

## Can Podcasting Lead to Career Connections?

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From the comfort of your own bedroom, you speak into a microphone and say what's on your mind. You play some of your favorite tunes, interview some interesting people, then let the world hear it all. Sound like a childhood dream? It's called podcasting, and it's spreading across the Internet. And like a lot of new features on the Web, it has plenty of potential for career advancement.

"A podcast is a buzzword to describe a very simple concept -- a video/audio file available on the Internet for you to watch/listen to, and to download if you desire," explains Justin Grotelueschen. He's the senior producer of a website called [podcast.com](http://podcast.com).

"Those media files are delivered in a series through a feed that someone can subscribe to. The feed is the key element because it pushes the newest media out to the subscriber, which is the new paradigm for how people get content on the Web," he adds.

"A podcast is a downloadable MP3 that is more or less like a radio talk show that is recorded for Internet use only," says **Chris Marshall**. He has a podcast about comic books. "You can subscribe to it through something like iTunes. It'll come to your inbox once a new file is loaded. Mine, for example, comes once a week, on Wednesdays. It just gets downloaded automatically."

Of course, there is an incredible variety of podcasts available. Many are like radio shows that focus on music. Others are more like talk radio, with topics ranging from politics to hobbies to food to self-help programs. You name it and it's out there -- often with few or no commercials to sit through as an added bonus. Because of the relatively cheap costs, it's very easy for people to start a podcast.

"The most basic elements for an audio podcast are a computer with recording software and either a USB microphone or a regular microphone with a mixer," says Grotelueschen. "Many people who do video podcasts record shows using an external digital video camera and load the files on their computers from there."

Sounds simple enough, right? But when it comes to making money through podcasts, you might have to do a little research first.

Leesa Barnes is president of a company that advises businesses on using podcasting as a communications tool. She says that podcasting can open up job opportunities, but not necessarily by doing a podcast yourself.

"There are many careers in podcasting," she says. "I'm seeing jobs for media producers -- those who can edit and mix audio files together. Also, those who are great at interviewing will find jobs in the podcasting field as many podcasts are interview-based. Those who have studio equipment and can record audio or video will also find that they can make money in podcasting by providing these services."

"Some people are making money," says **Marshall**. "There's a company called Podshow that really helps podcasts with advertising. I have sponsors for my show; I get paid in comic books," he says. "It's my little compensation. But, yeah, people are making money."

Grotelueschen agrees that there is money to be made in podcasting. As in a lot of industries, that money comes from the advertisers.

"Yes, you can make money in podcasting, mainly from advertising," he says. "There are a number of high-profile podcasts out there that contain sponsorships from major corporations. It's also possible for lower-profile podcasters to align themselves with advertising networks that insert random advertising into their podcasts, either on their websites or in the podcast files themselves. And some podcasters receive funding from a network to produce podcasts to be distributed by that network."

But don't think that you can just start a podcast from home and immediately start raking in the money.

"If you're a celebrity, you can expect to make loads of money from your podcast," says Barnes. "However, there's only one podcast that charges for content. About 99 percent of podcasts are offered for free, so if you have dreams of charging people to hear or see your podcast, keep dreaming."

"There are two ways that people can money from podcasts," she continues. "One, they use their podcast to lead listeners to purchase products or services on their website. Two, they get paid to help podcasters do all the technical work associated with putting a podcast together."

But no one really seems too sure right now if podcasting will turn into a lucrative business. Insiders have mixed opinions about its future.

"The potential for money-making will vary," says Grotelueschen. "It depends on how much each podcaster wants to work to secure it and the options for advertising in the future. With a growing audience, advertisers surely will follow."

Many radio stations already broadcast from the Internet. And podcasting, like college radio in years past, is proving to be a threat to mainstream radio.

"Podcasting has changed how audiences consume their media," says Grotelueschen. "Potential broadcasters should be aware that new technologies such as podcasting, audio

and video streaming, and on-demand audio and video are providing many new opportunities for anyone with the tools to make media. And the tools are now much easier and cheaper to get."

Podcasting is a field that overlaps with other fields, including journalism. Barnes says this has worked to her advantage.

"My own freelance journalism background has come in handy in the podcasting field," she says. "I'm used to interviewing people in the field and I can create a great story. Podcasts rely on good content to become popular. If you're working in broadcast, you can hire your services out to podcasters, as many of them lack the skills to create compelling content for their podcasts."

Something all the podcast experts agree on is that it's a lot of hard work to put a show together. **Marshall** goes over his show several times, even after he's posted it on the Internet for people to download. But he says all the hard work is worth it. Not only does he get free comics, but he's a changed man.

"It's all about connecting with your audience and being more social," he says. "When I was just on forums and message boards posting about comic books, nobody knew who I was. Now I'm kind of a voice; I've got over 1,000 listeners a week, and I've got a responsibility to my audience that I never thought I'd have. That dawned on me when I got to speak at the San Diego Comic Book Convention. It really hit me."

"I definitely have an audience and people who look up to me, and I've almost become my own personality in a way, when I get on the radio," he concludes. "I've had days where I've thought, I've had enough, I quit, I'm just tired of it. But I'll probably never quit, because so many people have invested their time into me, and I feel like I owe them back. It wouldn't be fair to quit."

Links

### **Collected Comics Library**

A popular podcast (and blog), focusing on comic books

<http://www.collectedcomicslibrary.blogspot.com>

### **Podonomics**

Interesting site looking at the business side of podcasting

<http://www.podonomics.com>

### **Podcasting stats**

Some interesting statistics here that prove how quickly podcasting is becoming popular

<http://www.podcastingstats.com>