



# Everything You Wanted to Know About Podcasts (but were afraid to ask)

Ron S. Doyle

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## Podcasts are...

- Audio files delivered to subscribers via RSS feed
- Only about 15 years old as a mainstream medium
- Still nascent and constantly evolving



The worst (but most common) first question:

**How do I start a  
podcast?**



## Better starting questions:

- Who will listen to this podcast?
- What unique benefit or perspective will this podcast provide?
- Where will listeners consume this podcast?
- When does this podcast need to be distributed to be most effective?
- Why does this need to be audio instead of another medium?



# A podcast is a product.

Four-step product development process:

1. **The Fuzzy Front-End:** Who, what, where, when, why
2. **Design:** How
3. **Implementation:** Launch
4. **The Fuzzy Back-End:** Repeat steps 1, 2 and sometimes 3



# 1. Fuzzy Front-End: Who?

## THE PRODUCER

Who will do the work?

- Hosting
- Researching and booking guests
- Recording, editing, mixing
- Writing scripts and copy
- Handling technical issues
- Marketing and promoting

## THE AUDIENCE

Who is the listener?

- Age, race, gender, etc.
- Does this demographic listen to podcasts?
- How large is the potential audience?
- Do I already have an effective way to reach these folks?
- Are there other stakeholders who will be as important as the listener?



# 1. Fuzzy Front-End: What?

## THE PRODUCER

- What is this podcast about?
- What length should it be?
- What format?
  - Roundtable
  - Live recording
  - Audio journalism
- What resources are required?
  - Equipment, staffing, time, space

## THE AUDIENCE

- What attracts me to a podcast?
- What format do I prefer?
- What length is right for my lifestyle?



# 1. Fuzzy Front-End: When?

## THE PRODUCER

- When will this podcast publish?
  - Timing of launch
  - Timing of episodes
  - Frequency
  - Serialized vs. episodic
  - Seasons vs. ongoing
- When does this podcast end?

## THE AUDIENCE

- When do I listen to podcasts?
  - Synchronous vs. asynchronous
  - Paced consumption vs. binge
- When do I stop listening?





# 1. Fuzzy Front-End: Where?

## THE PRODUCER

- Where will we record?
  - Studio vs. field vs. remote
- Where will we distribute?
  - Free platforms like iTunes, Spotify, Stitcher, Google Podcasts
  - Subscription platforms like Patreon, newsletters, etc.

## THE AUDIENCE

- Where do I find podcasts?
- Where did I find this podcast?
- Where do I listen?
  - Apps
  - Mobile device vs. computer, Alexa, etc.
  - Walking, running, in my cubicle, in the kitchen



# 1. Fuzzy Front-End: Why?

## THE PRODUCER

- Why is audio the correct medium for this product?
- Why is this podcast different than all the others out there already?

## THE AUDIENCE

- Why should I listen to this podcast?
- Why do I subscribe and become a devoted listener?



If you haven't thrown in the towel...

# How do I build a podcast?



## 2. Design: How to Build a Podcast

### PRE-PRODUCTION

- Choose a name
- Assemble your squad
- Create a listener profile
- Plan first 'season'
- Design a one sheet

### PRODUCTION

- Create a pilot episode
- Workshop—keep, S.C.A.M.P.E.R., or kill
- Design artwork
- Find a podcast hosting service
- Find funding

### POST-PRODUCTION

- Edit and mix audio
- Add sound/music elements as needed
- Upload to podcast hosting service



## 2. Design: Pre-Production

- **Choose a name**
  - D'oh! Your catchy podcast title is already taken.
- **Assemble your squad**
  - Avengers, assemble!
- **Create a listener profile**
  - Use answers from phase 1 to construct a model listener
- **Plan first 'season'**
  - Map out the first 5-10 episodes
- **Design a one sheet**
  - Compile all of your findings from phase 1 into a guiding document

## 2. Design: Pre-Production

### One-sheet:

A document that summarizes the podcast plan—a brochure for the podcast and a road map for the producer

- Synthesizes all of your front-end work into a single document. If you can't explain it in one page, it might not work as a podcast
- Helps you sell the idea to stakeholders and sponsors
- Include title, tagline, summary, description, sample episodes/guests, production overview, listener profile, contact info (if needed)

## DEAD DADDY ISSUES

TELL ME SOMETHING YOU REMEMBER  
ABOUT YOUR DEAD DAD

*Dead Daddy Issues* is a podcast that explores the humor and humanity of life after losing a parent. We ask comedians, actors, artists, celebrities, and other interesting individuals to share stories and memories about the relationships they had—and continue to have—with their once-living fathers.

*I'm a standup comedian in Denver, Colorado. I lost my father when I was just 15. My dad was a charismatic, sports-loving, 37-year-old engineer and I was a moody teen falling out of school. We weren't getting along at the time, and then—suddenly, tragically—there was no more time to make amends. So I left the turmoil of South Central LA and followed my dream of attending art school. I spent years pursuing an acting career in LA before finding my voice and my home in standup comedy. I've won awards and grants, performed in front of thousands, and have been invited to some of the biggest comedy festivals in the world. Nope, I never got married and I don't have kids of my own, but I'm one heck of an auntie, a devoted sister, and a pretty good friend. And I've made a few very funny, very famous people laugh. Still, with each achievement, I always wonder: Would my dad have thought this was cool? Would he even think I was funny? Would he have been proud of me?*



*I'm Janae Burriss and yeah, I've got dead daddy issues. If you have a dead dad, I'm gonna guess you have some issues too. I'd love to hear about them.*

### SAMPLE EPISODES

- Nicole Byer on watching her father mow the lawn in lycra bike shorts
- Laurie Kilmartin on channeling the grief of her father's death into a comedy special called '45 Jokes About My Dead Dad'
- Chaz Bono on letting go of the grudge that began when his father voted for the Defense of Marriage Act
- Leslie Jones on taking her father's advice to play basketball in college—but ignoring him when he said she wasn't funny
- The Sklar Brothers on their dad's lessons for pulling a great prank
- Dove Cameron on legally changing her name to her late father's nickname for her
- Special episodes devoted to the pop-culture fathers we've loved and lost—from Mufasa and Atticus Finch to Dr. Huxtable and Darth Vader
- A Father's Day open-submission episode featuring clips from listeners

### CONTACT

*janae@janaeburriss.com*  
*310-493-0126*

*Twitter: @magaivenegro*  
*Instagram: @magaivenegro*

### ABOUT JANA E

Janae Burriss is a comedian and actor based in Denver, Colorado. She is a native of South Los Angeles and an alumna of the California Institute of the Arts. Janae can be seen performing regularly at Comedy Works in Denver and at clubs, colleges, and festivals all across North America.

### OVERVIEW

*30-minute episodes*  
*1-2 mid-roll breaks*  
*Weekly distribution*  
*40 episodes per year*

### PRIMARY AUDIENCE

*Jasmine, African American, 35 years old. She's a wife, a mom, and a teacher who usually listens to podcasts during her commute and on weekends. Jasmine lost her own father in elementary school, when she was no bigger than the kids she teaches. Listening to this podcast brings back memories of her father. Every day in the classroom, she feels her father's influence. She hopes that somehow, just like our show's host, she's making her dad proud.*

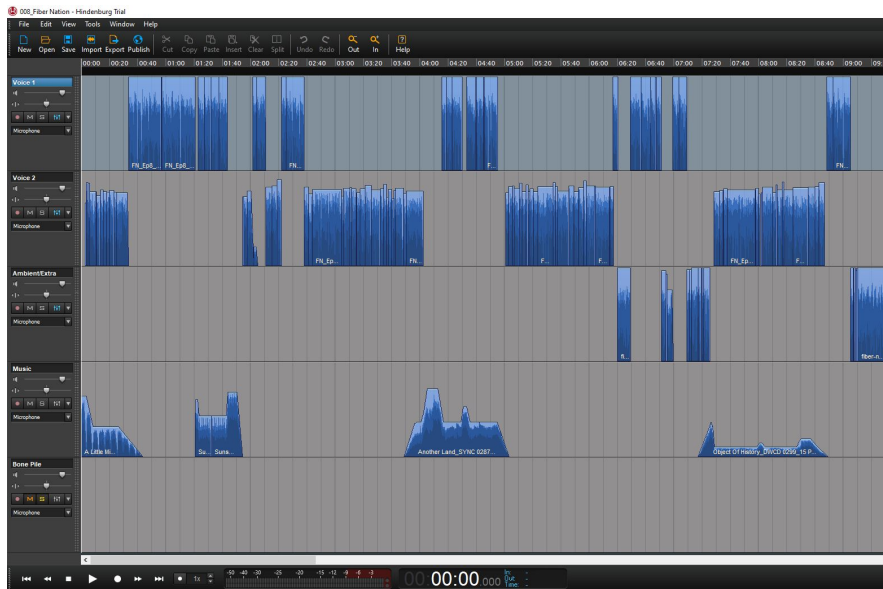


## 2. Design: Production & Post-Production

### Create a pilot episode

- Gather all the raw audio you'll need for the episode—voices, sound effects, music
- Don't sweat hardware unless you already have it (or a budget for it)
  - Microphones range from free (built into your computer or phone) to thousands of dollars
- Use software and online resources as needed
  - Remote recording tools like Zencastr, sound and music libraries
- Assemble and edit the audio using a DAW
  - DAW: Digital audio workstation. Fancy acronym for audio editing software (Audacity, Audition, Hindenburg, ProTools, Garage Band, etc.)

# DAW example: Hindenburg







## 2. Design: Production & Post-Production

Workshop the pilot—keep, S.C.A.M.P.E.R., or kill

S.C.A.M.P.E.R.

- **Substitute** (Substitute music, quotes, narration)
- **Combine** (Merge ideas that belong together)
- **Adapt** (Tweak the subjective angle to suit the podcast's objectives)
- **Modify** (Change the script, equipment, cast, etc.)
- **Put to another use** (Turn the audio into a newsletter, blog, etc.)
- **Eliminate** (Remove elements that distract/detract from the episode)
- **Reverse/Rearrange** (Reorganize elements to improve flow of the story/conversation)

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## 2. Design: Production

### Design artwork

- Must be square in JPEG or PNG format
- Currently 3000px by 3000px minimum
- Although artwork is large, must be identifiable and legible at tiny sizes (50px square)
- Font and color choices should suit the tone and demographics of the podcast





## 2. Design: Production & Post-Production

### Find a podcast hosting service

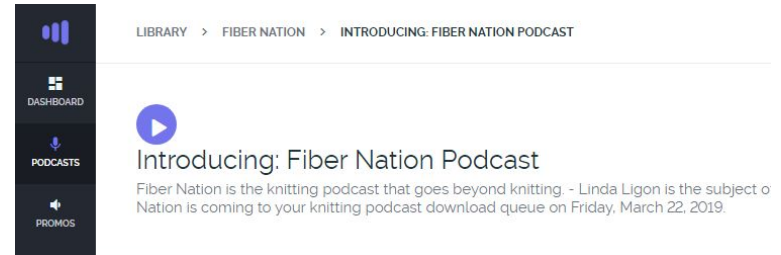
- An audio file alone is NOT a podcast—you need a place to store the files on the internet and an RSS feed to which listeners can subscribe.
- A website with a blog (e.g., a WordPress site) can host a podcast, but dedicated podcast hosting services have other advantages like server-load balancing, analytics, dynamic ad insertion, etc.
- Libsyn, Blubrry, Soundcloud, Soundtrap, Anchor.FM, Megaphone, etc. etc. etc.
  - Options are constantly changing—best to research when you're ready



## 3. Implementation: Launch!

### Publish your first episode on the RSS feed

- Ideally, this should be a short trailer episode or the pilot—it will be visible on podcast directories **BEFORE** you announce.





## 3. Implementation: Launch!

Submit your podcast's RSS feed to directories—or don't

- Free distribution:
  - Apple Podcasts (aka iTunes), Spotify, Google Podcasts, Google Play Music, iHeart Radio, Stitcher, Pandora, Spreaker, Pocket Casts, Blubrry, TuneIn, Player.FM, CastBox, Podcast Addict, and more.
  - Some podcast hosting services will automatically submit for you.
- Paid distribution:
  - Pandora, Acast Access, Stitcher Premium, password-protected website feeds, etc.—or your own delivery method.



## 3. Implementation: Launch!

### Announce your podcast to the world

- Wait until the podcast has been accepted in the largest directories (especially Apple Podcasts) before announcing, which can take 72 hours or more.
- This is like any product launch—the better the packaging and delivery, the more you're likely to get in return.



## 4. The Fuzzy Back-End

- Repeat the production cycle for each episode.
- Establish a routine and an editorial calendar.
- Refer to your one-sheet for existential questions.
- Don't be afraid to pivot if things aren't working.
- Set goals for commercialization—growing your audience, securing funding, improving the podcast as a product



# Questions?