

Lesson 5 – Prepare for Your Podcast Interview

Now that you've got some bookings, you'll want to make sure you're as ready as possible for the interview.

In this Lesson, you'll go into detail on the preparation of both your technology and yourself so that you feel confident and stay focused on the needs of the audience during the interview.

- **Topic 1: Prepare Your Tech**
- **Topic 2: Prepare Yourself for the Interview**

Lesson 1: Prepare Your Tech

What Tech Do You Need?

You don't need to spend a fortune on equipment when you're a podcast guest, but you do need good enough equipment to produce a professional sound. Your host may impose certain recording standards because they want a finished product that is professional. If they do, then abide by their requests.

If you want to be prepared for that first interview, you need to invest a little upfront. Here are the most important pieces of equipment to consider:



Microphone and Headset

Don't rely on the microphone in your PC as the quality isn't good enough. If you get a USB mic, it easily plugs in to your computer and makes a huge difference in how the interview sounds. Make sure you have a mic stand as well and not just a handheld version.

A good starter mic can be found on Amazon for about \$35-\$75. Be sure and check the reviews before purchasing.

Depending on your mic and your environment you may need headphones

A budget option is to use a listen-only earpiece such as Syiniix 3.5mm Earpiece. Earbuds can work also. The important thing is to have something that stays put and is comfortable for you to wear.

Camera

You will need a quality camera for video podcasting. Even if your interview will be broadcast in audio only, your host may want to speak to you in advance and you want the visual communication to be high-quality. Don't use your computer's built-in camera. Some podcast hosts like to conduct the interview over Zoom or Skype so that they can see who they're talking to, even if the episode is audio. The Logitech C920 is a good quality standard webcam.

Your total outlay on equipment will be \$100 - \$200. Lighting isn't a big deal if you have a natural light source in front of you. If you don't have that, an effective light kit will cost around \$50. If that sounds too much, then start off with a good mic and listen-only earpiece for around \$70 and add the camera later.

Internet Connection

Quality equipment alone won't be enough if your internet connection is slow and unreliable, and this will depend on the coverage where you live and your contract with the internet provider. Before you approach podcast hosts, check your Wi-Fi and phone connections. You want a speed that's fast enough to prevent buffering. Invest in your internet connection and upgrade to the fastest speed you can. This is part of your professional toolkit.

Even so, it's a good idea to use a physical plugged-in connection and not just Wi-Fi to be on the safe side.

Investing in quality materials is worth it in the long run. Always check your computer settings and indicate which is the default camera, microphone, and which is the default for speakers. Some hosts may ask you to record the interview as well to safeguard any tech problems their end. Use a recording tool for [Skype](#) or have recording enabled on [Zoom](#). If in doubt, ask the host what they want you to use. Don't distribute this recording without the permission of the host. It's only for backup.

After you're set up, make sure everything works, then check again 60 minutes before the interview. Outsource anything technical if you don't feel confident in handling it yourself. You can find experts on [Fiverr](#) or [Upwork](#) for little investment and they can make all the difference to a professional outcome.

However hard you try to avoid things going wrong, and however many times you test your equipment, you need to be prepared for the few times you'll have a problem. It happens to everyone. Discuss with your host what you might do if there are any technical glitches so you have backup plan. This is especially important if the host is broadcasting live.

Prepare Your Environment

You may not have complete control of the technology, but you do have control of your environment.

If you're going to take this seriously, you need to have a dedicated space for your interviews. You want to make sure that no extraneous noises filter in to the recording. These can make it hard for the audience, and the host, to hear you. Distracting sounds will put the listener off and they won't stay around to pay attention to your message.

Here are some tips:



- Do what you can to prepare the immediate surroundings where you'll be recording. For many people, this is their home office which might have carpets and soft furnishings to dampen the acoustics. But if you rent an office or you're in a large open space with lots of hard surfaces, you might need to soften the sound with pillows, towels, and so on.
- Make sure that your dogs, children, house cleaner, and anyone else knows that you are not to be disturbed during the interview. Close your office door and hang a sign on it to remind them if necessary.
- Turn off all your other devices such as phones, answerphones, and tablets.
- Make sure the notifications on your computer are switched off.

- Shut down all other apps using your internet and any open documents on your computer.
- If you're at home, get others off the internet during the interview or they may slow down the connections.

Key Takeaways:

- Invest in quality equipment and a fast internet connection. This is part of your professional toolkit.
- Do what you can to prepare the immediate surroundings where you'll be recording to cut out noise and distractions.

Action Steps:

1. Research and purchase a quality mic and headphones or earpiece, and also a camera if you can. Get them set up and tested.
2. Check the speed of your internet connection and upgrade if necessary.
3. Complete the separate **Tech Checklist**.

Lesson 2: Prepare Yourself for the Interview

Decide What to Say

Preparing your tech is only part of the preparation process. You'll also need to prepare yourself for your interview.

Let's look at the main points you want to get across to the listeners.

There's a limit to what you can talk about in an interview which may be 20, 30, or 50 minutes long. Podcasts tend to be short and to-the-point rather than long and rambling, and your contribution needs to be the same.

It makes sense for you to prepare 3 key talking points related to your goal for being on the podcast. Choose issues which will appeal especially to the audience and which will help them move forward. They may also be hot topics trending at the moment.

Write down 3 key messages and then figure out how to say them in different ways so that you can weave them into the conversation no matter how the interview goes. Stick to those key points and don't venture too far away or your message will be diluted.

As we said in a previous Lesson, you may or may not be notified in advance of the questions your interviewer will ask you. However, even if you don't know the precise questions, you can anticipate them. You can even think about how you'd answer a question with one of your key messages.

Let's take a look at the standard questions and prompts podcast hosts use in one form or another. Here are the most common:

How did you get started?

Tell us more about what you do

How can you help our listeners with their problems?

And how do you do that exactly?

Can you give me an example of how you've helped someone with this?

What can you offer my listeners to help them?

What are you working on right now?

Is there anything I should have asked, but didn't?

How can people find out more about you?

- How did you get started?
- Tell us more about what you do
- How can you help our listeners with their problems?
- And how do you do that exactly? (This can be a follow-up to any of the questions and needs to be prepared in advance.)
- Can you give me an example of how you've helped someone with this before?
- What can you offer my listeners to help them?
- What are you working on right now?
- Is there anything I should have asked, but didn't?

➤ How can people find out more about you?

It's worth practicing your reactions to these questions so that you're ready when asked. But you don't want to sound rehearsed, so don't simply memorize your answers. You need to be flexible enough in the interview to listen carefully to the question and give a considered reply.

Here's a great idea to answer the question "How did you get started?" Craft a story to tell during the interview. Most people don't realize that their unique story is what separates them from everyone else. When you tell it in an authentic way, it can have a big impact.

Below is a 5-step story format you can use, if it applies or modify to more accurately reflect your journey, of how you went from everything being great in your life, living through a trauma, and coming out the other side as the person you are today.

Here are the 5 steps:

1. Everything was normal in your life

2. A pivotal event came along such as a health scare, bankruptcy, etc.

3. You gained perspective and wisdom, learning from your experience

4. You took action

5. That brought you to your current situation doing the work you are now

1. Everything was normal in your life
2. A pivotal event came along such as a health scare, bankruptcy, etc.
3. You gained perspective and wisdom, learning from your experience
4. You took action
5. That brought you to your current situation doing the work you are now

Here's an example of how those 5 steps can play out:

1. I was working in corporate finance climbing the ladder in a regular way not thinking of looking at any other opportunities. Quite happy with what I'd achieved.

2. That's when the bomb dropped, and I found out I was being laid off due to a merger. With a family, a mortgage, and a car loan to support this was the worst possible time for me. I couldn't find another opening, and no-one seemed to be hiring someone of my age. I didn't know where to turn for help and I admit that I panicked. I contacted anyone I knew to see if they could suggest a job.
3. Then one of these contacts, who's since become a valued friend, suggested I take a deep breath and look at my career assets and my goals. You know when I started to look closely, I realized that I didn't find working for someone else inspiring or motivating and that in my old job I was just treading water. I started thinking about the possibilities of starting my own business and that got me all fired up. Maybe I could help others with their finances and stop them falling into the trap I did?
4. I did research and found the ideal course for me at a local business school. I enrolled there and also took some business development courses online so I was ready to launch my own business
5. Today I get the chance to work with people like you and help them plan their financial futures. I feel I'm really helping families build solid foundations and develop ways to future-proof their lives. It's inspiring and exhilarating and now I get to share that with you

This would take about 2 or 3 minutes of on-air time to tell. How deep you go depends on how long you've got. Always check the length of the interview so you can prepare accordingly.

Your goal with this story is to build rapport and relate your experience to the people you're talking to. Walking them through your journey demonstrates that a person like them has experienced their same problems – and that you

have the solution. This may be your story, but the interview is still about the listeners, so share emotions that they can relate to such as fear, frustration, etc. Include examples relevant to them. Talk about your errors and show your scars — this shows that you're human, and people will love you for it.

Here are some less common questions which you may need to think about in advance as the answers aren't always obvious:

- What's something you've failed at?
- What are your greatest insights?
- What do you wish you had known when you started out?
- Who are your business heroes?
- Who were your early mentors?
- What are you optimistic about right now?
- What advice would you give to someone just beginning their business/career in XX?
- What book would you recommend our listeners pick up to learn more about this topic?
- How do your values show up in your work?
- What do you do for fun? How do you relax?
- What inspires you?

Whether you have the questions in advance or not, remember that the interview is about the audience, not all about you. Practice your interviewing as much as possible to get the balance right between helping the audience and promoting your work. Find someone who can help you with that, a friend or a colleague or several. Start with a short 15 minute 'interview' and work up to something longer.

Preparation for Interview Day

Before you get online with the host, get mentally prepared for what they have asked you to do. Read through your Interview Preparation Document again. Then focus on the value you're presenting to your audience. Think of the end user and say to yourself, "I get the opportunity to help someone today and by doing that I'll move my business forward."

Then dial in to your connection. Get ready for some 'green room' chat, that's the time you spend before and after the interview with your host when they're not recording. Even if they've spoken to you before, they'll want to break the ice and get you relaxed with some chit chat. They'll probably also want to check out the tech such as the sound, lighting, and so on. You can ask them about your sound settings if you're unsure. Make sure you sound alright on their end.

If you aren't sure, check the pronunciation of their name and the show's name so you don't embarrass yourself on air. Ask any unresolved questions about how the interview will go before it starts.

This is a good time for you as a guest to:

- Check who's in your audience as this might've changed or been enlarged since you researched. While it makes sense to ask about the demographics of the audience, it isn't good podcast etiquette to ask

how many listeners the host has, and some don't like the question at all. It might seem judgmental to the host, so avoid asking that.

- Compliment them and their show, refer to other episodes, talk about things you've learned from the show to demonstrate your research
- Ask them, "How can I make this a great show for you?" That proves you're not just there to promote yourself
- If they're videoing the session, for example on Zoom, ask if they're posting the video so you know if the recording is going to be used or not. If it is, look at your camera to give the appearance that you're looking the audience in the eye
- Do you need to say anything to the host before the recording starts in order to be fully present? For example, if you have another call booked in 60 minutes, ask how long the interview will run. Otherwise you'll be worrying all through the conversation about how to get off the call in time.

Here are some more practical tips:



- Make sure you're hydrated. Dry mouths lead to lip smacking sounds that distract the listener
- Drink a glass of water 20-30 minutes before the interview
- Have a warm drink on hand
- Don't eat during the interview
- Try not to move too much. Hand gestures can be heard even on audio
- Don't rustle papers. Put your answers on index cards

- Don't write complete sentences; use simple words to jog your memory.
- Avoid "ums", "aahs", "sort of", "like" and other filler words as much as possible

Above all, try not to be nervous. Do some deep breathing or relaxation before you get on the call. Think of this as a conversation over coffee rather than an interview, with another person sitting in. Imagine that you're speaking to that one person when you're on the air. Listeners listen that way. If you've done your prep, then you'll be fine.

At the end of the interview there might be time to talk further to your host. If they've booked out an hour and the interview ran 50 minutes, they'll usually be happy to stay on the call with you. Use this time to ask about them and get to know them. The more you show interest in them, the more they'll show interest in you and ask more about your business. Remember hosts can become your clients.

You'll know if you've hit it off and if so, ask "What's the best way we can stay connected?" You may have something to offer that could really help them in their work, so strike while the iron is hot.

Key Takeaways:

- Always take time to prepare for your interviews. You'll feel more confident and be a better guest.
- Practice as much as you can by doing mock interviews so that you can get comfortable with your answers.

Action Steps:

1. Prepare your 3 talking points and add to your Interview Preparation Document.
 2. Write down answers to standard questions.
 3. Craft your 5-step story and practice telling it.
 4. Hold mock interviews with a colleague or friend.
 5. Give them the questions to ask you and record this as if it's a real interview.
 6. Review your performance with your 'interviewer' and make notes of anything that you can improve.
-