

THE POWER OF PODCASTING

By Marla Holt

Let's be honest. You might not finish reading this article. Maybe you've got other things to do. Maybe reading online isn't your thing. But what if it were read aloud as a conversation with a friend, an interview with an expert, or the presentation of research? What if you listened while working out or doing laundry?

That's the beauty of podcasts.

These episodic audio programs—downloadable on apps such as Spotify and Apple Podcasts—have changed the way we consume information with content that is often vivid and moving, fostering a sense of community between creators and listeners. Some podcasts are scripted; some are off the cuff. Formatting ranges from casual conversations to formal interviews, how-to to self-help, documentaries to fiction. According to Podcast Insights, 55% of the U.S. population tuned in to podcasts in 2021.

That's 155 million people.

"Streaming, on-demand media changed how we consume programming, and podcasting is on trend with that," says David Moss (LA'95), chief creative officer at Evergreen Podcasts, a production company with more than 170 original and branded podcasts. "Podcasting content often ties in with our passions and is more conversational than TV or traditional radio."

Podcasting is personal, Moss says, bringing together people in collaborative spaces, particularly for communities such as BIPOC and LGBTQ+ that might feel underserved by traditional media. "Accessible technology really opened up podcasting for a full-blown renaissance. It's very democratic—you can start and distribute a podcast with a simple phone app."

Not that everyone should. A podcast's success often hinges on good storytelling, good production values, and a host's ability to connect with guests and listeners.

"We've been talking about music, movies, business, crime, and sports since the dawn of time," Moss says. "It comes down to whether you identify with the host and whether they can tell you something fresh and compelling." Personally, Moss enjoys [Broken Record](#), during which music producer Rick Rubin and journalist Malcolm Gladwell talk with famous musicians about their lives, inspiration, and craft.

"I feel like I'm sitting in my living room with two very bright and accomplished people," Moss says.

As interest in podcasting has surged, Purdue has begun offering DIY resources and has added podcasting courses to the curriculum. Purdue Libraries and School of Information Studies collaborated with the Brian Lamb School of Communication to host [MakeYourStory](#), which is essentially a podcast about how to podcast.

Tonantzin DeAztlan-Smith, assistant professor of practice and director of the Digital Media Production Center for the Brian Lamb School of Communication, teaches a practicum on podcasting during which students plan and produce a 10-episode series.

Recent student podcasts have included *Purdue Pete-za*, a review of local pizza joints; *The Funniest Thing I've Ever Heard* about members of Purdue's improv community; and *Boilers Abroad*, which mixes hip-hop music with conversations about the unique challenges of being an international student.

DeAztlan-Smith hosts *The Pod-Class* to document what students are learning. "They realized that the best podcasts have an authentic voice," she says. "When they let go of presentation perfection, they create some amazing content. They build community simply by telling their story and sharing their passions."

Kate Young (LA'12), who produces, writes, and hosts [This Is Purdue](#), the University's official podcast, believes podcasting is all about good storytelling.

"If a podcast has a compelling narrative arc that shares different voices and perspectives, you can't wait to hear the next episode," she says.

This Is Purdue creates captivating stories about everything from legacy families and cutting-edge research to athletics and campus events. Young has welcomed alumni, coaches, faculty, staff, and students to the show, and she hopes it deepens Boilermakers' love for the University.

"We showcase Purdue's innovative spirit and are building our brand. It's a job well done if a listener comes away thinking, 'That's so Purdue!'"

THE ROLE MODEL

Tiffany (Schwab) Sauder (M'02)
CEO, Element Three marketing consultancy
Owner, Share Your Genius podcast production company
Podcast: [Scared Confident](#)

When Tiffany Sauder launched *Scared Confident*, she'd just had her fourth daughter and was transitioning into a less hands-on role at Element Three, her marketing consulting company. She was living a busy life of "and"—mother and wife and CEO and entrepreneur, etc.

"I thought about what I wanted my life to say as it relates to young women," she says. "I have other dreams, but fear was telling me to be quiet and be grateful for what I have."

Sauder identified, explored, and released that fear in *Scared Confident*'s first few episodes. Now in its second year, the podcast is helping other women embrace life's complexity and "giving them the courage to love their choices and pursue a sustainable life," she says.

Sauder, who also owns Share Your Genius, a podcasting production company, has found podcasting to be a process of discovery rather than simply one of documentation. "Podcasting has created a real richness in my life that was fully unexpected," she says.

SAUDER RECOMMENDS:

[Dolly Parton's America](#), a personal, historical, and musical rethinking of one of America's great icons.
[How I Built This](#), stories behind some of the world's best-known companies and the innovators, entrepreneurs, and idealists who built them.

THE FOODIE

Ariel Smith

Doctoral candidate in American studies

Outgoing Black Cultural Center scholar-in-residence

Author, *Before You Launch a Food Truck: 8 Questions Every Aspiring Food Trucker Should Ask*

Podcast: [The Food Truck Scholar](#)

Ariel Smith loves to eat good food. So much so that she made food—specifically food prepared by Black food truckers—the focus of her doctoral research at Purdue.

A native of Birmingham, Alabama, Smith found Indiana's food landscape rather bland when she started her doctoral program.

"My friends back home were posting pictures of the amazing dishes they got from Black-owned food trucks," she says. It piqued her curiosity: Why the sudden growth in mobile food among the Black community? Was it due to gentrification or something else?

Smith discovered there was no scholarly research on the topic.

"There's a lot of Black history and culture that either goes misrepresented or undocumented," she says. She wondered, "Could I eat my way to a PhD?"

After getting her advisor on board, she launched *The Food Truck Scholar* as a platform to celebrate the stories of Black food entrepreneurship. The podcast documents her research, including more than 100 interviews with food truck owners and more than 500 visits to trucks and restaurants owned by entrepreneurs of all backgrounds. It combines personal stories with business savvy and recommendations for those seeking mouth-watering food. "If you're in Nashville, you learn that you should check out the Beignet Bar," she says.

"By sharing stories of successful food truckers, I'm encouraging others to take a step toward their dream."

SMITH RECOMMENDS:

[+Plus Size Magic Radio](#), which counters the storytelling around larger bodies and dispels myths associated with fat persons.

[Table 86](#), centered on creatives of color transforming the food and beverage industry.

THE PROMOTER

Adam Bartels (LA'04)

Assignment editor, WXIN/WTTV, Indianapolis

Podcast: [Full Steam Ahead: A Podcast About Purdue](#)

When WXIN/WTTV, Indianapolis's Fox and CBS affiliate, began expanding its digital platform, Adam Bartels pitched the idea of creating a podcast all about Purdue. He'd noticed a slight bias toward covering Indiana University's sports and events, and he wanted to balance the scales, he says.

"I love Purdue and felt it needed more coverage in the Indy area."

His boss liked the idea, and now *Full Steam Ahead* features a range of topics with Purdue connections, including sports, research, and exceptional students and faculty. Video components were added in March 2020 and can be viewed on the station's website or YouTube.

Bartels's first three episodes focused on the impact that Tyler Trent (AS T'18), the Purdue student and super fan who died of bone cancer in 2019, had on the community. Other favorite episodes are an interview with Purdue President Mitch Daniels and conversations with Purdue sports legends.

Bartels sees his podcast in partnership with the University's podcasts. "I'm a strong promoter of the brand," he says. "University staffers have been very supportive, helping me line up guests and develop topics."

While the audience is mostly Boilermakers, Bartels says that doesn't mean the stories shared on the podcast can't touch other people. "Podcasting can be far-reaching," he says. "The education that happens at Purdue can be interesting to anyone who tunes in."

BARTELS RECOMMENDS:

[Southside Rabbi](#), which examines art, theology, and Christian living from a unique perspective.

[Sports Spectrum](#), which features stories at the intersection of faith and sports.

LISTEN UP

Purdue podcasts cover just about every aspect of the University. Here's a sampling:

[This Is Purdue](#)

Producer and Host: Kate Young (LA'12)

Purdue's official podcast highlights the accomplishments and life stories of Boilermakers across all disciplines and industries

Young recommends the following episodes:

[Purdue-Discovered Drug Strengthens Fight Against Cancer](#)

Philip Low, Presidential Scholar for Drug Discovery and Ralph C. Corley Distinguished Professor of Chemistry, discusses the drug he developed that allows cancer surgeons to quickly identify and remove malignant cells during surgery.

[President Mitch Daniels on Leading Purdue Through a Pandemic](#)

President Daniels discusses the decision to fully open the University in the fall of 2000 amidst a global pandemic.

[Purdue's Old Golden Ticket Vaccination Drawing: Winners' Reactions](#)

Students who submitted proof of being fully vaccinated against COVID-19 were randomly selected to win a \$9,992 "Golden Ticket" (the equivalent of a year's in-state undergraduate tuition). The podcast team hit the road to deliver the good news in person to the winners.

[Superheroes of Science](#)

Cohost: Sarah Nern

// K-12 outreach coordinator and chemistry professor

Cohost: Steven Smith

// K-12 outreach coordinator and earth, atmospheric, and planetary sciences professor

Boilermakers share their research, discoveries, and expertise with K-12 educators and their students. The podcast includes video components so that kids can watch real scientists doing science.

"The content we showcase often dovetails with a classroom lesson; it's useful for students to see and hear an expert conducting research into something they've been learning about," Nern says. "The podcast also highlights all the great STEM research that happens at Purdue and within our alumni body."

[My Constitution](#)

Writer: Peter Watkins

// Academic program manager, Department of Political Science

Producer: Connie Doebele

// Managing director of the Center for C-SPAN Scholarship & Engagement

This 12-episode series, developed by Purdue's Center for C-SPAN Scholarship & Engagement as part of its Civics Literacy Initiative, tells America's story for anyone looking to brush up on the history and principles of the U.S. government. Episodes, which blend academic rigor with creative storytelling, include "The Declaration of Independence," "Separation of Powers and Checks and Balances," and "Voting Rights," among others.