Tips for a Successful Podcast Recording Session

We've listened to and produced literally thousands of podcasts, and have a few tips we'd like to share for a good recording session, and ultimately, a great show! You might find some of all of these tips to be helpful in your specific application

Recording Environment:

While just about anyone with a voice recorder can make a podcast, it's important to pay attention to the overall quality of your recording. It is nearly impossible to fix things such as noisy backgrounds, bad recording levels and ambient live rooms (sound reflection and echo) in the final edit. So make sure you are recording with the absolute highest quality you can. Set your recording levels to minimize distortion from being set too hot, and high enough to not pick up "air" sounds from your recording. Try to use professional microphones with a separate mic for each guest if possible. Match levels for all microphones to the guests. Sit up straight to promote projection and breathing control.

PRO Tip: Talk clearly into the microphone and use a "pop" filter if you tend to "pop" when you say hard consonants such as 'P' and 'B'(most folks that are new to microphones naturally "pop their P's" so plan on a pop filter).   Try to not speak "off mic" (facing away from the mic) as this makes listening unpleasant and difficult to understand what you are saying.

Voice:

Nobody likes the sound of their own voice, that is a fact. It might be because you don't expect yourself to sound like you really do. You will eventually get accustomed to your recorded voice. In the mean time, try not to let it affect your performance.

Enunciation is critical. Many dialects naturally relax enunciation of some words and phrases, and that's fine for a dialect. But talking super fast, or talking with a lazy mouth will turn your listeners off.

Get it right: And just as telling as poor spelling is to writing, mispronunciation of words and names carries the same reaction. Know how to pronounce your content correctly.

PRO- Tip: Write out names phonetically on a script to help with pronunciation.

Character:

Podcasting is all about story-telling. The better story-teller you are, generally, the better your program will be, and the more your listener will engage with you. Regardless of whether the podcast you are producing is fictional or non-fictional, instructive, or entertaining, your listener will relate more with your message in story form. Audio performance is the ultimate theater of the mind, paint pictures, be descriptive, and don't assume your listener knows everything about your topic.

The most important part of storytelling is its characters (of which you play one, or more than one depending on your story). Your "character" will evolve over several episodes, so don't worry about perfecting your role in your first podcast, but do pay attention to traits you personify from episode to episode so you can stay in character throughout your series.

PRO Tip: Make a note of your character's name, friends, even spouse names if you replace them in your story-telling or you invent imaginary characters for future continuity.

Preparation and Concentration:

Prepare outlines for your show. Have the important topics down on paper before you click "record." Pay attention to your guest's responses, You may be thinking of your next question, so train yourself to take a slight pause before talking again so you can absorb what they said.   Interruptions are tough to listen to…hold that thought!

Know when to Move On:

You can ramble on for hours about any subject. The real finesse of podcasting is making your point concisely. Topics can go off the rails quickly and before you know it you have hours of unusable recording.

Things to Avoid:

- Lip Smacking on mic. This is a natural response that you will likely have to train yourself to avoid.
- Saying "uh" and "ah" while you are thinking of something to say, concentrate, take a short pause if needed, that's natural.
- Talking like a Sports Announcer, no one listens naturally to a soccer announcer yelling GOOOOOOALLL ever. Be natural, but inviting in your vocal inflections.
- Sounding Monotone. You are telling a story, put some excitement in your delivery, but don't over do it. This is, after all, a performance.
- Cursing. While there are no decency laws pertaining to podcasting you will appeal to a broader audience if you keep it clean, or use only mild profanity in small amounts.
- Drumming fingers on the desk with an open mic, this noise will likely reverberate back into the microphone.
- Touching mics or mic cables, they transmit noise
- Speaking to guests off mi cot turning your head while talking
- . Face each other if at all possible.
- Shuffling papers or objects, clicking ballpoint pens, playing with your phone (turn your ringer off for all sessions)

These are just a few tips to get going. Have fun! Let's have a good show!

Typical Podcast Show Structure

Your show may take on any number of topics, and may bounce around a bit, but try to incorporate the following into each show:

1. A produced show open. This is not always necessary, but listeners will identify your show as soon as they hear it. :20 or :30 seconds is fine. Use of a music bed is important for branding your show, it should be appropriate for your show, but MUST be Creative Commons Licensed or a custom –produced NON PUBLISHED song you have commissioned (or we can help you with that too)
2. A brief tease rundown of what you will be covering in the show at the top of the show. This will help the listener determine if they should stick around for something they are super interested in hearing
3. Introduction of the host and the guests, don't assume listeners began listening at episode one. Briefly explain your show at the head of each episode, or have it in your produced show open.
4. Allow for one mid-show break. Ads will eventually be placed in your show, so plan on a "we'll be right back" break, as well as a tease for what's coming up right after the break.
5. Promotion of where and how to listen to your show and where your show can be found (iTunes, Stitcher, etc.). Invite listeners to subscribe (remember it's free to subscribe to podcasts) and to give a positive review, especially on iTunes, because that helps your show get discovered by new listeners
6. Most experts claim the perfect show length is 22 minutes. There are plenty of highly-successful shows that are longer than 22 minutes, some are much longer. The key to a well-received show is a quality, entertaining show that holds the listener's attention time after time.
7. A show close that can include the information about subscribing, your Facebook page, web address or contact info. This should be short and sweet as most listeners will press stop as soon as they hear your close.

Some words about using music in a podcast: Almost every piece of music on the planet is protected by a copyright, and a published license. Use of ANY copyrighted music without express written permission of the actual copyright holder is illegal in the United States and other countries and carries expensive fines for copyright infringement. There is no fair use law regarding podcasting, nor is a "sample" any less copyrightable. Songs in the public domain are royalty free of mechanical royalties, but publishing royalties are not public domain for the producer. Snippets and fully recorded songs are not to be used in any Mouthful Media hosted shows without a copy of the written persmission of use by the copyright holder.