

Podcasting & Online Shows for Beginners

So you've decided to create your own podcast or online show? Excellent. Podcasting and online shows are a wonderful way to reach out to others and be heard on the Internet. And if you're the type of person who likes to hear themselves talk, it's a good way to fill that need too. So grab your laptop and put on your thinking caps as we dive head first into the wonderful world of podcasting and online shows.

Step 1: Define Your Show

Your Topic

As cheesy as it sounds, the first think you need to make a killer show is an idea. What are you going to do your show on? The easiest way to answer that question is with this one; what are you passionate about? Don't do a show on something you are only mildly familiar with, do it on something you feel strongly about.

There are tons of shows out there covering music, video games, TV, movies, sports, politics and religion. Though you may be a small fish in a vast ocean, don't let that scare you off from a doing a show about one of those topics; it just means you will have to be that much better to be noticed. But if your passion is something much more niche like say your love of basset hounds, or wood working or tea kettle collecting, you can still do a show about that as well. You may never get picked up by a network or optioned to turn it into a movie (BTW that is not the object of doing a show) but you may meet other people who share your passion and create a tight-knit community (which is part of the objective of doing a show).

Podcast or Online Show

Podcasts by definition use an RSS feed (Really Simple Syndication) to distribute the files to the listeners / viewers. Traditionally they are downloaded and played back on a device at a later time.

Online shows are either broadcast live online or watched online at a later time. Sites like YouTube and Twitch allow you to do either and can be used to store your files online for free.

The Type of Show

Unlike TV or radio, shows can be formatted in any fashion you want. Like in the case of Ethan Eternal, the book written by Cyrus Martin, it can be used to present a radio drama-like experience. That being said most shows fall into one of three categories:

- Informational – The host(s) discuss or present news about a topic or demonstrate how to do something.
- Talk – The hosts discuss a topic of topic.
- Fictional – A story is told much like a movie or radio play.

Doing an online show also gives you the freedom to use all of these formats whenever you want. For example, this week's episode could be about a new type of board game coming to market, the next episode could be a discussion on how it will affect the market and the one after could explain how to play the game.

Hosts

The more the merrier holds true in here as well. Adding additional people can not only break up the sound of your voice and add additional perspective, but it can also help divide up the work. Depending on your format, you may have to have a co-host. Informational and how-to shows can get away with a single host but if you plan on having discussions, you need someone there to put in their two cents.

Show Format

Podcasts come in two different flavors: video and audio. While informational and talk podcasts can be done either way, how-to podcasts almost have to be video. An online show like on YouTube or Twitch has to be video even if there is nothing to look at but a still image. Before you decide on which path to take, realize each have pros and cons.

Audio Podcast

- Production – They require less equipment, time and planning to do.



- Availability – If it can play an MP3, it can be used to listen to an audio podcast.
- File Size – We will discuss storage and distribution in a bit but the bottom line is audio podcast are smaller, download quicker and cost less to store.
- Show length – If you plan to do a 30 min (maybe even as short as 15 min) show or longer, you should consider audio podcasting. People are much more likely to listen to you for that length of time if they can do it through headphones or in the car instead of planted in front of a screen.
- Notoriety – There are literally thousands of audio podcasts out there and getting noticed is harder to do.

Video Podcast / Online Show

- Production – Instead of just thinking about audio levels you now also have to consider lighting, your background, etc. You will also need more equipment to pull it off. It also takes longer to edit video than audio.
- Availability - Most smart phones can play video which means they can also be used to watch your show. But in the end there are more phones and devices that can play MP3 files than play video.
- File Size – Depending on your distribution model, this may cost a lot more money in storage and bandwidth fees.
- Show Length – Once again, depending on your distribution model, you may be limited to the amount of time you have. Which could be a good or bad thing.
- Notoriety – Lets face it, video is sexier than audio alone. If you are looking to get noticed, video is the way to go.



Schedule

One of the biggest killers of any show is consistency. If your listeners or viewers can't count on you being there when you said you would be, they will move on. Once you start a show (and fall in love with it) you will realize it takes more time and dedication than



you might think. There are four models most shows follow:

- Daily – That might mean Mon thru Fri; M-W-F, or every single day. Unless this is your primary job or you have a lot of free time, I wouldn't suggest this model. It's takes a ton of work, preparation and planning.
- Weekly – Depending on the type of show you do, this can take a lot of time but is manageable. Just make sure to set a day of the week to have it out to your subscribers and stick to it. PRO TIP: People tend to download and watch earlier in the week.
- Bi-weekly – If a weekly commitment is too much, try once every two weeks. This allows more time to record and edit your show and still have a happy spouse. It is also frequent enough people will stick with it.
- Monthly – This model is not really suggested unless your topic just doesn't have that much going on and only needs to be visited once a month. Because of the large amount of time between episodes, most subscribers will forget to come back and listen to the next one.

Step 2: Gathering Equipment

Audio Podcasting

Audio podcasting is easier and more streamlined than video podcasting. Like any hobby, the more time and money you put into it the more you will get out of it but for beginning podcasters, you only need a few simple items.

Equipment

- Computer / Laptop – Almost all computers and laptops have the hoarse power to record and edit audio. As long as your computer or laptop was manufactured within the last six years, you should be good to go. Mac or PC is fine.
- Microphone – Most laptops have built-in microphones but I suggest getting a headset microphone instead. They will eliminate most ambient noise and sound better.



Software

- Mac – If you are a Mac user you are in luck, OS X comes with a program called Garageband that is perfect for creating podcasts.
- Windows – The program of choice for recording and editing podcasts on Windows is a free download called Audacity. You can download it from Soundforge.net. For a tutorial on how to use Audacity to podcast, you can find instruction here: <http://www.howtopodcasttutorial.com/17-audacity-tutorial.htm>

Video Podcasting

If you decide to venture into the realm of video podcasting, you will need a few more items and a little more power.

Equipment

- Computer / Laptop – Once again most computers and laptops made within the last six years should be fine, but recording and editing video is a lot more processor intensive and time consuming than audio alone. If your computer or laptop is taking forever to complete your project it might be time for an upgrade. Once again Mac or PC will do.
- Microphone – If you are going to be sitting in front of your computer and talking, then a headset microphone would work perfectly. If you plan on being away from the camera, it might be a good idea to invest in a hand-held microphone.
- Camera – Most laptops have built-in webcams and if sitting down and talking is the center attraction of your show, it should work fine. But if you plan on moving around or having a set, then a camcorder or camera with video recording will be needed. Make sure it can interface with your computer.
- PRO TIP: Camcorders and cameras that use SD cards will make getting the video into your computer a lot quicker than having to transfer it via USB or Firewire.

Software

- Mac – We Mac users get what we pay for as OS X has several ways to record and edit video. You can use Photobooth to record your webcam video or pull it in from a camcorder using Firewire or SD card into iMovie. You can either edit it in iMovie or move it to Garageband if you are more comfortable using it.

- Windows – Starting with Windows XP, Movie Maker started to become a decent video editor. It has improved in Windows 7 and will do a fine job editing your video. For a tutorial on editing video in Movie Maker, click here:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7GREeD2icUo>

Online Show

Doing an online show will take all of the same equipment doing a video podcast will. The only difference is if you decide to do it live it may require special switching software to add graphics or switch cameras on the fly. Depending on which service you choose to use (YouTube, Twitch, etc.), most of those tools are built into the software.

Step 3: Distribution

Depending on what kind of show you have created we now come to a crossroads on how you will get it out to the world. At this point you can continue down the road to making it a full-fledged podcast complete with RSS feed or you can take a different path and turn it into an online show. As always there are positives and negatives to both.

Podcast

- Positives – By creating a podcast with an RSS stream, you will make your show more accessible to viewers. It can be subscribed to and downloaded in iTunes, Stitcher, Google Play and other RSS readers. You will also have more control over the podcast and where it lives on the Internet and how people get it. These are important factors if you ever hope to monetize it.
- Negative – In order to have a true podcast you will need a website, someone to host your files and it will take more time, energy and possibly money to accomplish.



Online Show

- Positives – This option is really only for video programs but it requires less work as all you have to do is upload the video to a site like YouTube and you are done. No website maintenance, hosting fees and it is embeddable on other sites.

- **Negatives** – While there are ways to download videos from YouTube, for the most part the only way people can see your show is by going to that site. Your viewers will have to be connected to the web in order to watch you. This also means it will only live on that one site; no iTunes, Stitcher or RSS love. The biggest issue is you are at the mercy of that site; if YouTube removes your video or your entire page for some reason, you will have little recourse to get it back.

If you plan to go down the path of becoming an online show, then you can skip to Step 6.

Step 4: Web Site / RSS Feed

As I mentioned in my previous post, most sites use RSS nowadays and depending on who you go with, they will generate the feed for you.

- [Blogger](#) – Blogger is a free blog hosting site from Google. It costs nothing to start or maintain and can serve as your website and RSS feed generator. For a tutorial on how to set up a podcast site using Blogger, click here: <http://google.about.com/od/googleblogging/ss/podblogger.htm>
- [Wordpress](#) – Wordpress is another free blogging site that podcasters love to use. It can also be used to create your RSS feed. For a tutorial on how to set up a podcast site using Wordpress, click here: <https://codex.wordpress.org/Podcasting>
- [Feedburner](#) – Feedburner is a free site / software from Google that allows you to craft your RSS feed. For a tutorial on creating a RSS feed using Feedburner, click here: <https://feedburner.google.com/fb/a/myfeeds>
- [Squarespace](#) – Squarespace is an advanced web page hosting and design site. It can be used to create RSS feeds and host your blog. While it is not free, its low cost plans can serve as a one-stop shop for creating a site and podcast.

Step 5: File Hosting

This is where some money may be needed. While the RSS feed points to the MP3 or M4V file you have created, you need a place to store it online so people can get to it. Here are some options.

Audio Files (MP3)

- Archive.org – This is a site dedicated to backing up all of the information on the Internet. Best of all, they will host your files for free, at least audio files.

Audio & Video Files (M4V)

- Amazon S3 – And you thought Amazon was just for buying books. Sure it is a paid service but they don't come any cheaper than this. I currently use S3 to store all of our audio and video files for the Epcally Geeky podcast (over 100 files) and it only runs about \$.12 a month!

Step 6: Putting It Together

When it comes down to it, the steps for creating a podcast / show are simple (once you have everything set up).

1. Record your podcast / show.
2. Edit your podcast / show.
3. Distribute your podcast / show.
 - a. For an online show upload it to YouTube.
 - b. For a podcast upload the file to Archive.org, Amazon S3, etc.
4. Update your blog and RSS feed so people can get the new episode (for podcasts only).

There is one item I have eluded to that all podcasters need in order to be successful but haven't said out right and that is patience. It may take weeks, months or even years for people to find your show and become fans. While you may be tempted to look at traffic numbers and might get disheartened, don't give up as long as it is still fun for you to do. If you enjoy what you are doing and it shows in your work, the audience will come.

Until they do though, I would suggest reading *Crush It!* By Gary Vaynerchuk. In his book, Gary describes how he turned a simple podcast about wine into a full time job and how you can do the same. It will also provide you with the inspiration you need to keep working for your dream.

