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PODCASTING — STORY TELLING FOR YOUR BRAND

When it comes to knowledge sharing by professionals, we have 3 options currently:

- 1) Written form : Books, Articles etc.
- 2) Video Form : Youtube Channels, preparing videos that give information
- 3) Audio Form : Podcasting, pre-recorded messages.

While top 2 are quite common at the present time, (Audio Form) Podcast is gaining its due value lately. Writing the article is not easy and the difficult part in today's time is to find people who read. Videos have an edge over written form but creation of Video can be too expensive and time consuming. Further, in videos, focus has to be on appearance of person, lights, background and other animations.



This is the reason why the third alternative '**Podcasting**' is gaining popularity in knowledge sharing. With Smart Speakers like Alexa, Google Home, Apple Homepod etc finding way into our day to day lives, Podcasts are gaining popularity in a similar way as FM radio did in the 2000s. A human voice speaks louder and adds much more meaning through tone and inflection than a printed form ever can. The journey from radio to podcasts has been a full circle. The radio was superseded by televisions, televisions by cables, cables by internet videos and with technological advancement, internet videos are now at par with podcasts. Podcasting, thus, represents a new platform for story-telling.

According to the survey reports by Stitcher, an average podcast listener stays connected for 22 minutes daily. This is one reason why including podcasting to your digital branding strategy will prove powerful. Podcasts give you an opportunity to build a deep, personalized and rich relationship with your target audience. With smart speakers, the music apps supporting adding podcasts, people prefer to listen to Podcasts more frequently while doing other work instead of holding phone in hand or sitting in front of their screen to watch a Video or holding a book and reading it. Though, Video and Books have their own advantages, Podcasting is filling up the vacuum.

But first, let us understand what is podcasting?

Make it all about the audience, and then, you can never go wrong

When you search it on Wikipedia, this is what it says "A **podcast** is an episodic series of spoken word digital audio files that a user can download to a personal device for easy listening". Streaming applications and podcasting services provide a convenient and integrated way to manage a personal consumption queue across many podcast sources and playback devices.

But if we talk about our profession here, the most commonly accepted meaning of podcast is a collection of audio calls or audio messages. It is very simple as it sounds. A consultant/ professional generally answers clients' calls every now and then explaining various concepts without client's queries to interrupt in between. To make life easier and to save on time and energy, the recorded version of such explanations/ advisory can be converted to podcasts and uploaded.

Now imagine someone calls you and asks what is "Seamless ITC" under GST? All you need to do is share the link to the podcast uploaded by you and ask them to clarify their doubts. This also does the branding for you because the person may share it with others who may have the same query. Podcasts have an edge over videos and books because these can be heard while travelling in train or driving a car. One may not have to take out special time for the same.

How to start a podcast?

Podcasting in general terms is simple - recording an audio and uploading it on some platform which can be accessed by a subscriber of that particular service. For Eg: Jio Savan Music, Gaana and other music apps have started their Podcast services too. The most commonly used host these days is Spotify and Anchor FM

The following quick steps may help you to plan a podcast:

- Come up with a concept (a topic, name, format and target length for each episode. For eg: you can start with a series of topics on GST).
- Design artwork and write a description to "brand" your podcast.
- Record and edit your audio files (such as .MP3s). A microphone is recommended.
- Find a place to host them (as mentioned above, you may begin with Spotify)
- Upload your podcast on these platforms and rest will be taken care of.

**Podcasts are to
radio and Netflix
is to cable**

Now since we know what podcasting is, let us deep dive to the FAQs:



1. What are equipments/ softwares required for a podcast:

As a beginner, you can start even with the mobile phone record option. Find a place where there is no external noise and disturbance and keep your mobile on "Airplane Mode" so that your recording is not disturbed by calls/notifications.

Nevertheless, this may not suffice if you want to start recording at professional level. For the same, we recommend to use the below tools to the extent possible:

Microphone:

The foremost piece of equipment you'll want to get is a microphone. You may opt for a set that includes the microphone, a durable steel housing, and a broadcast arm that keeps the mic off the table etc. Now the good news is that apart from the normal recorder, playstore, IOS stores and web browsers also have special recording applications/ websites (Spreaker Studio, Anchor, Podbean, SoundCloud) which may assist you in having a really good podcast recorded using a very basic mic (maybe the mic of your headphones). You may choose either of it at the beginner level. Having tried both of it, we vouch that both work good provided you pick a place that is quiet for recording.

Headphones:

A pair of noise-cancelling headphones are advisable instead of normal headphones once you start recording it regularly. A successful podcast is less about the pricey equipment, and more about the experience you provide to your listeners. So we do not recommend higher spending on these equipment to start with but once you are regular, noise cancelling headphones will help in hearing it better and can help you provide better sound quality for upload.

Recording and Editing Softwares:

Most of the Podcast creators use Garageband (for Mac Users) or Audacity (for Windows), which turn your laptop or tablet into a full-fledged recording studio. Both of these companies offer free versions of their

software, which lets you record live audio, edit files, change the speed/pitch of your recordings, cut and splice, and output your podcast to a digital sound file. You need good software as Podcasts cannot be like a normal phone call where you just start speaking on content and end it after 30-60 mins. While you start recording you will realize there will be a need for Intro Music, Background noise editing, lots of cuts and retakes. Good software ensures that all these things are mixed in a way that podcast looks uninterrupted recording.

2. How long should your podcast be?:

This a question that may arise to everyone planning to begin with a podcast. To answer this, we did reach out to people and also had surveys and what we then concluded is: Podcasts should be as long as it needs to be. But since this doesn't answer the basic FAQ, below are few tips that you may take care of while considering the length of the podcast. The length of your podcast depends on the frequency of uploading. So, if you ask us, this is a tip that we may wish to share:

- If you plan to podcast once or twice a week or month, the length can be 60 minutes or more
- If you plan to podcast daily, the length then should be 5 to 15 minutes

However, the ideal length that a normal user may want to listen to a podcast will be 20-25 minutes, remember 30 mins daily soap operas? That used to run on the same psychology and that's why there used to be a lot of series that used to run for half an hour daily.

3. What should be the structure of the podcast?:

All podcasts no matter what it is, who makes it, how is it made or how long it is, it follows three structures:

Interview or Q&A structure:

This is by far the most popular structure of the podcast. This is simple as it sounds and requires less time too on preparing the content. All you need to do is start interviews on specific topics or have a candid chat with industry leaders in a Q&A format. We have seen people calling leaders on podcasts while they ask them candid questions like – what made you think you wish to practice GST, what advice would you like to give our fellow professionals, etc. A tip to share here – you may also consider having an interview with someone who can guide fellow professionals on the importance of mental and physical health.

This structure works as a branding for both – the interviewer and the interviewee

Educational Structure:

This is a series of podcasts where time and now you cover a topic which educates the listeners. The topic could be technical or non-technical. To begin with – you may consider having a series of educational podcasts on Ind AS covering all Ind AS in different podcasts. For this structure, time and efforts have to be put in preparing the content.

Entertaining Structure:

Again this is a kind of series which will slow gaining demand. In such a series, you may just call people from the same profession and talk about something which may entertain the listeners. You may have a series where you cover – Financial Lessons to be learnt from Bollywood Movies or something like Management Lessons to be learnt from Mahabharat. If not this, you may also just want to call people and explore their hidden talent and show the listeners how fellow professionals could be singers or comedians.

Irrespective of what structure of the podcast you opt for, there are still some basics that you should cover in every podcast: An intro, one key takeaway from the podcast, a call to action, a thankyou or a shoutout and closing remarks.

4. What are the basic steps in publishing a podcast?:

Have a podcast cover art designed:

While this may sound bizarre, a cover art will make a difference to listeners. We have often known and taught that 'Don't Judge A Book ByIt's Cover'. But it's crazy how we always judge a book by it's cover. So think about it – there are series of podcasts shown when someone searches – podcasts by CAs, one factor that a listener may open up your podcast is your cover art. The quick tips you may consider while designing the cover art for your podcast – 1/4th text, originality, colour schemes and images that speak about the topic.

How to publish your podcast on Apple, Spotify, Google, etc?

This is the most interesting part about Podcasting. Unlike, Youtube or Instagram, where you can directly upload video or go live and have your content on its channel, Podcasting works differently. Currently, Google, Apple Podcasts or even Apps like Jio Saavanetc do have a space for Podcasts but they do not allow users to upload content directly. You need a Host for your podcast, for eg Anchor.fm where you upload your podcast, the same will be published on the platform and from the Host, it will be distributed to all the Podcast providers and based on its AI and other aspects, will show it on their platforms.

5. What after the podcast is published?

Once the podcast is published, you may consider sending a link of the same to your newsletters list, update it on your social media accounts like twitter/ linkedin, send a broadcast on whatsapp, attach the link in your email signature and lastly ask your colleagues to share it. Also, you can get regular subscribers to your post on Podcasting and you can interact with them.

So far we have known enough on why podcasting is the current need to expand your professional brand and if you are still not convinced, the following benefits may convince you to start the series:

The Benefits of Podcasting:

There are a variety of reasons for firms to podcast regularly these days. The most common motivation is generating awareness about the firm, engagement and thought leadership. There are more altruistic reasons as well, which may include sharing information/insights or creating an online community. Regardless of your motivation or objective, podcasting can provide reliable results to expand a brand for your firm. Also, an important point to note here is that there is no violation of Code of Ethics since we are not in any way targeting to solicit clients. Our aim in podcasting series should be knowledge sharing and expanding brand value for the firm.

If you're still unsure whether podcasting is right for your firm, answer the following questions:

- Are you looking to build a relationship between your firm and your audience?
- Do you have valuable information to share?
- Are you able and willing to talk about your expertise on a regular basis?
- Do you want your firm to have recognition worldwide?

If you answered yes to one or more of the above questions, then podcasting is something that you may want to just begin.

