 Resource 04

History of Podcasting by [Stephanie Ciccarelli](https://www.voices.com/company/leadership/stephanie-ciccarelli)   
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From its humble beginnings to its rise as an instrumental agent of change, particularly in the broadcast arena, podcasting's mainstream acceptance has been documented and preserved for generations to come.

Podcasting, once an obscure method of spreading information, has become a recognized medium for distributing audio content, whether it be for corporate or personal use. A podcast is similar to a radio program with key differences. Listeners can to tune into their favorite shows at their convenience and listen to podcasts directly on their iPod or their personal computer.

The term "podcast" is derived from the media player, "iPod", developed by Apple, and the term "broadcast", the traditional means of receiving information and leisure content on the radio or television. When the two words were merged, the terms podcast, podcaster, and the art of podcasting were born.

A Brief History

Adam Curry, former MTV Video Jockey, with the cooperation of RSS feed developer Dave Winer, created podcasting, a sophisticated method of broadcasting that makes audio content available to listeners at their convenience, in an always on state. Starting at the grassroots level through the "Daily Source Code" podcast, a podcast was directed by the developers who worked at iPodder.com. From there, many of these developers improved the code and produced their own iPodders. When people discovered that they could create and host their own radio shows, a community of pioneer podcasters was born.

Initial Development

By 2003, web radio had already existed for a decade, digital audio players had been on the market for several years, and bloggers and broadcasters frequently published MP3 audio online. More recently, the RSS file format was being widely used for summarizing or syndicating content. While RSS/RDF already supported media resources implicitly, applications rarely took advantage of this development. In 2001, users Adam Curry and Tristan Louis, aided by UserLand founder and RSS evangelist Dave Winer, added support for a specific enclosure element to Userland's non-RDF branch of RSS, and then to its Radio Userland feed-generator and aggregator.

In June 2003, Stephen Downes demonstrated aggregation and syndication of audio files using RSS in his Ed Radio application. Ed Radio scanned RSS feeds for MP3 files, collected them into a single feed, and made the result available as SMIL or WebJay audio feeds.

In September 2003, Winer created an RSS-with-enclosures feed for his Harvard Berkman Center colleague Christopher Lydon, a former newspaper and television journalist and NPR radio talk show host. For several months Lydon had been linking full-length MP3 interviews to his Berkman weblog, which focused on blogging and coverage of the 2004 U.S. presidential campaigns. Having Lydon's interviews as RSS enclosures helped inspire Adam Curry's pre-iPodder script and related experiments, leading to a variety of open source iPodder developments. Indeed, blogs would become an important factor in the popularization of podcasting even before many professional radio broadcasters and entrepreneurs with business plans adopted the form.

First Use of the Term ‘Podcasting’

Possibly the first use of the term podcasting was as a synonym for audioblogging or weblog-based amateur radio in an article by Ben Hammersley in The Guardian on February 12, 2004. In September of that year, Dannie Gregoire used the term to describe the automatic download and synchronization idea that Adam Curry had developed. Gregoire had also registered multiple domain names associated with podcasting. That usage was discovered and reported on by Curry and Dave Slusher of the Evil Genius Chronicles website.

By October 2004, detailed how-to podcast articles had begun to appear online. By July 2005, a Google search for "'how to' +podcast" returned 2,050,000 hits.

Apart from the development of Podcasting and its distribution via RSS, an idea resembling Podcasting was developed independently at Compaq Research as early as 1999 or 2000. Called PocketDJ, it would have been launched as a service for the Personal Jukebox or a proposed successor, the first hard-disk based MP3-player, that Compaq's R&D department had started developing in 1998.

Podcasting Justified - Should You Be Podcasting?

To podcast or not to podcast, that is the question. If you have a keen interest or expertise in a particular area and a desire to share your knowledge, you should definitely start a podcast.

Let's say that you are a music instructor. As an authority in the musical realm, your podcast might feature biographies of composers, showcasing a different composer each week. Playing some of their music in between segments, reciting contemporary reviews from peers and musical critics of the time, inserting tips about musical theory, and including anecdotes are all great ideas for content with both educational merit and entertainment value. To take this a step further, you may even teach by podcasting, and require your students to subscribe to your lectures or tutorial podcasts. Providing additional resources, particularly audio resources, will entice your students and enable them to refer to your lessons even when they are not in the classroom.

Reasons to Podcast

As a business person, podcasting is a means of conveying and spreading your corporate message. The human voice is the most persuasive marketing tool available. You should take advantage of your talents and the opportunity to actively and directly market to a highly qualified and impressionable audience.

You can easily educate your listeners, informing them of new products or services that they can purchase and utilize. Using the podcast as a promotional tool is a good idea from time to time, but aim to make your podcast as educational and comprehensive as possible.

Keep the podcast light and moving quickly to retain your audience. This is why a shorter podcast is best, preferably between ten and twenty minutes.

Valuable Benefits of Podcasting

The best side-effects you could ever receive. Podcasting is a new medium ripe with benefits for companies that are ready to take the next step into the new marketplace.

Valuable benefits include the ability to expand your brand, spread your ideas, and serve individuals who listen to you at their own convenience. You will also save advertising dollars while reaping more sales by means of your podcast. Podcasting allows you to inform or educate new and existing customers, reach audio learners according to their learning preferences, measure your listenership, and demonstrate leadership within your industry.

If you have the ability to invite other people to participate, you can interview personalities and introduce new material exclusive to your podcast. i.e. Bob Izumi, a media personality in the fishing industry, could be interviewed on a fishing podcast and share tips and stories from his own personal fishing experiences.

Becoming a Host

Many podcasters host their own programs, however, a growing number of business and entertainment podcasts are employing professional voice-over talents to give their podcast an edge with the exact sound they want to achieve. Professional voice talents can deliver audio for podcasts on schedule, and can even produce and write content, ensuring a pleasant and relaxing experience for their clients.

Once the podcast has been recorded, the show is then distributed through RSS, or Really Simple Syndication. The podcast distributor, in other words, the host of the show or program, is responsible for releasing the most current podcasts and capitalizing on their marketing efforts by submitting the end product to as many podcast directories as possible, thus increasing their audience and influence. Getting into the iTunes Music Store Podcast Directory is a high priority for an avid podcast marketer.

When a podcast has been accepted and approved, it will be available to a global audience as a free subscription. Subscribers receive new shows automatically from their Internet service provider and can listen to them on their iPod or personal computer.

How Will Podcasting Affect the Mass Public?

People between the ages of 18-34 are using the Internet for 17.8 hours a week (IPSOS REID August 2005). Compare this to radio and television at 11.2 hours per week.

More and more people are seeking information online, related to areas of personal interest, in a proactive fashion as opposed to waiting passively to receive content or a news story via traditional mediums such as television. Not only can the information on the Internet be sought out, it is also immediately delivered to the subscriber when new information becomes available. There are no traditional limitations where podcasting is concerned. In other words, you don't need to be by your computer to listen to your favourite podcasts. You can receive your podcasts or RSS feeds on a variety of digital devices including mobile phones, PDA's personal digital assistants, laptop computers, and so on.

By creating a podcast that serves a niche market, products and services can be promoted or advertised as sponsors of the podcast. For marketers, this means that they have a new access to an even more targeted market of individuals who are highly interested in a specific area of study. A podcast produced for knitters may be sponsored by a specific brand of wool or a pattern maker, and a dog lovers podcast may feature advertising for dog food or novelty items related to canine health and fitness.

Summary - Key points to remember

The key objectives of this chapter were to introduce you to podcasting, from the grassroots beginnings to mainstream acceptance. There are many reasons to become involved with podcasting, whether you will be the podcaster yourself producing your own content, or a business entity that realizes a great opportunity for growth and the need to pursue this new, influential and cost-effective medium.