

Start Today!

Podcasting Made Easy

How to launch and succeed with your first podcast



by Steve Hart

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Introduction

Hello and welcome to *Podcasting Made Easy*. Podcasting is an increasingly popular way for people to share news and information about their business and hobbies.

Audio files are a lot smaller than video files, so are easier and quicker to download. Podcasts can also be enjoyed while on the move – they don't require people to look at a screen. For this reason they are versatile and can be enjoyed during almost any activity.

My first podcast was made in 2011 when I started a weekly review of business and stock market news linked to a magazine I was editing.

Later I moved on to podcasting about careers and employment, and then a weekly news podcast called *Talking Point*. In 2014 I started a one-hour news podcast that was syndicated to dozens of internet and low power FM radio stations across the US, New Zealand and the UK (in addition to being on all the best podcatching sites). At the time of writing I podcast about the WordPress CMS and real estate.

So quite a few podcasts over the years, each one running its course, and some overlapping one another. Each podcast better than the one before as my experience developed.

My background is in journalism so I have been able to use some of the best gear there is. But from my home office / studio, I started podcasting using modest equipment.

I routinely browse the podcast forums and read heated debates on which microphone is 'best', which mixer is better than another, learn about people's favourite software, and so on.

My view is that content comes first, audio quality a close second and then the gear. I am a bit fanatical about audio being clean so listeners aren't turned off by poor audio quality. But it was only recently that I got anything near pro gear – most of my podcasts have been recorded using a budget mic and free software. Once I knew podcasting was for me I started to invest in better gear to up my game.

I think of it like this; does having a top-notch camera make one a better photographer? No. Most of the art of a good photo comes down to experience, technique, composition, and skill. The same applies

to any trade. So when it comes to podcasting, while a certain level of audio quality is expected by listeners – because they are used to digital recordings and FM radio – you don't need to spend a king's ransom just to share your ideas, views, and information.

One podcaster I know still uses an old goose neck microphone that came free with his PC 10 years ago. It sounds like it too. But still, the content is good and he has built up a keen following.

And that is the basic premise of *Podcasting Made Easy*, to help you make great podcasts with as little initial outlay as possible, and help you understand why you would want to podcast at all.

I believe the basics required to be a successful podcaster are a passion to communicate and commitment to the subject matter of your podcast – the rest will fall into place as your audience builds and your skill level improves. Passion and desire must come first.

What is a podcast?

In this book, a podcast is an audio recording that is made available for free via podcast libraries such as iTunes, Tunein, and Spreaker etc.

POD stands for Play On Demand, and there is a podcast for most any subject you can think of.

Some radio broadcasters release shows, or segments of shows, as downloadable files, and there is some debate among the podcast community as to whether the podcast tag really applies to them – I don't think it does.

In my opinion, podcasts are defined as a sequence of speech-based recordings where someone shares their expertise/information on a given subject at regular intervals – ideally weekly.

Some people talk about comic book characters, TV shows, films...you name it – if it exists (in the real world or in the mind) there's bound to be a podcast about it.

So, if you want to start getting 'on the air' to share your thoughts and expertise, the following pages cover everything you need to get started and take your podcast to its full potential.

Why podcast?

First off, you need to decide why you want to start podcasting. Do you just fancy the idea of being heard around the world? Is it an ego trip, do you want to do it just because you can, do you want to raise your profile or drum up business?

If you are employed, and being paid by your boss to produce a podcast for the firm, then you're laughing. You'll get paid to do something that can be great fun – and you shouldn't have to worry about the cost of setting it all up.

But if you are in business and only really get paid when a client pays you then you will need to dig deep to find the stamina to podcast week in, week out. There has to be a benefit to the cost in time and effort for doing it. Fame is great if that's what you want, but fortune is better.

From what I have seen, most of the people who just fancy the idea of podcasting, and who don't really have a game plan, abandon the idea before they have completed 10 episodes.

In fact, many podcasts don't make it to seven episodes for this very reason. This is because after the initial buzz of making the first few shows has subsided, making a podcast can become a chore, a chore with little reward – just the self-appointed kudos of having recorded a show and uploaded it to a website.

Then you find that only 30 people downloaded your last podcast, you get zero feedback from listeners (who are more fickle and uncaring than you can ever imagine), your calls for donations via a PayPal 'donate' button to keep the show 'on the air' falls on deaf ears, and slowly you begin to wonder why you are doing it at all. Which is the key question. Why?

Yes, making a podcast is great fun, but why are you doing it? Just because you can? Not good enough!

If you fancy a career in broadcasting, then maybe fronting a podcast is one way to get some exposure and experience of speaking into a microphone, interviewing people, producing a show, adding music, and dropping in jingles.

It could help form a showreel for you to send to radio stations, and in

this case, falls under the ‘market your brand / raise your profile’ subject heading.

But it does take a lot of time, and it’s not quite the same as being live on air – it could make for a good experience nonetheless.

To be honest though, there are plenty of hospital and internet radio stations around crying out for people to volunteer their time to host shows, and if you fancy that then see: www.forum.internet-radio.com/volunteering/

Trawl through the podcasts on iTunes, TuneIn, Spreaker, Stitcher etc and you’ll quickly figure out that the vast majority of podcasts are made by people with a services to offer, and use their podcast to promote their products or service by sharing their insights and expertise. They promote themselves as being experts in their field as a marketing operation.

So, what’s your area of expertise or passion? What can you talk about to friends without a moment’s thought? In short, what subject do you know inside out and enjoy keeping abreast of?

Okay, so you may have a hobby you can talk about, and it may also be that you hope to turn that hobby into a paying job at some point. You could talk for 10 minutes each week on the latest news from within your industry.

The bottom line is, what’s in it for you? Are you podcasting for your employer on their dime [great]? Or are you podcasting for personal reasons? Either way, you must decide where you are going before you start.

Lock down these four words before you start:

- Vision: Blue sky thinking on where you want to be.
- Goal: The desired result, a specific place.
- Plan: The steps you need to take to achieve your goal.
- Purpose: Why? The reason for all of the above. Write it down.



Key take away

Want to start a podcast? Why now and why you?