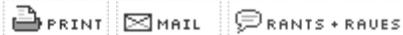


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Podcasting Gold Rush Is On



By [Steve Friess](#) | [Also](#) by this reporter

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The podosphere may be virgin terrain for the online world, but already the race is on to figure out whether there's any real money to be made through the new medium.

Consider the vast variety of approaches that have cropped up since Apple's iTunes upgrade this summer started delivering [thousands of new listeners](#) to podcasters who once toiled in obscurity.

[GrapeRadio](#) podcaster Brian Clark is now gulping down about \$1,000 a week from sponsors of his show for wine hobbyists. Grant Baciocco of the fiction serial [The Radio Adventures of Dr. Floyd](#) sells show-themed buttons and T-shirts and offers guest-voice roles for \$50.

Josh of [Josh in Japan](#) is asking for PayPal donations from fans of his tales of expatriate life, though so far only \$14 has rolled in. And Jimmy Diggs uses his Vegas-based [Daily Noise](#) as a traffic generator for his internet radio site, LVRocks.com, where sponsors pay for banner ads. (Editor's note: LVRocks.com hosts the author's podcast, [Vegas S&M](#))

"There isn't much information out there on how to do this," said Tim Bourquin, producer of the sports-themed Endurance Radio podcast. "It's a work in progress, how this all works."

[Endurance Radio](#) was sponsored for a time by Gatorade and is now carrying ads from Fleet Feet Sports, a chain of running-shoe stores. Buoyed by their success, Bourquin and his brother Emile now offer tips on how to profit from podcasting on their weekly [Podcast Brothers](#) show, and their website provides a boilerplate contract for podcasters to use with advertisers. Bourquin is also organizing the [Portable Media Expo](#) in November in Ontario, California, to teach other podcasters how to "monetize" their shows.

One of the biggest challenges, says Bourquin, is that most potential sponsors

don't even know what a podcast is.

"I've learned not to go in and say, 'We have a podcast and you should advertise,' because their eyes will glaze over," said Bourquin. "Instead, say, 'We've got this online radio program.' It's not quite correct, but people understand that a little better. And then you tell them the neat thing is that people can get the show automatically downloaded onto their MP3 player."

In addition to polishing their pitches to advertisers, podcasters are experimenting with different business models. Some are considering offering part of the podcast for free and the rest for a fee. Others hope that a network will buy their shows for syndication on broadcast or satellite radio, thereby plucking them out of the podosphere altogether.

Diggs, of LVRocks.com, says advertisers are more persuaded when he tells them the site is getting more than 1 million hits a month than if he tries to estimate the number of unknown listeners downloading the shows he broadcasts. But some of the podcasters he hosts are finding success in getting commercial radio-show-style sponsors, including [Renegades of Comedy](#), which landed an ad from the Vegas strip joint Cheetahs.

By and large, though, local business sponsorships don't work well, as Sam Hallgren and Adam Kempenaar of the breakout hit podcast [Cinecast](#) discovered when they landed ChicagoMixer.com as their first advertiser. The site, a dating service for Windy City singles, saw little increased traffic for its money, and Cinecast is now sponsored by DVD vendor MoviePassions.com, a more logical and less geographically dependant fit.

"Twenty percent of our listeners are from 59 other countries, so something specific to one location didn't turn out to be the best sponsor for us," Kempenaar said. "I wasn't really surprised, but this is new, so it's all trial and error."

With so much uncertainty surrounding the format, it's perhaps no surprise that few major companies have jumped into the podcast sponsorship game so far, and those that have are supporting tried-and-true news and entertainment providers. Z100, the New York radio station, signed Virgin Mobile for commercials on its podcasts of comedy bits and interviews from its morning show. ABC News has Verizon Online USA on board for podcasts of the audio of Nightline. And Slate had Chrysler plugging cars at the top of its daily podcast, in which editor Andy Bowers reads a story from the site.

"Chrysler was excited about supporting this new technology and being identified with Slate's launch of it," said Slate publisher Cliff Sloan in an e-

mail. "Chrysler ran other ad campaigns on Slate at the same time. In general, we're finding that advertisers are looking for new and different ways to reach people."

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