



Difference Between Webcast & Podcast

I was recently asked what the difference is between doing a Podcast and a Webcast. Since I didn't have a definitive answer to that, I did some research. I found some articles that helped, so here is a synopsis from a couple of them.

Clip on the mic and load up the webcam -- whatever you want to say to the world can be widely published on the Internet in a personal broadcast. Join with people from all levels of technical ability who are publishing their work every day, learning as they go along. If you are ready to make a multimedia stream, first know the difference between a podcast and webcast. It's likely that one is a better choice for the audience you want to reach.

The similarities between webcasting and podcasting make it easy to confuse the two -- even their names sound alike. Webcasting is essentially broadcasting over the Internet, using online streaming to deliver content. Podcasts are delivered via the Internet but are not streamed. Because of the differences between these media platforms, they have different software and storage requirements and are better suited to some tasks than others.



Podcasts

Podcast producers use personal or workplace computers to combine voice, music and sound effects into a composition that tells a story or expresses opinion on a social issue or trend. Some podcasts also use video. Usually, a podcast centers around a specific interest of the producers and the audience. Reviews, humor, ruminations, poetry, reflection, gossip and personal interviews might be featured or included in snippets or segments. Audience members listen through websites or players provided by outlets like iTunes, YouTube or Soundcloud.

Podcast Production

Producing a podcast requires a computer with a microphone port or attached microphone, Internet access and an editing software program like iTunes, iMovie, Movie Maker or Audacity. If you want to use video, you will also need a digital video camera. Since many podcasts include graphics for titles and credits, the software you work with should be able to create text for the screen. If you don't mind publishing your podcast to a blog and keeping it there, you can record directly into Blogger or other blogging services, like Blog Talk Radio. Often, they will give you editing tools and help you gain fans and followers too. If you use your own software, you will need to export the podcast as a MP4 file and upload it to the site or sites where you want it to appear.

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Webcasts

A webcast differs from a podcast because the recorded event usually includes live spectators in addition to an online audience. Webcasts might also include tools for audience interaction. The audience either watches online as the featured event occurs or downloads a recording afterward. Events that are often webcasted include speeches, games, church services, television shows and classroom lectures. Businesses use webcasts to train employees about new protocols, for continuing education, or just to motivate and inspire. A real estate brokerage, for example, might pay a speaker to webcast from a company conference room while agents in satellite offices watch from their computers. During the webcast, the agents could submit questions into their computers for the speaker to respond to on the fly. Polls, quizzes and chat rooms are also part of webcasting.

Webcast Production

The tools needed for a webcast depend on your budget and your goals for the quality, length and the publishing site. A professional webcast would require a script, one or more digital video cameras, microphones, lights, skilled camera operators and information technology professionals to establish and stream the connection. This doesn't mean that a webcast couldn't be produced with less than that: A webcam and microphone can deliver your message in a more utilitarian manner. Consider working with a company that specializes in online broadcasting. Publishing consultant company Media Bistro names Ustream, Qik or Cover-ItLive among some of the best webcasting services.

Delivery Method and Storage

The biggest differences between podcasts and webcasts are how they are delivered to you and whether they are stored on your devices. Webcasts stream video over the Internet, meaning your device doesn't store a copy of the video, so a constant Internet connection is required. Podcasts are downloaded directly to your computer, usually by media players with podcatchers. This means a connection is required only when downloading a new episode, and that the podcast episode is stored directly on your device.

Potential Applications

Each of these formats is more useful than the other under certain circumstances. Webcasts are easier to distribute among viewers who can't directly download a file, like those using a public computer as a guest. They can also stream live, making them useful for broadcasting live events over the Internet. Podcasts are better suited for distribution to people who can download them, but who may need to pause the podcast and return to it later. Users without Internet connections that are sufficiently strong to maintain a good stream also benefit from podcasts.

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