

2020

**THE ULTIMATE
GUIDE TO
BRANDED
PODCASTS**

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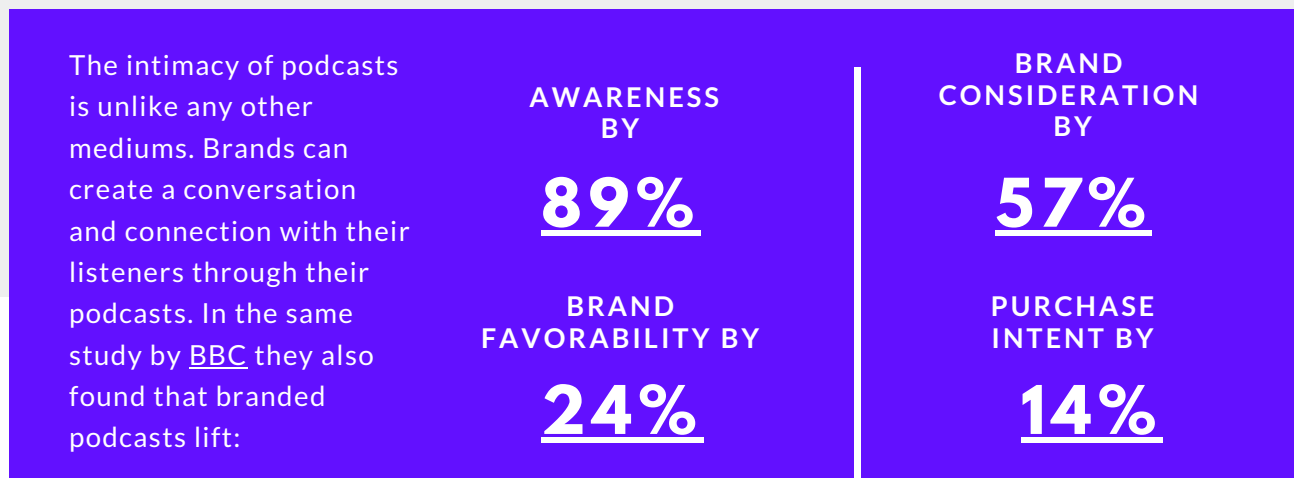
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INTRODUCTION

Throughout this guide we break down eleven different elements your brand needs to consider when it comes to bringing your podcast to life. Podcasts have been on the rise and branded podcasts are following suit. In fact, in a recent study by [BBC](#) they uncovered that through branded podcasts, the brand actually stands out from the content. Podcasts that mention the brand deliver on average [16%](#) higher engagement and [12%](#) higher memory compared to surrounding content.



THE GOAL

As a brand, the number one thing to consider when starting a podcast is the goal you are trying to accomplish. There's no use in creating a podcast for the sake of creating a podcast, you want to ensure that your content is geared towards achieving your goals and KPIs whatever those may be.

We've come to realize that well-produced podcasts can be used in a variety of ways for brands. Below we have broken down four key ways that your brand can use podcasts, all of which achieve different goals.

Let's dive in:

1) Awareness

The most popular goal for a branded podcast is awareness, a.k.a the elevation of brand values in the eyes of consumers. Podcasts give you the opportunity to build a relationship with potential customers by showing off your values and providing industry credibility in your respective space. These types of podcasts can be used for both the B2B and B2C space with examples like [Pick Me Up](#), a series created by Lyft in partnership with [Gimlet](#) or [Rise and Grind](#) presented by Zip Recruiter.

It's important to note that creating a series solely focused on your brand's offering will not work. In today's world, no one likes to be sold to and listeners don't want to hear a 30 minute sales pitch. Find a sweet spot that lets listeners know what you do while also sharing content that's of interest to the audience. [74%](#) of listeners are tuning into podcasts to be educated so make sure you're providing value rather than selling ([The Infinite Dial](#)).

2) Sales

Contrary to popular belief, podcasts can also be a gift for your sales team, not just your marketing team. Three key ways sales teams can use podcasts are lead generation, relationship building, and case studies.

1. Lead Generation

- If there's a specific lead that you've had your eye on whether it be an individual or brand, invite them onto your podcast as a guest. This will give you an opportunity to organically build a relationship with them. Make sure the conversations are not overly sales-y and transactional. You want to be creating valuable content that informs your audience, yet speaks to their interest. Priority should be creating a natural conversation, so that the sales magic will happen off the mic.

2. Relationship Building

- Strengthen the existing relationships you have with clients, partners, or leads by featuring them on your podcast series. Not only are you able to create a deeper connection with them, but you're also giving them additional value by marketing them through the series.

3. Case Studies

- Present case studies of your brand to potential customers through engaging and valuable content. However, be careful not to focus on you and your brand. If you're an ad agency and you're only presenting your own work to audiences, it will feel inauthentic and like a sales pitch. Whatever topic you're covering, find a variety of use cases and bring yours into the conversation as well.

3) Virtual Events

With the current COVID-19 pandemic that we're all living through, virtual events have skyrocketed. Although very different from in-person events, virtual events give you an easy way to repurpose content into podcasts.

Whether you're using Zoom or other virtual event platforms, most of them give you the ability to record the audio (and video) of the event. Whether it's a solo discussion from one speaker or a panel discussion between many, both of these can be converted into a podcast format.

Once your event is over, save that audio from the session. If you're an experienced podcast editor you can edit it yourself, or outsource to an agency to assist you. You want to ensure that you don't just publish the raw audio of the session, make sure to edit it and shape it into an engaging podcast episode for you listeners. If they're taking the time to listen, show them that you put in effort to deliver valuable content to them.



Benefits of a virtual event podcast:

For Sponsors/Speakers

- Creates additional exposure and incentives for your sponsors/speakers by featuring them on the podcast series whether it be through an interview, their session in the event, or an ad slot. Once distributed, brands that were featured on the podcast can now use it as their own piece of marketing.

For Attendees

- Podcasts are a great way for attendees to catch up on the content that they missed or didn't fully comprehend during the virtual event.
- As an event organizer, if you want to make your podcast only accessible to your attendees, platforms like [Storyboard](#) are available to host private content.

For Marketing

- Increase your reach amongst attendees for your next event.
- Gain credibility as an event organizer through the speakers featured on your series.
- Use the podcast to continue to promote your event by giving potential audiences an example of the type of content they'll be receiving.
- Build and grow a community around your event. Make listeners feel involved and included, whether they're past or new attendees.

4) Internal Communications

Podcasts can be a powerful tool when it comes to internal communications. Whether you're a startup or a corporation of thousands, podcasts have the ability to increase employee engagement and retention.

In a report done by [Poppulo](#) on internal communications professionals, it was found that [30%](#) of internal communications professionals still struggle with what channel to use to reach specific audiences.

Ways that brands can use podcasts for internal communications:

Updates

- [74%](#) of employees feel as if they're missing out on company news. This is where podcasts come in. Podcasts can be used to share either company wide updates or even department updates. It gives employees the opportunity to always be in the know with the organization.

Employee Features

- Featuring different employees within an organization helps to build trust, connection, and engagement among your workforce. By allowing them to get comfortable with each other and learn from employees of all roles and titles, it can boost your brand's internal communications. In fact, [69%](#) of managers said that they are not even comfortable communicating with employees in general. Podcasts can help to form that connection.

Industry News

- What's going on in your industry? It's important to keep everyone in your organization aware of what's happening in your respective space. This can assist with how ideas are formed and initiatives are executed if everyone is aware of the current state of your brand.

DEFINING YOUR IDEAL LISTENER PROFILE

Similar to developing a customer persona, an ideal listener profile identifies the demographic and psychographic behaviours of your potential audience. Who do you want listening to your content? By understanding their needs and desires, you will be able to effectively develop a relationship between your audience and podcast host. For example, if your goal is brand elevation, and your target demographic is women 25 to 34, developing a persona will tell you what your demographic cares about so you can conceptualize your podcast series around a subject that hyper-targets their interests.

The goal here is **relatability**. You want to paint a clear picture of who your listeners are in their everyday life so you can relate to them on a personal level. That way, they will have a positive association with your brand and will be more likely to become engaged listeners.

Key Components to an Ideal Listener Profile:



Age



Gender



Location



Industry and Occupation



Interests



Hobbies



Lifestyle



Social Causes



Pain Points



Fears



Budget



Total Market

(How many potential listeners there are that fit your profile. This metric will help you estimate your potential audience size)

COMPETITIVE ANALYSIS

Before you begin brainstorming different structures and formats for your podcast, you need to be aware of what already exists. Take some time to listen to other podcasts that exist in your category and analyse things like quality, length, format, and overall notes on what you did and did not like about the series.

Once you've listened to a variety of podcasts and have a breakdown of around 5-10, write out what your UVP is (unique value proposition). What can you do to set yourself apart from the other podcasts? This could be format, length, guests, host, etc. Find what will make you unique in your category.

CONCEPTUALIZATION

Once you have defined your podcast goals, ideal listener profile, and competitive analysis, you can begin conceptualizing your series. Get creative and use the knowledge that you have of potential listeners and current competition to define your subject matter/format. For example, if your ideal listeners are huge supporters of women empowerment and they are heavily based in New York City, it may make sense to interview female leaders currently residing in NYC.

CREATE YOUR PILOT SERIES

Now it's time to get creating. Below we've listed a number of different formats you can experiment with. Remember that this is all a guideline, based off of your UVP, it's up to you to switch up or get creative with what will set you apart.

Podcast Formats:

- Interview Q&A
- Discussion
- Multi-Story
- Documentary
- Scripted Narrative



DISTRIBUTION

Once you have your podcast ready to go, it's time to look at distribution. At this stage you have multiple decisions that you'll need to make moving forward:

Episode Frequency

1. Bulk Drop; Drop all episodes at one time to determine what episode subjects your listeners are most interested in.
2. Weekly
3. Bi-Weekly
4. Monthly

Distribution Platform

Podcast distribution platforms are platforms where you upload your series and it distributes your podcast out to all major listening platforms for you (i.e. Apple Podcasts, Spotify, Google Podcasts). Pricing can be dependent on hours, storage, number of episodes, and downloads. Some of the major distribution platforms are:

1. [Simplecast](#)
2. [Libsyn](#)
3. [Buzzsprout](#)
4. [Podbean](#)
5. [Blubrry](#)
6. [Anchor](#)

Launching With Multiple Episodes

It's common that podcasts will launch with 3-5 episodes. The reasoning for this is that it not only gives your listeners more content to get addicted to until the next episode release, but it also avoids the risk of releasing one episode that doesn't resonate well with your listeners.

Launching with multiple episodes will also look more attractive for potential listeners since it shows audiences that you are more committed to producing the series. "Podfade" is a term used where after the 7th episode, podcasters tend to lose motivation and slow down production on their series. You don't need to launch with 7 episodes but if you launch with 3-5, it shows more dedication and motivation for the series which listeners will catch onto.

AUDIENCE GROWTH TIPS

When it comes to audience growth the main question you need to ask yourself is - what channels do I have access to? This will take some time for you and your team to sit down and make a list of every single place your podcast can be promoted on. These channels are unique to you, leverage them by promoting your podcast series across each different outlet.

This includes channels like:

- Social media channels
- Websites
- Apps
- Newsletters
- Slack channels
- Communities
- Other podcasts

A brand that successfully leveraged the channels that they have access to is Tinder. When Tinder created the series “DTR” in partnership with Gimlet, they added a promotion for the podcast on their app where the series would come up as if it were a match. If people liked it, they would be taken to a page where they could listen to the series.

Audience Growth Tactics:

Paid

Spotify Advertising:

Spotify has over 299 million listeners across 92 markets and is the second most popular place to listen to podcasts in the world. As of February 2020 Apple accounted for 36 % of podcast downloads and Spotify accounted for 34% so they have significantly caught up.

We recommend that you utilize Spotify Ad Studio to spike your listeners. Your targeting can be an extremely warm, reaching people who already use Spotify, and are already listening to podcasts! Spotify ads can include a destination URL, image and audio message that marketers can pre-record and upload or create using a free voice over tool Spotify Ad Studio provides.

In addition to the traditional age, gender and location demographics, marketers can also associate their ads with a music type and mood. Spotify ads appear between music and podcast selections. You can target people who are interested in podcasts, and even get more granular into topics like Comedy, Business, Culture & Society, etc. to align with the topic of your show.



Contests

Create a contest and campaign to incentivize podcast reviews and give away prizes. The call to action can be to subscribe and review your show on Apple. This will increase your likelihood of hitting Apple’s New and Noteworthy (they say the first 8 weeks of your launch are the most crucial).

Prizes can include swag or gift cards that will entice people to participate. The goal of the contest would be to increase listeners, increase subscribers, and increase number of reviews on Apple Podcasts. Promote the contest across your podcast, social channels, and email distribution list.

Organic

Leverage Your Guests

If you have a series where guests are featured on your podcast, use their networks! Tap into another network of potential listeners that have an interest in listening to the episode that your guest is on.

Make it easy for your guests to share the episode by creating a media kit for them. The media kit should include items like:

1. Quotes from the episode
2. Audiograms
3. Images
4. Episode links
5. Sample posts to share

Collaborate with Other Podcasts

The great thing about collaborating with other podcasters is that you're tapping into a listener base that are already dedicated listeners.

Common ways that podcasts collaborate with one another is by featuring each other on their shows whether that be through interviews or ad slots. If you don't have a series where you can give a shoutout to another podcast, look into some of the other channels to promote one another even if it's just sharing their podcast on your social media channels.

[Quill Inc.](#) has launched an internal podcast network where podcasts can sign up to be connected with potential sponsors or connect with fellow podcasts to collaborate and cross promote on each other's respective series. If you're interested in joining, fill out the intake form [here](#).

Leverage Social Media

Podcast listeners are much more active on every social media platform ([94%](#) active on at least one) compared to the general population of the US. When using social media to grow your podcast, audience engagement and value should be top of mind. You want to share content that will engage your audience and also provide value so they hopefully result in a converted listener. Some valuable pieces of content to share are:

- 1) Audiograms
 - Audiograms are short video format teasers that take an audio clip from your episode and lay it over either a graphic or video that relates to your series. Platforms like Headliner, Audiogram, and Wavve make it super simple to create audiograms for your series.
- 2) Video clips from the episode
- 3) Episode teasers
- 4) Behind the scenes photos
- 5) Quote graphics

Remember to test which platforms work best when promoting your show, e.g. if you have a series that's focused on interviewing sales leaders from global organizations then LinkedIn might be very effective whereas Instagram might not be.



Start Building Your Audience Before You Launch

Lastly, start building your audience as early as possible before you launch. One way to do this is to tell your audience about the podcast through a series trailer. Your trailer should be short (30 seconds - 2 minutes) and consist of:

- An overview of the series and the value that listeners will get out of it;
- Why your show was created;
- Episode teasers;
You can do this by dropping guest names or by adding short audio clips from episodes.
- A strong call to action.
Your call to action will usually consist of asking listeners to either follow or subscribe to the series or sending them to your podcasts website.

In addition to a trailer, you can share teasers and snippets of your series to hook potential listeners through the different communication channels that you have identified. This will help grow your audience and build more awareness around your official series launch.

Discoverability

There are three main elements to discoverability.

Visibility: Whether or not listeners can find your content.

- Protips:
 - Use show notes strategically. Quill Inc. broke down [why you need podcast show notes, tips to writing them, as well as some resources podcasters can use.](#)

Episode Names & Descriptions: How compelling your names and descriptions are will convince listeners whether or not to listen.

- Protips:
 1. Don't exceed 60 characters
 2. Be succinct
 3. Episode titles and descriptions should conform to acceptable SEO practices for discoverability. Some resources include:
 - a) [Google Keyword Planner](#) helps you to find the most effective keywords for your series.
 - b) [Wordstream](#) also offers a free keyword tool that also allows you to specify the industry and location you are focusing on.
 - c) [Ubersuggest](#) allows you to see what's trending for others in your respective space.





Transcribe Your Episodes:

Transcribe your episodes and format them into blogs to boost your SEO and add another content point. Repurposing your content helps expand its reach.

Remember that not everyone discovers a podcast once it first launches. So if you're creating a seasonal podcast series, don't stop all promotion once you have released your last episode, new listeners can still be acquired between seasons.

And finally, experiment with different audience growth tactics to see what works best. Tactics that have worked for other podcasts may not fit with yours and your audience so don't be afraid to try new growth strategies out and let them go if they are not producing your desired results.

GET FEEDBACK & ADJUST ACCORDINGLY

Regardless of how you decide to distribute your podcast, it is vital to capture audience information. Key areas to focus on are listener demographics, behaviour, and interest level. Essentially, who are they, how long were they engaged for, and are you retaining them? Compare your results to your Ideal Listener Profile to ensure you're hitting the correct customer base.

Some resources to gather audience data are:

- Audience Surveys;
 - Directly ask your audience to fill out a survey that covers their demographics, behaviours, and interests.
- Social Media Analytics;
 - Focus on measuring audience engagement.
- Podcast Platform Analytics;
 1. Spotify
 2. Apple
 3. Combined metrics from distribution partners such as Podbean, Lisbyn, Simplecast, etc.
- Third Party Podcast Analytics Platforms
 - Such as [Chartable](#) and [Podtrac](#).



AUDIENCE MEASUREMENT

Now it's time to talk about analytics. Compared to other mediums, podcasts provide:

1. Downloads

Downloads are an important metric and should be tracked and measured. But one thing to keep in mind is that podcast success isn't based solely off of the number of downloads your series has, e.g. if your podcast targets a niche audience that's highly engaged, you probably won't have a large number of downloads but your sponsors may have higher conversion rates through your show.

Use downloads as a tool to estimate how many subscribers you have. Every week, calculate how many downloads you have on the day of your episode release, if that number is recurring every week on that same day, you can assume it's reflective of your number of subscribers.

2. Unique Downloads

Audiences have two ways of listening to podcasts - either an episode is streamed or it's downloaded. Unique downloads are a useful metric that filters through all the

listeners and downloads to only attribute one listener per download even if they downloaded the episode numerous times. This is a much more realistic metric of how many listeners you have.

3. Social Media

Information on your podcast doesn't just come from its direct analytics. Social media is a powerful tool to measure the awareness, engagement, popularity of your podcast, and audience demographics. Use social media listening tools (such as [HubSpot](#), [Hootsuite](#) or [Buffer](#)) to find who's talking about your podcast and how often listeners are talking about it. As you post your own content about the series, identify who consistently engages with it. These are either current subscribers or users that you can turn into subscribers.

4. Call To Actions (CTAs)

In your episode give your listeners a call to action. This works when you give your listeners a specific code or link for them to visit. If you can offer your listeners a discount to a product or service that either you/a sponsor offers, track the number of listeners that are driven to the website using that discount code. These numbers will also help you measure your conversion rates if you are interested in pitching to sponsors down the line.

The second way to use CTAs is by bringing potential listeners to your podcast whether that be through your website, social media channels, newsletter, etc. Give each channel a unique link so you can track where users are coming from. Once you've figured out which type of content and channel is best for converting users into listeners, put more marketing behind that tactic to grow your audience.

- A tool to use is [Chartable's SmartLinks](#) - SmartLinks create trackable URLs that will route listeners to their preferred listening app (e.g. Spotify, Apple, or Google Play) so you can view what channel is acquiring the most listeners.

5. Ratings & Reviews

If your podcast exists on a platform like Apple Podcasts (which it should) that lets users leave ratings and reviews, these are incredibly important to analyze. Not only do ratings and reviews let you know what listeners think of your overall series, they also help you find out which episodes are preferred by your audience. If you see a spike in lower ratings after an episode was published, take note that maybe that's not the type of content that your audience resonates with.

THE IMPORTANCE OF QUALITY CONTENT

Today, there are over one million podcast series and 30 million episodes available in feeds ([My Podcast Reviews](#)), and the numbers are only growing. As podcasting becomes more saturated, the key to growing an audience is about the niche you are creating for yourself and the quality of content that you are putting out.



AUDITING YOUR PODCAST

As you are distributing your episodes, make sure to check in with your content every 3-6 months. Due to the repetitive nature of podcast content (especially when not released in seasons), it can be easy to get lost in the motions, rather than ensuring that you are creating top notch content for your audience. We define podcast quality in 4 main categories:

1. Content Value

The value that listeners receive in return for listening to every minute of your podcast.

Does your episode have a [narrative arc](#)? You don't want your content to be flat and have listeners get bored. Try to create a story around your content with challenges and solutions or rising action and climaxes depending on the structure of your series.

2. Technical Quality

Ensure that your sound is clean and crisp rather than muffled and static. Music is also useful in keeping your listeners attention especially if you produce longer episodes (30+ minutes). Throughout your episode, add short music beds (5-10 seconds of music) that transition to a new segment, question, interview, etc.

There are a variety of platforms available to find creative commons music such as [Artlist](#), [Bensound](#), or [Free Music Archive](#).

3. Episode Structure

Make sure your episodes follow one general theme, topic and format. As we stated above, some possible formats are:

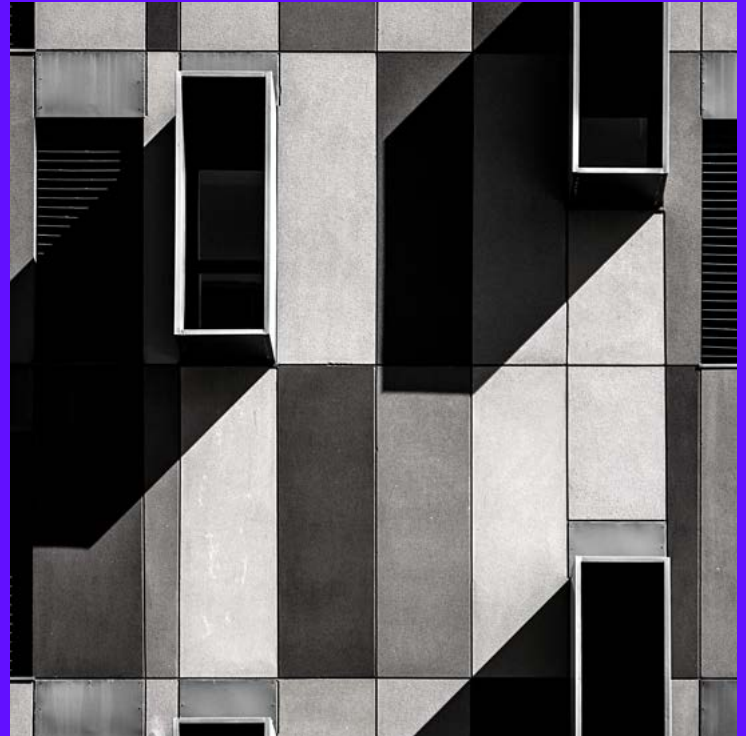
- i. Interview Q&A
- ii. Discussion
- iii. Multi-Story
- iv. Documentary
- v. Scripted Narrative

Don't forget to add effective signposts into the episode as well. Signposts are short clips in the podcast where the host will either recap sections of the episode, raise questions, give their opinion on a section, or tell listeners what's coming up.

- Signposts can be placed throughout the podcast, usually we'll hear signposts at the beginning and ending of the podcast and possibly throughout the episode depending on the length and format.

4. Subject Matter

Is the topic you are discussing different from other podcasts on the market? For example, if you run a tech podcast, what is it about yours that is different from the rest? Find out what sets your content apart from other shows in your category to give your listeners a reason to choose to listen to your series.



IN CONCLUSION

Creating a great podcast that listeners want to tune into takes planning, strategizing, and expertise.

If your brand is planning on launching a podcast this guide is a perfect resource to get you started, but after you're done reading you'll actually need to take action and dedicate time to bringing your series to life.

It's also important to remember that podcasting is a long-term plan. Don't expect to have your podcast produce the results you're hoping for immediately. Be patient with the content and continue to work towards finding the right content and marketing tactics that fit with your audience.

CASE STUDIES

Royal Bank of Canada



[Sample Link](#)

Season 2 of RBC Disruptors

Description: RBC Disruptors is a podcast series about reimagining Canada's economy through times of unprecedented change. It features thought-provoking conversations with Canadian business and innovation leaders about planting the seeds of a new economy

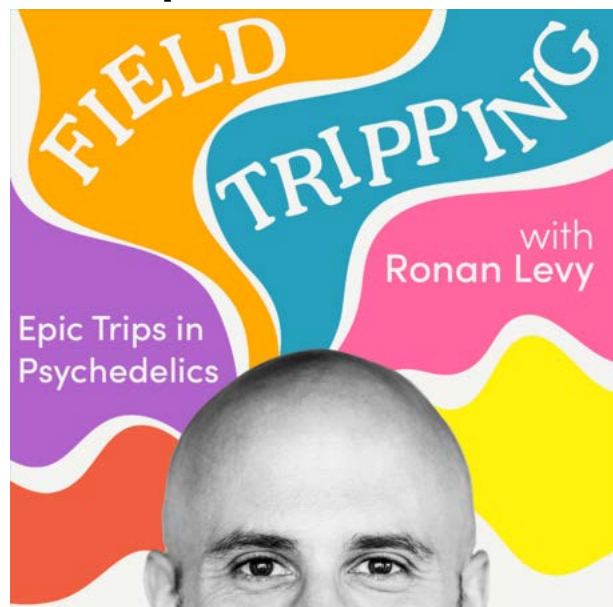
- Ranked #2 on Apple Podcast charts along with Tim Ferriss.

[Sample Link](#)

Description: Field Tripping is a podcast about psychedelics, the people that use them and what our renewed love affair with both says about who we are and where we're going. Explore how psychedelics awaken new views on sex, science, business, fitness, life, and death in the lives of our influential and inspiring guests.

- Nominated and made the short list for "Best Branded Podcast of 2020" by Discover Pods

Field Trip Health



The Marketer's Journey



[Sample Link](#)

Description: The Marketer's Journey by Uberflip is a podcast dedicated to learning from senior marketing executives, exploring the career journey they've taken and the buyer journey they set their customers on. Each week Randy Frisch speaks to a senior marketer and learns whether it was luck, hustle or a combo of the two that propelled them to their latest post.

[Sample Link](#)

Description: As the only podcast dedicated to open banking, the MOB podcast strives to be one of the key voices in the global open banking community. The goal of the show is to educate people on how the world of finance is being shaken up by open banking, ultimately giving them more ways to save their money, move money around and improve their financial well-being. To those building open banking, they bring the unique perspectives of technology innovators, financial leaders and key influencers, as they aim to accelerate its continued evolution.

- Ranked on Apple Charts for the business and entrepreneurship category

Mr. Open Banking by Axway



2020

THANK YOU!

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