

Podcasts: Understanding, creating and deploying them?



Dr. Rick Jerz
Rick@rjerz.com
www.rjerz.com

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1) What is a “Podcast?”

1. It must be nothing, since the “podcast” is not in my dictionary.
2. It has something to do with fishing
3. It is a radio talk show.
4. It a music file.
5. It is a TV program.
6. It is a lecture.
7. It is something only children do.

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Podcast Definition¹

- Podcasting is a new format for distributing audio and video content via the Internet. Actually, podcasting is just multimedia content enclosed into an **RSS** file.
- RSS means Really Simple Syndication. RSS is a special format based on **XML**. In fact, RSS feeds are XML files containing data according to the RSS specification, and usually located on a website.
- XML: an **HTML**-like file for handling data.
- HTML: Hyper Text Markup Language

1 - <http://www.rss-specification.com/sitemap.htm>

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My Podcast Definition

A method of obtaining (*subscribing*) computer files (*episodes*), usually audio (*mp3*) or video (*m4v*), from a catalog (*RSS feed, XML*) on the Internet (*website*), and having them automatically delivered to your **computer** and then to your iPod (*or other multimedia player*).

Podcast Demonstration

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2) How do I get podcasts?

- Computer (Mac or PC)
- Podcast software (**aggregator**)
 - Apple’s iTunes (free)
 - Others (search “podcast software”)
 - Not ICON
 - Not Windows Media Player
- Knowledge as to where to get the podcast
- “Subscribing,” or adding the podcast URL to your aggregator

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Aggregator’s Role: Manage the Podcast

- Read the RSS feed file
- Create a catalog of episodes
- Manage the podcast
 - Download selection
 - Track which episodes have been viewed
 - Remove episodes/podcasts
- Periodically (automatically) re-read the RSS file to update the catalog
- Coordinate with the portable player (iPod)

Demonstration

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3) Playing Podcasts

- **Computer software**
 - iTunes
 - Quicktime (video)
 - Windows Explorer
 - Depends on whether you have the correct software on your computer (Windows Media Player)
 - mp3, m4v, mov
- **iPod, Zune, and others**

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4) Why should I care about podcasts?

- **Understood by students (Fad? Cool?)**
- **Mobile/Portable format (computer-less)**
- **Automatic Delivery. One-step, done! (Subscription)**
- **Tolerates slow computer network**
- **Allows students (people) to learn when they want to (asynchronous)**
- **It is everywhere**
- **Disadvantages?**
 - Video (file) size (when using portable player)
 - Structure not as flexible

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Videos for Education

- **Captures knowledge**
- **Can efficiently delivers knowledge**
 - Knowledge acquisition per time
- **Sharing**
- **Delivery during absence of professor**

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Misconceptions

- **I must have an iPod to play podcasts.**
- **I have to have a Macintosh.**
- **I have to be a computer geek to do this.**

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What can be delivered?

- **Audio**
 - Stereo & mono
 - mp3
 - **Video**
 - 640x480 & 320x240 (iPod)
 - Mov, m4v, mp4
 - **PDF files**
 - **“Zip” files**
 - (Anything)
- Refer to Apple's Specification**

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5) How do I produce podcasts?

- **Two production requirements:**
 - Content files (audio and/or video)
 - RSS feed file (only one)
- **I prefer to produce instructional videos.**
- **You must consider what you want to do.**

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Creating Audio Content Files

- Computer and microphone
- Audio recording and editing software
 - Audacity (free)
 - Adobe Audition

Audio Demonstration

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Audio Tips

- Plan and practice (educational podcasts)
- Use a good quality dynamic microphone
- Put microphone on a stand, not in your hand
- Face the microphone away from the noise
- Record 44.1 kHz stereo, down sample from there.

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More Tips

- Avoid recording outside
- Avoid recording near fans or fluorescent lights
- Avoid crowded rooms
- Turn off the phone and window air conditioner
- Close the door
- Record at 3 a.m.

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6) How to deploy podcasts?

- a) Decide your podcast strategy
- b) Create the content files
- c) Create the RSS feed (catalog) file
- d) Put the content and feed files on the "Internet"
- e) Test the feed
- f) Inform the public where to find the catalog's location (URL)

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Podcast Strategy

- Options:
 - ICON
 - Engineering website
 - Private website
 - iTunes Store
- Pros and Cons
 - Feed file creation
 - Cost
 - Convenience
 - Control

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Website Demo

- Create the RSS Feed File
 - Manually with text editor
 - Notepad (PC) or Textedit (Mac)
 - Can us MS Word, but must save as ".txt"
 - Use a RSS feed editing program (Feed Editor)
- Test the feed (iTunes)

Example

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Apple's iTunes Store

- A commercial aggregator
- Free podcast service
- Big and easy audience
- A cataloging service, not a container
 - Wants only your RSS feed file, nothing else
 - i.e., you must keep your files somewhere else
- Audited by Apple
- No experimentation
- Delays
- Easier to get podcasts on than to remove them
- After posting, make note of the information Apple sends to you

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Tips About Files and Data

- Get organized!
- Consider using a consistent folder and file naming structure

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Inform the public

- Email
- Apple's iTunes store
- Website
 - URL
 - Podcast button
 - Podcast link to iTunes

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Notes about Video

- Much more complex
- Audio, music, photos, jpegs, videos (mov, avi, mpg, dv, etc.)
- Requires video editing software
- Transitions
- Must get output to m4v format
- Estimate 1 hour per 1 minute of production
- Next presentation

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Learning More

- Apple Technical Specs
- (Many) Online resources

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Questions?

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