Content Creation

How to Write and Record a Podcast

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Producing content has always been a significant part of any company's marketing.

When it's done correctly, good quality content has the power to grab the attention of new prospects, stimulate an interest in your product or service, generate a desire for your particular offering and ultimately encourage people to take action and become a customer.

More and more people are now consuming content on a range of devices and expectations regarding the type of content that keeps them engaged are growing. Additionally, search engines such as Google are giving more exposure to those websites that offer content using a rich variety of media, rather than those that provide everything in plain, old, boring text.

Now we're not saying that the written word is becoming obsolete. Far from it! A well-written article, blog post or ebook that educates, stimulates or entertains the reader will always play a huge part in online media. However, an increasing number of companies are now supplementing their traditional text-based content with video, infographics, animation, presentations and audio; so unless you want to get left behind by your competitors, you should be broadening your content offerings too.

One great example of how you can diversify your content is by recording podcasts. These are simply audio files where the style is not too dissimilar to that of a radio broadcast. Although there are no hard and fast rules for how you present yours.

Podcasts are a very popular form of content as, with many people now owning mobile devices such as smartphones and tablet computers, listening to a podcast is often a more preferable way to consume content when you are on the move.

Another reason for the growth of podcasts is that not only are they a great way for a company to establish itself as an expert within its respective industry, they can also be a quick and easy way of producing great content by re-purposing material that already exists in a different format. For example, you could recycle an old blog post or convert a company presentation into audio; giving you the opportunity to distribute it through a variety of other channels.

Writing Your Podcast Script

Whether you are producing a new podcast from scratch or are reusing an existing piece of content to create a recording, you should always write a script beforehand. Launching into your recording without preparing what you are going to say is a recipe for disaster and will likely result in the presenter either stumbling over their words or suffering from 'stage fright' and saying nothing at all.

To avoid the proverbial 'rabbit in headlights' syndrome and to ensure you deliver a podcast that your audience will love, here are the key points you should take into account when you write and prepare your podcast script.

1. Give it an introduction

There's nothing worse than settling down to listen to a podcast you have downloaded only to discover ten minutes in that the subject matter is of no interest to you whatsoever.

To avoid annoying your listeners in this manner make sure you introduce your podcast properly by announcing the title and giving a brief summary of what the podcast is going to cover. You should also introduce yourself so your audience knows exactly who they are listening to as this helps to add some context to the subject matter.

2. Consider your audience

Think about who your target audience is and tailor the subject matter and the style accordingly. If your average listener is likely to be a non-technical manager for instance, then you might want to avoid discussing overly technical issues.

Conversely, if you are aiming to capture engineers amongst your listeners then you might lose their interest by presenting certain technical concepts in too simple a manner, so a more detailed approach would probably be more suitable.

It can be a good idea to define a profile for your ideal listener as it gives you the opportunity to think about what their expectations, interests, needs and desires might be; allowing you to fulfill them and convert your audience into fans!

3. Make your script sound natural

The script has to be prepared for the ear, so it's a good idea to read it out loud before you hit record so you can get a feel for how it flows. When read, your script shouldn't sound like a script but should sound just like the language that might be heard in the everyday workplace - minus the expletives of course!

4. Use short sentences

Avoid lengthy sentences where you try and make multiple points in one drawn-out monologue. Shorter statements work wonders in delivering the main message as they are easier for your listener to process and understand.

5. Choose simple words in favour of being overly formal

Some podcasters try and emphasise their authority by using lots of fancy, multisyllabic words. However, too many of these can make the listening experience a real headache. You don't need to dumb down your message but you should certainly try and stick to clear, simple, everyday words where possible.

6. Write your script in lower case

When you're reading through your script for the actual recording, it's important that each word and sentence is as legible as it can be. Capitalized words are more difficult to recognize at a glance so always type your script using lower case letters.

7. Mark up your script

When you're doing your practice runs of reading your script aloud prior to recording, it's a good idea to mark up any elements that are significant to you. So you might want to underline words that you want to say with more emphasis or add in an indicator that tells you when to take a pause. If you don't mark up your script beforehand then you're effectively choosing to make these decisions on the fly;; and this can result in a recording that's not up to scratch.

8. Avoid direct quotations

If you need to refer to somebody else's comments in your podcast then it is better to paraphrase them. Quoting them word for word will make you sound less like a podcast host and more like a radio actor!

9. Make your podcast inclusive

A neat trick when scripting your podcast is to use inclusive language such as 'we' and 'our'. These words invite people in and help to build a connection.

Recording Your Podcast

Once you have your script written out, marked up and rehearsed, you're ready to record!

But before you hit that record button, as with the scripting stage of creating a podcast there are a number of key issues to be aware of in relation to the hardware and software you will need. There are also a surprising number of useful tips and tricks that can make an enormous difference to the quality of your recording and that can help you deliver a sterling performance!

1. Choosing your recording equipment.

The only hardware that is essential for you to record a podcast is a computer (we'll assume you already have one of those!) and a microphone. Whist there are plenty of fancy microphones available, there's no need to break the bank buying anything expensive. A basic microphone or headset that plug into your computer's microphone jack are perfectly suitable to record a relatively good quality podcast. However, USB microphones are a popular choice for podcasters as they tend to produce a better sound overall so you might want to upgrade to one of these in the future. If your podcast will feature more than one person talking then you will need a separate microphone for each person.

2. Choosing your recording software

You can record your podcast using something as simple as Windows' Sound Recorder but there are much better options available. A popular piece of software used by many podcasters is Audacity. It is a free sound recording and editing package which means that you are able to edit out any mistakes, remove background noise, combine multiple audio files and tweak a number of other elements of your recording.

3. Including music in your podcast

Another advantage of using Audacity to edit your podcast is that it gives you the option to add music or other sound tracks to the overall recording. Some popular podcasts feature music fading in/out at the start and end of each episode and this can add to the listeners' experience and help give your brand a stronger identity.

If you do decide to include music, however, stick to royalty free clips. Using audio gleaned from music albums, TV shows or movie sound tracks could be deemed as an infringement of copyright law.

4. Saving your podcast

As you will be distributing your podcast online you should save it using a compressed file format. Nobody wants to sit around waiting for a 76MB WAV file to download! Instead, you should save your file as an MP3 as this will massively reduce the file size of your recording allowing for much easier distribution.

5. Stand up when recording
A handy tip for delivering a more polished performance when you record your podcast is to stand up. Many professional actors stand when recording for radio as it allows them to breathe more easily and deliver their lines with a clearer voice. So put down your cup of tea, get out of your chair and e-n-u-n-c-i-a-t-e!

6. Position the microphone correctly
You should aim to position your mouth around 20 to 30 cm from the microphone. If you are too close then you might find the recording features odd popping sounds every time you pronounce a 'p' or a 't' or the recording could pick up excessive breathing noises.

Too far away and you'll sound distant and the audio will probably pick up background noise from the room as well.

7. Don't move around when you speak
Try and maintain a constant distance between your mouth and the microphone. Moving around will cause your voice to fade in and out on the recording; so keep still to ensure the sound levels do not vary.

8. Don't be afraid to make mistakes.
An occasional stumble or the odd "erm," and "ah" shouldn't be a reason to stop recording. These 'verbal crutches' are simply a natural trait of human speech and, if anything, lend themselves to giving your podcast a more human feel, rather than a sterile, flawless, corporate broadcast.

If you find yourself throwing in 'filler words' a little too frequently then the best advice is to simply slow down. This allows your brain to catch up with what you are saying and eliminates the need to fill a gap whilst you think about what you are going to say next.

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