

START PODCASTING!

Tips And Tricks From Many Podcasting Experts



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The History Of Podcasting

By Ken Snodin

What we know as a podcast had its beginnings in the creation of MP3 files that could be downloaded and played on the iPod device developed by Apple Computer. The release of the iPod encouraged people to share their music with others. They then realized that they could create, upload, and download information other than music. Some iPod users reverse engineered the device and loaded various types of firmware or operating system software. Other users decided that they would share sound files to be played on the iPod, since the technology for distributing such files already existed. RSS feeds provide a way to generate machine-readable files, which could then share data between servers and users. Many blogs used RSS to keep their readers up to date on blog posts. Some visionary podcasters realized that they could enclose links to sound files inside the RSS feed and download these files to a computer.

The iPod podcast became increasingly popular as this change in RSS feeds was implemented. Podcasting became a common way to share files, and users began to view podcasting as a way to become, essentially, radio-show hosts or DJs. Then software was developed that would automatically check the RSS feeds, extract links to podcast episodes, and download the files. This software is called a podcast client.

By the time all this was happening, podcasting had expanded far beyond Apple's iPod device. Developers had even discovered ways to use PlayStation Portable gaming systems as a podcast player. While this was more difficult than downloading a podcast to an iPod because of PSP's different file format, more PSP podcasts began appearing on the Internet. Podcasting also expanded into use by individuals who didn't have iPods, but who viewed podcasting as a very convenient technology for receiving news, music, and entertainment over the Internet.

Now, iPod podcasting remains in use, but fewer people subscribe to podcasts in order to get portable media files. This still represents an attractive feature of podcasting, but it is overshadowed by the use of podcasting as a content delivery system. Podcasting is currently associated with a large and growing number of audio and video blogs, for example. With these offerings, content is not delivered via posting, but through media files that are uploaded to the blog. These types of blogs, and podcasting in general, benefit from the constantly decreasing cost of broadband Internet connections and the growing number of people who have high-speed access to rich online content that includes multimedia files.



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Podcasts Increasing In Popularity

By David Tenemaza

Official Definition:

Podcast: a Web-based audio broadcast via an RSS feed, accessed by subscription over the Internet

Easier To Understand:

Podcast: an audio file which you can download and listen to

A few years back, the term podcast was a term that many were not familiar with. Even today, it is still something that is only beginning to pick up in popularity. While the average tech-geek may throw the word around here and there and seem familiar with it, they may actually be using it incorrectly. For instance, they may download an audio show off the Internet to listen on their computer but that is not truly podcasting. Podcasting involves subscribing to an RSS feed that downloads the show to their iPod or MP3 player for listening.

As mentioned in the previous paragraph, podcasting was something that only tech-geeks were familiar with. However, that is quickly changing with more and more joe-bloggers using the term along with media giants like Time Warner starting to distribute their shows via a podcast format.

Things like radio shows, interviews, music sessions, etc. are starting to become the norm for podcasts and even something that many may not have expected – college lectures. Students that are becoming more aware of this new possibility may call for podcasts to be included in their college courses. The benefits of these podcasts are great as students can listen to them if they are unable to attend class for whatever reason and if they are on the bus and need to catch up on some notes. For those that live in more urban areas and use the city transportation system, lectures on podcasts can be listened to while waiting in line or waiting to get off the next stop. This is more beneficial versus reading because reading can become quite uncomfortable for some in a crowded environment. So for colleges and students, this is a win-win situation where one side benefits from better performance and the other benefits from better scores on their tests.

Now, those are only a few examples of how podcasts are becoming more and more popular. As traditional media companies adapt to the quickly changing technology world, we will be seeing much more of podcasts in our everyday life.



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7 Steps To Creating Your Own Podcast

By Donna Gunter

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Listening to podcasts isn't something I enjoy or take time for, quite frankly. I'm a visual learner and prefer to read something rather than listen to it, as I find reading a much quicker way to gather the info that I need. However, with the proliferation of audio listening devices, like the whole iPod family and other mp3 players, I have to acknowledge that I'm in the minority, I believe. The world is listening to a wide variety of audio files, much more so than ever before in history, and I need to get on the bandwagon or be lost in the dust.

What is a podcast, anyway? A podcast is an audio file that you create in .mp3 format that is uploaded with an RSS (Really Simple Syndication) file to your server for your target market to download on any number of programs created to receive or subscribe to your audio file so that they can listen to it at their leisure on their computer or a personal mp3 device.

Why should you create a podcast? I think it serves as a marketing tool for the solo service professional, who might want to do one of the following:

- create an Internet radio show or talk show in which you create content-rich broadcasts for your target market
- conduct a teleclass series in which you interview experts who have solutions to problems faced by your target market
- promote a printed book, ebook, or CD/DVD series by releasing promotional snippets to a wider audience
- provide short and valuable expert tips to your target market (my Get More Clients Online podcast consists of the weekly article I write for my newsletter)

Many podcasts are about an hour in length, especially when they consist of recordings of radio shows or teleclasses. However, I think that the listening threshold for most people is about 10 minutes. So, that means that your podcast needs to be 10 minutes or less in length. If it's longer, you really have to grab their attention in the first 10 minutes to keep them listening for the full amount of time.

Good content and a good speaking voice are key to maintaining interest. Don't make your podcast one long advertisement for your services or products -- share some useful information with your target market to help them solve their problems. And, you need to have a good speaking voice. Nothing is worse than listening to someone read a speech with a monotone delivery. So, for maximum impact when you record your podcast (especially if you're just recording yourself), get up and walk around, smile, gesture, or do whatever you normally do when you deliver a speech. Modulate your voice, much in the same way that you would when you have a 1:1 conversation with someone -- put feeling

and emotion into your words. I pretend like I'm talking to my best friend, and that helps me with a lively delivery.

What are the steps to creating a podcast?

1. Listen to a few podcasts to get a feel for what others are doing. To listen, you'll need a podcatcher (podcast reader), which permits you to subscribe to podcasts in the same way you subscribe to blogs. I favor iTunes as my podcatcher of choice, which is a free online download. You'll also need to find podcasts, and the quickest way to do that is via podcast directories, which include the iTunes store. Podcast Alley, one of the most popular podcasting sites, has a large podcast directory, and Yahoo Podcasts has a podcast search. To find others, simply search online for "podcast directory."
2. Plan your podcast. Who is your target market? What do they want to listen to? How will your podcast be unique from others in your industry? What's your format (interview others, host a teleclass, or record yourself)? How long will your podcast be? How frequently will you deliver your podcasts?
3. Record your podcast. Many people choose to record their podcast with a free piece of software called Audacity. It has an easy learning curve and advanced features for more experienced podcasters. Mac users might want to check out Garage Band. For best recording sound, don't use the microphone that came with your computer or that is built into your laptop. You'll want to get a more professional one, such as the ones offered at Plantronics or Radio Shack.
4. Save and upload your podcast to your server. Once you've created your podcast in an mp3 file, now you have to save it and upload it to a server via an FTP program (like CuteFTP) so that it's readily available. You can upload it to your website, or use one of the many podcasting hosting services available. The problem with uploading it to your website is that audio files are space hogs, and you can quickly exhaust all the storage capacity of your hosting account, not to mention your monthly bandwidth capacity if your podcast is popular and is downloaded frequently. That's why I use a fee-based audio service hosting company, Audio Acrobat, which offers me generous storage and bandwidth capacity for a semi-annual fee. Another popular podcast hosting company is Hipcast.com.
5. Create your podcast feed. You can create your podcast feed from scratch, but I recommend you use a feed service to do so. If you use a podcasting hosting service, this feature is included in your service package. For everyone else, the quickest way to create your podcast feed is through Feedburner.com. This is the same service that creates RSS feeds for blogs. The advantage of creating your podcast feed from this site is that you can create a browser-friendly feed, track your circulation, and enhance your feed with its SmartCast technology.
6. Publish and promote your podcast. If you use a podcasting hosting service, the service will publish your podcast and notify various podcast directories about the availability of your new podcast. Or, you can enter the info directly into the major podcast directories. You'll also want to promote the podcast on your website, blog, and in your email newsletter. One of the easiest ways to do this is to add feed subscription buttons (called chiclets) to your sites. You'll have to cut and paste the HTML code into your templates to create the chiclets. You can get directions on how to publish subscription buttons from the various podcasters you want to feature. Lastly, you'll want to create "album art" for your podcast, or a graphic representation that many podcatchers upload with the mp3 file. Album art may be from 170x170 to 300x300 pixels square at 72 dpi. Any graphic designer can help you create this graphics file.

7. Make money from your podcast. Advertising on podcasts is still fairly new, but some companies like Fruitcast.com or PodcasterAds.com are places to start. Another option is to place Google AdSense listings on all of your sites listing your podcast, or seek sponsors for your podcasts, just like you would for a radio show.

Don't let the audio world pass you by! Podcasting is a very inexpensive way of helping you get the word out about what you do and what you offer to the world.



Podcasting For Profit

By Jennifer Kothe

So you have a podcast. That's great, but don't quit your day job just yet. Unfortunately, unless you're Ricky Gervais it might be more than just a little difficult to make money off podcasting. If you are Ricky Gervais: A.) Can I borrow some money? B.) Can I guest star on the new video podcast?

So why aren't there more podcast millionaires? Most podcasts don't have the audience necessary to generate any significant ad revenue. The other problem being that as podcasting grows, so do the number of shows targeting the same audience. The larger and more successful podcasts can generate revenue by charging subscription fees for their shows, or even by charging for the back catalogue of shows. Even amongst the larger corporations, excepting The Wall Street Journal, and Consumer Reports, most haven't been able to sell enough subscriptions to their web-based content to be anywhere close to profitable. Apparently just having a recognizable brand isn't enough to sell subscriptions alone.

The key is finding ways to make podcasts engaging, and effective. Right now businesses are using podcasting as a marketing tool to attract clients in much the same way that blogs lead to exposure for other businesses. There is no reason that podcasts can't generate revenue. For example if you host a show on llama herding, it's possible (although not probable) that 2,000 llama herding enthusiasts might subscribe. If you have a large niche marketing then advertising might work for you. Who's to say that if an enterprising podcaster rounded up an audience of 7,000 listeners interested in basket weaving, then why wouldn't a basket weaving company want to advertise to that audience? The key is finding a podcast with quality content and advertisers who need to reach that specific audience. What is needed essentially is a matchmaker of sorts to help the shows and advertisers find one another.

The other problem is getting web users to find and subscribe to podcasts. While it may seem like just about everyone knows about podcasting the truth is that there is a good majority of people who still haven't. In an interview last year Yahoo Chief Products Officer Geoff Ralston pointed this particular problem out. "...the fact is that what we really want to do at Yahoo is to bring podcasting to the mainstream, and for that to happen people have to learn about it. So we've created a site where it's really easy to learn about it, and like I said, you'll be able to find podcasts eventually everywhere on Yahoo. So as you're reading your news, which of course many millions of people do every day week, and month on Yahoo, you will start to be introduced to podcasts and start to be introduced to the podcast experience of the site and that will actually start to bring you into the community of podcasters. And it is a community! One of the key aspects of Yahoo Podcasts is that the community is what gives it strength and gives the feeling of the site. The site also allows people to rate podcasts to create the ability for people to find the podcasts that matter."

Podcasting is still a new medium and so there's plenty of room for growth and change. The real key to making money with podcasting is finding a way to use traditional methods of generating revenue along side newer methods. The key in a young industry, like podcasting, is experimenting with different methods, not being afraid to adapt new business models, or even inventing your own. So Ricky Gervais may have an easier time making money at it, but that's not to say that it's impossible for

anyone else.

Potential customers are looking for you through search engines, directories and forums. We help them find your website. How? Check out our marketing techniques at <http://www.itsontarget.com> and sign up for our podcast and we'll let you in on some interesting internet traffic solutions.



Using Podcasts For Marketing Buzz

By Philip Nicosia

Since the iPod was launched in 2004, Apple has sold over 40 million units. That's a huge market, and because of the development of the podcast, it's also a brand new marketing arena for companies to conquer.

Video podcasts are video broadcasts that people can download and watch on their iPods. They transform the gadget into a mini-TV, ideal for people on the go (and in this day and age, who isn't?).

Video Podcasts, like television shows, cover a wide range of topics and serve numerous purposes. Some are pure entertainment: comedy acts, music videos, short films. Others inform and educate: cooking demonstrations, documentaries, news and current affairs updates, language tutorials, business seminars and self-improvement seminars on everything from How to Improve your Selling Skills to Getting Over a Breakup.

The specific content of podcasts, and the fact that they're downloaded by individuals who are clearly interested in the content, opens an incredible opportunity for niche marketing.

The most basic way of participating in a podcast for brand awareness is to sponsor a podcast related to your product. For example, a sports apparel company can advertise on a podcast on the most exciting plays, or an interview with the coach of a winning team. This works for both the advertiser and the website that carries the podcast: if they carry the costs of creating and maintaining the site, they can offer the podcasts for free, for the opportunity to run a 10-second ad at the start of the video. The best thing about podcast commercials is that obviously the user can't change the channel. You have a captive audience of sports fans—the people most likely to buy your merchandise to begin with.

Another way of marketing your product through podcasting is to create your own. You can tap one of your own experts or endorsers to create valid content that would be interesting to your buyers. Let's say that you're a site that sells designer bags and shoes. Tap a stylist to create a short podcast on the latest styles of the season, and how to pair it with other items in your wardrobe. Your "trend report" is of obvious interest to females, who are more likely to invest in accessories if they know how it fits into a particular look.

You don't have to go hardsell: podcasts can be part of an overall PR campaign to build relationships with your community, thus enhancing your brand equity and reputation as "a company that cares". Since podcasts are relatively inexpensive to create, this may be an alternative to large-scale social marketing efforts. For example, if you are a pharmaceutical company that sells diabetes medication, your podcasts can be an information campaign on people who have successfully controlled the disease to lead very successful lives. Farm this video to podcast websites and your campaign reaches millions of people worldwide.

You can also use podcasts to enhance the mileage of an existing PR event. For example, if you are a

restaurant that wants to be known as the hottest and hippest place in the city, and hold regular parties that attract celebrities and models, then release podcasts that banner this benefit to the world. It's pointless to hold an event if people don't know about it; podcasts make sure that they do.



Avoiding The Pitfalls - Common Podcasting Mistakes

By Jennifer Kothe

In learning anything new there is always a sharp learning curve, and you're sure to make a few mistakes along the way, we all do. However in an effort to save you some grief and embarrassment along the way I've compiled a short list of some common mistakes and how to avoid them. So read on, and enter the podcasting arena a few steps ahead of the competition.

Number One – Reading from a script. While I strongly recommend writing out an outline of what you want to cover in your podcast it isn't necessary to read verbatim from a script. When most people try reading directly from a script they wind up sounding like Ben Stein. "Bueller?" It isn't entertaining and you'll lose your audience before you even have a chance to get started. So unless you have a background in acting or extemporaneous reading it's probably a good idea to forgo the script.

An easy solution is to make a list of talking points, note cards, or even a more detailed outline of what you intend to say in your podcast. So long as the format leaves room for improvisation it will come across as more friendly and conversational. It may take a few tries to get used to "winging it," but you'll sound much better. It's still advisable to rehearse and edit your podcast whenever possible you not to the point where it sounds too scripted or contrived.

Number Two – Sound. While not everyone can afford really slick production values it is important to appear at least somewhat professional. This means investing in a good quality microphone, some headphones, and an editing program of some sort.

This doesn't necessarily involve a large investment though. The mic and headphones can be obtained for a reasonable amount, and you can download a free program like Audacity which will allow you to edit your show. Audacity will allow you lay down tracks of music, edit out coughs, "ums", or even portions of the podcast that you aren't happy with. It's also worthwhile to do a sound check before spending 15 to 30 minutes recording a podcast that is unintelligible. Check that the mic volume is properly adjusted and that there isn't any background interference.

Number Three – Infrequent episodes. No one wants to subscribe to a show if it only airs sporadically. Why? Mainly because it's hard to get into and maintain interest in a show if it isn't on enough to keep you engaged in the content. At the very least try to have shows broadcast ever other week if not weekly. It's true that some shows are only released monthly but generally the more frequent the show airs the higher its ratings are.

Number Four – No call to action. It's rare that a listener will come to find your podcast in the context of your site. Most people will probably stumble across your podcast via podcast directory that's why it's important to make sure you include a call to action at the end of your podcast. The fact is that if you don't provide a clear way for people to interact with you then they won't.

Number Five – No album art. This really only applies when submitting your podcasts to the various

podcast directories and podcatchers. iTunes, for example, allows album art and more often than not people don't even take a second look at the podcasts without it. It doesn't have to be anything fancy, and you can even use your logo as the album art so long as it communicates something about the podcast.

Potential customers are looking for you through search engines, directories and forums. We help them find your website. How? Check out our marketing techniques at <http://www.itsontarget.com> and sign up for our podcast and we'll let you in on some interesting internet traffic solutions.



10 Tips For Podcasting Success

By Sharon Housley

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As podcasts increase in popularity, listeners have more choices. So while you might be ahead of the competition, you should still be thinking about ways that you can make your podcast unique and stand out from similarly themed podcasts.

1. Plan Accordingly.

When making the decision and commitment to podcast, it is important to think beyond the moment. Before starting, think about the time the podcast production will take. How will podcasting fit into a current schedule? How frequently will you podcast? How will hosting of podcasting files be handled? If the podcast is excessively popular, how will fees be generated to pay for hosting? What is the common theme that threads all podcasts in a series together? Think not only of a broad theme, but also various episodic themes that fit into a broader theme. What will make you distinct or different from others podcasting about similar content? By approaching podcasting with a little forethought, you will set yourself up for success.

2. Original Content.

Just like any media company, in order to attract and maintain an audience, you will need to provide original content, or at the very least, present the content in an original way. Think about a long term strategy that will help your show distinguish itself from others.

3. Get to The Point.

Jibber Jabber is fun, but not to the point of excluding quality content. Listeners in today's society don't have time for incessant rambling. If you have a point to make, make it in a reasonable amount of time. Minimize the fluff and focus on quality content.

4. Do Your Homework.

Not only is faulty information a liability, but incorrect information will hurt a broadcaster's long term reputation--just like a journalist's credibility is paramount to their success. It is important that the information that you provide is accurate. While being a shock jock might have short-term appeal to listeners, most will remain loyal to a source that has properly vetted all of their information.

5. Consistency.

The best content is consistent content. Podcasts should contain compelling content with episodic titles, that are united in common broad theme. The format of the podcast should be consistent, persistent and stable. Each show should be about the same length and contain a common format.

6. Timeless Content.

Content that is timeless has a long shelf life. Broadcasters will benefit more from content that is timeless and can be effectively archived. "How to" content that solves problems will often have long term appeal and listening life. When choosing topics, consider the long term effects of a specific piece and determine whether it will fit with the broad theme of the show.

7. Articulate Words.

The quality of the audio content does matter. Think of the last time you heard a good song, on a poorly tuned radio station; regardless of how much you like the song, most of us would move the dial along. Listeners will not want to strain to hear a podcast; pay particular attention to articulation. Another important item worth noting is that Podcasts have global reach and often global appeal. Minimizing an accent will often extend the podcast's listening audience.

8. Optimize Podcasts.

Podcast titles should be optimized to incorporate data that relates to the contents of the podcast. Think about the themes when selecting a podcast channel title and description. Use critical and related keywords and phrases that relate to a common theme. The text in the feed is important for both feed optimization and for attracting listeners. Many of the podcast directories index the contents of podcasts using the information contained in the channel and item's, titles and descriptions. Use these text fields to effectively capture the interest of listeners.

9. Listener Expectations.

Invariably listeners will come to expect certain things from broadcasters. In order to maintain a listening audience, it is important that broadcasts are consistent and satisfy the expectations of listeners. While it is okay to experiment, straying to far from what a listener expects will often disappoint.

10. Archive.

Many new listeners will want to review previous broadcasts. Consider ways to make older shows available through archives. Archives allow broadcasters another channel to benefit from the content. Maintaining archives of older podcasts might bring in new listeners and satisfy listeners who just can't get enough. Podcasts require effort, but by following basic guidelines and thinking things through, podcasts can be instrumental in increasing web traffic and communications within a community.



About The Authors

Publisher Joel Osborne. Joel Osborne is a successful Internet marketer who has been online for a few years selling and giving away products for other Internet marketers and to the general public. For more information about what he does and links to some of his web sites, check out his site www.Joel-Osborne.com

Author **Ken Snodin.** To learn more about [communications, telecommunications and technology](http://communication-tips.com) visit communication-tips.com

Author **David Tenemaza.** You can find more information at [Podcasts Increase in Popularity](http://www.map100.com) More interesting articles at www.map100.com

Author **Donna Gunter.** Online Business Resource Queen (TM) and Business Coach Donna Gunter helps self-employed service professionals learn how to get more clients online. To sign up for more FREE tips like these and claim your FREE gift, TurboCharge Your Online Marketing Toolkit, visit her site at [Get More Clients Online](http://www.getmoreclientsonline.com). Read about running an online biz at her blog, [Get More Clients Online Blog](http://www.getmoreclientsonline.com).

Author **Jennifer Kothe.** Jennifer Kothe is the talented marketing coordinator at Internet Traffic Solutions (www.itsontarget.com) which is a full service marketing agency that offers clients a profitable way to get the attention of their target audience online.

Author **Philip Nicosia.** Podcastblaster.com supplies easy to use [podcasting software](http://www.podcastblaster.com) and provides tips on [video podcasting](http://www.podcastblaster.com) and [podcasting for profit](http://www.podcastblaster.com).

Author **Sharon Housley.** Sharon Housley manages marketing for FeedForAll www.feedforall.com software for creating, editing, publishing RSS feeds and podcasts. In addition Sharon manages marketing for NotePage www.notepage.net a wireless text messaging software company.

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