How to Optimise Your Podcast's Outline & Theme
Podcraft, Season 15, Episode 4

Colin: Hey folks welcome to another episode of *PodCraft*. This is a show all about podcasting. Helping you to create a more successful show. I'm Colin Gray from thepodcasthost.com and Matthew is with me as always. How are you doing, Matthew?

Matthew: He is surely is with you. Fantastic. Burst tea bag. Is it a burst tea bag the following week or did we just record two episodes back to back. I have terrible tea base luck.

Colin: I think probably the latter, but more likely the former. [laughs] Yes, we still get tea bag, tea leaves in your teeth.

Matthew: I surely do, yes in the teeth yes. That's an attractive look.

Colin: Always. Thank you for joining us again, dear listener. We're still answering everyone's questions. Q&A stuff that come in to us, which is wonderful. Good to hear from yourselves and I hope to help out with the questions you have. Before we jump in, just mentioned our tool Ls. This content was supported by Alitu alitu.com, which is our podcast maker app. If you're wanting something to make it much easier to create your podcasts, pop over to alitu.com and you can see the call recording, the editing, the podcast production, the automation, the audio cleanup, all that stuff. You get a free trial. So pop over there, alitu.com, have a look. Let's jump into the questions, Matthew. Who have we got this time around?

Matthew: We've got Kay and he says he's having a bit of trouble optimizing various things on his podcast. We take wee lesson.

Colin: Go for it.

Kay: [audio] Hi, my name is Kay. I'm the host of *In Da Trenches* podcast, and a specific problem that me and my co-hosts are having are optimizing our names, show outline and theme. What is the best way or exercise you guys can suggest that we'd get those ironed out?

Matthew: Kay thank you very much for that question. Just to let the listener know, is well, if you have your own voice questions, there's still time to get them on this season at thepodcasthosts.com/answers and there's a wee link that will lead you through that and you could submit your question and get a wee bit of free promo as well.

Colin: Yes, indeed. Make sure you get your podcast in there. I want to hear who your podcast's for, what you're making and all that stuff.

Matthew: I thought this question was timely, actually, because we haven't long released a free tool for podcasters. A free podcast planner tool, haven't we?

thepodcasthost.com/planner. This is something we were really excited about when we finally saw it in action, wasn't it?

Colin: Yes. It's something that I think we've wanted to make for ages. In fact, I think we've made versions of this and the guides and the blog posts and podcast episodes that we make, haven't we. It's always been the same structure, like how do you think about making a well-optimized show, a show that attracts people and tells them what it's all about, tells them why they should listen and really converts visitors into listeners. It was what we talked about.

The planner is now somewhat interactive, that you can put your topics in, you can put your format in and it ends up guiding you through that. Then creating a PDF that you can download, print out if you want, or just keep in your computer or your tablet, whatever it is and then you can kind of work through that plan as you're launching. That's the first thing you were going to suggest, hey, Matthew? That's something that Kay here could you use to help optimization in the first place.

Matthew: Yes, definitely. I think a lot of the listeners will be really interested in this. Just to **[unintelligible 00:03:45]** this is 100% free. You go on there, like I said thepodcasthost.com/planner. That just takes you through all. It asks you loads of questions about your show, about what you're trying to do. Maybe about gaps in your skill set or areas that you're a bit stronger at. It'll eventually start talking about your lesson and stuff like that. At the end, same coin, you get this really good personalized plan spat out at you. Not physically spat out, that'd be horrible. Definitely, something that you could use going forward as well. That's a **[unintelligible 00:04:18]** that I would definitely suggest for him. We'd be daft to leave it there and just end the episode because there's definitely some tips that we could provide even now, isn't there?

Colin: We can go through some things. Yes, I love the fact that when we used to write blog posts, we used to write record a podcast episode. It'd be like, "If you have this requirement, then do this. If you have this requirement, then do this." You almost had to put an **[unintelligible 00:04:43]** [crosstalk]-- Exactly, but with this, with a planner, we can ask the questions. We can see do you do this? Do you do that? Do you do this? The solution totally tailored to those requirements. It's really cool. Okay. Anyway, let's get into a few other tips, though. Like, so what do you want to get into first?

Matthew: Yes, and I find myself saying this more and more these days, but I like to take that zoomed out approach when we come across questions like this. It's sometimes about really zooming out and getting back to basics. Like thinking about your podcast and why it exists. Like, what is this podcast all about? What's it's role? Who's it for? What does success look like to me? Because it looks different to all different people.

It's taking that step back first and thinking, "What am I doing here? Like, what am I working towards? Because once you start to answer those questions, then it makes all that other stuff a bit easier. When you're thinking about, "Okay, what do I call the thing? What do I write in my description?" You have to figure out that bigger. I'm not saying you haven't, Kay. It's just that sometimes stepping back and taking a look at that is going to be really useful.

Colin: I always find like, there's rarely a time when you can't improve that plan, hey? Things change so quickly. You create a podcast based on this idea and then two months in you realize that your listeners are asking you for something slightly different or you've latched onto some other niche that you didn't actually realize you'd be serving or. Or even just you, you'd realize that you don't actually enjoy creating this type of content that you expected quite so much and you actually like this other type of content a little bit better. You can always improve it, can't you, just asking those questions?

Matthew: Yes, exactly. Podcasts, they're a work in progress, aren't they? They're not like a book that you've published and put out there and that's it. It's a body of work. It's constantly being tweaked and a lot of it's going to be to do with your audience. The three areas you're asking about here. I mean, I'll be honest with you. These are entire topics on their own. We do have guides to all of these things on their own, which we'll link to initial notes.

You've mentioned your name, your podcast name. You've mentioned the outline or we could call it the description or summary and you've mentioned the format. I thought we could just briefly go and we could touch on like the high level pointers for these three things.

Colin: Yes. That's good.

Matthew: Starting with the podcast name. Without us like laboring the point too much, because like I said, this is a whole episode on its own, what are the biggest maybe mistakes you see with podcast names?

Colin: Yes. Good question. This is always the hardest bit. Isn't it? How long on average do you think you take to come up with a new podcast name, Matthew?

Matthew: Yes, I don't know. I could think about it for weeks, I suppose.

Interviewer: Weeks, weeks, literally weeks. [laughs] It should be actually the simplest part, shouldn't it? In our guide, we often talk about three types, isn't it? You've got the does what it, the Ronseal. We always advertise Ronseal, don't we, but it's us who came up with that brilliant marketing tactic. [laughs] That's what it says in the 10. It's like the best tagline ever. The Ron seal name means it does what it says in the 10. If I'm starting a mountain biking show, I call it *The Mountain Biking Show*, *Mountain Biking Show*.

I was very American. Sorry. If you're in the US, I miss my Ts out. People never understand me when I say mountain biking. *Mountain biking show*, or *The mountain biking podcast*, something like that. Then you get the slightly clever one. I might call it *The quick wheels podcast* or something, which means that you're not into wheels.

Matthew: *Speedy wheels*.

Colin: *Speedy wheels podcast*. Good name. Like it, which is quite nice. It's probably is arguably a better name in terms of memorable. It just sounds better, doesn't it? It's more fun. I suppose there's more personality there, but what's the problem with that?

Matthew: Yes. It's just as difficult for people to find it like both in search or to immediately know what it's about. Like that could be about formula one. It could be about, you're just really good at sewing [laughs] I suppose if you use a view. I don't know anything about sewing. [laughs]

Colin: I don't think it's going to work.

Matthew: Yes. It's not immediately clear what it's about and yes, people aren't searching for that specific term. There's just, there's so much to be said for the so-called boring name, which is very searchable. Just to cap off what you were saying about those three ways, Colin, the other popular route is to call it, the Colin Gray show. No one in the world knows who Colin Gray is, so they wouldn't be searching for it. If you're somebody like Joe Rogan, in which case, thanks for listening, Joe. You can call your show after yourself, but to most of us **[unintelligible 00:09:58]**, that's not an option.

Colin: Yes, that's later on down the line when you've got a big audience already. [laughs] I suppose what we're saying is that generally, the best option is actually the boring option. Look back at your show, Kay. Can you tweak the name at all? Can you tweak it so that is even more obvious what the show's about? Again, this is one of those things you can revisit isn't it? I might have called my show, *The mountain biking show* in the early days, but actually I realize that all I'm doing is talking about gear, because that's the thing I'm most interested in.

I'm reviewing bikes and shorts and shoes, and so maybe I'm going to rename it. I'm not going to call it *The mountain biking show*. I'm going to call it *The mountain bike equipment show* or *The mountain bike gear show*. That much more easily captures people. That's kind of the more optimized view, because people see it. They look at the artwork, it's like big letters on the artwork, *The mountain bike gear show* and they go, "Ah, that's a show that solves my problem, because I'm into gear. I want to know what gear to buy next."

Matthew: Did you literally get entire episodes of reviewing shorts?

Colin: Yes, totally.

Matthew: I mean, I'm sure Magnum's obviously there. There's only so many things I could say about shorts.

Colin: Yes. Well, it gets to that point, but actually, you know what it's like Matthew when you're really into something you get all the detail, you can find all things to geek out on. You're right, maybe not just one pair of shorts, but go through a few different pairs of shorts. [crosstalk] Definitely get deep deep on that.

Matthew: [laughs] Whole season.

Colin: Indeed. [chuckles]

Matthew: Name's the big thing, literally. Is it searchable, is it acceptable. Is it immediately obvious, but like I said we've got a full guide on this. I'll put a link to it in the show notes as well. The second thing he was talking about, the outlined, the description, the summary whatever we want to call it. I think the biggest mistake

people make-- Well there's two big mistakes, actually. The first one is, when you're creating your podcast and you're maybe a host, often, you write this because you have to, so you're creating your show, you upload artwork and stuff like that. You've got your first episode, and then you realize you've got one of the boxes and it's a field that you have to fill in.

It's like, "enter your description". You quickly, "Okay, my name's such and such, this is a podcast about this and that. Support us on Patreon." It's just shoved in there the last minute, and that becomes your description for years and years.

Colin: You never changed it again. [laughs]

Matthew: Yes. Well, first and foremost, we should create podcasts where that's maybe been written in advance, but you could edit at any time, obviously. I think the big mistake is, folk will write about themselves and the podcast rather than writing about the listener, so instead of talking about, "I'm this, and this shows this, and this is why I started it." It's more of a, "You are such and such. You want to learn to do this. This is the show that it's going to help you do it, and this is how we're going to help you do it." Make it about them, I would say.

Colin: Yes, absolutely. It goes back to we've said this before, haven't we? It goes back to people are not being uncharitable, but it's mostly true, because we're all busy. We're all selfish, we're all selfish, and we want to get something from anything we spend our time with. If we commit 30 minutes an hour to a podcast, we want to get something from it. That might just be entertainment. It might just be making us feel a bit better or making us laugh a little bit, but often, podcasts are education or motivation or directly made to solve a problem.

If we're selfish, we want to make sure we're going to get something from our 30 minutes, we need to know what problem this podcast solves, what benefit it's going to give us. That needs to be your first sentence in the description. It needs to be, "Here's how we're going to help you. Here's the problem we're going to solve for you. Here's the pain I'm going to take away for you as a listener." First 1, 2, 3 sentences need to be all about that. Like I recognize what you're struggling with listener, here's how I'm going to solve it, and here's how I do it uniquely. Here's why you should listen to my show which solves this problem, as opposed to all these other shows that solve the problem.

Maybe a really simple example could be something like, "Are you a mountain bike gearhead? Do you love gadgets and gear, but you never know quite whether you're buying the best bike or the best pedals? Well, on this show, I'm going to review in detail, every single pedal, every single saddle, every single pair of shorts in the mountain biking world to save you the time doing the research yourself, and I have access to the mountain bike industry, so I'm going to bring on experts which will give us all of the secret knowledge, and that's my unique angle on it." Something like that.

That's how you should start your description. I'm sure you can write it better than that, but that's the idea, that's the structure, and then from there you can maybe start to do a bit more of the here's my background in it if you want to, but you really need to grab them in, in those first few sentences with the problem, the pain, and the solution you're offering. That's how you can show people that they're going to get

some benefit from actually spending half an hour with you. All right. Format. Kay also asked about format. What are we going to jump into here? What do you think on the format?

Matthew: This is another thing that could chop and change. You could adapt over time. I seldom tell-- in fact, I've never told anyone, you need to do whatever an interview show, you need to do a solo show. In fact, I'm a big fan of trying them all out. Whether that's trying them in little seasons and batches or whether you just this week's a solo, this week, I've got a co-host, this week is an interview. I think over time you get a feel both for what you enjoy the best and what creates the best content, don't you?

Colin: Yes. Your listeners will tell you won't they? And especially if you ask, make the effort to say like, "This season I tried a couple of solo episodes, a couple of co-hosted ones, a couple of interviews. What do you think? Which ones do you like best," and take that feedback? Do you reckon, Matthew, do you have to, is it worthwhile having a routine? I've seen some shows and I do like the approach of doing solo Mondays, and interview Fridays, or even every other week or something. Do you like that approach? Do you think it's worthwhile?

Matthew: I've never come across that, to be honest, but that if you were going on that verbatim theme, that would involve like multiple episodes a week, obviously, which is a whole other conversation.

Colin: Or even just like taking turns, like you do a solo one week, co-host the next week, something like that, so that people know what to expect. I go back and forth on this actually, like the whole routine thing. Sometimes I think that, and I get the feedback that listeners about a routine, they know to let-- Some people will like solo episodes more than co-hosted.

Others will like co-hosted more than solo. If they have a solo episode one week, they like to know that next week it'll be the other kind or something like that. I don't know. I never quite decided on that, but I think in some senses that routine can be beneficial, perhaps.

Matthew: Again, with all of this, it's always about making it very easy for your listeners to get in touch with you because they will let you know. I know that there's a tight rope to walk with listener feedback. Sometimes the squeaky wheel doesn't need the oil. Sometimes it's just an obscure viewpoint that you're going to hear from somebody a lot.

You'll know yourself. If a lot of folks are getting in touch and they're saying, "I really like what you did there," or "I'm not so keen on these other ones that you're doing." Maybe leave an open survey, a Google survey, leave that on your contact page. Just point them to it, let them know that you're very easy to get in touch when you're **[unintelligible 00:17:53]** the feedback too.

Colin: I think it's worth saying as well. We always say and I think it is very important to do this, listen to your listeners, but it's worth saying that the show is your show. Podcasting needs to be fun. It needs to be enjoyable. It needs to be up your street. Even if you get feedback that people like solo episodes best, actually it turns out you

hate solo episodes, you don't need to go with that approach because a podcast will only work if you are enjoying it.

You won't create great content if you're not enjoying creating it, or if it takes too long for you to make, or if that routine I mentioned, if it does turn out that it's too much of a time suck or it just doesn't work for you doing that routine, like every other week, doing a certain episode, then mix it up.

The main things are that you're enjoying the content, which means that you're creating good content, you're creating engaging content and that you can keep it regular, that you can actually get it out every single week or every single two weeks, whatever routine you want to stick to. That regularity is more important and whatever content you like making, you'll find an audience for it.

There'll be a section of your audience that love that best. Maybe the others will drift off, but actually, they may be just weren't your kind of audience anyway. Do listen to your audience and do try and take that feedback and put it in there, but it is your show and you need to enjoy it. You can take control and disregard some of that feedback if you choose to.

Matthew: Sage council, Colin. Sometimes the bigger audience isn't necessarily the better one. Sometimes we could shave a few off. I do remember a while back getting feedback on the audio drama that I do and people were like, "I really like the episodes you're putting out. Could you put one out every week?" That's pretty much impossible.

Colin: How many hours does it take to make one of those things? Like dozens?

Matthew: Wouldn't like to think about it, but I was able to tell those people politely that they'll have to look elsewhere.

Colin: Yes, we're not your show. You want someone regular, you need someone a bit less highly produced than a Scotch podcast.

Matthew: Yes.

Colin: Cool. I think that maybe covers it. Does that cover in terms of feedback?

Matthew: Yes, definitely. Again, I would like to point to the, well, the links will be in the show notes to thorough guides on the three things we've talked about there. Remember too, we've talked about our free podcast planner tool. You'll find that at thepodcasthost.com/planner. Get on there right now. Fill it all out and get a, what was that? I said, get a PDF spat out at you.

Colin: Spat. Yes. Saliva not included.

Matthew: Covered in tea leaves.

Colin: Is saliva an international word. Is that a bit Scottish?

Matthew: I think so.

Colin: You think our wonderful US audience know what saliva is. Let us know, get in touch. That's the question of the week? Do you know what saliva is on Twitter? Go to the podcasthost.com, and let us know what's a sliver?

Matthew: Join in next week, where we review shorts.

Colin: [laughs] Yes, exactly. Podcasting shorts, makes difference. Wear the right shorts for your podcast, get your voice in the right timber. Legs cooling makes for a better voice, I've heard.

Matthew: Should have called pocket-size podcast. We should have called that podcast in shorts and the cover just could have been the alitu robot with shorts on.

Colin: Oh, that could have worked, actually. That's good. I like it.

Matthew: There's still time for a rebrand.

Colin: We just talked about that. Change the name. Yes. Feedback. We've got feedback from the audience. I'll just finish by mentioning alitu again as well. Please do go and check out alitu if you want something, that'll make your podcast much easier to create, take less time to create, automates a whole bunch of it from your audio cleanup, like noise reduction, leveling to adding your transitions and your fades.

You can build your episode in minutes rather than hours. It's all editing included as well. You can edit any mistakes out in our custom podcast editor too. Now, as of just a month or so ago, hosting as well. Alitu can be everything you need in a podcast, but it can also publish to other hosts as well. If you wanted stick with whatever wonderful host you're with. Go over to alitu.com A-L-I-T-U.com and you get a seven-day free trial to try it out, try out the call recording, the editing, the production. Let us know, give some feedback if you like it or not. All right. Thanks again, Matthew. Good couple episodes there. Oh, no. I gave away the secret we recorded two at once.

Matthew: Thanks, Kay. And thanks, Lauren for laughing.

Colin: Indeed. [laughs] Cool. All right, we'll come back in another week with another listener question as well. Matthew, do you want to give that link one more time for anybody have any other questions they want to sneak in before the end of this season?

Matthew: Yes. Nice and easy. Thepodcasthost.com/answers.

Colin: All right. We'll talk to you then.