

Podcasts - brilliant or brain numbing?

 By [Marion Scher](#)

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I want to say upfront that I'm totally in favour of podcasts - to a large part because they've given me another revenue stream. But I do want to say that judging by the ones I've been involved with so far, they vary greatly in the power of the message they're putting out.

Firstly why do a podcast? Well, assuming traffic is visiting your website it's a powerful way to get into the heads of your customers face on. Think of it this way, the written word is one thing and naturally can work very well, but to see someone talking passionately about their product/issue can be life changing.

Another good reason is that unlike trying to read on a mobile phone, which is often a case of enlarging half a line at a time, you can press, listen and watch. In other words, podcasts are portable and more personal. With online writing people skim, with podcasts they listen and watch, unless it's really bad in which case they'll tune you out.

You have one chance to grab people's attention

Let's face it, the ultimate for any company wanting to get their message out is to get onto talk radio - well, think of a podcast as on-demand talk radio...

BUT - of course there has to be buts, think carefully before you hire a crew or put yourself or your client in front of a mic. Just as I tell my clients when preparing them for television or radio appearances, you get one chance to grab people's attention, plan carefully and rehearse well. When it comes to podcasts this is even more important.

Just recently, I was asked by a large parastatal to act as the interviewer for a series of podcasts they were doing for their website. They sent me the script, which I learnt and was provided with a teleprompt in the 'studio' to work from. That was fine as I'm used to this. The person I was interviewing on the other hand, although highly qualified in their field, was expecting to literally read from their script. Disaster!

What is particularly strange is that if the person being interviewed is an expert in their field, why do they need a script? Surely a few points on a card would do it.

Keep it short

Although you need someone to ask the questions, given the time factor on air (the shorter the better) rather use the vérité system, where only the interviewee appears on the screen. This means not only does the interviewer have to ask the

questions; they need to guide the interviewee in order to 'frame' the answers for the viewer/listener.

Another recent brilliant use of a podcast I was involved in was for an awards event, where different people involved in the organisation spoke on the importance of these awards and what they meant to the organisation and its clients. These short clips were highly effective and we had a captive audience. It wasn't as though they could turn a page or tune you out - they sat and listened. Not only that - but behind their voices we showed footage of what they were talking about. Powerful stuff...

So what are the key ingredients for a successful podcast?

- Passion - a thorough knowledge and love of your topic - nothing can replace this
- Answering questions customers/clients would ask
- Provide quality, authentic content
- Right from the start, reach out and grab your audience before they switch off
- Rehearse - don't ramble
- No umms and aahs
- Try and produce these on a regular basis to grow your audience and help build your brand
- Use a professional company to produce, edit and package your final product
- Stick to what you know, your industry - don't venture outside
- Don't just give hard facts, introduce the human interest story to illustrate your points
- Don't take yourself too seriously - people want to watch a relaxed, confident person
- The shorter the better to get your point across
- No podcasts should run longer than 15 minutes - preferably 3 - 5 minutes
- Make sure your brand is firmly captured in your message
- ABOVE ALL - HAVE FUN!!!

ABOUT MARION SCHER

Marion Scher (www.media mentors.co.za) is an award-winning journalist, lecturer, media trainer and consultant with 25 years' experience in the industry. For more of her writing, go to her Bizcommunity profile or to Twitter @marionscher.

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