

# GROWING YOUR PODCAST AUDIENCE

YOUR GUIDE TO BUILDING A  
FANBASE AROUND GREAT CONTENT



# Growing Your Podcast Audience

# Your Guide to Building a Fanbase Around Great Content

By Matthew McLean



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## Your Guide to Building a Fanbase Around Great Content

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# GROWING YOUR AUDIENCE

## CHAPTER 1

**HOW LONG DOES IT  
TAKE TO BUILD A  
FOLLOWING?**



### Chapter 1 - Introduction

#### *How Long Does it Take to Build a Following?*

It's one of the most frequently asked questions in podcasting.

How can I grow my audience?

We all love the thought of reaching more people with our podcasts. There's a real satisfaction in seeing a steady increase in



download numbers when you're checking your stats.

In this book, we're going to take a deep dive into establishing and building your fan base.

We'll start with the basics; who do you want to reach with your content, and why?

We'll go on to look at creating content people want to share, and how to get yourself out there.

We'll then cover optimising your website, building a community, and how to enhance your "social proof" by getting more reviews for your show.

But before we begin, I think it's important to set some expectations.

Many people start a podcast, only to give up a few months later because they are disappointed with their download numbers and audience engagement.

So, the question is...

### ***How Many Downloads Should I Be Getting?***

There's no one-size-fits-all answer here, it depends on a lot of different factors. The biggest factor is your topic and niche.

It would be unfair to say a weight loss podcast with 2000 downloads an episode is doing better than a podcast about the appreciation of the naked mole rats at San Diego Zoo which gets 12 downloads per episode.

Audience engagement is a far better gauge of how you're doing than simple numbers. That's not to say download numbers aren't important though.

It's easy to be discouraged when you hear about some of the top podcasts getting 50,000 downloads an episode. Comparing your own numbers to a handful of the biggest shows in the world's numbers isn't going to do you any good though. Let's put things into perspective.

Rob Walch of [Libsyn](#) (the biggest podcast media host on the planet) gives regular breakdowns of podcasting statistics on the company's official show – [The Feed](#).

In April 2017, he revealed their latest figures. These are based on the number of

downloads in the 30 day period following the release of a new episode.

**If your new episode gets, within 30 days of its release:**

- more than 212 downloads, you're in the top 50% of podcasts.
- more than 1900 downloads, you're in the top 20% of podcasts.
- more than 5800 downloads, you're in the top 10% of podcasts.
- more than 14,000 downloads, you're in the top 5% of podcasts.
- more than 41,000 downloads, you're in the top 2% of podcasts.
- more than 88,000 downloads, you're in the top 1% of podcasts.

You can use these figures as a rough guide, but don't obsess over them. As I've said before, it's all about your topic and your reach. If you have 30 hardcore listeners, your priority first and foremost, should be to create the best content you possibly can for *them*, rather than spending all your energy worrying about the people who *aren't* listening.

That in itself is a promotion strategy, because those 30 people will love your show so much that they'll want to share and recommend it at every opportunity. They'll effectively do your marketing for you.

## ***Overnight Success – How Long Will It Take?***

[Gary Vaynerchuk](#) is success personified to many people. He has a massive audience. But it's important to remember that there was a point where he had no audience at all.

Vaynerchuk says himself that, for the first 18 months of his video series WineLibraryTV, "*nobody was watching*".

18 months is a long time. Much longer than many new podcasters last before they give up due to having "low" download numbers and no audience engagement.

*“I was thirty years old before anyone ever saw me. From fifteen to thirty, I was building businesses. I put in actual work.”*

Gary Vaynerchuk explains in one of his videos, which was titled [‘How to be an overnight success’](#).

“Because all those people you call an overnight success? They have the same story as me. They worked. Maybe you don’t see it. But you’re seeing it now.”

A famous podcasting example is John Lee Dumas of [Entrepreneur on Fire](#).

Nowadays, Dumas is a widely-cited example of someone making a lot of money from running a podcast. He is – but again, it wasn’t always that way.

If you look at his early [P&L reports](#), which he openly shares on his website, you'll see that he made a loss of nearly \$10,000 between June 2012 and September 2012, and that was whilst putting a new podcast episode out every single day. During that period, he didn't earn one single dollar from his show.

Dumas persevered because he knew he was playing the long game, and it paid off for him in the end. Now you probably won't need to spend anywhere near what JLD did on his podcast (he was creating a full time business for himself and this was his sole focus), but the big lesson here is that things don't happen overnight. If you put the work in though, they do happen eventually.



I think [Seth Godin](#) sums up the overnight success label well in this [short video](#).

*“One of the things that we see when we look at the work of people who have put really big ideas into the world, who have built online platforms, is that they got there by being patiently impatient.*

*If you look around at the blogs you read, or the people you respect online, or the organisations that you want to work with, the myth of the overnight success is just that - a myth.”*

## *Growing Your Audience*

So now we know that you're probably not going to be seeing huge numbers in the early days, and that there's no shortcut to any of this.

The good news is that there's still plenty you can be doing to increase your chances of picking up new subscribers though, and that's exactly the purpose of this book .

In the next chapter we're going to kick things off by getting back to basics. Who is your podcast for? What do you have to offer them? What pains or needs are you trying to solve?

In the words of the famous advertiser Bill Bernbach, *"Nothing makes a bad product*

*fail faster than good marketing."*, so we need to make sure we're on the right track before we go any further on the promotion front.

# GROWING YOUR AUDIENCE

## CHAPTER 2



# BUILDING ON SOLID FOUNDATIONS

## Chapter 2

### *Building on Solid Foundations*

Every podcaster wants to get their show in front of more ears and increase their download numbers. If you've not quite got the basics right though, any new listeners who find your show might not be compelled to stick around and subscribe.

So how do we make sure we're building on solid foundations with our podcast promotion?

### *Getting Back to Basics*

The biggest obstacle that stands in the way of starting a new podcast is procrastination. Many people never get around to launching their show because they over-plan every little thing and, due to their perfectionism, never actually get to the point of hitting `record`.

It's far better to start recording, without having much of a plan in place, than it is to have the most thoroughly planned show in history which only exists as notes on a word document.

Because of this, a lot of shows have been launched without huge amounts of planning. The beauty of podcasting though is that its all on your terms.

You can adjust, tweak, or pivot your content, you can make as many changes as you want, ranging from subtle to sweeping. Maybe you nailed everything before you even recorded your first episode, or perhaps there's still a few things you missed first time around. Let's take a look.

### ***What Kind of Podcaster Are You?***

...and what pain are you trying to solve? This sounds dramatic, but you need to determine where exactly your podcast fits

into the lives of your listeners or target audience.

The people who listen to your show are selfish. I don't mean that in a bad or negative way – it's just a reality that if someone dedicates half an hour of time each week to listen to you talk, they're doing so because they are getting something out of it.

This is where your topic and niche comes in. What do you have that people want? Like most things in podcasting, the possibilities here are limitless, but there are five main categories...



- The Teacher – Are you teaching something?
- The Coach – Are you offering encouragement or advice?
- The Journalist – Are you tapping into the expertise of others by interviewing them?



- The Guinea Pig – Are you about to embark on a learning journey by trying and testing various things?
- The Entertainer – You could be anything from a comedian or film reviewer to a storyteller or audio drama producer.

Of course, these can all overlap. You might be only one of these, or you might be all five. The point is you need to identify exactly what you're offering and why your audience wants or needs to listen.

Are you going to help them lose weight? Share personal experiences and advice for dealing with grief? Teach them how to grow their own fruit and veg? Or make

them laugh with some improv comedy sketches?

Once you know you're offering something that people want, you're well on your way to growing your audience before we've even done a single piece of promotion. Let's move on to the next part.

### ***Who (And Where) Are Your Audience?***

A targeted approach with any promotion that you do is going to be far more effective than a billboard or scatter gun strategy of shouting to everyone. We've identified what you're offering with your show, now let's find out who you're offering it to.

If you're a fitness podcast for example, there are still sub-categories to niche down to so you can really focus on who you want to reach. Is it a weight loss show for people who don't traditionally exercise, or is it a show for athletes looking to fine tune their training? Both groups here have different motivations, habits, and lifestyles, and they'll be found in different groups and communities online too. The more work you put into researching this, the easier it'll be to successfully promote your show.

### ***What Are You Trying To Achieve?***

What ultimately is the purpose of your podcast, from your own point of view? Again, if we look at the fitness example,

let's say our podcaster is an authority on weight loss through various diets and exercise regimes. Her podcast gives away a load of great information for free, but once she gets listeners onto her website she has an eBook for sale, an email list to sign up for, and various affiliate links to products mentioned on her show.

The aim of your podcast might be to earn some income (be that a full time wage, or some extra income on top of your day job). It might be to promote yourself as an authority or industry expert. It might be to build an audience around your business or service, or it might simply be to have fun.

Whatever the aim is, just be sure to identify it. Again, once you're very clear in

your own mind about these things, you can really focus on things that'll further these aims, and forget about things that probably won't.

### ***Doing The Groundwork***

So that's a brief run through to help make sure you're on the right tracks with your show, and are getting the basics right. If not, it's this, rather than the type or lack of promotion that could be holding you back from reaching new listeners.

If you're still struggling to nail this stuff down, I'd suggest checking out our article on [how to start a podcast](#), which takes a deeper dive into laying the foundations of a successful podcast.

# GROWING YOUR AUDIENCE

## CHAPTER 3

# creating Shareable content



## Chapter 3

### *Creating Shareable Content*

So far in this book, we've hopefully helped to set your audience size expectations, as well as making sure that you're getting the basics right with your show and are building on solid foundations.

With that all established, we can now move on to the content that you came

here for – what sort of specific things can you do to start getting in front of more people and growing your audience?

In this chapter we're going to talk about making podcast episodes that others want to share. These are tried and tested structures, and they don't just apply to podcasting, so if you run a blog or video series this is every bit as relevant to your chosen medium.

### *The List*

Putting a list together is a great way to have your episode shared by the people you mention in that list. Like everything, this starts with your topic.

What are your 5 favourite other podcasts in your niche? What are the top 7 blogs writing about the same subject you're posting about? Or what about the 10 books that inspired you the most in your own area of expertise?

Running through a list and talking about each thing you've chosen to include is a fun episode to do. Even more importantly, your audience will love it because its giving them loads of other things to check out that sound interesting and helpful to them.

Once you've put an episode like this out, be sure to tell those included about it. There's a good chance they'll share it, and



that can result in their own audience checking your show out.

### *The Comparison*

A popular type of structure in a niche that involves any type of gear or equipment. It's pretty simple – try out two similar (competing) products and give your feedback on them.

In podcasts about podcasting the “microphone shootout” is a common episode. The host will compare things like the price, durability, functions, features, aesthetics, and sound quality of two different microphones.

This can apply to almost any niche however, from cycling and fitness, to

gaming or knitting. If you know your topic well enough, it should be pretty easy to come up with a few potential episodes in this format.

So why is this type of episode so shareable? Mainly because people want to appear informed and helpful, and will retweet posts like this often even without clicking on them. Whilst that alone certainly doesn't give you more listeners, it gets you in front of more potential listeners, and hopefully a few of them will click, listen, and subscribe to your show.

### ***The Review***

Instead of comparing one product to another, you can instead focus exclusively

on one piece of equipment or gear. The review can extend far beyond that, though; you can review films, books, albums, websites, places, or even other podcasts. Again, it all comes down to your topic. What kind of reviews are going to appeal to – and ultimately help – your audience?

Creating a review can actually be quite tricky at first. You need to keep your integrity by being honest, but at the same time you need to be tactful enough not to create enemies (especially if you're reviewing something someone else does as a labour of love).

Carefully weigh up the pros and cons. Try to find at least some positives in things

you don't like, and look for any weaknesses in things that initially might appear perfect.

### *The Case Study*

A case study differs from a review because it uses examples of someone doing something, or an event taking place.

A cycling podcast, for example, might take a deep dive into how one cyclist prepared for and won a certain tournament. A podcast about podcasting might do a case study on how a famous show built a million download plus audience. Or a football podcast might chronicle the journey of a team of underdogs from a small village who won a national trophy.

Doing a case study is a great opportunity to tell a story, and people love stories. You want to hit certain beats, so you can almost think of it like a film. Imagine a case study relevant to your topic, and now run through the following questions.

- Who is the hero, or ‘protagonist’?
- Why will your audience relate or be sympathetic to them?
- What is their ambition?
- What are their main motivations?
- What are the big obstacles in their way?
- What are they doing differently?
- At what moment does it look like they’ve failed? The classic “all is lost” moment that’s found in almost every film.

- How do they turn things around?
- How do they achieve their goal? Or maybe they fall short. If so, why was that?
- What is the outcome of it all? What impact does it have? What changes take place because of it?

This is the framework to tell a story that's compelling, and also valuable in the lessons that it teaches. If done well, people who hear it will want to share it without a second thought.

### *The Interview*

You can also do the case study as an interview, if you're doing it about a person who's still alive, and also willing to come

on your show. Having someone tell their story in their own words can be incredibly powerful, but being able to draw a story out of an interviewee is still a skill that comes with practice.

Not everyone with a great story is a great interviewee either, so there's no definite better way here. It all depends on your topic and the case studies you'd like to cover.

You don't necessarily need to look at your guests as case studies though. You might just be looking for someone to come on and answer some questions on a topic that they're an expert in. Be wary of trying to completely separate who a person is from the knowledge they have though.

Your listeners will be more receptive towards hearing from someone who's actually human.

Exploring a bit about a guest's background, and how they came to learn what they know, can really reinforce the info you're providing to your listeners. Ask about events and experiences, and they'll deliver their knowledge in story form instead of listing facts and figures.

Not only will this make the content shareable for the listeners that have taken loads from it, your interviewee will enjoy it and want to share it with their own audience too. Once you publish an interview episode, remember to send them a link and let them know it's live.



# GROWING YOUR AUDIENCE

## CHAPTER 4

# Your Podcast Website



## Chapter 4

### *Your Podcast Website*

We've taken a look at creating podcast episodes that people will want to share. Now we need to make sure we're making it as easy as possible for them to do just that.

The starting point for this is your podcast's home on the internet – your website.

It's possible at this stage you might not have a website. You don't actually *need* your own website to run a podcast, but not having one is going to limit your growth.

If this is something you've been putting off because you're not really sure how to go about setting up a website, then we have a [free video course](#) that'll walk you through the process.

### ***Third Party Sites***

When you've just started out, sending people to your iTunes page or a Soundcloud link is cheaper and easier, but it's going to hold you back in the long term.

Yes, it's unlikely that iTunes will shut down tomorrow, but you don't own it and don't control it. The same goes for any other third party website.

Your media host – [the place you upload your episodes to](#) – will usually provide you with a basic website when you create an account with them. These often lack the customisation options we're looking for, however.

The quicker you get your podcast its own website, the easier things will be for you in the long run. Once you're at that stage, you can put the following things in place that will make it much easier for people to find, listen to, and share your podcast.

## *Website Pages*

Personally, I think that ‘less is more’ on a website and you don’t want to clutter it with an overwhelming array of details, links, and text. Setting up these pages in your menu is vitally important though.

- About – traditionally the most viewed page on any website, so take advantage of that. Although an ‘About’ page sounds like it should be about you and your podcast, think of it more as being about your listener. List the benefits they’ll get from listening, and link a few of the best episodes you’ve done so far.
- Subscribe – People listen in different ways and in different

places. Link to absolutely everywhere that your podcast can be found, subscribed to, and downloaded.

- Episodes – Having a full list of episodes is a great way, for people who've just found you, to look through your back catalogue.
- Contact – Put all your contact details here and make it easy for listeners to get in touch. You can put a contact form, e-mail address, as well as any social media links (Twitter, Facebook, Instagram, etc) here.

## *Podcast Episode Pages*

- Episode Title – Your episode titles will also be the podcast post titles on your website. Be clear and descriptive of what’s in the episode. What’s the big takeaway that someone’s going to get from listening?
- Media Player – A visitor to your site should be able to play an episode from inside that episode’s post. Whilst it’s true that most people don’t listen to podcasts this way, you still want to cater for everyone. Be sure to include a ‘direct download’ option with your podcast player too.

- Shownotes – In the last chapter we talked about the types of episode you can do that'll make people want to share your show. It's a good idea to include all lists, links, and anything else discussed on the podcast in that episode's shownotes. You'll have more chance of being discovered by potential listeners on Google if you have descriptive shownotes of 300 words or more.
- Call to Action – Whether you've asked for an iTunes review, or for someone to buy your ebook at the end of your episode, follow this up by putting a link in the shownotes to make it easy for your listener.

- **Sharing Buttons** – At the bottom of your post, which contains your episode and show notes, it's a good idea to activate that little row of social media icons so anyone on the page can share it to their Twitter, Facebook, etc, with a single click.

### *Other Things*

- **Domain Name** – When buying a domain name, try to make it as close to your podcast's name as possible. Avoid using hyphens or anything that'll complicate matters. Make sure your domain is easy to spell, and if possible, get a .com as it sounds more familiar when you mention it on the show. A .com is



more likely to stick in your listener's head.

- Mobile Optimisation – You can spend all day tailoring your website so it looks absolutely immaculate on your laptop, only to find it doesn't load properly on your phone. The majority of browsing and podcast listening nowadays is happening on mobile, so your website needs to load properly on all platforms. Fortunately most WordPress themes are mobile optimised – just make sure you check your site on your computer and your phone when you're setting it up or making any big changes.

## *Moving Forward*

Having all of this in place, combined with putting out great content (like the kind we mentioned in the last chapter) means that your listeners can now promote your stuff with ease, and people can find and subscribe to your show with equal ease.

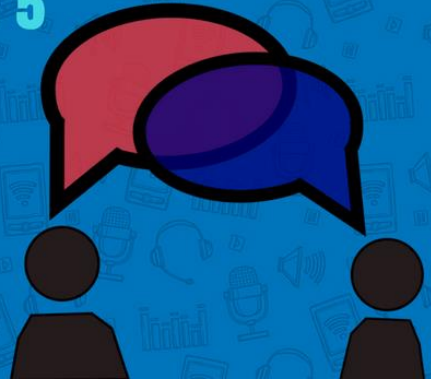
Dedicating some more time to promote your podcast is now worth it too, because you've got the infrastructure to support it, and the content to back it up.

With this all in mind, we can move on towards the next chapter, where we're going to take a look at some ways to get in front of potential new listeners.

# GROWING YOUR AUDIENCE

## CHAPTER 5

# getting yourself out there



## Chapter 5

### *Getting Yourself Out There*

Once you're at the stage where you're creating episodes that people want to listen to and share, and your website makes it easy for them to do that, you can look at getting in front of more potential listeners.

The internet is a busy place nowadays. Scroll through any social media feed and you'll see people's podcasts, videos, blog posts, ebooks, courses, webinars, etc. Is there a way to break through the noise instead of just becoming part of it?

Not that there's anything wrong with posting about your latest episode (as long as you're not doing it repeatedly in a 'spammy' way) – it's just that this isn't really going to grow your audience by winning over lots of new subscribers.

So what are the alternatives? What else can you do to promote your work?

## ***Being interviewed on Other Podcasts***

This is, hands down, the most effective way of finding new listeners. I'm going to state the obvious here, but being on another podcast gets you in front of actual podcast listeners.

Here's a group of people who know exactly what a podcast is, know how to subscribe to one, and who – presumably – are interested in your topic or niche.

That's a key point, because there's no point trying to get yourself interviewed on a podcast about golf when your own podcast is about baking. You need to go where your target audience are.

So how do you go about getting interviewed on someone's podcast? A good place to start is with the shows you really like that have similar topics to your own.

Reach out to the presenter of a show you'd like to guest on. Explain succinctly what you can bring to the table that's going to inform or entertain his or her audience. Tell them what you like about their show too. All podcasters value feedback, and it shows that you aren't just a "cold caller" carpet bombing everyone with a generic interview request.

Be prepared for a few knock-backs, and even a few people who might not reply. Don't take these setbacks personally.

People are busy, and these things are rarely done with malice.

### ***Interview Others in your Niche***

Your podcast might not be an interview show as such, but you have the freedom to throw one in now and then. You're the boss, and as long as it's something your audience will benefit from, then having a chat with an expert or authority in your field can produce a quality episode.

If you think about some of the people in your topic that you'd like to interview, they will each have their own following, too.

Not only do you get your guest's opinions and expertise in your episode, you also

have the opportunity to tap into their audience.

Once the episode goes live, e-mail your guest to let them know, and ask them if they wouldn't mind sharing it on their social media channels.

If they do, a few people are going to be checking out your podcast for the first time. If they like what they hear, they'll listen to a few more of your episodes and hopefully hit the subscribe button too.

Again, with podcast guests, start with who's going to bring the most value to your listeners, rather than who has the biggest audience. And be prepared for a few knock-backs too, as we talked about in the last section.



You might also want to check out an article I wrote called '[How to Find Podcast Guests](#)', which might give you some ideas on this front.

### ***Online Communities***

Whatever your topic or niche may be, there'll be online communities full of people who share the same interests or face the same issues.

That doesn't mean you should go rampaging around plastering links to your podcast everywhere though. People tend to react negatively to that, and consider it spammy.

That's not how you'd behave in a 'real life' conversation, so treat people with

respect. Engage in conversation, ask and answer questions, and become part of that community.

The subject of your podcast is going to come up time and time again, and not in a spammy or intrusive way.

Not only can you attract new listeners in an online community, you'll get lots of ideas for future episode topics, meet potential interviewees for the show, and make new friends within your niche.

### ***In-Person Events***

Even in the golden age of the internet, there's still a lot to be said for getting out and attending events offline.

Connecting with someone on Twitter or Facebook is no substitute for meeting and chatting to them in real life. The former absolutely has its place and its benefits yes, but if you can only ever be found behind the screen of your laptop then you're missing out on a lot of opportunities.

There's bound to be a few different conferences, events, or groups who meet regularly in your own specific field. Choose one or two and make a commitment to attend.

Though you might not necessarily be a business owner, I'd recommend [this episode](#) of the UK Business Startup

podcast, which takes a deep dive into networking at events.

On top of that, get some business cards made for your podcast. Have a clear link to your website on them, and if you've followed the advice in the last chapter then it's going to be easy for people to listen and subscribe to your show.

# GROWING YOUR AUDIENCE

## CHAPTER 6



# How Do You Get more iTunes Reviews

## Chapter 6

### *How Do You Get More iTunes Reviews?*

Whether we like to admit it or not, we all like getting iTunes reviews.

Podcasting is a rewarding medium for several reasons. But sometimes you can go through spells of doing a lot of work, putting a lot of quality stuff out there, and

hearing nothing back about it from anyone. This is particularly true (but not exclusive) to the first 12 months of your podcast's life.

Seeing a new 4 or 5 star iTunes review is a nice reminder that people are actually listening to your show. And not just that, but they're enjoying it too. Enjoying it enough to take a few minutes out their day to leave you a review.

There's more to it than fanning the flames of your ego, though. Reviews create social proof, and potential new listeners might decide whether to listen or not based on what others are saying about you.

They also prove that your show has an engaged and loyal following. This may be

picked up by iTunes themselves looking for shows to feature on their front page, or by a podcast network doing some talent spotting.

So, although reviews aren't the be all and end all, they are important. So how do you go about getting them?

### ***Who Should Review Your Show?***

There's only one answer here – your audience.

There are a number of ways that you can quickly get a lot of five-star reviews in a dishonest manner. You can -take part in “review swaps” in communities where everyone exchanges a 5-star rating.

There are also people out there who'll offer the opportunity to "buy reviews" (as well as snake oil) from them. Avoid these strategies at all costs.

Nothing screams "dishonest review swap" like a show with a long list of 5-star reviews, on the same date, with generic titles like "Great Show!". People can spot this a mile away.

Using any form of underhand tactics to try and play iTunes also risks unwanted attention from the folks at Apple too. If you suddenly find your show removed from the iTunes store, good luck trying to track someone down to convince them to let you back in.



Anyway, that's a couple of the don'ts – what about the do's?

## Asking Your Audience

It seems obvious, but if you want your audience to review your show, the first step is to ask them.

The best place to ask for a review is at the end of your episode. Your most engaged listeners will always listen to the very end, and they'll be more likely to take action. Especially if they've enjoyed the episode they've just heard.

The beginning of an episode isn't a good place to ask. For starters, you'll always have a few new listeners trying out your show for the very first time, and it isn't the

best first impression. Also, by the end of the episode, the listener will probably forget that you asked. Asking for a review at the end will always be more effective.

I prefer to ask for an “honest review and rating” rather than a 5-star review. Of course, you always want a 5 star review, but it’s good to know your content alone has earned you one.

Don’t labour the point, but encourage the listener to leave a rating and review by explaining the benefits to them. Things like the fact that it’ll help you reach new listeners, grow the show and enable you to keep putting out the content that they enjoy so much.

## Show Them How

Like anything else, leaving an iTunes review is simple when you know how to do it. But Apple do make you jump through a couple of hoops, and this can put someone off if they've never done one before.

It'll help you both if you can point your listener to a page or link on your site where you'll walk them through the process of reviewing a podcast.

You can create a video yourself, focusing on your computer or phone's screen as you click through and review a podcast you like. Or you can use screenshots if you think that would be easier for you. Short

guides showing people how to subscribe to your podcast are well worth having too.

You can even link to someone else's Youtube tutorial on rating/reviewing a podcast if you don't want to spend any time on it.

Whatever resource you choose to provide for your listener, let them know where they can find it and submit that review.

## **Approach People**

Hopefully, there's a handful of people out there who listen to your show, that you'd consider your friends. People who you know never miss an episode, and that you find yourself talking to on a regular basis.

It's absolutely not a sleazy tactic to reach out to these people and ask them if they'd mind leaving a rating and review. If they're loyal listeners to your show then you're still asking your audience.

The chances are that they'd be more than happy to help out and support you in this way.

## **Reading Out Reviews**

Reading out a previous review at the end of an episode is a good way to lead into asking for reviews.

It shows that other listeners value what you do, adding to the "social proof" that comes from positive reviews in general.

People also like to hear their names read out on their favourite podcasts. When a host reads correspondence from a listener it helps reinforce the relationship between them and makes them feel part of that show and the community around it.

So, if you've already had a good review on iTunes, read it out when you're about to ask for more. It'll help encourage others to leave one of their own, because they might end up being a part of a future episode.

### ***Competitions***

Is it “cheating” to hold a competition where people enter by leaving an iTunes

review? That depends on where you share details of the competition.

If you mention it on social media pages that aren't directly connected to your show, then it could be considered a little underhand. Some people leaving reviews might never have listened to an episode before. This could, again, lead to the telltale signs of multiple generic "Great Show!" reviews.

If you announce such a competition within an episode, though, then it's totally all above board. You are simply asking your audience for reviews, and they've got the chance to win something in return.

You need to make things easy for yourself when running any competition. Once the

listener leaves their review, have them screenshot it and email it to you. That way you have a method of getting in touch with them, without having to guess who they are based on their iTunes name.

Be clear on the closing date for choosing a winner. Is this a one-off competition or do you pick a winner at the end of each month?

Is the prize digital (an ebook, course access) or physical (a bottle of wine, a book)? If it's physical, are you in a position to post it anywhere in the world? If not, be clear on eligibility.

If the prize is digital, you might consider the “prize for all” approach, so anyone who leaves you a review and then emails



you will get a copy of your ebook, for example.

## Incentives

Finally, you can offer incentives that can get your listeners working together towards a common goal.

That could be something like “when we get 25 reviews in the US store, I’ll...”

Once they get you to that milestone, you then give them what you promised. Whatever that is depends on you and your show, but it could be some form of premium content, a live episode, or an already recorded interview with a top tier guest.

Or you could offer to do something a little different, like a parachute jump, having your head shaved, or running a marathon.

Again, the incentive really depends on your topic and your audience. You'll know them a lot better than I do, so pick something that'll interest them, and set them a target.

# GROWING YOUR AUDIENCE

## CHAPTER 7



# Building a COMMUNITY

## Chapter 7

### *Building a Community*

There are two main reasons that you might want to create a community around your podcast:

1. To provide a space where listeners will have access to you.

2. To provide a space where listeners can meet and interact with each other.

Both are designed to cater to existing listeners, which has been the recurring theme of this entire season. If you take care of your audience, it'll inevitably grow over time.

### *Access to you*

People listen to your podcast for a reason – the content you're putting out there obviously resonates with them. If it didn't, why would they listen at all?

It's always topic-dependent, but the chances are you'll be helping your listeners in some way. That could be

anything from teaching them a new skill to entertaining them on their morning commute – or even a bit of both!

The opportunity to get to know your listeners on a more personal level is one you should never overlook. This is far easier and far more scalable in a community environment than, say, in a one-to-one email conversation.

If you've been podcasting for a while you might have started to get questions in from listeners. Providing a community means that these questions can be answered for the benefit of everyone.

As your community grows, you won't even need to be the one answering every single question, either. Other members will

happily help out those who're a bit newer to your particular field. Which brings us to the second main benefit.

### *Access to Each Other*

When a group of people with a common interest get together, a lot can happen.

Ideas and information are shared, friendships are built, and collaborations are launched.

As the creator of your podcast community, every opportunity or success someone has from being a member will be attributed to you in some way.

This is a powerful thing. These listeners will talk enthusiastically about your

community and your podcast, recommending it to others in your niche who have yet to discover it.

At this point you have a podcast audience that grows itself – as long as you keep looking after and serving those existing members.

### ***Platforms***

So if you're sold on the idea of creating a community for your podcast listeners, the next step is to decide on where that community will exist.

### ***Third-Party Services***

One option is to use a pre-existing service such as Facebook or [Slack](#).

## Pros

These are quick and easy to set up. On top of that, they're usually free – although Slack does have [premium priced options](#).

If you use a Facebook group to host your community, there's a good chance most of your listeners already have an account. It's very easy for them to get involved, and you're not giving them yet another place to create a profile and check regularly.

## Cons

You've probably heard the term 'building on borrowed land' before. There's always a danger that a service you don't own or control will drastically change, or even disappear.



Myspace is a classic example of this. A decade ago many bands built their followings on this platform but suffered badly when it all went down the tubes.

It's hard to imagine Facebook going away any time soon, but things can change immensely in technology in a very short space of time.

Customisation can also be an issue on third-party platforms. You're very limited in the way your community is designed, or operates.

### *Peerless Platforms*

Your second option is to build your community on a site you own and control.

## **Pros**

And that's exactly it – full ownership and control of your community.

You can customise, design, and tailor everything exactly how you want it.

You also have the peace of mind that your community won't vanish overnight because the shared platform you use has folded, sold up, or changed their entire service.

## **Cons**

This can be a costly endeavour in time or money; either you put in a lot of work to create the community yourself, or you pay someone else to do it.

Regardless of which route you take, you're heavily invested in it and can take a hit if things don't really take off.

Peerless communities usually exist as private forums or bulletin boards. A common reason for these communities not succeeding is that they're yet another place for people to check in on.

For your average smartphone user, having a look on Facebook is already part of their routine. It's harder to get your listeners to form the new habit of also checking in on your membership site.

## *Free Vs Paid Communities*

Should you charge people to join your community or keep it free? There are pros and cons of each approach.

Your starting point is your niche – is it a space where people are generally making money? If not, few are likely to pay to be part of your community.

If we think of a typical audience that is more likely to pay to be part of a community, it could be aspiring entrepreneurs.

If we think of a typical audience that is less likely to pay to be part of a community, it could be full-time college or university students.

Always make sure you know your audience.

### **Free Communities - Pros**

Making your community free to all gives it the best chance of succeeding out of the gate, and it's all-inclusive.

### **Free Communities - Cons**

With no barrier to entry, anyone can join. This means that now and then you might have trouble with spammers or trolls – dealing with them can take your focus away from helping your actual audience.

### **Paid Communities – Pros**

A paid model acts as a qualifier.

Everyone in your community wants to be there so much that they're willing to pay for it.

These listeners are also more likely to buy other things from you in future – as long as they feel like they're getting value for money out of their membership.

### **Paid Communities - Cons**

Even the smallest amount of money is a huge barrier to most people. It can put severe limitations on your community's growth.

With payment comes an extra level of responsibility, too. Can you take a two-week holiday without checking in on your community from time to time? That's a

decision you'll need to weigh up and make for yourself.

Reprimanding or kicking out a paid-community member who's stepped out of line can be a sensitive issue, too. Things are always more complicated when there's money involved.

### **One-off Vs Ongoing Payments**

From your point of view, the regular income of subscriptions will probably be preferential to one-off payments.

However, the subscription model inevitably means you'll regularly lose community members. Now and then people look at their monthly bank statements to see where they can save

some money, and your fees will always be under scrutiny.

If you're going down the subscription route, you could also consider offering a 'life membership' in the form of a one-off payment. Some may be happier paying a larger sum once, than seeing money come out of their account every month.

### *Dealing With Spammers*

There's nothing more depressing than a 'community' with no discussion. We've all seen them – they've become a barren wasteland of self-promotion. Every single post is a link to that person's blog, podcast, or business.



So, how do you avoid that happening in your community, without having to become a dystopian overlord?

### **Stimulate Discussion**

You need to take the lead and ask questions. As always, that's entirely topic-dependent, but ask your members how they do certain things, what they use to do them, and their opinions on these tools or workflows.

It doesn't always have to be shop talk either. If it's appropriate, ask people about their personal lives, hobbies, and interests, too.

## **Managing Self-Promotion**

An outright ban on self-promotion can be hard to police, and in many ways it's counter-productive.

Members sharing helpful, relevant content they've created can make the community an even more valuable resource for everyone.

Your podcast and community might even be geared around creating some form of content.

In either case, you may want to consider a weekly thread where you invite people to share what they've been working on and any new stuff they've released.

This is easy to manage, and it curates everything in one easy-to-find place.

It also stops your community looking like a Formula One car with adverts plastered all over it. Everyone wins.

# GROWING YOUR AUDIENCE

## CHAPTER 8



### SUMMARY: WHAT NOW?

## Chapter 8

### *Summary – What Now?*

The chapters in this book have hopefully given you plenty ideas for enhancing and improving your show, along with everything associated with it.

Get these things right, and your podcast will naturally attract new fans each week.

As we reach the end now, I just want to leave you with these 8 key takeaways to help set you on your way.

### **1. Be Patient**

Whilst there are situations that can (and will) lead to download spikes, growing your core audience is a slow and steady process.

Trying to fast-track your audience growth can often do more harm than good. Especially if you're employing tactics that some might consider to be spammy or irritating.

### **2. Know what you're trying to achieve**

Lack of growth can often simply be put down to lack of planning.

When a podcaster sets out to create a podcast “for everyone, about everything” it’s no surprise that very few people feel compelled to listen.

Before you ever hit record, you should know who you’re trying to reach, and why your show will benefit them.

### **3. Create quality content**

This sounds so obvious, but it’s absolutely vital.

If you’re not putting the majority of your time and resources into this, then they are being wasted on every other audience-growth tactic you try.

#### **4. Show up consistently**

If your listeners come to expect regular episodes from you on a certain day or date then that's very powerful.

Once you're part of their routine, you're part of their life.

These listeners will know, like, and trust you. And they'll likely want to tell others about your show too.

#### **5. Make it easy for your audience to listen (and share)**

There are a lot of podcasts out there, and potential new listeners aren't going to hunt around for long if they can't find what they're looking for.

If someone lands on your site, is it easy for them to subscribe to your show and listen to your episodes? Is it also easy for them to share your content with others?

Set your site up so that people can do your marketing for you.

## **6. Look after those who are already listening (and they'll look after you)**

Don't get too hung up on the thousands (or millions) of people who *aren't* listening to your podcast.

Instead, focus on the people who already buy in to what you do. Your subscribers.

Take time to answer their emails and questions, find out more about them, and make friends with them.



If you take this approach with your current audience, then further growth will take care of itself.

### **7. Create and grow a community**

Give your listeners access to you, and access to each other.

Friendships will be forged and collaborations launched.

If you and your podcast are the catalyst for the successful ventures of others then this can be a very powerful thing.

### **8. Share other people's content**

Although we all want our own podcast to do well, it doesn't have to always be about ourselves.

Becoming more community-minded and promoting the content of others is a great way of reaching new people.

Other creators will often reciprocate too, and having your podcast promoted by others will always be more impactful than when you promote it yourself.

### **Good Luck!**

Thanks very much for taking the time to read this book.

It's been a massively enjoyable exercise to put together, and one I've benefited a lot from myself.

We'll always be adding more content around this topic over at

[ThePodcastHost.com](https://ThePodcastHost.com), and I'd love to hear your feedback.

What results did you get from the various strategies in this guide? What worked well? And was there anything that maybe didn't work so well for you?

Also, are there any techniques or strategies not mentioned here that you've had good results with yourself?

You can get in touch with us any time at [info@thepodcasthost.com](mailto:info@thepodcasthost.com)