



How to start a school podcast

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There are several ways to start a podcast in your school but the first consideration is what you're trying to achieve by having a school podcast.

- Is it for student recruitment (with prospective parents being the audience)?
- Is it for alumni engagement (to help with donor relations)?
- It is going to be a sixth-form student-led podcast (as an extended learning project)?

Let's look at each of the ways you could run a podcast to see which apply to the three options above.

1. The Headteacher's thoughts

Student recruitment podcast: ✓

Alumni engagement podcast: ✗

Sixth-form student-led podcast: ✗

Summary

This would be the Head recording episodes giving their own thoughts on things like what's happening in school this week, key thoughts regarding education this year, useful information to keep the parent body informed etc.

Recommended style of recording

A single USB microphone plugged into their own laptop with the recording stored locally.

Pros:

- Quick and easy to get started
- Usually very inexpensive too
- Perfect for the Head that likes the sound of their own voice

Cons:

- Content will often sound the same from one week to the next
- It can be a pain to do your own editing

2. Different staff members talking about their departments

Student recruitment podcast: ✗

Alumni engagement podcast: ✗

Sixth-form student-led podcast: ✗

Summary

These podcasts are less successful at engaging with the school community as they're usually a passion project for enthusiastic members of staff who want to promote their subject in the wider community. They don't really serve any of the three categories we're looking at in this document.

Recommended style of recording

A single USB microphone plugged into their own laptop with the recording stored locally.

Pros:

- Very easy and inexpensive to get going and to run
- Usually managed by the enthusiastic staff member

Cons:

- Quite possibly not operating within brand guidelines
- Could possibly get a touch 'maverick' without regular touch points with Marketing

3. Staff member 'interviewing' different guests in school

Student recruitment podcast: ✓

Alumni engagement podcast: ✓

Sixth-form student-led podcast: ✗

Summary

This is a great way to let the school community connect with the school at a deeper level. Prospective parents will learn about life in school, current parents will feel a stronger sense of connection and your alumni audience will feel like their donations to school are serving worthy causes.

Recommended style of recording

Each person having their own wireless microphone and the recording is carried out locally on each microphone too. Editing is done afterwards by combining all audio tracks (which has the option to control each person's audio separately).

Pros:

- Relatively easy to get going
- Very inexpensive to start and run
- Good variety and content from one week to the next

Cons:

- Finding a willing member of staff who has time to be your podcast Presenter
- Requires editing skill to avoid echo of microphone 'bleed' (when two microphones pick up the sound of one person's voice)
- It can be a pain to do your own editing

4. Staff member 'interviewing' different guests who aren't in school

Student recruitment podcast: ✓

Alumni engagement podcast: ✓

Sixth-form student-led podcast: ✗

Summary

The Presenter would be an existing member of staff, possibly someone who works in Marketing. Guests who aren't in school could include your alumni body (this is the perfect style podcast for alumni engagement), or your current parents, local businesses that work with the school, other key stakeholders who the audience would enjoy hearing from.

Recommended style of recording

An online recording 'studio' where the Presenter and guest(s) meet, record the conversation, editing is done afterwards. Each person is in their own location with a microphone plugged into their laptop.

Pros:

- Great variety of guests from one episode to the next
- Relatively inexpensive to get started

Cons:

- Finding a willing member of staff who has time to be your podcast Presenter
- Requires editing skill to blend together all tracks from the online studio, removing dead-space gaps where an internet recording injects a small amount of conversation 'lag'.

5. A partially-managed service from another company

Student recruitment podcast: ✓

Alumni engagement podcast: ✓

Sixth-form student-led podcast: ✗

Summary

Similar to Option 4 but using a podcast service business who provide a Guest Manager to communicate information to the guests and a Producer for the recording itself. Each episode is still recorded online but the general management of this is done for you.

Recommended style of recording

An online recording 'studio' which the external Producer manages, communicating with the Presenter and guest(s) until the recording starts. Editing is done afterwards, often by the management company. Each person is in their own location with a microphone plugged into their laptop.

Pros:

- Great variety from one episode to the next
- No technical requirement needed, you just focus on the conversation
- Professional intro with music
- Editing and production levels are very high. A professional school podcast.

Cons:

- Finding the member of staff with available time to be the Presenter
- Higher cost, typically a monthly fee and a fee per episode

6. Fully managed service provided by another company

Student recruitment podcast: ✓

Alumni engagement podcast: ✓

Sixth-form student-led podcast: ✗

Summary

Similar to Option 5 but engaging a podcast Presenter for each episode as well as having the customer management and technical management. Each episode is still recorded online. A fully done-for-you service.

Recommended style of recording

An online recording 'studio' which the external Presenter manages, communicating with the guest(s) from start to end. Editing is done afterwards by the management company. Each person is in their own location with a microphone plugged into their laptop.

Pros:

- No-one in school is needed to present your podcast or be technical support
- Great variety from one episode to the next
- Professionally produced episodes each week
- Marketing assistance often provided to get the most from your content

Cons:

- Highest cost per episode, often with a monthly fee to keep previous episodes up online

7. A sixth-form student-led podcast

Student recruitment podcast: ✗

Alumni engagement podcast: ✗

Sixth-form student-led podcast: ✓

Summary

Students in your school initiating their own podcast, creating the podcast artwork, identifying the market and theme of the podcast, sourcing their own guests and recording/editing each episode themselves in school.

Recommended style of recording

This could be recordings made in person (using multiple stand-alone microphones) or in an online recording 'studio' which they manage themselves. For any online recording studio the student Presenter and each guest would have their own microphone plugged into their own laptop.

Pros:

- An excellent way to engage students in 21st century media content
- Greater chance of viral explosion with a 'youth targeting youth' style podcast
- Often comes with good variety from one episode to the next

Cons:

- Full training is required for the students to run this effectively
- Can be harder to maintain when students leave the school

Whichever option is the preferred route in your school get in touch with our expert team of podcast specialists who can advise you on some of the finer details.

Visit www.thebonjouragency.com for more information or email happytohelp@thebonjouragency.com and we'll follow up with you on getting your school podcast up and running for you.



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