5 Months in, CNN’s Kasie Hunt Talks Hosting The Arena



Kasie Hunt has settled in nicely in the 4 p.m. ET slot on CNN. Since March, her show, The Arena, has covered major stories in real time, leading the broadcast to finish as one of CNN’s most-watched programs.

The show’s format has blended well with the network’s late afternoon and evening offerings. This cohesion has led it to become a significant player in the political space, with top politicians making appearances: “I like to think that that’s why people want to come on and talk to me, because I’m a reporter’s anchor,” Hunt recently told TVNewser.

Well aware that the TV landscape can change in a flash, Hunt is maximizing every opportunity she can get. Following up on TVNewser’s initial interview before the show launched in March, we recently caught up with Hunt to see how things were going for her, so far, inside The Arena.

TVNewser: Five months in, how’s it going in The Arena?

Hunt: Honestly, I’m having a great time. I feel like the longer we’ve been doing it, the more the team has been finding

its groove both behind the scenes and on air. We've made a lot of progress [and are] starting to feel like we have a groove going, and the viewers can come to the table knowing a little bit more of what to expect. The hardest thing for me was figuring out how to make sure that my energy was peaking at 4:00 in the afternoon instead of six in the morning. My caffeine schedule is considerably different now than it was when I first started. But overall, it's great.

What is so different about working in the morning versus working in the evening?

The biggest difference is that there is so much news that is still breaking at four in the afternoon, and that's a very different reality than 6 a.m., when the world is still waking up. There are definitely days when we do a show that we've planned and written and thought through, because there wasn't some big breaking story that changed everything at the last minute. A significant portion of our show is still breaking news or reacting to breaking news, and one of the great things about the format is that it's well equipped to handle that kind of thing in a flexible way, especially when we can combine it with CNN's vast newsgathering resources.

Yesterday (07/30/25), for example, we got a verdict in the protein shake poisoning trial right before we came on the air, and they read the verdict right at four. We were able to do that with people that we had pre-positioned, but it wasn't the conversation we planned to have at the top of the show. But we pivoted quickly and did that.

The other thing that happened was when **Kamala Harris** announced that she wasn't going to run for governor of California. That's the story that's very much in my wheelhouse as a long-time presidential campaign reporter. When that happened, the conversation immediately was like, "Okay, let's lead the show with this. What elements are we going to pull? What moments from the campaign should we remind our viewers happened and

could inform how they should understand what this decision means?” etc. That ended up being our second conversation.

That’s a really good example of being able to use the kind of structure that we had already set up. The people we had planned to have these conversations with are also well-informed and flexible, able to turn on a dime. So, that’s the biggest change.

What does it say about The Arena earning the most-watched title for the network a couple of times in the last few months?

I am always thrilled to hear that we’re doing well. I have nothing without my colleagues, without the network that supports the show and gives me a home and a place to do it. I’m really glad that our viewers are responding to what we’re doing, and I hope that says something positive about us. I don’t take it to mean anything negative about anybody else—4 p.m. has become a place where, as the cable landscape has changed, viewers’ habits are changing as well. It’s great to be in a time slot where you know people are reaching the end of their workday, probably the market has closed, but they’re still really engaged in the world. They haven’t shifted to going home and are looking for entertainment in the evening. I’m happy to be where I am and able to take advantage of that.

Why has the show resonated so quickly with CNN’s audience?

You never know with these kinds of things. I switched networks, which is always a risk for anyone, as you’re meeting a new audience. I’m really grateful to **Mark Thompson** and the leadership at CNN for letting me do the show that I knew was going to be the best show from me. This has been something I’ve been working on, how to find my voice, my format, my place of being the most comfortable. It started with my first show (on MSNBC), which was Kasie DC, and a lot of the elements

that you see on The Arena are things that I was trying out back then—in terms of having panels, trying to do big interviews, leaning into the strengths that I have as a congressional reporter and a political reporter, and taking the experience that I've had over many years.

I've had several different iterations at CNN. I came over for CNN+, and then I had a different role after that changed. I did the early morning show at five, and then we expanded. Those were all situations where either I was coming into a format that someone else had done originally, or there was a different vision. With The Arena, they've let me do my show, and that is something that I don't take for granted. The only way I'm going to succeed is by being the person that I actually am and doing the things that I'm good at. The audience is either going to like that or they're not. But I can't be different than who I am. The audience will see right through that. I appreciate that they let me put on the air something that I came to them and said, "Hey, this is what I think I can bring to the table," and they went for it, which was great.

What speaks to The Arena's ability to bring in big-time politicians to the show, as seen with former Governor Andrew Cuomo?

I hope that the reason why someone who is in "The Arena," which is what we named the show for, wants to come on and talk to me is because they understand that I have put in the work as a reporter throughout my career to be able to bring to the viewers, but also bring to the newsmakers, a respect and understanding of what they're doing—what they're trying to do and what they hope to do, a relatively sophisticated understanding of what living in this world looks like, what it means to be an American politician, and an understanding of the pressures that they face and the way that they make decisions. I'd like to think that sometimes I ask tough

questions that might not actually sound that tough when I say them, but hopefully, a sophisticated viewer or participant would understand.

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