

Strategic Soundbytes:

Creating & Using Interview-based Podcasts to Bring the Real World into the Classroom

Abstract

In this session, participants will learn how brief interview-based podcasts can be used to complement more-traditional course content, as well as to assess student learning of, and ability to apply, course concepts. Through a use case of a podcast I created for an undergraduate negotiations class, I will demonstrate the creation and use of, student reactions to, and benefits of using an interview-based podcast series. Participants will learn practices for designing such a podcast and creating a simple podcast using free, readily-available software. As well, participants will brainstorm ways they might use a podcast to illustrate their own course topics.

Keywords: podcast, elearning, asynchronous

Introduction

Teaching management topics, such as negotiation, to undergraduate students can be challenging, as students have often had limited experience in the organizational contexts in which common course topics are framed. As such, lectures on concepts may feel relevant to classroom learning, but largely theoretical and of limited, immediate use in their experience outside. I, therefore, propose a way to use brief audio interviews, in the form of a podcast, to give immediacy and importance to course concepts by exposing students to their real world application in common situations.

The purpose of this session is to demonstrate how we can create and employ brief podcasts to teach abstract course concepts to students and assess their ability to apply them to everyday and near-future organizational contexts. I do this by drawing on the use case of a podcast—*Strategic Communication Soundbytes*--that I designed for a hybrid synchronous-asynchronous course to introduce students to how people negotiate in their everyday lives. In this podcast, a series of 5 to 10-minute long audio-recordings, I interview people from various personal and professional backgrounds about either a negotiation experience that was critical to their learning or about their negotiation practices and advice, more generally. The interviews highlighted varied everyday negotiating contexts; for example, negotiating one's first job or a salary increase, purchasing a car, developing terms of a lease or contract, navigating a family dispute, hiring a service provider, or working with customers or one's boss. Given the diverse backgrounds of each interviewee and focus on personal experience, however, these interviews also shed light on how factors like age and generational differences, gender, race, work experience, and world view, as well as stakes, power, confidence, emotion, and relationship to the other party impacted their negotiating experience and outcomes. As such, many of the

concepts and theories normally highlighted in negotiation class lectures and simulations surfaced in personal and nuanced ways. A podcast was included as part of each of ten asynchronous learning modules posted to the learning management system for the course and coupled with online discussion questions designed to prompt application of module concepts to the interview. In this session, I will show participants how they might use an interview-based podcast approach to illustrate their own course topics, and provide ideas for how to both create such a podcast and use it to expand and assess student learning.

Theoretical Foundation and Teaching Implications

Podcasting has existed for nearly two decades, accruing massive audiences in 2007 (Skinner, 2020), at which point scholars, recognizing the free availability and accessibility of this expanding medium, began exploring podcasts as pedagogical tools--one going so far as to introduce the term 'podagogy' (Rosell-Aguilar, 2007). Since that time, thousands of new podcasts have emerged, with 40% of the top-rated podcasts falling in the genre of education and 44% of podcast listeners now between 18 and 34 years old (Ark, 2018), making podcasts an even more-important learning modality in today's world. However, it is the COVID-19 pandemic and the accompanying shift to online learning that has created needs for both technological innovation in teaching and creative ways to bring the outside world into classrooms that currently exist online, particularly in courses in which application of abstract or complex concepts are critical to student learning. While interview-based podcasts have been used to help educators teach management more-effectively (Journal of Management Education, n.d.) and by management educators to teach Entrepreneurship (Teckchandani & Obstfeld, 2017), the use of podcasts also holds promise for subjects like Negotiation and Leadership, as well as other management topics, in which students may have limited personal experience.

Fortunately, audio has been found to be a valuable and, often, preferred format of student learners. According to Brittain et al. (2006), for example, students both used (66.1%) and preferred (66.1%) audio-only lecture reviews over reviews that were delivered through video or PowerPoint synced with audio. When audio files contain a voice familiar to the Students, they will pay closer attention to content (Tanaka & Kudo, 2012). Thus, creating a podcast that includes the voice of one's professor and the real-world experiences of other people, provides students with a helpful digital medium through which to learn about management concepts in a memorable way. When coupled with online discussion questions, such podcasts also allow students to better understand topics in context, to recognize or apply course concepts to peoples' experiences, and to learn from one another's perspectives and experiences (Teckchandani & Obstfeld, 2017).

Learning Objectives

The student learning objectives for the podcast are threefold. At the end of each learning module in which a podcast is included, students should be able to (1) understand course concepts in action, (2) be able to recognize or apply course concepts to the situation described, and (3) be able to communicate and discuss these concepts and their applications with others.

Exercise Overview

Interview-based podcasts are best used as part of either asynchronous course content or as a homework assignment that illustrates course concepts. I used this podcast technique in an undergraduate negotiation class (25 students) taught online in a hybrid synchronous and asynchronous fashion in which most students had no prior negotiation experience. I believe that this podcast format could be used effectively to support both greater numbers of students and a variety of other course topics, such as Ethics, Leadership, Entrepreneurship, or Management in

which personal experiences can help illustrate complex or abstract concepts and dilemmas. When combined with a forum or chat room and specific questions designed to elicit recognition or application of course concepts, the podcast can prompt students to engage with both the podcast and other learning content more-deeply. In the negotiation class, the podcast was made available in the online course management system, with one new episode released in each of the weeks for which one was planned. In total, students listened to ten podcast recordings during the semester. Each podcast was included as the final element in a given week's learning module and served as a way for students to hear how their learning from the week was relevant to a real-world situation. To encourage this application, each episode was accompanied by two to three discussion questions to which students were asked to respond online prior to being able to see other students' responses. These questions invited application of course concepts and personal experiences and takeaways. To stimulate conversation and encourage exploration of other viewpoints, students were encouraged to respond to their peers' comments. These responses had the added benefit of permitting me to assess students' ability to integrate their learning.

Session Description

This 60-minute session will follow the schedule below:

- (10 min) Introduction of facilitator and attendees answering;
 - Introductions: Name, institution, type of classes taught
 - (If relevant) How have I used podcasts in my course design?
 - What do I hope to learn from this session?
- (5 min) Introduction to Podcasts and their Use in the Classroom:
 - Explanation of what a podcast is and how they have been used as a teaching tool
- (30 min) Presentation and Discussion on Application

- Presentation of a use case based on my personal experience creating and using *Strategic Communication Soundbytes*, an interview-based podcast to supplement my undergraduate negotiations course content and assess student comprehension of negotiation concepts.
- Brief clips of the podcast to illustrate how individuals are interviewed and how they describe their negotiation experiences, as well as how students responded to them.
- Explanation of how the podcast may be structured to address course concepts, how to identify and prepare interviewees, and how the podcast can be integrated into course design to assess student comprehension of course concepts.
- Overview of simple and free tools that can be used to create audio-recordings.
- (10) Small group discussion: Have participants discuss possible applications and brainstorm ideas for podcasts they could create to supplement their own teaching.
- (5 min) Wrap Up: Opportunity for questions and open discussion about possibilities for using this teaching tool in participants' courses.

After participating in this session, participants will:

- Recognize challenges in teaching abstract course concepts and identify ways in which an interview-based podcast can be used to address them
- Articulate how a podcast might supplement and assess other elements of a course they teach
- Understand basic practices and tools needed to create a simple podcast and gain comfort with the possibility of creating one

- Have developed relationships with other participants who hope to employ podcasts in their teaching

Application to Conference Theme: Tradition Meets Technology: Finding Ways Forward

The global COVID-19 pandemic has not only accelerated use of technology in the classroom, but foreshadowed a future in which online or hybrid learning is increasingly the norm. I believe it is important for us, as management educators, to meet this moment by developing greater ease with technology and by experimenting with and using the tools available to us to innovate the way we teach. Audio-recorded information, such as podcasts, offer a way for educators to not only deliver educational content in a new and convenient modality, but to introduce students to real-world applications of potentially-abstract concepts in everyday contexts through conversations with others. As well, bringing the real world into the classroom in this way--particularly when it is difficult for students to go out into the real world safely, will help students use course concepts in the circumstances they are most-likely to find themselves in in the near future.

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