



It's You... *Live!*

Podcasting and Video Blogging
Your Way To Success!

By

Your Name Here

<http://www.website.com>

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Part I: Basic Information

Video Blogging and Podcasting – What's It All About?

Today, we live in a Web 2.0 world. While the promotional methods that once worked still work, for the most part, there are new promotional methods that Web 2.0 has brought to the Internet Marketing playing field. Two of those methods are podcasting and video blogging.

Podcasting and video blogging are essential elements in Web 2.0. If you aren't clear about what Web 2.0 is, don't worry, most people aren't, as there are actually several different definitions, and three people have a hard time agreeing on what Web 2.0 covers. What you can be sure of is that it is not a certain type of software. It isn't tangible at all. It is merely a concept that has certain elements to it.

Those elements allow people who are online to interact with other people more closely. Prime examples of a Web 2.0 environment are MySpace and YouTube. MySpace is a virtual social networking community, where members can set up profile pages and communicate with each other.

The profile pages can be very elaborate, or very simple, and other members of the site can interact with a member through their profile page. Profile pages can include podcasts and video blogs as well. Everybody who has access to an Internet connection can open an account and set up a profile page at a site like MySpace free of charge.

YouTube is a bit different, in that it is a place where anybody who has an Internet connection can go to upload and download videos. The videos are created by regular people – just like you and me. Anybody can be a star at a site like YouTube. Users can also rate videos and view profiles at YouTube as well. Opening a YouTube account and uploading and downloading videos is free.

Along with these valuable and successful Web 2.0 elements, podcasting and video blogging have emerged. There are numerous places where anybody can set up a video blog, and distribute podcasts.

So, essentially, Web 2.0 is anything that allows people to interact with other people, or even with a website, more closely than they have ever been able to before. Again, video blogging and podcasting have become a very big part of the Web 2.0 revolution, and as a marketer, it is essential that you start using these two Web 2.0 elements to their highest advantage.

You may think that other people wouldn't be interested in your video blogs or podcasts, but you would be absolutely wrong. The key to success is choosing a

niche, where there are a group of people that are highly interested in that specific topic. If you do that, and you promote your podcast and/or video blog correctly, you simply cannot lose.

Video blogging and podcasting allow you to reach your existing customers, as well as potential customers in ways that were once only achieved with radio and television. These two Web 2.0 elements are actually today's version of television and radio. Video blogs are similar to television shows, and podcasts can be compared to radio shows.

You do not need an existing customer base to benefit from video blogging and podcasting. Again, you can actually build a potential customer base with these two valuable marketing tools.

Video blogging works well because you can use visual aids, and also because it turns you into a real live human being to those who are watching. Studies have shown that video is incredibly more effective than text. People don't feel like they have to read what you've written, but somehow, when presented with a video, they feel compelled to listen and watch.

The only downside to video blogging is that it is 'computer and Internet dependant,' meaning that in order for a person to view your video, they must have a computer, an Internet connection, and a web browser, and they must have these long enough to watch your video, unless they can download it (most video blog videos are not available for download), and even then, they must have a computer to view the video.

Podcasting is different. It is portable, but users must still have a computer, Internet connection, and browser to download the podcast. It may be downloaded to the computer, or it may be downloaded to the users' MP3 player.

An MP3 player is basically a portable listening device, similar to a portable CD player – but instead of listening to CD's, the user listens to MP3's of whatever they have downloaded. An ipod is an example of an MP3 player.

MP3 players are virtually replacing radio, because users are able to select what they want to listen to. They aren't limited to just a certain style of music or talk shows, they can literally pick and choose their programming, choosing particular talk show style podcasts, certain music titles, and video games, if their MP3 player is equipped for games.

You may think that you want to skip over the video blogging and go straight for the podcasting, since it is such a valuable media. But you would actually do better to participate in both, since they do reach different audiences, in different ways.

The Difference between Video Blogging and Podcasting

Some people assume that video blogging and podcasting is the same thing. As you read earlier, this is not the case. They are two very different elements, even if they have similar properties.

A video blog, as the name suggests, is a video that is placed on the traditional blog platform. Instead of having a blog post that is textual, you have a blog post that is a video, with very little text. Readers – or in this case viewers – of your video blog can leave comments and trackbacks as usual.

People who are interested in your video blog can also subscribe to it via RSS, just as they would subscribe to a regular blog. Video blogs are promoted in the same way as regular blogs also, but there are a few more promotional options as well.

Video blogs are constructed from videos that you shoot, typically with a digital video camera for best quality, and a traditional blog. You shoot the video, upload it to your computer, upload it to your web server or the host of your video blog, write a short description of the video on your blog post, and use code to make the video display on the blog post. Video blogs are commonly called vlogs.

We will be covering file formats and the code needed to make the video appear on your blog later, as well as issues concerning editing the video, shooting the video, tools that are needed, and more.

A podcast, on the other hand, is traditionally only an audio file that is available via RSS. However, recently, vodcasts have also emerged. A vodcast is a video podcast.

There is a great deal of debate as to whether or not a vodcast is the same as a video blog, but it actually is not, because there are now MP3 players that will play games and video as well. Because of this, a video blog, which cannot be viewed on an ipod or any similar device, is not the same as a vodcast, which can.

Video blogs and podcasts can, however, work well together. You can cross promote the video blog with the podcast, and promote the podcast with the video blog. This allows you to get out more of your message in the long run. As people who are subscribing to your video blog start downloading your podcast, they can get different information from you. As podcast listeners subscribe to your video blog, they can get new information as well.

With video blogs and podcasts, people can get to know your voice, and really get a sense of who you are and what you can do for them. Again, it is a good idea to have both a podcast and a video blog for promotional purposes.

Understanding RSS

Since both podcasts and video blogs depend on RSS for their success, it is important that you have a clear understanding of what RSS is, and how it works. RSS stands for Really Simple Syndication, or Rich Site Summary, or RDF Site Summary – whichever you choose. As you can see, experts can't even agree on that!

Regardless of what you want to call it, all three of those phrases mean the same thing. It means that your site, blog, or podcast is available via RSS. RSS has a very technical explanation that goes along with it, but it is too complicated for anyone that does not have an IT degree to understand – which is why many people run away from it when they look for ways to promote.

But it is really very simple, and can be put into laymen's terms. RSS enables you to syndicate your data on the World Wide Web. When you view the word 'syndication' think about newspapers and how they syndicate columns or comic strips. The column or comic strip is available in multiple newspapers around the world. The same is true when RSS is used, basically.

When RSS is put into play it takes information and creates an excerpt of it. An example would be the first paragraph, or even the first fifty words of a blog post. The title of the post would also be used in the RSS. This information is used in the RSS feed.

Now, users are able to download one or several of numerous aggregators or feed readers and subscribe to sites, blogs, or even podcasts that are RSS enabled. When they open their aggregator or feed reader, they will see the headlines, and possibly the excerpts of the latest blog posts, site content, or podcasts.

They can also view these things inside of the aggregator, but may click on the link (usually the title is linked), and actually visit the site, with the aggregator or feed reader acting as a browser.

There are also services that don't require an aggregator or feed reader to subscribe to RSS. Examples are major sites that allow users to customize the page, such as Google's Personalized Homepage, Yahoo, and MSN. People can subscribe to your RSS and add the feed to these personalized homepages.

While RSS was originally used to deliver news, at news websites, there are numerous other uses for it today. It is used for traffic information, airline information, sports scores, stock figures, weather, real estate, and yes, even to let people know when there has been an update to your blog, site, or podcast.

An RSS enabled site usually has an emblem that looks like this:



This emblem is the internationally recognized RSS feed indicator, and it is usually clicked on to add the feed to an aggregator or feed reader. This means that when you use this emblem on your blog or podcast download page, it must be set up.

Most blog platforms are already RSS enabled, and it is just a question of going into the options and selecting it. Otherwise, you can use a feed maker to create RSS feeds and make them available. Some feed makers are free, but not very easy to use, and others are easy to use, but not free.

One of the better free feed makers can be found at Fedafi (http://fedafi.com/feed_maker.php), but it is very basic. The best paid feed maker is available at Feed for All (<http://www.feedforall.com/feedforall.htm>). If you want to give the free feed maker a try, all you need to do is fill in the form, and then save the XML code that is generated as a file named feed.xml.

You upload this file to your web server, and then link your little orange RSS button to feed.xml or <http://www.yourdomain.com/feed.xml>. Once you've done this, try it out yourself. Download an aggregator and get it set up, go to your site, click the button, and make sure that you have the option to add the site to your aggregator.

Aggregators are end user tools. This means that in order to subscribe to your blog or podcast, so that they can see the posts or podcasts that are new, the user must either download and set up an aggregator or use a service that will allow them to add a feed to a customized page, without the use of a standalone aggregator. Aggregators are free, and the ability to set up a customized homepage is typically also free.

That's really all that the laymen needs to know about RSS – how to add RSS capabilities to their site. Again, there is a great deal of technical information that goes along with RSS, but knowing it isn't at all necessary. As long as you can create a feed, upload it, use the orange button and link to the feed with that orange button, you are good to go.

The Purpose of Podcasting or Video Blogging

There are actually many reasons why one might want to podcast or to produce a video blog. The reasons are as varied as the people who do it. Some people just want to be heard. Some people want to increase business. Some people just want to draw attention to issues that they care passionately about.

Before you start podcasting or video blogging, it is important to have a good sense as to why you want or need to do it. This reason will have a great influence on the format of your podcast or video blog, as well as on the content that you cover in each type of media.

Here are some powerful reasons why you might decide to podcast or video blog:

- You have a voice – and podcasting and video blogging gives you a platform. There was a time that only media personalities had a voice. The Internet changed this, and although we all had a voice, we weren't able to use it, because developing a platform was too hard and too technical. That is no longer the case.
- Podcasting and Video blogging makes you human to others. It is so easy to forget that the person on the other side of the computer screen is in fact a human being. But with the sound of your voice, and/or moving images of you, nobody can doubt that you are flesh and blood.
- To earn money. If your podcast is good enough, and becomes popular enough, you can earn money either through subscriptions to your podcast, or by selling ad space in your podcast. Money can also be earned by recommending products.
- To raise awareness. We all have topics and issues that are important to us. You can use podcasting and video blogging to bring your message to more people, in a more effective way.
- To teach others. Once, learning was only available in a classroom setting. Education by mail came along and gave us more options. The Internet was invented, and courses were available via email or website, which pretty much gave us unlimited choices. Now, courses are available via podcast and video blog, which still gives us even more choices. Those who had trouble learning just from what they read can now hear and see the course material as well.
- A podcast or video blog can be a great complement to other forms of media that you are using for your promotions. It is another promotional outlet, regardless of what you are trying to promote.

There are other reasons for podcasting, but even if you can't think of a reason that suits you, let's look at the reasons why people actually listen to podcasts and watch video blogs:

- They are busy. They can download podcasts onto their mp3 players and make constructive use of their time when walking, working out at the gym, and waiting in line, driving, etc.
- They like advanced selection. Instead of just listening to a radio station that caters to their particular taste, and being subjected to whatever programming that station throws at them, they can make their own programming choices.
- Some people don't like to read. Some have a hard time understanding what they read. They want to see and they want to listen, and podcasting and video blogs are an answer to those desires.
- There is a wider selection of entertainment when it comes to podcasts and video blogs. Right now, in terms of watching television and movies, we are limited by what the powers that be in Hollywood or the networks think that we want to see. With podcasts and video blogs, because there is so much diversity in the world, and because anyone is able to blog or podcast, those limitations are removed.
- Like television, people come to enjoy listening to certain podcasts or viewing certain video blogs. They 'tune in' week after week for the new content, and they are part of a community that is being built. Those who don't like your broadcast simply unsubscribe.
- You can listen to podcasts even without an MP3 player, or ipod. They are also accessible via the World Wide Web. Alternately, video blogging can be done in a style that makes it accessible via a video enabled MP3 player, but then it isn't called a video blog, it is called a vodcast. The point is that the technology is available through a couple of different media devices, instead of just one.

As you can see, there are really numerous reasons as to why one would want to podcast or video blog, as well as reasons why people want to listen to podcasts or watch video blogs.

The bigger question may be 'why would you *not* want to podcast or video blog in today's technologically advanced world?'

Part I Action List

- ☐ Explore MySpace at <http://www.myspace.com> and YouTube at <http://www.youtube.com> to get a sense of what Web 2.0 incorporate.
- ☐ Download and set up an aggregator. You can get one for free at Free Reader (<http://www.feedreader.com/>). You can also opt to set up a customized home page at Google (<http://www.google.com>) or Yahoo (<http://www.yahoo.com>).
- ☐ Choose your niche, if you have not already done so. There are entire courses written on choosing a profitable niche if you are having trouble in this area.
- ☐ View other people's video blogs, and subscribe to a few with your aggregator. Get a sense of how video blogs are presented, how long they are, etc. Look specifically for video blogs that fall within your niche, as these will become important to you later on.
- ☐ While you do not have to have a portable MP3 player to listen to podcasts, you should consider purchasing one, so that you can see how they operate. It is rather important to understand this, because you need to know how people will use their MP3 players to listen to your podcasts.
- ☐ Listen to other people's podcasts, especially within your niche. If you have not yet purchased an MP3 player, you can listen to podcasts on your home computer, with the use of media software such as Windows Media Player or RealPlayer.
- ☐ Learn how to enable RSS on a website or page, using the information above. You need to be able to add the orange RSS button to your page, and know how to create a feed, upload the feed, and link the button to the feed.

Part II: Podcasting

Podcasting Tools You Need

Now that you know more about podcasting and video blogging, let's dive right in, and get started with podcasting. Before you start, there are certain tools that you need. Be warned. There are a variety of tools, and many of them are very high priced, but that's not really what you need.

So, before you rush out and spend a veritable fortune on tools that you really don't need, let's take a look at what you do actually need for a successful podcast. Note that there are really two options.

Option 1: This is the easiest option, and only requires you dialing a number and speaking into your phone and pushing a few buttons on your phone. You can record your podcast over the telephone, and this is how many do it the first time, and how many others continue to do it for as long as they podcast.

The only expense here is the cost of the call. You can record for free, other than that cost at sites such as Gabfest, at <http://www.gabfest.com> or TalkCast at <http://www.talkcast.com>. Again, the only cost associated with this is the long distance charge.

Simply sign up for a free account at either of these services, and then follow the directions for phoning your podcast in. Once you've finished with your podcast, and it is available, download it to your own computer for editing.

Option 2: This is the harder option, but it removes all limitations and gives you the opportunity to create more powerful podcasts. Once you've gotten the feel for podcasting with option one, which is very simple, it will be time to start exploring podcasting with your own equipment.

Even with this option, there are many choices, and it does not have to be expensive. Essentially, what you need is a good microphone and some essential software. You can buy a \$20 microphone at a discount store. While it does not have to be fancy, it is a good idea to have one that cancels out excess or background noise.

Now, let's take a look at that software, which you are going to need for either option one or option two, in order to edit your podcast if for no other reason. But for option two, you also need some way to capture the audio (record).

Skype at <http://www.skype.com> is a free voice chat system, as well as a VOIP type system. You can call skype to skype, which is free, or skype to phone, for which there is a charge. Skype is absolutely excellent for recording interviews

and conversations that you want for you podcast. It works wonderfully, it digitizes the recording, so you don't have to, and it produces very clear audio.

For single speaker podcasts, The **Internet Audio and Video Bundle** is recommended. This will not only allow you to record, but will also allow you to edit your podcasts, which is going to become essential. You can find this powerful software at <http://www.internet-audio-video.com/audio-video-products.htm>.

This is a really nice package for podcasters and video bloggers to have, because it also contains Web Audio Plus, Podcasting Made Easy, Podcasting for Fun and Profit, and a Podcast Teleprompter.

Now, again, there are other podcasting tools available, but to get started, and even to take your podcasting to the professional level, this is really all that you need. There are, however, podcasting tools that make it possible to podcast away from your computer and telephone.

Many of the newer MP3 players have microphones installed on them, so that you can create a podcast. You can podcast from your car, in your yard, in another country – even in your bathroom if it suits you. But these devices are not cheap, and they don't necessarily provide the high quality audio that you really need for a professional podcast.

Also note that even if you can record your podcast in a location away from your computer, it must still be uploaded to your computer for editing, and then to a web server for public access. Therefore, it is really cheaper and easier to just record your podcast either over the phone or through your computer.

Of the two options available here, recording your podcast is the cheapest, but not necessarily the best. Use this as a way to get your feet wet and see if podcasting is for you. If it is, then you will want to upgrade to option two, where you provide your own equipment, and have total control over your podcast.

You will also find that option two offers the greatest quality podcast, simply because you can control volume and output levels. Option one usually won't allow for much editing or control.

There is a very small learning curve, and you can essentially learn everything you need to know about recording software and editing tools in a day or less. Just set aside one day for learning this, and do it. In the long run, you will be very happy that you did.

Writing and Planning Your Podcast Content

What will you say? Hopefully, you've listened to other podcasts and developed an idea about your podcast show.

Let's start with a few basics. First, how often do you want to produce a new podcast? Will this be a one time thing (hopefully not)? Or will you be producing podcasts on a regular basis? If you will be doing so on a regular basis, set a schedule for producing your podcast, so that you do it on the same day each week, every two weeks, or each month – however often you will be podcasting.

Next, let's consider what type of podcast you want to do. There are several choices. Here are the various types of podcasts:

- *The Monologue:* This is a podcast with only one speaker. This type of podcast can be used for multiple purposes. You can use it simply to be heard concerning topics that you are passionate about, or you can use it to teach a course, which could in turn be broken up into a series of podcasts.
- *The Interview:* This is a podcast where you interview another person. This can easily be done with Skype. You have a list of questions, and the person being interviewed answers them. It's a fairly simple concept, and depending on your niche and the person being interviewed, of great interest to your audience.
- *The Conversation:* This is similar to the interview, and is also accomplished with Skype. However, it has a more relaxed atmosphere, and instead of a series of questions and answers, the people on the call actually converse about a topic. Think amusing and interesting morning radio shows for this one.
- *The Call In Show:* This is not one that you will probably start with, as it is more complex. It requires the use of a conference line, and of course the podcast must be promoted in order to get people to call in ahead of time. It could be done with Skype, but it would take a lot of work, because each call in would result in a separate recording, and then the whole thing would have to be spliced together bit by bit.
- *News Podcast:* You could use a news style delivery for your podcast, where you essentially hit on the top news type stories in your niche. If there is a lot of news to cover in your niche often, this is ideal.

Most people will start with a news podcast or a monologue. Determine which type will be best for you, and then let's look at the format of your podcast.

The format is essentially how your podcast will be conducted – the overall order of things. Here is a sample format plan:

1. Lead in music
2. Welcome
3. Announcements
4. The information you want to present
5. Final Comments, wrapping up
6. Lead out music.

All of this is fairly simple, except for the information that you want to present. This goes back to the type of podcast you want to present. If you are doing an interview, you would start by introducing your guest, have him say hello, possibly ask him for some background information, and then move right into the interview questions and answers.

What it is important to realize here is that there are no rules. There is essentially only one rule that you must follow, and that is adhering to copyright laws. This includes copyrights that pertain to the music that you use and the content that you use in your podcast. Other than that, the sky is the limit. You can do and say anything that you want to say – this is your platform.

In the beginning, you may want to follow the same platform that other podcasters in your niche follow, but hopefully as you get more into it, you will develop your own unique style and flair. This is, after all, why people will want to listen to your podcast.

Once you've written out your platform, and you know what you want to cover in your podcast, the next thing to determine is how long your podcast will be. By determining this, you can assign a time limit to each item on your platform list. It's easy to get lost in a topic that you are passionate about. Unfortunately, no matter how popular, verbally gifted, or animated you are, nobody wants to listen to you talk for six solid hours.

Ideally, your podcast will be anywhere from thirty minutes to one hour in length. Depending on your niche and the topic of your individual podcast, fifteen minutes may be enough. For some niches and topics, two hours is required, but thirty minutes to an hour is good a good length for most things. Remember, in most cases, this won't be the only podcast you do – save material for future podcasts! Assign a time limit for each item on your platform list.

Now comes the hardest part. You have two choices. You can make an outline, from which you will work when recording your podcast or you can write out an actual script. Both choices are fine, and it really depends on you, and how well you do in your delivery.

If you are just doing an outline, make sure that you use really detailed notes. You don't want a lot of pauses, false starts, incomplete thoughts, or jumping around from topic to topic. It cannot be stressed enough. Make an outline, and detail it as much as possible.

If you are writing a script, start with that same outline, and then write it out. You need to know that research has shown that people are very comfortable listening to approximately 150 – 160 words per minute. Use a word processor that counts words, and then do your own measurements. Some people talk slower than others, and some talk entirely too fast. Strive to get your speech to 150 – 160 words per minute.

Do you have podcasters block? This is common, and similar to writers block. You simply aren't sure what you should say, or just can't think of a topic. This is not a problem. Have you participated in article marketing? Dig up some old articles that you've written, freshen them up, and use that for your podcast.

Visit forums related to your niche and see what the hot topics are. When you find this out, use the Internet to find information about that topic. Information is every where, and free for the taking if you look for it. Just be sure that you put things in your own words in your podcast, or quote your sources. This is vital.

Sometimes podcast block occurs because you are nervous. You want to say just the right things in just the right way. Stop. Relax. Just be yourself. Write like you talk, because you will be talking. Remember that there are no set rules, but that you do want to get your information across in a logical way. Also, think about why you took an interest in podcasting in the first place. In most cases, it is because you do feel that you have something to say, or some information to share.

Write down ideas. Write them down as they come to you, or you will forget. Look at other people's podcast topics. Determine how you can improve on those. Bring your wife, husband, neighbor or child into the room, and start talking about your topic – use a tape recorder for this.

Ideas are everywhere, and regardless of what many people think, no idea can be 'talked to death' if you are offering a fresh new perspective. If you don't feel that you can fill thirty minutes of time, shorten it to fifteen minutes, or even ten minutes. Whatever it takes. The goal here is not to record the Great American Podcast!

Relaxation is important in not only planning and writing your content, but also in delivering it. Once you've got your podcast script or outline written, you can start recording it.

Recording Your Podcast

Have the word processor check your grammar. Spelling isn't important here, as long as you can read your own typing. Grammar, however, is important, depending on what you hope to accomplish. A Southern accent is fine, poor grammar is usually not.

Load your text up into the podcast teleprompter, and start practicing. An unrecorded practice session is not necessary. You aren't using expensive tape or anything like that, so practicing is free.

Practice as much as it takes, but for the sake of time, only record your first five minutes of the podcast and listen to it to see how it sounds, if you are on your time schedule, and if you are easy to understand. Try to have someone else listen to it as well to ensure that they can understand you clearly.

If you are producing your podcast on your computer, you are really kind of tied down as to where you record, unless you have a laptop. If you have a laptop, find the quietest possible place, where there won't be any interruptions or background noise. If you are tied to a desktop, turn off the ceiling fan, and the air conditioner, as these only serve to create unwanted background noise. Put a sign on your door that says 'recording in session' and close the door. Make sure that you won't be interrupted.

On your computer, close your email, instant messengers, and any other running software that may make noise. Avoid typing while recording, as the click of the keys or mouse will be picked up in most cases. If you must do something with your hands while recording, get one of those tension squeeze balls that don't make any noise.

Avoid recording in an empty room. Carpeting and furniture will absorb sound, and reduce echoes, which can ruin a recording. When you are practicing, you should test out different distances between the microphone and your mouth. A podcast where the listener can hear you heavily breathing is not only unacceptable; it will be creepy to many. Make sure that the microphone is not picking up a chest rattle or breathing noises.

If you must cough, clear your throat, or get a drink of water during your recording, you should be able to pause it if you are using software, as opposed to phoning in your podcast. Use this feature as often as you please; just make sure that you edit out any sounds that this causes and that the podcast sounds 'smooth.'

Remember that speed of speech is important. Don't talk too fast or too slow. Again, practice this so that you can get the speed of speech just right for your podcast.

Don't settle! Don't settle for less than a high quality recording, especially if you are podcasting for business. Just as you would not settle for a website that didn't work in all browsers, or that had broken or less than quality graphics, you should not settle for a podcast that is less than what you want it to be, or less than what you listeners would expect.

Regardless of how it is delivered, content is, was, and always will be king. Never forget that. If you are just babbling about something that doesn't make sense, or has no point, you probably will not be very successful with podcasting. Have a point – a goal.

Be interesting not just in your words, but in the way that you say them, and in how you express yourself. Nobody wants to listen to a podcast of someone who is obviously reading a script. It's boring.

Your words should have emotion and feeling in them. Get excited. Laugh. Be personable. Be someone that YOU would want to listen to on a regular basis. At the same time, be natural.

If you have a Southern accent, don't try to mask it and pronounce words as you never would in your normal everyday speech. People love accents that are different from their own, as long as they can understand what is being said. Most find it pleasant to listen to.

If you use slang, use slang that your audience will understand the meaning of – or be prepared to explain it. Often, if the audience won't understand the slang without an explanation, it is best to avoid it altogether.

Above all, always keep your overall goal in mind, as well as your audience. While this is your platform, and you can say anything that you want to say, you don't want to offend or alienate anyone that may be your potential long time listener or customer. Don't say anything that is going to come back to haunt you.

At the same time, don't be afraid to be controversial. Think of Rush Limbaugh. Some loved him, some hated him, but all tuned into his show regularly – to disagree with him or to see what idiotic thing he would say next if nothing else. He was very animated and passionate in his speech and about his topics, and this is what you want to strive for – even if there are those that will disagree with you.

Use your normal voice. This is a mistake that many first time podcasters make. You don't have to sound like the radio announcers or show hosts. Use your voice, and speak as naturally as possible.

You don't have to shout. People in Japan will be able to hear you just fine when they listen to your podcast. In fact, depending on the sensitivity of your microphone, you may find that you need to work at speaking softer than usual.

Hopefully your recording software will allow you to set the options where the same volume on the recording is maintained whether the actual volume of your speech changes or not during the recording. Note that not all recording software has this feature, and it can be expensive. So, if shouting or getting really loud when you get excited is not a problem for you, don't worry about it.

Purchase a good pop screen. These are also often called pop filters, and they go in front of the microphone. This reduces popping sounds that often occur when we say words that contain letters such as P, B, or F. You can get a pop filter from Radio Shack.

Watch the decibel mark on your recording software. You don't want it to go in the red. The ideal decibel mark on the meter is 0. On your recorder settings, set it to record at CD quality, which is usually about 44.1 kHz. If you have a higher quality available than that, use it.

If you mess up in your speech while recording your podcast, don't sweat it. Just keep going. This can be edited out and replaced when you get to the editing phase. Pretty much everything can be corrected with editing.

Now, once you finish, if you feel like the entire thing will need to be edited, go ahead and take the time to redo it if possible. It will be faster. If you are interviewing someone else, you don't have to re-interview them. You can re-record your questions, and insert them into the recording before the answers.

Again, relax. Breathe normally, speak normally, and just be yourself. There is absolutely no point in being nervous when you are recording your podcast. It is just a recording, not a public live broadcast. Until you are ready for the rest of the world to hear it, nobody else, other than you and the people that you invite to listen, is going to hear it. It can be edited. It can be completely redone if necessary. Nothing is set in stone at this point.

While you just recorded the first five minutes of your podcast initially, for testing purposes, it is a good idea to run through – recorded or unrecorded – the first few podcasts for practice. This will get you relaxed, and it will even reduce stumbling over the words a bit, because after you've written it, and practiced it, you will be better able to know what is coming next.

Are you finished? Great. Save the file, and make two copies. Put one on your desktop to work with, and another copy in your documents file, in case you make irreparable mistakes while editing.

Editing Your Podcast

Congratulations! You've just recorded your first podcast. Now, you just need to get it cleaned up so that it is fit for human consumption. Hopefully, you've taken the time to learn how to use your editing software.

Start by cleaning up the noise in the background. No matter how silent you try to make your recording area, there will almost always be a background noise that must go. Again, you are striving for professionalism here.

So, even though you weren't trying to develop the Great American Podcast when you were working on what you would say, you are striving for perfection in your recording and in the editing. You want an outstanding end product, whether it is for sale or not. Your reputation depends on it, and your future success in podcasting depend on it.

Once you've gotten rid of the background noise, go through and really listen to the podcast. Did you say what you wanted to say? Did you get your point across? Did you talk too much about any one thing, and not enough about others?

Even if it means doing it all over again, make sure that you have the podcast that you want to release to the public. Now, if you have the podcast you want, and all it needs is editing, first fix any problems. Hopefully, you've taken care of any unwanted background noise. Here, you want to focus on the sound, not the speech. That comes next. Edit out any weird sounds or unwanted sounds.

Next, let's work on your actual words. Did you stumble? You can fix that with editing software. Did you leave out a sentence? You can record it and add it in. Are there weird pauses? Edit them out. Remember that we are just focusing on the actual speech right now. Close your eyes and listen. If there is a mistake, you need to find it, because if you don't, your listeners will.

If all of the speech is now corrected and edited, let's talk music. Adding lead in and lead out music is a wonderful thing. You absolutely must not use copyrighted music, however. Ideally, you should use music that you personally composed, music that a friend has composed and given you permission to use, or music for which you have a license to use. Don't break this rule!

The best option and the one with the least amount of worries is to use music that is in the public domain, or music that has a creative commons license. Such music can be found all over the Internet. If you can't find any, there is another option that works really well.

Go to MySpace, and look for bands. These are typically bands that are just starting out, and they would love the exposure. Contact them, and ask if you can use their music on your podcast, and let them know that you will give them credit. Then, at the end of your podcast, you can say 'Music provided by....'

You are exchanging exposure and credit for the use of the music – not money. It is a good idea to create a simple document that gives you the right to use the music, and have them sign it and return it to you. That way, if they forget, or change their minds later, you are protected. You want a hard copy of that document with their signature and date, preferably notarized.

You could also use music software and create your own digital music. There are numerous free music composers online that you can use to make short music for your intro and exit music. You may have to try out several software titles to find the one that you want, but you shouldn't have to go out and purchase expensive software for this. Create a theme song that you can use on all of your podcasts!

When you add your music, use the fade in and fade out features. The music should fade in at the very beginning, fade out when you start speaking, and then fade back in at the end. This will add professionalism to your podcast.

There are numerous things that you can do to spice up your podcast. For instance, if you want a talk show type podcast that sounds like it was performed before a live audience, you can add hand clapping in various parts of the recording.

If sound effects are appropriate in your podcast, by all means use them. Sound effects can really spice things up, and can be quite humorous. Again, make sure that the sound effects are appropriate for your podcast topic and your audience.

Save as you go – repeatedly. Each time you make a change during the editing phase, save the file. This will keep you from having to start completely over in the event that you mess things up later down the editing road.

All of it sounds like an awful lot of work. In the beginning, it may be. But this hard work phase only lasts until you get the hang of planning, writing, recording, and editing podcasts. Once you've done that, and you are past the learning curve, producing podcasts can be very fast and easy – not to mention a great deal of fun!

So even if you are frustrated by this point, keep at it. You will eventually get to the point where you see just how much fun podcasting can really be.

Using ID3 Tags for Your Podcast

Hopefully, your podcast is going to be widely distributed. It can be distributed via your website, someone else's website, sites such as iTunes, and more. Because of this, it is important to understand and edit the ID3 tag that gets distributed along with your podcast.

Podcasts are distributed as MP3 files. These types of files contain information about the content, such as the author, known as the artist, the album, the genre, and more. You may think that since you are not trying to become a rock star that this information really doesn't matter. But it does.

You see sites such as iTunes, and even software such as Windows Media Player, display this information on the user's end. They even use the information to organize the MP3 files on the user's machine. This is your opportunity to share vital information with your listeners, to help them keep your podcasts organized on their machines, and more.

Regardless of how your listener obtained your podcast, you want them to know where it came from. So, obviously, you want to include your website address in the ID3 tag. You also want them to know who the author of the podcast is, so it should include your name, and possibly even your company's name. This is one way to get them to visit your site to listen to more of your podcasts. There is additional information that can be added, but at the very least, the ID3 tag should contain your name and your URL!

You can change the ID3 tags before you upload it. Just right click on the file, and choose properties. The ID3 information should be under a tab called 'additional information.'

If for any reason you can't edit it in that way, edit it with your media player or iTunes player. Highlight the file, right click, and select Get Info. You can fill in the information here.

Also, don't forget to include the title of your podcast, the date, and possibly some related keywords. This will not only help with SEO, but it will make it much easier for listeners to organize your podcasts.

Hosting Your Podcast

There are a couple of hosting options for your podcast. The option you choose really depends on what you are trying to accomplish. Let's take a look at each option.

Option 1: Host your podcast externally. This can be done through many of the blog sites, such as WordPress and Blogger. If you choose this option, be aware that you will be censored in most cases. This option is really only good if you are a hobbyist, not if you are podcasting for business purposes.

You will need a place to store your podcast audio files. This can be done through a free file storage site, such as Our Media at <http://www.ourmedia.com> or File Den at <http://www.fileden.com>.

Option 2: Get your own web host and domain name. There are numerous options for web hosting, with varying prices, but you should ideally look for a service that offers a CPanel, and includes Fantastico with your account. You can purchase your domain name through GoDaddy at <http://www.godaddy.com>. Many hosting services also offer domain registration.

Once you have secured webhosting and a domain name, you will want to go to your control panel, click on Fantastico, and look for the WordPress blog. Ideally, you will install this on the top domain.

Once WordPress is installed, the next thing to do is to download and install the PodPress plugin. In the WordPress control panel that you have just installed, go to the tab that says 'plugins.' You will need to download the plugin, which can be found at <http://wordpress.org/extend/plugins/podpress/>. Once you have downloaded it, follow the WordPress instructions for installing it.

This is an incredibly useful tool. It makes it easy to set your podcast up on your blog, will automatically include a podcast player so that people can listen directly from your site, and will also ping major podcast directories each time you upload a new podcast. You can see an example of how the PodPress plugin is used with a WordPress blog at <http://www.puppies-and-pooches.com/puppy-blog>. You will see another example at <http://www.dougchampigny.com>.

Keep your overall purpose in mind. A hobbyist can use free resources, and never pay for more than a long distance call to create and host a podcast. But for business purposes, don't be cheap. Get the equipment, software, the domain name, and the hosting to do the job right!

For hosting, you need to consider how often you will podcast, and how big your podcasting files will be. This will determine how much disk space you need on

your server. Ideally, you should start out with at least a 1000 MB site, but note that as your podcast grows, you will need more space.

Also note that the MP3 files that are your podcasts will be approximately *one half to one megabyte in size per minute*. This means that for a thirty minute podcast the final file size is going to be about fifteen to 30 MB in size. If there is more music, it will be closer to 1MB per minute. If there is all talk and no music, it will be closer to half a megabyte.

Of course, this also depends on the bit rate that is used. Bit rate determines the overall quality of the compressed file. For a podcast that contains more music than anything else, you need to use 128kbps bit rate, which is CD quality. For a podcast that is mostly talking, without music, you can use a 64kbps bit rate, which produces FM Radio quality. If there is both music and talking on the podcast, you need a 96kbps bit rate, which is close to CD quality.

Bandwidth is also an issue that you must address when selecting a hosting service. Bandwidth is essentially the amount of data, including audio that your web hosting service is going to allow each month. Bandwidth will be used whether your listeners are downloading your podcast to listen to it on another device, or if they are staying on your site to listen to it via your web based podcast player.

To determine how much bandwidth you will need, get an average size of your podcasts (in megabytes) and multiply by the number of people that you expect to download each podcast that you produce. Take that number and multiply again by the number of podcasts that you will make available each month.

For example, you plan to produce weekly, so you will have an average of four podcasts per month, each being about 1 hour long. You will have more talking on your podcast than music, so you can expect each podcast to be about 15MB in size. You figure that you can get approximately 500 listeners each month through your promotions. Here is the formula:

Average size of file x number of listeners x number of podcasts per month

15 x 500 = 7500 x 4 = 30,000 -- 30 Gigabytes of data transfer per month

As you can see, it can add up, and when you look at hosting prices, you may see that for many web hosting services, the cost of bandwidth can really add up as well. On the other hand, you will usually be charged a great deal more for going over your bandwidth each month, or worse, you could be shut down by your web host company!

Get what you need to start with, in terms of disk space and bandwidth, and upgrade as necessary.

Uploading Your Podcast

Ideally, you will create a new directory on your web server for your podcast files. This will help you keep them separate from other website files, and make them very easy to find later.

Your podcast should be saved in the .mp3 file format. It is also a good idea to upload your podcast via ftp, as this is faster than using the web based uploader. You can find a free ftp client just about anywhere.

Using FTP is not hard. You will need to tell it what to connect to, and this is typically an address such as <ftp.yourdomain.com>. The port should be automatically set to 21 on most machines, and the username and password that you will use are the same ones that you use to get into your control panel through your browser.

Most FTP clients will have two windows. One window will show files on your computer, and the other window will show files on the server. In the server window, navigate to the folder that you want to upload the files to. In the window that shows your files, navigate to the file you want to upload. Highlight it, and look for a button or option that says 'upload' or 'transfer.'

You can opt to use the 'easier to understand' uploading interface provided by your web host. However, note that this will typically take longer to get the file uploaded. FTP is much faster.

That's all that there is to it. Make it accessible via RSS and via the WordPress blog on your site by getting it linked correctly, and you are ready to start promoting your podcast.

It is a good idea, however, to add a short bit of text above or below the podcast player or link. This is for search engine optimization purposes for the most part. You see, search engine spiders don't really listen to podcasts. They simply read text, and your podcast can't be 'read.'

So, to solve this problem, write a paragraph of text that describes your podcast, and includes your main keywords or keyword phrases. Again, place this on your post either above or below the podcast player.

Don't forget to test! You won't know for sure if everything is working correctly if you don't test it out. Again, just because it works on your computer this does not mean that it will work on others. Also test with multiple browsers, including Internet Explorer, Fire Fox, Netscape, and Opera (all free downloads).

Podcast Promotion

Now that your podcast has been planned, written, practiced, recorded, and edited, it is time for the hard work to pay off. You need listeners – otherwise, the entire process was kind of pointless. Getting listeners is easier than you might think.

First, remember that the PodPress plugin automatically sends a ping to iTunes, Yahoo Podcasts, Podcast Alley, and Podcast Ready. So those directories are covered.

Go to Feedburner at <http://www.feedburner.com> and sign up for a free account. List your podcast here, and this will generate a great deal of traffic to your podcast very quickly. It also gives people several options for adding your podcast to their specific aggregator.

Use common promotional sense. Put a link to your podcast on every page of every site that you currently own. Also put a link to it on every profile page that you have at various sites, such as MySpace, YouTube, Yahoo, etc.

Obviously, you would include a blurb about your podcast, along with a link to it in your signature file. Your signature file will be used on every email that you send out, in forum posts, in testimonials, in news group posts, and anywhere else that you participate online.

Hit the podcasting directories, other than the ones that PodPress already pings. These include:

Podcast.net – <http://www.podcast.net>
Podcasting News – <http://www.podcastingnews.com>
Pod Spider – <http://www.podspider.com>
Vital Podcasts - <http://www.vitalpodcasts.com/>
Podcast 411 – <http://www.podcast411.com>
Audio Weblogs – <http://audio.weblogs.com>
Podcast Lounge - <http://www.thepodlounge.com.au/add.php>
Blogebrity - <http://www.blogebrity.com/>
Podcast Directory – <http://www.podcastdirectory.com>
Idiot Vox – <http://www.idiotvox.com>
PublicRadioFan – <http://www.publicradiofan.com>
Pod Blaze - http://www.podblaze.com/podcast_directory.php
Business Resources Pod Cast Directory -
<http://www.businessresourcespodcastdirectory.com/>
Podcast Directory.org - <http://podcastdirectory.org/>
iPodder – <http://www.ipodder.com>
Podcast Pickle - <http://www.podcastpickle.com/>

These directories are just a start. You also need to get listed in the major search engines and directories as well. Also, look for niche specific directories. In these places, however, you won't be listing your podcast; you will be listing the page where your podcast resides.

Even though it is possible for people to subscribe to your podcast with RSS, you should also set up an autoresponder, along with a sign up form on each page of your podcast site. This allows people to sign up for what will become your newsletter. Not only can you notify them when you've updated, but you can then send them other topic related emails as well. Don't pass up this opportunity to build a list.

Announce your podcast with a press release. You can write a press release and distribute it through either a paid or free service. One nice service that is free is I-News Wire, at <http://www.i-newswire.com>.

Use social bookmarking. Sign up for a free account at Only Wire (<http://www.onlywire.com>). Next, sign up for a free account at all of the social bookmarking sites that they list. Put the only wire icon on your browser toolbar, go to the main page of your podcast site, and hit that icon. It will send the bookmark to all of those sites, with the tags – or keywords – that you've indicated. This gets a great deal of traffic in a short amount of time.

Become a listener and reader yourself. One of the best ways to promote your podcast is to listen to and comment on other people's podcasts, as well as their blogs. When you leave a comment, you are typically able to leave your link as well. You can also use your trackback feature on WordPress if your podcast relates to or quotes someone else's podcast or blog. Comments and trackbacks are what makes the blogging/podcasting world go 'round.

Become someone that others want to interview. Typically, the person that is being interviewed gets the opportunity to plug their website, blog, product, or in this case, their podcast. Find other podcasters that cover your niche, and offer to ask them to interview you. A good way to get them to do this is to return the favor.

Become friends with successful podcasters. Once you've established a friendship, ask them to give your podcast a mention, and of course, do the same for them.

Don't forget yourself! Sign up for a free account where you can create a customized homepage everywhere possible, and subscribe to your own podcast through those pages. While other people cannot typically see what you are subscribed to, these services can, and it is likely to get listed within that service much faster.

Naturally, you will use the ‘usual suspect’ marketing techniques as well. This includes article marketing, forum marketing, offline promotions, Craig’s List, email marketing, and even traffic exchanges, if you feel those methods will work in the promotion of your podcast.

Word of mouth is still the most effective form of advertising. Build relationships with the people who listen to your podcast. Ask them to contact you. Read their mail and answer it. Recognize them on your podcast show. The more they like you, and your podcast, the more likely they are to tell their friends and relatives about it.

Make sure that you are using all of the white hat search engine optimization techniques on the site that you host your podcast on. Natural search engine traffic is very valuable. Also, if you stand to profit from people listening to your podcast, you should strongly consider pay-per-click advertising, such as Google’s AdWords program.

The main thing is to not be quiet about your podcast. Remember that the squeaky wheel always gets the grease, and you want to be that squeaky wheel when it comes to getting the word out about your podcast.

You will need a name for your podcast, and possibly some sort of memorable slogan. Try to make the name interesting and catchy, while still going with a name that fairly well describes what your blog is about. Unless you are already a famous person ‘John Doe’s Podcast’ is not going to cut it in the podcasting world. You need a good name for your podcast!

Further brand your podcast with a graphic. This is a graphic that is 300 x 300 pixels wide, in JPEG format. This graphic will appear on sites such as iTunes. The graphic can be a picture of you, or whatever you want. Ideally, a picture of you, the podcast host, works best for branding purposes.

As much time as you’ve spent producing your podcast, be prepared to spend at least three times that amount of time – or more – promoting it. Promoting a podcast is just like promoting anything else. It requires time and effort on your part. However, because of specialized promotional outlets, such as podcast directories, promoting a podcast is easier than promoting a product or a website. The same is true for blogs, since there are specialized ways to promote blogs as well.

Part II Action List

- ☐ Download and install Skype from <http://www.skype.com>. Play around with it, and see how it is used. Explore all of the features.

- ☐ Write a short podcast content outline or script, and phone in your first podcast. Download it to your computer. If you already have editing software, play around with it and add lead in and lead out music. Upload the podcast to your web server, and get it linked on a page. Thoroughly test it out just to see if you've done it right.

- ☐ Get the Internet Video and Audio Bundle from <http://www.internet-audio-video.com/audio-video-products.htm>. Install the software and read the operation manuals. Start practicing with it until you know how to use it like a pro.

- ☐ Choose a web host and a domain name for your blog. Remember that it is really better to have your own host, instead of using one of the free ones. Install WordPress on that site. This can be easily done through a host that includes Fantastico. Install the PodPress Plugin for WordPress as well. This can be found at <http://wordpress.org/extend/plugins/podpress/>.

- ☐ Write your first 'professional' podcasting script, and get it loaded up in the teleprompter. Practice the first five minutes until it meets your audio and time requirement. Record the entire podcast.

- ☐ Edit your podcast. Get rid of background noise as much as possible, and try to include some nice lead in and lead out music. Make sure that you are not violating any copyright laws with your lead in/lead out music!

- ☐ Upload the podcast, link to it on your WordPress blog, test it on a few different computers and/or MP3 players, and go live!

- ☐ Follow the guide above for podcast promotions, and remember that the PodPress plugin will also ping iTunes, Yahoo Podcasts, Podcast Alley, and Podcast Ready for you.

Part III: Video Blogging

Video Tools You Need

Just as you need specific tools for podcasting, you also need tools for video blogging. While you can find and use various inexpensive tools for podcasting, the same isn't necessarily true concerning tools used for video blogging. You essentially need two tools: Audio and Video editing software and a digital video camera.

Depending on what you intend for your video blog, you may be able to get away with using an inexpensive webcam – inexpensive here means that it is less expensive than a digital video camera. It does not mean that you should choose the most inexpensive webcam on the market. If you go with a webcam, choose a top of the line webcam.

Note that with a webcam, you will pretty much be committed to shooting your video from one place all the time. This is really only a good choice if you know that this will be the case, and that the video will always be just of you, sitting in front of your camera.

For best results, you should really consider purchasing a quality digital camera. Digital cameras range in price, features, and of course in quality. Typically, the more features and better quality you receive, the more you can expect to pay. As a business video blogger, however, this expense should be considered an investment in your business.

You don't have to buy top of the line equipment, but you don't want to purchase your digital camera from the bargain bin either. When you start shopping, take your time. Try out several cameras to determine which one is going to be the right one for your purposes.

While this is not a course on choosing the right digital video camera, there are specific things that you will want your digital video camera to have. You will be presented with a myriad of features, but one thing that you want to keep in mind is that a single chip camera will do – you don't need a three chip camera for video that will be used on the web.

You may want to consider purchasing a used camera. You can visit an online auction site, or even your local pawn shops to find quality, used video cameras. If budgeting is an issue, this will most likely be your best option, since digital video cameras start at around \$700.

There are several add-ons that you will want to purchase as well, including a case for your camera, and a tripod. A tripod is vital, since it will often determine whether or not you produce a quality video.

Keep in mind that there are hundreds of add-ons that you can purchase, but unless you are planning to become a professional videographer, you really won't need most of these things.

Remember that a great majority of video bloggers use simple webcams for their videos – regardless of how limiting it can be – simply because they don't see their way clear to spending big bucks for professional video equipment. Start as cheaply as you can, and upgrade as you see a need for upgrades later.

Whether you use a webcam or a digital video camera, you will find that you will need to work with it some in order to learn exactly how to get the quality of video that you want. This may mean adjusting the settings on the camera, or adjusting the light in the room that you are shooting your video in.

Make sure that your camera – webcam or otherwise – comes with documentation that tells you how to operate it. This will be a concern when purchasing used equipment.

Aside from a way to shoot your video, you will also need video editing software. You can use the same Audio and Video creation and editing software that was recommended for your podcast, Internet Audio and Video, which can again be found at <http://www.internet-audio-video.com/audio-video-products.htm>.

If you are purchasing a new digital video camera, it may come with editing software as well. However, much of the software that is distributed in such a way is usually either very complicated to work with, or not worth figuring out because it is too limited. Be prepared to buy your editing software separately.

That's really all that you need. You can have all of the needed tools for as little as fifty bucks, or as much as thousands of dollars, depending on what you buy. Again, don't go 'all out' in the beginning.

Start as cheaply as you can, and upgrade later. There's no reason to shell out hundreds or thousands of dollars when you are just getting started.

Selecting Your Blog Host and Domain

If you have already started podcasting, and you've set up a domain name, web hosting, and a blog for this, there usually isn't any need to set up a separate domain name, web hosting, or blog for your video blog. It can all be incorporated into one.

Your blog will allow you to set up multiple categories. You could set up a category for your podcasts, which will be listed by date, and a category for your video blogs, which will also be listed by date. This will save you money. It's kind of a 'two for one' deal.

However, if you are not podcasting, or if your video blog will be on a different topic than your podcast, you will want to use a separate domain name, with a separate blog installed, however, if you've chosen a web host that allows you to have more than one domain name on the server, this is ideal.

There are also, of course, free options for setting up your video blog web hosting. You can now host video blogs in multiple places. Some places are specific for video blogs, while others are not. Regardless, you will probably have to use a free file storage service to store your videos.

Some of the top blog hosts include:

- Blogger – <http://www.blogger.com>
- WordPress – <http://www.wordpress.com>
- SquareSpace – <http://www.squarespace.com>
- Blog.com – <http://www.blog.com>
- TypePad – <http://www.typepad.com>

Some of the best places to upload your video are:

- YouTube – <http://www.youtube.com>
- Google Video – <http://video.google.com>
- Yahoo Video – <http://yahoo.video.com>

Your video will be made available to the public at the above video sites. If you don't want your video to be publicly available, you should use a more private file storage service, such as Our Media at <http://www.ourmedia.com> or File Den at <http://www.fileden.com>.

Note that the only reason you may not want your video to be publicly available would be if you want to get traffic to your site, as opposed to just getting views on your video. However, you can typically drive traffic to your site through your publicly available videos. This will be discussed in detail later.

Planning Your Video

Planning your video is much like planning a podcast. There are numerous things that you must decide, before you ever turn the video camera on. Of course, you must determine what style of video you will make, what format you will follow, and finally, you must write the content or at the very least a very well defined outline of the content.

Planning is the longest part of video blogging. Again, there is much that you must decide, and a good place to start is with the style of video you will make. Here are typical video styles:

1. *Interview Style* – This is of course a video that will capture you interviewing someone else. These make great videos, and they are quite popular, depending on your niche.
2. *News Reporting Style* – This is the same as it is for a podcast, wherein you literally report the news that concerns your niche – CNN style.
3. *Conversation Style* – This would be a video of two or more people having a topic centered conversation. It is not to be confused with an interview, because it is more of an open conversation about the topic, where each person gives their views. Think of ‘The View’ when you think of this style.
4. *Course/Lesson Style* – Video makes a wonderful tool for courses and lessons. Generally, with this type of video, you would use visuals and such to teach the topic.
5. *Monologue Style* – Just as with podcasting, think Rush Limbaugh here. You give your views on your topic.
6. *Other* – There are numerous styles of videos. You can do ongoing ‘journal style’ videos, funny shorts, full length movies – the possibilities are endless.

There is no hard and fast rule that says that you must create the same style of video for each video blog post that you make. However, in terms of business video blogging, you will most likely want to stick with a combination of news reporting, courses/lessons, monologue, conversation, and interviews.

Once you’ve chosen your platform, you need to choose your format. Again, there are not hard and fast rules here. You can do what you want, but ideally, your video should be laid out in an orderly, logical fashion. You want it to make sense to your audience, and it is a good idea to stick with a similar format for each video, so that your audience knows what to expect from you.

A sample video blog format may look like this:

1. Lead in music, intro screen
2. Welcome
3. Announcements
4. Main Content
5. More Announcements
6. Lead out music, credits screen

This is a very basic format for your production, and your specific video may have additional items – or completely different items depending on the type of video that you are producing.

It helps, at this point, to determine how long your video will be. As with podcasts, thirty minutes to an hour is a good length. Longer videos may be harder to produce, take longer to upload, and may actually be too long for your audience. Shorter videos won't give you enough time to get your point across. Choose a video length, and assign a time limit for each item of your format.

Remember that 150 to 160 words can be spoken, on average, per minute. With this in mind, you are ready to start writing your content – or your outline. If you feel that you will be able to speak more naturally, stay focused on your topic, and get your point across in a logical fashion with the use of a well defined outline, as opposed to a script, go with that.

If not, you will need to write a script. You can use a teleprompter for this, as long as your computer is close enough to where you are shooting your video for you to see the teleprompter. However, you never want to sound like you are reading a script. Write a five minute outline, and a five minute script, and shoot a practice video of each one to determine how you do best at delivering your content.

The same concepts apply here as they do for planning podcast content. Be sure to refer to that section of this ebook for that information. Remember that there are ideas out there everywhere. But you will need to determine how often you plan to post to your video blog, so that you can better determine what content, and how much content should go into each video.

It is also at this point that you will create or gather any visuals that you plan to use. This could be a variety of props or items, depending again on your niche and your topic. For example, if you are shooting a video that teaches people how to groom a poodle, you will need a poodle – preferably one that actually needs grooming, and all of the tools that are needed for grooming the poodle.

You aren't quite ready to turn the camera on yet...there are still a few more issues that you need to work out before you say 'lights, camera – ACTION.'

Shooting Your Video

The first step to shooting the perfect video for your video blog is to ensure that you have chosen the right venue for the video. Again, if you are using a webcam, this will be limited, but if you are using a digital video camera, you won't be limited at all.

First, you need to really consider the background. What will the camera see behind you? Will there be movement? A Sunset? Some sort of backdrop? Think about your favorite television talk show, and focus on the background there. For instance, is there a skyline? Is there a solid colored wall, but nice furnishings and simple deco? You need your own background or backdrop.

Lighting is another issue. Shoot a few minutes of practice video in the space that you plan to use to ensure that the lighting is right. Too much light can blur the lines and cause white spots on your video. If the video is too dark, you will have nothing more than shadowed figures.

Place the camera on the tripod, or on another solid, still surface. This will prevent you from shooting 'shaky' video. Don't assume that just because you have steady hands, the video won't be shaky – it very well could be, and this could ruin the whole thing. Even professional videographers know that using a tripod is always preferable to holding the camera, in order to produce the best possible video.

While it may be difficult in some locations, you should try to eliminate noise in the background as much as possible. This will result in a video with much higher quality audio, and it will require a little less editing later. While a great deal of background noise can be filtered out in the editing, it is not true that all of it can be, and therefore, you need to minimize it before and while you shoot the video.

There are two features on your digital video camera that you should strongly consider using. The first is auto focus. The second is image stabilizing. Furthermore, when you look at your test video, you may need to change settings to adjust for lighting – but if possible, make adjustments to your setting, instead of the camera settings.

Unless you are very close to the camera, you may want to consider using an external microphone. These are not expensive, and you will find that you get better audio quality with an external microphone. When you use the internal microphone, you will be limited as to how close or how far away the camera can be.

Once you feel that your physical setting and camera settings are right, you are ready to turn the camera on and start shooting your video. Note that it is perfectly

acceptable to hold a paper or note cards while you are recording your video. It's done all of the time, in the most professional of settings. However, if you don't want to hold a paper or note cards, use a teleprompter.

Speak clearly and remember how much time you have for each segment of your format. You should not worry too much about keeping strictly to that time limit, however, as you can edit the video for time later on. If you stumble while speaking, again, don't worry, as this can be edited later.

It could literally take days and even weeks to shoot a video if you worry over every little imperfect detail. If the majority of your video is good, that which is not good can be taken out or changed with editing. However, if the majority of it is not good, it should be redone.

You don't need to add music, such as intro and exit music to the video as it is being shot. This is done during the editing phase. It is a good idea, however, to leave a little space in the front and at the end of the video to make editing a little bit easier. You don't have to leave enough blank space for your music to fit...just start recording, wait about thirty seconds, and then start your actual show. When you are finished, wait an additional thirty seconds before you stop recording.

Again, don't shoot the entire video without first shooting a few minutes of footage and checking it. You will find that you will save a great deal of time by recording for five minutes, watching, and then fixing anything that isn't working out well, such as lighting or sound. Shoot this practice video until you have the right environment for your video!

You should also be aware that there is another option that will allow you to create a video blog, without shooting the first inch of video. You can use other people's videos on your blog. There are, of course, pros and cons.

The cons are that this is not your video, and you will have to credit the author. You will also have no control over the quality or content of the video. The pros are that you don't have to own a video camera or web cam to make this work for you.

The idea would be to go to one of the video sites, such as YouTube, and find video that would appeal to your audience. Then, simply post the video on your blog, and write a commentary about it.

Be prepared, however. Such a video blog won't get nearly the attention that your own videos will. You also run the risk of losing visitors, as they surf away to find more videos by the author of the video that you are showing on your site. For best results in video blogging, shoot your own video, even if it is with a webcam.

Editing Your Video

Editing a video will typically take more time than editing a podcast. This is because there is so much that you can do with video that you cannot do with audio. The final video can be very simplified, or very complex and that can all be determined during the editing process. It's all just a matter of how professional you want your video to be.

Before you start, do the same thing with your video as you did with your podcast. Save one copy on your desktop, and another in a separate file, such as you're my Documents folder. This way, if you mess up too badly, you will still have the original video.

Start by listening to the video while watching. You will need to edit out any background noise. You may also need to do a 'talk-over' in some areas, where you say what needed to be said in case it doesn't come out clearly enough. Take care of all of the sound issues first.

You can transfer your entire video into the video editing software, and then determine which parts of that video you want to use for the final product. You can take entire sections, clips, clips of clips, etc. So, if you had a long pause in the video, it can be completely cut out.

If you have a shot that didn't work well, you can cut it out. Since you can also edit the sound, you can easily make it work out okay. It just takes a great deal of time and patience. Remember that once you get the hang of it, this becomes easier and faster.

When you 'splice' it all together, however, it may not look quite right after you've cut out several clips or trimmed clips. This can be resolved with fades. You can fade into a clip, and then fade out of that clip and into the next one, or just fade into the next one. It is obvious that the camera was 'stopped' or that the video was edited, but it is very professional, and not a problem at all.

For the most part, it just looks like a break between shots or topics – a planned break. You may need to adjust the gamma on the video for your final product. You can use the editing software to make the video appear brighter or darker overall.

At the beginning of the video, use your editing software to create a title screen. Title screens typically have the name of the video/show, the name of the star (you), and possibly some video or still picture that represents your video/show. You may or may not need additional title screens throughout the video, but this is usually not the case with blog videos.

The use of music is optional of course. Typically, music is used at the beginning and end of 'news style' video blogs, but it isn't required. They will work just as well without the music. However, music kind of gives your video a professional touch. Consider using intro and exit music at the very least. Music that plays in the background usually isn't necessary at all. Make absolutely sure that you are not violating any copyright laws.

If you will be using visuals, such as pictures, websites, or other things such as this in your video, don't actually shoot footage of them. Instead, scan them, tweak and tune them, and then edit them into the video where they belong. You don't want to try to record something on your computer screen with the use of a digital camera. You can use Internet Audio and Video to do that.

Finally, at the end of your video, you could opt to roll some credits. This is easily done with the video editing software. You could also opt to just 'fade out.' The effects that you add to your video really depend on what the video is of, what it is meant for, the audience, and several other factors that are specific to your video.

The important thing to remember is that you don't have to use all of the crayons in the box in order for your video to be successful. Often, less really is more. Every element that you add could make the video file larger – unnecessarily larger.

Before you start dressing your video up with special effects and what-not, really consider your audience and the message that you are trying to portray. Will music really mean that much to your audience? If not, don't add it. Will not having music make your video look unappealing to your audience? Add it.

Use your best judgment, and pay attention to the comments that your users leave behind. If you ask for feedback, you will get it. You can literally ask your viewers what they think of the video, how it can be improved, what they especially liked, etc.

Every piece of editing should have a purpose. The overall purpose is to make the video better, whether it is based on sound, picture, or audience attraction. To make a video that is more appealing to your audience. If you are unnecessarily cutting or adding, you are most likely doing something wrong.

One bit of editing that you will want to do is to possibly watermark your URL on the video, and your copyright (in much smaller letters). On your blog, you can make it clear that others are free to use or share your video, as long as it remains unchanged.

File Format Selection and Uploading

Unlike podcasts, which should be uploaded in .mp3 file format, videos can be uploaded in one of several different formats. The format you choose depends largely on how big the video file is, the player that you are using the call the video on the server, and of course on your personal preference.

There are easy ways to get your video to display on your blog, and hard ways. Obviously, you want the easiest possible method, so that is all we are going to cover here.

The easiest possible way to display your video on your blog is to first upload the video file to a site such as Google Video at <http://video.google.com> or YouTube at <http://www.youtube.com>.

Install a video plugin for your WordPress blog. There are numerous plugins to choose from, and they can be seen in the WordPress Codex, which is located at <http://codex.wordpress.org/Plugins/Video>. The one that seems to work the best is call WordPress Video Plugin.

You can choose any file format that is supported by the site where you are uploading the video initially. We've mentioned Google Video and YouTube, but other possibilities are Clip Fish, Daily Motion, Vimeo, Video Tube, Uncut, Grouper, Revver, Blip TV, Metacafe, My Video Break, and Seven Load.

You simply save your video in a supported file format, upload it to the external site that you have chosen, navigate to the control panel for your blog, and use the WordPress Video Plugin to get your video to appear on your blog. You can then edit the blog post, where the video appears, to include your text.

Again, this is the easiest possible method. Furthermore, you won't have to worry about using up your server disk space to store your videos, as they are stored externally. However, this only works if you are using a WordPress blog, with the WordPress Video Plugin.

If this is not the case, you will have to use a harder method. First, let's discuss file format. Choices are MPG (Moving Picture Experts Group), RAM (Real Audio, Real Video), MOV (QuickTime Files), AVI (Audio Video Interleave), ASF (Advanced Streaming Format), WMV (Windows Media Video), SWF or FLV (Flash).

Make it easier on yourself, and your users, by either choosing the FLV/SWF format or the WMV format. Note that Windows Media Videos (WMV) can be played on computers that are not running Windows software, such as Macintosh.

Once you've uploaded the video – either to your server or to a file storage service – you have to do one of two things to make it available to others. You either have to link to it, or embed it. The best course of action for a video blog is to embed it. Of course, you need code that is specific to the file format for embedding to work.

Code can be extremely hard to understand. Your best option is to have video file converter software that will convert your files to the format that you've chosen, and then generate the code for your page for you. Some video editing software will also do this for you. You can also use one of the various free, online generators as well.

For software that will convert and give you the code to embed your video, consider using the same software that was recommended for both podcasting and video blogging: Internet Audio and Video at <http://www.internet-audio-video.com>. This will convert your video to the best possible format, and generate the code that you need to instantly publish the video on your webpage or blog post.

A fantastic web based code generator can be found through the Center for Instructional Technology at <http://cit.ucsf.edu/embedmedia/step1.php>. It supports Flash, Real Media, Quick Time, and Windows Media. It is free to use.

Once the video is appearing on our site, you will of course want to watch it completely, and consider watching it on different computers with different Internet Connection speeds. Be absolutely sure that it is working correctly, as sometimes things get scrambled during the uploading process. If this happens, delete the file from the server, and try uploading again.

You may also consider adding a simple link to the video file so that users can opt to download it in order to watch it locally on their machine, in the event that they have a slow connection. This will also cut down on some of your bandwidth usage.

As mentioned earlier, you must include a paragraph that describes your video blog post. If you don't, it won't get indexed in the search engines, because as far as the search engines are concerned, there won't be anything to index. A paragraph is sufficient, but you shouldn't go anymore than two paragraphs with the text, and be sure to include your keywords.

You may also want to consider adding any website links that are mentioned in the blog post to the textual part of the post. After the description, you could just make another paragraph with 'referenced links.'

Promoting Your Video Blog

Promoting a video blog is the same as promoting a blog, except that you do have a few more places where you can promote. Of course, you will want to use all of the same methods that you use to promote a podcast, a website, or a product as well.

Start with the marketing basics, such as Google AdWords, article marketing, forum marketing, marketing to newsgroups, cross promoting between websites, and purchasing advertisement in ezines and on websites. From there, let's move to the more 'blog specific' promotions.

The first key to successfully promoting a blog is to pay very close attention to the Web 2.0 elements. If you have social networking profiles, you should post a link to your video blog there. If a blog is included, you can post your actual video blog there as well. Just be careful to change the textual description of the video, so that you are not penalized by the search engines.

Use social bookmarking through Only Wire at <http://www.onlywire.com>. This is explained in detail in the podcast promotions section of this ebook. Next, hit the top blog directories, and make sure that you get listed in the search engines as well.

The top blog directories include:

Blog Directory – <http://www.blogs.botw.org>
Blog Catalog – <http://www.blogcatalog.com>
Blog Hub – <http://www.bloghub.com>
Blog Flux – <http://www.blogflux.com>
Blogarama – <http://www.blogarama.com>
Blog Dup – <http://www.blogdup.com>
Top Blog Area – <http://www.topblogarea.com>
Blog Top List – <http://www.blogtoplist.com>
Blog Rankings – <http://www.blogrankings.com>
Weblog – <http://www.weblog.com>

The top video blog directories are:

Vlog Directory – <http://www.vlogdir.com>
Video Blog Directory – <http://www.videoblogdirectory.com>
MeFeedia – <http://www.mefedia.com/feeds>
Blog Universe – <http://www.bloguniverse.com>
Video Blogging Universe – <http://videoblogging-universe.com/vlogs>
Fire Ant – <http://fireant.tv>

Vlogdex – <http://www.herecomespod.org.uk/vlogdex>
Vlog List – <http://www.vloglist.com>
Vlog Map – <http://www.vlogmap.com>

Next, make sure that you ping each time you post. This can easily be done through a service such as Ping-O-Matic at <http://www.pingomatic.com>. Do this each and every time you post, so that all of the top directories, where you have already listed your video blog, know that you have updated. This also helps with search engine listings.

You have to entrench yourself in the blogging community. Even though there are literally millions of blogs and a huge number of video blogs as well, never think for a minute that it isn't a community. It is indeed. Start by becoming an active participant in one or two of the many video blogging/blogging forums.

Not only will you learn a great deal, but you will also get traffic to your video blog. As you develop relationships there, you will also get mentioned in other people's video blogs.

You will need to visit blogs and video blogs that relate to yours in some way. Trackbacks and comments are a huge part of blogging, as well as video blogging. You should post comments on other people's video blogs and blogs on a regular basis, and leave a link that leads back to your video blog. Make sure that your comments are relevant to the post, however.

Also, just as you would refer to other people's blogs in a textual blog, you can refer to other people's blogs in your video blog as well. Just be sure to add the track back link to the text that you use in your video blog description.

Finally, build your blog roll. A blog roll is a list of blogs that you find useful or interesting. Start adding important video blogs or blogs that relate to your topic to these, and request that they add your video blog to their blog roll as well.

Remember when we talked about how making your video publicly available would actually boost hits to your video blog? It's absolutely true. You need to upload a copy of your video to all of the top video sites. You will create a profile at each of these sites, and your profile should of course contain a link to your site.

You could also opt to just make some sample videos, and upload those, instead of uploading each and every video that you do, but you won't get as much traffic from it. It all really depends on how much time you have to promote your video blog as to how often you upload to the video sites. Here is a list of video sites that you do not want to miss:

YouTube – <http://www.youtube.com>
Google Video – <http://video.google.com>
Yahoo Video – <http://video.yahoo.com>
Flurl – <http://www.flurl.com>
Eyespot – <http://www.eyespot.com>
Grouper – <http://www.grouper.com>
Jumpcut – <http://www.jumpcut.com>
Our Media – <http://www.ourmedia.org>
Revver – <http://www.revver.com>
Video Egg – <http://www.videoegg.com>
Vimeo – <http://www.vimeo.com>
vSocial – <http://www.vsocial.com>

Join FeedBurner at <http://www.feedburner.com> and make sure that you put a 'subscribe via feedburner' button on your blog. When you do this, visitors can easily hit the button, and select to have your blog added to their RSS feeds in their reader, or on numerous customized home pages.

I didn't mention Technorati in the lists above because it is special, and you should pay special attention to it. Technorati can be found at <http://www.technorati.com>, and it is one of the biggest blog directories in existence. Make absolutely sure you list your video blog here, and also make sure that it is pinged after each post.

Remember that people may acquire your podcast or your video from a variety of sources. Therefore, it is a good idea to promote your video blog through your podcast, and your podcast through your video blog. Never assume that blog watchers are listening to the podcast and vice versa!

Make sure that you are using a website statistics program, so that you can analyze your traffic for your podcast and your video blog. This is usually available through your web hosting service.

This information is invaluable to a website owner, and it will help you to determine where you need to put forth more advertising efforts, or even where it is best to spend your advertising dollars. Spend less time on what is not working, and more time and money on what is working.

You will be able to see where your visitors come from, how long they stay, what pages they enter your site on, and what pages they exit from. Again, this is very valuable information that can not only affect how and where you advertise, but also what you do with the pages on your site.

Part III Action List

- ☐ Acquire the tools that you need for quality video. This includes a good digital video camera, a tripod, and editing tools. Choose a place where you will shoot your video blog episodes (if it will be the same place each time), and get it set up with the appropriate background and lighting.
- ☐ Select your blog host and domain name. It is acceptable to use the same host and domain name as you use for your podcast, where you have WordPress installed. You can also opt for a separate domain and hosting account, or to host your blog at one of the free blogging sites, such as blogger.com.
- ☐ Plan your video. Choose your topic and outline it, and write a script if you need one. If you have your computer nearby, you could also use the Podcast Teleprompter.
- ☐ Shoot your video. Because it is digital, you don't have to worry about wasting film. Practice as much as you need to, until your video resembles what you want, with only some editing required.
- ☐ Edit your video. Include a title screen, credits, and music. Make sure that you edit out any background noise and make any needed adjustments to the overall visual aspect of the video. You can also add a watermark of your domain, which will remain on the viewing screen while the video is being played.
- ☐ Save your video and get it uploaded to your web server. The format that you choose will depend on how your video will be displayed on your page. See the chapter that covers this information.
- ☐ Promote your Video Blog. There are numerous ways and places to do this. Refer to the earlier segment on Video Blog promotion.

Conclusion

As you've learned by now, there is work involved in getting started with podcasting and video blogging. Fortunately, it won't always feel like such hard work – otherwise, fewer people would be doing it.

There will come a point, when you've learned all of the 'ins and outs' involved, where you will actually enjoy podcasting and video blogging, and actually even look forward to doing it.

The key to success in both ventures is to make sure that what you are producing is of high quality. Remember that anybody can easily create podcasts and video blogs, but what sets you apart from everyday podcasts and video blogs is the quality.

Quality matters in all things, from the content, to the delivery, to the quality of the audio/video, and even to the quality of the website where those things are delivered. It all matters, because your reputation matters –and your reputation will *absolutely* be affected by the quality of the work that you put out there in the public.

You may start to feel like all of the learning, work, and frustration isn't worth it, if you don't catch on easily – but it is indeed worth it. If it weren't, there again wouldn't be so many people doing it. It does work, and receiving information and entertainment via podcast and video blog has become the norm worldwide.

As mentioned earlier, although it may seem like a great deal of time is spent putting together the perfect podcast and an outstanding video for your blog, the majority of your time will actually be spent in promoting the podcast or vlog.

Make it all as easy as possible by having the right tools for the job. These are discussed at the beginning of Parts II and III, but it cannot be said enough. Get a good microphone that has noise canceling features and get a good webcam, or a good digital video camera. Get good editing software that makes life easier.

The software that has been strongly recommended in this ebook, for both podcasting and video blogging is Internet Audio and Video. This is great software because it virtually includes everything that you need for podcasting and video blogging, with the exception of external hardware (microphone and camera). You will be hard pressed to find anything else that will work for both, at a better price, with the same or even more features.

When you have the right tools, and you learn how to use them effectively, you will find that podcasting and video blogging really is a great deal of fun. Do you remember the great LonelyGirl15 hoax? While the whole thing was a hoax, those

were *kids* doing that video blogging series! If kids are willing to put that much effort into you, you know there has to be some joy and fun in it somewhere! Even though the whole thing has been exposed, it is still being produced, and it still has a huge following. The acting is bad. The story line is farfetched most of the time...but it is still interesting.

This alone should give you not only an indication that it really is easy once you get the hang of it, but also that video blogging and podcasting are wildly popular. You may feel like you wouldn't have a good following...but why wouldn't you? If you can get people to visit your website, you can *certainly* get people to listen to your podcast or view your video blog. It's easier, but like everything else, it comes down to how well you promote it.

It may take several tries to get it right. Remember that you can ask for feedback from your listeners/viewers. They will tell you what they want or expect, if you just listen to what they are telling you. Try different styles or formats until you are producing what the majority of your audience wants.

Finally, don't make the mistake of thinking that podcasting and/or video blogging is a trend that is going to pass. It's not going to go backwards. It is only going to move forward and become bigger and more technologically advanced. It is important, from an Internet Marketing standpoint, to learn this new technology in it's infancy, which is actually where it still is today.

Learning the technology now, will make it easier to learn and move with new technology in the future. Podcasting and video blogging aren't just good promotional tools, they also serve to build your credibility, to earn more profit, and of course, they are really fun to do once you know how.