

Holland Cooke Media Podcasting 101

www.HollandCooke.com

Good News/Bad News:

- The Good News: Undeniably, we're an on-demand culture. Witness the success of Netflix. At a couple conferences I've attended, NPR executives have disclosed that they derive more Time Spent Listening from archived audio than live on-air listening. And unlike broadcast stations – whose coverage is local, and where content must be mass-appeal – podcast content is offered worldwide, and can address specialized issues.
- The Bad News: You're vying for attention in a crowded arena. There's no accurate way to count how many podcasts are out there. Do-it-yourself audio publishers have been at it for over a decade, since back when “podcasting” referred to iPod devices that were intended to be music players. Now, think of “P-O-D” as “programming on-demand,” which consumers now expect and favor.

Podcast Best Practices have emerged.

- Google “podcast tips” and you'll find plenty, most for utter newbies (i.e., “State your name and the name of your podcast at the beginning”).
- Fundamental: Understand how-users-are-using, and package accordingly. Assume that your listener is busy, and visualize the listening context where you hope your download or stream will be heard. In-car? On the treadmill at the gym? Think “minutes,” not half-hours. “Snack-size” episodes. Segment the show so users can pause and re-enter at logical break-points. Doing so won't turn-off listeners sitting-still at computers.
- Format your podcast. Structure it like successful broadcasts. For example, note how HBO's popular “Real-Time with Bill Maher” is formatted:
 1. Mercifully-brief produced open;
 2. Well-written-but-not-too-long monologue;
 3. Interview segment: Well-prepared questions asked of intriguing people, some-of-whom you've heard of (who often say things you weren't expecting to hear), others-you-haven't-heard-of (and you end-up wanting-to-know-better);

Note a common thread so far? Don't just wing-it.

4. Panel, participants of-differing-viewpoints, led by the host's bullet points and outspoken take;
5. Then a featured guest, at first interviewed by the host, then interacting with panelists;
6. “New Rules” is a scripted comedy segment, a half dozen quick edgy bits that play-off the week's news and the societal observations that are such rich fodder for comedians. The last New Rule runs longer, and is the host's scripted byline think piece.
7. Then comes an invitation to join the after-show, online, where panelists respond to questions and comments viewers submitted during the show's first live airing.
8. Closing credits billboard next week's guests.

I'm not saying *that's* your format. I'm saying *have* a format. Avoid “random thoughts.” Plan each segment so it has a beginning, a middle, and an end; like NPR podcasts. Much of my work coaching podcasters involves what to leave out, and how to create shows that are episodic, so users subscribe.

More...

About Apples iTunes Store: Be there, period. It's the podcast mothership, and it's free if you know how to submit. And here's a recommended shortcut: To avoid getting-bogged-down with RSS code and other techie "plumbing" minutia, check out Libsyn.com.

More tips, from DMR Interactive, working with the Texas A&M Digital Media Research and Development Laboratory:

- **Know your audience**, and "make sure you are delivering something that is of value and use to them." Midroll Media podcasting evangelist Paul Riismandel suggests reviewing other podcasts that may focus on the same or a similar topic and see what can be improved or done differently. "You may see that within whatever realm you're looking at there are gaps, things that aren't being done...that's how you begin to differentiate yourself."
- Consensus among accomplished podcasters: **Don't underestimate how much work this is.** Jonathan Messinger, creator of the children's show "The Alien Adventures of Finn Caspian" began by producing what he calls "a secret podcast" for about 6 months; which helped him get a feel for the work flow, so he wouldn't disappoint his young audience by missing an episode.
- **"A strong Social presence is necessary,"** which Boerner says "gives you validity to potential guests and allows you to engage with your audience and build an intimate community."
- **Guests provide value** with fresh perspectives or new information, AND their own Social following. Riismandel suggests seeking out people your audience already knows. "They may not be famous to the world, but in the world of rose gardening [if that's your topic], they're an absolute superstar."
- **Advertisers like podcasts BUT** Boerner suggests having at least 30,000 downloads per episode before approaching brand advertisers or a network. Other monetization opportunities include paywall subscriptions or crowdfunding web sites like Kickstarter™, Go Fund Me®, and Patreon™.

Bottom Line? Attention is currency. Earn it.