Angela Kelly Smith

Best Practices for Running a Podcast
Brand + Design Scoop ep. 010
Podcast Transcript

Welcome to Brand + Design Scoop, where I share practical, relatable tips on branding, design, and building a business for people-centric entrepreneurs.

I'm Kelly, a brand strategist and Squarespace website designer and founder of AKS Design Studio.

Today I'm going to discuss best practices for running a podcast. On November 26th, I did a podcast on best practices for running a blog. Some of the practices for a blog are the same for a podcast. But there are some very specific practices that are unique to podcasting, which is why I'm doing this as a separate episode, instead of combining it with the episode on blogging.

On November 5th, I wrote a blog post called "Should You Start a Podcast?" I'll put the link in the show notes. In it I discuss four ways that podcasting is good for your business. Those are:

One, a podcast helps to boost your brand. Podcasting gives your audience the ability to engage with your brand through the sense of sound, not just visuals or the written word.

Two, a podcast can improve your SEO ranking. When you podcast, you're giving search engines more content through which to find you.

Three, a podcast can improve engagement with your audience. The additional content from a podcast gives your audience more ways to engage with you. And it gives them a reason to stay longer on your website.

And, four, a podcast can improve your credibility and reputation. The more high-quality, valuable information you share, the more you prove that you are an authority in your industry. This increases trust between you and your ideal client, making them more likely to hire you.

So, you see it's definitely worth starting a podcast as a marketing tool to boost your business.

Now, before you start a podcast, there are several factors to consider. I write about these in a blog post from December 28th called "5 Things to Consider Before You Start a Podcast." Link in the show notes. I discuss thinking about your goals, whether you have enough content to share (you do!), whether you have the time and equipment for a podcast, whether you have the skills to run a podcast, and how you will promote your podcast. All of this is totally manageable. So, since you're listening to this, we're assuming you've decided that you are going to start a podcast or that you're already running one!

If you haven't started one yet, you can check out my blog post from January 4th in which I share a video about how to set up a podcast in Squarespace. I walk you through not only setting it in Squarespace, but also getting it set up with Apple Podcasts. Link in the show notes.

Okay! Back to this topic of best practices for running your podcast!

Let's talk about some specifics for podcasts.

First, you need a good microphone. Please don't use the built-in microphone on your phone, tablet, or computer. That's just not good enough. The volume won't be very high. And you might get an echo.

Apple Ear Buds works well. High-quality headsets work well, too — such as Apple AirPods Max or Bose. One of my Geek Girl Soup podcasting buddies uses basic Apple Ear Buds. Another Geek Girl Soup podcasting buddy uses a high-quality stand microphone made for podcasting. I use a Blue Yeti microphone made for podcasting.

You'll need to figure out where you're going to record your podcast. You can record in an online platform such as Zoom, Uberconference, or Amazon Chime. At Geek Girl Soup, we use Zoom. We meet by video to make it less likely that we'll interrupt each other. But we download and use only the audio portion. I use Amazon Chime. You can also record right onto your phone, tablet, or computer. Sometimes I record into my editing software, which I'll get to now.

To make your podcasts sound as good and professional as possible, you need to edit them. There are lots of good editing programs out there. Look up reviews to see what fits you best. If you're on a Mac or iPad, you get GarageBand free. Now, I personally don't find GarageBand very elegant for editing podcasts. I cannot believe I just said that about an Apple product! I edit on my iPad and use Ferrite Recording Studio. It has a one-time fee that was something like $30 when I bought it in 2021. I've found that software for the iPad tends to cost less than software for the Mac. And editing on the iPad is fabulous when you use the Apple Pencil. You have very precise control. And I just love Ferrite Recording Studio. They created lots of video tutorials, and you can find many other video tutorials on YouTube made by other users.

So, what should you edit?

I write lots of notes for this podcast. And sometimes I mess up and need to start a section over again. I don't stop recording. I just pause, maybe drink some water, then redo only that section. When I edit, I cut out the section with the mistake, and hit "join" to bring together the good clips.

You'll want to edit out as many "ums" as you can. Just because you say "um" a lot in regular speech, doesn't mean you have to leave them in your podcast!

You'll want to shorten long pauses. I pause between sections or important ideas. But you don't want pauses to be too long or sound awkward. When recording, you can make the pause a bit long to have room to play in editing. Then, when you're editing, listen to the flow and decide how much of the silence you need to edit out.

You should edit in some intro and outro music. It is very important that you use only licensed or royalty-free music! You do not want to get a cease-and-desist letter with a demand for damages for using copyrighted music. Or worse, you could be sued. This includes having copyrighted music simply playing in the background. So, make sure that your background is totally silent when you record. No TV or music playing in the background. Don't even hum or sing any part of a song. If you are referencing a song, it's

okay to speak the lyrics. But be sure to quote them, acknowledging the artist and/or songwriter. I can't stress the importance of this enough.

So, the intro and outro music. At Geek Girl Soup, we had some original music composed and recorded for us. And we give credit for it on our website and in the show notes. I'll talk about show notes in a minute. For this podcast, I got royalty-free music online. There are numerous sites where you can get royalty-free music for free or for a low price. I got mine for free at Pixabay. The artist is Zen Man. I give him credit in the show notes. Two other sites I looked at are Take Tones and Sound Stripe.

When you add music, you'll need to adjust the volume when you edit. The music is probably going to be as loud or louder than your speaking volume. The music will be on a separate track from your speech. In any editing program, you can adjust the volume of each track separately. For this podcast, I have the intro music playing on its own at first. Then I lower the volume when I start talking. I lower it further as I continue to talk. Then I lower it again as it fades out. For the outro, I have it come in at a low volume as I start the end of the podcast. Then I lower the volume even more as the music continues for the fade out of the podcast. I could have the volume go up, but I prefer to lower it.

Show notes. When you publish the podcast to Apple Podcasts and other streaming services such as Amazon Podcasts, Google, and Spotify, you are required to post show notes. This should include a summary of the content, a link to the post on the website, any other links you mention in the podcast, a link to find you online (your homepage, maybe a social media account), and any credits you need to give. So, that's where I give credit to Zen Man for the music. When I have a guest on, I link to their social media accounts.

Speaking of guests, inviting guests onto your podcast is a great way to increase your audience and to boost your credibility. When you publish your podcast, you'll share the link with your guest. They will ideally share it with their audience, which will get a new audience to your website. **So, you'll want to have some key information on your podcast post pages that will guide visitors where you want them to go next.**

What do I mean by that?

I have a sidebar plugin for my blog and podcast. In it I have my photo and one-sentence bio. I have a link to my main website design service. I have a drop-down menu for the blog archive and podcast archive. And I have a search bar. Very simple. In the footer of every page is a signup form for my freebie and newsletter. That's not the goal of my website. So, it's not in the sidebar. But it is in the footer since I would like to grow the email list.

Think about the goal of your website and where you'd like to direct your visitors once they've landed on your website. Then put those calls-to-action on every podcast and blog page. I show you how to do that in my blog post from December 14th called "How to Create a Blog Template in Squarespace." Link in show notes.

When you originally set up your podcast with Apple Podcasts and the other streaming services, you had to create an image for the podcast. When you post the podcast on your website, you don't have to use that same image for every individual post. I create a different thumbnail image and social-sharing image for each episode. The thumbnail shows up on my podcast page. And the social-sharing image shows up when I post the episode on social media or when someone else shares the post on social media. You can easily make square images in Canva or Adobe's Spark Post. I use Spark Post. It's a paid service.

The next practices are similar to the best practices for running a blog.

You'll want to create a schedule for posting your podcast and stick to it. How often should that be? Ideally weekly. No, it's not easy, especially if you're also running a blog. But, in some ways, that does actually make it a bit easier. I use topics from my blog to come up with ideas for my podcast. This episode is a great example. I mentioned my most recent blog posts in the beginning of this podcast: "5 Things to Consider Before Starting a Podcast" and "How to Start a Podcast in Squarespace." I could have written this episode as a blog post. But, since I run a podcast, I decided to make this topic a podcast instead of a blog post. It's lengthy and works better as a podcast.

Publishing frequently will help boost your SEO ranking because lots of content gives search engines more items to find. Posting weekly means search engines are updating your listing every week. In my case, I'm posting to the blog every Tuesday and to the podcast every Friday. So, search engines are updating my website twice a week.

You can make it easier to plan and schedule your content if you use a content calendar. There are lots of free ones online. You could pay for a service such as Hootsuite or Loomly. Those services also allow you to schedule your content to be posted straight to your social media accounts. Or, you can create your own content calendar, which is what I do. I created a spreadsheet in Google Sheets. I have one page for my blog and another for my podcast. I have the following columns:

• Date that the podcast airs or the blog publishes
• Title of the blog or podcast
• Whether the post has been written or recorded, scheduled, or published. If the column is blank, that means it's just an idea and hasn't been worked on yet.
• The next columns list my social media accounts. When I post to those accounts, I write the date there. I may post again in the future. So, I have those columns set to "wrap text."
• The next column is for hashtags I will use when posting on social media.
• The final column is the link to that post.

When you use your content calendar, **try to schedule content out 6 weeks to 3 months in advance**. This will relieve a lot of stress so that you're not scrambling to come up with topics every week. Now, you won't be able to go weeks without doing anything. You should constantly be coming up with content. But there will be less stress to do so since you'll have ideas scheduled so far in advance. And, ideally, you'll have a bunch of episodes recorded and scheduled in advance, as well.

When you post your podcast on your website, first create a post template. I show how to do this in my blog post from December 14th called "How to Create a Blog Template in Squarespace." Link in show notes. It's the same for a podcast. So, watch it if you need help doing that. This is where you will share key information you want to direct visitors to after they listen to your podcast.

You'll want to put your podcast in the main navigation bar of your website and in the footer menu. Make it easy for visitors to find your podcast.

In addition to that, you can feature your podcast somewhere on your homepage. I have a summary block at the bottom of my homepage that lists the two most recent podcasts. This is next to a summary block for my blog that also lists the two most recent blog posts.

Make the URL of the post the same as the title of the podcast. The setup of your podcast is the same as the setup of a blog. And most blog setups now automatically generate URL that are the same as the title of the post. But go into the settings for that post and confirm that this is the case. This will make it easier for search engines to find your post.

Write a shot excerpt for each episode. This will go in settings to show up on the blog page. You'll also put it in SEO settings to show up on the search engine results page. This makes it easier for people to decide if they want to listen to your episode. So, make the excerpt strong, and use a few keywords and phrases that are relevant to the episode.

Finally, post every episode to your social media accounts. This seems obvious, but sometimes we forget to do it. If you use an online content calendar service such as Hootsuite or Loomly, the posts will go out automatically when you schedule them. If you post by hand, set a reminder in your calendar or using Apple Reminders (or whatever type of reminders you use). I have an ongoing reminder in Apple Reminders to share my blog every Tuesday and to share my podcast every Friday.

If you have a newsletter, share your podcast there every week. Since I have both a blog and a podcast, I share both in one newsletter. I don't want to send two newsletters a week. So, I share both in one on Wednesdays.

That's it for today. Next week I'll be discuss what is SEO and why is it important. The following week, on January 7th, I'll have on guest Ling Wong to discuss using content creation to boost your SEO ranking. That's going to be a good one!

Thanks for listening! See you next time on Brand + Design Scoop!

_____

Links mentioned in the episode:

"Should You Start a Podcast"

"5 Things to Consider Before You Start a Podcast"

"How to Start a Podcast in Squarespace"

"How to Create a Blog Template in Squarespace"

Link to this episode
_____

Angela Kelly Smith provides custom Squarespace websites, branding strategy, and marketing instruction so freelancers and entrepreneurs can run a successful business while spending more time focusing on the work they really love doing. Check out her website design + marketing strategy services.