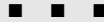


## PODCAST SPECIFIC TOPICS



Podcasts are exploding in number and popularity. The low barrier to entry, the addictive nature, and the incredible amount of both niche and mainstream content are hard to beat—yet not everyone is upbeat. Some people see podcasting itself as a niche technology, never to approach “traditional” text-based blogging in popularity. They see many of podcasting’s most enthusiastic supporters as those who missed the first wave of blogging and are looking for “the next big thing.”

Certainly podcasting is growing and podcasts are evolving. New podcasts are started every week. People even argue about what exactly a podcast is—is it always audio or can it be video? Not all users like audio. Some prefer watching video. Some prefer reading and are more comfortable with blogs. People have different learning styles and preferences.

We’re going to hear some thoughts and advice from podcast fans and pioneers, and then look at some examples of podcasts themselves. You’ll also find podcasting information throughout this book. This chapter deals with podcast specifics that don’t apply to text-based blogs.



---

# 66.

## WHAT MAKES A GREAT PODCAST?

Advice for podcasters



So what makes a great podcast? Who better to ask than Paul Gillin, an independent content marketing consultant and former IT journalist who is an enormous fan of podcasts?

“A great podcast is short and passionate,” says Paul. The ideal length is between 5 and 20 minutes, and at 30 minutes a podcaster is risking overstaying his or her welcome. People prefer shorter podcasts. Longer podcasts can work well if the podcaster has a very strong personality, such as Adam Curry and his popular Daily Source Code podcast, *www.dailysourcecode.com*, or if the podcast is a recording of a live event, for example, a speech at a conference.

“Podcasters need to be passionate about their topic,” adds Paul. There must be an intersection between the strengths of the podcaster and the podcast’s format so that passion shows through. For example, some people may be more effective and comfortable podcasting in a question-and-answer format or with a cohost, while others may be more effective taking a more casual approach.

Five formats for podcasts work well, according to Paul:

1. One person talking
2. Question-and-answer format with a subject matter expert
3. Cohosted podcasts, with personalities that have complementary strengths and play off each other well
4. A news format, which works especially well in underserved, and often very specialized, markets
5. Speeches of recorded events, such as conferences and other meetings

Enormous numbers of new podcasts are appearing, and Paul has some very sensible advice to anyone looking at starting a podcast:

- Pick something you are passionate about.
- Plan six to eight podcasts with the basics of what you know.
- Have some ideas of how to continue when you run out of obvious things to talk about.

Businesses that want to start a podcast must conduct some research first, just as businesses that want to start a blog must do some research. They need to listen to a variety of podcasts to explore different formats and techniques. They also need to pick a great topic they are passionate about. And quite important for a business podcast, it needs a purpose, not just “Let’s podcast because everyone else is doing it.”

A business topic need not mirror a company’s core business, but the topic should be relevant for the business’s audience. An example is the popular American Family podcasts, *www.whirlpool.com/custserv/promo.jsp?sectionId=563*, from Whirlpool. They don’t talk about appliances; it’s hard to imagine an interesting series of podcasts on washing machines! These podcasts concentrate on family issues, and presumably many families buy appliances, at least as compared to single people in their 20s! Recent topics include homeschooling, baby food, and children’s playdates.

An enormous number of really good podcasts exists—so many that you could probably listen 24 hours a day. If you want your podcast to succeed and become really popular, it needs to be more than really good; it needs to be great!

---

# 67.

## EVERYONE SHOULD PODCAST

Or at least have an audio presence on the Internet



“All solopreneurs should podcast,” says Michael Pollack, an Internet business consultant who thinks all businesses should be podcasting. Although he may be exaggerating slightly, Michael makes a number of great points and observations.

“Portability is part of today’s lifestyle,” notes Michael. People have limited time to read a brochure, book, or surf the Web, but there is a lot of available time while moving—both while driving and during other activities when one cannot read. Satellite radio capitalizes on this trend, and so do other forms of audio such as podcasts, which allow users with scarce reading time to listen while they are driving, walking the dog, or exercising.

Audio has another big benefit besides portability—familiarity. People may come to feel they know you from reading your blog, but they more quickly become familiar with you when they hear your voice. “A lot is communicated via voice,” says Michael.

“We’re getting out of the early adopter phase, and podcasts are rapidly becoming more mainstream,” according to Michael. “Podcasts, or at least some audio presence, will quickly become almost necessary for conducting business, just as business cards have long been essentially required and just about every company has a Web site today.” Podcasting is developing into less of an opportunity and more of a requirement. Not having an audio presence is quickly becoming a competitive disadvantage.

The number of devices that can play MP3s, the common podcast file format, is rapidly growing. Specialized audio devices are relatively cheap and the prices are dropping rapidly, and MP3 audio capability is increasingly being integrated into other devices. Many new cars have built-in MP3 players, just as all cars have some kind of radio. “Even two years ago, high-end RVs had MP3 players built in,” says Michael. Before long, the now ubiquitous cell phone will have integrated MP3 functionality. “Within five

years, everyone will have an audio device, just like everyone has a TV and radio today,” notes Michael. Of course, most computers can also play MP3 files, although they are not usually mobile or convenient.

It’s easy and inexpensive to start podcasting. Michael records on his PC, using a couple of different programs. Many cheap and free programs are available. An easy way to start podcasting is to interview experts in your field and related fields. Michael usually conducts podcast interviews over Skype, and uses the free version of the HotRecorder product to record them.

Before long, having an audio presence on the Internet will be almost a requirement for doing business. Fortunately, podcasting is an easy and inexpensive way to get audio on the Internet.

---

## 68.

### SOME PODCASTING ADVICE

At a minimum: passion, a desire to share, and time



“Don’t do it to make money,” says Martin McKeay, a security expert who is involved with two podcasts, his Network Security podcast, *www.mckeay.net*, and The Podcast Roundtable, *www.podcastroundtable.com*. Maybe the top 1 percent of podcasts are profitable, and planning on making money is not a reasonable goal. There are plenty of other business, personal, and social reasons to podcast, according to Martin.

Podcasting develops relationships and creates opportunities you’d never have otherwise. There are chances to interview people and attend events you never would have otherwise. Martin has met plenty of famous and well-known people because of his podcasting. The networking opportunities are immense. As someone once said, “It’s not what you know, it’s who you know,” and podcasters tend to know a lot of people and are well known. Also, just “the exchange of ideas is worth the time put into it,” adds Martin.

Martin suggests you had better be passionate about your podcasting topic, and it should be something you want to share. Don’t just do it because

it's a fad! If you're not passionate or don't want to share, you probably won't keep doing it or succeed. "Many people don't realize the time involved," according to Martin. He often starts working on his Network Security Podcast around 7 PM and finishes at midnight. His 30-minute podcast takes one to two hours of preparation time, 30 to 45 minutes of recording, one to two more hours of postproduction work, and then an additional hour for uploading, producing show notes, and other miscellaneous tasks. That's up to 5 or more hours to produce a 30-minute podcast!

Martin prefers to podcast with others. "I'm boring by myself," says Martin, although his listeners might disagree. Martin likes having guests on his Network Security podcast, someone to bounce ideas off, and finds it really allows for an expansion of ideas. Many podcasters agree with Martin, and podcasts often have multiple hosts as well as guests.

The Podcast Roundtable has five hosts, all bloggers, who have enough different viewpoints on the Internet and Web to make it worthwhile to get together each month and talk. At least 700 people agree and download the monthly podcast. Multiple hosts keep it lively and interesting.

With multiple hosts, however, Martin says there will certainly be additional challenges. Everyone needs to have similar goals. They don't need to be identical, but they must align somewhat. With multiple hosts, it is especially important to plan up front in what direction the podcast will be going. Although the plan may certainly evolve, there must be some basic agreement among the members. It's also possible that interpersonal issues may be involved and things just may not work out in the long term.

Podcasting is time-intensive, and you must be passionate about your topic and want to share. It can also be incredibly rewarding with networking opportunities, the chance to exchange ideas, and more. Just don't start podcasting to join the fad and don't plan on generating direct revenue. Do some basic planning, and do it for the long term. Martin suggests the only way to start is just to do it—too many people plan and never start, or start and never feel their podcasts are good enough to put on the Internet, and that benefits no one.

---

# 69.

## TALKR—CONVERTING BLOGS TO PODCASTS

Listening to text-based blogs while driving



Imagine driving to the office as you read your favorite blogs. Sound like insanity, a dream, or fantasy? Many users regularly listen to podcasts in the car, but can't keep up with blogs while driving, or at least they couldn't before Talkr, *www.talkr.com*.

Talkr founder Chris Brooks had the same problems. He used to commute to work, wasting three hours each day in the process. He tried to use the time effectively, listening to podcasts and audio books, but he would fall behind on his reading, especially blogs. A three-hour commute is not that uncommon in the United States, and certainly scores of people spend at least an hour a day driving to and from work. Just an hour a day means that 250 hours are spent commuting in a typical work year.

Chris came up with a way to easily convert blogs to podcasts and listen to them while commuting. "Talkr podcasts the blogs you love," says Chris. "It's a podcasting server." You can hear your favorite blogs at times when reading is inappropriate or impossible, like while you are driving, exercising, or mowing the lawn. Many busy people have very limited additional reading time most weeks, but have free listening time when they are busy doing other things—and they can now use that extra "ear time" to catch up on their favorite blogs.

Many users may be a bit apprehensive, recalling that early attempts at converting text to audio were, well, clumsy, with robotic and not entirely understandable voices requiring extreme concentration. In contrast, Talkr's voice is a pleasant and inviting female voice. It is slightly robotic, but not unpleasantly so, and very listenable.

Talkr offers both free and paid services. The free service allows you to listen to Talkr's free audio feeds, about 16 popular blogs, as well as any three additional blogs you chose. Actually, Talkr will let you listen to more than just blogs—it can convert any Web site with an RSS feed into audio.



You can also add “Listen to this post” buttons to your blog by joining the free Talkr Partners program. “Talkr Partners provides bloggers with a podcast of their text-only blog,” says Chris. “Once configured, the day-to-day process of producing the podcast is fully automated. Talkr provides hosting and bandwidth for the podcast.” Talkr also offers paid services with additional features.

Our lives today provide us with little extra time to read! But many people do occasionally have extra “ear time” when driving, biking, in the gym, fishing, or mowing the lawn. Now we can use Talkr to listen to our favorite blogs.

---

## 70. MONETIZING PODCASTS

Business models for podcasts



“Podcasting is growing at an unprecedented rate,” says Michael Geoghegan, author of the book *Podcast Solutions*. Making money from podcasting is an area of extreme interest, but “podcasters are struggling with monetization,” adds Michael. He sees a number of different models for monetizing podcasts, i.e., making money from them, and has succeeded at more than one!

One of the simplest models is when an existing business adds podcasting to their marketing and communications mix. The podcast helps support the business by adding value to the customers, much as business blogging does. Companies podcasting today include Whirlpool, Disney, Cisco, RSA Security, and many more.

Another model is consulting and production services. Big companies who want to podcast rarely have the in-house expertise, but they want to do it right. For example, Michael has produced podcasts for Disney Resorts. The need for consulting and production services for podcasting is growing.

Many podcasters want to monetize their existing or soon-to-be-started podcasts, often on topics they are passionate about, which are not connected

to any business. Michael thinks many podcasters have unrealistic expectations, although he does see a lot of opportunity, especially in niche markets. “There are some expectations when you monetize—it’s more like a job,” says Michael. “It’s like the difference between hiring a high school kid to mow your lawn or a lawn-care service.” Whether you accept advertisements, sponsors, or product placements, or even charge for your podcast, suddenly you need to give your audience what they want, which may not necessarily be what you always want to do. You may have to commit to a schedule. Details will need to be carefully described in a contract. What if you have a \$50-a-week advertiser, and you suddenly get Bill Gates on your podcast? You may suddenly have 250,000 downloads. How long are you required to keep that advertiser or sponsor in your podcast? A week, a month, forever? A good contract will address these issues.

Podcasters must also consider at what price point it makes sense to monetize. Is it worth making the jump for \$50 or \$100 a week? For the GrapeRadio podcast, [www.graperadio.com](http://www.graperadio.com), in which Michael is involved, it was \$1,000. Monetizing is hard work and requires contracts, media kits, selling or outsourcing ads and sponsorships, and more.

What are a podcaster’s goals when it comes to monetization? It’s certainly possible to have podcasting pay for itself and maybe make an extra \$5,000 or \$10,000 a year, but much harder to quit your day job or get rich. Podcasters need to realize that few will ever quit their day jobs and support themselves solely through podcasting.

There are also nonfinancial rewards from podcasting that may help to make your efforts worthwhile. The GrapeRadio crew gets to travel to wine events worldwide and meet famous wine personalities. Often, they even fly to Southern California specifically to meet with GrapeRadio and be on the show. Michael’s Reel Reviews podcast, [www.reelreviewsradio.com](http://www.reelreviewsradio.com), which reviews movies, results in free DVDs, often before they are released. Podcasters may be treated as members of the media and get access to events they wouldn’t otherwise.

A lot of opportunities are appearing in podcasting as it explodes in popularity. Existing companies are leveraging podcasts, and there is work for the podcast-savvy as consultants and in podcast production. The podcast as a media outlet with advertisements, sponsorships, and more can be a viable business model, but podcasters need to set their

expectations and realize that making money is usually hard work; previous business experience is helpful.

---

# 71.

## WHAT DO PODCAST LISTENERS WANT?

Feedback is elusive



“A lot of people are getting involved in podcasting and they are taking a ‘Record it and they will come’ attitude,” says Dan Sweet, who is in the IT services and staffing industry. “But attracting an audience is difficult.” Dan’s podcast is the Free Resume And Career Toolbox podcast, FRACAT, [www.fracat.com/blog](http://www.fracat.com/blog), where he covers job-seeking and career topics. He also is a host of the Podcast Roundtable, [www.podcastroundtable.com](http://www.podcastroundtable.com), a podcast where five people comment on the Internet and the Web.

Dan receives a lot of positive feedback on his podcasting, which is great. Unfortunately, the vast majority of comments are along the lines of “Excellent show” or “I love the podcast.” Other podcasters have similar experiences. These aren’t comments that help fine-tune the content or direction of the podcasts. The number of people listening is growing for both podcasts, but there is little information about what people are looking for. That type of feedback has been essentially impossible to get.

“It’s like trying to mine for gold in the dark,” says Dan. Perhaps people aren’t sure what they want from podcasting. Maybe you can survey your current listeners—but how about everyone else out there? If you pick a specialization that has lots of interest, especially if you are the first or among the first in that niche, then you’ll have plenty of listeners, but luck also plays a large role.

Doing something you love is great, but “you are not your own market,” stresses Dan. Don’t assume that because you like something, other people will, too. You need to produce content that your listeners and target market like, and figuring out what that is can be difficult.

Another challenge is attracting people in addition to those who are already podcast-savvy. Most people don't know, and may not care, what a podcast is. Some factors to consider are where your target audience hangs out, what they read, etc. If they are young, for example, MySpace might work. One hint may be to avoid using the term "*podcast*." Several successful podcasts have the term "*radio*" in their name, like GrapeRadio. People are familiar and comfortable with the term *radio*.

The barriers to entry in podcasting are low and almost anyone can produce a podcast. That is part of its attraction. But the vast amounts of material that are created can make it difficult to attract listeners. Creativity can be highly rewarded. No one knows exactly what works or will work in the future. In the short term, Dan is podcasting and not worrying too much about his numbers of listeners. They are increasing, so he must be providing value, but getting feedback on what they want remains somewhat elusive.

---

## 72.

### PODSAFE MUSIC

The Podsafe Music Network



Music licensing bodies have not embraced podcasting, to say the least. Many copyright and licensing policies were created in reaction to concerns about illegal file sharing, and they haven't been changed since. "When the record labels, the RIAA, licensing bodies, and others hear MP3, they freak out," says C. C. Chapman, podsafe music advocate and prolific podcaster. They don't understand podcasting. "It can be dangerous for podcasters to play music," warns C. C.

In late 2004, C. C. started a music podcast. It was fun, but not worth getting sued over, so he convinced unsigned bands to agree to have their music played on his podcast. It was hard: He had to find the bands. He had to exchange countless e-mails. He had to continually explain what podcasting was.

In early 2005, PodShow, *www.podshow.com*, a podcast network, tapped C. C. to create a repository of podsafe music that any podcast could use without fear of legal action. What exactly is podsafe music? C. C. defines it as “music that all the rights holders have said can be used license-free on podcasts.” Podsafe music is important for more than music podcasts, because many nonmusic podcasts use music during their introductions or closings.

Podcasts and podsafe music are very empowering for artists. They can release all or some of their music as podsafe, and they get exposure, they get heard, and they can sell their music worldwide. C. C. related a story in which a beginning podsafe artist in Tennessee was amazed that someone from Australia was ordering his CD; it’s a great source of exposure with no cost to the artist.

Royalties through the traditional channels are slim—the artists get a small percentage of the proceeds from the sales of CDs and other media. In contrast, when artists sell music directly to their fans, they keep all the profit. Most artists need to do their own promotion whether they are selling music directly to fans or not. Record companies rarely do promotion, particularly for emerging artists: They just get the CDs into stores.

The Podsafe Music Network, *music.podshow.com*, went live in July of 2005. It currently has more than 4,000 artists and 20,000 songs. Many successful bands are interested and have made some of their music available. The smaller independent record labels are on board, and many midsize ones are too. As for the bigger record companies, “I’d rather work with them,” says C. C., but they tend to be litigious instead of friendly. Artists who have contracts with them could be getting exposure and potentially increasing sales by releasing some of their music as podsafe.

The labels need artists more than artists need labels today. A record contract has never been an assurance of success, and it is becoming less and less important. In the end, podcasting and podsafe music is part of the marketing for many bands. It helps get the word and the music out.

---

# 73.

## PROMOTING MUSIC THROUGH PODCASTING

Brother Love



“It’s been pretty fantastic,” says Brother Love, a pop-rock singer and songwriter. “It’s the wave of the future, or maybe the future is now.” He’s talking about his experiences promoting his music through podcasting, both on his own podcast, Brother Love Notes, *brotherlovenotes.blogspot.com*, and via other podcasts and the Podsafe Music Network. He believes this is the best way for unsigned, up-and-coming artists to promote themselves.

In mid-2005, a friend suggested, “You gotta check out podcasting.” Brother Love checked it out and contacted a podcaster with a request to play his music. On successive days, his music was played on PodcastNYC, *www.podcastnyc.net*, Getting a Leg Up, *legup.libsyn.com*, Accident Hash, *accidenthash.podshow.com*, and Daily Source Code, *www.dailysourcecode.com*. You may recognize some of these as extremely popular podcasts.

“I started making money,” says Brother Love. “I realized the power of it.” His CD, available on *www.CDbaby.com*, which connects with iTunes and many other distribution points, started selling. He began earning a few hundred dollars every week or two.

He also put a couple of songs on the Podsafe Music Network. He realized he was giving away his intellectual property in exchange for worldwide distribution. “It’s all about getting your music out there,” says Brother Love. Podcasters gave links to Brother Love’s Web site, *www.brotherloverocks.com*, in their show notes in exchange. He was becoming well known and receiving lots of fan e-mail.

In November of 2005, he was flying to the Podcast and Portable Media Expo and was shocked when people recognized him on the plane. “That was when I really got it,” says Brother Love. “Now I have friends. It’s like a small army.” Whenever he is playing a gig, podcasters play recordings of him asking fans to come to the show, and it works well.

Brother Love’s music is all over the place. Podcasting has helped put it on the map. It has been in a motion picture and may be appearing in TV commercials and shows soon, and, of course, there’s his CD, his live shows, his contributions to the Podsafe Music Network, and plenty of podcasts that play his music.

Would Brother Love be interested in a record company contract if it were offered? “It would have to be a pretty damn good contract,” he states. “I’m my own record label at this point.”

---

## 74. WAXXI, AN INTERACTIVE PODCAST MODEL

Building community with scheduled  
podcasts and social media



Many argue that podcasts are one-way and there really is little conversation. Podcasts are recorded and posted, and afterward, people can listen. Others disagree, arguing that podcasters often read comments and play audio comments from previous shows. But these comments are after the show; they are not interactive. A podcast is not as interactive as, for example, talk radio. There is certainly far less of a conversation—nothing in real time.

“We let people be part of the conversation,” says Tracy A. Sheridan, CEO of Waxxi, [www.waxxi.us](http://www.waxxi.us). “They can ask questions as well as make comments.” Waxxi runs scheduled interactive podcasts, and listeners can call in, toll-free in the United States, in real time. “The audience also gets to interact with each other,” adds Tracy. Participants can use an embedded chat client to interact without needing to call. Guests see the chat and interact as well. “They have a feeling of closeness and connection with the audience,” she adds, “which is much stronger than with a ‘traditional podcast.’” Podcasts are also archived and available later.

Waxxi is also launching a business-focused global social network that will allow participants to converse outside of scheduled podcasts. They'll also be able to create profiles with information about themselves and their interests. Groups are being formed around the interactive podcast topics, including business blogging, Web 2.0, and more. Groups can also be formed from the suggestions of participants.

Waxxi's inaugural podcast featured authors and well-known bloggers Robert Scoble and Shel Israel on the theme of business blogging. Participants registered for the event on Waxxi's Web site and were given a unique user code and telephone number to dial in. The conversation was moderated to avoid "podcast chaos"—people had to raise their hands by touching two buttons on their telephone to ask a question. Waxxi allows 800 people, but will soon have the capability to allow 5,000, in its podcasts. There was a lively back channel conversation via chat.

There will be no shortage of opportunities for Waxxi going forward, for both informative and community-building events, as well as for organizations to use internally and with their customers and partners. Social media is evolving, and Waxxi is part of that ongoing evolution.

---

# 75.

## THE NEW RULES OF PODCASTING

Podcasting—there really are no rules



"There really are no rules—I can do anything I want with this," thought Rob Safuto when he first discovered podcasting. "How liberating this is!" Rob is the podcast producer and consultant responsible for Podcast NYC, [www.podcastnyc.net](http://www.podcastnyc.net), and others.

Unfortunately, some de facto rules started to creep in. The longer you had been podcasting, and the more podcasts you'd produced, the "cooler" you were. At the Podcast Expo last year, someone belittled a friend of his who had produced only six podcasts so far. "But they're really good



podcasts,” said Rob. Apparently, quantity is more important than quality to many podcasters. It was also assumed that once you started podcasting you had to do it for life, or you failed. Rob can think of several short-term podcasting models that can work, such as a series of podcasts to promote an event.

Rob has started writing “The New Rules of Podcasting” at the Podcast NYC blog, [www.podcastnyc.net/blog](http://www.podcastnyc.net/blog). These are partly a reaction to the rules many podcasters seem to accept and also an effort to help people who are new to podcasting. Rob is not negative: He sees lots of great things happening in podcasting, but he also sees confusion, bad practices, and charlatans attempting to profit from other’s efforts in podcasting. I spoke to Rob about his favorite new rules.

**1. Signing away the exclusive rights to your podcast is a stupid thing to do.** Some podcasters are signing away exclusive rights for a contract that promises nothing more than free hosting, and hosting is pretty cheap. “Some contracts are laughable,” says Rob, “and even require you sign away your name, likeness, and any ideas attributed to your podcast.” If they were paying real money, they might be worth considering.

Rob suggests you podcast for at least a year and hone your craft. Try to develop a minibrand. If you’re proud of your podcast, try to line up non-exclusive agreements. You can also try to find sponsors directly. Your podcast may be worthless commercially, or you may become an enormous star. Why sign away all your rights for next to nothing?

**2. Networks are a losing business model.** Podcast networks are hot, but do they make sense? A podcast network can serve several purposes, including offering podcasters a business and technical infrastructure, for example helping podcasts make money and hosting the podcast files themselves, and offering listeners a single source of many high-quality podcasts. “In traditional media, networks can work because growth of new outlets is constrained,” says Rob, “but not so in podcasting.” It’s not easy to start a new TV station, but there are new podcasts created every day—their growth is unrestrained. There is a flood of new content and trying to organize existing podcasts into a network doesn’t make much sense.

Advertising is a primary reason that networks are advocated. Sponsors can advertise across an entire network instead of writing lots of little checks to separate podcasts, but Rob doesn't buy that argument. He believes advertisers will "start producing their own podcasts instead of taking their chances on a ragtag bunch of indie media producers who might just screw up their message," and any money that flows into networks will be extremely diluted before it gets to individual podcasts.

Rob does believe that aggregating like content into a network to build community and make it easy to find makes sense, and gives the Culinary Podcast Network, *www.culinarypodcastnetwork.com*, as a great example. But a network of a little of this and a little of that—what benefit does that provide for podcasters or for their audience?

**3. Demographics don't matter.** People worry too much about audience demographics, but the model is very different than traditional media. With all the choices in podcasting, audiences tend to be very interested in the topic they're listening to. Would you rather have a few thousand intermittent, somewhat interested listeners, or a few hundred who are dedicated and are passionate about the topic?

**4. Revolutionary change will come out of nowhere.** Rob believes that big things and big changes are in store for podcasting. "Someone will come out of nowhere with something no one has ever thought of and take the world by storm," he exclaims. "It'll really reach into the public consciousness. There is no formula and no amount of money will help." It'll just be someone with an amazing new idea.

---

# 76.

## MANIC MOMMIES

Creating community for working moms  
through a podcast, blog, and private group



“Working moms do crave to connect with others, and it’s global,” says Kristin Brandt. “There is a real hunger for working moms to connect with each other. Stay-at-home moms have far more opportunities to connect with each other at kids’ events and play dates.” Manic Mommies, [www.manicmommies.com](http://www.manicmommies.com), helps working moms connect.

In 2005, Erin Kane, another working mom, told Kristin they should start a podcast together and talk about being working moms. Kristen says she “got into it to find out what it was all about.” They also started a Manic Mommies blog. Kristen had previously started a blog, but it had failed because she had no focus and had trouble deciding what to write about. In comparison, focusing on working-mom issues made it easy.

Initially, they podcasted monthly, but eventually went weekly. Both Kristin and Erin have full-time jobs in the communications field, and podcasting is a significant time commitment: “It’s a hobby, so it’s hard to give it the attention it deserves.” The average 45-minute show takes 5 hours to create. It’s a lot of work, and they are highly dedicated. It’s only possible because they both have very tolerant and supportive husbands.

The response has been terrific. “Our audience amazes me,” adds Kristin. “We never ever would have anticipated this type of response.” They often get long, personal e-mails from listeners asking for advice. They ran a recent contest in which listeners needed to send in a secret word from the podcast, and 99 percent of them sent the word (“*medicine*”) and introductory e-mails as well.

Besides the podcast and blog, Kristin and Erin have set up a private group on [www.gather.com](http://www.gather.com) to further help their listeners connect and give them a chance to start conversations. *Gather.com* has been described as MySpace for older, educated people, and members must sign up and be approved. Any member can post anything, including text and pictures.

“Manic Mommies has been incredibly rewarding,” says Kristen. Making money was never a goal, although they have recently started looking for sponsors.

So, once a week, when the kids are in bed, Erin and Kristin get together, drink wine or cosmopolitans, and share their trials and tribulations with moms and dads around the world. And they further the community they’re creating through their blog and private group on *gather.com*.

---

# 77

## THE FINANCIAL AID PODCAST

Promoting the Student Loan Network



Every day the Financial Aid Podcast, [www.financialaidpodcast.com](http://www.financialaidpodcast.com), now well beyond show 300, gives advice on financial aid, personal finance, and scholarships, and more than 2,300 people listen. “It’s a promotional vehicle for the Student Loan Network,” says Christopher Penn, the producer and CTO of the Student Loan Network. “It’s been directly attributable for \$250,000 in loans so far.”

It started as an internal podcast for employees and was spurred by two events: Christopher got an iPod just as podcasting came on his radar and the company had “an employee who needed to hear things more than once,” he says charitably. After the first five or six podcasts in 2005, it became clear that the podcasts contained information that would have value to others.

The original format interspersed podsafe music with information, but Christopher sometimes found himself fast-forwarding through the music, so he changed the format to have the music follow the information. Podcasts often contain music, and because his target audience includes high school and college students, it’s particularly appropriate.

Christopher promotes the Financial Aid Podcast in a number of ways. He submits audio comments to other podcasts, including the popular podcasts

Adam Curry's Daily Source Code and Accident Hash by C. C. Chapman. Whenever his podcast is mentioned, he gets a flood of additional traffic.

"MySpace guerrilla marketing has made an enormous difference," Christopher adds. MySpace is a social networking site that's enormously popular among students. When someone visits his MySpace site, the podcast starts playing automatically. "The stealth secret weapon in MySpace is finding bands and supporting them," he says. "Support them and they'll support you." It's certainly working: The Financial Aid Podcast has more than 19,000 "friends" in MySpace, although he admits that the MySpace definition of a friend is fairly loose.

The Financial Aid Podcast is also syndicated and available on some colleges' traditional radio stations. Christopher is pursuing syndication to additional college stations to further increase his audience.

What would Christopher do differently if he were starting now? Not much: He says he'd market more aggressively initially and start with better podcasting equipment.

Christopher is having a lot of success with his podcast. He offers value to his target audience, and some become customers. He's going to where his target audience hangs out and listens: MySpace, iTunes, and college radio stations. He's doing a lot of things very right, and the Student Loan Network is certainly benefiting financially from his efforts.

---

## 78.

### RIGHTLOOK RADIO

Podcasting to sell  
automobile-reconditioning equipment



"It was a no-brainer," says Stephen Powers, president of Rightlook. "No question it would work for Rightlook!" Steven is talking about podcasting to support his business, which provides automobile-reconditioning equipment and training. Most of his sales are in the "Auto Detailing" space.

Many of his customers are looking to start a business. They are entrepreneurs who may spend \$25,000 to \$35,000 at once. Sales of this size require building trust. Rightlook already had an extremely informative Web site. Adding a podcast to help build trust made perfect sense, for its customers want as much information as they can get.

A potential customer talks to a salesperson, but that's just the beginning. The salesperson points them to Rightlook Radio, *www.rightlookradio.com*. Or they might find the podcast from the Web site, catalog, or maybe from a Rightlook ad in an industry publication. Some of them stay up half the night listening.

What kind of content can be that compelling? Steven and cohost Mel Craig talk about opportunities in the industry, interview successful automobile-detailing company owners, explain new add-on services that can be provided, discuss business issues such as the importance of professionalism, and more. In other words, they provide the kind of information their target market wants—information to help them succeed in the auto-reconditioning business.

Stephen invested about \$5,000 on equipment when he started. He got Mel to cohost, and he likes the two-host format a lot. "It's more lively, more entertaining," he says. He also loves interviewing people on the podcast. It provides lots of great information as well as requiring slightly less preparatory work on the part of the hosts.

Rightlook was already marketing and didn't add any new marketing when they added the Rightlook Radio podcast. They did start mentioning Rightlook Radio in their ads, however, and in some cases their existing ads morphed into Rightlook Radio ads. For example, they've run full-page ads for Rightlook Radio in industry publications.

So how is it working? Several thousand people listen, and it has absolutely led to sales. "We recently had a customer thinking of going with a competitor. He was pretty far down that path," says Stephen. "He spent almost all night listening to Rightlook Radio, and in the morning we had a \$25,000 order." Stephen says that interactions like this one are common.

Rightlook Radio is a great example of using a podcast to help bolster an existing business. There are plenty of podcasts in the fields of high technology and public relations, but fewer in more traditional fields. Stephen is getting results and enjoying podcasting as well. He also has the first-mover

advantage in his business. “Normal businesses have been very slow to realize the benefits of podcasts,” says Stephen.

---

# 79.

## GRAPERADIO

Guys passionate about wine podcasting



When Brian Clark, Leigh Older, and Jay Selman started podcasting, their goals were simple—they initially wanted to have fun. Their podcast “grew rapidly and quickly,” according to cohost Brian Clark. “Very quickly there was lots of pressure to do a professional job.” Today GrapeRadio, [www.graperadio.com](http://www.graperadio.com), has more than 15,000 listeners, is still growing rapidly, and has been mentioned in CNN, *The New York Times*, *USA Today*, BBC Radio, and *BusinessWeek*, among others. Brian attributes this rapid growth and success to “luck and a good product.”

Brian describes GrapeRadio as a “show for people who want to learn about wine,” which is both accessible to both wine novices and serious wine connoisseurs. The show has a roundtable format and often features guests, including experts and famous winemakers from around the world. Their list of guests is impressive, and they’ve always had success getting anyone they wanted as a guest.

They started podcasting in a friend’s professional studio and eventually built their own at a cost of \$35,000 to \$40,000. It’s hard producing a show every week, so they also added other cohosts who share their passion for wine.

Shows have included “The Wines of Château Pichon-Longueville Baron,” an interview with technical director Jean Rene Matignon (this podcast sent me literally running to my local wine store to experience a bottle of this famous wine), “You Have the Wine List—Now What?” (proper wine etiquette for a business dinner), and the self-explanatory “Trust Your Taste” and “Wine Myths.” Each show lasts 30 to 45 minutes and is basic

enough to appeal to a novice yet interesting enough to captivate serious oenophiles.

All the cohosts have day jobs, and most are self-employed or own businesses. GrapeRadio brings in \$3,000 to \$4,000 a month from advertising and sponsors, which covers the costs of trips and equipment. There are a lot of other ways that the GrapeRadio podcast could make money, but, although it may be very professional, it's still a hobby.

So why is this podcast so successful? It is certainly well produced and interesting, has fascinating guests and appeals to a wide body of people interested in wine. No doubt there is some luck involved, as Brian says, but equally important, it's simply extremely well done.

---

## 80.

### MOMMYCAST

An incredibly successful podcast



Gretchen Vogelzang's husband "wanted to learn about podcasting, since he's in advertising and marketing and wanted to experiment with the medium." Gretchen had no idea what a podcast was, but once she found out, she thought, "This sounds perfect for mommies! They can catch it whenever and wherever possible—the portability is perfect for mommies." And she knew the perfect person to do it with: fellow mommy Paige Heninger, who was pregnant at the time.

That was in March of 2005. A year later, their listenership was estimated by some at 100,000 or more. They are one of the first podcasts to land a major corporate sponsorship, which can bring in tens of thousands of dollars a month. "Way more money than I ever thought," says Gretchen. They've been interviewed by CNN, NBC, the BBC, *Brandweek*, and *The Wall Street Journal*, and even me! "Podcasting took off far faster than anyone thought it would!" adds Gretchen.

"We're just a couple of mommies," insists Gretchen. So why is the podcast so popular? They talk to each other just like mommies talk to each



other—because they are mommies. It’s like listening to a telephone call between friends. “People have become so busy,” says Gretchen, “they don’t have time to hang out in the park or talk on the phone. MommyCast gives mommies a sense of community and camaraderie and lets them know there are others like them. Many people out there are disconnected, maybe away from family.”

MommyCast doesn’t have advertisements, but they accept two or three sponsors a year who fit in with the show well. For example, Dixie, with their “Make it a Dixie Day,” encouraging parents to occasionally use disposable plates, cups, etc., for a day and spend the time saved with their children, fits perfectly with MommyCast. Dixie is their prime sponsor. The sponsorship for Dixie is also ideal because they are perceived as somewhat of an old-fashioned company—“Hey, I remember Dixie cups from when I was a kid.” The tight relationship with a popular podcast casts them as cool and modern and fun.

Many people and advertising agencies they talk to don’t yet understand the podcast model. They sometimes try to apply metrics that make no sense. Podcasting is very directed—and podcasts hit very specific demographics. It’s also not like broadcasting in the sense that people maybe just have a broadcast on in the background. People listen more intently to podcasts.

Gretchen and Paige are pretty much committed to producing two MommyCasts a week now, but “It’s still as much fun now that it’s professional” comes through loud and clear. Future plans involve extending their brand. For example, they are both interested in music and have started a MommyCast music show that features podsafes music, music that can be played without restrictions on podcasts. Beyond that, they are also starting a “MommyMinute,” sort of a tip of the day for mommies.

