

What Moves the Needle When It Comes to Planning & Running a Podcast?

Colin Gray:

Hey, folks, and welcome to another episode of Podcraft. This is the show all about podcasting, from launching your show to monetization and everything in between. I'm Colin Grey from The Podcast Host and Alitu, joined by Matthew from the same, as always. How you doing, Matthew?

Matthew :

Good day. Very well. Good to be getting together for a wee Podcraft episode.

Colin Gray:

Indeed. Indeed. Yeah. We're going to record a few over the next little while, don't we, and get back into a new season. Starting with the wee idea of yourself, as well, and going into ... What are we going to go through, Matthew, today?

Matthew :

Yeah, so it was a few months ago we realised, wasn't it, that the site's 10 year old, which is [crosstalk 00:00:48] a milestone.

Colin Gray:

Old. Ancient [crosstalk 00:00:52] in the internet world.

Matthew :

I know. I know. It had its own MySpace back in the day probably. I realised, too, that it was, it was 10 years this year that I'd released my very first podcast episode back in 2011; '10, even. What year is it?

Colin Gray:

No idea.

Matthew :

[Crosstalk 00:01:06] 2021. Yeah. I know. Nobody knows what year it is anymore. 2011. Yeah. So 10 years. I think you beat me by a couple of years, Colin, but certainly 10 plus years experience [crosstalk 00:01:26].

Colin Gray:

I trying to remember quite because I don't have a record of that very first one, because it was an internal podcast at the university I worked at.

Matthew :

Yeah.

Colin Gray:

It was refreshed a bunch of times and turned into this, turned into Podcraft. But I think it was 2008. That's what I always claim, anyway.

Matthew :

Yeah. A long time ago, anyway. So a lot of podcasts between us have been launched and some have done fine. Others have fallen by the wayside, but I thought we could maybe go through ... The thing is, when you set out to start your podcast, there's a lot of things you could be focused on. There's a lot of things you could be working on and all of these things don't really want the same amount of attention. I mean, they're all important in their own ways, but some things I think deserve to be focused on a bit more than others because they move the needle.

So the idea with this was we are going to go through all the different things, the factors that make up your podcast [crosstalk 00:02:22] and we are each, Colin, going to rate each thing out of 10 [crosstalk 00:02:28] based on how much importance we put into that, [crosstalk 00:02:32] with 10 being the highest one being the lowest, if you like, and then we'll add up our scores. The idea is we'll get a little list and it'll help the listener to gauge how much time they should spend thinking about each thing, how much focus to put on it [crosstalk 00:02:47].

Colin Gray:

To prioritise. Yeah. So one that gets the highest score is the factor that we think is the most important part of making a successful podcast, essentially.

Matthew :

Yeah, exactly. Yeah.

Colin Gray:

These go from everything, from things like your mic and equipment, your hosting platform, your cover art, your name, your launch, which I'm sure is going to be controversial, and all the other parts that go into launching your show.

Matthew :

Yeah. Exactly. Based on all these podcasts we've put on over the years, we have our rough idea of what ones are these things that did move the needle, and what ones just didn't and weren't worth worrying about too much.

Colin Gray:

Totally. Yeah. That sounds cool. Okay. Let's talk it through. There's 14 of them, though. So we need to make sure we're not [crosstalk 00:03:34].

Matthew :

Yeah. We need to crack the whip.

Colin Gray:

Move it long. Move along. We'll put in plenty of links, though, so we'll have links for every single one, too.

Matthew :

Yeah.

Colin Gray:

Quick update. I think it's been a few months since we had an episode. We had to parent an episode, didn't we? We delved into it because you are ... Maybe is this related or is this just coincidence, that we haven't had an episode in a few months and it's also the [crosstalk 00:03:58] tiny wee human in your house?

Matthew :

I know. Last time we spoke, she'd just been born. Now she's away university. [crosstalk 00:04:04] She's working in a pub part time. So they do fly the nest quickly. But it's all been good. It's been great fun, in the main. Challenging, but [crosstalk 00:04:20].

Colin Gray:

[crosstalk 00:04:20] out there thinking about having a kid or just had one or just want to hear us ranting, then go back and listen to the previous episode all about how to run a podcast while also looking after small humans.

Matthew :

Yeah. And then, ironically, didn't put an episode out since then.

Colin Gray:

Yeah, exactly. Yeah. Do as we say, not as we do, that's what we always say.

Matthew :

Exactly.

Colin Gray:

Yeah. But a of couple updates. There's a couple of interesting things, isn't there? One, you've been working on in particular to reach a new part of the podcast community, Matthew.

Matthew :

Yeah. So we're translating some of the big articles or popular articles into Portuguese to serve the markets of podcasters and aspiring podcasters in countries like Portugal, obviously, and Brazil, and I dare say there's a couple other ones out there. But I've been working with [Ananda 00:05:13] and Peter to put these together. I can't take any credit, to be honest. I've just been there in the background. They've been doing the actual work [crosstalk 00:05:21].

But really good to see a few of those go live already. [crosstalk 00:05:25] We'll have links in the show notes to those. We've done how to start. We've done how to name your podcast, [crosstalk

00:05:30] a couple others, and we've got a few more in the pipeline too, so [crosstalk 00:05:34]. Nice to be venturing into those markets.

Colin Gray:

Indeed. Indeed. Yeah. We want to expand that out over in the future, as well. We're going to see what the response is like. This is the first opportunity we've had, the first language we've had the chance somebody good to work with on it. It's a pretty popular one, so we thought we'd give this one a go, see how the demand is for that, and then hopefully expand it into others in future.

Matthew :

Yeah.

Colin Gray:

The other one I wanted to mention is ... I'll briefly go into this, but I think I'll probably talk about it a bit more in a future episode, as well ... we've kind of reorganised the way that we talk about all the elements of what we do now. We've always had the podcast host, obviously. That's the main company that we run. The podcasthost.com is our big site, Podcraft is our podcast, but then we had the Podcast Host Academy, as well, and we've got a few other things in amongst all that, too, different products and courses and things.

A couple of months ago, we were just thinking, "How does this all tie together?" And we actually ended up, we wanted to bring our community ... We had a community around Alitu, which is our podcast maker app, and we wanted to bring that out into the open and really allow much more people to join that in and put much more resource into that and try and bring around more chats and conversations and just create a cool place for people to hang out, and talk podcasting, and to get all our resources, and our courses, and our free stuff, and do live events, and all that kind of thing, and bring a bunch of value.

It ended up, we just thought, "Do you know what? Podcraft is really the brand that we're most into." It's the bit that a lot of people identify with. I think this podcast, we've been lucky enough that we've got thousands of people listening to every episode, and it's really cool. People like the concept, the Podcraft. I always loved the idea of it being a craft. It's not just tech; it's not just playing around with geeky stuff on the internet, which is what it was years ago.

These days, it's an art, podcasting, to do it well. It's the art of podcasting and that's what the craft around it was, how to get better skills around podcasting from presenting, to confidence, to, then, into the technical stuff, as well. It includes the whole lot. So we've renamed it, really. We've created the Podcraft Community. So the Podcraft Community is now our free community where people can get just about everything that we do and can upgrade into ...

We've got a few free courses in there, a bunch of free resources, like checklists and stuff like that. We'll be doing live events in there often, as well. We've got the one coming up this Friday, which is the ... What is it today? The 14th. So it's probably the 17th, 18th. I'm not sure what Friday is, actually. What's Friday? Friday's the 17th. So we've got a free event coming up on the 17th of December and we'll be growing stuff in there and really adding in as much as we can. So that was just to say that that's out there now, the Podcraft Community, and that's tying into the Academy, as well, which will now be the Podcraft Academy. They'll be tied together so that if you're in the Academy, whether you're on the free tier, getting the standard courses, or whether you're on the paid tier, getting all the courses that people pay for in the academy, you'll be using the community to really get that support and extra community spirit of all the other podcasters in there, too.

So you can pop over to that if you go to, well, the show notes. Let's make a short link. I'll make a thepodcasthost.com/community and that'll take you to the Podcraft community to sign up, if you fancy it. [crosstalk 00:09:05], Matthew.

That'll do. That'll do. All right. Well, let's get into it. What's the list? Bring me in. I want to start scoring stuff. I want to start [crosstalk 00:09:15].

Matthew :

All right. Do you want a quick run through this stuff we're going to cover first then before we dive in the first one?

Colin Gray:

No. I want a surprise.

Matthew :

No? You just want be told. Okay. Let's start at number one, then. Number one is defining your target audience. We need to think about these on a score of one to 10, like I say, one being of minimal importance, 10 being of utmost important. So what's your thoughts on this, Colin?

Colin Gray:

Okay. Target audience, I think are we allowed a 30 second pitch for our score? Are we trying to get [crosstalk 00:09:49].

Matthew :

Yeah. Of course. Of course.

Colin Gray:

Okay. 30 seconds. So define an entire audience: this is the bit that people always miss, I think, and it's one of the most important parts of the whole process to me, because if you don't know who you're speaking to, then you're speaking to no one. If you don't know who you're speaking to, you'll put your message out, you'll create a name, you'll create artwork, and it won't be targeted at any particular person, and it'll be just average. It'll be just meh and no one will care and no one will listen. So to me, this is 10. This is a 10.

Matthew :

10? Yeah. Yeah. I've went nine and I do think it's the most important thing. The reason I've not went to 10 is because I think there is some wiggle room yet. I think if you can be in the ballpark and you can maybe whittle it down over your first couple episodes.

Colin Gray:

Yeah.

Matthew :

So that's reason I've not went to 10. I think you can get away with putting a couple episodes out there, even if you've not a hundred percent nailed down the this-then-that [crosstalk 00:10:47] aspect.

Colin Gray:

Cool. Well, that's interesting. Yeah. I like it, but I would suggest still putting the work in to define what you think is your target audience for those first few episodes. But I totally agree that it's an ongoing process. It changes every five episodes, every 10 episodes. You check in, you see was I right or is it changing and you adapt it as you go, so it's another ending one, I think, which is even more a 10 to me.

Matthew :

Yeah. Well, that's a fat 19, then. Struggle to beat that, I reckon.

Colin Gray:

Are you noting down the [inaudible 00:11:21]?

Matthew :

Yeah. I've noted it down. [crosstalk 00:11:22] Yeah.[crosstalk 00:11:24] it down.

Colin Gray:

Perfect. All right.

Matthew :

Numero dos is your podcast's name.

Colin Gray:

Okay. Do you want to alternate turns? You go first this time.

Matthew :

All right. I've given this eight. I have been known to give very boring, descriptive names to podcasts that I've created over the years and it's, to be honest, worked very well. [crosstalk 00:11:47] They get found well in search, not just in podcast directory search, but in Google as well.

Colin Gray:

Yeah.

Matthew :

I don't really buy into the idea that a boring name ... Maybe it is a boring name, but I don't think anyone cares about that. They're not excitedly tuning into a podcast because it's got some weird, exciting, esoteric name. [crosstalk 00:12:09] I think going as boring and descriptive as possible and you can get good results from that because you're going to pick up more listeners.

Colin Gray:

Yep. I agree. I think there's some areas which are lucky in that they can create a kind of funny, humorous, pun-based name that also describes what the show does. Ours doesn't really, does it? Podcraft. It's got the pod in there, but every podcast is a podcast. It's not that good. Hostile Worlds, one of our shows, is kind of cool. It's quite dramatic, but it also slightly describes what the show's about. Yeah. I think it's possible, but I think you're right. I think when it comes down to, if you could just go

boring, like The Mountain Bike Show, The Personal Trainer Show, that kind of thing does well. So, yeah. Totally.

All right. I will give it ... You said an eight, didn't you?

Matthew :

Yeah.

Colin Gray:

I mean, I think next to the target audience, this is one of the next, most important ones because that really then grabs people. I'm going to say nine.

Matthew :

Nine?

Colin Gray:

Yeah.

Matthew :

Tough. Okay. Then next up on our list is your cover art. You want to lead off on this one, Colin?

Colin Gray:

Yeah. Cover art matters, I think, but I think a big factor in why cover art matters is because you should have your podcast name on your cover art. So it's kind of a way ... My favourite cover art is basically the podcast's name drama-ed up, basically; you take the name and you make it look cool so that people see the name, they think, "Oh, I know what that's about right away, and it's well designed and it's nice. So it looks like there's going to be a professional show."

So that's what your cover art is, essentially. Catches the eye and makes the person read the name. So I think next to the name, it's probably next most important. So I'm going to count down here to eight. So the cover art is really important, but it's second to the name, because the name's the primary part of the cover art to me. Hmm.

Matthew :

Yeah. I initially thought I would give this ... I'm going to give it a six and I thought I was going to give it higher, but I was thinking back: I can't remember ever not listening to a podcast because I didn't really like the cover art. If I've maybe searched for a particular topic or episode on something [crosstalk 00:14:40] and I found a podcast and it was like, "That episode looks like exactly what I'm looking for here," [crosstalk 00:14:47] I don't think there could possibly be a situation where I'd be like, "But you know what? That cover art's not very nice," [crosstalk 00:14:54] that would lead to me literally not trying [crosstalk 00:14:56] the podcast. So that's the reason I'm going to drop to six for that.

Colin Gray:

Yeah. I get you. I get you. But when I'm scrolling through, there's plenty of shows that I haven't even noticed or haven't even thought, "Should I listen to that?" because the cover art hasn't caught my eye. [crosstalk 00:15:12] So that's part of, yeah.

Matthew :

I wonder if then it depends on maybe the crowdedness of the market of that content, like you've got 10 potential episodes that you could check out. Yeah. Then at that point, the one without cover art, you maybe just won't get round to it. So yeah. I accept that.

Colin Gray:

Yeah. But it's a valid point on the six. Cool. Okay. Go for it.

Matthew :

The next one, then, is the average episode length. I've gone a three on this. I've gone very low. [crosstalk 00:15:48] I think that having a level of consistency, having that sort of average, whether that's between half an hour and 45 minutes, I think that's good. I don't really think you would get away with doing three minutes, one week, an hour and a half the next week, two hours the next week, five minutes ... I think that would just be a bit mental. But I don't think your show will live and die just on your episode length. I think it's just about letting the content dictate the flow and sticking to that. But I don't think you could really say, "My episodes are going to be five minutes long therefore the show will be [crosstalk 00:16:26] good or bad, or do well or won't."

Colin Gray:

Yeah, totally. I would do the same. I'm going to go for maybe slightly higher because I think you're right that it needs to have at least a ballpark, like you say, not five minutes to an hour next week, but actually if you do a five minute show and then you drop up an hour long show the following week just because it justifies it, then you'll be fine, and your listeners will appreciate it. So I'm going to say four for this one. Yeah. That's it.

I think the only little fact, the only little booster for that, as well, is that I think that episode length can be a unique factor as well. So you can put your episode length into helping your show succeed if it's quite a unique length, as in it could be really short. Maybe it's only two minutes every single day, or it's super long, like it's a three, four hour episode but released once a month, like Dan Carlin or the huge, massive episodes that you sometimes see. It can be a unique factor as well, so that can tie into it. But, nah. You don't need to stick to any particular average.

Matthew :

Yeah. I like the thought of doing a show called the One Minute Tip, but the episodes are 20-odd minutes long. So [crosstalk 00:17:34] the tip's in there, the one minute tip's in there somewhere, but you've got to sit through 25 minutes of awful to find it.

Colin Gray:

Yes. Exactly. Cool. What's up next?

Matthew :

Release frequency. Episode release frequency. Who is it to go first? I've lost track.

Colin Gray:

You went last time. So you go ... There's somebody sawing in the background. Go.

Matthew :

So release frequency, I've went seven here. I think it's pretty important. I don't think it's the be-all and end-all, but if you maybe hit a weekly schedule for a while and then maybe you miss it for two months, then you come back and it's fortnightly and stuff like that, I suppose that could put, put listeners off, especially if they find your show and they look at your back catalogue and see that there's not a huge amount of consistency. So going to go seven on this. What about you?

Colin Gray:

Yeah. I think this is high. I think frequency makes a difference. I think consistency makes a huge difference. I'm not going to score this based on what frequency you choose. Although that can be a factor, I don't think necessarily daily is better than weekly, or weekly is better than fortnightly, although weekly is a nice frequency because it kind of ties into life routines and stuff like that. But I think just being able to stick to something so that people know what to expect is really important. I think that's really good. So if you can stick to weekly or you can stick to fortnightly, I think that makes a big difference to your growth. So I'm going to give it an eight.

Matthew :

Good stuff. Next up, then, is your episode titles. What's your thoughts on that, Colin?

Colin Gray:

I think these make a difference as well. I think we've talked about this, haven't we, the fact that when people are searching in any of the directories ... It used to be really important in iTunes. iTunes? Going back a bit. Apple Podcast. It still is important in Apple Podcast. You type in a keyword and it'll show you podcasts, but it'll also show you episodes related to that keyword. So your episode titles are a way to be found, really importantly.

It also ties into the website: if you've got your podcast website and you've got all your episodes, show notes on that website, then people type in phrases, questions, problems into Google, and your individual episodes can show up as solutions to those problems because of the titles. The titles are the main way that Google, Spotify, Apple Podcast, Google Podcast decide whether this content's going to solve that problem. So the titles are a big search factor how people find you. They're a big discoverability thing. So I'm going to give them an eight as well.

Matthew :

Eight? Yeah. I've went high with this. I've went nine. I think it's really important. Nothing makes me roll my eyes more than coming across a podcast that's episode 16, episode 17, or the name of the show.

Colin Gray:

[crosstalk 00:20:33] The name of the person. Oh, yeah.

Matthew :

Aye. So like Podcraft: Episode 42 and you're like, "Well, that's just really unhelpful, isn't it?" [crosstalk 00:20:44] Aye, go on. Sorry.

Colin Gray:

I was going to say the only second one to that is people's names. So episode 12: interview with Matthew McLean.

Matthew :

Aye. Chat with Bob Smith. You're thinking, "Well, Bob could be anyone, couldn't he?"

Colin Gray:

Exactly.

Matthew :

Yeah. I think it's really important. Frustratingly, I still don't think ... I use Overcast, which I have very few complaints with, but I don't think it searches episodes. So I think, for example, if I wanted to find an episode on the best podcast mice, I would need to find podcast in Overcast and then internally search podcast for that episode. I think that's a bit annoying. Apple Podcast on my phone is the place I will go if I just want to look for an episode on something [crosstalk 00:21:38] because it'll search episodes, too. But I still think it's hugely important.

Colin Gray:

Yeah. To me, it's more the external search, actually. It's Google. It's people just doing a random search on the internet [crosstalk 00:21:49] and they come across, stumble across, a podcast episode of this random podcast they've never seen before that answers their question, and they're like, "Oh. I don't even listen to podcasts very much, but this solves my exact problem, so I'm going to listen." It attracts in new listeners as opposed to trying to persuade podcast listeners, existing podcast listeners, to listen to another show. That's one of the reasons I think they're really important.

Matthew :

Cool. Next one. I could feel a rant coming on for this one: your launch. So what we mean by launch is the whole process of taking the podcast from the planning stage to getting out there and suddenly it's in all the directories and you're doing stuff around, promoting it, and stuff like that. Your launch thoughts on that, Colin?

Colin Gray:

All right. I'm going to be melodramatic and give it a zero.

Matthew :

A zero?

Colin Gray:

Yeah.

Matthew :

I mean ... Good.

Colin Gray:

So, justification is that for most people, I don't think it has any effect on the long-term success of your show. It doesn't matter what you do at launch. In fact, most of the time at launch, just get the damn thing out there and start producing, start talking to your listeners, and start seeing what your show really should be, because, often, those first five, 10 episodes, you having a clue, really, what you're ... Like we talked earlier about defining your target audience, you're to change that loads over the five, 10 episodes that you first release. So just get it out there and start finding out really what you want to talk about, what your listeners want to hear, what type of people you're going to bring on the show, if it's [inaudible 00:23:23] show, what you and your co-host actually enjoy talking about, if it's a co-hosted show, all that stuff.

The counterargument is if you already have an audience, if you already have a blog that's successful, you already have a social media following that's successful, it might be that you do want to do a bit of a launch and try and persuade a lot of them to start listening to the show right away. But, again, counterargument to that, is maybe you don't want to do that because if you already have an audience, you want to make sure the show is great and hits the point before you actually push it on your whole audience. So maybe you still want to only do five or 10 episodes on the quiet and only really tell them later. Yeah. I think zero.

Matthew :

Yeah. So I've went two, and it was with the two lowly points worth with that example you've given, Colin. Say I'm an author and I've already got an email list. It's a no brainer: tell that email list about my podcast. But I don't see it as some big grand launch type thing. I think where confusion comes over this is if you are a big company releasing a product or something like that, [crosstalk 00:24:36] you want it to launch well. Books and stuff like that on Amazon, you hear how important it is for a new book to do well in a certain amount of days.

Podcasting is just not like that at all. There's nothing like that that's going to make it live or die in those first couple of days or weeks. Your launch could be nothing at all and your podcast could still be very successful.

Colin Gray:

Sounds good. Okay, cool. What's next?

Matthew :

Your show format, whether it's an interview show, a co-hosted show, a sole show. I've went for a three on this. I think any show format could be done really well or really badly, and you could mix it up. I don't think it's, I don't think it's important at all, to determine whether your show's going to do well or not. Don't know what your thoughts on that are.

Colin Gray:

Yeah. This is an interesting one, actually, because I think you're right: any format can work, but only if you put a bit of thought into it. I think it's real, really important to think about your format carefully, because some formats can work better than others in certain situations, and there's such a tendency, or certainly there was in the past, for people just to opt for interview shows just by default, and in that case, it becomes an important factor because if you just opt for an interview show and just start interviewing the same old people in your niche, then you're not going to succeed because it's boring. It's the same as everyone else. So on that sense, the format's really important because if you choose the default, or you just don't put much thought into it, it can have a big effect on your growth.

Whereas if you actually think about, "What I'm going to talk about is," blah, blah, blah. Exercise, let's say. Personal training. I could give just the same old I'll interview personal trainers on this, and that'll be boring. But if I actually go out there and make an effort to find a co-host, I think, "Right. Maybe I'll go for a co-host because it's good chemistry. It brings in some extra expertise, some stuff that fills gaps that I have," then that can make a big difference and it can be much more unique in your space.

There are unique formats, as well, like if you have three hosts or if you have a round table format, or if you have some kind of documentary format, or you bring in segments, like you've got a new segment, plus an info segment plus a quiz segment, that kind of thing. Those are all format choices, and for all those things, I think is quite a big factor in your success. If you put a lot of thought into it, it can have a big effect. So I'm going to give it a seven because it's not make or break, but I think it can have a big effect.

Matthew :

Cool. Next stop, then: your microphone and equipment.

Colin Gray:

So how are we going to judge this one? This is interesting, too, because on one hand, this is zero because it does not matter whatsoever if you've got a \$300 mic versus a \$100 make. But it does matter if you've got a \$50 mic versus your internal laptop microphone. So how are you judging it?

Matthew :

I'm more taking the assumption that you need something. I mean, obviously it's a 10. If you have nothing to record [crosstalk 00:28:08], so we need it. It's just, I'm thinking of it as like how much time you spend worrying about it. [crosstalk 00:28:14] So I've given that a four. I don't think it's ... I think it's just there's just so much good stuff out there. It's almost impossible not to pick something that would work.

Colin Gray:

Yeah.

Matthew :

So I think the time you should spend on it is so minimal. Just buy something that you can afford and get on with it.

Colin Gray:

Yeah, I agree. That's a good way to think about it. Yeah. So I'm going to say ... I might even go lower, actually. I might go to, because it's a 30 second decision. Just go and buy a Samsung QT, plug it in by USB, and start talking.

Matthew :

Yeah. I think another factor is just that there is literally no correlation between the gear that you invest in and use and the growth that your podcast. The blue snowball, you could have the popular show in the world; it doesn't sound the best, but nobody's going to know, whereas you could have the Heil PR40 or whatever, and it won't get you one extra listener.

Colin Gray:

No. I think I'd say a two [inaudible 00:29:20] a zero, just because you have to hit that minimum. So you have to buy something to plug in, but literally just buy any decent USB mic and, and there's so many recommendations out there that that means it takes a 30 second choice and that's it.

Don't overcomplicate things. So you've got your mic and equipment here. People get mixers and digital recorders and all that kind of stuff, and that can be cool, and it can be good fun to play with later on. Once you've got an established audience, by all means, start thinking about it a bit more if you really want to, but it doesn't have much effect on your show at all.

Matthew :

Yeah. It ties into the next one, actually, because the next one's recording environment. [crosstalk 00:30:02] I would argue that that is substantially more important to the sound of your podcast and what you're actually recording with. Would you agree with that, Colin?

Colin Gray:

Absolutely. Yes. Totally. So you're higher up on this one?

Matthew :

I've went eight for that. Yeah. I think you could have the Rodecaster, the PR 40 or whatever, the Electro-Voice RE20, or whatever you call it. [crosstalk 00:30:27] You could have all of that stuff and set it up in your bathroom or the classic one, down a well, if there's any wells in your village, and find out just how good that gear sounds, which you'll be not very good at all.

Colin Gray:

Yeah, totally. Yeah. Agree. I would go exactly the same match. That'd be my gut feel, eight, because it's certainly not the most important because you could ... I mean, today I'm recording and there's blooming workmen downstairs sawing, so it's not ideal, but it's good enough. I'd rather get a show out rather than wait another week to find the perfect situation.

So I don't think you should put [inaudible 00:31:06]. I don't think you should put things off. I don't think you should be so perfectionist that it stops you creating and stops you being consistent, but it is a big factor in how your mic sounds, how you sound, and it's one of those things that you can set up and is kind of set and forget, as well, so that's something worth putting the time into.

Matthew :

Yeah. And a good recording environment, the last time I conjured up images of professional radio studios or that, [crosstalk 00:31:34] and that's not what you need. You just need some nice soft surfaces and absorbent, making sure that your voice isn't bouncing around the room, and that you're free from too much unnecessary distractions, like, for example, saws or, any minute now, baby crying.

Colin Gray:

Yes. Exactly. Yes. It's the background noise really. Okay? Sounds good. Okay. Next.

Matthew :

We've got your recording and editing software.

Colin Gray:

All right. Am I allowed to pitch here?

Matthew :

Yeah. Go for it.

Colin Gray:

I think this, on one hand, it's not really that ... I think it depends on what you want to choose. So if you want go in there and create a really highly produced show and do a lot of editing, cut all your ums and ahs, have loads of layers of music, and all that kind of stuff, like you do Matthew on your audio drama shows, I don't think it really matters which package you choose. You've got Audition, Pro Tools, Reaper, whatever it is you want to go. I don't think it really matters. They're all good. Choose the one that suits your workflow, the one that you like.

But on the other hand, this is the exact reason we created Alitu, our podcast maker app, because on the other hand, it actually has a big effect on consistency, on quality, on stress, on often you can get your show out there, and editing should be the thing that you don't spend your time on, really. It should be the thing that's outsourced, if you can, if you've got budget to pay somebody else to do it, so that you can just spend all your time on the content design, and the speaking, and the presenting skills, and really creating great content, and getting to know your audience, and talking to your audience, engaging your audience, and promoting your show, and all the other things that are more important, then you should do that. That is that's exactly why we created Alitu, so that it would automate a lot of it. It would make all editing and production a lot easier, make it take way less time, so that you didn't have to stress about any of that side of things.

So what am I going to score, in that sense? I think I'll give it ... People out there can call me biased or not, but I'm going to give it an eight because I think genuinely that choice does make a difference. Yeah. That's what I'll go for.

Matthew :

Yeah. I struggled to score this one. I could have went very low or very high. [crosstalk 00:34:01] I could have went very low on the basis of just pick a thing and use it [crosstalk 00:34:06] and it'll be fine. But then, there are more complexities. You need a thing that works and works well. It's almost like a good piece of software for record than it. You almost don't want to notice it. [crosstalk 00:34:25] It's not the thing you're always thinking about. [crosstalk 00:34:25] It just works. You use it, it does what you need it to do, and it just works.

So I've gone a seven. Yeah. Like I say, I could have dropped to three. I could have went to nine. I struggled with this [crosstalk 00:34:36]. But I think a seven.

Colin Gray:

Yeah. To me, it depends on that choice. It's the, do you want to go easy hands off, or are you a techy type person who really wants to learn that stuff? Some people love it. We've got plenty of folk that I don't recommend Alitu to at all, because they want to get in there and they want to learn it, and they're into audio engineering and figuring out noise reduction, and EQ, and compression, and all that kind of stuff, and that was me five years ago. I love that stuff. It's so interesting.

But these days I just enjoy the content creation and I just want the editing to just almost happen by itself. We don't have enough time to play around with it anymore. All right.

Matthew :

Next up, then, is your hosting platform. I had a wee think about this. I've settled on a five. I think it's similar to the gear and equipment that [crosstalk 00:35:33] there are just so many very good hosting platforms out there, you'd almost struggle to choose a bad one. Funnily enough, I talked about my first ever podcast, the first few podcasts that I put there was on a hosting platform called Jelly Cast. I don't know if it's still exists, but [crosstalk 00:35:53] they were proper old school. They cut the show off because it got too many downloads and it was like, "If you want us to turn it back home for the rest of the month," it was like 40 quid. [crosstalk 00:36:06] I just had to accept new listeners who found us for the rest of that month, just couldn't listen to the show. So that was very frustrating.

But you don't hear of stuff like that happening these days, even media hosts who have those download limits, they're not going to cut you off. They're going to get in touch and say, "We'll let it pass this month, but we might need to see about upgrading you." But [crosstalk 00:36:30] as far as I know, nobody's going turn the tap off. So many media hosts, they offer so many good features and services and good customer service, will give you a good website. Like I say, you'd just really [crosstalk 00:36:44] struggle to find a bad one, so I'm going for five on this. Yeah.

Colin Gray:

Yeah. I'm going to pretty much copy you here. I think it's a very middle of the road one as well. I'm going to go five too, because I think, as you say, it's hard to choose a bad one, as long as you just say ...What are our favourite three at the moment in our hosting? We've got Captivate, we've got Transistor, we've got [CASTUS 00:37:10] for different reasons. CASTUS is great for WordPress stuff. Captivate's great for tonnes of different features. They're always launching new stuff, like dynamic ads and all of kind of caper. Choose one of them and you'll do fine. I think some of them have [crosstalk 00:37:24]. Oh, yeah. Sorry. [Bus Spread 00:37:26] too. That was the other one. Yeah. I was struggling to remember there. Yeah. There's four we generally recommend. Bus Spread's just great and simple and good value.

Some of them have individual features, so if you know that you want to have dynamic ads in there, then maybe go with Captivate. But if you want to tie in really strongly with an existing WordPress website, then CASTUS is great. So maybe it is kind of important to choose the right one based on your real individual needs. But then again, they're all developing new features. They're all really new stuff really quickly and really well.

Maybe the deciding factor here is that it's actually really easy to swap. You can move between hosts really simply, can't you? [crosstalk 00:38:11] You just say, "Actually, I think I made a mistake here and I'll go over and I'll move from here to there." The new one will [inaudible 00:38:18] in your RSS feed. You just put a redirect on the old one and that's your show moved. The main downside is you'll lose your historic stats. But I mean, nobody tracks their overall downloads over the years these days, do they? Bet they do.

Matthew :

Yeah. I know that's a solid score for it, I think, the hosting platform. Spend not that much time on it. Just pick one and you'll be fine.

Oh, we've got another rant on the way. The 13th over 14th. So social media: the importance of social media, when it comes to running a podcast. Do you want to lead off on this one. Colin?

Colin Gray:

We're probably not the best people to judge this because neither of us are particularly good at social media, are we? We struggle to put the time in that's needed. I've seen shows grow really well because they do social media well. You do some stories on Instagram and you stick with it and you grow an audience that's really engaged; that can really help you grow your podcast. And all the other ones are the same, people that get on TikTok early and grow an audience there, or use live shows on Twitter or Clubhouse or whatever. So I think it can be effective. It can be really effective.

But then, we've grown all our shows without much social media at all, because we don't really enjoy that platform. We much prefer long-form, evergreen media like video or blogging or podcasting. So it's a middle of the road one for me. It's certainly not going to make a break your show, but it could help. So let's go with a six.

Matthew :

Six. You got a guess on what I'm going here, Colin?

Colin Gray:

I'm going to say zero.

Matthew :

Yeah. It's a flat zero. Yeah. So the reason I'm opting for zero, I suppose, is I think that any potential pros of using social media vastly outweighed by the cons. I think they're just not nice places to be Facebook, Twitter. They're not great companies. They've not got good ethos. They're highly distracting, often quite toxic places. I'm not saying that there are no examples with somebody doing quite well on social media, which has led to more audience numbers, I guess. I'm just saying that it's highly unlikely that it's going to be that impactful, and it's quite likely that it's not going to improve your life. In fact, it might make your life a lot worse, especially in the current climate.

So I would say if you absolutely must use social media, for Christ's sake, get it off your phone. Make some time, small amount of time, each day or each week to go in there on your computer and do what you need to do, but don't spend your time looking at it on your phone, especially scrolling through newsfeeds and stuff like that. So that's my rant on social media, I suppose. But I'm going to give it a big fat zero.

Colin Gray:

Okay. [crosstalk 00:41:23] for social media overall. Great stuff.

Matthew :

It brings us on to the 14th one on the list: your website. Your podcast [crosstalk 00:41:31] website. Yeah. I've gone a respectable seven on this. I think having a ... Gone are the days where you need to actually spend money and get a web designer and that. It's not too difficult to do one on Bluehost or that, but services like Pod Page, and we've spoken about the media hosts, the web pages that they operate for you are often very good. [crosstalk 00:41:58] It's really easy to get a website and [crosstalk 00:42:03] it's just good from the point of view of linking your podcast.

Colin Gray:

Yeah.

Matthew :

I really don't like to see somebody putting out a link on your episode and it's iTunes or Apple, and they're just assuming that you're going to go and listen there, whereas if you send them to your own website, you've got all the info you need there. If it's a business as well, you've got all your funnels and stuff in place. So I think it's pretty important, your website.

Colin Gray:

That's it. I would say even higher; I'm going to give it about a nine [crosstalk 00:42:34] because I think there's almost no point in having a podcast unless you've got a purpose for it. Every podcast has a purpose, doesn't it? Whether it's pure entertainment, it's just a comedy show, but the purpose is still to grow an audience, to engage in audience, to try and get them to listen more regularly, and that's all about having a place for them to go to engage with. So they might listen to the podcast, but then you want to send them and have them sign up for an email list where you're going to send them even more funny stuff, entertainment stuff, and give them different things, and get them to engage in a community, or all that stuff.

I think there's so much around the purpose that you have in your podcast, the calls to action you give to your listeners, this is obviously a hundred percent necessarily for anyone who's running a show that's based around a business, or you want to earn some money from, or anything like that. You need that funnel, like you say. Where are you going to send people at the end of every show to try and turn them from casual listeners into fanatical fans? The website is all about that. That's what it's all about.

Like you say, there's really easy ways to do it. So you don't need to worry about how to create it. But I think you do need to put a lot of thought into what's on that site. The episode titles come into this and the podcast name comes into this and the target audience comes into this, because all of that ties into the copy that's on your website, that then turns people into fanatical fans.

The final part of it, as well, is searchability, is discovery. We talked about people finding you on Google earlier on. The website is where they're going to find you if it's text. Rather than trying to convert existing podcast listeners into your show, they might have to give up other shows to do that, to fit more time in. Why not find people who don't even really listen to podcasts so far? They're searching in problems. They're typing in problems into Google and they find your site because you've put a bit of time into the website, you've got the titles all well-named, you've got a good copy, and every one of your show notes that expands out on it, and Google sees it as valuable information, and therefore they send people over to your website. So that's why I think it's that important.

Matthew :

While you were talking there, Colin, I've just been totalling up the scores there [crosstalk 00:44:51]. All right. I'm going to start at the bottom.

Colin Gray:

Cool.

Matthew :

So the very bottom, then, with two points, was your launch. You surprised at that, Colin?

Colin Gray:

No, not really. No. That's good. I like it.

Matthew :

Second bottom, then, with six points, all of which were given by Colin, was social media. So social media bringing up the [crosstalk 00:45:18] cow's tail there.

Down at a 12th place with six points, we had your microphone and equipment, so that might be surprising to a few folks.

Colin Gray:

Yeah. Yeah. Well, it's the one that everyone thinks is important when it's not really, isn't it? [crosstalk 00:45:36] It's a funny one.

Matthew :

Yeah. Then we have your average episode length with seven points. Yeah. Just with the caveat try and be consistent, but it's not something to obsess over, certainly.

With 10 points in 10th place, your hosting platform. So I think we were in agreement there that you'd struggle to find a bad one. Just pick one and embrace it. [crosstalk 00:46:09] That was level with your show format picked up 10 points, as well, in ninth place [crosstalk 00:46:17].

In eighth place, your cover art got 14 points in total. [crosstalk 00:46:22] Getting into the more popular ones now, more higher ranking ones. Your recording and editing software, that got 15 points and seventh place.

Colin Gray:

Okay. Yeah.

Matthew :

Episode release frequency was level that, on 15 points. In fifth place ... So we've got the top five here. In fifth place, your website. That picked up 16 points in total, [crosstalk 00:46:47] and fourth place your recording environment, on 16 points, as well.

Colin Gray:

Yeah. That seems right, too.

Matthew :

So the top three: in third place, your episode titles, 17 points, [crosstalk 00:47:01] worth paying a bit attention to those.

Colin Gray:

Definitely.

Matthew :

Setting place your podcast's name. That's really important. 17 points, as well, in that. So that was a-

Colin Gray:

[crosstalk 00:47:13] time, that's always the hardest part, but that's why it is important. It is worthwhile thinking about properly. But then again, we did say it's important just to go with a boring, bog standard. That's [inaudible 00:47:27] said in the [inaudible 00:47:27] type thing.

Matthew :

Top place, no real surprise, here: defining your target audience. That was just one point shy of full marks and that was my fault. Dropped my point on that. [crosstalk 00:47:40] But, obviously, very important for lots of obvious reasons I think we've covered so far.

Colin Gray:

Indeed. Great stuff. Cool. That was fun to go through, actually, Matthew. I hope that was useful to everyone. Obviously, if you want any guides to any of these, we went into a little bit of detail, but if you're out there thinking, "All right. So defining your target audience. How do I actually go about that?" Well, go to the show notes, go over to podcraft.net and you'll see a list of all our episodes and you're able to see this one right there. Go in there, show notes, and you'll see links to all of the guides we have to all of these different things, from choosing the right name, to what makes good episode titles, to choosing good mics and mixers, so they can just pick one and go for it. So they'll all be there over at podcraft.net.