

7 IMPORTANT QUESTIONS TO ASK YOURSELF BEFORE STARTING A PODCAST

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What is this podcasting thing all about anyway?

Businesses, non-profits, and passionate hobbyists are always looking for ways to expand their audience. The first forms of marketing were word of mouth and street signs. Then came billboards, radio commercials, newspaper advertising and mailers.

The age of the internet introduced an entirely new world of banner ads, email, and social media all vying for our attention (and our dollars). However, consumers have become weary of such attempts and are blocking out all the noise.

How is a small business or non-profit supposed to compete with established names and companies that can afford to pay for television commercials and sponsoring events? I have an answer to that question, and you might be surprised that you've never heard of it before: **Podcasting**.

“Podcasting will see exponential growth”, says Michael Stelzner from Social Media Examiner.

32% of marketers want to learn how to use podcasting and only 3% of marketers are using podcasting. When we compare the millions of blogs out there to the less than 300,000 podcasts in iTunes you can see that there is tremendous room for growth - and the time to start is before the competition does!

Podcasting is an intimate medium that puts your message in front of prospects longer than a commercial. Fans and customers get to know you better through a podcast than any other marketing resource - better than email, newsletters, and video-blurbs combined.

How much would you pay to educate your fans and customers about who you are and what you are about? Podcasts are like talk radio in this way - a



regular does of personality that comes out when talking about your podcast's main topic.

The barrier to starting a podcast is extremely low. Anybody with a message can reach a global audience for very little cost. Podcasting is the next big movement and you don't want to miss the bus.

But before you jump all-in simply because I have convinced you that this is the hot thing to do, here are 7 important questions you should ask yourself before starting a podcast.

Question 1: Do You Know What a Podcast Is?

This question will not prevent you from creating or releasing a podcast. It is simply something you need to know and understand.

A podcast can be subscribed to in an RSS feed (don't worry about what RSS is right now). A podcast is an ongoing series of recordings released on a regular basis with fresh, new content.

A podcast is not a one-time recording: Don't confuse a single video or audio lesson posted to a website as a podcast. It takes much more than a couple of recordings to be considered a podcast.

A single release of a podcast show is called a "podcast episode". Podcast episodes are media files that can be listened to by being:

- Downloaded to a computer
- Uploaded to a portable device (not just iPods)
- Streamed on almost any smartphone

Because podcasts are media files they can be listened to anytime you want - kind of like on-demand videos. They can be paused, rewound, re-played,



and shared. People listen to podcasts while driving to work, jogging, doing yard work, or cooking. Podcasts are convenient, educational, informational, and entertaining.

Look at it in this way: Podcasts are less like flyers and more like newsletters. You could create a flyer and print copies for those who visit your office, mail it to people's homes, hand it out at expos, or make it available for download on your website.

However, this does not make your flyer a newsletter. A newsletter is updated on a regular basis with new content. A podcast is more like a newsletter - it is a regularly updated with new content and made available for your target market.

Question 2: Are you prepared to invest a little money to start a podcast?

Good news! The barrier of entry to starting a podcast is very low - there is no licensing, training, or initiation required. The monetary cost is also extremely low. If you have a computer with internet connection then you already have everything necessary to get started. There are free programs like Audacity that will allow you to record audio and most laptops have built-in webcams to record video. Some media services also offer free storage or distribution, but this takes away some of your ownership over your podcast.

You could buy any of the following items to increase the quality of your podcast (average prices current for 2017)

- Microphone (for improved sound): \$40 - \$100
- Webcam (for improved video): \$40 - \$100
- Domain and web hosting (for branding and control): \$80 - \$250 a year



- Media hosting (for podcast mp3 storage and distribution): \$5 - \$75
- Mixer (for co-hosts and/or sound effects): \$50 - \$600
- Intro/outro/bumper music: \$1 - \$500
- Professional voiceover: \$50 - \$1,000+

Like I mentioned earlier, you probably have enough equipment to get started without having to buy a bunch of gear. Start small and make little purchases over time - there's no rush. Learning the ropes of podcasting will also help you to make smarter purchasing decisions down the road to podcasting prominence.

Question 3: Are you prepared to spend a lot of time for a podcast?

The real cost of a podcast is harder to measure: Time. This is the biggest obstacle for new podcasters. We all believe it takes 60 minutes to produce a 30 minute show. This is never the case. It takes me up to 6 hours to produce a 20 - 30 minute audio podcast and 2-4 hours for a 2-10 minute video. Here is an estimate of how much time it takes me to release an average 25 minute audio podcast episode (I pray you find ways to make your workflow faster than mine):

- Show prep (idea generation, research, outline): Varies from 30 minutes to 3 hours
- Set-up (hooking up equipment, cueing sound clips, etc): 5 - 10 minutes
- Recording: 45 minutes
- Editing: 60 minutes
- Converting and uploading the audio recording: 20 minutes



- Writing show notes, releasing the episode, announcing on social media: 1 hour

Some of these things happen simultaneously but you can expect to spend the good part of a day working on one episode. A few things I do to streamline the process is create a generic outline, use the same intro music, and practice some mouth exercises before recording.

Recording an episode isn't the only commitment of your valuable time. It takes a long time to grow a dedicated following. Very few launches get more than 100 downloads in their first week so be prepared to grow your audience. Respond to every comment, Tweet, or email until you are so busy that you need to hire someone to do it for you! :)

Underestimating the time required is the #1 reason most shows pod-fade (quit before reaching 7 episodes). Be prepared to have patience if you choose to start a podcast.

Question 4: Do you have a focused theme or message for your podcast?

- What are you going to talk about?
- Is it interesting or entertaining?
- Does it solve a problem?

Nobody wants to listen to someone talking about what they ate for breakfast unless it has to do with recipes or tips about cooking. (Throw bacon into the mix and you've got my attention!)

Also, don't be broad with your topic/theme/message. In a world where there are thousands of podcasts about major subjects, the odds are in your favor that you can build an audience out of the millions of people listening to audio.



You can become as niche and unusual as you want so long as the people who are your ideal audience can find you.

The internet along with search engines and mobile applications has made it possible to reach hundreds of dedicated fans using their smartphones to find information about the very thing you are talking about.

For example: There are podcasts about archery, quilting, and even a show about historical reenactments. There are millions of niche podcasts that are successful because it answers a specific need of the listener/subscriber. That's where you come in.

Do you like MineCraft? Guess what - there is a podcast for that! What's your subject?

Question 5: Do you get excited when talking about your subject?

- Do you enjoy sharing your skills, abilities, and experiences with others?
- Do you have a passion that you just can't help but talk about?
- Do you get excited whenever you start talking about whatever it is you want to podcast about?

We all have good ideas or past experiences that others could find interesting or enlightening. If you helped raise foster kids then I would bet you have some great stories to share.

If you create woodcarvings with a chainsaw then you probably have some great tips that a targeted audience will want to hear about.

If you are big into Paleo then help a brother out!



Podcasting is an excellent platform for exposing the public to a new way of thinking, to your knowledge, or to a talent that you have. If the topic is exciting to you then you can find an audience that will be excited to hear it!

Question 6: Do you expect your podcast to make you money?

Let me answer this for you: **No**, you really don't. Why? Podcasts don't make money so don't start off with the expectation that you'll be rolling a wheel barrel of cash to the bank every week. A weekly recorded audio program will not make money any more than a commercial advertisement does.

However, a podcast can drive people to your website just as commercials convince customers to buy their products. It also helps listeners get to know who you are, what you do, and learn to trust you.

WARNING: Do not mistake this for permission to make every episode a sales pitch. Listeners can tell and will tune you out. Give them something they want show after show and they will call when they're ready.

Podcasts do not make money, your products and services do.

Question 7: Do you want to have an edge over your competition?

Podcasts are growing in popularity every day and are becoming the hottest new marketing idea for small businesses and niche markets. Michael Stelzner from Social Media Examiner stated "Only 3% of marketers are using podcasts in their marketing efforts." This gives the little man a huge advantage over large companies!



There are 450 million active blogs with more starting every day. Compare that to the 200,000 audio podcasts in the iTunes store and you can see that podcasting has a lot of room to grow.

There are thousands of websites for businesses and passionate thought-leaders in cyberspace. What makes one better than the next? It is possible that offering a free podcast episode every week is something that most of your competitors don't do but you could?

Having a podcast could give you an edge over your competition or help to gather a group of people together who are as passionate about your topic as you are. Podcasts are universal - they are not limited to one geographical area. Podcasts are timeless and can cause you to become a celebrity in your niche. The barrier to entry is very low and you've got very little to lose.

If you've made it through these 7 Important Questions To Ask Yourself Before Starting A Podcast then I have good news for you: Yes, You Can Podcast Too!

Visit <http://AudacityWorkshop.com> often for tips, tricks, and short video tutorials.

About the author:

Steve Stewart started his first podcast in 2010. The MoneyPlan SOS podcast was retired on its 200th episode in September 2015 and hosted two other podcasts until the demand for his podcast production skills turned his side-hustle into a full-time career. He now produces shows like the award winning Stacking Benjamins Show, Martinis and Your Money, and the hugely successful Afford Anything podcast featuring Paula Pant. Steve has presented podcasting-based sessions at Podcast Movement, FinCon, WordCamps, and local MeetUp groups.