning show that emulated our show. They wouldn’t have had that confidence if they couldn’t see that example of success with DeDe here.

**Radio Ink: Why do you love doing radio?**

**McGuire:** I’m silly. I get to be me, have fun, and educate the audience. I like taking them on that emotional roller coaster. There’s the immediacy of having a conversation. It has always been something I loved.

**Radio Ink: Who has mentored and inspired you along the way?**

**McGuire:** Tom Joyner. When I worked with Doug as a co-host, working for ABC Radio Networks, we were across the hall from each other, and I watched his work ethic. I watched him build his show and take ownership of it. I have always been a fan of his. Doug, as I mentioned before. Russ Parr. Way back in the day, Terri Avery gave me advice and helped me out.

**Radio Ink: What are your general thoughts on the radio industry? You hear the younger generation say radio is dying. What’s your impression?**

**McGuire:** I don’t think radio is dying at all. We have a generation right now that loves podcasting, which is easier to do. Many don’t want to get into radio and learn the craft and have to follow some rules. I think people love radio. Personality is coming back. For a long time, programmers would say, “More music, less talk.” Now people can get music anywhere, and it means personality will be the big differ-



ence. Personality radio will be around for a while.

**Radio Ink: What do you want other managers and PDs to know about your show?**

**McGuire:** Number one is funny, and I have always believed funny wins no matter what. It's not predictable. We have great chemistry. You can throw some shows together, but if you don't have chemistry, it won't work. We're authentic, fast-moving, and transparent with the people. We get naked with the audience.

**Cook:** We get to the funny faster and have more comedic speech than most shows. We approach it with intention. We think of it almost like a reality show. It's all about the awkwardness, fun, and drama that's found in relationships. That runs through the content.

**Sanders:** As the producer, it's easy because of the chemistry and the effort everyone puts into the show. I could easily come in as a producer and pass out assignments, but what we do is, everyone brings stuff to the table, we work it out, throw stuff against the wall to see what sticks. It's a team effort.

The show works hard. There are a lot of shows that just mail it in, take phone calls with generic topics of the day. Our co-host comedian, Michael Shawn, has struggled with some addictions; he's a recovering alcoholic. He had to go to rehab on the show. Our other co-host, Lady Jade, struggling to find love, so she froze her eggs. She was married for a year. We went through the wedding on the air, and then she got divorced.

DeDe thinks her husband cheated on her this past summer, and she brought that to the airwaves and we talked it out – that type of realization, mixed with the listeners' comments, because nobody wants a perfect morning show. Nobody wants generic topics. We go for different angles.

**Radio Ink: Did he cheat?**

**McGuire:** He was seen coming out of a chick's room while we were on vacation. He claims he was only in there five minutes. I give him hell for it every day.

**Cook:** He has offered to take a lie detector

test, so we thought about doing that on the air. It will either destroy their relationship or give us more content.

**McGuire:** If it destroys it, we have content. Compass Media would love to sell this.

**Radio Ink: What is your show prep for each day? How do you stay on top of what your audience wants to hear?**

**McGuire:** I love the show prep today: it's the cell phone we have. Back in the day, people would walk in with newspapers, magazines, etc. We still get all of that, but it's at the tip of our fingers with our phones. I follow every single hot website and Instagram page.

The audience will also let you know. They will say, "OMG, DeDe, did you see this? I can't wait to hear what you have to say about it tomorrow." That is the beauty of it. Show prep is 24/7 now. If something breaks, my phone goes off.

**Cook:** The audience has access to the information. We give context to that and let them know why it matters. They want to hear it from DeDe's perspective.

**McGuire:** I have heard from people in other markets who ask how I get this done. I say you can record people with your cell phone. I do that a lot. We were on the elevator the other day and a girl got on saying, "Oh, I listen," and I pull out my phone and interview her right there. I send it in an e-mail to Gary, and it's on the air. There are apps you can use. I create videos showing people where I am on my Instagram page. Show prepping is right there.

**Sanders:** When DeDe interviewed the lady on the elevator, it turned out she had just divorced her pastor husband, and it turned out she was a lesbian.

**McGuire:** She let me get in her business right there on the spot. I go to a basketball game to see my favorite player, LeBron, and I'm looking around trying to figure out what I can talk about the next day to bring into the show.

**Radio Ink: So you are constantly using Instagram and Facebook Live to help promote the show?**

**McGuire:** Yes, you have to be as visible

**"DeDe's enthusiasm for her show jumps out of the speakers, as well as her desire to do whatever it takes to drive success. She understands that it takes hard work to launch a new show on an affiliate and is available to win over clients and listeners, no matter how zany the request. She's fun, she's real, and she's relatable, and she was the natural choice for us on 94.3 WYBC."**

**Kristin Okesson**  
**SVP/General Manager**  
**Connoisseur Media**  
**Connecticut**

**"DeDe McGuire is not just a great female air talent, but a great air personality who can rival anyone in the business"**

**Terri Avery**  
**Cox Media Group**  
**Atlanta**



“DeDe McGuire is not just a great female air talent, but a great air personality who can rival anyone in the business”

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**Atlanta**



Mike Shawn, DeDe McGuire, and Lady Jade

as possible. It's still so much fun to me. It doesn't feel like work.

**Radio Ink: What are your goals with the show?**

**McGuire:** I do a vision board every year. I write down goals for what I want to do with the show. By the end of the year, I want 50 affiliates. By the end of next year, we better have 75 to 100.

**Cook:** Where things are normally mandated by companies, everybody that's a DeDe affiliate loves and wants DeDe. Part of our mission is spreading love and laughter across the country. Sometimes we will get in meetings and say it's not about the ratings. If we have the beloved brand and show, if we want to make change in people's lives, the ratings will come.

**Sanders:** A lot of that is customer service, too. Stations need their liners and promotions turned around. We can't sit on the liners. We're their morning show, and it's important.

**McGuire:** Working with us is easy. Some people doing radio these days aren't radio people; it's not their first love. It's my first love and all I have done. I understand the immediacy of making sure liners are done correctly. I know what they're looking for and where to put the inflection because this is what I do.

I have worked several formats. I have to thank Hymen Childs, the owner here at K104, for believing in me and allowing me to do this. Compass Media, too, has been the best to work with.

Radio Networks, Superadio, everyone had an interest in working with DeDe. Peter Kosann came down to see us and spent time. We shared our vision with him. He saw the opportunity, particularly in the Urban space, but also saw the overall appeal of DeDe's show. What's amazing is the show is on multiple formats. Everything from Hip Hop to Rhythmic to throwbacks to R&B because funny works no matter what.

**McGuire:** We're on 40 stations, but on several different formats. They can take the content and do what they want. That is the beauty of what we do and how I'm able to position it.

I'm coming for Howard Stern's title, "King of all Media." I also launched a foundation last year, the DeDe McGuire Foundation, whose main purpose is to aid women's education. Single mothers certainly need more money to take care of their kids and help them go back to college. Last year we gave out \$40,000 worth of scholarships in our first year, which I'm really excited about.

**Radio Ink: What advice do you have for younger kids thinking about getting on the air?**

**McGuire:** If you are afraid of failure, you will never succeed. Sometimes you have to take a step backwards to go two steps forward. They all want to start at the top and not do the work anymore. They all think they should land in a major market. They have to be themselves. Take it seriously. There is fun and the perks of going to the club and the VIP events, but this is a business.

**Cook:** ABC Networks, American Urban

# SIDELINES

**What are your hobbies?**

Watching reality shows, traveling, and reading.

**Who is/was your role model, and why?**

My mom, because she is the strongest woman I know and because no matter what life has thrown at her, she always gets back up.

Tom Joyner because he was and is truly a radio star. He didn't come from the comedy world or acting world. He was a true radio personality whose talent took him all the way to the top of the food chain in radio. The fact that he took ownership of his show, created Reach Media, and had the success and longevity in syndication is commendable.

**What are you reading right now?**

I'm reading two. One is fluff that I picked up at the airport called A Well Behaved Woman by Cherese Anne Fowler. Two, a book I took off my boss Geo's desk called Building Strong Brands by David A. Aaker.

**What is your favorite movie?**

The Count of Monte Cristo, Shawshank Redemption, The Ten Commandments (I always loved the music in it – lol).

**What is your favorite TV show?**

Real Housewives, anything on HGTV, Black Mirror on Netflix.

**Twitter handle?**

@dedeinthemornin

**Instagram?**

@dedeinthemorning

**Who are the three most interesting people you know (outside your family), and why?**

I love flawed people.

A chef friend of mine who travels between Texas and Louisiana. He's super talented in the kitchen but can't seem to keep a steady job. I marvel at all his missed opportunities. His reasoning why or stories of haphazard things that interfere and why he can't get it right are fascinating to me. I realize some people can't help themselves.

My girlfriend who travels all the time by herself and will leave at the drop of a dime. I love hearing her stories.

My co-host, Michael Shawn. He's a recovering alcoholic who has turned his "mess" into a message. He's talked about it on the air, and I've been impressed with his courage and strength to beat his addiction. He's also a conspiracy theorist like me, so we get to explore a bunch of crazy scenarios together.

**If you had 30 minutes and a recorder, who would you interview, and why?**

Michelle Obama. I want to know the real inside stuff about the White House. How much input did she have in terms of her husband's decisions while he was president? How did she deal with the racism and scrutiny? Were there days while in the White House where she stayed in bed all day or on the couch and vegged out? When she and her husband got intimate, was she nervous the Secret Service would bust in the room? Lol. Did the old pics in there scare her? Is the White House haunted? How did she sleep in there

with the rumors of a rat infestation? (Which would totally gross me out because that's a phobia of mine.)

**Name three radio stations you listened to as a kid.**

I spent three years in Germany (stepfather was in the Army), so I had to listen to Casey Kasem on the Armed Forces Network. K104 in Dallas, KIIZ in Killeen.

**What apps do you have on your phone that would surprise people?**  
Facetune, which helps me cheat on all my pics. It's my own Photoshop.**Three favorite podcasts?**

Earn Your Leisure is the only one I really listen to.

**Your most embarrassing career moment?**

Of course, I've had the obligatory non-stop giggles while reading live copy on the air. But I was hosting a fashion show in front of 300 people and walked off the stage in my beautiful dress and high heels and proceeded to fall down the stairs in front of everyone.

**What one goal has eluded you?**  
Television talk show host.**Most proud career achievement so far?**

Getting my own syndicated show.