

The Creation of a Podcast about the Challenges of Leadership in Educational Technology

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ABSTRACT

This project explores the dimensions of podcasting success and the technical prerequisites for setting up a podcast, using the artifact analysis method within the Technology Acceptance Model (TAM) framework. The study examines successful podcasts as cultural artifacts and investigates the technical aspects of podcast production.

The research involves a comparative study of top-ranking podcasts and a review of podcasting guides and resources. The expected outcome is a podcast series about technology leadership challenges, specifically for educational technology leaders. The podcast aims to provide an outlet for these leaders to discuss their challenges.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

I. Introduction	6
II. Literature Review	7
III. Methods	14
IV. Project Outcomes	15
V. Results	17
VI. Discussion	17
VI. Conclusion	19
Works Cited	21

I. Introduction

This project aims to explore the multifaceted dimensions of podcasting success and the technical prerequisites for setting up a podcast, employing the artifact analysis method within the framework of the Technology Acceptance Model (TAM) (Hanington and Martin, 14-15). The central project questions are: "What constitutes a successful podcast?" and "What are the best practices and technical requirements for setting up a podcast?"

The study will dissect successful podcasts as cultural artifacts, examining their structure, content, presentation, and audience engagement strategies. It will also investigate the technical aspects of podcast production, including equipment, software, hosting platforms, and distribution channels, through the lens of TAM, focusing on perceived usefulness and ease of use.

Artifact analysis will involve a comparative study of top-ranking podcasts across various genres and platforms. The technical exploration will include a review of podcasting guides and resources.

The expected outcome is a set of podcast episodes about technology leadership challenges. The podcast will be created from the information explored and the identification of podcasting success factors. More specifically for educational technology leaders, grounded in the understanding of user acceptance of technology as proposed by TAM. This podcast could provide an outlet for educational technology leaders to discuss challenges in their roles.

II. Literature Review

Academic literature on podcasting is somewhat limited, often focusing on its specific applications across various industries. To help answer the project questions, I will investigate the best practices in podcasting from 2014 to 2024, drawing insights from industry articles, books, and select academic journal articles. The project's outcome will be a podcast titled "Ed Tech Therapy: Navigating the Challenges of Technology Leadership". The premise behind the show will be for listeners to send in stories to the podcast related to Ed Tech Leadership topics that they want to discuss. They can do so anonymously to protect their identities and their schools within the stories shared. We will set up a theme for the podcast episodes around the subject of the story that was sent in. Advice will then be provided based upon the combined 30 years of educational technology leadership experience of the hosts. In addition, when necessary, tie in Ed Tech leadership principles from CoSN (CoSN). For those listening, it will not only provide a way for them to talk about the challenges they are facing but also will provide professional development around leadership lessons. The artifacts explored for a successful podcast will be examined through the lens of TAM on the perceived levels of usefulness and ease of use.

Background

Podcasting has sparked discussions about whether it is a unique creative category or a form of broadcasting akin to radio. By examining the history of podcasts, we can trace their growth and understand how technological advancements have popularized this medium. A podcast is defined as any digital media file, or series of files, distributed over the internet for playback on portable media players and personal computers (Lonn and Teasley, 2009: 88). More recently, this definition has expanded to include smartphones and IoT devices such as Amazon Alexa and Google Home.

According to Spinelli and Dann, podcasting originated from the convergence of RSS Technology and digital audio in the book *Audio Media Revolution*. Before 2014, playing or downloading digital audio files/RSS feeds required a separate application. This method of audio distribution was a niche medium until 2014, allowing a small group of content creators to share their work.

Unlike traditional radio, podcasting democratized content creation, enabling independent creators to produce shows without corporate gatekeepers. This led to a diverse range of content, from true crime to knitting. In 2014, the release of Apple's built-in podcast app on the iPod made existing podcasts mainstream due to the popularity of iTunes (Spinelli and Dann).

One of the most popular podcasts, "Serial," debuted in October 2014. The show narrates a nonfiction story over multiple episodes, delving deep into real-life cases. Spinelli and Dann note that "Serial" became a cultural phenomenon due to its unique storytelling and was ranked number one in iTunes before its debut.

When comparing podcast statistics from 2014 to the present across various categories such as total number of podcasts, most used platform, listener growth, and global reach, we can observe a significant increase in podcasts as a digital medium. The total number of podcasts has grown from a few shows to over 4,318,424 registered podcasts worldwide. Apple remains the dominant platform for podcasts, hosting 2,650,803 podcasts, a substantial increase from 2018 when there were 550,000 active podcasts on iTunes. The total number of podcast episodes published on Apple Podcasts has surged to 89,947,847. The number of monthly podcast listeners in the US has also skyrocketed, from 32.1 million listeners in 2013 to an impressive 178 million by 2024 (Podcast Statistics, Facts and Trends).

Technological advancements have accelerated the growth of podcasting. Changes in accessibility and distribution have significantly impacted podcasting. The rise of streaming platforms such as Spotify, Apple Podcasts, and Google Podcasts has made it incredibly easy for listeners to discover and access podcasts. These platforms provide a vast library of shows, making podcast content readily available. The convergence of cellular phones and computers into the modern smartphone has transformed podcast consumption. People can listen while commuting, exercising, or doing household chores, significantly expanding the audience base.

The barriers to entry have decreased significantly. High-quality microphones, headphones, and recording devices are now more affordable, enabling aspiring podcasters to create professional-sounding content without breaking the bank. User-friendly editing software allows creators to enhance audio quality, remove background noise, and add music or effects. These changes in production tools encourage more people to start their own podcasts.

Another area of advancement is the ability to collaborate remotely. Technology enables podcast hosts to interview guests remotely, broadening the pool of potential interviewees. Geographical barriers no longer limit podcast content, and cloud-based collaboration tools facilitate seamless teamwork among hosts, producers, and editors, regardless of their physical locations.

One interesting aspect of podcasting is its connection with listeners. Podcasts, often listened to via headphones or in the enclosed space of our cars, are characterized by their intimacy, unmediated sound, and parasocial relationships with listeners (McGregor, 2022). The evolution of the podcasting industry has been significantly influenced by various factors. Next, we will examine the technical setup of a podcast.

Technical Setup

There are relatively few academic articles related to the technical setup of a podcast. However, numerous books, magazine articles, journal articles, and websites provide this information. The information found ranges from generic descriptions of essential guidelines to ensure optimal audio quality and improve podcast editing. Each source offers similar recommendations on best practices.

For instance, *Podcasting: New Aural Cultures and Digital Media* (Berry, 2018) provides advice on equipment selection. It emphasizes that good quality recording equipment directly affects the quality of the podcast. The book discusses selecting the right microphones, headphones, audio interfaces, and recording software, taking into account your budget and desired audio quality.

An article titled *The Best Podcasting Equipment for 2024* in PC Mag discusses the types of audio equipment needed. It recommends microphones like the Apogee HypeMiC, a high-end USB microphone that combines analog compression with digital conversion for professional-quality audio, and the Blue Snowball Ice, an affordable USB microphone known for its quality audio output without digital signal processing (DSP). It also mentions the SteelSeries Alias Pro, a versatile XLR microphone with adjustable controls, a shock-absorbing stand, and an LED-adorned mixer.

Other considerations include recording techniques such as microphone placement, room acoustics, and minimizing background noise. PC Mag suggests using acoustic foam panels and bass traps to minimize background noise, and accessories such as pop filters and shock mounts to eliminate microphone vibrations, along with quality cables.

For audio editing, PC Mag recommends Audacity, a free, open-source audio editing software suitable for beginners, and Adobe Audition, a professional-grade DAW with advanced features for editing, mixing, and mastering.

ACast, a platform that provides hosting, monetization, and growth support for podcasts, has an article titled *Podcast Editing: How to Do It In 10 Steps* on their website. The article emphasizes the importance of editing in podcast production, highlighting its role in removing unwanted elements and enhancing audio quality for a professional and engaging listener experience. It provides examples of tools and techniques for selecting the right software and understanding essential editing tools like trimming, fading, and noise reduction, as well as organizing files for an efficient workflow. The article guides readers through the editing steps, from importing audio files to adding music and sound effects. It stresses the importance of volume adjustment and sound quality optimization, discusses the export process, the importance of show notes and transcripts, and offers tips for publishing and promoting the podcast effectively.

Podcast Distribution

Information on podcast hosting and distribution is crucial for wide distribution of your podcast. A podcast hosting site is essential for distributing your podcast to listeners. Many of these sites not only distribute to podcast streaming services but also provide features like websites for monetization, such as merchandise.

An academic research paper titled “The Platforms of Podcasting: Past and Present” discusses the history of podcasting platforms and the business and market pressures they face. It also mentions the hosting and distribution methods of podcasting and their features. Platforms

such as Libsyn and Podbean were discussed, along with strategies for distributing episodes to podcast directories (Berry, Fox, and Llinares).

However, as of 2024, there are multiple podcasting platforms. An article titled “31 Best Podcasting Host Sites” from the website Podcasting Insights highlights the top seven podcast companies.

Buzzsprout, the first on the list, was created to simplify podcast hosting. They offer excellent statistics and a mobile-friendly podcast site. Buzzsprout has a free level but also provides more advanced tools for \$12 a month. They regularly update their product to make podcasting easier.

Other top podcast platforms include Captivate, Transistor, Castos, RSS.com, Podbean, and Resonate. Captivate offers advanced features and provides a seamless experience, with plans varying based on audience size. Transistor is designed for professional podcasters and businesses, allowing multiple shows under one account, with plans starting at \$19 a month. Castos integrates with WordPress for seamless publishing and offers unlimited storage. RSS.com also provides unlimited storage and customizable websites, with some of the lowest paid plans (Winn).

Content Creation

Notable articles related to content creation include a journal article titled “Understanding Podcast Users: Consumption Motives and Behaviors,” which was the first comprehensive study of podcast listeners in the United States from the perspective of motivation and usage (Chan-Olmsted and Wang 684-704). The study identified five motives, including entertainment, library building, time-shifting (i.e. convenient and on-demand access), advertising (i.e. consuming

advertising and supporting advertisers), and social aspect (i.e. interaction with friends and other audience).

Another resource is a website called *Introduction to Podcast Content Creation*. This article discusses the importance of creating high-quality content for podcasts, given the numerous podcasts vying for listenership. It suggests ways to stand out from the crowd, emphasizing that compelling, informative, and entertaining content is crucial for capturing your target audience's attention. Key strategies include understanding your audience, defining your target audience, analyzing existing podcasts in your niche, planning and developing podcast content by setting clear objectives and goals, structuring your episodes, and creating outlines.

An article published on the Podcastle.ai website titled "Complete Guide to Creating Podcast Content Strategy in 2023" covers how strategy can help determine who will be on your show and how to use resources and partnerships to promote it. The article states that there are five key questions that need to be answered for your podcast strategy: Are the goals attainable, important, and measurable? Is the goal narrow in scope? Is there a time limit? Once these questions are answered, you can determine your target audience by going through another set of questions, study your competitors, and then create your content plan. Podcastle.ai is a podcast platform that believes in democratizing the podcast industry. While it may not appear in the best-of lists yet, its advice is backed up by other sources. This information about content creation best practices will be used to engage our podcast audience and develop the podcast content strategy.

Audience Engagement/Success Measures and Challenges

For this project, this goes beyond the scope of the project but this information is beneficial if we decide to continue the podcast beyond the project. Both the podcastle.ai and Call for Content articles on creating podcast content discuss strategies for audience engagement. One such strategy is to leverage social media and online communities to promote podcasts and engage with your audience. With your content plan, you can identify your audience and engage with online communities and forums related to your audience (“Complete Guide for Creating a Podcast Content Strategy in 2023”). This can be done through engaging social media posts, polls, and getting listeners involved.

Another method in the category of audience engagement is to review key performance indicators. Podcast platform tools include analytics that can help identify trends and patterns in your data. You can use these to examine episodes that have been well received and those that have not. Call for Content suggests looking for opportunities to replicate elements of shows that have done well. Key performance indicators include the number of downloads or listens, which will indicate your number of subscribers and the size of your listeners. Additionally, engagement metrics such as average listening duration can provide insights on how well your content is connecting with your audience. Another useful metric is listener demographics, such as gender, age, and location, which can help you tailor content and promotional efforts.

III. Methods

The two types of information that will be reviewed as part of this project are the study of successful podcasts and using those as cultural artifacts as well as looking at the technical aspects of podcast creation. This includes equipment, software, hosting platforms, and

distribution channels, through the lens of TAM, focusing on perceived usefulness and ease of use.

The artifact analysis will involve a comparative study of top-ranking podcasts across various genres and platforms. The technical exploration will include a review of podcasting guides and resources. In podcasting, this could involve assessing whether the podcast resources (such as recording equipment, editing software, hosting platforms, etc.) enable the creation of high-quality podcasts that reach and engage the target audience effectively. This can be done through the literature reviewed. For perception of use with podcast resources, this item involves evaluating how user-friendly the resources are. Are the equipment and software easy to set up and use? Is the hosting platform intuitive and straightforward to navigate? Evaluating the literature through the lens of TAM, you can gain insights into what makes certain resources more accepted and preferred by podcasters. This information will then be used as a guide for best practices in setting up the podcast "Ed Tech Therapy". The podcast creation itself consisted of identifying a co-host to provide another opinion to our stories. The content is made of stories that are sent in by individuals. We had a total of two stories to work with for the sample episodes as I did not get a lot of response from the Ed Tech Leaders that I had marketed the material to. The themes that we talked about included the lack of accountability of technology use in the classroom as well as student technology helpdesks.

IV. Project Outcomes

My project aimed to answer two main questions: "What constitutes a successful podcast?" and "What are the best practices and technical requirements for setting up a podcast?"

To find answers, I analyzed several successful podcasts, comparing their structure and themes with the literature we had read.

Examples of successful podcasts include "The Office Ladies" by Jenna Fisher and Angela Kinsey, which provides behind-the-scenes stories from "The Office" TV show, and John Gordan's "Positive University," which offers insights on living a positive life. Marc Maron's podcast, known for its in-depth interviews, caters to a different audience, demonstrating that successful podcasts often target specific communities.

A common factor among these podcasts is their high-quality audio setup, aligning with our literature review that identified high-quality audio as a requirement for podcast success. This includes not just the microphone and headphones, but also the mixing, audio file quality, and recording space. An example of a podcast with great content but poor audio quality is "Overcomer Nation," which underscores the importance of sound quality.

Distribution is another critical aspect. Platforms like Buzz Sprout, which upload to popular platforms like Apple Music and Spotify, ensure that podcasts are widely available and that listeners can access old episodes. The technical setup, including the use of an XLR Microphone, foam panels, pop filters, and shock microphone stands, was also found to be important, along with editing tools like Audacity or Adobe Audience.

Successful podcasts tend to publish shows on a set schedule and have a predictable structure, which helps listeners know what to expect. They also engage their audience through various methods, further enhancing their success.

Another common thread was audience participation and engagement through a variety of methods. Podcasts that encourage audience participation and feedback tend to be more successful. A key factor in this success is audience engagement, which can be facilitated through

various means. For instance, social media platforms like Instagram and TikTok can be used to interact with the community. Podcasts can also feature letters written in by listeners, fostering a sense of connection and involvement.

If a podcast's audience is part of a specific community, tailoring content to that community's interests can strengthen this connection. For example, "Office Ladies" invites listeners to provide feedback and share observations, which are then read out during the show. This ensures the audience feels heard and connected.

Marc Maron, on the other hand, connects with his audience through his storytelling style and the vulnerability he shares, along with providing entertaining and in-depth interviews with his guests. These strategies align with the literature on audience engagement. The literature also emphasizes the importance of monitoring Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) and show metrics to gauge success and identify what resonates with the audience. Factors to watch include listening duration, download counts, and the popularity of specific episodes.

V. Results

Website and Podcast Links: www.edtechtherapy.com

Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/profile.php?id=61557445882674>

Instagram: [Ed Tech Therapy \(@edtechtherapy\) • Instagram photos and videos](#)

Email: edtechtherapypodcast@gmail.com

VI. Discussion

After conducting an analysis of the artifacts, I answered the questions: "What makes a podcast successful?" and "What are the best practices and technical requirements for starting a podcast?"

The result was three episodes of the 'Ed Tech Therapy' podcast, created using insights and tools from the artifacts obtained.

The podcast targets leaders in Educational Technology, providing a safe, anonymous platform for sharing challenges. My co-host and I, with over 30 years of combined experience, offer advice and share humorous stories from the Ed Tech world. Our experience and training in Ed Tech leadership ties into the ability to content creation as we are presenting ourselves as content experts.

Our content strategy encourages listener engagement by allowing leaders to anonymously submit stories via a website form. We've purchased the domain www.edtechtherapy.com and plan to create a webpage. We've also created social media accounts on Facebook and Instagram to collect stories and engage with our audience. The podcast will be distributed through Buzz Sprout, which provides website setup and storage for old episodes. The music was selected through Envato and the logo was created on Canva. In the process, I downloaded a content strategy plan to fill out as the content strategy plan was suggested from many of the resources.

The podcast consists of a story related to the topic and then discussion around the story and strategies for helping the situation. In our sample episodes, we talked about teacher accountability with using technology in the classroom and also student help desks. In addition to the stories, we will include some humor with an Ed Tech blunder. For the pilot episode, we used one about iPads getting destroyed during Covid. The conversation was around our experiences in leadership in Ed Tech.

Technically, the podcast was recorded using MXL microphones in a quiet, acoustically sound space. The audio board was a RodeCaster Pro, and Adobe software will be used for editing. Editing was done by a local producer at Classy Wolf Media, Rochester NY. The

products were chosen for their ability to produce high quality audio as found in the artifacts obtained.

While recording the podcast, we faced a few challenges. The most problematic was a lack of stories for the podcast. For the first episode, we ended up discussing the podcast itself and how to submit stories. We then followed up with two stories we received for the second and third. The importance of marketing and user engagement for content submission was evident. Since this is a new podcast, we were relying on colleagues to submit stories which may have been a little too close to home for them to freely share. We also decided that our target audience is inclusive to anyone in EdTech which could also help with content. With the lack of content, the first episode sounded like a bad radio show but the following episodes were more conversational. In the future, we plan to theme the stories and prepare content ahead of time to make the episode flow better and expand our marketing to others in the field.

While not in the scope of this project, the success of this project will be measured not just by listener numbers, but by the impact we make in the Ed Tech community. If we can support even one individual facing burnout, we would consider our podcast a success. We may explore monetization options in the future to expand our reach and impact.

VI. Conclusion

In summary, this project yielded valuable insights into the key elements of a successful podcast and the best practices for its establishment. The ‘Ed Tech Therapy’ podcast emerged from this knowledge, serving as a platform for educational technology leaders and professionals to exchange their challenges and experiences. By integrating high-quality audio, consistent

content, and effective audience engagement strategies, we crafted a podcast that is poised to resonate with our intended audience.

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