Casting a Wide Net: The Use of Podcasting to Reach Students On the Go

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Abstract

Podcasting has seen consistent growth in both users and content generation since the mid 2000’s. College educated, 18 to 34 year olds represent the largest percentage of podcast consumers and that number is on the rise (Edison Research, 2017) Thus podcasting may be an effective way to deliver content to students in hybrid and online formats, and in particular working students who travel. In this interactive demonstration and discussion participants will examine some affordable podcasting hardware and software options and participate in a streamlined process of podcast creation, hosting, and iTunes publication.

**Keywords:**

Podcasting, Online lectures, Blended Learning

**Introduction:**

Online and hybrid courses continue to rise in popularity, particularly for working adults, commuter students, and MBA students. Although video based lectures have become increasingly common in recent years both in response to the need for online content delivery and as a common component in courses utilizing reverse instruction, video files have limitations that can make them cumbersome for students. Video files are large and require significant bandwidth for streaming or memory for downloads. Often there is no mobile interface to access the video files, which are often housed in a University’s learning management system (e.g., Blackboard, Moodle, Canvas, etc.), and therefore accessing these files away from a computer is challenging. Video lecture files are best accessed from desktop and laptop computers with a high speed internet connection. However, today’s learners are often on the go, away from consistent high speed internet, and they often prefer mobile devices, with 81% of those 12 years of age and older now owning a smartphone (Edison Research, 2017). Podcasting is an alternative option for providing recorded audio content that can be accessed easily, on demand, and is built for a mobile experience.

Podcasting, which began with early adopters in the early to mid 2000’s, has continued to grow in popularity and is now a common form of media consumption. A recent survey by Edison Research found that 40% of those 12 and older had ever listened to a podcast and 24% have listened to a podcast in the past month. Of those who listen monthly 44% are between the ages of 18 and 34, and the majority of listeners have attended college or earned degrees. Moreover, the demographic with the highest percentage of podcast listeners are those with some graduate school or advanced degree, and those who are working full time (Edison Research, 2017). These demographics suggest that not only are college students a receptive audience for podcasts but that MBA students might be especially likely to engage with podcast content.

**Theoretical Foundation/Teaching Implications:**

The use of podcasting to deliver content to students is novel insofar as the podcasting medium is relatively new. However, this approach is simply an extension of the broader movement to capture lecture content and provide it to students outside of the classroom setting. Flipped classrooms and reverse instruction have been prominent topics in both the popular press and in the academic literature and have coincided with the explosion of free online instructional content (e.g., Kahn Academy, YouTube, TED talks), and in connection with an emphasis on blended learning (Means, Toyama, Murphy, Bakia, and Jones, 2010). The assumption behind reverse instruction is that students may only have a limited amount of time that they can spend engaging with the instructor or other students and that such precious time should not be spent passively consuming content that could be consumed anywhere at any time. Thus, such pedagogy typically relies heavily on having students consume lecture content outside of class while using class time for engaging activities and experiential exercises that build on the lecture content (Berrett, 2012).

These “out-of-class” lectures are typically delivered as an audio or video file, but the means by which these files can be consumed has not kept up with changes in technology and the lifestyles of many young adults. In recent years podcasts have grown tremendously in popularity as listeners, primarily young adults, have turned towards this not-so-new medium. A recent article in Forbes cited several reasons for the uptick in podcasting including, screen fatigue, affordability, and a search for mobile/commuter friendly options for media consumption (DeMers, 2017). For many years management educators have been pushing for optimization of class time with a focus on engagement and experiential activities. As the theme for this year’s MOBTS Conference suggests, educators should also seek to navigate challenges to learning for working students by optimizing of “out-of-class” time. I believe this can be accomplishing in part by offering content in a format that is most accessible and consumable for today’s learners, and right now that format is podcasts.

**Learning Objectives:**

By the end of the session participants will know

* What is meant by the term podcast
* What types of content can be used for podcasts
* How podcasts differ from typical online or video lectures

By the end of the session participants should be able to do the following

* Use software to create and edit podcasts
* Use simple podcast recording devices and peripherals
* Locate and set up a domain for hosting podcasts
* Publish podcasts to iTunes
* Sync audio and video files together

**Exercise Overview:**

As is the case for much online course content, creating podcast content for a course requires a significant amount of front loaded preparation. However once all of the casts are produced and published there should be little if any time required to maintain these. Also, by creating the casts without time references, teachers should be able to use the podcasts for multiple semesters. Teachers can expect to spend approximately 30 minutes preparing notes and practicing for a 30-minute podcast. Longer time frames can be expected if multiple people participate in the podcast or if an “interview” style is employed. Teachers will likely spend another 30 minutes to one hour editing each cast. This time drops significantly once you become efficient with the process. Podcasting requires very few resources and once an initial investment is made there is little or no incremental cost for producing additional casts. Equipment and software may include a podcast recording device ($100), a microphone ($25), Camtasia or other editing software, and domain hosting. Podcasters will also need access to a space with limited noise and echo for proper recording.

**Session Description:**

The session will be comprised of four segments. During segment one I will explain what a podcast is and provide examples of popular current podcasts (e.g., Revisionist History, Bald Move). I will also show participants how to access my course podcast through iTunes and listen to a brief segment. During segment two I will lead a discussion among participants regarding what content could best be delivered via podcast. This will include a discussion of interview based podcasts and how to integrate podcasts within a learning management system. In segment three I will demonstrate how to create a podcast from start to finish with an emphasis on the importance of sound quality and voice. I will demonstrate how to use a recording device and peripherals, how to sync a podcast with video, how to edit in Camtasia, how to export and host a podcast audio file, and how to publish a podcast to iTunes and make use of show notes. During segment four I will engage the participants to help me create a sample podcast including recording, editing, hosting, and publishing.

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