Making a Podcast

What is podcasting?

An opt-in medium

Podcasting put simply allows content to be broadcast and distributed via audio files over the internet. Podcasts can be downloaded or listened to online with a device such as a computer, smartphone or tablet. Podcasts usually are subscribed to by the listener, so that updates to the information in the forms of ‘episodes’ can be identified.

Benefits of podcasting:

- Flexible in nature: you can listen to it as you like when you like and you can listen to what you like
- Podcasting can be cheap and easy to make
- A companion as you do other things: drive, walk, do household chores, work out

Why is podcasting so powerful?

Unlike text, audio captures intangible aspects of a story and these aspects add authenticity. A speaker’s mood or state of mind and the raw emotion they feel while speaking can be felt by the listener.

Planning session

1. Decide the format of your interviews and the format it will take. This could be:

- **Interview**: Here, the host relies on finding interesting people to bring into the studio. They might be celebrities, or just ordinary people who have done unusual things.
- **Storytelling**: often taking a deep dive into a topic - it might be a murder investigation or a trip to Antarctica - and unfold the subject by delving into the characters and events in a compelling, carefully structured way, that keeps you listening all the way through. They can be told over several episodes, or each episode can tell a self-contained story. Either way, they need a strong plot (something has to happen), interesting characters (the people things happen to), solid research (distilled via good writing and editing) and a tight structure (careful craft and narrative arc). They are the hardest to do - but the most powerful when done well.
- **A Gabfest**: two or more people chat about something they feel strongly about. It might be a recap of a television show, it might be the week in politics, sport or women’s issues. What matters is that the hosts have chemistry and passion.

2. Pre-prepare a set of questions you will ask each interviewee. Don’t follow it slavishly, just use it as a prompt.

3. Take time to choose and research your guests, if you don’t already know them well.
Interview tips
1. Your interview should be a conversation where the host or interviewer listens carefully and acknowledges the speaker.
2. Carefully navigate transitions within your conversation.
3. Give your guest time to speak without cutting them off or interrupting.
4. Take the opportunities that follow-up questions can offer.
5. Don’t force the conversation to go in a particular direction all the time. If the speaker digresses from your original question, this may provide your listeners with added insights.
6. Make sure your questions are open-ended in order to give the speaker the opportunity to speak freely.
7. Be yourself, be respectful, be authentic, be sincere.

Ways of working
1. Probe for anecdotes and word-pictures to build emotion and drama. An example of how: “Can you describe the principle of differentiated responsibility in the Kyoto Protocol - what are your impressions as this continues to be a major sticking-point?”
2. If you don’t understand a response, ask them to clarify - your listeners will also be needing it.
3. Ask about specific details to get all the facts.
4. Change your language to suit your interviewee.
5. Be comfortable with silence - podcasts are not live and you can always cut out a pause that goes nowhere. But often silence can be the compost for deep conversation.
6. On rare occasions, you may have to do more of the talking but in general, the rule is: if you are more interesting than your subject, pick a better subject.
7. Repetition is ok. Don’t be afraid to ask your interviewee to repeat something they’ve said, clarify what they’ve said or direct them in general. At the end of the day, you have to craft this story, so if you feel like there are too many distractions in the room or that they were not entirely clear with their answer, politely instruct them on ways to make sure your audio is the best it can be.
Listening for inspiration

**Guardian: 27 podcasts to make you smarter**

**The Atlantic: The 50 Best Podcasts of 2018**

**Wired: 30 of the best podcasts for curious minds in 2019**

**Guardian: The 50 best podcasts of 2018**