Talking about the Podcast (Audio Create)

www.LonSafko.com/TSMB3_Videos/09Podcast.mov

Why do you suppose it is that automakers have been scrambling to make their cars iPod and iPhone compatible? It's because so many people who drive—especially those who spend long periods behind the wheel—use that time to listen to music, news, sports, weather, and other forms of audio information. In-car audio programming used to be the exclusive domain of radio, an industry that was built on finding ways to entertain or inform, and then to sell stuff to a captive audience of drivers during the highly lucrative drive-time hours.[1] But that was then.

As automakers today know, iPods (used synonymously here with all portable music-playing devices) have become so ubiquitous and indispensable that they are routinely played in cars. Now, you and your company can be there too, and in all of the other places people take their iPods. This is provided you know why, when, and how to make podcasting (producing audio for iPods) part of your business strategy.

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What's in It for You?

Podcasting is an effective way for you and your business to be heard—to capture the valuable mindshare of customers, prospects, and employees. And, like nearly all of the social media tools in the ecosystem, *it's free!* Podcasting is quite easy to do and produces a medium that is much more psychologically desirable—and frequently more accessible—to your customers and followers than mere text. One report states that 75 percent of all journalists prefer rich media (see Chapter 4, The World of Web Pages), and education studies show that rich media is more effective for teaching. Almost all search engine optimization (SEO) people (see Chapter 18, Spotlight on Search) have known this for more than a decade. Even Confucius (551 to 479 BC) knew a picture was worth 1,000 words! A picture is worth a thousand words, an audio podcast is worth a thousand pictures, and a video is worth a thousand audios.

Back to the Beginning

The distribution of digitized audio recordings has been around—in one form or another—for nearly as long as the Internet has existed. The first audio files to commonly appear on the early Internet were based on the Resource Interchange File Format (RIFF). These files included *Audio Interchange File Format (.aiff)* on Macintosh computers and later *Waveform Audio (.wav)* files on Windows PCs. A typical $3\frac{1}{2}$-minute song at CD quality occupied an uncompressed file size of about 35 megabytes (MB). Because of its smaller file size and faster download times, a highly compressed audio format called *MP3* emerged and soon became the de facto standard for Internet audio. *MP3* stands for the Motion Picture Experts Group standard MPEG-1 Audio Layer 3, and is able to fit that same $3\frac{1}{2}$-minute song into roughly 3.5MB—a 10-fold reduction in size—with practically no discernible loss of quality. Podcasting, for the most part, is done in the MP3 format.

Note: Keep file size and download times in mind when creating your podcasts—a 20-minute session in CD-quality stereo could run more than 30MB. Fortunately, *bit rate* is a selectable parameter in most podcast recording software, and choosing a lower bit rate and monaural encoding can cut the size of a spoken language podcast by another factor of four while still sounding great.

The Birth of iPod

Apple cofounder Steve Jobs introduced the first iPod to the world on October 23, 2001. The iPod was not the first portable digital music player—SaeHan

Information Systems and Diamond Multimedia had both introduced models (*MPMan* and *Rio*) as early as 1998—but, with its sleek design and novel scroll wheel interface, the iPod quickly won the attention of consumers as the coolest MP3 player available. (A Diamond Multimedia marketing executive would later comment that he was too ashamed to reveal his newest *Rio* model to a fellow airline passenger en route to the product's introduction because the other guy's iPod, despite its use of (non-MP3) AAC encoding only and compatibility only with the iTunes music service, was still clearly a cooler product).

The iPod also benefitted from the use of a small hard drive, in contrast to the lower capacity flash memory systems of its competitors. And while the Recording Industry Association of America (RIAA) had been suing companies like Diamond Multimedia over their product offerings, Apple's iPod was tethered to Apple's legal downloading service, the iTunes Music Store (IMS), which remains the world's top-selling digital music service (now offering untethered MP3 downloads). On October 4, 2011, Apple reported that 300 million iPods had been sold and 16 billion songs had been downloaded from iTunes. According to Apple's CFO, Peter Oppenheimer, in 2010, IMS accounted for about 85 percent of all digital music sales in the United States (at about $1 each).

Later generations of the iPod were developed to accommodate MP3, AAC/M4A, Protected AAC, AIFF, WAV, Audible audiobook, and Apple Lossless formats. The iPod photo model can display JPEG, BMP, GIF, TIFF, and PNG image file formats, and iPod video can play MPEG-4 (H.264/MPEG-4 AVC) and QuickTime video formats. With the introduction of Apple's third-generation video-playing iPods, Apple began selling video content through iTunes. With video on the scene, the term *podcast* began to apply to both audio and video recordings, but since *vodcasting* is becoming an increasingly popular term for video broadcasting, we will use the term *podcast* to refer only to audio.

The Birth of Podcasting

Podcasting is an equally accessible and entertaining application of the iPod. The word *podcasting* comes from combining the terms *iPod* and *broadcasting*. Although systems that enabled downloading of serial episodic audio content onto portable devices for later playback had been around since 2000, the ability for anyone to produce and publish audio content as podcasts really took off after the first Bloggercon weblogger conference, organized by software developer Dave Winer and friends in October 2003. Winer is the author of RSS, a web-feed format used to publish frequently

updated media, such as blog entries, and news headlines (see Chapter 17, RSS—Really Simple Syndication Made Simple).

At that first Bloggercon, Kevin Marks demonstrated a script to download RSS enclosures and pass them to iTunes for transfer to an iPod. Marks and early audioblogger Kevin Curry discussed collaborating, and following the conference Curry offered his blog readers an RSS-to-iPod script called iPodder. iPodder moved MP3 files from Winer's weblogging product, Radio Userland, to iTunes. Curry encouraged other developers to build on the idea, and thus podcasting became accessible to you and me.

Podcasting and You

Podcasts are ordinary MP3 audio files and aren't limited to the iPod or the iTunes Store. A podcast can be played on any MP3 player or right from your browser from any website that offers podcasts. Go to www.theSocial MediaBible.com

for nearly 50 Executive Conversations podcasts with social media industry leaders. You can listen to an audio recording live by streaming it into an audio player, or you can download and save the file to your PC. Podcasts allow anyone to create one's own talk show, interview, educational or training seminar, sermon, speech, presentation, or music file that can be distributed worldwide to literally thousands of listeners who can hear what you have to say . . . for *free*. You can create a following of colleagues, friends, and customers who care about what you have to say; and by podcasting, you've created a viral, entertaining, and informative medium through which you can be heard.

What You Need to Know

The more interesting you make your message, the more likely people are willing to hear it. Of all rich media—which includes video, audio, and

animation such as Flash—audiences prefer video over audio, and audio over text. However, video—while the most desirable form—also requires the most effort and the greatest initial expense to create. Video requires a computer, digital video camera, and video editing software at the very least.

On the other hand, audio podcasting is a much simpler—and still great—expression of user-generated content, and all of the tools you need to create your own audio podcast are right inside your computer (or smartphone). From the audience perspective, audio files are smaller and download faster than video, can be played on more existing portable players, and can be listened to while driving, walking to work, or working out at the gym. So, for many, podcasting audio content is the easiest and most effective way to broadcast their personal message.

To create an audio podcast, all you need is your computer, the built-in microphone (or an external one, if your computer does not have a microphone built in), the free audio recording and editing software that came with the computer—and a little bit of creativity. Just hit Record, speak your message, hit Save, and upload it to a website like PodBean.com

for Internet distribution, and you are podcasting.

Podcast Components

An audio podcast can range from less than a minute to more than an hour in total length, depending upon the content you wish to include. The podcast can sound slick, as though it was professionally produced, or have a rough-around-the-edges homemade flavor to it. It can start with an introduction to the content and speaker, and even have a musical intro. Many podcasters find the easiest way to sound natural is to have more than one person speaking, like a radio interview or discussion. Whatever your choice of content, podcasts are effective, portable, and fun.

The Value of Podcasting

Creating successful podcasts on a given subject will allow you to build a loyal following, and convey to your audience that you are an expert in your industry or subject field. Your audience may include people interested in your subject area or in following what you do. Most importantly, they may be both existing and potential customers of your product or service.

As with all of the other chapters in this book, a strong "What's in It for Me?" is imperative. If your podcasts contain valuable takeaways, your listeners will continue to come back for more. They will also be able to provide user feedback—yet another benefit of podcasting. By allowing your listener the opportunity to give comments on your podcast, you can hear directly from your audience what you are doing right—and what you can do better.

Podcasts are like blogs in that they can be RSS-fed (see Chapter 17, RSS—Really Simple Syndication Made Simple, for more about RSS). Essentially, your podcasts can be syndicated or distributed, and made available worldwide for free. People who like your podcasts and want to share them and be alerted when you've created more content can be informed every time you publish a new podcast. You can also set up Facebook, LinkedIn, and other free services to automatically publish when you have added a new podcast episode.

Tips, Techniques, and Tactics

How to Create Your Own Podcast

Creating your own podcasts is easy, so don't be afraid if you've never created one. The process follows four steps: planning, recording, editing, and publishing.

A great resource for creating and distributing podcasts is *Podcasting For Dummies* by Tee Morris, Evo Terra, and Dawn Miceli (see Figure 9.1). Go to www.theSocialMediaBible.com

to download the *Podcasting For Dummies* primer e-book. It's free!
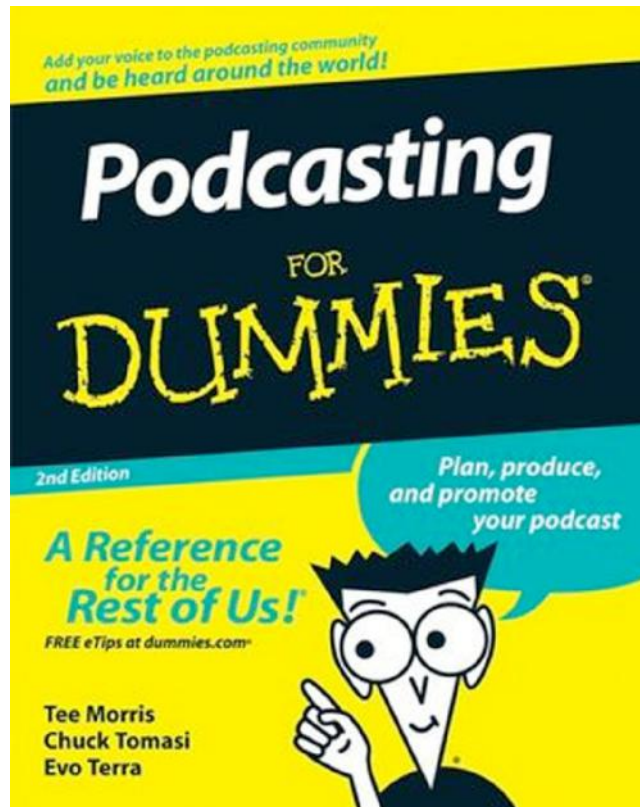
FIGURE 9.1   Podcasting For Dummies

Planning

It's best if you plan out your podcast ahead of time—gathering and importing information, and then writing the script. Although the goal of podcast production is to make it sound professional, it needn't be perfectly polished. What is right depends on your audience and your personal production style; many podcasters try to sound more relaxed and casual, while others go to great lengths to make their radio shows, audiobooks, and other recordings rival the production value of traditional media sources. Less than perfect is okay, even better. But be sure the audio quality is pleasing; your customers are more likely to listen to it all the way through.

The less-than-perfect maxim holds true for all social media you produce, and the reason is the audience's perception of the purpose for which the podcast was produced.

For the most part, when an audio or video has that polished, Madison Avenue, network production feel, it can safely be assumed that it cost a great deal to have it produced. It also stands to reason that if someone is writing a big check for the production, most likely there is an agenda for that media. And excluding public service announcements (PSAs), that usually means there is a commercial message behind all that professional-sounding media.

With social media, the content is by the people, for the people. It's ad hoc, fresh, spontaneous, unbiased, and noncommercial. Most commercial products and companies wouldn't want to be represented by anything less than professional quality. So, with decreased focus on production quality comes a perception of homemade, honest, truthful, and trustworthy.

Keeping this concept in mind, it's better *not* to strive for perfection— and to be very careful how self-promoting and commercial your social media message may sound. This holds true for your blogs, vlogs, podcasts, and any other form of media you might produce (excepting only your corporate web page). You can mention your product, or even have a quick introduction to it at the beginning of your vlogs for your sponsor, company, or yourself; just do it tastefully and keep it at a minimum. Otherwise, you will lose your listener's trust.

Introducing Your Podcast

The next step of planning is to sketch out the type of introduction that you want to have. It can include a verbal opening explaining who you are, what your subject matter is, and what you will be talking about in this episode. It can also be saved for future use as the introduction for your next podcast. Remember: Your intro is your persona, your audio image, and your brand for you and your content.

Your introduction can also include a couple of riffs or a few bars of music. Get an idea ahead of time the feeling you want your podcast to convey: serious, businesslike, entertaining, educational, or something else. Then pick about five seconds of music that conveys that feeling to your listener. Apple's GarageBand (assuming you own a Macintosh computer) is a great tool for this. In just a couple of minutes, you can select a few instrumental riffs (several seconds, or chords), and lay down a track (create a piece of music) that will really get your listener's attention. If you don't own a Mac, then you can capture a few seconds of music from any recording on the Internet that is copyright-free.

The best part of working with GarageBand is that *anything* you create is copyright and royalty free. Always be sensitive to copyrights and keep in mind: *If someone else created it, it belongs to that creator.* Rarely is any music you download from the Internet or rip from a CD free for you to use. To include

someone else's music in your podcast, you will need written permission from the copyright owner. Otherwise, you could end up as Napster: The Sequel.

However—in terms of copyrighted music—there is the Creative Commons Project. Creative Commons (CC) is a nonprofit organization that has developed copyright licenses that grant certain rights to the public—rights that the owner of copyrighted material is willing to waive so that others may use those not-in-the-public-domain materials. The Creative Commons licenses vary, and can include dedication of copyrighted material to public domain or open content. For more information on the Creative Commons Project, please visit http://creativecommons.org/.

And, for more information on U.S. copyrights, you can visit www.uspto.gov

and select "Copyrights," or www.theSocialMediaBible.com

for clickable links.

Recording

When making your podcast, use a few bullet points or a slide show to convey your main ideas. You can then simply read a bullet and just speak spontaneously about that subject, without sounding too rehearsed or rigid. And if you don't want to plan out your podcast—then it's okay to just wing it!

Once you know what you want to say, it's time to record it. To begin, you will need to use your computer's built-in microphone or connect an external microphone for better quality. A number of high quality USB-compatible microphones are available from online retailers for as little as $30 or less. You will also need audio recording and editing software. Use Audacity, Sound Studio, GarageBand, or other inexpensive or free sound editing software. Some statistics suggest that nearly half of all of the creators of podcasts are either using or have used Audacity to record and edit their shows. It provides easy-to-use, high quality tools—and it's free! Audio recording software, including podcasting-specific features, sometimes also comes bundled with some of the USB microphones mentioned earlier. For straight-ahead no-frills recording, the latest release of Apple's Quicktime Player—a free download for Mac and Windows—will also record, allow you to trim, and save audio in the .mov, .m4p, and .m4v formats. Of course, you're also welcome to use more expensive and elaborate software.

Some audio editing software can import sound file formats such as .wav, .aiff, .wma, and MP3s, and record from a microphone as well as from the computer's sound card and auxiliary devices. If you want to record a talk-show format or telephone interview, and your guest or co-host is working in a different location, VoIP (Voice over Internet Protocol) software, such as Vonage and Skype—both also *free*—can record both sides of the phone call directly though the use of add-ins like VoIP Recorder (for Vonage) and Pamela (for Skype).

Starting with the release of the Leopard version of its operating system and continuing through Snow Leopard and Lion, Apple began shipping Mac OS X with an included utility called Podcast Capture (in the Utilities folder inside the Applications folder). According to the introductory screen, "Podcast Capture lets you easily capture high-quality audio and video from a camera or your Mac's screen and send your content to a Podcast Producer Server for processing." Podcast Producer is a Mac OS X Server application that automates the publishing of podcasts to blogs, iTunes, and iTunes U. Podcast Capture requires you to enter the address of your Podcast Producer Server before it will let you do any recording, editing, and tagging, and most people I know don't have a Mac OS X Server lying around waiting to publish their podcasts, but if you are on a university campus or in another

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enterprise that runs one, this may be a viable option for you. And while no Podcast Producer hosting services have popped up as yet to fill this potential market niche, in the near future, you may find Podcast Producer services for hire on the Internet—maybe even for *free!*

Signing Off

The last part of podcast planning involves writing or rehearsing your closing, or sign-off. During this part of the session, you should remind your audience of who you are and what your subject matter is, where they can find more of it, and perhaps mention your sponsor (if you have one). Your sign-off is perhaps the most important part of your podcast, because it is the last thing your listeners will hear each time they listen to you, and through repetition, it establishes your auditory brand identity. For a great example of a consistent sign-off, listen to podcasts from National Public Radio's weekly program *Talk of the Nation Science Friday* (http://sciencefriday.com).

Editing

You will need to edit your podcast somewhat. In most software packages— even the free ones that came with your computer or that you downloaded from the Internet—it's as easy as copying, cutting, pasting, and deleting. At the very minimum, you will need to trim the dead air at the beginning and end of your recording; and in most cases, you will want to paste together the music and verbal intro and your sign-off content.

Most audio editing programs include basic editing tools such as the ability to cut segments, mix tracks, convert formats, and split tracks (see Figure 9.2). Some incorporate advanced tools like automatic gain controls and recording volume sliders. Many programs also feature a variety of filters and effects such as reverb (discussed in the following "Special Effects" section). This all might sound a little daunting at first, but after playing with the software for a mere 30 minutes, you might consider yourself an expert. And lest you think you need to
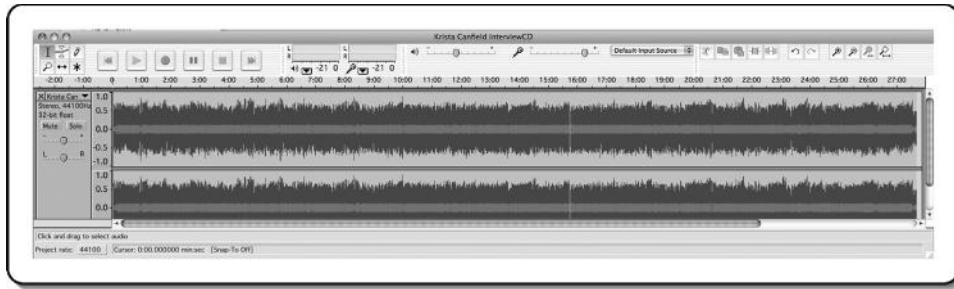
FIGURE 9.2   Audacity Sound Editing Software

be sitting at your computer, there are also smartphone apps now in which you can perform all the basic recording and editing functions you will need.

Publishing

The final step in podcasting is publishing. Because of podcasting's growing popularity, a lot of new software now has podcast publishing wizards built right in. This software fully automates your podcast tags or keywords (see Chapter 18, Spotlight on Search (Search Engine Optimization) for more information on keywords), and RSS feed creation (see Chapter 17, RSS—Really Simple Syndication Made Simple). You simply click to publish, and you're immediately able to share your material. Podcasts are meant to be shared; the more people who share your podcasts, the more people who are sharing your thoughts and ideas—and the bigger the following you will have.

Liberated Syndication (www.Libsyn.com)

is one of the largest media-hosting providers that podcasters use. Starting at $5 a month, they'll provide all the download bandwidth you need regardless of how popular your show becomes. Some people host their podcasts on their own server and have plug-ins to play the podcast directly from the web page, while most others upload it to podcast websites—such as PodBean and iTunes (RSS)—where it is easily syndicated.

Special Effects

Special effects, properly used, can enhance your podcasts. By adding a little creativity and a special effect here and there, you can keep your content exciting and entertaining.

If your software has features that allow you to do so, you should first boost your volume and your bass. Most microphones—especially the inexpensive built-in types—can make your recording sound shallow and tinny. Boosting the volume and bass will add fullness and fidelity to your recording. Another (free!) piece of audio editing software called the Levelator does all that boosting for you automatically (see Figure 9.3).

The Levelator (www.conversationsnetwork.org/levelator) also performs audio normalization—leveling out the volume of two people talking. This feature is very useful, since one person is usually a little closer to the microphone, or at the other end of the telephone.

FIGURE 9.3 Levelator

Software

Podcast recording and editing programs include GarageBand, Quicktime Player, WordPress PodPress Widget, Sound Studio, Soundtrack Pro, Audacity, Evoca, ePodcast Creator, Gabcast, Hipcast, Odeo Studio, Phone Blogz, Podcast Station, Propagan, WebPod Studio, and others. This may sound like a lot to think about, but remember, you need only one. Install a few editing applications, try them, and then stick with the one you like the best. It's that simple.

Hardware

Hardware can include your computer and accompanying microphone, desktop stand or lapel microphones, recording decks and mixers, telephone recorder interfaces (for recording directly off the telephone), headsets, and digital recorders. A $49 Overstock.com

digital recorder was a great purchase. It is approximately one-half by one-half by four inches, fits in a breast pocket, works with a lavaliere or lapel microphone, and will record up to 12 hours of continuous stereo digital audio (see Figure 9.4). Whenever making a new or unique presentation, on it goes—and a podcast is recorded without any effort. All that's left to do is add the intro and the sign-off, and it's ready to go!

FIGURE 9.4   Digital Recorder

Websites and Podcast Distributors

You can find a variety of different types of podcasts on the Internet today on a variety of topics that range from subject-specific, to informative and educational, to entertaining, to commercial, to the occasional rant.

Podcasts are everywhere. When the term *podcast* is googled, almost 93 million results are returned for sites like PodCast.com,

Digg, MSNBC, CNN, Yahoo!, *New York Times,* PodcastAlley, NPR (National Public Radio), PodBean, Grid7, iTunes, iTunes University, Scientific American, NASA, and CBS News.

For some great examples of podcasts and amazing content from 50 of the social media industry's founders, CEOs, and vice presidents, go to www .theSocialMediaBible.com

menu item Insights.

The ROI of Social Media

Crisis Overnight: How We Raised $160K+ in Three Weeks with Social Media

Background

A beloved and trusted crisis community center helping hundreds of abused individuals in Elgin, Illinois, was in desperate economic straits. The center had completely exhausted its monetary resources and was waiting for a drawn-out decision from state lawmakers to approve a budget and release necessary funding.

Approximately three weeks before the center's funding and cash-on-hand was officially drained, the center's leadership made a desperate plea for help. They acknowledged a brutal fact—they might have to close their doors.

Albeit impromptu, the right people came together at the right time, and the Crisis Center board and executive director trusted us to try something new. The decision to integrate social media and share the center's story publicly was agreed to unanimously.

Strategy

The idea for Crisis Overnight was born. In addition to traditional fund-raising efforts, an overnight awareness campaign would be held at the center, documented through social media with a call to action to encourage people to donate.

We had four days to develop a plan, create a donor website, craft our messaging, and implement.

The truth of the situation became the primary messaging of the campaign: "The goal is simple. We raise $150,000 by July 1 and the Community Crisis Center stays open. We don't, and they close." However, because social media was an integrated part of the outreach, it meant reaching more than just a local constituency. The team developed separate messaging and tactics for the local community, and a broader message was used to appeal to a national audience that could relate to the causes of domestic violence, economic issues, and sexual assault.

Implementation

To communicate socially with the local community and world, we used the center's LinkedIn profile and amped up their social media toolbox by creating a blog, a Twitter account, and social bookmarking accounts.

Nevertheless, developing a community and building credibility through social media platforms takes time—something that was not available. To maximize the center's online visibility, I donated my entire online presence, a platform of more than 40,000 followers.

The online communities we used during the campaign included Twitter, Facebook, Seesmic, PRsarahevans.com,

YouTube, and CrisisOvernight.org.

The campaign began as a one-night event and expanded into a three-week campaign, securing continuous donations, both in person and online. All online donors were populated on the Crisis Overnight website with their city and state to visually convey that people across the United States were fighting for one community's crisis center.

Opportunity

The opportunity was to generate local and national awareness of the crisis center's story, which would drive funding so that the institution could continue to support the abused individuals in the community.

(*continued*)

(*continued*)

Conclusion

All efforts related to Crisis Overnight raised $161,000, buying the center one month of payroll and the ability to pay off end-of-the-year bills.

—Sarah Evans (@prsarahevans)
http://PRsarahevans.com

Expert Insight

Evo Terra, coauthor, *Podcasting For Dummies*, www.podiobooks.com

Evo Terra

Well, there is a lot of information out there about starting a podcast, and the most common word that is given out is, "Just start, and figure it out as you go along." And that isn't bad advice for some hobbyist that just wants to play in the media. But for businesspeople—and for those who really want to get in to make a splash—I suggest they take a different route.

The very first thing I would suggest to people interested in podcasting is: do your homework. You know, find out if there are other people in the space that you are getting into. Most businesspeople are not going to say, "I want to open up an ice cream stand," without having some understanding of the ice cream market. You have to know what you are getting yourself into, even if you have no idea how to run an ice cream stand; you can, at least, know what the business is.

The same thing goes for podcasting. You can figure out what the competition is doing, if you want to think about it as competition. I don't. I use the word because we all understand it. But [you have to] at least understand what is competing with the topic of your podcast for people's time; and the other sorts of media that are doing the same thing, just not in a podcast form. Whether that's radio, or whether it's an audiobook, you know, understand what your listeners are likely to want to listen to. Do your [due] diligence. . . .

I could go on for days on what *not* to do. As I am often reminded myself, you know, there is no one right way to do things; but there are lots of wrong ways. There are lots of tip and advice books out there that will give you some suggestions; but one of the things I think I would caution people about is that, since we're talking about this user-generated content of podcasting, amateur people who have not had a lot of experience using the tools are getting into the space.

There are a lot of people out there advising that it's the content that's the most important, and I don't disagree with them. Content is *king*. You have to have something that is worth talking about and that is interesting to people. However, I think that oftentimes, this comes at the expense of quality. In fact, I have heard more than one person suggest that you ought to not worry about the quality of the show, because it's content that matters; and then discuss other reasons why quality does not matter. And I just . . . I have to disagree! And I have to disagree for one reason. I know how easy it is to make your podcast sound professional.

There are quite a few tools out there. I recommend that anyone starting out new in podcasting does not go out and spend crazy amounts of dollars. In fact, you should spend as little as possible. . . . I still use Audacity. It's free and it's simple and it does just about everything you are going to want to do at your level. . . .

There's another piece of equipment that I like to use called The Levelator. It is free software that you run your spoken-word audio through, and it magically (I don't mind using the word, because I have seen this tool work and I use it every day myself) brings up your audio level to a fantastic

(*continued*)

(*continued*)

level. It is not a perfect tool; and there are plenty of engineers who don't like to use it. But my recommendation to all new people and all podcasters today is . . . you should be using The Levelator. It is amazing what it can do to your sound. . . .

Now there are some specialty tools which come into play if you want to record telephone conversations. Or maybe you want to buy a library of prelicensed music, so that you don't sound like everybody else discovering the free stuff. There are those investments to make. But if it is your first time doing it . . . don't! Don't invest any additional money. Your computer most likely already has set up what you need to do to get started, even with a cheap, $5 microphone that it came with. I know many people that started out that way, but once they figured out what they wanted to do, [they] eventually graduate to bigger and better equipment. But start off with spending next to nothing. . . .

You know, quality has become very important—even though people don't recognize or realize it. I think one thing that's becoming easier to discern from the podcast listeners—as they have matured over the last four years—is the issue of authenticity. And I think you may be right [about sounding *too* good]. Early on in the process, if something sounded really slick and polished, you started wondering, "What's the underlying agenda? What corporate underwriting sponsorship is happening here?"

But I think consumers are becoming a lot more educated in that now. They're a little more sophisticated, and they are really able to get down to the message. If your goal is to try and sound like the guy who does the 10 o'clock news, then that's going to fail miserably. You know why? That's a terrible delivery. They have to do that in a certain way because they have a certain amount of time to get to people before they get to bed, and they drag you along and put the weather at the end. . . .

To listen to or read the entire Executive Conversation with Evo Terra, go to www.theSocialMediaBible.com
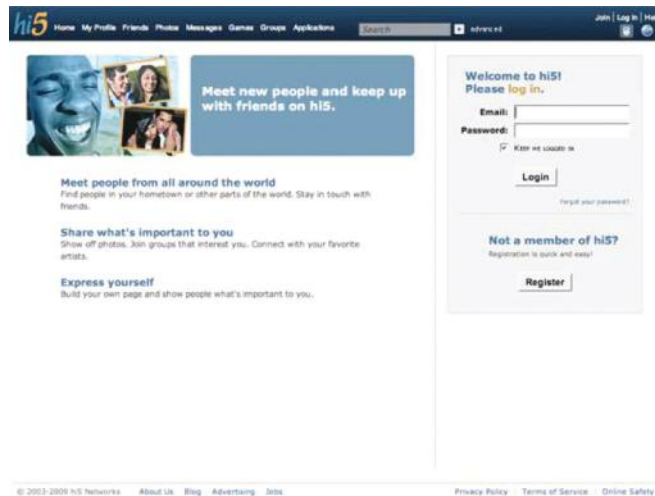
or www.podiobooks.com.

International Perspective

Mexico

(continued)

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As the fastest-growing social networking site in the world for the first half of 2008, Hi5 is the largest site of its kind that you may have never heard of. The site grew 78 percent in the first half of 2008 alone.

Based in San Francisco, Hi5 launched in 2003 and was turning a profit by 2004. By 2005, the site had 10 million members. While sites like Facebook and MySpace began to dominate the U.S. social networking scene, Hi5 began to look at other opportunities internationally.

In 2006, it launched a Spanish version of the site to great success. Versions of the site in other languages soon followed. This new focus paid off. Hi5 became the most popular social networking site in Mexico and many Latin American countries. Like many other social networking sites, members create profiles, share photos, play games, and post messages.

—Jonathan Strickland, Senior Writer
HowStuffWorks.com
Discovery Communications

To-Do List

- Podcast.

  Go forth and podcast, often. Go and be creative! It's easy and free! Just try it. You will surprise yourself how good you are.

- Do not covet thy neighbor's copyrights.

  Be careful not to take or use something that belongs to someone else. Creating a five-second song is really easy. There are even royalty-free sound bites and music you can use called *pod-safe* music.

- Experience sound editing.

  Sound editing sounds scary, but it is really easier than you think. Many good editing software packages either come free with your computer or can easily be downloaded from the Internet.

- Do not spend a lot of money.

  Unless you really want to get into podcasting, don't spend a lot of money doing it. Remember in this one case that "good enough" might actually be *good enough*.

- RSS feed your podcasts.

  By RSS feeding your podcasts, you are making them available to literally millions of potential listeners. You can learn more about RSS (Really Simple Syndication) in Chapter 17, RSS—Really Simple Syndication Made Simple.

- Upload your podcasts to iTunes.

  Be sure to upload your podcasts to iTunes. Tens of millions of people search iTunes every day looking for content that might be similar to yours. Be sure to follow their guidelines to ensure your podcast's success. And keep in mind that if your podcast falls into the educational category, you should upload it to the iTunes University.

- Keep your podcasts brief.

  Most people only have about a seven-minute attention span for audio. Taking any more time than that will lose your listeners' interest. If you have a 30-minute interview or a 45-minute panel discussion, leave it at that length. If your audio file can be broken into five- to seven-minute chapters, topics, or ideas, then break it up.

- Produce in the right file format.

  Be sure that when you link or upload your podcasts, they are in a usable file format. While QuickTime is great for Macintosh users to play, Windows and PowerPoint users have difficulties with it. Most people want your content in an MP3 format so that it is compatible with their digital music players.

- Be conscious of file size.

  While you may have a lot to say, a 53MB file is just too large for most people to download and install on their digital players. Most tunes run at about 3.5MB each, so try to keep your finished files in the single-digit MB range.

- Be creative.

  This, again, is the most important commandment. The more creative you are and the more "What's in It for Me?" you provide for your listener, the more people will download it, listen to it, pass it along to their friends, recommend it, and comment on it; and the more loyal listeners and followers and trusted network you will build. Remember to ask your customers to be collaborators of your content.

Conclusion

As long as your podcasts have a strong WIIFM, your listeners will keep coming back for more. The more you podcast, the more quality content and contributions you will provide to your followers, listeners, and customers. Keep podcasting, because it helps to build your trusted network; your customers and followers will perceive you as an industry and subject matter expert; and when it's time to buy, you will be the one they think of first. It's free, it's easy, it's fun—so do it!

To hear all of the Expert Interviews, go to www.theSocialMedia Bible.com.

Downloads

For your free downloads associated with *The Social Media Bible*, go to www.theSocialMediaBible.com,

and enter your ISBN number located on the back of the book above the bar code. Be sure to enter the dashes.

Credits

The ROI of Social Media was provided by:

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Expert Insight was provided by:

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Technical edits were provided by:

Stephen Farrington, www.stephenfarrington.com

Note

1. Drive time refers to 6:00 AM to 10:00 AM and 3:00 PM to 7:00 PM Monday through Friday when the majority of radio listeners travel to and from work and significantly more commercials are run.