

Podcasts let you live your radio-show dream



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Recording and editing

Other than a good microphone, you probably already have most of the gear to record a podcast around your home or business.

If you are going to use a Windows or Mac laptop, you'll just need a good USB microphone. The Blue Snowball (\$85, various stores) is a great entry-level microphone that can be used for everything from podcasts to making your Skype or FaceTime conversations sound better. One of the features that makes the Blue Snowball a great choice is that it has two capture modes to help you get the best sound possible. You can capture from a single direction, such as a solo podcast, or capture in 360 degrees with its omnidirectional capture mode, which is great for when your podcast includes a guest or two. At the higher end, the Audio-Technica AT2020USB+ (\$209.99, Long and McQuade) is an excellent choice, but one that is designed for capturing a single source rather than a group of people.

Blue also offers a microphone and software package. The Blue Snowball Studio (\$137, Amazon) includes the Blue Snowball microphone and the Snowball Studio app. Snowball Studio helps you set up your podcast to include music and multiple

tracks – for when you've booked a few guests – and includes a feature to help make your voice sound as smooth as the host of jazz radio show.

Audacity, a free app for Windows and Mac OS laptops, is one of several software options for recording and editing your podcast. The software is easy to use – and it also has a great online community to help you with any questions you might have. Audacity is available as a free download from www.audacityteam.org.

Apple's pre-installed Garage Band application makes it easy for Mac OS laptop users to begin recording and editing podcasts. And being an Apple-created app, you can count on an abundance of online resources to help you.

Adobe Audition is a professional-level audio recording and editing software package; perhaps more than what's needed for a basic podcast. For me, Garage Band is a better choice. Adobe Audition is available either individually (US\$20.99 per month) or as part of Adobe Cloud (\$52.99 per month).

You can also use your iPhone or iPad to record your podcast. The Blue Mikey Digital microphone (\$124, Amazon.ca) or the Røde iXY-L (\$259, AVShop.ca, Amazon.ca) are portable microphones that connect to your particular device via the built-in Lightning connector on the bottom of the phone. The Blue Mikey Digital works with a variety of apps on your iPhone or iPad, such as Apple's Garage Band app, Spire Recorder or any other audio capture app. The Røde iXY-L works with those apps too – and even includes its own app, Røde Rec (available on the Apple App Store).

Getting the word out

So you have produced your first podcast – now what? The next step is to get your podcast on the major platforms, such as Apple iTunes, Google Play and Spotify. There are two steps to getting your podcast out for people to discover. First, you need to choose a host for your podcast episodes. There are a number of options, including Libsyn (libsyn.com, \$5 US per month), and my go-to choice, SoundCloud (soundcloud.com, \$7.50 per month). These services, and others such as Podbean and Buzzsprout, are where you upload your finished podcast episodes.

After your podcast is hosted, the next step is to create accounts on the big three platforms. The steps to creating your accounts will vary from platform to platform but the last step is the simplest part of all. Your hosting provider will give you an RSS link, which is an Internet standard link that you just need to copy and paste into each of the platforms

during your account setup. Once you've done that, any new episode you upload to your hosting provider will automatically be published. There are no costs with distributing your podcast on Apple iTunes, Google Play or Spotify. To learn more, visit their sites – Apple iTunes (podcastsconnect.apple.com), Google Play (play.google.com/music/podcasts/publish) and Spotify (podcasters.spotify.com).

Now, if all of this sounds complex, don't panic. There are two simple-to-use options if you're looking for something quick and easy.

First, Anchor is a service that lets you record and distribute your podcast right from its website or iOS or Android application. Both the site and app include editing tools to help you create a great podcast. Anchor will also push your episode to Apple iTunes, Google Play and Spotify. Anchor acts as the host for your podcast episodes and also manages the distribution for you. Even better, Anchor is a free service (anchor.fm).

Another option is Toronto-based Dialog. Dialog is a twist on the traditional podcast. I used Dialog for podcasts for a work project this year and it's the closest thing to living out my AM radio dreams that I have ever used. With Dialog, anyone can broadcast content and conversations live in real-time, allowing hosts to bring callers on the line to engage in the discussion. Signing up for Dialog is free at getdialog.am.

If you're looking for inspiration for your podcast, check out these locally produced examples. In the summer, two local mid-townners produce "The Devil's Cut" podcast, which is focused on music. And Jennifer Tribe from Waterloo-based Auvik Networks produces the Frankly MSP podcast, which is used to connect with Auvik's customers (and future customers) around the globe. Both podcasts can be found on iTunes.

Alex Kinsella has been part of Waterloo Region's tech community since 2004 and is always looking for the next great gadget (or tacos, if it's Tuesday). Find him on Twitter at @alexkinsella

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