A QUICK GUIDE TO PODCASTING

Daniele Rossi

MORE OF SPUD'S* PODCASTING BEST PRACTICES

*ACTUALLY, DANIELE ROSSI, CREATOR OF SPUD
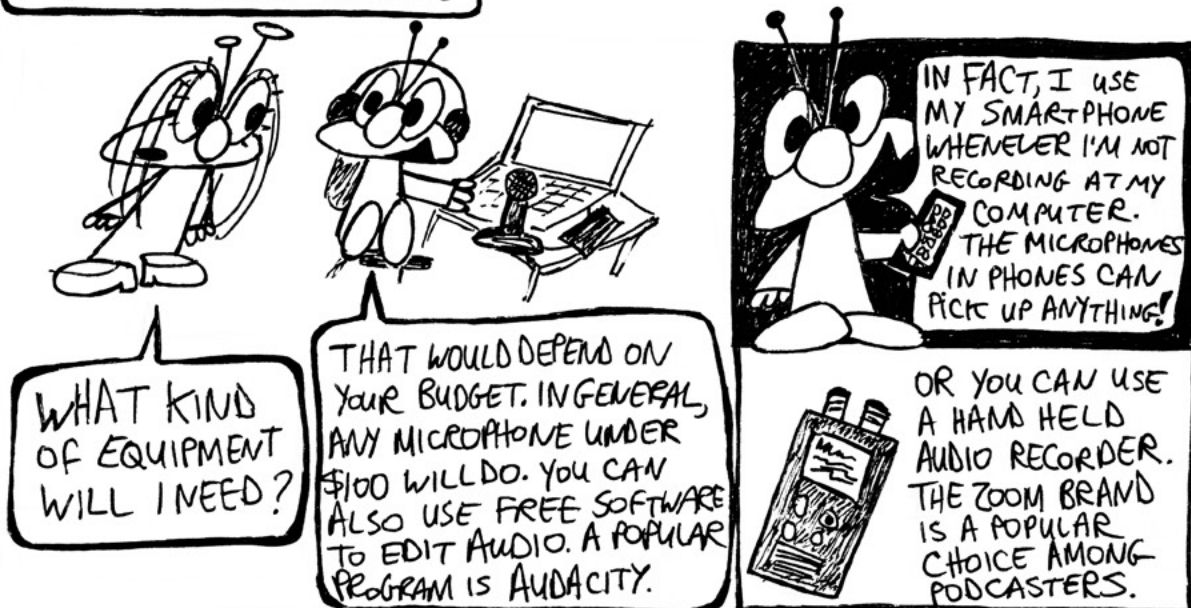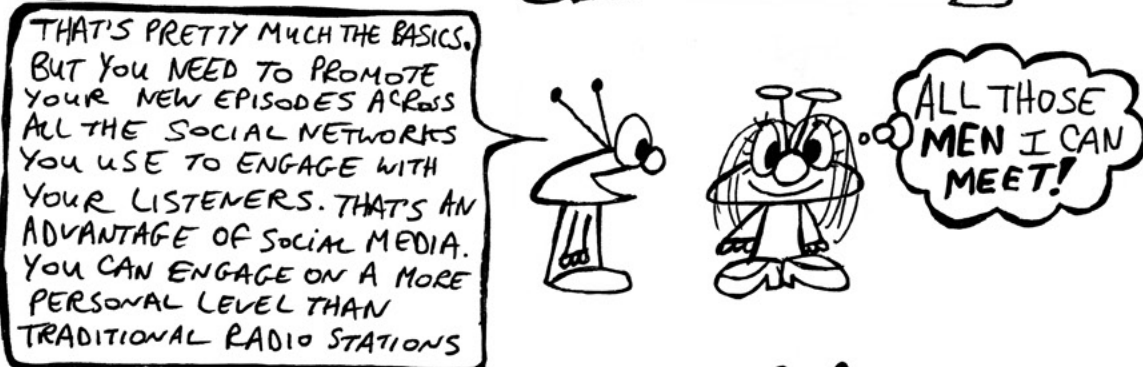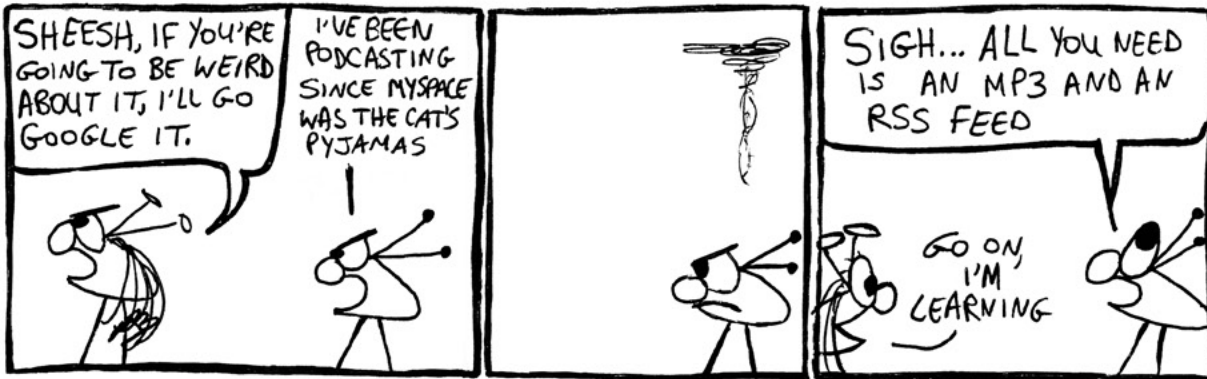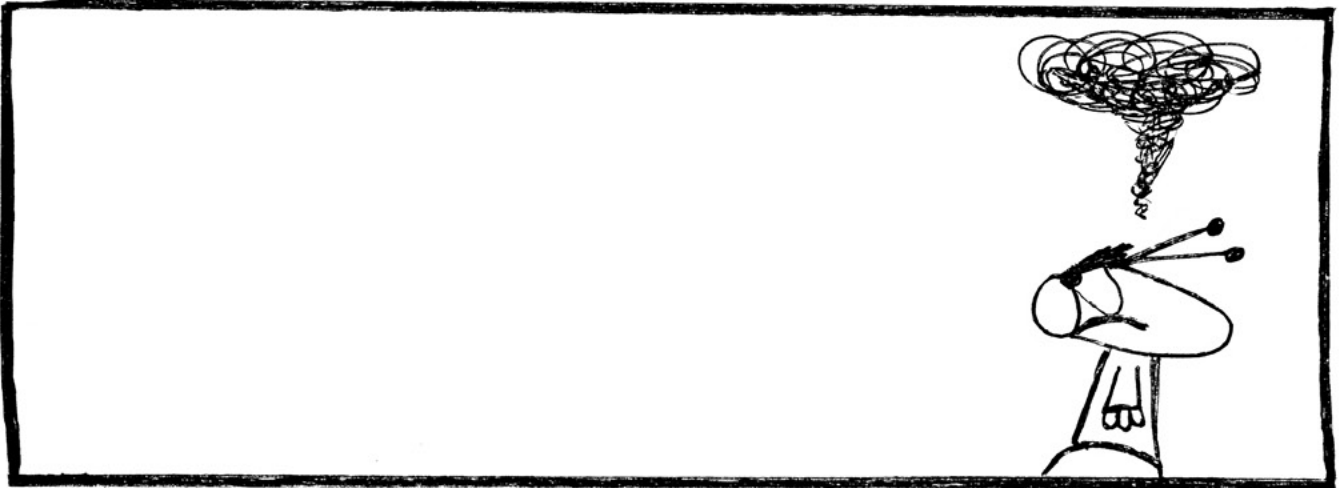
(Google anything for extra info and product reviews)

Directional microphones record in one direction (example, your mouth). Omni-directional microphones record in, well, directions all around them. Binaural microphones are great for in-the-field episodes which immerse the listener right into your environment. You wear them like headphones!

Obviously, you'll need more microphones if you plan on having more than one speaker (co-hosts can be fun!). In this case, you may need to add a mixer to your set up.

Invest in a pop guard. These prevent sudden "pops" as you say words with Ps and Bs.

Don't speak too closely to the mic or else you'll cause clipping which will make you sound way too loud and distorted and annoy the listener. But don't speak too far from the microphone or else ambient noise and room tone will compete with your voice.

You may consider wearing headphones so you can monitor your audio levels as you record. Headsets can be useful as they have both headphones and a mic built in.

Stand up and smile as you speak so you sound enthusiastic and friendly.

Avoid drinking too much liquid before or during your recording as it will wash away your mouth's natural lubrication. You'll end up with a dry mouth which will annoy listeners. Avoid recording right after a meal as well so no spontaneous stomach noises creep up! Drink. Don't sip.

Do not read from a script. Listeners will know and you'll sound robotic. If you must read from a script, a trick from traditional radio is to write out what you need to say in lines of about 60 characters in length. This will make you sound more natural.

Make sure the room you record in doesn't have too many echoes or reverberation (like the sound you get when you're pretending not to be talking on the phone in the bathroom) which can be distracting to the listener. Closets are popular choices among podcasters as the hanging clothes make for a great sound studio! Cars are another popular choice as well.

Let's learn some basic audio filtering! "Compression" brings highs down and lows up. This is best for mixed audio sources, multi-genre music shows, and creating a "radio-like" sound. "Limiting" reduces high levels and is best for single voice shows and anything with a few high peaks. "Normalization" makes your audio as loud as possible without clipping. "Clipping" is when audio is so loud that it begins to distort. "Noise reduction" filters consistent background noise. Apply noise reduction before and after you apply compression or limiting. Apply normalization before and after you apply limiting.

It's a good practive to record about a minute of silence with your microhone turned on before or after your record. You will need this silence if you find yourself needing to apply the noise reduction filter.

When creating your mp3s, be sure to fill in all the details of the ID3 meta tags including images, show notes, links, and the iTunes description tags if applicable. There is a lot of software that can help you acomplish this.

Ensure your cover art is simple with no small text. Chances are that users will be viewing your cover art on their mobile devices as they browse podcasts to subscribe or listen to.

Use a descriptive name for your show. Better if you incorporate your subject area in the title. Or at least in the subtitle. Plus, it makes it easier for new listeners to find your show!

Stay clear from using copyrighted music in your shows. Unless, of course, you get permission from the right people (there is often three entities you need to ask; the artist, their publishing company, and their record company). There is a lot of music available in the public domain (such as archive.org, SoundCloud, and ccmixter.org) or in creative commons. Creative Commons is a licensing scheme which creators use to set the usage rights for their works. Including for sharing and use in podcasts. You should also protect your podcasts with Creative Commons. More information at creativecommons.org. Of course, if you're a musician, you can create your own original music!

If you don't know if you'll be able to sustain a podcast beyond episode one or two, a good method to try is pre-recording 4 episodes before posting your first episode. It is said that after you've published 7 episodes, you'll have a better chance at continuing your podcast.

If you find that you are unable to continue with your podcast for whatever reason (also known as "podfading"), it is good etiquette to explain why to your listeners and offer alternative podcasts or blogs so you don't leave them hanging. Nobody likes a cliffhanger with no ending.

It's natural to wonder if you will have anything useful to say or if anyone will listen to your podcast. You don't have to appeal to a broad audience like traditional radio and TV. Niche topics rule and succeed in podcasting (and blogging). As long as you choose a topic that you're passionate about, you will always have something to talk about and you'll definitely have listeners who would be interested. But you must offer something of quality. And like blogging, it can be about your day, your favourite movies, the line of

work you're in, or, well, like I said, whatever you're passionate about! Fortunately, giving podcasting a try is relatively a low cost (or no cost!) experiment. What have you got to lose?

I'm sure your content will be interesting to your listeners, try not to go over an hour. A good rule of thumb is under 30 minutes. However, a lot of times I go over by 5 or 10 minutes. It's not a big deal. Sure, listeners can pause your show and return to it whenever they can, but it can be a chore to do so. Listeners may also have other podcasts to listen to and many are an hour long. Besides, listeners can absorb your content better in smaller chunks.

One of my pet peeves of group podcasts is long off topic intros. Yes, your listeners can fast forward over your 15-minute off topic banter before you finally get into the topic of the episode, but sometimes listeners can't. What if they're listening while driving? Though at the same time, off topic banter is engaging to listeners as they want to know about your day. Keep the balance and don't overdo it.

Let your listeners participate in the comments on your website or social network, or better yet, directly on your show! Invite listeners to email you their comments in audio form and include them on your future episodes. Listeners will feel that their voice is being heard and it's also a more personal way to engage with your audience.

Unlike traditional radio, your podcast has a direct human face. Yours. Not a gigantic brand behind it. Our smaller, more engaged audience allows us to reply to listener email personally. I've made many friends over the years who ended up becoming influencers. I've also engaged with them on Twitter, Facebook groups, good old web 1.0 forums, and other social networks. Most importantly, in real life events such as conferences. It's also a great way to grow your audience, find new topics to talk about, and find new people to interview.

Show notes are good for SEO and, obviously, they let your audience know what to expect. Be clear and try to avoid fancy headlines.

Including a transcript is another great way to generate SEO but most importantly also includes listeners using assistive technology. Though I've struggled with this one on my own podcast since I have a lot to say (do I talk too much?) and it takes a lot of time to transcribe audio. There are programs out there that can transcribe for you but they usually come at a high cost and from the reviews I've read, they aren't that perfect. If your budget allows, you may also consider hiring a freelance transcriber.

Speaking of money, many people have generated an income from their podcast. Some even made it their primary source of income! Many take sponsorships, speak at events, or use their show as a means to sell a product or service. Many podcasters play promo ads of other podcasters for free. It's part of the community. There is no competition between podcasters! Except maybe among the podcasts by traditional media outlets.

Get the word out about your podcast by submitting it to podcasting directories as well as engaging in group forums about your topic. Please avoid hard selling or else you'll be regarded as a spammer. No one likes to be advertised to in social settings.

Some podcasters also post their audio podcasts on YouTube as slide shows or in-studio recordings.

Don't give up if you don't get any comments or other forms of feedback. It actually takes a lot of initiative for a listener to send feedback since they may be listening to your show in any kind of situation where they can't stop and send a thoughtful message. Also, August is typically a slow time for podcast listening

so feel free to take time off then as well.

Keeping a consistent schedule helps build an engaged community. Maintaining a content calendar can help you plan future episodes including those based around major holidays and events.

Years ago I had the pleasure of attending a podcasting workshop by radio veteran, Tod Maffin, who worked in radio. He mentioned how the headphones, or ear buds, are physically touching our ears making audio a more intimate medium than video or blogging. Hence why Tod also advises that you shouldn't address your audience in the plural form in your shows. For example, instead of saying "Hello everybody!", you could instead address as if you were speaking to one person. "Hello! I hope you are doing well". Or something to that nature. Instead of "I'd love to receive feedback from everyone", you could say "I'd like to hear from you". Podcasting is not traditional radio that is one-way. Just like blogging, it's a two-way medium.

Just like blogging and home made videos posted on YouTube, podcasting is most engaging with an informal tone. There's no need to rent a studio or even buy equipment costing hundreds of dollars. In fact, before I bought a pretty good, not-so-expensive microphone, for years I've used my iPhone voice memo app to record in-the-field segments and a cheap Skype headset to record interviews over Skype or Google+ Hangouts. I've always been complimented on how great my audio sounds! While listeners are forgiving with sound quality, don't go too far down the quality scale.

You may consider using Feedburner. You enter your RSS feed url into it and get something like a vanity url which you can customize. Submit that to iTunes and other podcast directories. This way, if you ever need to change your domain you won't have to go to the trouble of informing your audience to update your feed on their end. Of course, this only works for as long as a Feedburner lasts!

Which brings me to another point; the comic mentioned a bit of a warning about third party sites and tools. While third parties provide great service, we are truly at the mercy of their business decisions and longevity. They can close down at any time. Fortunately, the more friendlier owners of third party tools and sites send notification emails ahead of time.

If you need to cut things out of an interview, make sure you don't end up making the person you interviewed sound like a jerk. It's amazing how much a sentence or context of a conversation can change with one word edited out. If there's a glitch of some sort that does change things for the worse when it's edited out, I prefer to keep it in. Listeners are forgiving about production quality.

It can be quite tricky to ensure background music isn't drowning out your voice, that of the person you're interviewing, or the music isn't too low. These scenarios are distracting to the listener. Many times I've ensured that my levels were ok only to find the opposite upon later listening and posting! I've searched for a formula over the years and it seems there isn't one. It's an art that gets mastered with practice and a set of good quality headphones or speakers. Also, not all pieces of music make good background audio. Sometimes an instrument in a piece of music can drown out the human voice.

There are software programs that let you record audio from Skype calls and Google+ Hangouts. Popular choices are WireTap Studio, Audio Hijack, and iFree Skype Recorder.

There are many audio players you can add to your page to make it super easy for your audience to listen to your episodes right on your website. I personally use the Blubrry PowerPress plugin for WordPress. I also like how SoundCloud's player shows the audio waveform when you share it's link across social networks. When listening on the SoundCloud website, users are able to leave comments right on the waveform

itself!

My friend and fellow podcaster, Dr. Vibe, uses a service called Mixlr to stream live from his website as we records his podcast. I know other podcasters who also simultaneously live stream in a Google+ Hangout or UStream video.

Recommended Resources

I've only scratched the surface of podcasting in this little ebook. In no particular order, here are some of my favourite resources to give you even more best practices and how-tos.

The Podcaster's Studio
A podcast with tons of tips, news and updates for podcasters by veteran podcaster, Ray Ortega.

The Audacity to Podcast
A tips podcast with an emphasis on Audacity, the free audio editing software I use for my own podcast. Produced by veteran podcaster, Daniel J. Lewis.

Podcast Answer Man
Got a question about podcasting? Ask the Podcast Answer Man himself, Cliff Ravenscraft producer of over 20 different shows!

Making A Podcast
Everything you need to know about submitting a podcast to iTunes including cover art.

Transom
A website all about great radio storytelling

podcasting.about.com
A list of tutorials covering a wide range of topics in podcasting.

The Complete List of Audio Gear You'll Need for Your Podcast

3 Steps to Create Podcasts With Google Hangouts On Air

Top Podcast Directories to Submit Your Podcast
This list is updated on a regular basis

Pablo and Canva
No Photoshop? No problem! Free web tools such as Pablo and Canva allow you to create graphics for your social media postings with an easy to use editor.

7 Techniques To Design Killer Graphics For Your Blog Posts
It is beneficial to learn the best practices of design so you come across more professional and as a trusted expert in your subject field.

SEO Copywriting Made Simple
A fantastic ebook introducing the basics of how to make your website rank high in search engine results.

Finding the best times to post on social media
An article I wrote for LinkedIn Publisher on, well, the title speaks for itself!

Social Media and the Self-Help Movement
Or, *YOU have the awesome ability to make positive changes to the lives of people all over the world via personal interaction through podcasts (and other social media tools)*. My first ebook published in 2009, I share my experiences and findings with, well, helping others through my podcast. And vice versa.

Bios

Daniele Rossi is a digital strategist and cartoonist living the digital life since dial-up was all the rage. Having taken to social media like a fish to water, Daniele is a veteran in building and engaging communities with original content since launching his first podcast in 2006 and second the year after entitled, Stuttering is Cool, along with publishing a comic book of the same name while after. Daniele is also co-founder of Stutter Social, an online community connecting people who stutter around the world using Google+ hangouts. More about Daniele and his various projects on his website at danielerossi.ca.

Spud is a cartoon character created by Daniele during his high school days. Hailing from the dark side of the moon, Spud emigrated to Earth "because of all the light here". Well, that's the official version. Hints about the real reason why he's here can be found by iPad users on ipad.superspud.com. Check out more of Spud's adventures in digital culture at superspud.com (like the time when he and Willomina got trapped inside Twitter).

Willomina also hails from the dark side of the moon though her reasons for emigrating to Earth are rumoured to be centred around keeping a jealous eye on Spud. The two had been a celebrity couple back on the moon and their very public break up is legendary. When she's not tracking down Spud with off the shelf spy equipment or a drone, she's either asleep or tending to her cholcoate shop.

Thank Yous

To fellow podcaster, **Mark Blevis,** for proofing my ebook. Check out his podcast archive of radio documentary style shows at ElectricSky.net and Digital Public Affairs podcast at MarkBlevis.com.

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And to podcast listener extraordinaire, **Linda Mills**, for requesting more of Willomina's shenanigans.

I am not affiliated with any of the companies or software tools mentioned in this ebook.