

# Learning Podcasts

**Creating Content  
to improve organizational  
performance**

## **LEARNING OBJECTIVES**

**Create audio content that actively enhances comprehension and aids memory retention**

**Develop audio clarity and presence when hosting a podcast**

**Ensure content is easily understood and remembered**



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# Welcome!

Hello and welcome to this TK session on creating podcasts as learning tools. It's a real privilege for me to be with you today. I hope you'll leave this session inspired to create podcasts that help people learn.

The other day I overheard a conversation in an airport lounge. "All you need to do," a tall woman told a younger man, "is plug a microphone into your computer and start podcasting. It's like broadcasting to the world."

Unfortunately it's really not that simple. Not if you want people to listen, that is. Creating a podcast that's interesting and motivates people to listen is both an art and science. And creating content that helps other people learn and grow requires a real knowledge of how people learn and how people consume media.

In this session, we're going to draw together the principles and theories of learning and media. I want you to experience the power of audio as a communication medium. And discover how this power can be harnessed in training and development so that podcasting becomes a tool you can use to improve performance in your organization.

To do this, we're going to make a podcast today. We'll cover some theory to get us off on the right track but spend much of our time actually making a podcast. I'm hoping this experience will help you think about podcasting as a strategic learning solution, rather than simply a process of plugging a microphone into a PC.

When you leave this afternoon, I'd like you to know how to:

- Create audio content that actively enhances comprehension and aids memory retention and skills transfer.
- Develop vocal skills to provide audible clarity and presence when you host and produce a podcast.
- Ensure that audio content is easily understood and remembered using professional broadcast techniques with sound learning strategies.

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# Audio basics

Sound exercise: listen to the three sounds that Jonathan plays. After he plays each one, describe it in the box below.

	Your comments
Sound One	
Sound two	
Sound three	

Music exercise: listen to the three pieces of music that Jonathan plays. After he has played each one, describe its impact on you. For example, how do you feel? Has it raised or lowered your energy levels? Do you picture an event or scene when you hear this music?

	Your comments
Sound One	
Sound two	
Sound three	

## Theatre of the mind

## 3 Communication tools

1

2

3

### Strengths and weaknesses of audio

Strengths of Audio	Weaknesses of Audio

### Podcasting: What is it?

## Dispelling the myth: Podcasting is not radio broadcasting

RADIO BROADCASTING	PODCASTING
Broadcast	Narrowcast
Scheduled 24/7	On demand
24 hour continuous program	Individual program
Linear	Non-linear
Broadcast once	Taped and replayed multiple times
Transmitted by radio waves	Distributed by IP
Is a traditional medium	Is a method on a new medium



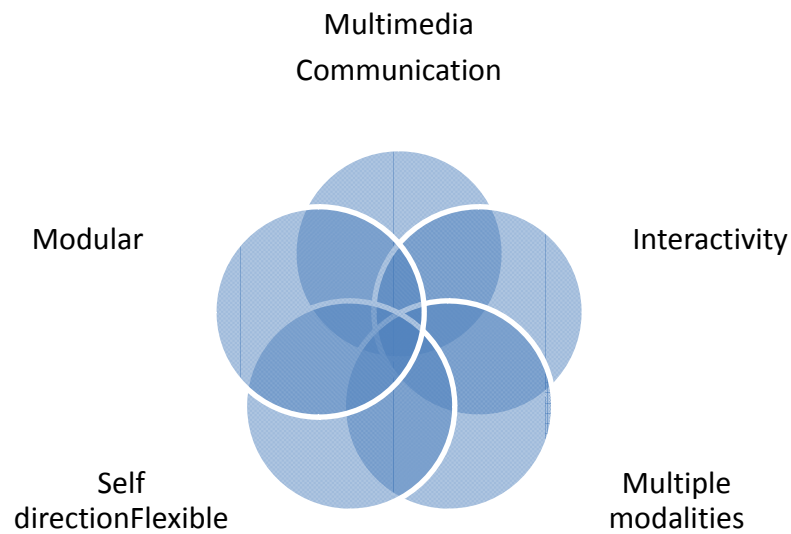
## New 'media basics'

- **Multimedia**
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
- **Interactive**
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
- **Personalized**

## 3 learning principles

- **Memory retention & information chunking**
- **Self direction**
- **Interactive**
- **Multiple modalities**

## Media & Learning





## When to use audio

In groups of two or three people, discuss when audio can enhance learning. Draw on your own experience and think about learning initiatives that might benefit from learning podcasts. As you discuss this, use the table below to list when you should and should not use audio.

When Should I use audio?	When shouldn't I use audio?



## Podcasters Toolkit

- Microphone
- Headphone/monitor speakers
- Computer with acceptable sound card
- Audio editing software
- Portable sound recorder (optional but recommended)
- A room with decent acoustics.
- Audio Library



## The 'cast: vox pops

In this exercise, Jonathan will be looking for 5 volunteers.

He will ask each of the five volunteers a question. The answer will be recorded on a portable digital recorder. In the media world, we call this a vox pop - short for vox populi. It means “voice of the people”. Using real voices in your learning podcasts adds a realistic dimension to your production.

Jonathan will load the audio pieces into the computer. Using a free editing software package that you can easily download from the Net, he will clean the responses up and cut them together to make a quick vox pop sequence.



## Scripting podcasts

- **Tone**
- **Sentences and phrases**
- **Words**
- **The purpose of your script**
- **Mechanics**



## Scripting exercise

Read the following piece of text. It has been written for print. Re-write it in the space below using the audio writing principles we have discussed. Once you have done this you'll be asked to swap your work with your partner and you'll each review each other's writing.

Audio is a powerful method for conveying communication to all sorts of audiences whether they be local or dispersed to locations around the world. The inherent power of audio is in fact controlled by three principle tools which are used to build stories. No matter what medium you are using to communicate a message you will have at your disposal a number of tools. For audio, and this is also true of radio, you have the spoken word, sound effects and music. To full appreciate how these tools work, it is helpful to visualize a painter. The painter's medium happens to be the canvas. Her tools include the palette of colors, and a varying array of brushes. Audio communicators have three principal storytelling tools. They are sound effects, music, and the spoken word. To take full advantage of all that audio has to offer, the audio communicator trains himself to fully master each of these tools to convey his message or tell his story.



## Scripting for memory

Form groups of two or three people to discuss what techniques you could use to aid memory retention when writing your scripts. Remember the learning theories and audio principles we have discussed today.



## Your vocal image

- **Creating warmth and authority**
- **Creating credibility**
- **Creating interest**



## Role plays = drama

Many trainers have discovered how powerful role plays are in aiding learning. One of their values is enabling others to see something they may otherwise take for granted, and being able critically analyze it. In this exercise we will draw put together a short drama to add to our podcast.



## Planning your 'casts

Never make the mistake of thinking a podcast is simply a matter of plugging a microphone into the computer and talking for a while. You'll discover that if you don't take the time to think your content through and plan it properly, your audience will not take the time to listen. Here are a few areas worth thinking through before you launch your podcast or podcast series.

- **The learning topic**
- **Audience**
- **Multimedia**
- **Individual podcast or series?**
- **If a series, how about format, music and consistency?**
- **Length**
- **Copyright**



Radio is more than 100 years old and during that time an elaborate set of rules has developed that help us understand what works and doesn't work on air.

Podcasting hasn't reached its 5<sup>th</sup> birthday yet. There are no rules set in stone for podcasting yet. In fact it's up to people like you and me to write the rule book. And there are many, many new ways of using podcasting to enhance learning that are just waiting to be discovered and developed. When people ask me what the future looks like, I ask them how they are going to create it.

What are you doing to create new and exciting ways to use audio for learning? Here's a creativity formula I use to spur on creativity and innovation. It's easy to remember – ICE.

**I – Imagine**

**C – Critique**

**E – Enact**



We've had a whistle stop tour of podcasting and discussed how audio can become an important part of your facilitator's toolkit. What has struck you as most important over the past 90 minutes? What are the issues you will take back to the workplace with you?

Form groups of two people. Interview your partner and find out what they think is important for their own work and what struck them about the techniques we've discussed.

Please note, this is not designed to be a conversation about how you liked or disliked this seminar– we do value your feedback and have provided sheets for you complete that gives us feedback. We'll collect these at the end of the seminar. This discussion is meant as a reflection on what you've learnt.



## Resources

### Free learning

If you'd like more free information about making audio content, including podcasts and vidcasts with tips and hints, check out our website [www.podcastersportal.com](http://www.podcastersportal.com). You'll find free guides to using the software editing tool Audacity, plus extensive notes on writing for the ear, planning and putting together a podcast, as well as tips on keeping your listeners listening.

### Free editing tool

In today's seminar we used a software editing tool called Audacity. There are two cool things about this editing tool. First, it's highly practical and has just about everything the average podcaster needs to create a podcast. Second, it's free. This editing tool has been developed by enthusiasts around the world and they'd love you to use it. If you'd like to download a copy, visit their website at <http://audacity.sourceforge.net/>

### Guides to equipment

If you do some research, you'll find plenty of microphones, headphones and portable recorders to choose from. Be careful not to buy equipment that is sub standard. And by the same time, be careful not to be seduced by higher end equipment that is far more complex than you need. We don't recommend equipment on our websites however, we do have a list of recommended equipment we give to our media clients around the world. If you'd like a copy, email me.

### Articles

Our workshop today has been designed so it's active. As such we didn't spend a lot of time going through the complex learning theories that our methods are based. If you're interested in some of the theories, here are three articles I highly recommend. These are academic articles and are not light reads. But you'll find them highly interesting.

Fitts and Posner

Rumelhart and Norman

Norman. Experiencing the World

### Feedback

If you have any questions, comments or feedback, I'd love to hear from you as we all discover the exciting potential of audio as a learning tool. Remember, podcasting is more than just plugging a microphone into a computer and broadcasting to the world. Successful audio content is well considered, well planned and well produced. Do drop me a line if you have any thoughts. [jonathan@talkshowcommunication.com](mailto:jonathan@talkshowcommunication.com)

### Royalty free music and sound effects

If you're looking to buy royalty free music or sound effects that you can use in your podcasts, do a quick search on Google and you'll find loads to choose from. If you don't have time to fire up the browser, here are a few you can investigate. [www.soundrangers.com](http://www.soundrangers.com), <http://www.massivetracks.net>, <http://www.stockmusic.net>, <http://www.premiumbeat.com>. In the old days we had to buy CDs. Now we can download these easily and relatively cheaply



Jonathan Halls is Managing Director of Talkshow Communications Ltd.

Talkshow uses communication and innovation practices used in the media sector to help corporate executives and workers of the future deliver phenomenal leadership; as well as media production training for the media sector and corporations adopting multimedia as part of their communications strategies.

Most recently, the company has delivered change training programs in newspaper companies adapting to the challenges of the digital information world. As a partner with Ifra, the international newspaper association based in Germany, Talkshow has delivered massive training projects for leading newspaper publishers including the award winning Daily Telegraph in London and the Imprensa Group in Portugal.

Prior to Talkshow, Jonathan ran the BBC's prestigious Television, Radio and New Media training departments in London. The department was part of the corporation's broader training division. Under his leadership he led both a structural and cultural change process in the multi-million dollar department to give trainers more autonomy to tailor training and ensure solutions were aligned with BBC programs.

He also led the operation to embrace many of the dramatic changes taking place in broadcasting. The department provided training across many of the developments in media production experienced over the past few years including the move from analogue to digital production in network radio, high definition television, use of lightweight cameras and interactive television.

Halls has worked as a journalist, talkshow host and trainer in Britain, Europe, the US and Australia. He has a bachelors and masters degree in adult education.

Jonathan's primary interests are in creative leadership and media production. He has published numerous articles on communication and media including an award winning piece on professional and academic partnerships. He was on ASTD's ICE Program Committee in 2006 and 2007 working on leadership. He was founding president of ASTD's UK Global Network in 2003. Australian born Jonathan lives in Central London with his American wife. They spend a lot of time in the US.

## JOB AID– EDITING TEXT FOR THE EAR

This job aid is a simple checklist of questions you should ask yourself when writing for the ear? It’s also a helpful list to go through if you’re editing someone else’s script.

EDITING YOUR SCRIPTS FOR THE EAR	
<p><b>Sentences</b> What words can I remove from the sentence without changing its meaning?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Is your sentence one clause?</li> <li>• Have you removed sub-clauses?</li> <li>• Is your sentence written in the active voice?</li> <li>• Is there any word that you can remove without changing the meaning of the sentence?</li> <li>• Does the sentence flow – is it easy to read?</li> <li>• Do any words obscure the meaning when spoken together? (For example, “concerns about attacks on pensioners”).</li> </ul>
<p><b>Words</b> How visual are my words? Do they paint pictures in the mind?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Are your words too complicated?</li> <li>• Do your words sound clumsy?</li> <li>• Are your words easily recognized and understood by your audience?</li> <li>• Do you have any abstract nouns or weak verbs?</li> </ul>
<p><b>Sound effects</b> Do I really need these sound effects? Do they paint the broad backdrop?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Do you really need this sound effect?</li> <li>• Have you used too many sound effects? (Remember the “Candy Rule”)</li> <li>• How realistic is this sound?</li> <li>• Is this sound easy for your audience to recognize?</li> </ul>
<p><b>Music</b> What mood am I trying to create? And how do I keep my listener’s energized through my podcast?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Have I used too much music?</li> <li>• Does this music change the mood or energy level?</li> <li>• Do I have copyright clearance to use this music?</li> </ul>
<p><b>Overall</b> Is it easy to understand and to remember?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• How does the script sound – does it flow easily?</li> <li>• Is the script easy to understand?</li> <li>• Is the script too long?</li> <li>• How does the integration of spoken word, music and sound effects sound?</li> </ul>