Maybe You Should be Podcasting for Clients

THE REASONS FOR CREATING A PODCAST ARE VARIED. THE WEEKLY PODCAST I CREATED AFTER 16 YEARS OR SO ON WTVN RADIO IS ABOUT TO RUN PROGRAM NUMBER 600. THAT'S 12 YEARS. WOULD A PODCAST HELP YOUR BUSINESS?

Making money *directly* from a podcast is problematic, although some podcasters do. Whether or not this is the case may depend on the reasons for creating it. One of the best reasons is to enhance your position in the marketplace, but only if you have something *worthwhile* to say.

Unlike commercial and non-commercial radio, podcasts are delivered on the listener's schedule. People may turn a radio on at home, in the car, or at the office just to create some background sound. Few would turn on a podcast for that reason because the podcast must be sought out explicitly. Podcasts fill a need for listeners and may fill a need for your business.

Podcasting is a way for content providers (those who know something about a topic) to provide that knowledge to content consumers (those who want to know something about that topic). Podcasts are in the same vicinity of the media landscape as websites and blogs, streaming media, and web radio. They are somewhat distant from the *old media* — books, newspapers, and broadcast.

The *old media* face a troubling future. Newspapers have lost ad revenue and are trying to find a way to be profitable with on-line subscriptions.

Few radio stations have local programming during the day, choosing instead to run network programs or to have announcers in distant cities create voice tracks that sound live only if you're not paying attention.

Podcast listeners choose when and where to listen.

I grew up in a small town in northwest Ohio. If I didn't like what the local radio station was playing, I could listen to stations in Columbus, Dayton, Fort Wayne, Pittsburgh, Cleveland, Detroit, Windsor, and Cincinnati; at night, I could add Minneapolis, Boston, New York, Nashville, Saint Louis, and sometimes Dallas. Every signal was different. Now there's a lot of sameness across the dial and some people are looking for more worthwhile content. Podcasts fill that need.

Podcasts can be recorded anytime and listeners can listen whenever they like. There's something magic about speaking via a big transmitter that sends your voice out for people to hear 150 miles away, but there's

something equally magic about preparing a podcast that's listened to around the world.

Building Your Brand

A PODCAST THAT DISCUSSES HOW TO USE YOUR COMPANY'S PRODUCT OR SERVICE CAN GAIN A FOLLOWING BY CURRENT AND PROSPECTIVE CLIENTS.

All that's needed is a sincere and honest desire to provide useful information that will appeal to the people you'd like to talk to. There's a stark line between useful information and self-serving *blather*.

Perhaps you've attended a conference where one of the presenters spent most of the time allotted attempting to sell you a product or service. If so, you probably felt cheated and the conference organizer may not have

Podcasters choose when and where to record the podcast.

engaged that person again. The same is true for podcasts. If the listener feels that you're primarily a huckster for your own product or service, that listener won't be back.

Have an engaging message and be personal. The best radio performers have always known that their audience may be numbered in the hundreds or thousands, but that people listen to radio individually. The conversation must be between two people. And it is a *conversation*, not an *oration*. Talk to *me*. That's the podcaster's credo.

Here's an example: The podcaster who says "most of you ..." emphasizes the audience, but the podcaster who simply says "you ..." emphasizes the individual.

When an announcer says "most of you probably do this" I wonder which parts "most of me" refers to. My head and shoulders? Does it include my arms? What about my legs? These are subtle differences, but one of the best program directors I encountered during more than 20 years in radio admitted that most of the radio stations in the market got most of the basics right. That meant "the least important things become the most important things." Small errors had large effects.

Take the time needed to script your message, too. When you listen to news on radio, you can be sure that somebody has written it and that the newscaster is reading it. If you're one of those uncommon people who can ad lib in a way that your message is clear, you may be able to omit the script. As an old radio news announcer, I am not one of those people.

So you need a meaningful, well prepared message and a desire to help listeners. When you have those, you'll be able to become a trusted advisor.

Technical Needs

Podcasts are inexpensive to create. All you need is a decent microphone, a computer, an audio editing program, and a website host.

A dynamic cardioid microphone is a good choice for podcasts. You should invest in 3 other relatively inexpensive items for the microphone: A desk stand, a wind screen, and a pop filter. Holding a microphone instead of placing it on a stand will result in noise. Many microphones come with wind screens, but a pop filter will reduce the popping sounds that are caused by plosives: P, T, B, and D.

To record your podcast and generate the MP3 file that you'll upload to a website, you'll need a recording program.

My preference is Adobe Audition, which is part of Adobe Creative Cloud ($50/month). Other options include Magix Sound Forge Audio Studio ($60 for a perpetual license), Ardour's digital audio workstation ($12/year), and Audacity (free, open source).

When I started recording a podcast, I had the advantage of more than 20 years of dealing with audio in a broadcast environment, so everything seemed easy, obvious, logical, and straightforward. Those who are new to audio will find the process less so. Fortunately, YouTube offers many programs that deal with the technical aspects of recording, editing, and preparing your podcast.

And Then

When the podcast is complete, you'll want to register it with Apple's Itunes and other podcast promoters such as Google Listen.

Most of your listeners will come via Apple, but don't ignore the others. You'll want to add the podcast to your website, of course, just as I do on TechByter Worldwide. Once the podcast is registered with Itunes and other promoters, these services will automatically index new editions.

But you should also use social media to promote the podcast and on the day you choose as launch day, be sure to have at least 3 podcasts already produced and available. Why? Anybody who likes the podcast will want more and having at least a few episodes "in the can" is the best way to prepare for that.

Set a schedule for subsequent episodes. TechByter Worldwide is recorded on Thursday or Friday, produced on Friday, and on the website no later than 4am (Eastern time) on Saturday, which is when a promotional email goes out to those who have signed up to receive it. The publication date is Sunday and this is primarily because the radio program was broadcast on Sunday morning.

Regardless of the day you choose, it's important to have a schedule because that's what people expect. The newspaper arrives at 5:30 each morning. Local news is on television at 11pm (10 Central). *Time* magasine arrives on Saturday. Your podcast should go live on a regular schedule if you want it to be taken seriously.

So if you have a message that you're serious about sharing, consider podcasting. Ω