

visit us online for  
The full archive  
of our business  
communications  
series

5%  
of podcast users  
have paid to  
subscribe to a  
podcast

6  
The number of  
weekly podcasts  
the average user  
subscribes to

# loud and clear

In the third part of our series on communications, we look at how podcasts can get you talking directly to your customer

**D**o you want a smart, future-facing way to promote your business? Then look no further than podcasts. They can work just as hard as traditional forms of communication, such as print, and despite what you might think, they won't cost much either.

## pressing play

Podcasts are for everyone. A plumber might create a short podcast to explain what that gurgle in the radiators is, or how to get the best quote for a job. Or a shop manager may want to build on a customer base by working with regulars – perhaps by recording them talking about their recent purchases or asking them to create jingles for the shop



**Karen Pearson**  
runs Folded Wing,  
which produce podcasts  
for everyone, from  
the BBC to Nike

podcast. And they work, too: a report by Edison Research and The Association For Downloadable Media found that over 70% of podcast listeners are receptive to sponsorship messages in podcasts.

Part of the appeal of podcasting is that it doesn't need fancy technology to get it right. You just record it, then upload it to iTunes or other sites known as 'podcatchers', such as iPodder. According to radio audience research body RAJAR, 8.1 million people in the UK have downloaded a podcast, while 4.4 million say they listen to them at least once a week. And once someone has signed up to a podcast, new episodes will download automatically (as long as you've set up an RSS Feed).

## on the right wavelength

Podcasts are usually a mixture of chat and music but the format is wide open – you are basically free to do what you want. Saying that, it's worth pointing out that a recent survey by RAJAR found that the most popular podcasts in the UK are comedy-based.

A good podcast feels personal and authoritative and is flexible enough to deliver information quickly. It's not being interpreted by a middleman – this is you, talking directly to your customers, and giving them exclusive content that can be shared by them with friends and family. First Direct recently podcasted the news that they're going to charge customers with dormant accounts £10 per month by featuring an interview with their CEO, who explained the reasons behind the change.

If the content is relevant, it will build brand loyalty, strengthening and broadening the bonds of community within your audience. It will also make you sound like an authority, whether you're a building contractor, accountancy firm or design agency. ■

“ This is you talking directly to your customers and giving them exclusive content that they can share with friends ”

75%

of listeners use  
iTunes to find  
and subscribe  
to podcasts

February  
2004

First use of the  
word 'podcast'

## what's on your mind?

If you have a business topic you'd like us to discuss, email us at: [exchange.magazine@orange.co.uk](mailto:exchange.magazine@orange.co.uk)

## in a nutshell

- ✓ **DO** make sure your podcast is high quality, otherwise you will haemorrhage listeners immediately and they won't come back.
- ✓ **DO** keep it exclusive – in the sense that it genuinely gives something to your customers. Maybe run a special interview or feature.
- ✗ **DON'T** ramble on. Keep it around 30 to 40 minutes. Any longer is too long.
- ✓ **DO** use websites for advice and tips. For example, take a look at [bbc.co.uk/podcasts/help](http://bbc.co.uk/podcasts/help)
- ✓ **DO** use sound design, jingles and drops to encourage listeners to check out the other areas of your website – or anything else you want to promote.
- ✓ **DO** make it easy to subscribe. You'll need to set up an RSS feed, which will allow listeners to automatically download each episode of your podcast. There are many websites and applications that will generate the feed for you.