

OPPIDIUM

PODCASTING FOR ACADEMIC RESEARCH COMMUNICATIONS.



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Introduction

This is an introduction to the use and benefit of developing podcasts for academic Research engagement and communications. It also includes a brief outline of the other support that Oppidium could provide to support academic Research communications.

Podcasts.

Media research organisations such as **Nielsen** and **Statista** report that podcasts are the fastest growing communications vehicles. Year on year the number of podcasts being produced are increasing, the numbers of listeners are growing and the number of times they listen is becoming more frequent.

More podcasts are being listened to, by more people, more often.

In 2019 **Ofcom** reported that:

“Around 7.1 million people in the UK now listen to podcasts each week. That’s one in eight people and is an increase of 24% over the past year – and more than double over the past five years. Ofcom research also found that half of listeners have joined the podcast wave in the last two years.”

As organisations seek to enhance engagement and increase communications, podcasts are an excellent way to deliver these objectives during this extended period of physical distancing and remote working.

It’s good to know that they have never been easier to produce, disseminate and measure.

Why Podcast?

1. Create a strong component of an academic's social media strategy.

Oppidium has developed a 'Share', 'Curate' and 'Create' social media content model which enables quick, regular and meaningful content to be shared on social media channels. It involves:

- sharing useful information from third-party sources.
- sharing and commenting (i.e. adding value) on that information.
- creating original content.

Podcasts provide a potent part of the created content element.

2. Build and strengthen a Research Community.

Through the podcast subscription model followers can be created, increased and developed. This could include existing Research partners but can be expanded to create a 'follower' base beyond an immediate locality and sector, including prospective Research partners and Funders, in the UK and beyond.

3. Help make a Research theme distinct.

Podcasting is a format that lends itself to storytelling, this enables the individuals involved in the Research to describe themselves, their backgrounds, reasons for being involved, the work they carry out, the benefits that Research delivers (or can deliver). This can enable an academic, Research Centre or wider institution to develop a 'voice' and presence distinct from other Researchers.

4. Flexible.

Podcasts can be created as one-off episodes to support individual events, "newsworthy" moments or announcements. Series can also be produced to provide an updated narrative about the Research. This helps move beyond the usual 'Funding Announcement' or 'We have achieved...' moments that much Research communications is limited to.

In addition, the podcast formats can be adapted to suit whichever purpose is required at any given time (e.g. interview, panel discussion, on-location magazine style package, etc.)

5. Stronger and more powerful than video.

Video and film can be highly effective at specific moments, particularly when a significant budget is available. However, similar to radio, podcasting utilises the power of imagination which allows the listener to interpret the content, or the 'story' in a personally relevant way. The images portrayed within video are fixed, the mental images conjured by a podcast listener are specific and pertinent to them and their experience. The imagination also 'projects' images with higher 'production' values than video.

On a practical level podcasts can also be listened to when doing other things such as driving, making it easier for the audience to engage with the content in their own time and in their own way. The personal and flexible nature of podcasts means they are more likely to be engaged with than video.

6. Enables storytelling and 'human interest'.

Human interest stories are compelling. The podcast format varies from radio by allowing the stories of the individuals and their work to emerge over several episodes.

Podcasts develop committed listeners (even fans) and are not subject to the issues of having to cater to the casual listener (i.e. to keep things at a basic level or to keep re-explaining things). This means

subjects can be explored in more depth and the need to reintroduce themes and individuals is lessened compared to broadcast radio. The specific nature of the podcast ensures that the listeners are already interested in the subject area, which allows to a greater depth to be reached.

As previous episodes are easily available on podcast browsers (or on the organisations' website), it is possible to cover a range of subjects and themes and to cross reference other episodes when describing, for instance, projects, work previously accomplished or individuals involved in the Research.

7. Overcomes the 'is it newsworthy?' dilemma.

Announcements and key moments lend themselves to traditional news channels, whether reported by external media agencies, or contained with an organisation's website or other 'owned' media. These moments are valuable and provide an important part of a communications plan.

However, as mentioned above, outside of these moments podcasting allows for powerful, ongoing communications based on a narrative about the Research. This means you have increased opportunity to communicate your work and aims.

Additionally, this narrative can be tailored to be relevant to the needs of a specific audience whether this is academics, funding bodies, policy makers, or the wider public but also includes traditional journalists.

The narrative approach is also extremely helpful in communicating within the institution that an academic operates. Effective internal communication is a challenging task, there are many corporate messages that need to be communicated within universities (especially during this time of the COVID-19 pandemic). Podcasts enable internal communications to be carried out with, and alongside, the formal channels.

8. Accessible.

An interviewer/host can play an 'every-person' role asking the questions that people might usually be 'too afraid' to ask. They play the role of an external audience member and help to translate and explain the Research through interviews. This aids the creation of accessible content, allowing the information to be communicated with relevance but without dumbing down.

9. Creation of back catalogue, or library.

The episodic nature of podcasts (either as one-offs or in a series) means that a library of content can be created and easily found by the listener. It is often the case that a new listener will search for previous podcasts to build a bigger picture of the work and background. Podcast episodes tend to have a longer usable 'shelf-life' compared to other types of content. When earlier and related Research activity is available in an episode this can be easily identified and linked to.

10. The human interest

Primarily the listeners are really interested in you and the people involved in your Research. Human interest and storytelling are compelling. From the time two people first sat around a campfire and told each other how they managed to create a tool, catch a fish or accomplish a journey. Think of the multiple TV programmes and documentaries about work and organisations. Whether it's 'Inside The Factory', 'Back To The Floor' or even 'The Repair Shop', we're all 'hard-wired' to be interested in how things work and how things are organised. Podcasting allows you get a chance to promote your Research. but be prepared to give a bit of background and personal opinion, the audience will respond best when you do.

Process

The processes can be broken into different areas. Oppidium can help in all of these, or just those that you need support for. The areas are planning, recording, editing and disseminating:

1. Planning.

Pre-interview discussions including creating and agreeing questions and themes. Being clear about objectives, key messages and target audience (or audiences). Development of the 'treatment', which is something comparable to a rough or draft version of a script. The tone will be conversational meaning that a full script is not necessary, however a treatment will set down the subject, themes and 'flow' of the episode or series.

The planning process can also include bid writing support, specifically in writing the Communications and Engagement elements.

2. Recording and editing.

The recording can be facilitated remotely via Zoom, or other suitable online audio recording applications.

The editing process will 'tidy up' the interview, the sound quality and add music, links, introductions and outros (i.e. thanking the listener for listening and directing them to further episodes or other related information).

3. Uploading and disseminating the podcast.

This stage ensures that the podcast is available on all the most popular podcast browsers. Subscribers will be automatically notified when a new episode is available.

Social media (Linkedin and Twitter) is used to advertise, promote and describe the content of an episode. This can be carried out inhouse or included within the Oppidium podcast service.

4. Reporting

Providing a report of the number of listens, subscriptions, likes, shares of the podcast itself and the related social media activity. This will tend to grow exponentially over time. 'Old' episodes can also attract listeners as more people are aware and engage with the podcast.

Oppidium delivers strategic marketing and communications services for Universities, particularly providing support for Research communications.

We help you communicate and engage with:

- academics in your own institution and beyond
- funding organisations
- those you would like to conduct Research with
- journalists
- policy makers (elected officials, special advisors and civil servants)
- Third Sector organisations
- the general public

The Oppidium approach is:

THINK:

This involves taking a step back to work out what your 'market' needs and how you can demonstrate how you can meet these needs. It includes the development of Marketing and Communications Strategies, Market and Audience Research, Offer Development and Marketing Audits.

PLAN:

After the strategy is developed the planning begins. This stage involves the development of plans that will reach and engage your audience successfully. It's a process that is realistic about your resources and the timescales required. It includes Campaign Development, Content Marketing planning, Audience persona development.

ACT:

This is when you need extra capacity and capability to deliver your marketing and communications plans, this is the 'activity' bit. This stage includes things such as social media marketing, podcast creation and training, film and video production, communications training workshops.

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