

FREE GUIDE

YOUR VA

HOW TO START
A PODCAST

WHY START A PODCAST?

Starting a podcast can be amazing for your business. More popular than ever before, there is a podcast for everyone, and there are just as many pros to starting one as there are for listening to one. Podcasts offer deeper intimacy with audiences as people remain engaged for longer than they do while reading blog posts. You can also multitask while listening to podcasts, they keep your mind busy while you're commuting, cleaning or exercising. Yes, starting a podcast will be awkward at first. There are lots of valid fears to overcome. Public speaking, the horror of hearing your voice and learning new technologies are things you will confront headfirst. But, if you put in the work, you can reach new audiences and grow your business.

THIS GUIDE COVERS:

- Planning a podcast
- Preparing your podcast
- Recording and editing
- Launching your podcast

STEP 1. PLANNING YOUR PODCAST



CHOOSING A TOPIC

You can't get any further into podcasting if you don't first and foremost know what topic you'll be talking about. Choosing the right topic is all about striking the balance between something not too niche and something not too broad. It needs to be open-ended enough that you can have multiple episodes, but specific enough to attract an audience.

Try writing a list of at least 25 potential episode ideas. Ask yourself where you see it in a years time, what are your goals? Whether you are doing this to grow your business, help and educate people or just to have fun, your idea needs to excite you and be something you can commit to. As much as possible, keep the podcast inside your zone of genius.

DEMOGRAPHICS

Who is your desired audience? Thinking about your target demographic in the early stages of planning your podcast is really important. If you already have a preexisting audience you can target, survey them to find out who they are listening to already (and why). Take their feedback into consideration. Once you know who you want to reach, you can think about how you are going to reach them.

TITLE

When choosing your podcast title, don't box yourself in so much that you don't have room for growth. You can have a clever title that's witty, catchy or humorous. You could go with the descriptive title that's searchable and informative (if you do go this route don't get too wordy). Or, you could go with a name title (e.g. "The VA Show") but then you need to incorporate some detail that gives people a sense of what the podcast is about. You want to use some keywords in your title, as that will help potential listeners find your podcast through SEO, but don't overdo it. It is also helpful to purchase a domain name.

STRUCTURE

It's key to think about how you will structure your podcast. Again, there is lots of variation for a reason - so you can do what works best for you. Feel free to get creative, and remember to target both new and returning listeners.

A common podcast structure is:

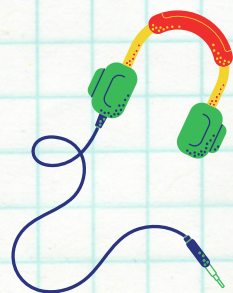
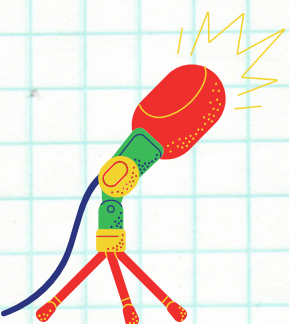
- Teaser
- Intro Music
- Welcome
- Discussion/Interview
- Ad Break
- More Discussion/Interview
- Call To Action (remind your audience to review your podcast, check out your social media or website)
- Outro Music

FORMAT

You also need to decide what format your podcast will be. Will you go solo, or have a co-host(s)? Will you have guests every week? Will it be an interview, storytelling or informational style podcast? There are pros to each format, you just need to find what will serve your topic best. You could also choose to be a seasonal podcast, where each season has its own theme. How long do you want each episode to be. Lots of people argue about what the "ideal" podcast length is, but there is variation for a reason. There are 5 minute podcasts that are successful just as there are 3 hour podcasts that work, it all depends on your content and audience. Don't make your podcast longer than it needs to be, or you'll end up with lots of rambling, but also don't rush through an episode just to make it shorter and snappier.

SCHEDULE

How often will you release a podcast episode and when? Choose a specific day and time (considering the time zones of your target audience) and be consistent. You need to be able to commit to your date, so don't compromise the quality of your podcast by promising to release an episode when you don't have the time to because your workload is overwhelmed. Whether you decide to be weekly, fortnightly or monthly, what matters most is that you prioritise quality over quantity.



STEP 2. PREPARING YOUR PODCAST

COVER ART

Just like your title, your cover art is one of the first impressions of your podcast. It should communicate the topic visually and be consistent with your branding. But there are also technical things to consider - it needs to work for a variety of sizes, and be legible. This means limiting distractions by not adding too many words, selecting only one or two fonts, and avoiding overused images like microphones. You could create a cover image yourself using Canva or Photoshop, or we'll do it for you!

DESCRIPTION

Your description should summarise your podcast, and it could make or break whether your audience will choose to listen (especially if you, like the majority, don't start your podcast with a preexisting audience). Try beginning with a hook or point of interest by thinking about what is important to your listeners, and tell them a bit about you and any other hosts (what makes you qualified to be talking about your subject?) Also, think about what category or sub-category fits the genre of your podcast best.

GUESTS

If you want guests on your podcast, start reaching out ahead of time. Write a list of the people you would like to have on and contact them to see if they're interested. To avoid the messy back and forth of finding a time to record, use a tool like Calendly where they can efficiently book in a time that suits both of your schedules.



EQUIPMENT

Audio quality is everything when it comes to podcasting, so you want to make sure it's a smart investment. It doesn't need to break the bank, but it shouldn't be the area where you cut costs. Most people recommend starting with a USB microphone. The Audio Technica ATR2100x-USB and the Samson Q2U are both highly rated, but doing some research will help you find a microphone that fits within your budget. Remember, once you are more familiar with the technology and have a desire to advance the quality of your equipment, you can upgrade to using mic stands, boom arms, pop filters and professional headphones. Fears of spending excessive amounts of cash on the gear shouldn't stop you from starting a great podcast.

SCRIPT

Podcasts do best when the tone is mostly conversational. You might think that a script isn't necessary, but it's a good idea to have one, especially when you're starting out. Scripting the intro and outro will help you avoid nervous rambling and ensure that you get all your desired points across, as well as scripting any questions for guests. Scripting is the best way of managing time during a podcast, as you don't want too many tangents, especially for more informative podcasts. Be sure to practise beforehand, you don't want to sound stiff as though you are directly reading from a script, it should sound natural. Remember, this skill will improve with time, so don't put pressure on yourself to be perfect from the get-go.

INTRO MUSIC

Having a small jingle at the beginning of your podcast helps your audiences associate you with a specific tune. You can license music through Premium Beat or use royalty-free music, but commissioning a custom intro is a great method as your listeners will have music they haven't heard before to link with your podcast. However, be sure to keep it brief, as it only needs to be between 15 and 30 seconds to be effective.



STEP 3. RECORDING AND EDITING



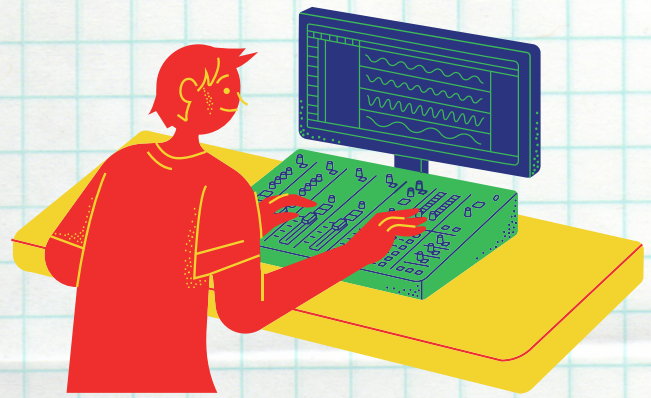
SOFTWARE

One of the most intimidating parts of podcasting is the recording and editing side. If you are recording solo or with multiple hosts together physically, you can normally record directly into the editing software. But if you are managing multiple people remotely, Zoom or Squadcast are your best options. It pays to test out your recording software and equipment in advance to ensure that the audio is crisp and you can use it easily when it comes to your official recording time-slot, especially if you have guests.

There are different platforms for recording/editing podcasts, again depending on your budget. GarageBand and Audacity are both free options, but Audacity tends to be recommended more as it works for both Apple and PC, the features are more advanced and it's easy to use. Adobe Audition is another powerful editing software that's great if you're using high-end equipment and working at a professional level with a higher initial skillset. But by far, the most recommended tool is Alitu: The Postcast Maker as it simplifies the editing process. Alitu automates many of the confusing technical aspects and is all based in your web browser, meaning you don't actually need to download any software to access it.

HOW TO RECORD

Ensure your microphone is plugged into your computer and that it is the default input device for your recording software. Then all you have to do is press record. Don't stop and restart even when mistakes are made or there are awkward pauses, as you can fix those while editing. It's normal to be nervous when starting out, but focus on sounding confident because the more self-conscious you are, the more stressed you will be which can make your voice shaky and unsure. As you record more often, you will become a better speaker where you sound more natural and composed. Remember, you can use your first episode or 'Episode Zero' as a trial where you introduce yourself to listeners and tell them a bit about the topic so they can get a feel for the podcast before you begin releasing official episodes. Once you get through the first, each episode after will become easier and easier.



HOW TO EDIT

Editing is a crucial part of podcasting, it allows you to add your intro/outro music and ad segments, remove mistakes or extended silences, stabilise volume and eliminate background noise. There are lots of tutorials available online to navigate your chosen software so you find the right settings and learn tips on how to improve the quality of your podcast. Edit with separate tracks for each of your audio sources (speakers and/or music), so you can make edits by adjusting volume, removing pauses, coughs or other interruptions easier. Be sure to edit for content on your first run-through before fixing errors and distractions so you don't waste time editing sections that may end up on the cutting room floor. Try fading between tracks to avoid unwanted clicks or pops when cutting audio to make transitions smoother. You can also use post-production tools like Auphonic to stabilise volume levels and improve the audio quality. Once your podcast is edited, make sure to save or export it as an MP3, this is the best format for uploading and sharing.

STEP 4. LAUNCHING YOUR PODCAST

HOW TO PUBLISH

With a podcast host, publishing is as simple as uploading your MP3 file. Most hosts will automatically embed ID3 tags into the audio file, which provide devices with data like the name of the episode and podcast. You also have the option of submitting to directories (e.g. Apple Podcasts, Spotify, Soundcloud, Google Podcasts, Stitcher) to extend the reach of your podcast.

Another thing to think about when it comes to launching a podcast are the details, i.e. transcriptions and show notes. Transcriptions are great for SEO, as they allow search engines to 'read' your podcast. Show notes can be transcriptions, a written summary of a podcast episode, a blogpost version of the episode, or a mixture of all of these options, as they help you make the most of your podcast by adapting the content into versatile formats for broader audiences. Be sure to add your episode embed code to your show notes page so people can easily listen to the podcast from your website.

PODCAST HOST

Finding a podcast host is the best way to simplify the process of launching your episodes. They store your audio and allow listeners to hear, download and/or subscribe to your podcast. Some highly recommended ones include Buzzsprout, Anchor, Captivate, Transistor and Libsyn.

MARKETING

Once you've made the podcast, don't forget to promote it! Sharing episodes through your website, email newsletters and social media is a great way to ensure your clients become aware that you've started a podcast. If you don't already have a website, most podcast hosts will provide you with one through your plan. Remember to reach out to your guests and remind them to promote their appearance on your podcast to notify their followers. Buzzsprout has a social sharing feature that allows you to create teaser videos to share on your different platforms, but you can also make shareable podcast content through Headliner, Repurpose and Wavve. During the early launch period, be sure to engage with podcast listeners who leave reviews or comments by saying thank you.

**TALK TO US ABOUT
STARTING A PODCAST!**

ONGOING SUPPORT?

BOOK A DISCOVERY CALL TODAY

NEED HELP IN A HURRY?

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