



HOW TO BE A GREAT PODCAST GUEST (AND CREATE YOUR OWN ONE)

INTRODUCTION

Podcasts constantly grow in popularity.

And increasing numbers of organisations are including them in their comms plans. That may be by making them a crucial media target for spokespeople or by creating their own branded podcast.

It is easy to understand why – the numbers are impressive.

There are now more than 4 million podcasts registered around the world. And there are around 19 million podcast listeners in the UK.

Listener predictions suggest the number will reach 28 million by 2026.

So, it is perhaps not surprising we often provide media training for people who are about to appear on podcasts – whether for one run by their organisation or as a guest on an external one.

Podcast appearances are not the same as radio interviews. So, those who appear on them need to prepare differently.

Here's our guide to how you can help your spokespeople prepare for a podcast appearance.

BEFORE THE PODCAST APPEARANCE

Make sure they have the right gear

Podcasts can be recorded in many different ways and places – you don't even need to be in the same country as the host to make one.

If you record your podcast in a studio like ours, they will have everything you need.

But, if it is made remotely, there are a few more technical things to consider.

Firstly, how are you going to capture the audio?

It is possible to do this through Zoom and Teams – but the quality won't be brilliant.

There is something called a 'double-ender', which is a better approach. It involves both the podcast host and guest recording their parts of the audio locally. They are then synched together in the post-production phase.

But the best approach – and the one we use when recording podcasts remotely – is to use software like SquadCast, Zentcastr, Cleenfeed and Riverside FM.

BEFORE THE PODCAST APPEARANCE

These work in the same way as a double-ender. But they are easier to use as the service does the heavy lifting for you.

This can all sound daunting and techy. But companies like ours can help you overcome that challenge. And we can even provide the equipment so you don't have to buy it.

Whatever the recording format, guests must have a decent microphone and a set of headphones for their podcast appearance.

There are many microphone reviews and videos online. And it can be hard to differentiate them and know what one to go for.

If you've not got much room in your budget, we'd recommend a Blue Microphones Snowball Omnidirectional.

MICROPHONE OPTIONS



Blue Snowball



Marantz Professional
MPM-2000U



Rode NT-USB Microphone



Razer Seiren X



Blue Microphones Yeti

BUDGET FRIENDLY



MID RANGE



HIGHER END

MICROPHONE OPTIONS

Whatever microphone you opt for, ensure everyone has the same one for podcast recording. It will help ensure everyone's audio quality sounds similar. Sure, this can be achieved with clever post-production tweaking, but we're trying to make it easy for you here.

Again, we can help you find the right microphones. Or you can opt to record in our dedicated podcast studios, where they are ready and waiting for you.

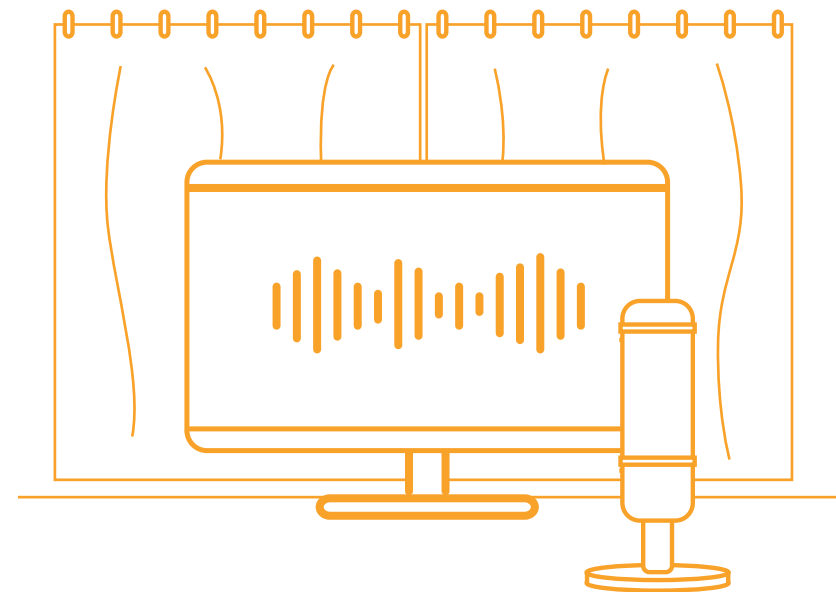
The other thing to be mindful of when recording a podcast remotely, is keeping away from loud noises and echoey-sounding rooms. Even aircon can be a problem as it creates a constant hum that is often picked up by microphones.

A quiet room is not always easy to find.

So, your spokespeople may need to record under a duvet (a technique many broadcast journalists use).

Or, get them to revisit their youth and build a pillow fort around the microphone to help absorb the sound.

If that all seems a bit extreme, try pulling the curtains and seeing what difference that makes to the acoustics of a room. And if you have hard flooring, a rug (or the kid's duvet) will help to deaden the sound and improve things during the recording.



LISTEN

Here's a question that can be easy to overlook.

Has your spokesperson heard the podcast they are about to appear on?

They should try and listen to a couple of episodes before the recording.

It will help them become familiar with its format and style. Is it educational? Entertaining? Topical? Niche?

It will also make them more aware of the questions they may face and how long they will need to talk.

And, indicating you have listened to the podcast before, such as by referencing past episodes, can help build a bond with the audience and host. Or, at the very least, it will help you in your small talk with the podcast host before hitting the record button.

PLAN

You don't want your spokesperson to sound scripted when they appear on a podcast.

But, just like any media interview, they need to be clear on what they want to get across and consider the questions they might face.

A temptation with podcast interviewers, with their more relaxed feel, can be to ask to see the questions in advance.

While that can provide some reassurance, it should be avoided. Spokespeople who see the questions are likely to rehearse their answers.

And when they do that, they will sound scripted when the podcast is recorded.

A much better approach is to think **AMEN**.

It is an acronym we use during our communication training to help delegates consider what they want to say.

It stands for

AUDIENCE
MESSAGE
EXAMPLES
NEGATIVES

Let's look at this acronym in some more detail...

AMEN

Audience

Who will you be talking to?

What are their interests?

What knowledge will they have of the subject?

If you appear on an internal or an industry trade podcast, you can afford to use more jargon and refer to common ground.

For a wider audience, you will need to simplify the language and remember those listening may have a limited understanding of what you are discussing.

Message

Once you know who you are talking to, you can decide what you want or need to tell them.

Spend time considering what you want listeners to remember from your podcast appearance. Do you want to persuade them of a point? Do you want them to be motivated into action? Perhaps you are simply looking to teach them some new facts or skills.

When you are clear on the objective, you can hone the message. You should be able to get it out in a single sentence of fewer than 20 words. Otherwise, it is likely to be too complex for people to remember.

AMEN

Examples

The message you want to get across must be supported by examples and stories.

These are crucial for bringing your words to life, illustrating your points and stimulating emotions in those listening.

The key is to use human stories and examples – people are fascinated by other people, not processes. Strong human stories will always triumph over facts, statistics and clever arguments, particularly on podcasts.

Negatives

You also need to think about the potential negatives.

Now, in a podcast, you are less likely to be asked hard-hitting negative questions than you would in a radio, TV or print interview.

But a good podcast host, regardless of whether it is for an internal or external audience, may ask questions about timely, political and potentially negative subjects.

Questions on the ramifications of covid, a change in political-leader, the impact of the cost-of-living crisis or hybrid-working, to give a few examples, could all stimulate compelling conversation – the vital ingredient in a great podcast.

People tend to have strong views on these sorts of subjects. But what is your organisation's stance? Does it have a position?

Podcast guests must think carefully about these questions and ensure they don't say anything that would conflict with their organisation's stance. If you are a guest and are unsure on the company messaging on any of these areas then be sure to have a chat to your comms team before starting your podcast.

GETTING PERSONAL

Spokespeople in podcast interviews must prepare to face plenty of personal questions.

The intimate nature of the podcast format typically offers greater scope to find out more about the spokesperson, as well as what they want to discuss. So, while your spokesperson may want to talk about a new service or product, many questions could be about the person behind it.

Listeners want to know more about the person in their ears.

Personal questions, even ones appearing innocuous, can be tricky for spokespersons. There are many examples of people struggling to answer them in different media formats.

So, podcast guests need to think about these types of questions and plan how they would respond to them.

Here are a few personal questions you could face:

What is your biggest failure/mistake?

What would you have wished you had known at the start of your career?

What is the most common myth about your industry?

What is the biggest challenge you have in your role right now?

PRACTICE

Practice makes perfect.

So, try to ensure your spokesperson has a run-through ahead of their podcast interview.

It will help them ensure their technical setup is working and enable you to evaluate how they perform.

This preparation should involve finding out how the podcast will be recorded and ensuring they are comfortable with any technical aspects they may need to do if it is remote.

DURING THE PODCAST RECORDING

Conversation

We often talk about the importance of spokespeople striking a conversational tone during our media training courses.

That conversational tone is vital in podcast interviews.

Even niche trade industry podcasts tend to have an informal, fireside chat-style feel.

Spokespeople need to sound natural. It means using the same language they would if they were chatting with a friend, or colleague, over coffee or in a pub (without the swearing).

It also means treading carefully with notes. It can feel reassuring to have them by your side.

But spokespeople must avoid the trap of reading them, which will make them sound scripted and robotic.

DURING THE PODCAST RECORDING

Stories and anecdotes

The average live news radio interview is about two and a half minutes long.

Podcast interviews do not have the same time constraints.

Most podcasts we create for our clients involve around 75 minutes of interviewing which is then edited down to around 40 minutes.

It means there is much greater scope to get messages across and share stories and anecdotes.

And they will help your spokespeople bring messages to life, add credibility to proceedings and help them connect with the audience.



Average interview lengths



DURING THE PODCAST RECORDING

Messages

Spokespeople must be proactive and ensure they get their messages across early in most interview formats.

If you think about a radio interview, there are tight time constraints on the format. The audience is also likely to multi-task - people typically listen to the radio while doing something else, like driving, working or cooking.

So, they dip in and out of the discussion.

And radio is typically considered a form of mass media with a diverse and large audience.

Podcasts, on the other hand, are often niche and have smaller audiences.

The audience often subscribes to them, is invested in them and can listen to them when convenient.

Some people have specific podcasts for when they are working, going for a run or trying to get to sleep.

They can pause and stop it when and as often as they like.

People tend to listen to podcasts through headphones, which raises that intimacy level and means the audience is more likely to listen actively.

It means your spokesperson can be more relaxed about getting their message across and patiently wait for more natural opportunities to use it.

DURING THE PODCAST RECORDING

Ask questions

Podcasts are built on conversation.

And conversations typically involve more than one person asking questions.

So, we encourage podcast interviewees to ask a few questions to help create that natural conversational flow and more rounded, dynamic discussions.

Listeners like nothing more than thinking they are getting unedited access to a conversation – a bit like being a fly on the wall.

DURING THE PODCAST RECORDING

Longevity

Podcast interviews have a different shelf-life to broadcast ones. News interviews date quickly. But podcasts age differently.

Listeners don't always consume them as soon as they come out. People may listen to them weeks, months and even years later.

So, spokespeople need to take care to avoid saying anything too time-sensitive.

DURING THE PODCAST RECORDING

Smile

One of our current working journalist tutors says,
“you can hear a smile on the radio”.

Sounds weird, doesn't it?

But smiling helps to bring that all-important energy and enthusiasm into an interview.

And the same applies to a podcast, where it can also create warmth.

The audience will sense if you are talking with a frown.

DURING THE PODCAST RECORDING

What else?

Here are a few other top tips and tricks from our training you should consider:

Be careful with jewellery and accessories: If it makes a noise when you move around or continually knocks against the microphone or the table you are sitting at, it will take attention away from what you are saying.

Avoid dairy: Dairy tends to build up mucous in your throat. Constant throat-clearing will irritate your audience.

Hydrate: Drink water around half an hour before the podcast recording starts. And consider using a lip balm. Dry mouths can create an annoying smacking sound.

Watch the filler words: There's nothing wrong with a few 'errs' or 'umms' – we all say them. But overusing filler words such as 'like', 'you know', 'look' and 'basically' can cause audiences to switch off.

Put your phone away: Having it on silent mode isn't good enough – we all get distracted for a split second every time our phones light up. And that can cause you to lose your train of thought.

Ditch the notes: All they will do is make you sound overly scripted and corporate.

Enjoy it: Podcasts are great fun. Enjoy it and see it as a chance to be more human and less corporate.

AFTER RECORDING

What should you and your spokesperson do after the podcast recording is complete?

Promote

Find out when and where the podcast is being published and promote it.

Push the episode through your organisation's social media channels, internal newsletter, and website. And if it's an internal podcast, consider adding a link to it in your email signature.

And don't forget the power of word of mouth. Tell your friends, family and colleagues about the podcast and where they can find it.

Review

No one likes listening to themselves. We all feel a bit weird when we hear our voices.

But reviewing podcast appearances is a crucial way of identifying what went well, what could have gone better and what you could do differently next time.

You could also ask the podcast host for feedback on how your spokesperson performed.

They may have a different interpretation of how the interview went and could provide some helpful advice.

If the podcast covers a niche subject, they may want to speak to your organisation again. So, it is in their interest to interview confident guests.

WHAT ABOUT IF YOU WANT TO CREATE YOUR OWN PODCAST?

More brands are turning to podcasts to tell their story, increase brand awareness and stand out from the competition. It is one of the best ways to show off an organisation's human side and build trust in a brand.

One concern brands tend to have is whether they can create enough content for a podcast series.

Firstly, who says your podcast has to be part of a series?

There is no reason why a podcast cannot be a one-off.

Let's say you have a specific message to get across. Or you need to update investors and shareholders about performance or your latest sustainability report. It could take the form of a one-off podcast.

A podcast doesn't have to be for entertainment and marketing purposes.

But if you are planning a podcast series, on the following pages are six topic ideas.

WHAT ABOUT IF YOU WANT TO CREATE YOUR OWN PODCAST?

Six topic ideas...

Interview: Interview your customers and get them to tell the story of how they have benefited from working with you. You'll need to work hard to avoid this feeling dry. This is where a professional podcast host will shine – adding credibility to the interview and ensuring it doesn't just sound like one massive advert.

Behind the scenes: You could put together a series that takes your customers behind the scenes of your business featuring interviews with everyone from the apprentices to the CEO. This might also help with recruitment – handy when the average cost of recruitment in the UK for an SME is said to be between £5 – £12k per person.

Niching down: Niching down and getting specific is another option. It is an approach that will potentially result in a smaller audience. But that audience will be easier to captivate and persuade. We've worked with Sagentia Innovation to produce podcasts on subjects like [predictive analytics in the food and drink industry](#) and [making servitisation work](#). And with Frontier Economics, we have created podcasts on issues such as whether [competition law is stifling a move to a green future](#) and how we can [invest in digital markets and data to enable sustainability](#).

WHAT ABOUT IF YOU WANT TO CREATE YOUR OWN PODCAST?

Six topic ideas...

Ask the expert: Showcase the wealth of expertise in your organisation by encouraging a range of experts to discuss different topics. Your customers will hear different voices and views and could develop a better overall understanding of what you can do for them.

Customer questions: Your customers may have plenty of questions about your business, products and services. Why not collate them and get your CEO or experts to answer them?

Using props: We recently created a podcast for WRAP where the interviewee was given various props to talk about. These props were relevant to the organisation and the interviewee's career and the format worked really well. Go and have listen to [The WRAP podcast](#) and see for yourself.

NEED SOME HELP CREATING A PODCAST OR PREPARING FOR A PODCAST APPEARANCE?

We can help with all aspects of podcast production.

Pre-production

We'll work with you to develop your content and help you find the stories and guests that will bring your audio plans to life.

We will help you structure your podcast and plan your series by identifying the angles and issues to discuss.

We can also define your 'audio brand', create bespoke music and jingles and work with you on your tone of voice.

We will spend time getting to know you and understanding your aspirations and podcast strategy.

And we will get to know the people who will appear on your podcast and understand how confident they feel in front of a microphone.

Recording

We have [state-of-the-art podcast recording studios](#) at our Berkshire headquarters and access to other studios across the country.

We can even bring our recording equipment to your offices or record high-quality audio content remotely if needed.

And if we were to record a podcast remotely, we can provide you with all the support and technical equipment needed to get professional results.

NEED SOME HELP CREATING A PODCAST OR PREPARING FOR A PODCAST APPEARANCE?

We can help with all aspects of podcast production.

Post-production

Our audio production experts will use their wizardry to turn raw recordings and audio files into compelling podcast episodes.

We'll improve the audio quality and remove the filler words, long pauses, background noise and false starts.

We can also help you tie your brand identity together through audio logos, theme melodies, and the right music and sound effects.

And we have access to session musicians, digital experts and royalty-free music sites to help ensure your podcast grabs attention.

Hosting

Once your podcast is recorded, we can ensure it is available on all the major podcast platforms, such as Apple Podcasts and Spotify. And we can help you promote it.

NEED SOME HELP CREATING A PODCAST OR PREPARING FOR A PODCAST APPEARANCE?

We can help with all aspects of podcast production.

Need a podcast presenter?

It is not easy to find the right presenter for a podcast. You need someone who sounds knowledgeable, enthusiastic, passionate and conversational.

We can help you find the perfect podcast host. We have more than 40 current working journalists and voice-over artists on our roster.

They are ideally placed to front your podcast and ask questions that lead to captivating conversations and brilliant interview podcasts.

And if you want your people to present the podcast or be guests on it, our media training expertise will ensure they sound confident, natural and relaxed.

Chat with one of our account managers about how we can help you create your podcast.

Or how we can help your spokespeople ensure they make the most of podcast appearances.

ABOUT MEDIA FIRST

We've been delivering communication training for around 40 years.

This includes working with 40 of the FTSE 100, public relations companies, charities, public sector organisations and businesses of all sizes.

Our customers are increasingly asking us for help creating compelling content for them, including webinars, masterclasses, live streams, videos and podcasts.

All our content is created by current working journalists who know how to inform, educate and entertain audiences.

And we can enable your people to play an active role in the content by ensuring they feel comfortable and can communicate with clarity and confidence.

We can also work with you to produce the marketing material to help you promote your content and guide you through repurposing it into other forms of compelling content.

EXAMPLES OF PODCASTS WE HAVE CREATED:



The Media Landscape

We launched a new podcast for our customers in 2021. The Media Landscape looked at the stories making the headlines, how they were handled, and what could be coming up on the news agenda. Series one was a timely look at breaking news stories and PR events. Series two is an audio blog inspired by our highly popular written blogs.

[Listen here](#)

EXAMPLES OF PODCASTS WE HAVE CREATED:



The Innovation Podcast

Sagentia Innovations asked us to plan, produce, host, record and edit The Innovation Podcast. A science-based consultancy, the company wanted a new way of communicating its knowledge and putting an approachable voice to the brand. It wanted listeners to leave with a better understanding of a new business idea or concept and be inspired by the people and stories they hear. You can listen to The Innovations Podcast here.

[Listen here](#)

EXAMPLES OF PODCASTS WE HAVE CREATED:



Big questions

We worked with Frontier Economics to plan, produce, host, record and edit a short podcast series called Big Questions. It is a series of compelling conversations with leading experts at Frontier Economics who are working to address the most pressing topics of our time. It seeks to unravel assumptions we have about sustainability, public policy, and energy – daring to ask the big questions society is facing today.

[Listen here](#)

EXAMPLES OF PODCASTS WE HAVE CREATED:



The WRAP podcast

We worked with climate action NGO (Non-Governmental Organisation) WRAP to produce a one-off podcast to showcase the changes it had been through. And the developments led by its outgoing CEO.

[Listen here](https://www.wrap.org.uk/podcast)

SUMMARY

There has never been a better time to start your audio journey and amplify your brand.

The ever-growing podcast audience is hungry for new content.

And podcasting is increasingly being taken seriously as a media channel. The News Agents podcast, hosted by former BBC journalists Emily Maitlis, Jon Sopel and Lewis Goodall, exceeded 10 million downloads just three months after it was launched.

It is getting around 130,000 listeners per episode.

Whether you think your spokespeople need a hand to get ready for this exciting new channel or you want to launch your own podcast, we're here to help you find your voice.

Thanks for downloading this eBook. Why not take a look at some of our [other publications](#):

- [Crisis communications checklist](#)
- [A guide to preparing for a media interview](#)
- [How to create a media skills matrix to identify the best spokesperson for every media scenario](#)