

Launching and producing a podcast the right way

While a podcast is a great way to bring new readers to your blog, it's not the only reason you should start one. In addition to new followers, you connect with your audience on a more personal level.

Hearing someone speak is undoubtedly more personal than reading words on a screen. With this kind of connection, you can gain your listener's trust and get their attention in lesser time than it takes to read a blog post. It may seem obvious, but when you're talking to a mic, it's easy to get self-conscious and not sound like yourself. Smile, laugh, be yourself and enjoy the process of getting your message out there. Soon you'll have a group of followers who can't wait for your next episode.

A well-planned podcast will make your podcasting routine easier. Just like a blog, a podcast needs a content calendar, so you have a clear idea of what you need to accomplish for each episode.

FOLLOW AN OUTLINE

The dangers of recording a podcast without an outline are that you'll go off-topic and find yourself rambling on about something else entirely. Storytelling is ok if the story is part of the original plan but can sound like rambling if it is not part of your original outline.

Just like a blog post, a podcast should have an introduction, body, and conclusion. You don't have to write a script that you read word-for-word; that would just sound like an advertisement or a bad commercial. Just make yourself a bullet point list of what you'll talk about and in what order.

While talking about something else for a few minutes can add personality to your podcast, you need to know when to bring your show back to delivering the subject matter at hand.

GETTING PERSONAL

Speaking of personality, one of the benefits of a podcast is connecting with your audience on a deeper, more personal level. Podcasts are great for telling personal stories that relate to the episode's topic. If you're giving advice about how to do a certain task, talk about how you learned to do the task effectively or whether you had challenges along the way. Vulnerability makes you more human.

EPISODES

List potential episode titles and schedule to publish them in a logical order. For instance, an episode with the title "How to Choose a Web Host" should come first before "How to Set Up Your Blog." You can also have a theme or single general topic and break it down into sub-topics within a given time frame. For instance, you can assign April as "SEO month," so all your episodes will be about SEO for April.

When you have a clear content plan for your podcast, you don't have to worry about coming up with a topic for your next episode. All you need to focus on is creating and recording the content.

INVEST IN A QUALITY MICROPHONE

Don't just buy a cheap microphone; you'll end up having to heavily edit the recording to compensate for poor audio quality. If you have the budget, or you can wait a little longer to have enough money to buy a quality microphone, I suggest you do so.

Having the best possible recording equipment will save you a lot of trouble when it's time to edit your audio and will make you sound more like yourself when speaking.

GET A PROFESSIONALLY MADE PODCAST COVER IMAGE & INTRO

Unless you're a graphic designer, I suggest having your podcast cover image made by a professional. You can ask around for the best designers in your area, or just contact me and I can design one for you at minimal cost.

Make sure you choose a designer whose graphic style matches with your personal brand. Have a clear idea of how you want your image to look and take your time giving clear instructions. Better yet, if you speak with a good marketer, they will even help you design the image before creating it.

Take note that your podcast cover image will appear as a thumbnail image on most podcast streaming services, so go for a design that still stands out even when it's small.

CHOOSING A PODCASTING WEB HOST

There are two main ways to host your podcast: on your website or through a hosting platform.

With a website, you have full control over your podcast and visibility into stats like website traffic and downloads. Hosting platforms add an additional step to your production process, but they also offer a wide variety of features that you may not have access to on your own site.

What does a podcast hosting provider do? These sites allow you to upload your audio file, they create an rss feed for the podcast, and then serve the files for your listeners. A podcast is simply an rss file which contains a map to the audio files. So, at a minimum you need an rss file, image, and audio files to be public somewhere on the internet, so listeners can find the show and listen.

There are many different podcast hosting platforms, and it can be difficult to decide which one to choose. Some companies have been around a long time and new ones are popping up all the time. There are free platforms but most charge a monthly fee depending on your needs. Do your research to ensure you are getting what you pay for.

SOUND QUALITY

Why is sound quality so important for your podcast? You want your listener to feel like the only person in the world that matters and to forget that they're listening to a podcast. This means that the better your audience can hear your podcast, the greater the chance they will continue to tune in, retain the information, and act on your calls to action.

SOUND TIPS

Once you decide which application to use to record your podcast, don't forget about these additional tips:

- Use a computer and not your phone.
- Use an Ethernet cable instead of Wi-Fi.
- Ensure you're using the CHROME browser.
- Ensure you're using headphones and that they're wired (not Bluetooth).
- Don't use a headset or laptop mic (they're not meant for podcasts). Instead, use an XLR or USB microphone. Laptop mics leave hollow sound, and headset mics are great for conference calls, but don't produce good sound quality.
- Turn off Outlook, all computer applications, and your cell phone.
- Don't record near air conditioners, fans, open windows.
- Ensure no one else enters the room (including pets).
- Test your internet connection beforehand.
- Rooms filled with clutter are great for sound. I suggest using pillows, blankets or anything that absorbs vibration.

LEARN BASIC AUDIO EDITING

You can hire someone to edit your audio files for you or you can do it yourself. Learning audio editing can take a while, but it's worth it if you want total control of how your finished recording sounds. A free audio editing tool called Audacity works great, but if you want to get more advanced, there are others you can choose. I suggest doing your research and spending some time finding which one you like best. You can always start off small until you feel more comfortable. More advanced editing tools will allow you to edit, enhance and compress your audio files so your podcast has the best possible quality when streamed online.

PROMOTE YOUR BLOG OR LANDING PAGE IN THE PODCAST

Don't forget to mention your blog/site at least twice during a podcast. This lets your audience know where to find you. You can also direct your audiences to a specific page to find certain information like how to contact you. Make sure any links you give are short and easy to remember.

MARKETING

How do you plan to market your podcast? The great thing about podcasts is that the content can be repurposed and distributed in so many ways.

Some hosts allow you to add customizable calls-to-action to your podcast landing page or episode description and create supporting content like basic social media graphics. Some platforms offer social media automatic posts every time you publish.

And don't forget paid opportunities as well. Many of the hosting platforms that offer ad marketplaces also allow you to place your own ads on different podcasts for a small fee.

ASK YOUR LISTENERS TO SUBSCRIBE AND LEAVE A REVIEW

Before the end of each podcast episode, always tell your readers to subscribe and leave a review if they liked the episode. You can also include a link on your blog below your podcast player, so your blog readers can subscribe and leave a review as well.

There is a lot to think about when launching a podcast but start by creating a features list for yourself and set a budget. There are no bad choices, just the choices that are best for you at this time.