



A Podcasting Mini-Guide

Version 1.0
November 2009

Jeff Cobb
P: 919.201.7460
E: jcobb@tagoras.com

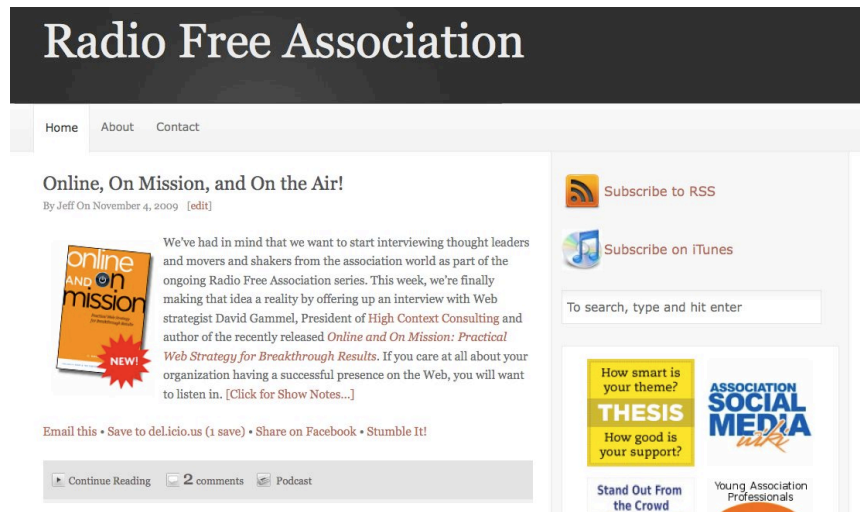
Table of Contents

Introduction.....	1
Web site	2
WordPress	2
Thesis Theme with Straight Shooter	2
RSS Feed	3
Feedburner.....	3
iTunes	3
Recording.....	4
On-site with high-end mics	4
Remote with Skype and phone	4
Recorded conference call.....	5
Handheld digital recorder.....	5
Mixing and Editing	6
Garage Band.....	6
Music Alley.....	6
Levelator.....	6
Audio Hosting.....	7
Libsyn	7
Bottom Line.....	8
About Radio Free Association	9
Jim Thompson, CAE	9
Jeff Cobb.....	9

This document is made available under an Attribution-Noncommercial-Share Alike 3.0 United States license. [View the license.](#)

Introduction

This brief guide offers an overview of how the [Radio Free Association](http://www.radiofreeassociation.com) podcast is produced. The information offered here is specific to Radio Free Association. In other words, the document is not intended to cover every possible approach to producing a podcast. However, the approaches described here should be useful to pretty much anyone who wants to launch a new podcast or consider new options for their existing podcast.



The content has been divided up into the five major components of producing and distributing a podcast (at least as I see them):

- Web site
- RSS Feed
- Recording
- Mixing and Editing
- Audio Hosting

I've also included a final section on the Bottom Line to give an idea of the costs that are associated with producing and distributing a podcast

If you have questions or comments about anything you read here, please submit them on the Radio Free Association post where this document is available for download: <http://www.radiofreeassociation.com/2009/11/19/how-to-podcast-mini-guide/>

Thanks for reading, and please feel free to share this document with anyone else who you feel may find it useful.

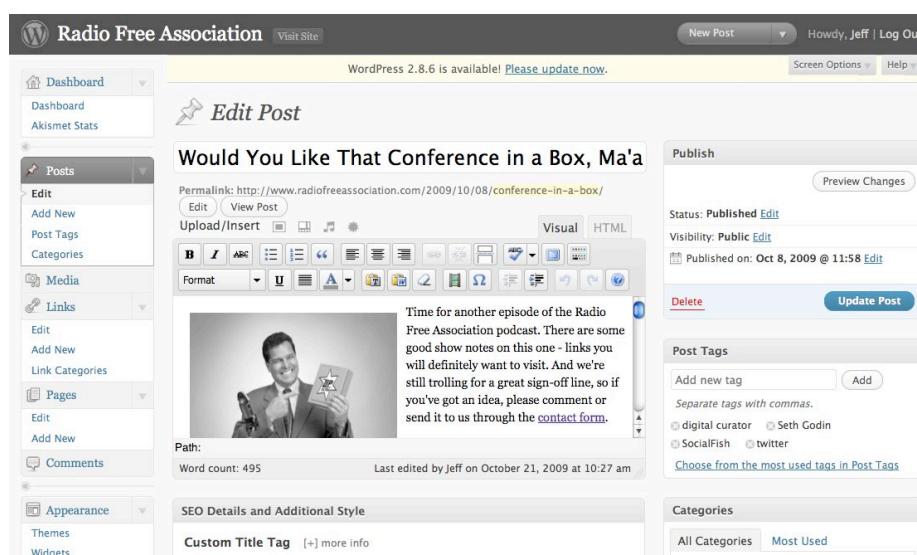
Jeff Cobb

Web site

A podcast needs to “live” somewhere. If you use a specialized site for hosting podcasts – like Libsyn or GCast, discussed below – you don’t necessarily have to set up a separate Web site. We decided to, though, because it gives us more flexibility with branding and presentation of types of content other than just the podcast audio files. Here are the main components of the [Radio Free Association](http://www.radiofreeassociation.com) site:

WordPress

The popular blogging software [WordPress](http://WordPress.org) serves as the content management system for the site. It’s a very flexible and easy to use platform, and it offers very good options for managing podcast content.



While it is possible to use WordPress.com for free hosting of WordPress, we like the additional flexibility of having our own installation. Our installation – which involved no more than a few mouse clicks – is hosted at [Netwisp](http://Netwisp.com) for \$9.95 per month.

We use a number of “plug-ins” to add features to WordPress, but the most important is the [WPAudio](http://WPAudio.org) plug-in that allows visitors to easily play the podcast right on the site. (I have also used [Audio Player](http://AudioPlayer.org) for other podcasts and like it very much.)

Thesis Theme with Straight Shooter

There are a number of different free or low cost “themes” available for WordPress that help you to brand your site. I won’t go into all of the reasons here, but I think [Thesis](http://ThesisThemes.com) is among the best options out there. We spruced Thesis up some by applying the free [Straight Shooter skin from Thesis Themes](http://StraightShooter.com) to it.

RSS Feed

Blogging software like WordPress is designed to automatically generate a “feed” for you that will enable site visitors to subscribe to your podcast. My preference, however, is to use Google’s Feedburner service to manage the feed.

Feedburner

[FeedBurner](#) provides a range of features and functionalities to help you manage, promote, and track your feed. While you will find people who are not a fan of it, I think the advantages far outweigh any disadvantages – and it is widely used across the blogging and podcasting community. Among other features, it makes it very easy to set up your iTunes information correctly. Feedburner is free – you just have to have a Google account to use it.

iTunes

You can subscribe to the Radio Free Association podcast using any standard RSS reader – like for example, the free Google Reader – or “[podcatcher](#).” It’s great also to give listeners the option to subscribe using iTunes so that they can easily load the podcast onto their iPod or iPhone.

To set up a podcast for iTunes distribution, go to the Podcast section of the iTunes store. (You have to have the free [iTunes software](#) installed to do this.) Click “Submit a Podcast” and put in the RSS feed link for your podcast. In our case, this meant our Feedburner feed: <http://feeds.feedburner.com/RadioFreeAssociation>.



Recording

Naturally, you don't have much of a podcast unless you record some audio or video content for it. For the time being, we're sticking with audio and are purposely using a variety of approaches to give listeners an idea of the results possible with each one. Here's a run down of approaches we used so far and some we expect to use at some point in the future. Any one of these may work well for your podcast – it depends on how many people are participating, where they are, what quality of sound you want, and how much flexibility you want for editing the audio files.

On-site with high-end mics

When Jim and I get together in person, we use two Shure SM58 mics – the kind you often see singers in rock bands use. We hook these into an [Inspire 1394 mixer from PreSonus](#) plugged into my Mac and control the recording using Garage Band, free audio software that comes with a Mac. The same thing could be done on a PC using the free Audacity software mentioned below.

If you want to go this route, the Inspire 1394 sells for around \$150 and Shure SM58s sell for around \$100 a piece with cable.

Remote with Skype and phone

When Jim and I are not in the same place, or when I conduct an interview with someone in a remote place, I use the free voice-over-Internet software [Skype](#). You can call someone Skype-to-Skype and use the [free Pamela call recorder for Skype](#) to capture the conversation. This approach has its limitations, though (including no Mac compatibility), so I tend to do the following:

First, I have purchased some [Skype to Phone](#) time that enables me to use Skype to dial a phone pretty much anywhere in the world at a low per-minute rate. This is a big help when I am calling someone who is not really comfortable using Skype. I find it also usually results in a clearer and more stable connection for recording purposes.

Second, I like to have the option of splitting up the audio track that I capture through Skype into separate tracks that can be edited individually. To do this, I use [Call Recorder](#) for the Mac. The equivalent for the PC is [Call Burner](#). (There are also paid [versions of Pamela](#), but I have not tried them.)

When I record using Skype, I just use a very basic Logitech USB headset. It's an older model, but compares to the current [Clear Chat Comfort USB](#). I also usually use this when I record a solo podcast.

For this approach, the Logitech headset costs \$39.99. Call Burner (for Mac) is \$19.95 and Call Recorder (for PC) is \$99.95. Skype to Phone charges will vary, but the minimum purchase is \$10.

Those are the main approaches we have used to date, but here are two others that I have used on other occasion and that we plan to use here:

Recorded conference call

Many of the conference call providers now offer the option of recording the call and providing an MP3 file that you can then edit (if desired) and upload to a service like Libsyn. (In many cases you can even play it at a link provided by the conferencing vendor or call in to listen to it.) Two of these services with which I am familiar are FreeConference.com (\$9 per month charge for recording capabilities) and FreeConferenceCall.com (no additional charges for recording). Here's an example of a recording of a conference call using FreeConferenceCall.com:

[July PD Virtual Lunch Date: "How Association PD is Shakin' Things Up with Social Networking"](#)

A variation of the above is to use a service like [GCast](#) to phone in a podcast. An advantage to this approach is that GCast provides simple editing tools that allow you to do things like attach intro music to the podcast. It also simplifies the process of creating an RSS feed and providing various ways for your listeners to play the podcast. For those who are willing to trade flexibility for making everything as simple as possible, it could be a good option. For the phone-in option, the service costs \$99 per year.

Handheld digital recorder

I also often make use of a handheld digital recorder – particularly for capturing interviews with people at conferences. You may be able to use your cell phone for this, depending on the model you use, but personally I like the [Sony ICDUX70 Digital Voice Recorder](#). The output sounds good and it is incredibly easy to use. For examples of some interviews done with the Sony recorder, visit:

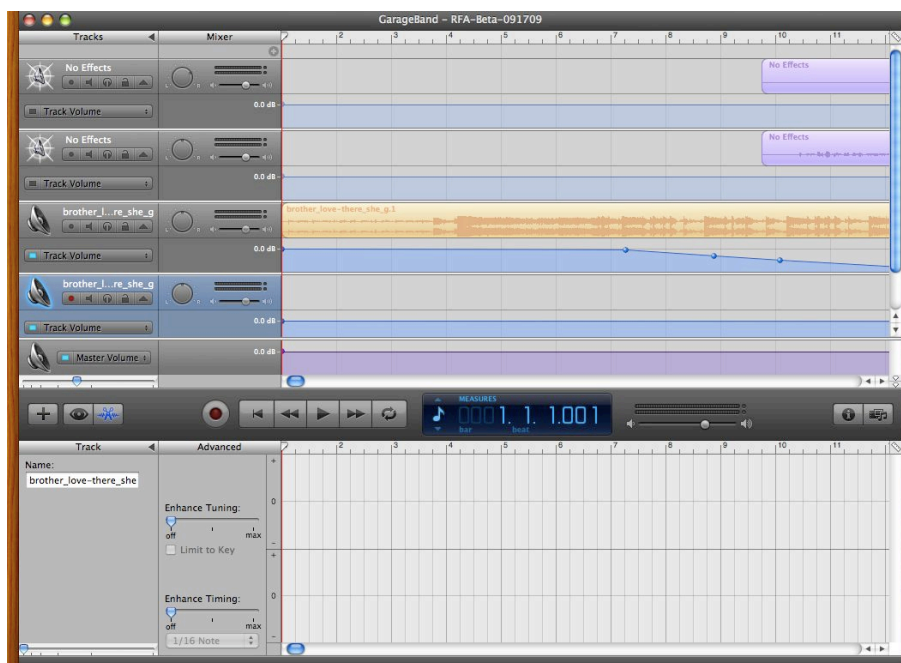
<http://www.tagoras.com/tag/asae09/>

Mixing and Editing

We purposely try to record Radio Free Association so that it needs very little editing. Sometimes I'll adjust the volume of the tracks a bit or chop any extraneous conversation at the beginning or end. I also add in the intro and exit music. Here's what I use:

Garage Band

If we haven't recorded directly into Garage Band, the free audio software on my Mac, then I drag and drop the audio tracks in so they can be manipulated there. I like Garage Band pretty well, but I could also use the free [Audacity](#) software on the Mac or on a PC. Once the tracks are tweaked as needed, I simply use the export function to create the final MP3 file that gets uploaded to Libsyn.



Music Alley

There are a number of sources on the Web for finding free, "pod safe" music that you can use to spice up your podcast some. Music Alley is one of the more popular ones. Jim gets the credit for finding the Radio Free Association theme music, "[There She Goes](#)" from Brother Love.

Levelator

One final tool I'll mention is [Levelator](#). I'm not using it at this point, but I plan to give it a try. Basically, it is software that automatically adjusts the volume level on a digital audio recording. I've heard very good things about it (particularly from the [MarketingOverCoffee](#) guys), and it seems like a great combination of time savings and quality enhancement.

Audio Hosting

Podcast audio files have to be stored somewhere in a way they can be accessed by listeners. We could just store our file on the same servers where we host the WordPress site for Radio Free Association, but my preference is to use a service that specializes in hosting and delivery of streaming audio files.

Libsyn

To host the audio files we use [Libsyn](#), a well-established provider of audio hosting services. This costs \$5 per month. Once we have recorded a session, I simply upload it to the Libsyn account through an easy-to-use Web interface. Libsyn then stores the audio files and generates the link from which it can be streamed. We could actually use Libsyn to provide the Web site where listeners access each new podcast posting, but as noted above, we like the flexibility that having our own site provides.

Bottom Line

The fact is, I already had all of the software, hosting accounts, and recording equipment on hand for other purposes, but if we had to start from scratch and replicate everything we are currently doing on Radio Free Association, the annual cost would be approximately as follows:

WordPress Software	\$-
Hosting for Web Site (One Year)	\$95.40
Thesis Theme (Optional)	\$87.00
Straight Shooter Skin	\$-
Feedburner	\$-
iTunes	\$-
Libsyn (One Year)	\$60.00
2 Shure SM58 Mics (Optional)	\$200.00
PreSonus Inspire 1394 (Optional)	\$150.00
Logitech USB Mic Headset	\$40.00
Call Recorder (Optional)	\$19.95
Garage Band/Audacity	\$-
Music Alley Music	\$-
	<hr/> <hr/>
	\$652.35

If you remove all the optional items, the annual cost drops to \$195.40. You could also go with completely free hosting options and drop the price down to whatever it costs you to get a decent microphone.

About Radio Free Association

Radio Free Association is a podcast for anyone interested in the opportunities and challenges that membership organizations are wrestling with in a hyper-connected 2.0 world. We don't make any guarantees at this point about how often we put out a new edition, but we're shooting for at least every two weeks. If the podcast turns out to be popular, we'll do more. Each show will run between 15 and 20 minutes. Your hosts at Radio Free Association are:

Jim Thompson, CAE



Jim is the Executive Director of the [Association Executives of North Carolina](#) (AENC) and current chair of the [Association Societies Alliance](#). Jim joined AENC in September 2005 with seven years of experience in non-profit management, most recently serving as Director of Business Development for the N.C. Association of REALTORS® in Greensboro. Jim graduated from UNC-Greensboro with degrees in English and Political Science. He has also earned the Certified Association Executive designation, and has graduated from the U.S. Chamber's Institute for Organization Management. Jim and his wife Hollyn have a son named Nelson, and a daughter Lily.

Jeff Cobb



Jeff is managing director of [Tagoras](#), where he works with organizations to market their e-learning programs more effectively as well as to integrate educational content and learning community into overall marketing strategy. Over the past decade he has helped a wide range of associations launch and grow successful e-learning initiatives. He speaks frequently on topics related to social media, marketing, and new Web technologies, and he also blogs weekly at [Mission to Learn](#), a site focused on lifelong learning. Jeff serves on the Professional Development Section Council of the American Society of Association Executives. He lives in [Carrboro](#), NC – the Paris of the Piedmont – with wife Celisa and two-year old son Cy.