



Lay the groundwork

How to set your podcast up for success



Introduction

As of [April 2021](#), there are over 1.75 million podcasts on the market, with more than 42 million episodes. That might have you wondering, “Aren’t there too many podcasts already?”

Absolutely not! As long as your podcast connects with your audience and provides value, listeners will tune in to hear your unique perspective.

To put those podcast statistics into perspective, there are over 2 billion websites and over 31 million YouTube channels, with more being created every day. That big supply is working to meet an even larger demand for content.

It’s the same story with podcasts. Podcasts help entrepreneurs achieve the reach and exposure they need to grow their business. And with the right tools, a podcast can also be used to generate income in a variety of ways: premium subscriptions, cross-sell and upsell promotions, affiliate partnerships, or sponsorships (just to name a few).

But just like any new marketing channel or revenue stream, starting a podcast takes a lot of preparation. In order to have a successful podcast, you need to lay the groundwork.

In this guide, we’ll cover the steps you need to take to research, produce, and market your podcast so you can give yourself the best chance of seeing a return on the time and money invested.

Section 1:

Prepare to start your podcast



1. Choose your topic

Half of the success of your podcast is simply from picking the right topic.

Don't pick the first broad, high-level topic that comes to mind. Choose a topic that relates to your business and can help you build your brand.

It should be general enough that there's a lot you can talk about. But narrow enough that you can attract a niche audience. The best podcasts focus on a specific concept or perspective within their chosen topic.

For instance, the [Sales Hacker Blog](#) doesn't just talk about sales. It focuses on sales leadership in B2B companies. The host only interviews VPs of Sales and CEOs of B2B businesses.

Similarly, the [Profit from Legal™](#) podcast aims at small- to medium-sized businesses who may not realize the value of working with a lawyer. It doesn't talk about litigation in enterprise companies. It shares tips that help SMBs grow their business.

Here's how you know you've chosen a good topic:

- There's enough to say about your topic to support at least 50 episodes a year.
- The things you talk about will attract your target audience. They'll be able to clearly identify your content as being "for them."

2. Research your competition

Before planning your podcast, research the podcasts that are already being produced around your topic. Study the different podcasts your audience listens to.

When you look at your competitors, ask yourself:

- How are they approaching it?
- What format do they use?
- How many listeners are they attracting?
- What kind of points are they making?
(Decide if you agree or disagree with them and why.)

Don't get discouraged if your topic is "taken." It's a good sign. The more podcasts that exist in your niche, the more confident you can be that there's a hungry audience.

Having a lot of competition isn't a bad thing. It forces you to do better work and to be more strategic.



3. Look for a gap you can fill

Look for ways you can stand out from the competition:

- Can you take a unique or contrarian perspective?
- Do you have a different way of approaching the topic?
- Can you use a different format for your show?
- Is there a subtopic no one is covering?

Find at least one way you can differentiate yourself from your competition. It could be related to the questions above, or it could be related to your personality or presentation style. Play to your strengths.

4. Choose your format

You can format your show in a variety of ways. Here are 4 formats that are easy to produce and will help keep your audience engaged.

Interview format. This is one of the easiest and most popular formats because you don't have to come up with topics or create unique content for every show. You only need to schedule interesting guests.

Create a series of questions that you ask every guest. You may also let your guests give you the questions they'd like you to ask.

Then schedule a Zoom meeting, and record your conversation. You can extract the audio for your podcast and use the video for your YouTube podcast or other marketing purposes.

Chat show. With this format, you'll co-host the podcast with one or more other people. Similar to the interview, you don't have to create a lot of content for this format, but you will need to come prepared with interesting topics that you can discuss with your co-host.

Mark your calendar with recording dates and the topic for each. Each co-host is responsible for coming up with their perspective on the topic, including news bites, statistics, and stories.

You can record your sessions in a Zoom meeting or meet in person for recording sessions.

During your show, one co-host will introduce the topic. Then you'll have a lively conversation and hopefully butt heads, disagree, and laugh out loud. It's the real human interaction that will attract loyal fans.

Choose your co-host wisely. It should be someone you have good conversational chemistry with so that the discussion flows easily. Ideally each of you should bring something different to the table. Ask yourself, “Is this someone my target audience can relate to?”

Expert format. With this format, it’s just you, sharing your thoughts, ideas, news updates, and stories.

The expert format is easy to produce, because you don’t have to coordinate your calendar with guests and co-hosts. All you have to do is pull out your microphone and start recording.

The challenge with this format is that a one-person show can easily sound like a dry, college lecture. To keep your audience engaged, you need to choose interesting topics and present your information in an entertaining way.

The expert format works well if you’re comfortable letting your unique personality shine.

Variety show. With this format, you can use several different formats both within episodes and between them.

Each episode can be formatted to suit the topic you’re covering. You may have one episode where it’s you sharing your expertise, and then another where you chat with a guest expert.

Alternatively, each episode may contain a series of small segments:

- An intro monologue
- An interview with an expert
- A game
- Q&A with your audience

5. Consider monetization and premium content

There are two types of podcasts that you can produce: public (free) and private (members-only). Public podcasts are available for free on major apps like Spotify and Apple Podcasts. They're great for growing your audience and building up your subscriber base.

Private podcasts usually contain premium content behind a paywall. Here are some examples of premium content that people will pay for:

- Ad-free episodes
- High-profile guest interviews
- Exclusive bonus episodes
- Extended versions of your public episodes
- AMA episodes with your audience
- Outtakes/bloopers
- Early access to new series or episodes

You don't need thousands of followers for a paid members-only podcast to be successful. You only need a small and passionate fanbase, meaningful content, and a method to deliver that content. That's why choosing the right podcast platform is so important.

Before choosing your platform, make sure you know what it can and can't do. Some platforms give you the ability to create a private podcast, but you can't monetize it. Others let you monetize it, but take a significant percentage of your revenue.

You might be surprised by how many of your audience members are willing to pay for exclusive and/or ad-free content. Even if you're not ready to offer premium content today, keep it in mind for a few months down the road.



6. Choose your length and frequency

A successful podcast can range from 15 minutes to 60 minutes or more. The right length depends on how much time you have to record and edit your shows, and what your audience prefers.

Most podcasts publish an episode at least once a week. Some produce a show every day.

You may choose to adopt a strict publishing schedule (i.e. dropping a new episode every Monday and Thursday).

But some brands are adopting a Netflix approach. They record a handful of episodes and publish them all at once. A week or two later, they record another batch. You could also batch-record and publish episodes one at a time on a consistent cadence. It's up to you which model best fits your schedule, your content, and your audience.

7. Create your podcast brand assets

You don't need a lot of assets to start a successful podcast. Here's what you do need:

- **Name.** Make it unique. Make it memorable. Make sure it's easy to say. Try to keep it short.
- **Description.** In a few short paragraphs, describe your show, who it's for, and why people should tune in.
- **Cover art.** You need a square image that meets these requirements:
 - Size: 1400×1400 minimum, 3000×3000 maximum
 - Resolution: 72 dpi
 - Color settings: RGB
 - Format: JPEG or PNG

8. Plan your content

Create a content calendar for your podcast. Then plan your episodes either quarterly or annually.

For instance, if you plan to produce one episode per week, try to brainstorm 52 ideas for your podcast, and plug them into the calendar.

Tip: Create show notes or write the script for each episode in advance so that you have time to find interesting stories or statistics. It also gives you time to practice, which is a great way to make recording easier.

Section 2:

Facilitate high audio quality



It's important to emphasize that your content holds much higher value to your customers than its accompanying audio quality. But, if you're going to leverage podcasts as a marketing or revenue channel, it's worthwhile to ensure that the sound quality has good production value.

Here are some tips that can improve your sound quality.

1. Use a good microphone

Getting a dedicated microphone is the first step as it's the primary tool you'll need. But the cost of microphones ranges from \$20 to thousands of dollars, so how do you know which to choose and how much to spend?

How to choose a microphone for recording audio

When choosing a microphone for a podcast, video, or audio course, there are many options.

One good starting point is a [lavalier microphone](#), which is great for discreetly capturing audio while filming. These clip right onto your shirt or coat and capture directional audio. This means it will record your voice clearly while blocking out background noise.

Lavalier mics can be hidden in your pocket as they record to an SD card. This makes it easy to upload straight to a [Kajabi audio course](#) or sync with a video in any editing software. There are also more streamlined and cost effective lavalier microphones that you can plug right into your smartphone or your camera, such as [this one](#).

A handheld recorder, like one from [Zoom](#), is another option for those recording on the go. These are helpful for creators making their content in an area that does not involve a recording setup. For example, if you're recording outdoors.

Another option is to record straight into your computer using a USB microphone. What USB microphones lack in audio quality compared to professional mics, they definitely make up with convenience. They have tools like a pre-amp and digital audio converter built in, so they are a great entry level option.

We recommend the [Blue Yeti USB microphone](#) or the Audio Technica AT2020 USB microphone. These have easy plug and play operation and great sound quality.

For a more robust sound that can earn a permanent spot on a recording desk, consider using a dedicated vocal microphone like the [Rode Procaster](#), [Shure MV7](#) or the [SM7B](#). We use the SM7B here at Kajabi.

Professional microphones are engineered specifically for balanced vocal recordings. Chances are your favorite podcasts have these on set!

How much to spend on a microphone

When it comes to audio, you get what you pay for. Once you choose a microphone setup, expect to pay anywhere from \$20-\$200 for a decent lavalier mic and \$150-\$300 for a good dynamic vocal microphone.

In general, even a budget microphone will provide better audio than using a built-in microphone on your computer. But if you're looking for a professional setup, be prepared for the additional cost of related equipment.

Microphone accessories

There are plenty of accessories that can further upgrade your setup and improve your audio quality. As with microphones, the cost varies. Here are some helpful items:

A microphone stand or arm that can move the microphone around. For most microphones, the optimal distance from your mouth is just a few inches. Being able to bring the microphone closer can provide for a more comfortable recording experience.

Pop filters (also pop screens or pop shields) reduce the “popping” sounds that come from bursts of breath, called plosives. They also maintain microphones by preventing saliva from getting inside the microphone. Position the pop filter three inches from your mouth and then leave another three inches from the pop filter to the microphone.

Sound-dampening items can go behind the microphone, nearby walls, even the floor beneath your setup if there isn't a rug.

Shock mounts isolate the microphone from its stand. Shock mounts prevent any vibrations (like steps in the room or accidentally touching the microphone stand) from resonating into the microphone as low frequencies. It could even help minimize sounds that you don't even realize the microphone is picking up, like a door slamming or an idling truck.

2. Consider a professional audio recording setup

Professional, high-end recording setups require more equipment. As a result, the cost will go up but so will the quality of your recording.

Additional recording equipment

A professional recording setup will be modular with all of the elements needed to capture the sound and transfer it to a digital file. These include a microphone, a digital audio converter, preamp, headphone amplifier, and mixers. If you go this route, expect to spend a few hundred dollars at minimum, and perhaps into the thousands depending on the equipment you choose.

USB audio interfaces are a great option for combining many of these additional pieces of technology into one. They often include the digital audio converter, preamp, a virtual mixer, and headphone amplifier. They are ideal if you are doing solo recordings. But, if you have two or more people involved in your recordings, prepare to go beyond the USB audio interface.

Why go with a professional recording setup?

Why would someone opt for this modular setup that is more expensive and requires more equipment over a more affordable option? It comes down to higher quality sound and equipment.

Each piece of equipment is doing one specific job, so it can specialize and perform better. The materials are also usually higher quality and more durable. For example, you'll get metal rather than plastic.

With a professional recording setup, you can upgrade and replace elements down the line. Professional setups are customizable. The various elements of a modular audio recording system also tend to last longer.

If you have more demands on your audio recording system, such as multiple people recording at the same time, you'll need a more robust setup as well.

Less expensive options have trade-offs. For example, USB microphones rely on the drivers from the brand. This can present issues if the drivers stop working, which is rare, but could be very inconvenient if it occurred when you planned to record.

And because an all-in-one recording tool is doing more, it likely will only last a few years. Many elements of high-end audio recording setups can last for decades and retain resale value.

3. Upgrade your recording location

Musicians and voiceover artists record in special studios. You don't need a professional setup to get good quality audio, but you can take steps to recreate that environment.

In a pinch, recording in a quiet, carpeted room with minimal echo is a start. Record when it's quiet, and choose a smaller room over a larger one.

Acoustic treatments

Due to the physics of acoustics, sound bounces in a room. Acoustic treatments can counteract unwanted sound from impacting the recording.

Many audio producers use bass traps and acoustic panels. These are used to reduce reverberation in a room which can impact the quality of the recording.

Acoustic panels or absorption panels typically go on the walls in a room. These address middle and high frequencies. You've likely seen these in auditoriums, movie theatres, or concert halls.

Bass traps are thicker than absorption panels and typically go in the corners of a room. These address low frequencies.

You can buy ready-made acoustic room treatments. Check out Guitar Center, Sweetwater, Gik Acoustics, Amazon, or other music supply stores. You can also have them custom designed and created for your space.

Soundproofing

Soundproofing differs from sound damping because it prevents outside sound from getting into the recording room. For example, the sound of construction or music playing that permeates the walls and windows.

To avoid this, ensure your recording space and the surrounding area has good insulation. Seal windows and walls and install soundproofing door sweeps.

4. Invest in audio mixing and mastering

Mixing and mastering your audio helps it sound better.

Mixing involves taking multiple tracks and combining them into one. Mastering involves polishing the mix to make it ready for distribution.

Great mixing and mastering is important to make sure that podcast or course tracks are consistent in volume and sound. That way, someone can listen to them like an album without having to adjust the volume or notice inconsistencies.

You could produce audio tracks yourself using any number of audio recording programs, such as Audacity, GarageBand, Ableton Live, or FL Studio. If you're not skilled in this area, there are options to get help.

Outsourcing your audio

If you're a knowledge entrepreneur, you may find it more cost-effective to outsource your audio production. [Upwork](#) lists audio production freelancers and most rates are between \$25-\$55 per hour. Be sure to establish a workflow with your freelancer and get an estimate on how much it would cost to produce your audio materials.

AI audio production

Fortunately, there is a middle road between completely producing audio yourself and outsourcing. There are multiple software options that use AI to produce great quality audio.

Some services, like [LANDR](#), allow you to upload your files and they return a completed file back. Other software options, like [Izotope Ozone](#), have you at the controls but with machine learning tools included to generate the sound and consistency you need.

Section 3:

Develop a podcast marketing plan



Along with researching your topic, planning the content, sourcing the equipment, and starting production, you'll need to market your podcast. Making your audience aware of the podcast and keeping it top of mind can help you secure your first listens and start to gain traction.

Here are five elements to consider in your podcast marketing plan.

Announce on your social media

This one's simple: Announce your new podcast and each episode on all of your social accounts. Prepare by creating social media copy and graphics for the announcement and each episode. Then, you can consistently promote each episode, and it can look sharp and memorable in your feed.

Announce that you will be launching a podcast soon. You could drive people to a landing page to collect their email and stay informed when the first episode is ready. Then, for social posts about new episodes, you could just give people the link to listen.

You could even clip sections of audio as a teaser and upload those soundbites as videos to your social feeds. You can give people a taste of the content and get them excited about the full episode.

Be sure to call out what content is free, and what content is behind a paywall, and always make it easy for people to subscribe to your premium content.

Putting these steps into your workflow when you start your podcast will help keep your marketing efforts consistent so that you can build brand awareness and trust with your audience.

Create an email marketing campaign

Email marketing is a great tool to inform your audience about the podcast launch and remind them about new episodes.

In your emails, provide a summary of what occurs in the episode and a link to listen. You can even ask your audience to forward the email to a friend that might like the episode content.

Similar to social media, email is a great place to remind your audience that you offer premium content. Give them samples of the type of content you offer inside your subscription, and make it easy for them to join your community.

You can also use email to gather episode topic suggestions or source guest speakers.

Get other people to share your podcast

Ask your existing audience and people in your network to promote the initial episodes. Then, ask listeners to help you get the word out. At the end of each episode, remind your listeners to subscribe and share.

Invite fascinating people to appear on your podcast. Then encourage them to help you promote the podcast episode that features their interview by posting about it on their social accounts and sending out an email to their list. The people in their network might be especially relevant audience members for your content, so this method can boost your growth quickly (especially if your interview subject has a large audience).

Create partnerships with other podcasters

Podcasting communities are designed to help you find podcasters who cover topics that would interest your audience.

The idea is to trade guest appearances. Each of you interview the other for your own podcast. Then both of you share the podcast with your audiences.

To develop partnerships, join podcast communities like at [Audry.io](#) and [Spot a Guest](#).

Livestream your recording sessions

This is as simple as recording your podcast publicly. When you do this, you create multiple pieces of content in one session.

- Your recording session becomes social media content.
- Your audio file becomes your podcast.
- Your video file can be uploaded to YouTube for video content.

Hosting your podcast with Kajabi

You can use Kajabi to host and distribute your podcast to other channels like Spotify, Apple Podcasts, and Google Podcasts. If you already have a podcast, Kajabi makes it easy to import all of your existing episodes.

Kajabi makes it easy to both monetize your podcast and use it as a marketing channel to support your business. In addition to the podcast tool, be sure to check out our helpful resources to get your podcast up and running, including a related Kajabi University course.

Podcasts on Kajabi is another way that we are delivering even more value from our all-in-one solution. Every Kajabi membership comes with an easy-to-use website builder with professionally-designed themes, blueprints and hosting for your digital products (like online courses, membership sites, and coaching programs), interactive assessments, payment processing, analytics, sales funnels, email marketing, automations, and more.

Kajabi gives you everything you need to grow and manage your knowledge commerce business without giving up a cut of your revenue. It's where creators go to take their business to the next level and become serious entrepreneurs.

Ready to get started?

Redeem your free 14-day trial to see what Kajabi can do for you.

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