



Presenter Paul Metcalfe

Destined to succeed

Entertainer Paul Metcalfe's big break was all down to one impulsive act. Since then his career has gone from strength to strength, he tells **Natalie Lambracos**

Paul Metcalfe is proof that there is some truth in the old showbusiness adage about the importance of good luck, timing and being in the right place at the right time. His break into presenting was all down to a single, spur of the moment action which secured his first job under the spotlight.

"I was working backstage on a CBBC event called the Big Bash at the NEC in Birmingham and someone was on stage warming up the crowd," says Metcalfe. "I didn't think he was doing a particularly good job, so I just grabbed a microphone and ran out on stage and started to get the crowd going. I don't really remember what I was thinking – all I remember was seeing the microphone and the next thing I knew I was on stage with a cheering crowd in the audience."

"My bosses said to me, 'You really shouldn't have done that, but would you like to do five shows a day?'. I was so excited I couldn't even sleep at night because I kept thinking of new ways to communicate and interact with the children in the audience."

While occupied on the Big Bash,

Metcalfe also worked on Blue Peter and CBBC's SMart, where the late Mark Speight became a huge influence on him. They bonded and Speight played mentor to Metcalfe, encouraging him to develop his own ideas.

It was after his stint with SMart, that Metcalfe became fully committed to pursuing his present career.

Key ingredients in maintaining his success have been an ability to master the different demands of television and event work and to continue working in both fields.

"You've got to be able to come up with fresh ideas over and over again to keep the crowd interested," says Metcalfe. "It's very different to presenting in a television studio, where you can keep retaking the same link until you get it right. With live presenting, you've got to get it right first time round."

Metcalfe's live events include television spin-offs but he has been quick to see the value of brand promotion too, with a roster of events ranging from Family Fortunes Live to Shop at the Top live shopping experience, Muller yoghurt's Mix it Up Roadshow and Game Show Greats.

The ever-expanding gaming market has been another income stream. Contrary to the dismissive attitude of some entertainers to the sector, Metcalfe cites his work for EA Games and Nintendo as an example of where he really had to think on his feet.

"I was brought in to host a Nintendo Wii tennis tournament with Andy Murray, where people were given the chance to test out the consoles against Murray," says Metcalfe.

"After the fun and frivolity, I suggested to Nintendo that I could host a question and answer session with Murray, which they agreed to. But after a few minutes, the session had become a little stilted, so to inject a bit more personality and liveliness into it, I started to drive the discussions, prompting both parties to get more involved. By the end of the session, the atmosphere had changed and everyone left having enjoyed the experience because I was willing to bring the debate to life.

"I really think it is important to bring your own ideas to the table. Companies are willing to pay a lot of money for a good presenter, so the more you give them and the more

passionate you are, the better your chances are for being employed again."

Metcalfe initially studied performing arts at Newcastle College. Ant and Dec were in the year above him and he later went on to Salford University to specialise in presenting, inspired by the likes of Phillip Schofield.

"I've always looked up to Phillip Schofield," says Metcalfe. "I used to watch him in the Broom Cupboard when I was growing up and I've always been inspired by him. I still learn from him and if I could be half the presenter he is, I would be happy."

So what advice would Metcalfe give to novice presenters wanting to get their feet securely on the first rung of the ladder?

"Don't ever think you're a star – but at the same time, don't let people use you," says Metcalfe. "You have to be prepared to work hard and to do as much work experience as possible. It's also important to stay in touch with who you work with along the way because you never know where they'll move on to afterwards."

"You do have to be dedicated and passionate and use resources like Facebook and Twitter to your advantage. Watch as many live shows as possible to learn from others, and never give up. I've worked hard to get where I am now but it's great to be able to do something you love. Every day I wake up with a smile on my face and I can't wait to start work."

For more information about Paul Metcalfe, visit www.paulmetcalfe.tv