

8 tips for creating a podcast that hits the mark

We can't all be professional deejays or broadcasters, but, thanks to technology, we can all be podcasters. A podcast can be a low-cost, uncomplicated way for individuals, businesses, nonprofits and other organizations to gain exposure, inspire listeners and share information or a powerful message.

But just because it can be done doesn't mean it should be. Before launching a podcast, make sure you're doing it for the right reasons and in a way that helps rather than hurts your goals. Some considerations before getting behind the mic:

What's the goal?

Why are you starting a podcast? If your only message is "buy our products," the better path might be a traditional campaign of public relations and advertising. A podcast could be a nice tie-in, if the goal is to share information and stories, create change or entertain.

Don't be pushy

No one likes to be sold to. The content can certainly expose listeners to a business, but that shouldn't be the main message. Instead, a veterinarian might host a podcast that answers pet lovers' questions. A chef might interview local farmers, chefs and bartenders. An accounting firm might sponsor a Q&A podcast on tax law changes.

Power of the pod

A podcast can be a great vehicle to encourage action. An effective way to tap the power of crowdsourcing, a podcast can encourage fans to donate to a cause, or volunteer for an event.

Beyond the numbers

Success should be about getting the right message to the right people. It's better to have 500 right listeners – those in your target demographic, whose choices and experiences intersect smartly with the podcast – than 5,000 listeners who don't relate with the content. On the other hand, if the goal of the podcast is simply to have fun and amass listeners, then more might be better.

Branch out

Related blog posts, marketing pieces, media placements and website content can dovetail nicely with the podcast to connect with the listening community. Those content pieces can make effective use of relevant hashtags, keyword searches, reference visuals and more.

The mechanics

It can be easy to obsess over the perfect microphone; don't let the pursuit of technical perfection stop you from sharing your story. Sure, there are software and hardware considerations, but the content and mission of the podcast are paramount. Countless sources on the internet – such as Mashable, Lifehacker and Buzzsprout – can answer tech basics.

How often?

Podcasting is episodic, but that doesn't mean it has to be weekly. It's better to create a quarterly or monthly offering rather than launch a weekly podcast and struggle to fill it with quality content. The wildly popular podcast "Hardcore History," for example, comes out sporadically. The best frequency is the frequency that works for you, with the caveat to be sure not to promise a certain availability and then not follow through.

Fit is everything

Podcasts work best when the hosts and listeners make a real connection. There's no point in speaking formally when your real style is conversational, or exploring topics that don't excite you. Let your personality shine. Everything should be an authentic fit, from the host to the guests to the advertising.