PODCAST QUICK STARTER GUIDE

14 steps to creating and launching your podcast today

And the journey begins...

So you're ready to start your own podcast? Fantastic! There's something pretty damn magical about creating a podcast for the very first time. The excitement, the nerves, the creative inspiration, the possibility, the opportunities, the connection, the freedom.

If you've felt that little *it's time* nudge, I am so glad you have found your way here. I know just how fulfilling, life-changing and business-changing podcasting can be and, as the creator of three of my own podcasts, I've learnt a thing or two about starting a podcast. I would love to share my learnings with you.

In this quick starter guide, we break the whole podcast-starting-shebang down into a few simple steps.

Ready?

STEP 1: YOUR BIG PODCASTING WHY

One of the first things I always ask my podcasting clients when they're first getting started is: *why do you want to start a podcast?*

We make sure we are really clear on the why before we move forward. The reason we do this is because creating a podcast and consistently podcasting takes a lot of time and effort.

Your why needs to be clear and come from a place of *authenticity* otherwise sustaining it in the long run will become a burden.

Your why also becomes increasingly important as your podcast evolves. You will go through periods of deep clarity and periods of second-guessing everything. This is where you need to be certain of your why, even if you are not one hundred per cent clear in the message.

When you're able to anchor back into your why, it helps to make the small decisions. Who should be my next guest? When should I release this podcast?

AND the big decisions. Do I need to revisit my message? Should I change my signature questions? Should I say yes to that sponsorship deal?

So let me ask you:

What is your big podcasting why?

Hot tip: Write down your why and podcasting vision. Declare to the Universe exactly what you want to achieve. Journal it, vision board it, announce it to your existing community. And then return to it again and again throughout your podcasting journey.

STEP 2: CREATE A PERFECT LISTENER PROFILE

Do you know your audience? Do you have a clear understanding of who she is, what she really needs and how your podcast will serve her? Here are a few questions to ponder:

// What are her core beliefs?
// What are her big fears?
// What does she truly desire?
// What problems will your podcast solve for your audience?
// What is she doing while she's listening to your podcast?
// How does your podcast make her feel?

In addition to the questions above, you also want to explore aspects of your audience such as her age, hobbies, marital status, career, likes / dislikes.

Create a crystal clear and detailed profile of your ideal listener. The more specific you can be, the more powerfully you can target your episode content to your listeners.

In other words: **The better you know your listener, the better you can be of service.**

Hot tip: Ask your audience directly. I love doing a shout-out on social media, in Facebook groups or even in my newsletter asking my audience for their input and feedback. Pay attention to the common questions that flow in and the language that she uses to describe her circumstances. Include this in your perfect listener profile.

STEP 3: DETERMINE YOUR SHOW FORMAT AND SCHEDULE

What kind of show are you producing? Host-only, where you – the host – presents solo. Are you considering co-hosting with a bestie? Perhaps you will invite guests onto the show, create a panel format or even story-tell. You are only limited by your imagination.

And how often will you podcast? Every day, once a week, every fortnight, every month? Once your audience becomes engaged, they will quickly pick up on your release schedule and eagerly watch for the next episode to be released. This is why consistency is so important.

When you're considering your podcast schedule, you might like to think about:

// How much time each week are you willing to dedicate to this project?
// Will you be interviewing guests or only recording yourself solo? Inviting guests onto the show adds an additional element and will take more time.
// How long is each episode? And how much post editing is required? The longer the episode and the more post editing required, the more time investment is needed.
// Are you willing to consider outsourcing some of the administrative tasks, such as post-editing, to someone else?
// How technical savvy are you? If you already have some knowledge in the realm of podcasting and / or blogging, you'll naturally be faster at pumping your podcasts out.

STEP 4: SELECT A PODCAST NAME

If you already have an existing website or blog, using your brand's existing name followed by the words "podcast", "radio" or "The Podcast Series" probably makes the most sense. This is what my sister and I did for She Makes Magic: The Podcast Series.

One of the big benefits of this format is that your branding is kept consistent across your website, social media profiles and your podcast. Your listeners will think of you, your biz AND your podcast whenever they see that name. This is what you'll become known for.

If using your brand's existing name isn't going to work for you, then you'll need to explore an alternative name.

One thing to keep in mind when you're selecting a name is that the name is one of the first things a listener sees when browsing or searching for a podcast in iTunes.

Is your name engaging? Does it make sense to your perfect listener or does it make them curious enough to want to click through and find out more?

Hot tip: Once you've selected a name, check to see if it is available. You might like to do a domain name check (if you plan to create a website of the same name). While you're at it, do a search in Google and iTunes to see if there are any websites or podcasts out there with a similar name. While iTunes does allow submissions of podcasts with the same name, you probably don't want to be competing in search rankings with someone else. Plus, it's pretty poor podcast behaviour to copy someone else's name.

STEP 5: WRITE YOUR PODCAST DESCRIPTION

Your podcast description is displayed in iTunes just above the list of episodes. New listeners will read this to get a feel for your podcast. If your listener has landed here, they want to know what your podcast is about and what they can get by listening. So be sure your description caters to this need.

Hot tip: iTunes is like one giant search engine. Keywords used in your podcast description (and your podcast name, too) are all indexed by iTunes. When potential listeners search for one of these keywords, your podcast will be returned in the search results. Think about what words your audience might use to search for your podcast and consider infusing these words in your podcast name and description.

STEP 6: CREATE YOUR PODCAST COVER ART

When navigating through podcast directories, like iTunes, it's the podcast artwork that captures your audience's attention first. You'll also be using your artwork to promote the podcast on your website, in your newsletter and across social media.

To submit your podcast for approval to iTunes you MUST have podcast cover art. This is the thumbnail image that appears on podcasting directories, such as iTunes, as well as on your listener's device when they download and tune in.

I also suggest creating episode art and quote art.

Episode art – the artwork for each individual episode. You'll use this in your show notes, newsletter and on social media. If your episode includes a guest, share this with them so they can promote the interview to their tribe.

Quote art – pull out a snappy, inspirational quote from your episode and lay it across beautifully designed artwork. Quotes are often shared by your tribe, generating further reach. Don't forget to give this one to your guest, too.

Hot tip: If you don't have design experience, consider enlisting the help of a graphic designer. Beautiful artwork is a powerhouse for spreading your podcast message far and wide.

Hot tip: To be sure your podcast is approved by iTunes, make sure your artwork adheres to the recommended podcast artwork specifications.

STEP 7: COLLATE YOUR PODCASTING TOOLKIT

Putting together your podcasting toolkit does not have to be expensive. In fact, the majority of recording and editing software is either free or won't cost much more than $30. Your biggest investment is probably going to be your microphone (and in the grand scheme of things, that doesn't have to cost too much either). Let's explore the common tools you're going to need to get your podcasting groove on.

Microphone

When I first started podcasting I simply just used my iPhone ear buds to record. Yup. No fancy microphones here. Sure, it didn't create the most profesh sound quality but they worked and they were cheap. This probably goes against everything any other podcaster will tell you but don't let the idea of having to have the best microphone out there stop you from getting started. It's totally okay to start with what you have and can afford.

If you are ready to invest in – and have the budget for – something a little more high-end, let's have a chat about what to look out for.

The main two types of microphones you'll come across are condenser and dynamic microphones.

Condenser microphones pick up audio extremely well, creating a very clear sound. But, because of this, they are very sensitive, picking up and amplifying other surround sounds, too. Condenser mics are great for recording in a studio or a room that is very quiet.

Dynamic microphones are not so sensitive to surrounding noises but you do have to speak directly into the mic for the sound to be picked up. Dynamic mics are great for recording in noisier spaces or if you want to be out and about with your mic.

I have both a condenser mic and a dynamic mic. I like both for different reasons.

I use the condenser mic at home when I'm recording in a quiet room. I use the dynamic mic if I'm recording in a space where there's lots of background noise (i.e. if my housemates are home) or when I'm travelling because it's small and compact and can easily handle being thrown around.

My dynamic mic came with me all around Australia and was perfect for recording from the back of my campervan (which honestly was not a very quiet recording studio). My condenser mic is great now because I'm at home a lot more. The audio is much clearer and crisper than the dynamic mic.

The other thing to question is, does the mic come with (or can you buy as an add on) a pop filter? Pop filters prevent the plosives "p" and "b" popping sounds that can occur if you speak directly into the microphone. Some microphones come with a built-in or attachable pop filter. For others, you'll need to purchase the filter as an additional item.

Here is a list of microphones that have received great reviews from me and my podcasting friends and clients:

Audio Technica ATR-2100 USB: this is the dynamic microphone I first purchased and used while travelling.

Rode NT-USB: my condenser microphone. Love it! It comes with an attachable pop filter and a sturdy stand. It's quite large so you do need desk real-estate.

Blue Yeti: a condenser microphone, a favourite among many podcasters.

Rode Podcaster: a dynamic microphone, designed specifically for podcasting.

Headphones

If you're using a microphone, you'll want to connect your headphones into the headphone jack on your microphone. This will prevent audio feedback which occurs when your microphone pics up sound coming out of your laptop speakers. I just use my simple iPhone earbuds for this purpose. Depending on your budget, you may choose to invest in a higher quality set of over-the-ear headphones so you can better hear the sound, especially during post-editing.

Audacity (free)

If you're planning on going it solo and recording host-only episodes, then you'll really only need one small piece of recording software – Audacity. The good news? This guy is free! Available to both Mac and Windows users, Audacity is an audio recording and editing software. It's perfect for recording host-only episodes and for post-editing and episode collation.

Find out more here

Skype (Free)

If you're going to kick-it with a guest, then you're going to need Skype. The program is free and generally reliable if you have a relatively decent internet connection.

Find out more here.

Ecamm Call Recorder for Skype ($29.95)

If you're a Mac user, Ecamm Call Recorder* is brilliant for recording your interviews through Skype. Your calls are automatically saved into Ecamm Movie Tools where you can then easily export the files for post-editing. One of the things I love about Ecamm is that you can split the audio recordings into two different tracks, leaving your voice on one track and your guest's voice on another. This becomes really useful during post-editing.

Find out more here.
*I am an affiliate for Ecamm Call Recorder because I LOVE it!

Amolto Call Recorder ($29.99)

If you're a Windows user, you'll want to check out Amolto. Just like Ecamm, Amolto allows you to record your interviews through Skype and has the functionality to split your audio tracks ready for post-editing.

Find out more here.

Zoom (Free for 1:1 calls)

Zoom is a wonderful alternative to Skype and a call recorder. It's compatible with both Windows and Mac and, just like the call recorders mentioned above, you can split the audio recordings onto spearate tracks. Zoom is also a fantastic application if you're thinking about hosting panel discussions. However, you will need to purchase the paid version if you want to have more than you and one guest on a recording.

Find out more here.

OneNote (Free)

Available to both Mac and Windows users, OneNote is a super useful note-taking program. You can use this program to keep all your podcasting notes and details in one area – your podcasting vision and goals, lists of guests you want to interview, episode plans, guest details and drafts of your show notes. Having everything in one location helps to really streamline the podcast process.

Find out more here.

ID3 Editor ($15)

ID3 Editor allows you to tag your episode audio files with metadata such as the episode title, number, podcast name and artwork plus loads more. ID3 tags ensure the important information about your episode is captured and stored against your audio file. Apple describes this information as your "product packaging" which is actually a really great way to look at it. If someone downloads your file and it doesn't contain ID3 tags, they are not going to know who created the podcast, what it contains, or how or where to find you.

Find out more here.

iTunes (free)

Use iTunes to convert your final audio file into a suitable format and size for publishing.

Find out more here.

STEP 8: SELECT GUESTS AND BOOK INTERVIEWS

If you've decided you're going to feature guests on your show, you'll need to select your guests and book interview sessions. Read my post: how to invite guests onto your podcast in which I offer useful tips for selecting the best podcast guests and for crafting potent invitation emails your guests just can't say no to.

Hot tip: craft your invitation emails using the 3 done-for-you emails scripts included in the podcast quick starter pack.

Hot tip: Consider investing in an automated scheduling system for booking interviews. This will save you and your guest loads of time and make those pesky time-zone conversions a breeze. I use Calendly and LOVE it.

STEP 9: CONFIGURE YOUR WEBSITE FOR PODCASTING

There are two components you'll need on your website when you start a podcast – your podcast landing page and your episode show notes.

Podcast Landing Page

Think of your landing page like a sales page for your podcast, showcasing exactly what it's about and what your audience will get by tuning in. Your landing page may include some or all of the following elements:

 // A few short paragraphs describing your podcast
 // A list of past episodes in an easy-to-navigate format or, when you're launching, a list of the first episodes to go live
// A newsletter subscribe box
// Links to podcast directories such as iTunes and Stitcher
// A photo of you (the host), your bio and why you created this podcast.

In the lead up to launch day, direct your audience to this landing page. Invite them to sign up to your mailing list so you can notify them when your podcast goes live. This is a fantastic way to build your list and gauge the interest of your audience.

Hot tip: offer a free opt-in gift to encourage visitors to sign-up to your newsletter.

Show notes

Each time you publish a new podcast episode you can create corresponding show notes on your website. Your show notes provide your listeners with a central location where they can find all the information about a specic episode such as the topics discussed, resources mentioned and contact details for your guest, and they can leave comments here too, if they choose. The link to your show notes is also what you'll share when you promote an episode across social media and in your newsletter.

STEP 10: RECORD AND EDIT YOUR EPISODES

Now you're all decked out with your podcasting toolkit, you're ready for the fun stuff – creating awesome, vibe-aligned, super-useful content for your listeners.

To submit your podcast to iTunes, you'll need at least one episode recorded and ready for publishing. Prepare for your recording by planning out your episode. Set an intention as this will act as a guiding light through-out the interview, helping you to stay on topic, while extracting the most useful information for your listeners. List out the main discussion points and questions you wish to cover during the episode. Anchor into your why and the big vision you outlined back in Step 1.

Once recorded, you can begin editing and building your episodes. This is where it gets really fun! Call on your creative genius to build an episode that is unique to your style and engaging for your listeners.

Editing can be pretty heavy going when you first start out. If you're needing some assistance, check out my Audacity for Podcasters Course, a series of online video tutorials specifically designed for podcasters. It teaches you exactly what you need to know to record and edit your podcast episodes in Audacity, explained in straight-forward, easy to understand terms.

STEP 11: SELECT AND SET UP YOUR PODCAST HOST

Your podcast host is the location where you will upload your episode audio files. Think of your podcast host as a big storage area designed specifically for holding and distributing your episode files.

There are quite a few different podcasting hosts available, but my personal recommendation is Libsyn. I use Libsyn for all three of my podcasts. I tried SoundCloud for a while but eventually transferred to Libsyn because it is more intuitive to use and has a whole range of awesome functionality available.

Particularly I love the scheduling functionality which allows you to upload episodes and schedule them to go live at a future date and time and the Facebook OnPublish option which automatically posts your episode as a video file onto your nominated Facebook page. Love!

Get free Libsyn hosting: I have partnered with Libsyn to offer you free podcast hosting. When signing up to Libsyn, use the promo code ALANA and you'll receive free hosting for the remainder of the current month and all of the following month. Find out more about this offer here.

STEP 12: PUBLISH YOUR EPISODE

When you're first starting out, editing and publishing an episode can feel overwhelming and confusing because there are so many little bits and pieces to take care of.

When I first started podcasting, I created a detailed checklist of all the things I needed to do, to ensure I didn't miss any important steps.

Over time I got faster at this and now I don't need that checklist anymore. But in the beginning it helped to relieve overwhelm.

In the Podcast Quick Starter Pack I've included an episode publishing checklist to guide you through each step required. Use this one to get started and, over time, adapt it to make it your own.

STEP 13: SUBMIT YOUR PODCAST TO ITUNES

The word on the street is that the majority of podcast downloads (between 60-80%) come via iTunes and the iOS Podcast app. Bigfoot Podcast Studio reports that in 2015-2016 Apple surpassed 1 billion subscriptions in its podcast app.

Yeah. iTunes is a pretty big deal. That's why you want to make sure your podcast has been approved by iTunes before you launch.

To submit your podcast to iTunes, you're going to need a valid podcast RSS feed. To extract your valid podcast RSS feed, you need to have all your podcast host settings configured correctly and at least one episode uploaded and published on your podcast host.

Once you've done this, then you can extract your RSS feed from your podcast host and submit your podcast to iTunes over at iTunes Connect.

Hot tip: approval of your podcast on iTunes can take up to two weeks so be sure to allow enough time from submission to launch date.

STEP 14: PREPARE TO LAUNCH

One thing that worked REALLY well for me when I launched my podcasts, was taking the time to plan and launch with momentum.

In fact, when we launched She Makes Magic, it received over 6,000 downloads in the first month and was featured in iTunes New & Noteworthy, What's Hot and Top 100, plus our subscriber list quadrupled in size.

When I launched Untangled, a similar thing happened.

I get quite frustrated and a little sad when I see women launching their podcasts without first doing the proper planning.

It's actually pretty quick and simple to slap together a podcast episode, submit it to iTunes and hit publish. But, in all honesty, most often than not, those kinds of podcasts never have the reach or impact they could have had.

There is a knack to launching and launching right.

Take the time to plan well and build excitement and momentum with your audience. It's well worth it.

About Alana

Alana Helbig is a women's podcast mentor, creator of the online program Ignite: Podcasting for Changemakers and the host of three podcast series - Untangled, She Makes Magic and Podcast with Heart.

With over 15-years combined experience in business management, IT consulting, blogging and podcasting, Alana brings a wealth of knowledge and a unique ability to clarify and simplify the often confusing language of the online world.

Using just the perfect blend of soul and strategy, Alana guides women into the heart and essence of their podcasting message, igniting powerful and purposeful conversation through the podcasting platform.

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