*In our service to broadcast ministry organizations, we remain committed to keeping a pulse on the ever evolving media industry for new opportunities to expand outreach and reach audiences.*

*The audio landscape in America continues to evolve as more consumers tune in to more audio across different platforms. The Podcast platform is a growing one as* [*Edison’s Podcast Consumer Report*](http://www.edisonresearch.com/wp-content/uploads/2017/04/Podcast-Consumer-2017.pdf) *estimates that 112 million Americans have listened to a podcast – and that number continues to rise.*

*As the podcast listenership continues to grow exponentially, we recognize it’s a space terrestrial broadcasters need to consider occupying as well. To that end, Ambassador had two representatives from the Media Team attend the Podcast Movement Conference in Anaheim last month to gain insights into the growing industry to better equip us to serve our clients in this digital platform. Following is their summary of learning—emphasis on summary as the scope of Conference input was wide and deep.*

**About The Podcast Movement Conference**

[The Podcast Movement](http://podcastmovement.com/) is billed as “For Podcasters, By Podcasters,” a conference catering to anyone who is currently involved with, or looking to get into, podcasting and the **podcast** industry.

Only four years old (the first Conference was held in 2014 and was partially funded through Kickstarter), this year’s gathering included 2000 attendees with over 150 speakers and panelists representing the “best” podcasts and the “most successful” podcast networks and companies. Over 80 sessions were offered covering all facets of the now designated podcasting industry: creation, technical, industry, marketing and monetization.

Some of the most interesting stats were reported by Larry Rosin and Tom Webster of Edison Research in their session on [*Share of Speech: Podcasting’s Place in the World of Spoken-Word Audio.*](https://www.facebook.com/pg/edisonresearch/videos/?ref=page_internal)

In addition, uniquely this year, Movement leadership invited radio guru Fred Jacobs (Jacobs Media Strategies) to engage in the Conference with special attention to podcasting’s impact on and relationship to the broadcast field, acknowledging the syncretic dynamic between broadcasting and podcasting. You may already read Fred’s blog regularly but if not—[here’s one to check out](http://jacobsmedia.com/79-8-million-reasons-to-launch-a-podcast/) as a starting place (related to podcasting). (It was a privilege to host Fred at Ambassador a year ago for a summit with our ministries—his perspective is always a helpful one.)

**A Few Stats about Podcasting**

As you’d expect there are a plethora and, as with any such reporting, can be used to prove a point from more than one direction. However, here are a few pulled from the various studies available:

\*Estimate is 300,000-400,000 podcasts currently available online.

\*60% of the US population is familiar with the term—up 5% from 2016.

\*24% of the US population listen to podcasts at least monthly—that’s up 3% from 2016 (and represents 67 million listeners).

\*59% of all speech-based content is now podcast listening.

\*Speech listeners consume nearly five hours of audio per day (!); of that audio, 47% is spoken word.

\*Of that total above, 69% is heard over AM/FM radio; 11% is podcast content.

\*At the PMC, four members of the panel addressing monetizing podcasts were asked to predict “What year will the 12+ podcast audience surpass the 12+ radio audience?” Their answers: 2020 ( Sarah van Mosel/*Market Enginuity*), 2025 (John Rosso/*Triton*), 2024 (Rob McCracken/*Scripps*), and 2020 (Rob Walch/*Libsyn*).

**Key Conference Learning**

As we continue to evaluate the information shared at the conference, and explore a number of the avenues recommended for even deeper learning (which is proliferating quickly), we look forward to providing further insights. In this overview, however, here are six primary points with a suggested follow-up.

*1-There are three advantages for podcasts (over radio): space to elaborate, a potential deeper connection with the listener, and a unique listener experience.*

Unlike a radio show, a podcast doesn’t have to time out to a specific length. As a result, podcasting provides *space* for speakers to elaborate on content should they want to extend the duration of their broadcast. (However, it *doesn’t* mean you should take more time than necessary to “wax eloquent”—respect the consumer’s time!)

While most radio shows try to please a lot of people at once (that’s the nature of *broad*casting), podcasts serve a more *exclusive audience*--people with a unique common interest. This singular approach in podcasting allows a deeper, “custom” connection (if you will) with listeners. As [Sheri Lynch](https://twitter.com/sherilynch?ref_src=twsrc%5Egoogle%7Ctwcamp%5Eserp%7Ctwgr%5Eauthor), co-host of the Bob & Sheri show, a nationally-syndicated morning radio show and podcast shared at a Podcast Movement session, *“Radio is a big splash in an enormous ocean, podcasting is a cool dip in a custom pool. Podcasting doesn’t like shallow but favors deep, storytelling and intimate connection.”*

Another difference between the radio and podcast listener is the *listener experience*. By their very nature, podcasts are thoroughly “opt in” entities. Instead of just flipping on the radio and either loving or hating what they hear, podcast listeners usually find those they like and commit to regular listening by subscribing. This results in a different relationship between the content creator and the audience. Again … the podcast listener chooses what he wants to hear, typically listens in entirety (or saves the rest for later).

Offering content that is not replicated elsewhere is pivotal to drawing in this target audience.

*>Capitalize on the three Cs of Podcasting: Connection, Community and Content.*

*2-The components to a successful podcast? Story, character, voice, quality and consistency.*

No surprise here. The elements necessary for a successful podcast are some of the very same elements which make up the most successful radio program:

**Compelling story or idea:** Every podcast has to be about something. Seems so obvious but lack of definition is a big problem.

**Engaging characters:** Every successful podcast has an engaging character(s) used to forward an idea. (Perhaps a bit of the “personality driven” dynamic for broadcast medium remains reality.)

**A unique voice:** Voice=perspective, opinion, conviction. Have something to say.  It's not about being biased, it's about sharing a unique viewpoint.

**Quality of sound:** It’s not enough that the content be quality, there’s got to be a well-produced clarity to the audio. Podcasts may be created very simply from a technical standpoint—but not at jeopardy of audio quality.

**Consistency is key:** Regularity matters. The most successful podcasts are being generated on a regular schedule—if the commitment is daily, it has to *be* daily. Just as we know for broadcast entities, the consistency of a podcast schedule nurtures the listener relationship.

*>The nature of accessability and affordability shouldn’t facilitate any short-changing of attention to critical factors, any more than would be true for broadcasting entities.*

*3-An organization’s podcast ought to reflect the brand just as much as any other promotional entity.*

The reality of a new avenue for communication doesn’t mean opportunity to stray from the core mission. As with all other avenues of “branding” in a marketplace, the podcast venue *must* support what else is being done. It ought to help *extend* the brand/mission … not confuse or counter it.

*>Stay on message despite the freedom podcasting can afford. Use it to amplify not invent a new identity.*

*4-Podcasts are best discovered via SEO, social media and word of mouth.*

Unlike formatted radio, knowing where to find podcasts of interest to a “niched” consumer is a critical factor. An interesting newer development in the podcasting world is the more strategic use of SEO in finding podcasts that address the

individual consumer’s interest. [Audiosear.ch](https://www.audiosear.ch/) is a one-stop search and recommended engine for podcasts. They transcribe, timestamp, tag, cluster, and collect ratings and reviews for thousands of shows.

Another means of discovering podcasts is via social media. As listeners find and listen to podcasts, they are sharing content (quotes, statistics, tips) on their social platforms and tagging respective podcasts. According to [Steve Goldstein](https://twitter.com/sjgoldstein) of AmplifiMedia, *60% of surveyed listeners said they find a podcast via social media*.

The same findings from AmplifiMedia note that *57% of surveyed listeners learn about podcast from friends*. Personal endorsements and references of podcast content in conversation remain a common means to spread the word about a podcast. Some of those with significant audience (such as *This American Life*) are those with content that drive this “buzz.”

>*The “build it and they will come” approach isn’t sufficient. Create and utilize those social media tools to help escalate target audience connect points.*

*5-Facebook group pages are a key social media platform for podcast audience engagement.*

Social media is not only a way by which listeners discover podcasts, it’s also a significant manner by which podcasters are *cultivating relationships* with listeners. A Facebook group is a page created for an organization or business to promote activities. Users can join the group and post their thoughts on a wall and interact through discussion threads. By creating a Facebook Group page, podcasters are providing a *forum* in which their listening family can engage on a deeper level with a community with like-minded individuals, by choice.

*>This is no “newsflash” but a reminder that the day of one-dimensional delivery of content is done. Use every tool possible … and Facebook is a significant one.*

*6-The podcasting audience demo skews younger and differs in their listening habits from standard radio audiences.*

The audience for podcasts continues to be predominately 18-54, and leans slightly male. Some speculate that technology factors into the younger podcast demo citing that downloading and subscribing requires some technical sophistication. (NOTE: Amazon Echo may help to alleviate some of these challenges though as more and more podcasts become available via home automation technology!)

Much as we might tout for Christian broadcast facilities, podcast listeners are also very *committed consumers,* listening to most of the podcast episodes they download (47% listening to the full length of each episode).

*>Create content that serves the organizational mission but with a realistic understanding of who* currently *is a podcast consumer. And, by the way … so much for the “people only listen in short segments” theory ☺.*

**Podcasting for Broadcasters**

For almost a decade now, podcasting has quietly been gaining traction as it consistently offers a medium for some of the most unique and compelling audio content. Those engaged in listening have built communities of similar interests and priorities which further fuels the “movement” aspect of the industry.

It’s been said that *podcasting is the digital medium built on the power of conversation*, listeners engaging with podcasts for 20, 30, 40 minutes—sometimes longer—at a time. The lack of strong scripting creates a spontaneous flow, which leads listeners to repeat these conversations to their peers, their friends and their families, creating their own versions of the discussion and making new connections.

As [Fred Jacobs](http://podcastmovement.com/schedule/#!programmation=artist$fred-jacobs/509), President of Jacobs Media has reflected: ***“****We see podcasting as having a huge upside potential for radio, but it’s a learning process. Broadcast radio – especially commercial radio – needs to jump into this space.”*

**So … now what?**

For terrestrial broadcasters, with this new opportunity for delivering the most important message to be told … now is the time to consider amplifying the voice of the messenger with this avenue for impact.

*The Podcast Movement Conference 2018 meets July 24-26 at the Philadelphia Marriott Downtown.*