



Journalist Fellowship Paper

‘Graft’ content model for successful podcasting

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August 2022

Trinity Term

Sponsor: Helsingin Sanomain Säätiö

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Acknowledgements

I would like to thank Helsingin Sanomain Säätiö for this great fellowship possibility at Reuters Institute for the Study of Journalism. I was also helped and funded by Media-alan tutkimussäätiö.

Nic Newman gave me valuable comments and advice while I was writing this article, so I am thankful for him.

Most of all, I want to thank everybody at Reuters Institute – especially Caithlin Mercer and my co-fellows – who inspired me every single day.

Introduction

Since the advent of podcasting in 2004, the industry has grown exponentially.

How exponentially? Consider these three metrics:

- The number of listeners in the U.S. increased by almost 40% between 2010 and 2020.¹
- The number of podcasts on Spotify more than doubled between 2020 and 2022 to 4.4 million shows.²
- The value in terms of revenue recorded by IAB increased by 192% from \$479.1 million in [2018](#) to \$1.4 billion in [2021](#).^{3,4} By 2024 that figure is projected to reach over \$4 billion.

As the amount of... well, *everything* increases in the podcast industry, the quality of the content you produce will play a central role in determining whether you succeed in standing out in a crowded market place.

But what determines content quality in 2022? This paper will define the core elements of podcast content, and then help you determine – through a series of questions – whether you are meeting the highest standards for each element. By answering all of the questions at the end of each section, you should find you have

¹ According to The Infinite Dial 2022 report 23 percent of the total U.S. population (12+) had “ever listened to a podcast” in 2010, whereas 33 percent was reported in 2015 and 62 percent in 2022.

² Spotify. 2021. *Spotify reports Q2 2022 Earnings*. [online] Available at: <https://newsroom.spotify.com/2022-07-27/spotify-reports-second-quarter-2022-earnings/> [Accessed 1 Aug 2022].

³ FY2018 Podcast Ad Revenue Study, prepared by PWC for IAB. Available at: https://www.iab.com/wp-content/uploads/2019/05/Full-Year-2018-IAB-Podcast-Ad-Rev-Study_5.29.19_vFinal.pdf

⁴ FY2021 Podcast Ad Revenue Study, prepared by PWC for IAB. Available at: https://www.iab.com/wp-content/uploads/2022/05/IAB-FY-2021-Podcast-Ad-Revenue-and-2022-2024-Growth-Projections_FINAL.pdf

the key to defining your podcast content strategy. By the end of the paper, you can distil these answers to create a single sentence mission statement for your project.

This model can be applied to a whole series or just one episode of a podcast.

I won't tell you how to market your podcast, and I won't tell you how to distribute it. Others have already done this work elsewhere.^{5,6} Besides: expensive marketing and distribution strategies may give you a short-term bump in reach, but they won't help you retain an audience if your content strategy is weak.

The model is based on my own audio experience in Finland as a podcast producer, buyer and listener, primarily working at Bauer Media Finland. I'm grateful to Bauer Media for access to podcast analytics which have given me valuable information over the past five years, allowing me to draw conclusions that would have not been possible without the data.

A final word of caution: this model will hold in 2022 but – as the podcast industry continues to evolve rapidly – it will need to continue to evolve to keep pace with changes. If you are consulting this paper at any point beyond 2023, use it to check your basics but consider how the industry has changed, and adapt your answers accordingly.

⁵ Podcasting Marketing Strategy: A Complete Guide to Creating, Publishing and Monetizing a Successful Podcast, By Daniel Rowles, Ciaran Rogers · 2019

⁶ The Routledge Companion to Radio and Podcast Studies. (n.d.). United Kingdom: Taylor & Francis.

So you want to make a podcast?

A good podcast, like any other publication, requires careful planning. Over the past few years I have listened to hundreds of podcast demos, and the most common mistake I hear is that the listener – and their listening experience – is not taken into account in tandem with the producer's own interests.

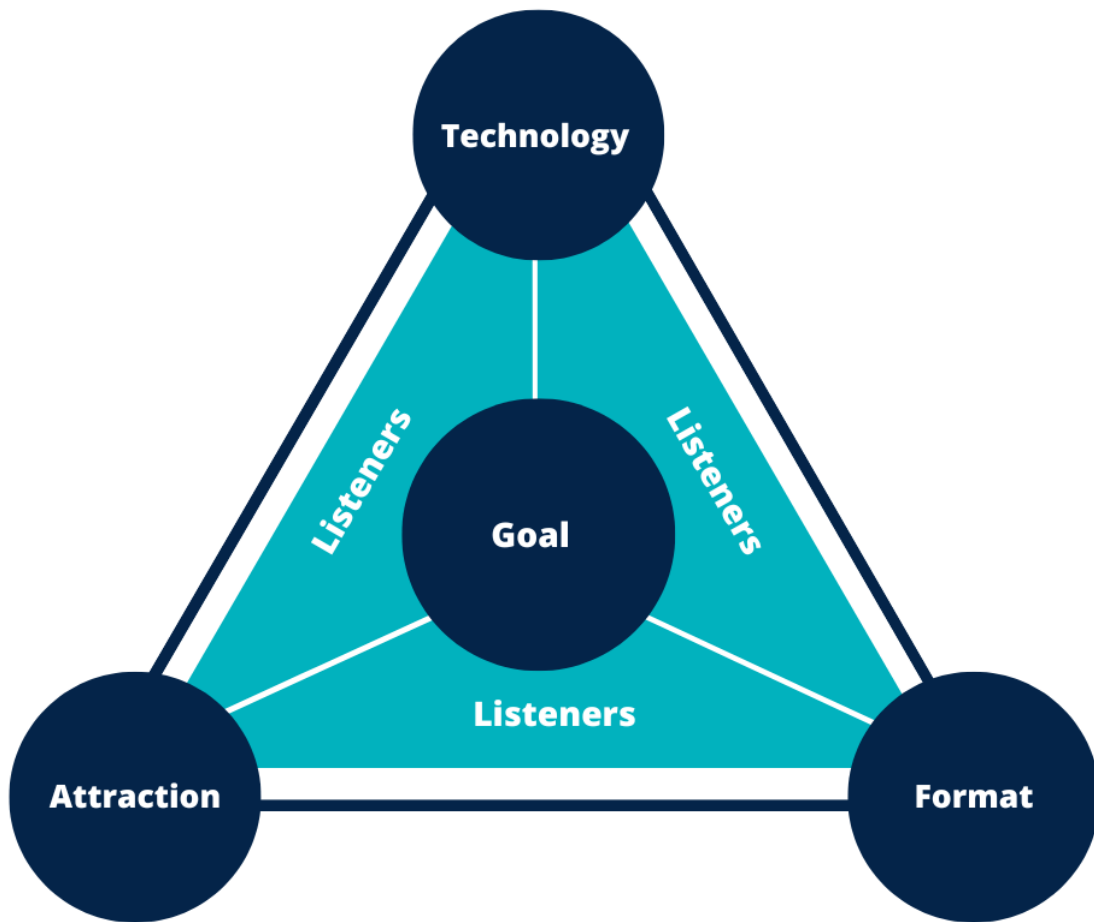
The podcaster's goal – or the producer's – is often clear; the listener's reason for listening is not. And yet the common ingredient of all successful podcasts is that the listener gets something from listening: they profit from the investment of their time. If you read no further, know that Listener value is a core component of all good podcasts.

But there are other components that contribute to podcasting excellence:

1. Goal
2. Attraction
3. Format, and
4. Technology

On the next page, you'll find a diagram that represents the core components of this content strategy model – all interwoven with the fifth component, Listeners. This model will have you ask "why" and "who" (Goal and Listener value), "what" (Attraction), and "how" (Format and Technology). Know the answers to all of these questions before you go anywhere near the record button.

All of the components are important, interconnected, and impact each other. If one component fails, the model (and your content) will fail.



Model 1: Graft Content Strategy Model for Podcasting

Note how the diagram depicts Listeners as being connected to and informing each of the other four elements. That's why you won't find a separate section for the Listener element: it is the primary element, woven throughout the other four.

As we unpack the *Graft Model* – Goal (and, by extension, Listeners), Attraction, Format and Technology – I will ask you to pause at the end of each section to answer certain questions about your series or episode. Write down your answers, because they will inform how you complete the final mission formula at the end.

Goal

There is a reason the *Glaft Model* places Goal in the centre: your first step in planning should be establishing your goals and how to reach them. Every other component will be informed by the decisions you make at this stage.

The Goal component asks why the podcast is being produced, who will listen, and why. As I've said already: a producer may have a clear Goal in mind for the podcast, but no one will listen if they do not somehow profit from it. So in addition to planning the Goal from the producer's view, the Listeners' goal must also be made clear.

Once a producer goal is set for a podcast, one usually gets an idea of who the desired listener is: it might be fans of a certain sports team, people interested in a certain subject or a person, or a company's customers. The goal can also be to reach a certain demographic, for example: young news consumers. Knowing who your desired Listener is, is not the same as defining the Listener Goal. Once you know *who* you want to reach, a Listener Goal defines *why* they want to be reached by your content – what's in it for them?

Examples of a Producer Goal might be:

- To make more people aware of a specific subject (as a form of education or as entertainment),
- To connect a company or brand with a specific attribute or value,
- To get consumers/listeners engaged with a brand or person, or
- To attract an audience for the purpose of monetization.

Examples of a Listener Goal might be:

- To learn something new,
- To keep up-to-date,
- To be inspired,
- To be entertained, or
- To feel a sense of belonging.

Younger audiences (under 35s) are primarily driven by progress and enjoyment in their lives, and that translates into what they look for in news, according to *How Young People Consume News and The Implications For Mainstream Media* (a report commissioned by The Reuters Institute, authored by Flamingo).⁷ Whether you are producing a news podcast or not, this trend – and other audience research reports like these – may be helpful in defining your Listener goal.

Be honest and realistic when going through the goal-setting phase. Not every goal can be met in podcast form. Your target audience may not be reachable through podcasting, and the format may not be suited to your brand intentions. Is a podcast really the best way to reach the desired audience, or are you just doing this because it's fashionable?

When planning your content, refer back to both your Goal and your Listeners for each and every episode. Consider the needs and the interests of those listening, as well as their current knowledge of the subject. Think about the language and perspectives required to meet your listeners' needs.

⁷ Galan, L., Osserman, J., Parker, T. and Taylor, M., 2019. *How Young People Consume News and the Implications for Mainstream Media*. [online] Reuters Institute for the Study of Journalism. Available at: <<https://reutersinstitute.politics.ox.ac.uk/our-research/how-young-people-consume-news-and-implications-mainstream-media>> [Accessed 8 February 2022].

One way to stress-test your goals is to frequently ask: what would the producer be missing if this episode were not made? What would the listener be missing if this episode were not made? If we didn't publish an episode this week, would the listeners miss something important, or would they get it from somewhere else? What does our audience get from us that they cannot get anywhere else? Will this episode contribute to fulfilling the producer and/or host wants and needs?

A final word: as crucial as it is to define and meet Listener goals, do not neglect meeting the Producer goals either. I worked on a very popular podcast that ended, even though listeners loved it and wanted more episodes. It ended because the podcaster's goals were not fulfilled: it took more from him than what he got back. Be realistic about how much work is entailed, and whether the reward is enough.

Goal-related questions

- Why is this podcast being produced?
- Who is going to listen to this podcast?
- Why should the listeners engage with this podcast?
- What are the listeners missing if they do not listen to this podcast?
- When should it end?

Attraction

With clarity around your goal, your listeners and their reason for listening, it's time to think about your Attraction. This is the businessman's equivalent of a "Unique Selling Proposition": what is it that makes your podcast different from the others?

Your Attraction could come in the form of the subject or the host, or both. It could also be the format, but Format alone cannot be your Attraction – just as your Attraction cannot stand alone without a thoughtful Format. That is why I have separated these two aspects into different sections of the model.

Let's consider whether your podcast's Attraction should be its subject, its host, and what role emotion plays in defining Attraction.

Subject

The most common type of podcast demo I receive is two unknown people talking about whatever pops into their heads that day. I almost always reject these because, according to the analytics I've seen, the most popular podcasts always have a clear subject that acts as the Attraction for listeners.

Some examples of popular subjects in podcasting include true crime, comedy, news, sport, politics, health and wellbeing. One way to tell if your subject has legs is to sketch out a 12-episode series arc. Can you sustain interest in this topic for more than just one episode? Will listeners want to keep coming back for more?

Consider the success of *99% Invisible*, a show that has been running since 2010: its longevity and success is tied to a strong subject Attraction (design) that can be used as a frame for thoughtful discussion of... well, anything.

Other examples of successful subject Attraction shows are *Stuff you should know* (the subject is unusual facts you wouldn't learn about elsewhere), *Where should we begin?* (the subject is relatable and moving insights on relationships), or *PlanetMoney* (useful and entertaining takes on personal finance), as well as story-driven shows like *The Dropout* (investigating the story of Theranos).

A show that starts out with a subject as its Attraction may evolve over time to become a show where the Attraction is the host. This happens when the subject has been so engagingly presented by the host that the audience begins returning to listen to them. Keep this in mind.

Although the *New York Times* podcast *The Daily* is a news podcast, its host Michael Barbaro has become the face (or voice) of it.⁸ A huge number of people work on the show, but without his voice the Attraction of the show might suffer in future.

On the flipside, a podcast can be also thought of as a way to brand experts in your organisation. When an organisation engages in podcasting, the sustainability, branding opportunities and implications of that host as a “face of the show” need to be considered in the planning stages.⁹

Host as Subject

In some cases, there is no clear subject, but the podcast is successful by virtue of an invisible subject: the interests and passions of a very relatable host.

⁸ Schneier, M., 2020. *The Voice of the Podcast Generation*. [online] Intelligencer. Available at: <<https://nymag.com/intelligencer/2020/01/michael-barbaro-the-daily-podcast-new-york-times.html>> [Accessed 3 May 2022].

⁹ Chan-Olmsted, S. and Wang, R., 2020. Understanding podcast users: Consumption motives and behaviors. *New Media & Society*, [online] 24(3), pp.684-704. Available at: <<https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/10.1177/1461444820963776>> [Accessed 3 May 2022].

Two examples of successful podcasts using this format are *Conan O'Brien Needs a Friend* and *The Joe Rogan Experience*. This Attraction typically relies on the existing celebrity of a host.

This is not a strategy to be overlooked: an individual with a strong social media following can be leveraged to build an audience quickly. But usually not without a subject that they are passionate enough about to sustain conversation over, say, 12 episodes. Discuss that reality with your talent if you take this approach.

A host can also be the Attraction without a huge following when they are a renowned expert that will bring a unique insight to a subject of interest. Consider *POD Save America*, which was successful in the U.S. because Listeners interested in the subject of politics were intrigued by what insights President Barack Obama's former speech writers might have to offer on the current political situation.

But, as Lovisa Ohlson, Head of Content at PodX group, warns: "In the cases where the host plays the biggest role in the podcast, I believe that if the host is changed to someone else, the whole concept fails and the podcast will be left without listeners."

Guests on a show can also form part of both a host and subject Attraction, but this will rely on the success of your guest booking strategy and budget. Even a steady stream of A-list celebrities is not enough to sustain a show's success if there is not a common thread that Listeners will return for.

Emotion of Subject

There is one final facet of Attraction I want to address, and it concerns emotion. Every good podcast episode elicits feelings – at their root, either mad, glad, sad, or scared. Yes, even shows about dry educational topics or business statistics: we keep listening when we feel the fear of being ill-informed.

Those feelings are best elicited by hosts and guests who communicate with passion. Listeners can tell when you don't care about the subject you're addressing. As Ohlson says: "Anybody could be a host but not anybody could be host for any [subject]. The audience will hear immediately if the host is driven by lust and interest for the subject and if not, it makes a huge difference for the listening experience and for the trustworthiness of the podcast."¹⁰

One way to isolate what your Attraction will be is to think about where your passion, strengths and interests lie. What is the subject you (or your brand or organisation) is known for? What does your host get animated about? What subjects provoke the strongest feelings that might do the same for your audience? Is that something you can give to the listeners that others cannot?

Choose a clear attraction for your whole series. In the next section, we will consider how to Format the show to best highlight your Attraction. Remember: throughout this process you should refer back to your Listeners and Goal to ensure all the components are in alignment.

Attraction-related questions

- What is the subject of your show?
- How many episodes can that subject sustain with passion?
- What core emotion(s) does this subject elicit in Listeners?
- Who is the best person to present this subject to your Listeners, and why will Listeners keep coming back for them?
- Is this Attraction in alignment with your Goal?

¹⁰ Ohlson, L., 2022. *An interview request*. [email].

Format

Format is the term I give to the style in which the Attraction is presented in a series. It encompasses considerations like show structure, tone and duration, and requires planning the beginning, middle and end of your show's arc.

By far the most prevalent Format style is the free-form interview: one host interviews an expert or a celebrity. As competition between podcasts gets tougher, one way to stand out in a crowd is to use something other than an interview. Examples of different styles include: a scripted narrative, scripted vignettes, a panel discussion, fictional storytelling, and more.

In their report on [Daily News Podcasts](#), Nic Newman and Nathan Gallo identified four distinct news formats, “often aimed at specific audience needs and with different implications in terms of the resources required to create and maintain them”.¹¹ Those format types are deep-dive, extended chat, news round-ups and micro bulletins.

At this stage, you will not be surprised when I say: you should consider your Format from the perspective of the Goals you have set and the Listeners you are targeting.

Let's take a closer look at the three aspects of Format to consider in your planning stages:

¹¹ Newman, N. and Gallo, N., 2020. *Daily news podcasts: building new habits in the shadow of coronavirus*. [online] Reutersinstitute.politics.ox.ac.uk. Available at: <<https://reutersinstitute.politics.ox.ac.uk/sites/default/files/2020-11/Newman%20and%20Gallo%20-%20Podcasts%20and%20the%20Impact%20of%20Coronavirus%20FINAL%20%282%29.pdf>> [Accessed 15 March 2022].

Structure

Even if an interview format is chosen, it is good to think about the structure of the episode.

Some producers will think about style and structure in relation to pre-roll and mid-roll ad placements, which is why you may have noticed many formats are built around two to three segments.

I like to think about structure from the perspective of the beginning, middle and end. And they all need to be planned in order to keep the listener hooked on content from the beginning to the end – and bring them back to listen to more episodes.

The role of the beginning is to sell the episode to the listener by setting an intention and telling them what to expect – to leave them wanting more. You don't want to spend too long in this space and risk losing your listeners because it takes too long to get to the reward. Pay close attention to editing here. When I plan the beginning of a show, I consider every sentence one by one and think about the relevance to the listener.

The middle part of the podcast delivers the promised Attraction to the listeners. It contains the meat of the reason for listening, and that should align with your goal. This is the section in which you should ensure that something is happening and the story or interview is moving forward. It should be building towards an ending.

The ending should either leave the listener satisfied or, even better, wanting more. Good planning of structure keeps your Attraction interesting in the beginning, during the middle and at the end.

Tone

When thinking about setting the tone, you want to think about your Listener and your Goal, while considering your Attraction. Will it serve your needs to be authoritative, humorous, comforting, friendly, confrontational, energetic or calm?

All of that will be dependent on the voice and how the host and guest modulate it. Pay attention to how different accents may impact on those intentions, too. Your listener is entirely dependent on the voice for all its needs.

As I said earlier, passion can be heard. If someone speaks with passion it usually engages listeners more effectively than a talk which is delivered without it.

If you are working on a branded show, or your show goal includes multiple stakeholders, you will want a discussion about tone before you start and ensure you are all in agreement.

The tone you select will also depend on content, and I include a note on your responsibilities around misinformation here. There may be times when information provided by the expert is not correct, most often unintentionally. On serious subjects, the responsibility falls on the host to adopt a curious and questioning tone. Always seek the truth: what's the source for that data, when was that said, what evidence supports that claim...?¹²

In January 2022, podcast host Joe Rogan had to apologise after he (and his show's distributor Spotify) came under fire for episodes in which guests presented misinformation about COVID-19 without challenge. Spotify had to release an official

¹² Gordon, N. and Fleisher, W., 2021. *Effective Interviewing and Interrogation Techniques*. 3rd ed. Academic Press, p.27.

statement about their future plans to avoid misinformation on the platform.¹³ In most cases, things do not go as far as a public apology but Rogan’s case reminds us of our responsibility when selecting experts and the tone we adopt in response to the information provided. On controversial subjects, more than one expert may be advisable.

Duration

The duration of an episode is often discussed when planning Format. The media industry is well versed in thinking about duration from the perspective of tight TV or radio timetables. With podcasts it’s different: there are no real restrictions. But this is a double-edged sword.

You have time to deliver your content in the best possible way but balance this freedom with your listener’s needs and show goals – what length will be profitable to both?

Mattias Björkman, Bauer Media’s Head of Podcast Business, said: “It’s neither possible, nor relevant, to set a duration benchmark across all podcasts. It depends on audience, genre, format, and episode frequency. We have examples of successful 15-minute podcasts, as well as 90-minute ones. It all depends on what you want to achieve.”¹⁴ Podcasting is an on-demand medium so the opportunity to pause and play is there.

I believe the proper duration for an episode is “as long as a good story lasts”. Nothing extra. If an interesting story is 20 minutes today and 40 minutes next week, that is fine. There is no explicit need in making them all the same length.

¹³ Cain, S. and Sun, M., 2022. *Joe Rogan pledges to ‘try harder’ after Spotify misinformation controversy*. [online] The Guardian. Available at: <<https://www.theguardian.com/culture/2022/jan/31/joe-rogan-pledges-to-try-harder-after-spotify-misinformation-controversy>> [Accessed 1 February 2022].

¹⁴ Björkman, M., 2022. *Podcast interview*. [email].

Listeners are willing to listen to both short and long episodes if their goal for listening is fulfilled.

A note on interactivity

When thinking about Format, consider the question of interactivity with Listeners. Is there a way they can be part of the show that lends itself to meeting your Goal?

Even pre-recorded podcasts can be a medium of participation: perhaps by recording with an audience (see: *The Guilty Feminist*), by including listener voice notes (see *Reply All*), or simply by responding to listener mail. Social media can be a huge support to this end. Listeners could even be considered as potential guests.

We know that audiences respond with more interest and loyalty to mediums that make them feel part of a community.¹⁵ And an interactive aspect can distinguish the podcast from scripted forms.¹⁶

In a podcast series I produced we interacted with the listeners by asking them to submit their stories about a certain topic ahead of time. We requested stories via Instagram when promoting the series. The listeners sent short audio stories to us, which we edited into the episodes.

Use your creativity when thinking about all of the aspects related to Format. This may be your least resource-consuming opportunity to stand out in a crowded market.

¹⁵ Making 'Maximum Fun' for fans: Examining podcast listener participation online
Wrather, Kyle, *The Radio Journal: International Studies In Broadcast & Audio Media*. Volume 14: Number 1 (2016); pp 43-63

¹⁶ Markus Lundström & Tomas Poletti Lundström (2021) Podcast ethnography, *International Journal of Social Research Methodology*, 24:3, 289-299, Available at:
<<https://www.tandfonline.com/action/showCitFormats?doi=10.1080%2F13645579.2020.1778221>>
[Accessed 31 January 2022]

Format-related questions

- What Format will best showcase the Attraction of your show?
- What Format will most appeal to your intended Listeners?
- What tone will meet your Listener's needs, and is that tone in alignment with your show Goal?
- What does the beginning of your show promise?
- What does the middle of your show deliver?
- Does the end of your show make Listeners want to come back?
- Is there a way to include your Listeners in the format of your show?
- In what way does your Format stand out from other shows?

Technology

Most podcasters cannot affect distribution technology, but there are technical aspects they can control to make the on-demand audio experience as good as possible. Namely: recording and editing – which I will talk about together as “sound quality”.

High-quality content and good sound quality go hand-in-hand. You can perfect your goal, attraction and format, but it will be hard for your listeners to get excited about any of it if they can’t hear you properly.

In the UK, 59% of podcast listening is done using headphones, meaning the audio quality can be heard precisely.¹⁷ That’s bad news for anything less than perfection.

Good sound quality is like plumbing: it’s unnoticeable until something goes wrong. And so many things can go wrong: scratching, hissing, popping, reverb, background noise, jarring edits, volume fluctuations.... The moment you’re distracted by the sound is the moment your attention is taken away from the content. And there’s no shortage of alternative shows for listeners to pick instead of yours.

And, while I haven’t come across comprehensive data for how audio quality impacts listen-through rates, cognitive researchers have found that the human brain devotes more attention and creates better imagery, transportation and recall when sound is carefully considered and designed.¹⁸

¹⁷ Rajar.co.uk. 2022. *MIDAS Winter 2021*. [online] Available at: <https://www.rajar.co.uk/docs/news/MIDAS_Winter_2021.pdf> [Accessed 29 March 2022].

¹⁸ Emma Rodero & Laura Romero (2022) Let me listen to where you are. Spatial dimension resources in audio stories can increase imagery, transportation, attention, and recall, *Media Psychology*, 25:1, 155-179, DOI: 10.1080/15213269.2021.1880439

Another study looked at the impact of poor sound quality on video formats: “When the video was difficult to hear, viewers thought that the talk was worse, the speaker less intelligent and less likeable, and the research less important.”¹⁹

And all of this may be even more important to holding the interest of young people: “Gen Z, as digital natives, have even higher expectations of a flawless, seamless, personalised online experience than Millennials,” according to *How Young People Consume News and the Implications for Mainstream Media* report.²⁰

So, where do we begin? Most problems with sound quality are solved before you start recording: by planning the recording space and editing ahead of time. Use a studio whenever feasible for the most consistently warm sound. If recording on location is important to your Format or Attraction, look for spaces that are soft and contained – carpeted and curtained spaces will keep audio waves contained for capturing; large spaces with glass and hard edges will bounce soundwaves, leading to echo and reverb.

I always recommend pre-recording and listening to a sample ahead of time. Listen for the hum of an air-conditioning unit, background chatter or music, a crackling fire or the noise of a tram – all of these are examples of ambient sounds that have made it harder for me to edit a show in the past. Bad recording is hard, sometimes impossible, to fix afterwards.

¹⁹ Newman, E. and Schwarz, N., 2018. Good Sound, Good Research: How Audio Quality Influences Perceptions of the Research and Researcher. *Science Communication*, [online] 40(2), pp.246-257. Available at: <<https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/10.1177/1075547018759345>> [Accessed 29 March 2022].

²⁰ Galan, L., Osserman, J., Parker, T. and Taylor, M., 2019. *How Young People Consume News and the Implications for Mainstream Media*. [online] Reuters Institute for the Study of Journalism. Available at: <<https://reutersinstitute.politics.ox.ac.uk/our-research/how-young-people-consume-news-and-implications-mainstream-media>> [Accessed 17 April 2022].

When it comes to editing, my recommendation is this: *do editing*. And by “do editing” I don’t mean slapping on an introductory sting and outro and exporting.

The role of editing is to support the other *Glaft* components: Goal, Attraction and Format. So if the content is not about fulfilling your Goal, enhancing Attraction or delivering Format, it probably needs to be edited out. Every second of time spent listening to your podcast is a second of time the listener could be spending with a loved one instead, so take this responsibility seriously. The tagline of an old BBC radio game show, *Just a Minute*, makes for a good mantra: edit to ensure your show is “without hesitation, deviation or repetition”.

When it comes to sound design – the addition of music or sound effects, and mastery of levels and compression – all the same rules apply. It needs to be there in support of other content components and to serve the listeners’ needs.

While technology alone will never guarantee success, it is a mark of professionalism. Media houses who want to be taken seriously need seamlessly edited and well-recorded episodes.

Technology-related questions

- Where are you recording the episodes?
- What will you edit out of (and into) the show?
- How will recording and editing highlight the Attraction?
- Does your chosen Format affect your Technology needs?
- Does the technology meet your Listener needs and show Goal?

Putting it all together

You've considered your Goal, Attraction, Format and Technology with your desired Listeners in mind. Armed with the answers to the questions at the end of each section, complete these two sentences to reveal your mission statement:

In order to **[insert producer's Goal]**, we are creating a show for **[describe your Listeners]** about **[state your Attraction, whether subject and/or host]** to **[describe Listener's reason for returning, which may be informed by emotional need]**. The show is unique because it **[describe what is unique about your format]** and it is delivered with **[describe your Technology-related recording and editing standards]**.

Let's test this out with a few examples. I'll start with one of my own shows, because I don't have to guess what my answers are to the component questions.

Rosvo & Poliisi was a show commissioned with the goal of leveraging the popularity of the True Crime genre to bring new Finnish audiences to our podcast platform. We were targeting any Finnish podcast listeners who might be intrigued by the topic of crime from the unique perspective of a former criminal and a former criminal investigator interviewing guests about shocking cases. We recorded in our studios but also edited together narrative inserts describing the crime being discussed.

So the action plan for us was:

In order to **leverage the popularity of the True Crime genre and bring new audiences to our podcast platform**, we are creating a show for **all Finnish people** about **real-life Finnish criminal cases from the perspective of a reformed criminal and a cop**. The show is unique because it **lets listeners hear a criminal's perspective and gain insights from a real investigator**, and it is delivered with **high-quality studio recording and editing that emphasises a dramatic story arc**.

Now, let's consider NYT's podcast, *The Daily*. This mission statement is based on educated guesses based on their content and some of their stated aims.^{21,22}

In order to diversify our content offering, drive new subscriptions, and create future monetization opportunities, we are creating a show for young, upwardly mobile audiences on the go about the most important stories of the day to keep listeners informed on a daily basis. The show is unique because it leverages the rich content, contacts and expertise of NYT, and it is delivered with concise editing and rich soundscapes.

Finally, let's consider *Conan O'Brien Needs a Friend* – a very unusual success that breaks most of the rules of podcasting. Let's see why this content remains at the top of Chartable's global charts after two years:

In order to explore the potential of a relationship between Earwolf and Conaco, we are creating a show for fans of Conan O'Brien about the comedian interviewing prospective new celebrity friends to amuse and delight listeners. The show is unique because it will include discussion with the show producer and Conan's PA before the celebrity arrives and after they leave, and it is delivered with a sound recording that emphasises the comedic chaos of the spatial environment, with unexpected noises and off-mic comments.

After your action plan is completed, you should keep it on your mind throughout the planning: when choosing guests, writing description texts, planning graphics or putting together a marketing plan. The action plan serves to remind you, and everyone else in the team, what you are doing and why.

²¹ Turvill, W., 2020. *How The Daily podcast is helping the New York Times drive advertising and subscription growth* - Press Gazette. [online] Press Gazette. Available at: <<https://pressgazette.co.uk/how-the-daily-podcast-is-helping-the-new-york-times-drive-advertising-and-subscription-growth/>> [Accessed 27 June 2022].

²² Nytimes.com. 2022. *Celebrating 5 Years of The Daily*. [online] Available at: <<https://www.nytimes.com/2022/02/18/podcasts/daily-newsletter-five-year-anniversary.html>> [Accessed 27 June 2022].

Conclusion

My starting point for this project was to create a simple graphic model for podcast producers to consult. I wanted a working tool that would help creators consider the most crucial determinants of future success: Goal, Attraction, Format, Technology and Listeners, and all the ways they are interwoven.

It's all so very simple and obvious that you may have looked at each section and said to yourself, 'Yes, I already knew that'. And yet, based on my experience with producers, these incredibly straightforward components are the ones most frequently overlooked, and most frequently the cause of show failure.

People do not listen to podcasts anymore just by virtue of being new. Competition is fierce, and standing out requires intelligent planning. Use this content model to plan your show, and consult its core components again with each episode.

Remember that building an audience takes time, and requires that your show be consistently good – week in, week out. Some of my biggest hit shows have only become hits during the second season – a long time after the first episode was published. Consult your audience analytics, engage with your listeners, seek feedback and adapt when necessary.

Thinking about the future of podcast media content, I can't help but consider the success of on-demand streaming platforms like Netflix, Disney and Amazon. These services attract an audience of more than 1.1 billion, cannibalising 82% of the

entertainment market.²³ That success is not just a result of the convenience of the product, but also due to the investments made in creating good content.

Podcasts, like streaming services, are an on-demand product of convenience. But beyond the convenience of the medium, like Netflix, its success requires producers to create good content.

That presents an opportunity for traditional radio: according to *Broadcast Programming & Research's Audio Uncovered 2021* report on eight international markets, 74% of podcast listeners also listen to the radio.²⁴ It's a medium primed for producing audio content, with access to potential audiences, and built-in marketing opportunity. And other traditional media, with all their storytelling expertise, are also well-suited to dominating in this space if they follow a clear content strategy.

For those who do master the production of good content, future opportunities may lie in watching the distribution space. Based on recent moves by Spotify in buying exclusive content, acquiring audio content and analytics companies, and investing in future formats, one might predict that Spotify is in the game of becoming a new audio-Netflix.²⁵

Then again, considering the success of many podcasts in video format (see Joe Rogan's numbers of YouTube before the Spotify sale), I wonder if streaming services

²³ Motionpictures.org. 2021. [online] Available at: <<https://www.motionpictures.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/03/MPA-2020-THEME-Report.pdf>> [Accessed 29 November 2021].

²⁴ Bprworld.com. 2021. *BPR's Audio Uncovered - 2021*. [online] Available at: <<https://www.bprworld.com/wp-content/uploads/2021/12/BPRs-Audio-Uncovered-2021-Overview.pdf>> [Accessed 16 November 2021].

²⁵ Laporte, N., 2021. *More than Joe Rogan: Inside Spotify's audio revolution*. [online] Fast Company. Available at: <<https://www.fastcompany.com/90698541/spotify-audio-revolution-joe-rogan-bill-simmons-ringer>> [Accessed 29 November 2021].

might consider incorporating podcasting into their content offering? Distribution will definitely be the most interesting space to watch for development.

No matter how big or monopolistic the distributors get, it is my firm belief that content is king and good planning is the key to good content. I hope the *Glaft Content Strategy Model for Podcasting* will be used to plot out content strategies and craft mission statements for many exciting new shows.