

PRINT MATTERS

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"I Know Dino," a podcast by Sabrina Ricci and Garret Kruger, has 1 million downloads.

Considering podcasts? Here's what you need to know.

Have you ever considered that podcasts might be a great way to bring in new subscribers?

An impressive total of 68 million people in the U.S. listen to podcasts every week, according to Edison Research, one of the most trusted research companies in the country.



Here's the breakdown of listeners by age: 48% are under 34, 32% are 35-54 and 20% are over 55.

Podcasts could introduce you to new audiences and also serve as a way to deepen your relationship with your current subscribers. But what will it take and where do you begin? Consider this your official primer.

What are they?

Think of a podcast as a radio show that is available like a library book, except you don't have to return it. You just download podcasts to your electronic device and listen to them any time. Some podcasts also have video, but most of the time they are just for listening, and most people listen while doing something else like commuting, running or folding laundry.

Where do you find them?

Typically, podcast apps are pre-installed on cell phones (both Apple and Android). If not, you can download the podcast app from the App or Play store. Another popular option for finding podcasts is the app Spotify. You could also just use your search engine. Google "podcasts" or "podcasts about horses" or cars, or clothes, or food — anything you like — and you'll find tons of options.

How do I create one?

The best place to begin is by listening to podcasts so you can develop an ear for an audio story. Felix Poon is a podcast producer at Gimlet Media, a subsidiary of Spotify, and that was his top tip for people who work in print and are considering a leap to audio journalism. Boring people need not apply! "You can interview boring people for a print magazine and still be pretty interesting, but when you're thinking about audio it's better to interview someone who has a good audio voice, and tells interesting stories," he said.

Sabrina Ricci, who has run the "I Know Dino" podcast since 2015 with her husband, Garret Kruger, agrees. "I Know Dino"

now has more than 1 million downloads, and Ricci has learned a trick or two along the way. "What makes a great podcast," Ricci says, "is when the hosts are engaging and you can tell that they're really passionate about the topic too."

What tools will I need?

We know you have that passion thing down, and you already know what makes a great story. But to put out a good product, you will have to learn some audio production too. You can't just use your phone, you will need a professional microphone to record, and you will need software for editing.

"Podcasts are intimate," Ricci says, "you're right in somebody's ears through their headphones. You want it to be a pleasant experience." She recommends a Blue Yeti microphone, and Poon recommends Hindenburg Journalist software for editing. Other amateur editing software options are Audacity, Zencast or GarageBand. You'd never publish your interview transcript as a magazine story without editing it, and the same applies to audio!

"Set aside time to learn the process," Poon says, "and you can teach yourself." Use Gimlet Academy, a podcast that will teach you a lot about good podcasting, and the information on transom.org. These are really superb resources.

You're probably wondering how long your podcasts should be. The truth is that they vary greatly. Some are five minutes and some are several hours long! Think of it the same way you would think of columns and features. Some topics merit more attention than others, and the same is true of a podcast.

What about distribution and marketing?

This part is important, and maybe one that gets forgotten. "You want to use a hosting platform, and Libsyn is a good one to start with," Ricci says. "That way you can make sure your podcast goes out to Apple podcasts, Google, and all the major platforms, and people who listen to podcasts regularly have a chance to find yours." And you can also embed it on your website.

"Then you have to market it," Ricci said. "Otherwise no one will know it exists. You have to put in a lot of effort. You send it out to your network, and on social media, and ask for ratings and reviews. Then turn out quality, consistent content so people know that they can depend on your podcast."

Yes, we agree, it isn't a walk in the park. But keeping a magazine, or anything really, going these days requires constant adaptability and learning and a host of tricks up your sleeve. We know that magazine publishers are up to the task.



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Publisher's Corner

Podcast lessons learned

What if you start a podcast to inform your listeners on a topic, but then you give them inaccurate information? That's exactly what happened to Sabrina Ricci of the "I Know Dino" podcast.

"We weren't experts in dinosaurs when we started the show," she says of herself and her co-host, husband Garret Kruger. "And so we said a few things that ended up being incorrect."

Their listeners were quick to point out the errors, and Ricci and Kruger were very grateful for the feedback. "We invited them onto the show," Ricci says. "They are dinosaur experts, and it turned into a really great conversation and a learning moment."

There were other lessons along the way as well. Initially, their "studio" wasn't remotely professional. "We were recording with a blanket over our heads because we wanted to make sure that the background noise wasn't coming through," Ricci said.

It sounds silly, but this technique is actually passed along among beginning podcasters because it does work. But then comes the

obvious: It's pretty unbearable under the blanket. "It definitely gets hot and sweaty," she says. The heat can in fact affect one's ability to think clearly. "Once, we spent 45 minutes recording a session, and when we emerged, we realized we had forgotten to press the record button," Ricci laughs.

"So we took a minute and then it was back under the blanket and we did it all over again. Now we always make sure that we press the record button way earlier than we need to!"

Ricci's advice to beginning podcasters is to just have fun. "Know that you're going to learn and you can grow from the bumps. We keep a good attitude as we progress, and we want our listeners to grow with us."

