



Podcasting 2018

What you need to know



Podcasting

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Introduction

A question often being raised by publishers these days is, “should we have a podcast?” The answer depends, of course, on who the publisher’s audiences are, who they hope to reach, and why those people would engage with the content. However, in many offices this is often dominated, if not determined, by more fundamental questions about what a podcast is and who listens to them.

This report addresses those fundamentals. It provides a brief overview of podcasts and podcast audiences to help teams get beyond the “what” so they can focus on the “why” of podcasts as a content product. To learn more about podcasts and discuss whether they are right for your audiences, contact Richard Fawal at 202-285-7912 or richard@MyJunto.com.

Definition

A podcast is an episodic series of digital audio or video files that a user can stream or download to listen or watch. It is usually available for subscription so that new episodes are automatically downloaded via web syndication to the user's own device. Podcasts differ from other digital content platforms in that they are syndicated for direct delivery on any platform a user chooses, whether iTunes, GooglePlay, Stitcher, or another podcast player app.

Syndication contrasts starkly with modern video hosting. YouTube, Facebook, and Twitter all host video natively, and they incentivize publishers to post to each independently. Then the channel’s algorithms decide whether consumers see it, not the consumers themselves. The podcast publisher, however, delivers the product directly to the user’s chosen platform automatically or on demand, available for the consumer’s use anytime. Podcasts can be delivered for free or through an annual subscription or per-episode fee.

Top 10 Facts About Podcasts

1. *One out of four Americans listens to a podcast at least once a month*
2. *Forty-two million Americans listen to a podcast at least once a week*
3. *Podcasts can have any format, from news show to performance art*
4. *Podcast listeners are more likely to have advanced degrees*
5. *Podcast listeners are more likely to have six-figure incomes*
6. *Podcast audiences listen to an average of five podcasts a week*
7. *Podcast audiences subscribe to an average of six podcasts*
8. *There are more than 100,000 podcasts in the iTunes directory*
9. *Top podcasts can receive as many as five million downloads a month*
10. *Apple will soon provide podcast listening data for the first time ever*

For more information, see Edison Research's podcast audience data, <http://www.edisonresearch.com/the-podcast-consumer-2017/>

Why syndication matters

People in modern society are bombarded with content. As a result, content marketing is a major factor for publishers today. Most content marketers recognize the importance of building engaged social media followings and “feeding the beast” by posting content that gets a strong reaction from followers, though the algorithms that determine what shows up in someone’s feed are a closely guarded black box.

Syndicated content, however, is delivered directly to the consumer. Once a person subscribes to a podcast, each new episode is delivered to their player, ready for them anytime, without filtering by any algorithm. When they focus on subscribers, publishers can prioritize the quality of the content rather than the effectiveness of the Facebook post promoting it, and audiences don’t have to be extremely large to be incredibly valuable.

A brief history of podcasts

In the early 2000s, bloggers experimenting with audio distribution formats for “audioblogs” began using enclosures in RSS feeds to deliver files to Apple iTunes for downloading to iPods, and the “podcast” was born. In 2005 Apple formally added podcasts and built a directory for them in its iTunes Store, and “podcast” was named Word of the Year by the New Oxford American Dictionary.

By the end of the decade, most major media companies were offering audio podcasts and many public figures and celebrities hosted their own. Surveys indicated, however, that while 45 percent of Americans were familiar with the term, only 23 percent had ever listened to a podcast and just 12 percent listened to one a month. As a result, podcasting was generally considered a small, niche market that received little mainstream attention.

Recently, however, podcasts awareness and listing has grown significantly. According to Edison Research, which has been studying podcasting for more than a decade, an estimated 112 million Americans have listened to an audio podcast and 24 percent of Americans, 67 million people, listen to a podcast at least once a month. Forty-two million Americans listen once or more each week, and half of those spend more than three hours each week listening to podcasts.

Did you know?

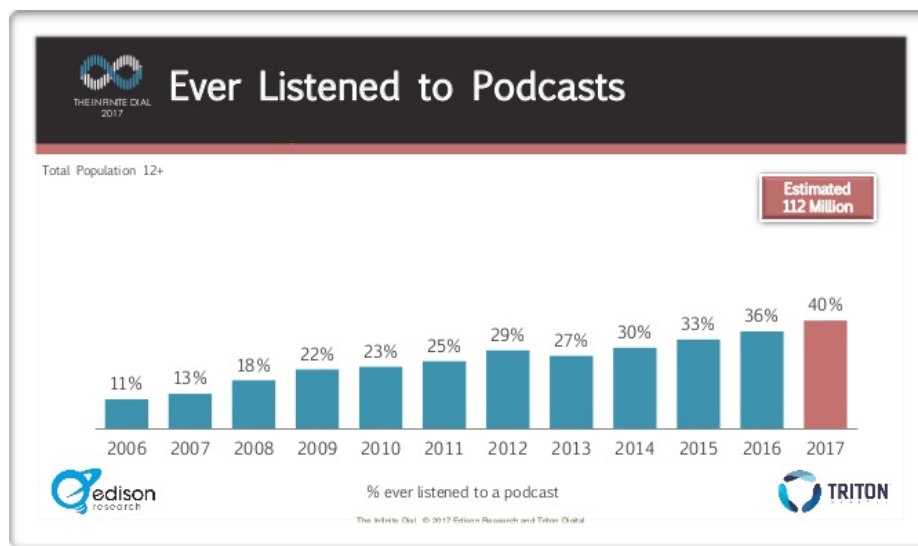
In 2005, the founders of a podcast directory company called Odeo realized their business was in jeopardy when Apple introduced a podcast directory in iTunes. After a day-long brainstorming session to find a solution, they developed a simple SMS one-to-many messaging system. They called it Twitter.

Why are podcasting audiences growing so fast?

The recent rapid growth in podcast audience size is due to changes in the technology, content, and user behavior for podcasts.

- **Technology.** Early podcasts had to be downloaded to a portable device through a computer, which required a manual process. Today, new episodes of a favorite podcast download to devices through wireless services, often automatically, so they’re ready to play anytime.

- **Content.** Early podcasts were nearly all formatted like radio news magazines, talk shows, or audio diaries, limiting their audiences. Today's programming runs the full gamut of news and entertainment, including audio novels and plays, interviews, monologues, magazines, and game shows.
- **Behavior.** On-demand content has become normal in audio content just like on TV, and podcasting's direct syndication model offers audiences great content available anytime. Syndication also makes "binging" easy, and today it's normal for a user who discovers an older podcast to listen to a year or more worth of older episodes in a matter of days.



Programming

Thousands of podcasts are produced and published each week, ranging from professionally produced programs created by established media brands to amateur efforts made with nothing but a computer and built-in microphone. There are well over 100,000 podcasts in the iTunes directory, although many do not produce regular content.

Podcast formats are as diverse as any media. Some are audio magazine programs with several segments that each cover a different topic. There are talk show formats, some hosted professional journalists, others by subject matter experts, and still others by average people from all over the world. Others are simply monologues, from the famous and unknown alike. Podcast novels and

plays are fictional stories performed episodically by professional actors, and are a popular form, hearkening back to the radio shows of the 1930s and 40s.

Examples of top award-winning podcasts in a variety of formats



Stuff You Should Know

Produced by How Stuff Works
 iTunes ranking:
 Top 20

Hosted by Josh Clark and Chuck Bryant, who explain a different topic in each of 3 weekly episodes with wonder and humor.

<https://www.stuffyoushouldknow.com/podcasts>



Serial

Produced by This American Life
 iTunes ranking:
 Top 20

Serial tells one true story over the course of a season. Each brings the next chapter in the story, so episodes must be listened to in order.

<https://serialpodcast.org>



Nerdist Podcast

Produced by Nerdist Industries
 iTunes ranking:
 Top 200

An interview show hosted by Chris Hardwick and friends featuring comedy and film celebs. It led to Hardwick's fast-growing media company, Nerdist Industries.

<https://nerdist.com/podcasts/nerdist-podcast-channel/>



Welcome to Night Vale

Produced by Night Vale Presents
 iTunes ranking:
 Top 100

Welcome to Night Vale is a fiction podcast presented as community updates from a small town where strange lights in the sky and dark hooded figures are common.

<http://www.welcometonightvale.com/>



The Daily

Produced by *The New York Times*
 iTunes ranking:
 Top 5

A 20-minute daily news summary hosted by Michael Barbaro and powered by *New York Times* journalism.

<https://www.nytimes.com/podcasts/the-daily>

Audience Demographics

1. *Podcast listeners are much more likely to be college graduates and to have advanced degrees*
2. *30 percent of podcast listeners report incomes over \$100,000 per year (compared to 22 percent of the general U.S. population)*
3. *44 percent of podcast listeners are ages 18 – 24*
4. *33 percent of podcast listeners are ages 35 – 54*
5. *94 percent of podcast listeners say they use social media (compared to 81 percent of the general U.S. population)*
6. *48 percent of podcast listeners say they follow companies or brands on social media (compared to 31 percent of the general U.S. population)*
7. *62 percent of podcast listeners click an listen immediately, while 19 percent subscribe and automatically download to listen later*
8. *70 percent of podcast listeners listen on a smartphone, tablet, or other portable device*
9. *Podcasts are consumed mostly in the home (51%) and in a personal car or truck (22%)*
10. *86 percent of podcast listeners say they listen to most or all of the podcast episodes they start*

For more information about Edison Research podcast audience data, see <http://www.edisonresearch.com/the-podcast-consumer-2017/>

Audio versus Video Podcasts

The most critical difference in audio and video podcasts is in consumption behaviors. Audio podcast listeners can consume their content while driving, exercising, knitting, etc. – times when watching video is not an option. Unlike radio, podcast content is downloaded so can be stopped, started, and rewound at will, so it is most often consumed in the home or in the car.

Video content is available on many popular platforms, including YouTube, Vimeo, Facebook, and more. These are often the default platforms for video content publishers so most podcasts are audio and most podcast consumers are listeners, not viewers, though video podcasting is becoming more common. The syndication at the core of podcasting is very effective for episodic video, so video podcasts are more commonly published by regular video creators such as TV networks and TED Talks.

The podcast medium impacts costs, of course. Producing high quality video content requires expensive professional staff and equipment, as poorly shot or edited video will not retain viewers. Audio podcasts, conversely, can generally achieve high production quality with far fewer resources. Video edits, for example, are usually obvious to a viewer, while audio can be edited without a listener realizing that any edit has been made.

The Future of Podcasting

The current joke among podcasters is that today everyone has a podcast. The number of podcasts is increasing rapidly, and that bodes well for the medium. Factors driving the growth in podcast production include:

- **Cost.** Anyone with a computer and internet access can start an audio podcast for very little cost. While this leads to more “average Joe” podcasts, usually of low quality, such accessible costs are also attractive to publishers who have the ability to create higher quality content without big budgets.
- **Audience Growth.** As audiences grow, awareness does, too, and content producers – amateurs and professionals alike – are finding niches to fill and making new shows to fill them. More people listening means more to listen to.

- **Competition.** For years, iTunes has been the dominant delivery platform for podcasts, with 60-80% of all podcast plays. That's changing, however, as Stitcher, GooglePlay and other platforms compete for listeners by promoting podcasts to more and more of their users and creating better revenue generation for publishers.

Don't expect the growth in podcast content to end soon, though this is far from a bubble. Because podcasts are delivered directly to consumers, and production costs can be low, a show can be extremely successful with even a small audience, depending on the goals and objectives of the producer. Reaching a few thousand engaged audience members every week, for just a few hundred dollars, is an exciting prospect for many publishers.

In addition, awareness will continue to increase. New podcasts rarely generate an initial audience organically. Unless there is already engaged audience (such as for an existing media channel), they require well-developed marketing plans to reach target audiences and turn them into listeners. As more podcasts are created, more will be marketed, and more people will start listening.

Podcasts are coming of age. In the next several years they will likely become a standard component of most professional, sustained content publishing and marketing practices, and will become fully integrated with digital and terrestrial content. As the marketplace becomes more crowded, however, it will become more difficult to draw and retain audiences, so those who start sooner will stand the best chance to find a successful model quickly.

Find out more

To learn more about podcasts and discuss whether they are right for your business, contact Richard Fawal at 202-285-7912 or richard@MyJunto.com.