

## **Learning points from the episode #2 *Building the podcast with Jukka Ahola and Essi Pulkkinen***

### **Podcast in Podcast**

#### **Introduction**

The second episode of our podcast series deals with the building blocks that formulate the podcast. Whereas the ideas and concepts for the podcast were the themes in the first episode, we are now going to focus on planning and practical execution of the podcast.

As the guests of the episode, Jukka Ahola and Essi Pulkkinen know how to build an intriguing narrative for the podcast, since they are experts in literature and writing. Also, they are the hosts of *Kertojan ääni* -podcast (Finnish) that is a podcast about their expertise, literature and writing.

The interview was recorded with WhatsApp-call because Jukka and Essi live in Oulu. In the terms of editing, there are three tracks (Jukka, Essi and Lotta) that are recorded for separate microphones and put together in the editing phase. It is recommended to listen to the episode for a while to hear the quality of the recordings and the result of uniting them.

#### **Where Jukka and Essi got the idea of founding a podcast? What is the concept of their podcast?**

– In 2016, we were living in the golden era of podcasts and we wanted to go with the same flow and found our own podcast. We were wondering for a while the subject for the podcast, but since we are interested in literature and writing, we decided to choose that as the subject, Jukka says.

So, *Kertojan ääni* -podcast was founded in the end of 2016, and in the end of 2019, they have over 60 episodes already. The episodes have included monologues, dialogues and interviews with guests, such as writers, novelists and journalists. Also, there are episodes where short stories are read aloud – the short stories of either Jukka or Essi.

In the opinion of Jukka, the podcast is, frankly, for people who are interested in writing and literature.

In one part of her job, Essi visits different companies or has webinars to lecture about podcasting as a part of marketing strategy. She has visited different learning institutions as well.

- In the context of academia, popularising research is the first thing that comes to my mind when thinking about playing the advantage with podcasting, Essi says right away.

The idea in popularising research is to put difficult and complex issues into an understandable form – or to make it even fun, Essi adds.

## **Practical side of building the podcast**

The steps for building up the podcast follows as this, according to Jukka: choosing the subject, the format and the role(s) for the host(s).

When choosing the subject, the subject should be limited and have an interesting point of view – not to repeat something that has been already done.

The format means the carrying out of the episode: who are joining the episodes? Who is or who are talking and what are they talking about? And if there is a host, what is the role for the host or the dynamic between the host and the possible guests.

At first, they were recording the episodes in their bedroom (Essi and Jukka are married), because of the acoustics of the room. It is highly important to choose a room that does not echo for the quality of the recordings. In their bedroom, they had carpets, counterpanes and curtains to block the echoing, but nowadays they have built a proper studio.

The aim for the podcast and each episode is invaluable, Essi emphasizes. When thinking about the aim of the podcast, one needs to think about its possible audience and the target group that one wants to approach. In the context of academic-based podcast, the target group can be a more specific group of the specialists of the subject or a “larger audience”, when the popularising is necessary.

– The idea and subject for the podcast have to be clear. For us, literature and writing is such, Essi reminds.

Jukka and Essi have different content for different episodes. The episodes can include the previously mentioned short stories, or discussing about different literary subjects. Some episodes are meant for sharing best tips of selected topic, such as “Five tips for writing”, or to promote the experts by interviewing them.

– The listeners are different, so the episodes are different as well, Essi argues, and gives a great tip regarding the different episodes:

– In Soundcloud, you can create playlists where you can add the episodes that share the chosen topic together. In this way, the listener can choose to listen to only for the episodes where short stories are read aloud, for example.

## **How to choose a format or a structure for the episode?**

When choosing between a monologue and a dialogue, one needs to think about the practicality of recording. It can be surprisingly difficult to record the episode all by oneself, which is why interviewing someone or discussing with someone can be an easier way out.

– In my opinion, there seems to be a magical number of participants to make the episode work. If you are good at talking alone, go for it. Then, I have never heard a podcast including a panel discussion that would have worked, Jukka ponders.

- No matter who talking in the podcast, one needs to remember that there is always the one listening to it. The listener is always present to whom we want to talk to, Essi clarifies.

A single episode can consist of an intro, a discussion or the substance of the episode itself, and an outro that can include some sort of advertisement. The way a single episode is built can vary a lot.

– Some are more careful with the strict structure for each episode, whereas some, for example us, are just leaning on some notes and otherwise let the discussion flow. The extremities are the worst, I would say: that one does not plan at all or plans everything, Jukka explains.

– A frame and planned structure for the episode can help to understand how an episode can proceed from a beginning to an end. I would say that it could be difficult to start the discussion if you do not have any notes or questions figured out beforehand, Essi guides.

The chosen subject for the podcast is, still, the main thing that helps the discussion. When you are familiar with the subject, it is really possible to discuss the topic and even disagree with the one you are interviewing.

– It creates dynamics and excitement, Jukka advises.

The podcast can convince the listener either by consistently good content or by charisma of the host or hosts.

– If you feel like you are not that charismatic, you should then pay extra attention to the content you are creating, Essi recommends.

– Or: does the charisma arise from the knowledge one has, Jukka points out.

Either way, they both recommend writing down the purpose of each episode in one sentence. What is the episode all about?

### **Do the sound system and the quality of the sounds matter?**

Even though the concept of podcasting is simple and easy to carry out (choose a subject, talk about it and record it), it does matter where and how the recording is done.

– The podcast plays with sounds and voices, so the quality of them is crucial. I recommend strongly investing in them, Essi says.

– I have heard a saying that we can have a video that is taped with a quality of a potato and it can have its audience, but if there is a recording with bad quality, no one listens to it, Jukka emphasises.

The reason for the importance of the quality can be that listening to a podcast is a very intimate act – you enter one's ears.

– The ears cannot skip the echo or disturbing sounds. The aim is that the quality of the sound is good enough not to be considered disturbing or pay any extra attention to it, Jukka aligns.

– Not everyone can afford to rent a fancy studio, but one can avoid the rooms with echo, such as lofty rooms or rooms with big windows, or record in a room lined with thick textiles, Essi advises.

## **What are good platforms for publishing the podcast?**

To put it bluntly, a podcast episode is a file that one wants to share. With this definition, there are multiple ways to share a file.

– Usually, one needs a hosting service that provides RSS-feed that can be sent to different services – such as iTunes, Spotify, SoundCloud. There are plenty of services where one can publish the podcast. It has its pros and cons: we are missing “the killer app” for podcasts that has them all, which would be easy for listeners, Jukka explains.

– On the other hand, the services support each other. For example, you can store the episodes and files in SoundCloud that offers you the RSS-feed, and you can use that feed on other services as well, Essi notices.

Summa summarum: what one needs is a sound file, a web hosting service (that cannot be one’s own computer, but can be such as SoundCloud), and an RSS-feed for sharing (so that others can find the file).

## **Conclusion**

Podcasting is a medium that is quite equal since it does not cost fortunes or take a forever to create. It is easy to start podcasting and continue producing it.

Podcasting is convenient also because it reaches people who one may not reach textually or by social media. It is possible – and apparently usual – to listen to podcasts while doing something else.

For someone, who is interested in launching a podcast, Jukka and Essi have a few tips:

- 1) Figure out the *why*: what is the goal and reason for the podcast? Keep that in mind!
- 2) Choose the target group for the podcast carefully: do not try to please everyone!
- 3) It is all about sharing: do not try to hide what you have done, but rather share, share and once again share the podcast episodes!