Ready, Set, Podcast!

STC-PSC Presentation by Allie Proff
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Today's Topics

I spend a lot of time in the car on the commuting, as I'm sure many of you do as well. That's when I really started listening to podcasts. My introduction to podcasting came in 2017 when I gave a presentation at STC Summit (hint...speaking is the best way to get a reduced entrance to conferences), then Ed Marsh invited me to be on his Content Content podcast. I hadn't heard of them before, but I quickly discovered how fun they are to listen to.

Meet Allie

I've been a technical writer for almost 15 years, mostly at Boeing but I've been at a few other companies as well.

I'm also a mom to an 8 year old and twin 6 year olds, all boys. When they were babies, daycare cost x 3 was killing us. My friend had been using an au pair for her childcare, so we changed to having an au pair as well. Even with a great agency and area coordinator and my friend's help, I still made mistakes.

Earlier this year, I decided to put my technical writing skills to work helping other working parents find out about au pairs, and then smoothly onboard and interview their au pairs with process guides and checklists. My friend, Maggie, and I are starting a blog and a podcast.

I also have my professional blog, Technically Eclectic. One of the podcasts I've listened to is Optimal Living Daily, where they curate and read other people's blog articles aloud for a given topic. It's great for the blog author because it increases their audience reach. So I'm also in the midst of launching a Technically Eclectic podcast reading articles about Tech Comm and related topics.

So I tell you this because my confession is that I haven't yet actually released my podcasts. I'm waiting until I not only have my initial three episodes, but I also want to have a content backlog so I can provide a consistent feed. I have episodes recorded on my computer, but I haven't actually flipped the switch with iTunes, etc. However, I've taken Pat Flynn's Power Up Podcasting course as well as a few other classes and talking with other podcasters, and I know that all my research is useful for people who are curious about what podcasts are and what goes into creating one, without going into the technical detail of recording, editing, etc.

For sure, you will definitely walk away with the knowledge of what goes into a podcast and how you might create one for you or your business.

Podcast Statistics

I love data and numbers to back up my stories, so let's talk about some statistics.

First, though, I'd like to know a little more about you and where you all are coming from.
- Who's heard of podcasts?
- Who listens monthly?
- Who listens weekly?
- Daily?
- What are some of your favorite podcasts?
- Who wants to start a podcast? For personal or for your work?

64% of Americans have heard of podcasts. Just after the 2016 election, only 60% of Americans know who the vice president is. (It's Mike Pence.)

44% of Americans have listened to at least one podcast, which includes 12 million people who listened to their first podcast last year.

26% of Americans listen to podcasts at least monthly, including 17% of Americans who listen weekly, which is more than twice as many Americans who watch Sunday Night Football (around 7%). The age group that listens the most are 25 to 55, followed by people 12 to 25, but not a lot of people over 55 listen (though it's growing). Men used to listen to podcasts more, but the numbers now are about equal.

What's really cool is that of these weekly listeners, 80% of them listen to the entire episode. That's down from 85% last year, but the number of weekly shows grew from 5 to 7. They're downloading more episodes and listening to slightly less of each.

https://www.edisonresearch.com/infinite-dial-2018/
https://www.convinceandconvert.com/podcast-research/the-13-critical-podcast-statistics-of-2018/
https://www.podcastinsights.com/podcast-statistics/

Why and why not to do a podcast

So with all these data points, it seems like starting a podcast is a great investment. After all, there are some great reasons to start.

Reasons to start
- It's relatively new, which means less competition for now.
- It may be what your audience is looking for, and is a new way to increase their loyalty.
- More attention than visual channels because people can multi-task while driving, working, etc. Where else do you have your audience staying for 10 to 60 minutes, consuming 80% of your content?
- Builds more connection with audience than written words, but less cost and production effort than video.
- You enjoy it.

Reasons not to start
- It's trendy. Lots of people are starting
- It requires work, commitment, and dedication. This is precisely why I'm focusing the majority of the presentation on setting up a podcast, and I don't have a lot of tips yet on doing a podcast. I can't wait to share my insights with you next year after I have a few published episodes under my belt.
- It needs pairing with text for SEO
- It may not be what your audience is looking for. Focus on producing quality content for your ideal client.
- Money. It's a long game. Hard to directly monetize without alienating your audience, which can be difficult to prove ROI (like any content marketing). Tim Ferris: you can shear a sheep many times, but you can only skin him once. Don't skin your sheep.

https://thoughtcatalog.com/ryan-holiday/2016/10/please-please-for-the-love-of-god-do-not-start-a-podcast/
https://tim.blog/2016/04/11/tim-ferriss-podcast-business/
https://podcastwebsites.com/2017/03/why-you-shouldnt-start-a-podcast/

Podcast content

VALUE TO COMPANY: What is the value of a podcast to you as a company? (Content marketing, storytelling, relationship building)

VALUE TO LISTENER: What's your show about? What's the value of a podcast to your customers/consumers? Why would they continue to listen?

Types of podcasts

For the sake of this lecture, I'm going to assume you're starting a podcast. Otherwise, we'll all just go home right now. But you are thinking about starting one, so let's do this together.

On this slide we have mostly solo shows and interview shows, but you can also have answer/Q&A shows, read the news shows, and everything in-between. You can release numbered episodes, seasons at a time, or just whenever you feel like it (though not advised).

- **Technically Eclectic News Podcast** - reading you the best of tech comm, content strategy, and user experience blogs. (not yet released)
- **The Not Boring Tech Writer** - Jacob Moses gives you the tools to prove to your peers that you're a not-boring tech writer. (19-38 minutes, 10 episodes in 2016, a summary in January 2017, and then one episode in October 2018)
- **I'd Rather Be Writing** - Tom Johnson reads and talks about some of his more popular blog posts. (6-70 minutes [one episode 4 hours!], 48 episodes, 2015 to present)
- **Write the Docs** - The group is a series of conferences, local meetups, and Slack groups focused on software documentation. Their podcast episodes are just as varied. (5-90 minutes, 2015 to present)
- **Boagworld Web Show** - Paul Boag covers digital strategy, user design, and user experience. Mixture of original content, reviews, and interviews. (50-70 minutes, 300+ episodes from at least 2009 to present)
- **UIE Podcast** - Jared Spool interviews people in the UX field. (7-25 minutes, 15 episodes from 2016 to present)
- **Hurley Write** (and The Write Way with Pam and MJ) by Pam Hurley are tips from technical writing, scientific writing, manuscript writing, and other documentation. (2-5 minutes, 2011 to 2014)
- **ISTC** is the Institute of Scientific and Technical Communicators and is presenters and highlights.
- **LavaCon Speaker Series** is also presenters and highlights from their conference. (9-17 minutes, 7 episodes in 2017)
- **Cherry Leaf** is a business based in the UK that focuses on becoming a better technical and business communicator. There's even a URL that you can leave questions for them to answer. (12-45 min, 45 episodes [missing 1-25] from ???? through 2018)
- **10-Minute Tech Comm** by UAH Technical Communications are 10 minute interviews with technical communication practitioners, scholars, and innovators. (Most really are 10 minutes but go as short as 6 minutes and as long as 22 minutes. One is over an hour. 47 episodes since 2014)
- **Insert Content Here** by Lullabot. Interviews with people in the content strategy arena. "Cheeky conversations about content strategy, riveting tales of projects gone off-the-rails, and reflections on life in the trenches of digital publishing." (No time listed. 25 episodes since December 2012, but only two episodes in 2017.)

- **Content Content** by Ed Marsh. "Interviews with technical communication, content strategy, and web content professionals." (55-90 minutes, published approximately once a month since 2015)
- **Scriptorium - The Content Strategy Experts** by Scriptorium is a series of interviews hosted by Gretyl Kinsey (14-27 minutes, 10 episodes in 2018)
- **Content Strategy** by Kristina Halvorson of Brain Traffic is also an interview show about content strategy. (22-42 minutes, 10 episodes in 2018)
- **Content Strategy Interviews** by Larry Swanson and Elles Media. "Every week we bring you the unique perspective of an experienced content strategy expert." (28-35 minutes, only the last 10 episodes show in iTunes)

What podcasts are you listening to right now?

[Reasons why not to start an interview podcast, and how to do it well if you do](#)

Podcast Info

When you release a show, here's the information you need:
- Cover art: The maximum size is 3000 x 3000 pixels. Use it so the resolution is good, but keep your design simple for thumbnail viewing.
- Podcast description: Be descriptive, but not too long. Since podcast players are search engines, include SEO keywords.
- Link to your website in your description
- Keywords and categories
- Show type: episodic (no order) vs serial (first episode first)

Episode Info

When you release an episode, here's the information you need:
- Audio Requirements
  - Bumpers (intro, outro)
    - An intro typically has music, and you might pay a voice actor to introduce you. The thought is that someone else introducing you gives you more credibility. At the very least, though, you want to say what the episode is about and provide a hook for staying the rest of the episode (even though they've already made a start by reading the episode title and description)
    - The outro thanks people for listening, and might provide a preview of the next episode.
    - Remember to always include a call to action (CTA) somewhere. You have your user's attention--make good use of it! (invitation to participate, transfer from audio to web how/motivation?)

- - Master files can make your bumpers a lot easier. Record once, then drop in every episode. Or make minor edits, then drop in.
    - Body. This is your show content, where you provide the value and what people are here to listen to.
  - Release Requirements
    - Episode artwork (optional)
    - Episode description: Also be descriptive, but not too long, and include SEO keywords. Podcast players return search results on individual episodes as well as shows. Remember to link to your show notes on your website
    - Show notes written and created on your website.

Tips:
- Episode planning - Have a bullet script before you record
- Content calendar and batching

What it Looks Like

These are screenshots from my phone using Google Podcast. However, all podcast players display similar info.

How a Podcast Gets Published

These are the steps from planning to recording to publishing to listening.
If you want to know more, there are lots of great podcast courses out there. I personally recommend Pat Flynn's Power Up Podcasting (he has a [free version](#) that gives you plenty of info at and a paid class on his site smartpassiveincome.com under Courses and also under Resources)

Equipment and costs

- **Recording microphones** (Audio Technica ATR 2100, Blue Yeti, headset). Although you can use a headset, it's best if you don't. The ATR 2100 is a dynamic mic, and the Blue Yeti is a condenser. I'm not an audio engineer, but you can read this [Reddit thread](#) for more info. I bought the ATR 2100 because Pat Flynn recommended it, it's less expensive, and I found a good used one for $35 online. Your interview guests can use a headset. As the host, it's most important that you sound good.
- **Recording interviews** (Skype, Zencastr, Zoom, Citrix, webinar software, etc.). Zencastr is useful because it records two different channels, but Skype is popular because it's free. Most webinar software also has a recording feature. It's nice to have video with your interview while recording to get that connection with your guest. During editing, you can strip the video and capture only the sound.

- **Editing software** (Garage Band, Audacity, Adobe Audition, podcast engineers [humans]). Garage Band (Mac) and Audacity (Windows or Mac) are free, and Adobe Audition costs. If you don't have the time or the energy, you can also always hire a freelancer or a contractor to do this for you (for example, podcastengineers.com).
- **Post-editing tools** (Auphonic, Levelator) Even though editing software helps equalize sound levels, you might consider running the final file through one of these services.
- **Hosting** - Audio (Libsyn, Podbean, Buzzsprout, Blubrry, others). You pay the hosting company to store your audio files, the metadata that forms the RSS feed that the players read, etc. The podcast host also provides basic analytics such as number of downloads. Libsyn charges $5 per month basic, and $7 per month with basic analytics. If you are doing an internal podcast and do not want to publicly distribute your episodes, you can skip this and use an internal site. (Note: Soundcloud can be a host *and* a player.) https://www.weeditpodcasts.com/8-top-podcast-hosting-companies/
- **Players** (iTunes, Google Podcast, Spotify, Stitcher, Soundcloud, etc.) The players are free. You go to their site, sign up, and ask them to pull from your host and display to their listeners. Each site has their own procedures and timelines. When you post a new podcast episode, it can be a few minutes to a few hours (up to a full day) before they display your new episode on their site. Each player also has its own interface. It seems the only place for people to leave reviews is iTunes; there's no Android equivalent yet on the major players.
- **Show notes and transcript**. Remember to have your own website to post episodes and show notes. You can embed a player right in your website. Remember to get transcripts in addition to your show notes. Temi.com will do it for $0.10 per minute, though with every option you'll have to do some proofreading. In a non-tech-comm space, I think Amy Porterfield and Pat Flynn (Smart Passive Income) both have this down. And you can set your episode post where people can leave comments directly instead of through iTunes.

Measuring success

What's your goal?
Building your email list
Analytics from your audio host
Effect on your business (use content marketing metrics)
   https://optinmonster.com/how-to-measure-content-marketing-roi-metrics/
   https://contentmarketinginstitute.com/2015/06/measure-content-marketing-roi/
   https://contentmarketinginstitute.com/2018/04/measuring-content-performance/
Personal growth and satisfaction

Funding your podcast

How much funding are we talking about? There's the initial equipment (not just the microphone, but also the stands, the holders, the pop filters, etc. Still probably under $200 in total). And then there's the monthly host fee ($5-7 for Libsyn at the basic level). There's the cost involved in creating transcripts (Temi.com offers $0.10 per minute). And your podcast is probably part of a larger picture where you need to consider website hosting fees, email client, etc.)

- Corporate budget: For large companies, this can easily fit within an overall content marketing budget, building reputation and authority.
- Selling your own product: Probably the best for small businesses. It will connect people to you to buy your consulting, your course, etc.
- Advertising and sponsorships: This is where you read aloud ads for another product. They pay you based on your download rate at CPM or cost per thousand (M being the Roman numeral for 1,000)
- Affiliate marketing: This is where you recommend someone else's product. They don't pay you directly, but you receive a percentage of sales when people buy using your affiliate link.
- Crowdfunding and Patreon: Patreon is a site where people support the arts. You set contribution levels and people receive different rewards. A $1 per month contribution might get a thank you, where a $20 per month contribution gets physical swag, a mention on your podcast, etc.

Thank you!

Although I'm by no means an expert, I have done a lot of research and always love helping people. Please feel free to contact me (allieproff@gmail.com or on LinkedIn) anytime.