SPECIAL REPORT:
The Eight Podcast Templates of

PodcastStudio Pro™

Adapted from the most popular templates found on Buzzsprout

By Jeffrey Alan Schechter

www.podcaststudiopro.com

THE INTRO

By some estimates, humans have been telling stories for 37,000 years.[1] These same humans (the species, not the individuals) have been engaged in one of the newest forms of storytelling -- podcasting -- since only the early 2000's. For argument's sake, many people consider June 2005 -- the month and year Apple added podcasts to iTunes 4.9 -- as throwing out the podcasting game ball.

I'm sure I don't need to point out that since then podcasting has become big business. At the time of this writing Joe Rogan's podcast, arguably the most successful in history, is downloaded a staggering 2.4 billion times per year. To put that in

perspective, while you were reading that previous sentence about Joe Rogan's podcast being downloaded it was downloaded 360 times. By the time you finished <u>that</u> sentence about how many times it was downloaded, it was downloaded an additional 360 times. By the time you finish reading <u>this</u> sentence, it will have been downloaded over 1000 times. And that's assuming Joe's audience hasn't grown since someone cooked up those numbers. Which I'm confident it has. (FYI, we're now at 1446 downloads with no signs of stopping.)

Podcasts come in a variety of flavors and sizes, and the best of the best rely on some type of format or template to help shape and clarify each episode. Some podcasts use the same template for every show, while others will mix them up depending on the needs of each episode. There are many podcasters that switch around between the Solo Host, Interview, Freestyle, and Listener Q&A templates…all while staying true to the theme of their podcast.

Most people who start podcasts don't continue with them. According to the Slam Agency, fewer than 20% of podcasts launched each year are still around the following year.[2] Nobody wants their podcast to fail. Everyone hopes for the best when they start, but hope doesn't always guarantee success for as heavily democratized as podcasting is the

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[1] According to Science.org, the Aboriginal Gunditjmara people of Australia have been telling the same story about the eruption of the Budj Bim volcano since 35,000 BC. And still nobody in Hollywood has gotten the rights.
[2] https://slamagency.com/why-podcasts-fail/ The Slam Agency goes on to succinctly descibe the four reasons why podcasts fail: Lack of focus, lack of quality, lack of execution, and lack of distribution.

deck is still stacked against the beginning podcaster. Even those who have been doing it for a while and are consistent with their podcast, releasing new episodes on a regular cadence, still struggle to build an audience and stand out from the increasingly loud background chatter of 2 million other voices. To quote the late, great author and screenwriter William Goldman 'screenplays are structure.' Well, podcasts are structure, too.

This is why we developed PodcastStudio Pro™. Who are we? We're Showrunner Industries Inc, creators of WritersRoom Pro® (www.writersroompro.com). WritersRoom Pro® is a story development app that has quickly become the TV industry standard for remote and in-person writers' rooms. We've taken that same appreciation of the power of structure and combined it with our powerful web-based development engine to create PodcastStudio Pro™ (www.podcaststudiopro.com).

The templates we've adapted for both PodcastStudio Pro™ and this Special Report are based on an article written by Alban Brooke, Head of Marketing at Buzzsprout and the co-host of Buzzcast. Alban detailed the eight 'baseline' (my term, not his) templates most used. They serve as a great jumping off point for people looking to start or refine their podcast. You can read Alban's excellent article HERE.

So, with all that in mind, what follows is a brief description of each of the eight templates, complete with a few examples of podcasts that might serve as good inspiration for you. Just a heads up: we don't believe – or even advocate – that you should be monolithic in the use of these templates. They are truly meant to be mixed and matched, tweaked and adapted. As I said, these are the baseline. There's nothing wrong with using them 'as is', but it's even better to make them your own.
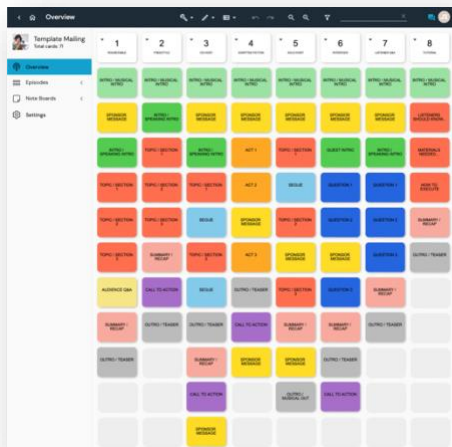
And by the way, in the time it took you to read this Introduction, Joe Rogan's podcast was downloaded a total of 12,960 times. Who wouldn't want a piece of *that?*

Let's get to it.

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1
ROUNDTABLE

INTRO / MUSICAL INTRO

SPONSOR MESSAGE

INTRO / SPEAKING INTRO

TOPIC / SECTION 1

TOPIC / SECTION 2

TOPIC / SECTION 3

AUDIENCE Q&A

SUMMARY / RECAP

OUTRO / TEASER

#1 - ROUNDTABLE TEMPLATE

ROUNDTABLE podcasts feature three to multiple people discussing a topic.

The format can be:

- The same group discussing the same topic (podcasting, computing)
- The same group discussing different topics (current events, news)
- A different group each show talking about the same topic or a different group discussing different topics.

The key to a successful roundtable podcast is 'casting' the participants carefully, especially if it's going to be the same roundtable members each episode. Generally, it's helpful to have different points of view represented if you're discussing a topic, particularly a contentious one. If your podcast has a narrower focus such as issues that affect your particular religious group or some point of view that you wish to discuss without it being challenged, then make sure all participants are like-minded and can speak entertainingly on the topic.

Something to consider is personality. Think of the different ways people approach issues: some people react logically, some emotionally. Some people are very supportive of other's ideas, some people are skeptical and challenging by nature. Regardless of whether your podcast topic is broad or narrow, make sure that the participants' various approaches to communication are varied. If you have someone whose default mode is emotion, look to include another participant who defaults to logic. Let someone who is skeptical by nature be balanced by someone who is supportive by nature. This is the same principle Hollywood writers have used for decades to differentiate the characters in their stories, and there's nothing wrong with bringing this idea to your podcast 'casting.'

EXAMPLES –

#2 - FREESTYLE TEMPLATE

2

FREESTYLE

INTRO / MUSICAL INTRO

INTRO / SPEAKING INTRO

TOPIC / SECTION 1

TOPIC / SECTION 2

TOPIC / SECTION 3
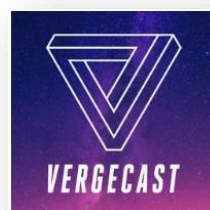
SUMMARY / RECAP

CALL TO ACTION

OUTRO / TEASER
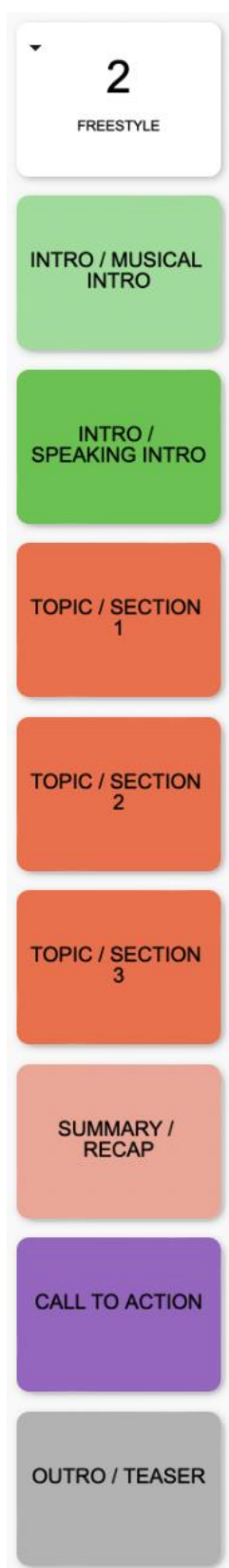
FREESTYLE podcasts are a high-wire act. They require the host(s) to be quick on their feet and have the ability to move the podcast along at a relentless, interesting pace without benefit of a very detailed plan. A few simple questions or topics might be just enough to help you fill the time.
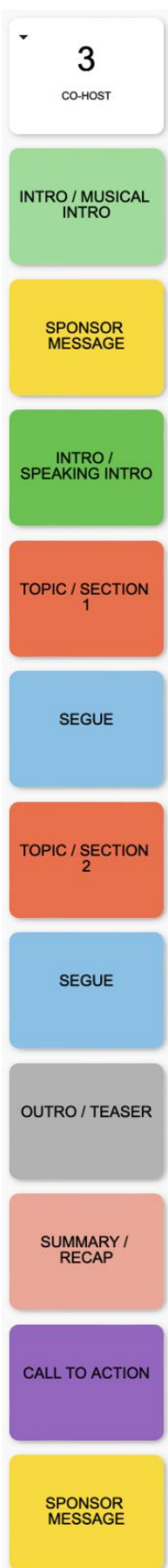
Having worked with actors trained in improvisation, I know from personal experience that, for some people, this format is exhilarating because you never really know all the twists and turns your episode is going to take until they're taken. The flip side of this is that some people find this format nerve-wracking and exhausting for the exact same reason.

One solution is to use a mix of templates, varying your podcast episode by episode. The podcast *Life of Awesome* by Saul Blinkoff intersperses episodes featuring Saul's life lessons with other episodes in which he interviews thought leaders in their fields.

It ultimately comes down to self-awareness. Are you quick-witted, able to think fast and effectively without a detailed plan? If so, then this might be the podcast format for you!

EXAMPLES -

#3 - CO-HOST TEMPLATE

3
CO-HOST

INTRO / MUSICAL INTRO

SPONSOR MESSAGE

INTRO / SPEAKING INTRO

TOPIC / SECTION 1

SEGUE

TOPIC / SECTION 2

SEGUE

OUTRO / TEASER

SUMMARY / RECAP

CALL TO ACTION

SPONSOR MESSAGE

CO-HOST podcasts can be a lot of fun; who doesn't like hanging out and chatting with friends?   However, like anything that involves a relationship, communication with your co-host is essential to avoid misunderstandings. You want to make sure that you and your co-host(s) are on the same page and in agreement regarding who is speaking when and what segments each one is responsible for, both in the planning phases as well as during recording.

Unfortunately, I've seen many co-hosts disband their podcasts due to lack of coordination. **PodcastStudio Pro™** can be particularly helpful in this situation as it allows for full transparency in the collaborative process.

Co-host podcasts do have an an advantage over some other formats: you aren't flying alone and have someone to share the heavy lifting with.

Spotify posted an excellent article with tips and tricks for co-hosts. The key points are:
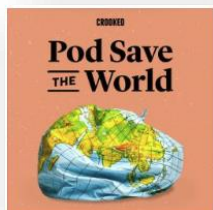
Tips and Tricks for Working with a Co-Host
1.   The best matchup is co-hosts who are similar but not identical.
2.   Prepare, but leave room for spontaneity.
3.   Pull your weight.
4.   Play to your strengths.
5.   Learn to communicate non-verbally.
6.   Listen to each other and remember your audience.

The full article can be found here, and is highly recommended reading:

https://podcasters.spotify.com/blog/how-to-work-with-a-co-host

EXAMPLES –

#4 - SCRIPTED FICTION TEMPLATE

4
SCRIPTED FICTION

INTRO / MUSICAL INTRO

SPONSOR MESSAGE

ACT 1

ACT 2

SPONSOR MESSAGE

ACT 3

OUTRO / TEASER

CALL TO ACTION

SPONSOR MESSAGE

SCRIPTED FICTION podcasts are, without doubt, the hardest to produce. Beyond the writing of the script, this type of podcast requires the creator to be more than an excellent storyteller but also an excellent writer, producer, and director, have more than a working knowledge of sound and music editing, and frankly have the temperment to manage a team of people because scripted fiction needs bodies to make them happen. Actors must be auditioned and cast, directed either in person or remotely (which has its' own built-in challenges) and while it's possible to do scripted fiction on the cheap, unless you have an audio engineering background you will run into multiple, seemingly insurmountable difficulties as you pull each episode together. And your reward for successfully spinning all these plate for your episode? You get to spin them again, and again (and again) until you've finished the story which could last for multiple episodes.

Don't get me wrong; I've made my living as a professional scriptwriter for 30 years in film and television and I love…LOVE…being a TV showrunner. I can tell you from personal experience, doing scripted storytelling properly from conception to execution is not a part-time job.

I have a lot to say about story structure, much more than can or should appear in this short breakdown, so look for a separate report soon detailing some of the best, most succinct techniques for telling a good story based on my book *My Story Can Beat Up Your Story*.

One key advantage of the scripted fiction podcast is that if it's any good, you have a chance that Hollywood will come calling because studios, networks, and production companies are always on the hunt for great content with an established audience.

EXAMPLES –

#5 - SOLO HOST TEMPLATE

5
SOLO HOST

INTRO / MUSICAL INTRO

SPONSOR MESSAGE

TOPIC / SECTION 1

SEGUE

TOPIC / SECTION 2

SPONSOR MESSAGE

TOPIC / SECTION 3

SUMMARY / RECAP

SPONSOR MESSAGE

OUTRO / MUSICAL OUT

SOLO HOST podcasts can be the easiest and least expensive podcasts to get going. All you need is a topic, a point of view, and the ability to speak engagingly for 10 to 30 minutes or so.

Of course, this is deceptively easy. How many people do you personally know with whom you'd love to schedule 30 minutes once a week to hear what they have to say on a subject while you silently listen? For a solo host podcast to work, you must be one of those people.

Solo host podcasts can include several other formats, such as Interviews and Listener Q&A, but the defining idea is a single person with a singular point-of-view, regardless of the template. For example, The Joe Rogan Experience, while being a Solo host podcast, would be more appropriately classified as an Interview podcast. But then again, Joe can be whatever he wants to be!

While you don't need much more than an idea and something to record your voice on to do a Solo host podcast, there are many that are highly produced and researched, literally with a team of people that number in the double digits. But that doesn't have to be you, at least not yet. Joe Rogan's first podcast reached an audience of 350 people. Right now, his podcast averages almost 6 million listeners *an episode.*

Start small, build an audience, and dream big.

EXAMPLES -

#6 - INTERVIEW TEMPLATE
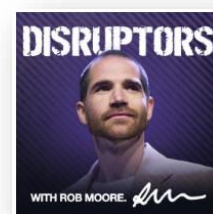
6
INTERVIEW

INTRO / MUSICAL INTRO

SPONSOR MESSAGE

GUEST INTRO

QUESTION 1

QUESTION 2

SPONSOR MESSAGE

QUESTION 3

SUMMARY / RECAP

OUTRO / TEASER

Creating a compelling INTERVIEW podcast is a great way to engage your audience through interesting people talking about fascinating topics…or at least topics interesting enough to hold an audience's attention.

As you can imagine, the Interview format sinks or swims based on the ability of the interviewer, and being a good interviewer is harder than it looks. It's not just knowing what to say it's knowing when to say it, when to say nothing and listen, how to steer a conversation but in such a way that it doesn't appear steered but organic. Journalists train and practice for years to learn these skills, so don't expect yourself to knock it out of the park on your first few tries.

There is an excellent article online from the Muck Rack blog called "How to conduct a good interview: 14 go-to interview techniques for journalists." The top eight techniques are:

1. Research the topic and your subject.
2. Determine how you'll do the interview.
3. Set expectations.
4. Consider your interview questions.
5. Start with the basics.
6. Actively listen and ask follow-up questions.
7. Take the lead.
8. Avoid talking about yourself.

The entire article can be found HERE, and I think it's required reading for anyone who wants to excel at the Interview format.

EXAMPLES -

#7 - LISTENER Q&A TEMPLATE

7
LISTENER Q&A

INTRO / MUSICAL INTRO

SPONSOR MESSAGE

INTRO / SPEAKING INTRO

QUESTION 1

QUESTION 2

QUESTION 3

SUMMARY / RECAP

OUTRO / TEASER

Maybe one of the easiest podcasts to create, the LISTENER Q&A only requires one thing: listeners. You don't need many, but you certainly need enough so that you're guaranteed of having a critical mass of fresh questions.

The Listener Q&A template can be used as a 'filler' episode if you have a regular podcast and need to take a break from your usual format for an episode or two. Let's say you do a Co-host podcast, and for some reason your host needs a week off, or the topic you were planning on doing is no longer relevant, or you just didn't get it together in time to record and publish an episode on your regular cadence. If you've been solicting your listeners for questions on an ongoing basis, you basically have an instant podcast episode ready to record.

Some podcasters will use the Listener Q&A podcast as a bonus episode as well. It's often a good idea to have some episodes in reserve that can be used to generate more search results. For example, just do a Google search for "listener Q&A podcasts" and see what results come up. They are all, almost without exception, one-off episodes for podcasts with a different main template.

So, add a CTA (Call to Action) segment in every episode of your regular podcast and encourage your listeners to reach out to you with questions. Besides the benefit of making your listeners feel heard and engaged with, it will help you come up with some great episodes when you find yourself short an idea or two.

EXAMPLES -

#8 – TUTORIAL TEMPLATE

8

TUTORIAL

INTRO / MUSICAL INTRO

LISTENERS SHOULD KNOW...

MATERIALS NEEDED...

HOW TO EXECUTE

SUMMARY / RECAP

OUTRO / TEASER

The TUTORIAL template is an excellent format if you're an expert in a particular field that lends itself to a step-by-step process. If you're an excellent chef, a tutorial podcast on different recipes would work nicely, particularly if you can also add video to it (depending on which platforms you publish on, of course.)   If you're an excellent neurosurgeon, well, better to leave those tutorials to medical school.

Unsurprisingly, most tutorials are classified under the 'education' category, so not only must you be an expert in the topic of your podcast, but you must also have the spark all great educators have; the ability to distill the information down and present it intriguingly.

Most teachable subjects won't lend themselves to the Tutorial format for every episode, so feel free to experiment with this template. It can be an occasional episode, or even used as a tutorial segment within a different template. You don't need to make every episode a step-by-step guide to something.

One of the best things about podcasts in general is that, with so many of them in production, smaller niche topics of interest can and do find their audiences of like-minded listeners and viewers. We're all good at something; find that thing you're great at and see if it's teachable. By doing this and then releasing tutorials on a regular basis, you can establish yourself as an expert in a field which is the exact thing many podcasters need to take what was a personal interest and turn it into a profitable business or side business.

EXAMPLES –

THE OUTRO

Thanks for reading this Special Report on *The Eight Podcast Templates of PodcastStudio Pro™*.

All these templates are built into PodcastStudio Pro™, the only collaborative, template web-app for podcasters. If you want to put these templates to work for you, give PodcastStudio Pro™ a try. Subscriptions begin at $10 a month and each one comes with a 14-day free trial. Podcasts have a failure rate that makes the restaurant business look like a sure bet (Spoiler Alert – 80% of restaurants fail within the first five years) so why not do what you can to make your podcast professional through a solid episode-by-episode plan? Check out PodcastStudio Pro by CLICKING HERE.

Please don't hesitate to reach out to us at info@podcaststudiopro.com with any questions, comments, or suggestions. We love to hear from podcasters, and we're excited to be part of your journey.

Happy Podcasting!

Jeff

Jeffrey Alan Schechter (left) interviewing TV director Todd Holland on the set of the Showrunner Industries' podcast 'WritersRoom Pros'.