ELEARNINGNEWS ARTICLE

Year 7 - number 253 Wednesday 28 june 2023

How to use podcasts in eLearning

A detailed insight into how to use podcasts, one of the most popular communication tools of the moment, for an eLearning strategy

The term "podcast" was first used in 2004 in an article in The Guardian and is a combination of the words "iPod" and "cast." The term was coined to define the new phenomenon of mp3 audio files available on easily transportable media such as the iPod. Nowadays, podcasts are among the types of content that are becoming so successful that, according to the latest available **data**, there are 464.7 million podcast listeners worldwide, or **22% of all Internet users**. There are various types of podcasts that are intended to educate, inform, or entertain. In this article we focus on podcasts for learning and how to use them to supplement an online training program.

Why podcasts can be effective for an eLearning course

There are three main reasons why podcasts can be useful for education:

1. **They are extremely versatile**
2. **They optimize time**
3. **They meet the educational needs of digital natives better than other solutions**

1. Versatile solution

Podcasting allows teachers to easily deliver engaging audio content. Podcasts can be easily used in schools and universities to engage students and teachers to improve learning and teaching practices.

Versatility also lies in the implementation of a podcast. Contrary to what you may think, podcasts can be made at a **low cost**, making them an easier solution than other types of content, which are often expensive and time-consuming to make.

2. Flexible learning

One of the greatest advantages of educational podcasts is their portability and convenience. Podcasts can be downloaded to a mobile device, **allowing the student to access educational resources anytime, anywhere**, with minimal effort.

The same could be said of video content or interactive presentations; however, audio content can be much easier to enjoy than other types of content because students listen longer than they watch or read.

3. Easier to follow

One of the great powers of podcasting is the **span of attention** that we are able to devote to this type of content. It is difficult to encourage students to devote 30 minutes to reading an article or watching a recorded lecture. This is because text and video require two activities: in the case of text reading and focusing, in the case of video watching and listening.

In the case of the podcast the individual only has to listen, in fact the information is read by someone else and there is no need to strain to look at a screen. This means that a podcast can be listened to in otherwise wasted time or while doing a routine activity. Students are much more likely to listen to and consume your material if they can do so on the bus, driving the car, washing dishes, or while at the gym. This is an important aspect of learning because, when students are already distracted by a routine activity, the content they are listening to gets a lot of attention. Another aspect that should not be underestimated is the attention span we are able to devote to a podcast compared to other content such as video or text. Several studies indicate that while **on average we are able to devote 2 or 3 minutes of attention to a video, in the case of podcasts the duration goes up to 20 minutes**.

How to use podcasts in the classroom

Language learning

One of the most common examples of educational podcasting is learning new languages. Anyone who has embarked on a journey to learn a new language has sooner or later found themselves listening to a story or program to train listening and pronunciation skills. This type of educational podcast is often done in "segments," with an approach of learning a sentence or grammar rule in each episode.

Review of lessons

There are more and more instances of teachers recording lectures and making them available on student portals to allow a review or, for those who were not present, a chance not to miss the lecture. In this way, lectures can be listened to again like a podcast.

Student-created content

One of the most interesting uses of podcasting in education is the concept of student-created content or active learning activities. You could allow students to create a podcast episode that delves into a topic from a lesson. In this way you can push students to engage with experts, other classmates and fuel a classroom debate. This allows students to take control of an aspect of their education and encourages engagement in the material.

How to create podcasts for eLearning

Now that we understand why and how podcasts can be useful for an eLearning project, let's shed some light on how to create podcasts for eLearning.

Develop a detailed rundown

The first point to consider is to create a detailed lineup for each podcast. One of the most popular strategies used by podcast producers is to create a series with multiple episodes. In this case you will need to develop a rundown for each episode in advance so that you do not repeat or skip some content. To avoid this problem decide what topics to include in each episode and then brainstorm ideas on your chosen topic. Don't forget that all eLearning podcasts should have a natural flow and create curiosity about the topic of the next episode. This keeps listeners coming back for more and prompts them to tune in the next time. Make sure the rundown covers all the topics you will cover and includes some degree of audience participation, such as asking compelling questions or soliciting their feedback.

Create a story-centered eLearning script.

Podcasts are not automatically more engaging than other content, and if a podcast is poorly done it will quickly bore listeners. The most engaging and engaging ones involve the use of storytelling by creating a storyline. Write a text that focuses on a challenge, obstacle or problem that online learners face regularly, add relatable characters and then tie it all together with a storyline. Even a 2-minute story at the beginning of the podcast can capture the attention of online learners and connect them to the topic.

Choose the right voice

When creating a podcast for an eLearning course, it is important to have a clear idea of the tone and pace you are trying to achieve, as well as the character you want to portray. For example, some training podcasts involve multiple characters, so you are likely to need the help of a professional voice actor or the help of a colleague.

Put your online students behind the microphone.

Instead of centering a podcast on the teacher, you can turn the tables and put your online students behind the microphone. One of the easiest ways to do this is by organizing a **discussion** with two parties involved and a facilitator. Give them a set of guidelines to follow, divide them into teams and ask them to create their own podcasts focused on a particular topic. This benefits all parties involved. The facilitators and those participating in the discussion have the opportunity to recap and review information to increase their memorization capacity. Listeners have the opportunity to get a new perspective on the topic. Last but not least, teachers in the eLearning course are able to assess the progress of learners, who should be able to summarize information in their own words and process it to support a position...

Create reusable eLearning templates.

There are certain elements of an eLearning podcast that you can **reuse** for each episode, such as the audio introduction and sound effects. Create an eLearning template that you can reuse each time to speed up the podcast production process. If you follow the same eLearning script format in each episode, you can also create a **master template** to reuse each time and into which you will simply need to insert the content of the next topic. Of course, it is a good idea to review your current eLearning content and update it from time to time.

Invite guest speakers and interviewers

After a few podcasts, you may find that you are running out of eLearning content or simply do not have the time to host an episode. In any case, you might consider inviting a **guest speaker** or conducting an **interview**. Choose people who are experts in the field you are covering or who have an interesting take on the topic. Don't be afraid of having to pay astronomical amounts of money for guests. Often if you offer them to promote their website or product to your listeners they will be happy to attend for free.

Integrate your branding

If you publish your podcast on particularly popular social platforms and your content is interesting, it may be picked up by other people. For this reason, it is always wise to integrate your **branding**. If you are a freelancer or a company offering these services be sure to mention your name or that of your company and include any other contact information a listener might need to know more about who you are.