

# What is Podcasting?

## I. Podcasting – versus broadcasting

If you are in the age group of twenty and below, chances are you know what Podcasting is all about. If you are older, it may already be too late.

But try this on for size anyway: Podcasting is the latest weapon in the hands of the iconoclast digerati in their quest to make you obsolete (even while they grow older by the day, and thus join the process of becoming obsolete themselves! How's that for poetic justice?).

Podcasting takes off on the basic platform of blogging, which is another recent phenomenon. Simply put, a podcast is another form of radio broadcast, but with an attitude. Here are the differences:

- ✓ Radio broadcasts have their own set times and formats. The radio stations decide what music shall be played and when. A podcast customizes the listening experience of the user, who decides what music they shall listen to, and when. (The downside here is that live participation is not possible (yet). Also, reaching across large audiences “simultaneously” is not the goal (yet).)
- ✓ Radio broadcasts play on simple ether, the way they used to in the days of Bill Marconi and Lee De Forest. There is no such thing as 'protocol' or diplomacy to guide those air waves. Podcasts, on the other hand, work on the internet, and follow the RSS protocol (newsfeed) in order to function.
- ✓ Radio broadcasts require a, well, radio to tune into. Podcasts require an iPod, or any digital player or even a computer with the appropriate software to play.
- ✓ Radio is still a tightly controlled medium. Obtaining a broadcasting license is difficult. Podcasting, on the other hand, reflects the free spirits of its users. Individuals can transmit their voices throughout the world without fear of regulation or licensing. Podcasting allows for the creation of self-published, net-syndicated radio shows, spawning a new breed of entrepreneurs we call Podcasters.

So does podcasting bode the end of radio broadcasting as we know it? Of course no one knows for sure how much impact it will have. One thing is certain, however, it will have some impact, and traditional radio will have to adjust.

## **II. Podcasting - the nitty-gritty**

It is interesting how Podcasting closely aligns with blogging. Blogging, is of course a web-based journal maintained on-line and targeted to those with shared interests. More and more, blogging is used by companies and businesses to promote their products and services. Through their blogs, companies reach out to customers on a more personal basis.

Since blogs allow us to link audio, visitors to your site can also listen to your personal observations. While your audio may contain information about new products or services offered by your business, they may also be presented in an entertaining way.

Coupled with the RSS Feed you have a podcast. These feeds allow your blog's audio content to be available as simple links to other people's sites. The resulting shared files are easily available to large groups of digerati interested in your content.

Podcasts originated as the easy way to load one's iPod with music. Expanded use allows any of the RSS feeds from any blog to be downloaded to the iPod on the fly. Once the content is stored on the machine, it is always available for listening. Downloading and storing the audio files distinguishes Podcasting from webcasting or internet radio, where audio is streamed and cannot be downloaded and stored.

## **III. Podcasting - Impact on business**

The impact of this twenty something technology is being felt world-wide. Even in the most respected corridors of the broadcasting business, (BBC, Canada's CBC Radio One, Australia's ABC to name a few) Podcasting is being taken seriously.

Think of new ways to use this technology: investors might love to hear the deep, reassuring voice of the CEO telling them that their investment is safe and growing in value. Others might crave the creative company President extolling the virtues of his/her product in a humorous, engaging way.

If you are over twenty and used to the leading edge of business, then Podcasting may be your best hope of reaching the youngest slice of your demographics.

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