

WEEKLY OUTREACH

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There are all kinds of ways to reach an audience weekly with content that is a little more detailed. Weekly content can take significant time on your part to create, so you should first ask yourself: “Do I have time?” and “What will I share?”. If you know you have content to share, but are hesitant on the time it will take to develop this content, then consider creating a team. That leads us to the next question, “Who do I want on my team to get this done?”

The phrase, “work with people as good or better than yourself”, comes to mind when talking about group projects and this can be really important when creating content with others. Mainly because your name is on it and you’re looking for partners to help carry the weight of the project.

If you’re making a weekly time commitment to develop materials, your listener or reader base has the potential to grow. But be sure to create desirable content while sticking to that weekly schedule.



PODCASTS

There are a lot of successful podcasts out there, especially now with COVID-19, there seems to be more appearing each day. In taking this on, you really need to find your space in the podcast world – what are you going to add to this already exploding source of information?

Then determine if this approach will help you reach your intended audience. Think through this carefully and if you can’t identify what your contribution will be of if this will help you reach the intended audience, then you may want to shift efforts to another area because a podcast is a lot of work and will take considerable time.

If you decide that you have valuable content, that this is the right space for that content and you can reach your audience, now it's time to build your team. **Your team will consist of a content developer, host, editor, marketing and lastly, guests for the podcast.** These can be all the same individual, but remember, building a team for a podcast may be a better approach than taking this on yourself.

In the case of the Soil Sense and Field Check podcasts, we built a team of:

Content Developers - Abbey Wick (NDSU Soil Health), Tim Hammerich (Cogent Consulting)

Host and Editor - Tim Hammerich

Marketing - Jaime Hammerich (Cogent Consulting),
InHouse Advertising (Fargo, ND), Mick Kjar (Farm Talk host)

Guests - Farmers, consultants, researchers and Extension

Sponsors – organizations

Granted, this is going to be one of the more expensive approaches to get a podcast up and running, so adding sponsors to the team is fitting. This may not be the best approach for you or your budget – but know that you can modify and take pieces of what we share here to make this approach work for you.

HERE'S MORE DETAIL ON WHAT EACH TEAM MEMBER DOES:

Content developer – this is an important role needs to be carried out with careful planning and using connections of the content developer(s). Having two people in this role can be beneficial for kicking around ideas and making sure that the podcast continues to move through a theme.

Determine the primary theme of the podcast. In our case, we didn't want it to be just about soil health. There are plenty of podcasts already filling that space and it seems a little too vague. After plenty of long discussions and getting a feel from those on our list to interview, we came up with the idea of "Collaboration amongst farmers, consultants, research and Extension" in Soil Health as our theme. We added to that theme the idea of "not a prescription but rather a pursuit". This was not only reflective of the content we wanted to build but was also a unique space we could fill easily in the podcast world. Take the time to have the brainstorming sessions to identify this theme.

Figure out who you will interview and put it on a schedule. You may want to group your interviewees into "Seasons" to make it more cohesive for content and seem less daunting. Each Season can have a underlying theme, in our case:

Season 1: pursuit of soil health for farmers, consultants, researchers and Extension (individuals on each episode). We found they were all referring to each other, so...

Season 2: collaborations in North Dakota (more joint interviews showing collaborations and making connections primarily within the state along with individuals interviewed for episodes).

Season 3: collaborations which cross state boundaries (joint interviews with individuals in ND and then someone outside of ND along with individuals interviewed for episodes).

Season 4: TBD, planning that now.

It also helps to have release dates for each season that are based on your audience and to schedule in breaks between seasons that can fall around holidays. For example, we chose 15 episodes per season and release our "seasons" during fall harvest (August – November) and spring planting/field work (April – July).

Host and Editor – this is often the same person because they are closest to the content and already know how they want to condense the interview into typically a 30 minute or less time slot. When interviewing, encourage a conversation. Over-preparing can come across as rigid and you can lose personality of the person you're interviewing. You can provide some guidance though prior to the interview. This may be in the form of emailing a couple of questions that get the individual thinking. But, keep these questions general and conversational.

Help the people you're interviewing prepare technology-wise. Ask them to use earbuds or a headset for better sound quality. They may not need to go buy something specifically, but maybe they have a headset laying around that has better sound quality than using the microphone on their computer or iPad. If you're face-to-face, bring a good microphone with you.

Try to keep the interview at 45 minutes or less to keep the energy up for the duration of the conversation. Remember, as a host, your job is to ask follow-up questions to an answer they provide and to keep the energy high. Use inflection in your voice which will naturally encourage the person you're interviewing to also use inflection.

If there is a background sound or for example, a nervous tapping on the table during the conversation that is taking away from the interview, tell them, then edit that out of the interview.

There are several options for software used to record the interview – it's nice to be able to see their face when you're talking, so use something other than the phone if you can.

ONCE THE INTERVIEW IS RECORDED, THERE ARE TWO APPROACHES OR STYLES A HOST CAN USE:

Interview – interviews are edited while using a question and answer format.

Narrative – the host breaks the content into sections and provides a narrative or information between blocks of content.

You may end up using a mix of styles based on content; however, it may be best to pick one and go with it for consistency reasons.

THERE ARE PLENTY OF EDITING SOFTWARE PROGRAMS AVAILABLE, FIND A GOOD FIT FOR YOU:

The goal in editing is to take out some of the long pauses, the “ums” and “ahs” so that listeners aren't distracted. But, don't take out too many that you lose the personality of those you interview. Some pauses may indicate a thoughtfulness of responses.

Always, always, always, allow the person you interview to listen to the content prior to release.

MARKETING

This is really a critical step in this process, or really any content creation. People need to know about the content and marketing is how you do that. There are several approaches for this:

Graphics – use photos of individuals on your graphics, this puts a face with the voice. These graphics can be shared on social media and/or you can create/print postcards of those graphics to hand out at meetings.

Audiograms/Headliners – you can take a clip of the podcast episode and put it over a graphic for posting on social media.
www.headliner.app

Play Location Maps – these can be used to not only show the impact of your podcast, but also help others see that they may be missing out on something great. There are several online programs where you can create these from the information you can collect on anchor.fm

Radio – you can reach individuals who don't listen to podcasts by playing your content on the radio. By making shorter episodes (10 min or less), you can sponsor (or pay for) radio time to play your content. This is where we worked with Mick Kjar (Ag News 890, Farm Talk) to find a good fit for our content and then find sponsors to cover the playing of Field Check on the radio also.

GUESTS

This is likely the most important part of creating a podcast, the people you interview. This aspect will be largely determined by your theme, but one aspect that should be universal is choosing a diverse group of individuals. In a time where many organizations are showing more commitment to equity, diversity and inclusion, a podcast is a great space to show that awareness and commitment. The more diverse your podcast is regarding gender, race and other aspects, the more you are showing support for this important movement.

SPONSORS

Finding a good, consistent fit for sponsors is a great way to keep a podcast running. It's also a great way to have another organization promote your podcast.



BLOG

A blog may seem overwhelming, but maybe that's because we often don't know what to share or how much to share. But this can be a really good option (which is also inexpensive) for creating and sharing content on your website.

A FEW GUIDELINES ON HOW TO USE THIS TOOL FOR SHARING INFORMATION:

WORD COUNT

In general, a blog is around 1,600 words, but can range from 500 – 2,000 words. The reason 1,600 is recommended is because those reading blogs are typically looking for more in-depth information. This doesn't mean that you need to create rambling paragraphs of information. You can use bullet points and sidebars/notes to mix things up and always include photos. Another good idea is to include weblinks within your blog to other resources available within your organization or outside of your organization to show collaboration and support.

BE READY TO POST WEEKLY

It's important to stay connected and post weekly to keep readers engaged and coming back to your website for more. Did you catch that other opportunity there? Coming back to your website. A blog can encourage traffic to your website where you have your events posted and content that you may also develop like videos and social media feeds. On the flip side, you can use social media (Twitter, Facebook, LinkedIn) to promote your weekly blog and again bring more traffic to your website.

MAKE A LIST OF TOPICS

It's a good idea to think through the information you want to share prior to starting a blog, that will make it less overwhelming and more enjoyable. Your blog can take multiple forms, but maybe an easy way to start is to write down questions you have gotten in the past month. If there are questions that you don't know how to answer, bring in guest writers. Or make a phone call to get the answer, write the blog and have that expert proof it for you.

MAKE AN ARCHIVE OF BLOG POSTS

To cover those busy weeks or times when you feel you don't have content, you can post the "old reliable" or basic content. There are general management practices that can be discussed that don't have to be related to a question you are getting at the time. But, these "old reliable" posts can still be timely, especially in agriculture. There are certain staples of information that can serve as reminders during planting, spraying, harvest etc. Create that content and put it in the archive for when you need it.

To find out how you want to create and run your blog, try checking out other blogs already available. See what you like and don't like. Examples are always a great tool for developing your own content.



PINTEREST

Pinterest is a way to organize ideas or interests and making them available for others to see. Think of it as taking all your post-it notes with ideas and weblinks on them and organizing them in one digital place. With the added benefit of others being able to view the information you've organized, it's no wonder there are over 335 million active monthly users of Pinterest.

The **Home Feed** on Pinterest is where content (pins, people, brands) is delivered right to you. This may help you get started and may be useful as you start identifying with other content of interest, but you can also search by keyword to find Pins.

Pins are basically a bookmark to a website where you find content you like. You can add your own photos and notes to a Pin also and send Pins to other people you think may be interested in them. There is a messaging function associated with Pins also to engage with others.

The Pins you save are organized by a common theme on a creative board. You can make these boards public or private depending on what you want to share. Adding "rich pins" which contain extra information on the pin itself or "promoted pins" where you pay to have that Pin be more visible can be effective.

Group Boards are another option where you can lighten the workload by bringing in partners. Several people can post content to the same board making Pinterest an easier avenue for sharing information. But you have to be careful in the partners you choose, what they post will be a direct reflection of you also.

The Help Center for Pinterest is a good website to better understand all the benefits of using this platform.

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