



Podcasting: A Guide For Radio Stations

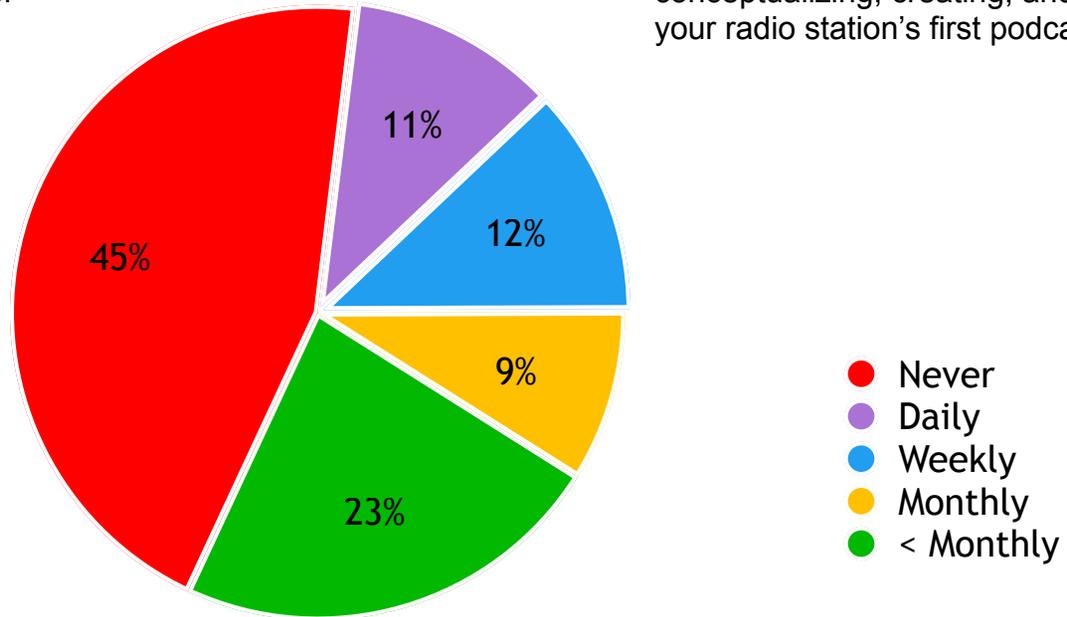
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Introduction

Each year, more and more people are listening to podcasts. In our 2018 [Techsurvey](#), the radio industry's largest online survey, 23% of respondents reported listening to podcast weekly or more often.

This guide will help radio broadcasters, from program directors to on-air talent to digital strategists, enter the podcasting space. It offers step-by-step instructions for conceptualizing, creating, and promoting your radio station's first podcast.



How often do radio listeners listen to podcasts?
Source: [Techsurvey 2018](#)

Listening to Podcasts

Before creating your first podcast, it's helpful to understand how to listen to a podcast. According to the podcast hosting company Libsyn, about 85% of all podcast listening happens on mobile devices. But the way people listen to podcasts on iOS devices from Apple is different from the way people listen to podcasts on Android devices.

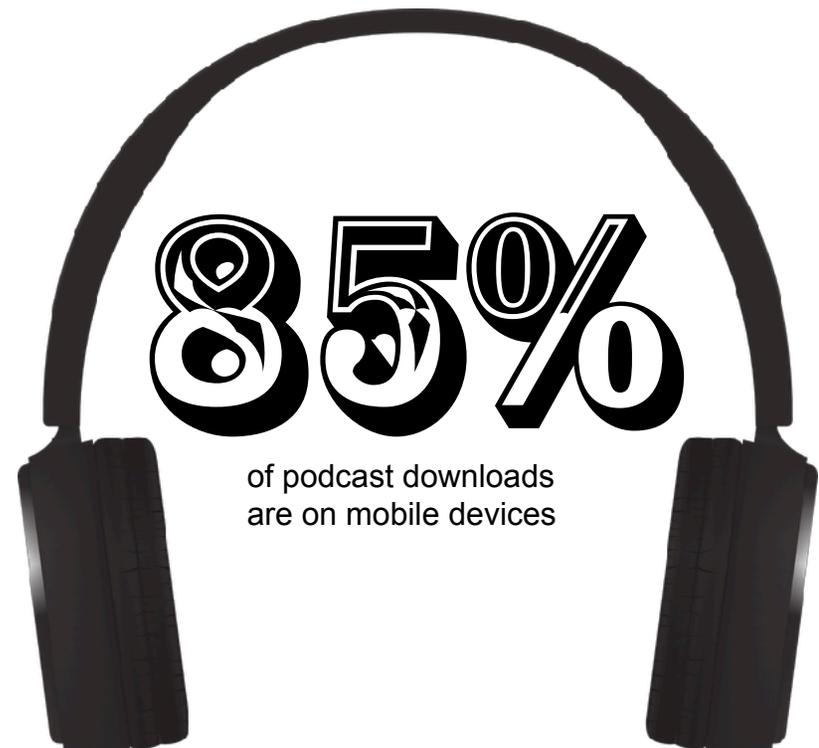
A mobile app used to listen to podcasts is called a **podcatcher**. iOS devices come with a podcatcher called Apple Podcasts pre-installed.

For many years, Android phones did not come with a podcatcher app preinstalled. That changed in 2018. Now, there is an app called Google Podcasts on every Android phone. However, Android phones do not show the Google Podcasts icon on the home screen out of the box, so many Android owners don't know that it is there. Google's slowness to embrace podcasting has a profound impact on podcast listening — according to Libsyn, Apple devices account for about 5 times as many downloads as Android devices!

Of course, not every listener uses the podcatcher app that comes with their phone. Some podcast listeners download a third-party podcatcher, such as Stitcher, Downcast, or Pocket Casts. The Spotify and Pandora mobile apps now include podcasts as well.

On both iOS and Android devices, once you open your podcatcher, you can search or browse for the podcasts you want to listen to. You can subscribe to a podcast, download

an episode, and start listening. You also have the option of streaming the episodes if you prefer.

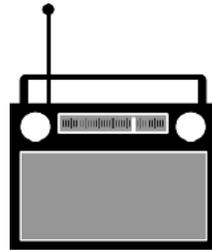


Radio vs. Podcasts

Before recording your first podcast, it's important to understand some of the key differences between radio and podcasts. These differences will have a big impact on the way you approach podcast creation:

Radio

- **Mass Appeal Within Limited Geography:** Radio stations try to attract the largest possible audience within the geographic limitations of their transmitters.
- **Tune In Anytime:** Listeners may tune in to a radio station at any point during a broadcast, requiring on-air personalities to frequently repeat themselves to invite listeners in to the show.
- **Time Constraints:** Radio shows have strict time constraints, and DJs must allot for music, commercials, and other on-air elements.
- **Music:** Most radio shows play a lot of music.
- **Fleeting:** Once a DJ does a break on the air, he or she moves on to the next one; radio shows are usually only heard live, not after the fact.



Podcasts

- **Niche Appeal with No Geographic Constraints:** While you would struggle to find enough listeners to financially sustain a radio station that focuses on a niche topic like knitting in Los Angeles, you might be able to sustain a podcast about knitting that appeals to listeners around the world.
- **Start at the Beginning:** All podcast listeners start at the beginning of each episode, making the first 60 seconds of a podcast crucial to its success.
- **No Time Constraints:** Podcast episodes can be as long as the creators want. On the one hand, this allows podcasters to include more high-quality material; on the other, they don't have as much incentive to edit themselves down to their best stuff.
- **Music Rights Issues:** Prohibitive costs around music rights prevent most podcasters from using popular songs in their episodes.
- **Long Shelf Life:** Listeners may seek out past podcast episodes months or even years after they were originally recorded.



Developing a Show Concept

When you're ready to develop a show concept, here are some factors to consider:

The Host(s)

Find somebody in your radio station who is eager to explore the medium of podcasting. This doesn't necessarily need to be your most popular on-air talent. At some radio stations, DJs from different dayparts team up to host a podcast.

The Topic

A podcast offers an opportunity to go in-depth on a topic that you can only cover briefly on the air. For example, some on-air personalities are passionate foodies or geek culture fans. A podcast allows them to delve into material that may not be broad enough to appeal to the entire terrestrial audience.

Length

Successful podcasts can vary widely in length. Episodes of Dan Carlin's *Hardcore History* can be up to four hours long, while episodes of Mignon Fogarty's *Grammar Girl* podcast are only a few minutes long. There is no right or wrong answer, but make sure that all of the content in your podcast is truly compelling.



Frequency

A best practice is to publish your podcast on a regular basis, whether that's daily, weekly, or monthly. It's better to start off slowly and increase the frequency of your episodes than to set an overly ambitious goal and have to retreat from it.



TIP: Consider releasing your podcast in "seasons;" for example, publish a dozen weekly episodes now, and if they are successful, return for a second season next year.

Topic Ideas

Here are some ideas for radio station podcasts:

Interviews with notable locals:

- Bands
- Athletes
- Comedians
- Chefs
- Breweries

Interviews around these events:

- Concerts at the big summer venue
- Arts & wine festivals
- Conferences and expos
- Christmas season
- Sporting events

Topics that interest your audience:

- Beer
- Cars
- Food
- Geek Culture
- Hobbies
- Movies
- Parenting
- Specific sports or teams
- Specific television shows



TIP: Look for topics that your air talent is passionate already about.



The Show Format

Podcasts can take on a number of different formats, from simple single-broadcaster monologues to complicated journalistic storytelling. The format you choose will have a big impact on your production process. To create a complex show like *This American Life*, you will need hosts, editors, producers, researchers, and more. When selecting your format, consider the resources you have available to you.

Here are three common formats:

1. Single Host / Phone Interviews

A single host conducting interviews with guests by phone or Skype is an easy format to execute because you only need to arrange a time with your guest.

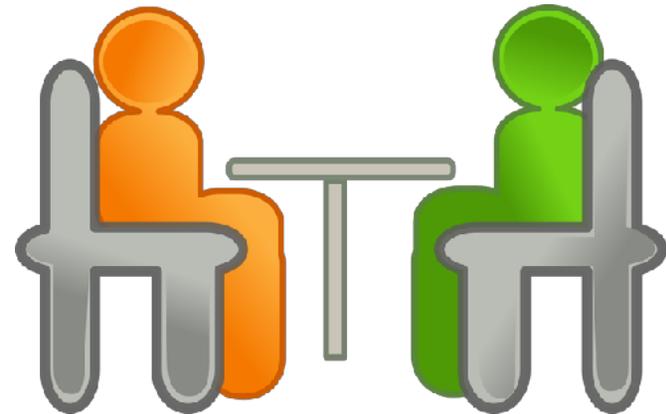
2. Single Host / In-Person Interviews

In-person interviews sound better than phone interviews, but are more difficult to schedule. Marc Maron's popular *WTF* podcast uses this format.

This is a great format for a podcast around an event. For example, you could conduct a series of interviews backstage at a festival concert and then release them afterwards.

3. Roundtable Discussion with Regular Hosts

A roundtable discussion with three regular hosts, similar to a radio 'morning zoo' show, is another popular podcast format that is easy to coordinate. Slate's popular *Gabfest* podcasts employ this format.



The Show Opening

Everybody starts listening to a podcast at the beginning of an episode, but they don't always start with the first episode. So it's important to hook listeners in the first 60 seconds of every single podcast episode.

Here's what you should do in the first 60 seconds:

- Explain the concept of the show with a simple tagline
- Introduce yourself and any other hosts or guests
- Tell people what to expect in this particular episode

You may also want to include:

- The episode number
- A sponsorship read



TIP: Many public radio podcasts begin with a “pull quote” as a teaser. Consider using a short but intriguing audio clip from your show to draw listeners in.

The Show Closing



Plan out how you want to wrap up each episode of your podcast ahead of time. This is a great time to give your audience a clear call to action.

Here are some things to do in your episodes' closing:

- Remind the audience who you and your other hosts are.
- Thank them for listening.
- Give credit to any other producers, interns, or team members who work on the show.
- Direct people to a shownotes page for the episode on your website (see page 15).
- Ask people to subscribe to the podcast in Apple Podcasts, Google Podcasts, and Spotify.
- Ask people to follow the show on social media.
- Invite people to rate your podcast and review it in one of the podcast directories.

The Audio File

You're radio broadcaster, so I don't need to tell you how to create an audio file for your podcast. Use your radio station's preferred tool, such as Adobe Audition or ProTools.

Here are some tips for your audio files:

1. Avoid Music if You Don't Have the Rights

Always check with your station's legal team before using any music in your podcast. Don't assume that the station's normal ASCAP or BMI license allows you to include music in your podcast.

2. Create an MP3 File

You may prefer a higher quality audio file format, but the average listeners just want to be able to download their favorite podcast episode as quick as possible. Upload the smaller MP3 file to your podcast host instead of the higher quality WAV file.

3. Configure the ID3 Tags

ID3 tags contain the metadata associated with your audio file, such as the title, artist, description, year, and copyright information. You have probably seen this data when loading your music files into a program like iTunes. Some audio editing software will allow you to set the metadata for your file, or you can find an inexpensive online program that will enable you to do this.



Podcast Hosts & Directories

Hosting Companies

Once you have created an audio file with your first podcast episode, you need to find a service to host it. Just as a company like GoDaddy hosts website files, there are companies that specialize in hosting podcast files. Popular podcast hosts include Audioboom, Blubrry, Libsyn, Omny Studio, Podbean, Spreaker, Triton, and others.

When comparing podcast hosting companies, you may want to consider a number of features, including:

- Price
- Customer support
- Types of statistics offered
- Storage limits
- Bandwidth limits
- The ability to dynamically insert ads (page 19)
- Reports generated for advertisers
- Separate logins for multiple users
- Control of the RSS feed
- Whether the company actively participates in podcasting events and the podcasting community

Directories

Listeners don't go to your podcast host to listen to an episode; they go to a podcatcher, which pulls the episode from a directory. The most important podcast directory is Apple Podcasts (iTunes) because it not only feeds episodes to the iOS' Podcasts app, but many other podcatchers as well. That's why Rob Walch, Libsyn's VP of Podcaster Relations, is fond of saying "If you're not in Apple Podcasts, you're not really podcasting."

Some podcatchers have their own podcast directories, such as Stitcher. Your hosting company will feed your podcast episodes to these podcast directories through an RSS feed. Think of an RSS feed as a pipe that you have to hook up to the different directories; when you upload a new episode file to your podcast host, it will pump the episode out to all of these different directories through this pipe.

You will want to submit your podcast to some of the most popular directories. [Follow these instructions.](#)

The Podcast Title & Description

As we have seen (page 3), Apple's iOS devices are, by far, the number one source of podcast listening. If you want people to find your podcast, you'll need to make it easy for people to discover it in the Apple Podcasts directory. Think of Apple Podcasts as a search engine, like Google for podcasts.

podcast title simple and only include the first and last names of the hosts in the author field.

Optimize for Apple Podcasts

When producing search results, Apple Podcasts considers the title and author of the podcasts as a whole, as well as individual episodes. However, it does not index the show or episode descriptions. So if you've include the call letters "WKRP" in your show's description but not in its title, listeners will not find it when they search Apple Podcasts for "WKRP."

Consider the search criteria carefully when naming your podcast. However, avoid "keyword stuffing" — including words in the title to try to game search results. Apple has removed podcasts for this practice. It's best to keep your



TIP: You do not need to include the word "podcast" in your title or description.

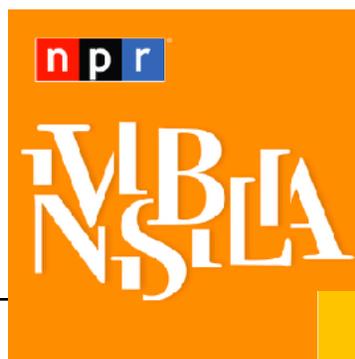
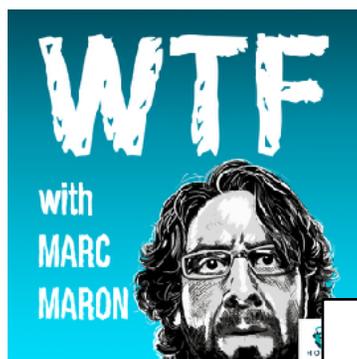


Artwork

The different podcast directories may have slightly different specifications for the artwork to be included with your podcast. Keep in mind that many people will see this artwork as a small icon on their smartphone, so you want to make sure it is clear at that size. Generally, you want to avoid photos, lots of details, and excessive text.

Here are the image requirements that will work for most of the major podcast directories:

- 1400x1400 pixels
- 72 dots per inch
- .jpg or .png file
- < 300 kb



Get Feedback

As radio broadcasters, we all know how crucial airchecking is to improving the quality of our on-air talent. It's just as important when it comes to your podcast. Fortunately, in addition to airchecking an episode with your Program Director or other colleagues, you can also get inexpensive but invaluable feedback using [Amazon's Mechanical Turk](#) service.



Amazon's Mechanical Turk

Amazon's Mechanical Turk is a little-known service that allows you to hire people to perform small tasks. You can hire people to listen to the first ten minutes of your podcast and give you some feedback. Some of them will have very insightful suggestions and others will not, but if you start to hear the same things over and over again, then you know that these are issues that need to be addressed. By subjecting the first few episodes of your podcast to review, even before they are published, you can dramatically improve the quality of your content.

I have posted a video tutorial that shows you how to use Amazon's Mechanical Turk to review get feedback on your podcast. You can find it at:

<http://jacobsmedia.com/feedback>

The Podcast Section of the Website

On your radio station's website, you will want a page for your podcast (or podcasts), as well as subpages for each new episode of your podcast. This way, each new episode will have a unique URL that you can share over social media, and you will also have a separate URL for the entire show. For example, on the Jacobs Media Strategies website, we have:

- [A page with all of our podcasts](#)
 - [A subpage with our Worldwide Radio Summit podcast](#)
 - [A subpage for episode 1 of the Worldwide Radio Summit Podcast](#)

Individual Episode Pages

This means that in addition to uploading each episode of your podcast to your podcast hosting service, you will also be creating a webpage for that episode. These episode pages should include:

- **An embedded player with the episode:** Your hosting service can provide you with a snippet of code so that you can embed the episode on the webpage. This will allow people to play the episode directly in their browser.

- **Shownotes with links:** Include a list of things mentioned in the podcast episode. Link the listed items to their respective webpages whenever possible. This is not only a service to listeners who want more information, but it also helps people discover your podcast episode through search engines like Google. We will also use this shownotes page to proactively share the episode over social media (see page 17).
- **Subscribe buttons:** If people subscribe to your podcast, they are more likely to return to listen to other episodes. Include large buttons that encourage people to subscribe to your podcast in the major directories, including Apple Podcasts, Google Podcasts, and Spotify. ([You may want to combine them into a single link.](#)) Be sure to add these buttons to the podcast's main show page in addition to each episode page.



SUBSCRIBE

In Your Mobile App

Because subscribing to a podcast involves several steps, most of the general public still doesn't know how to listen to a podcast. Simply announcing on that you have a podcast on the radio is not enough to drive listenership. You also have to tell them *how* to listen to your podcast.

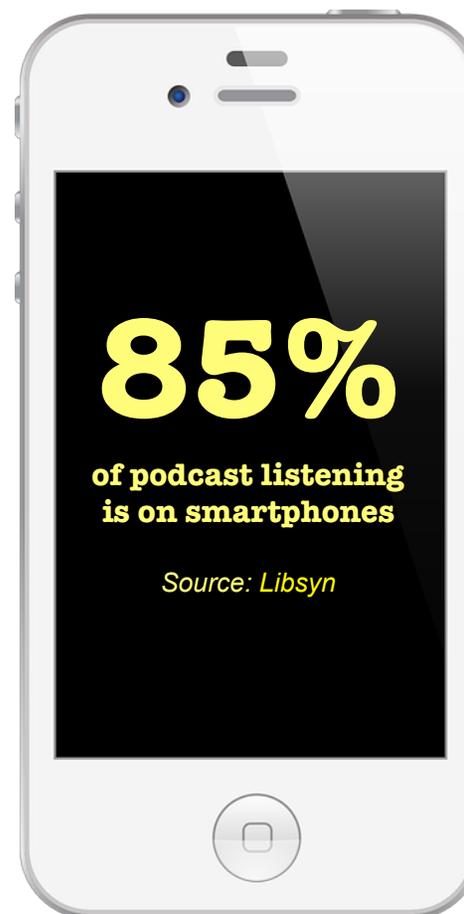
The easiest way to do this is to make the podcast available through your radio station's mobile app. It is much easier to say:

"Download the WKRP mobile app and listen to our knitting podcast."

than it is to say:

"Search for our knitting app in Apple Podcast, Google Podcasts, Spotify, or your favorite podcatcher."

Best of all, by including the podcast in your mobile app, you get to promote both of them at once — it's a double win!



TIP: If your radio station needs a mobile app, our sister company, j̄acaps, has built over 1,200 mobile apps, many of them for radio stations. They'd be thrilled to build yours. Go to j̄acaps.com for more info.

Promote Your Podcast

Once you've uploaded your first podcast episode to your hosting service, created an episode page on your website, and included it in your mobile app, you're ready to promote it. Use these channels:

1. Your Airwaves

Create a short, easy-to-remember vanity URL for your podcast page that you can use on the air to promote your podcast. Include this URL in live mentions, sweepers, and recorded promos. You may also want to play audio clips from your podcast on the air to promote it.

Example: *"Here's Corey Taylor from Slipknot talking about his love of macrame. If you want to hear our entire interview, go to wkrp.com/knittingpodcast or download the WKRPP mobile app..."*

2. Social Media

Click on the link for each of your shownotes for the episode. Then find the corresponding Facebook and/or Twitter page for each shownote link. Post to the Facebook page with a link back to your podcast episode.

Example: On the Yarn Barn Facebook page, post *"In our latest podcast episode, Corey Taylor of Slipknot says Yarn Barn is his favorite place to buy yarn. Listen: wkrp.com/knitting-podcast-episode-1."*

Example: On Twitter, tweet *"@CoreyTaylor of @Slipknot says he get all of his yarn from @YarnBarn. Listen: wkrp.com/shortlink"*

Repeat this step with every shownotes link. The goal is to get these organizations to share your podcast episode page with their followers — that's what makes it go viral.

For a video tutorial of this social media sharing strategy, go to:

jacobsmedia.com/shownotes

3. Your Email Database

Send an email blast out to your listeners promoting the latest episode of your podcast. Be sure to include links to subscribe to the podcast in Apple Podcast, Google Podcasts, and Spotify in the email.

Measurement

Once you've launched and promoted your podcast, periodically check on your statistics to see how it is doing. You will most likely find these by logging into your hosting company's website.

Downloads

The key metric for measuring podcasts is "downloads." This means that somebody has downloaded the MP3 file to their device for playback. Of course, just because somebody downloaded an episode, that doesn't mean that they listened to it. In fact, some podcatchers can be set to automatically download new episodes when they are released, so the number of downloads you see may be higher than the actual number of listens that you are getting. (The Apple Podcasts app stops downloading new episodes if you have three unplayed episodes on your device.)

Time Spent Listening

There is no easy way to measure how much of a podcast that people have listened to (the equivalent of "time spent listening"). To do so, the podcast host would need to get information back from the podcatcher and most, including the Apple Podcasts app, do not provide that data. However, Apple has introduced a Podcast Analytics dashboard that does provide some of this information.

Standardized Metrics

The Internet Advertising Bureau has been working with dozens of the key players in the podcasting space to develop standardized metrics. As podcast hosting companies become certified by the IAB, advertisers' confidence in the numbers will grow.



Monetization

There are several different ways that podcasters are monetizing their shows:

1. Advertising

“Baked in ads” are included as part of the audio file that is uploaded to the podcast hosting company, while “dynamically inserted ads” can be automatically inserted at the time of download and can vary based on the listener’s location or other factors. Podcast ads usually take the form of live reads by the podcast host, not produced ads like the ones you hear on traditional radio. Some podcasters sell their own ads. If a podcast receives enough downloads, a third-party company may be willing to sell ads in the podcast.

2. Episodes behind a Paywall

Some podcasts make certain episodes or extra content available exclusively to paying customers. For example, Marc Maron used to make the most recent six months of his show *WTF* available for free; listeners needed a paid subscription to access older episodes. Panoply offers an extra podcast segment in its *gabfest* episodes which are available only to “Slate Plus” subscribers.

3. Branded Content

Some podcast networks create content for other companies for a fee. For example, Panoply produced a podcast called *The Message* for GE.

4. Content Marketing

Many podcasters don’t generate significant revenue directly from their podcasts, but instead use it as a means of promoting their other goods and services. For example, a lawyer might host a podcast about legal issues to attract clients.



Additional Resources

Podcast Movement: The largest podcasting conference attracts thousands hobbyists and professionals.

Podcast Movement Facebook Group: The official Facebook group for the Podcast Movement conference features frequent discussion among podcasters.

PodNews Newsletter: James Cridland's email newsletter compiles stories from around the globe.

The Hot Pod Newsletter: Nick Quah's newsletter also covers a wide range of news in the podcasting space.

Podcasters Roundtable: This bi-weekly video discussion features a rotating stable of podcast experts discussing different issues.

Podcast Business Journal: The publication is an important source of news for podcasters.



Wait Wait...Don't Tell Me!'s **Doug Berman**, talent coach **Valerie Geller**, Speaker's **Rob Greenlee**, on-air personality **Tom Leykis**, and Jacobs Media's **Seth Resler** at the 2016 **Podcast Movement** conference in Chicago



TIP: To hear some podcasts about radio broadcasting, check out [The Worldwide Radio Summit: Backstage Interviews](#) podcast and the [CES for Radio](#) podcast.



Next Step:

If you'd like help getting your radio station's first podcast off the ground, or in tuning up an existing station podcast, feel free to email me:

Seth@JacobsMedia.com

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