

Why There Are Free Podcasts

Podcasting, unlike other media forms, almost never has charges for services, and the vast majority of feed producers distribute free podcasts. This puts at odds with, say, online radio stations, news sites that offer media to subscribers, or the online music industry general. Even though podcasting has very direct correlations with industries like news and music that have strong business models, podcasting differs. Podcasting does not really have a business model, and hardly anyone is podcasting in order to profit from it. There are some businesses and news sites that podcast, but they do it as a way to supplement their companies and to gain technological geek credibility, not to make money. This is an odd thing, but explainable in light of what podcasting is.

The free podcast problem is not difficult, and podcasting differs in several key ways from other media areas. First, podcasting involves the physical transfer of a file from the host to the users computer. An online radio station does not do this; all that they provide to their listeners is a streaming sound file that cannot be saved without difficulty and work. If someone did manage to do so, the station would have strong grounds for suing them since they were never given the rights to keep and store the files. By podcasting the complete file to the users computer, express permission is granted the user to copy and use as they wish. Second, the podcasts are, for the most part, made by individuals who have low costs involved in creating and distributing the files, as opposed to a news broadcast or song by a music company. These individuals have little reason to charge for their work since there is little cost to them to do so. Because the files are distributed in a way allows their copying and does not control the media, and since podcasting is a very low cost media outlet, feed producers have little reason or ability to charge for their work.

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