

Are You Ready For Podcasting?

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Everyone says podcasting is easy: Just start using a microphone and record an interview, and you are on your way to creating a podcast. Well, after doing several podcasts, I disagree. There are a number of lessons you should keep in mind before you embark on the podcasting journey. After interviewing more than 150 chief learning officers on how to develop engaging learning, podcasting and vodcasting were identified as being on the cusp of explosive growth over the next 12 months as CLO's experiment with these new media for learning.

But, before you pick up that microphone, here are 10 lessons for you and your team on how to create engaging and high-impact podcasts.

1. Plan a Series

Podcasting should become a staple for any e-learning or communications plan, and it should not be a one-time activity. This will allow you to present your content on a continuous basis and continually engage your audience. By making the series a part of all of your e-learning campaigns, there is an opportunity to continuously stay in contact with your workforce.

2. Formulate the Podcast

A successful podcast is crafted like a good radio or television program and has many of the same qualities, such as well-developed segments and an engaging interview format. Be sure to give your audience additional references and online locations where they can learn more.

3. Make it Professional

Podcasting started as a homegrown medium, but today it is important to make sure your content is on the level of a professional radio and television program. The content you produce will be a reflection of the organization, and in the context of learning, it will set the tone, the language and the level of professionalism expected at the workplace.

4. Smart Tunes

Music is an important aspect to producing your podcast and making it sound professional. But be sure to only use royalty-free music.

5. Keep it Focused

The podcast should cover a specific topic. But the topic can flow over various segments and feature different perspectives.

6. It's About Time

Perhaps equally as important is to keep your podcast succinct. Although there is no exact science to this, most podcasts can probably express their key points in a period of 6 to 8 minutes, which is recommended. For more involved topics,

develop a longer show with distinct segments that runs somewhere in the ballpark of 15 to 20 minutes but can be broken down into shorter segments.

7. Promote Your Podcast

Podcast traffic needs to be driven through conventional tools such as e-mail blasts and reminders on your corporate learning Web site. In terms of online promotion, it needs to come in a variety of areas including through your Web site, online forums and blogs.

8. Archive Your Content

As you produce new materials, continue to keep your old podcasts live so you can reference them for future employees.

9. No iPod Required

Despite the name of the technology, video podcasts or audio casts can be consumed by about 95 percent of today's computers with software that comes pre-loaded or is very simple to install such as Apple's iTunes.

10. Re-Use Existing Content

Think of all the content you have at your disposal that can be re-used for podcasts or vodcasts. For example, training sessions that are videotaped for a corporate library now can be digitized and made available online to employees. Or the guest lecturer's speech that only 30 percent of your staff was able to attend now can be made available for download.

Experiment with podcasting and vodcasting, but prepare your staff because the biggest lesson is that the content needs to be constantly refreshed and updated so learners are engaged and motivated to contribute and consume more learning.

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