



VETERINARY
MEDICAL
ASSOCIATION
EXECUTIVES

FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Podcast Task Force

Tim Atkinson, Chair

Karlene Belyea

Susan Blevins

Gail Hansen, DVM

Lisa Perius

Marie Queen

Tesha Hoff, Staff Liaison

Ralph Johnson, Staff Liaison

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Introduction

The VMAE Board of Directors established the following charge for the Podcast Task Force:

- Identify potential uses of podcasts by veterinary medical associations (VMAs).
- Review association management literature for any best practices in offering podcasts.
- Create an inventory of podcast knowledge drawn from VMAE members.
- Identify existing podcast content in the veterinary space that may be useful for VMAs to link to.
- Formulate a recommendation for board consideration about VMAE generating podcast content for use by VMAE members in their organizations, including whether VMAE should seek RACE approval for such content and what resources would be required to produce an ongoing series of such podcasts
- Prepare a summary document for board review that can be disseminated to members to share the learnings and outcomes from this effort, including a step-by-step guide for VMAs that wish to start offering podcasts.

Process

To fulfill its charge, the Podcast Task Force conducted meetings via video conference and undertook individual work assignments to search association management literature, identify existing resources of value to VMA executives, and develop a survey of VMAE members to assess needs and experiences with podcasts. This document presents the findings of the task force along with recommendations for consideration by the VMAE Board of Directors.

Findings

Potential uses of podcasts

“[The Power of Podcasts](#)” is the title of a useful article, authored by Mark Athitakis and published by Associations Now (November/December 2016 issue), that explores the question “Do podcasts have a place in your content strategy?” Based on the high level of interest expressed by VMAE members in offering podcasts, and on Podcast Task Force discussions about the value of podcasts, there is indeed a place for podcasts in the content strategy of veterinary medical associations.

The task force envisioned several potential uses of podcasts by VMAs:

- Connect members by sharing stories about members
- Tell the association’s story to members through an engaging format

- Address topics for veterinary professionals ranging from clinical education to personal and professional development
- Reach the public with educational resources

The task force identified several potential sources of podcasts that VMAs might choose to make available to their members:

- Original content developed by the association
- Content curated by the association
- Content curated by others, including content curated (and/or generated) by VMAE and aggregated in a podcast channel available to all VMAE members.

VMAE member survey

The board asked the task force to conduct a survey that would probe, for example, which VMAs are producing webinars, what written materials they have that provide guidance on podcast production, what equipment they have purchased, what editing software they have found useful, where they have hosted their podcasts, and whether they have obtained approval for CE credit on podcast offerings.

A member survey was conducted in June of 2018, generating 32 responses. In general, the survey results indicated that few VMAs are currently offering podcasts but have a high interest level in doing so. Absent widespread experience by VMAs in delivering podcasts the task force had to rely heavily on parties outside the veterinary community for information and tools.

Comments from Colleagues

Through survey responses and additional conversations with VMAE members, the task force received several useful comments from members who are experienced with creating podcasts:

- “A key requirement to successful podcasting is having someone on staff, in your membership or a vendor who is experienced in skillfully interviewing guests and presenting a smooth, interesting program.”
- “Make sure you have a ‘champion’ that is going to help drive it and sustain it. Map out several topics right from the start, and don’t overcommit to a specific number. Start with quarterly or once a month if you are feeling really ambitious.”
- “Keep them fairly short, 15 minutes best, 20 if you need to. If longer is desired, have natural breaks every 15 minutes. Keeping them narrowly focused is usually best. Decide how much attention you expect listeners to give (e.g. undivided attention or being played while driving/walking/exercising/doing other tasks). “

- “Computer audio may not be the highest quality but it’s sufficient to get started. Production quality doesn’t need to be high end – people value authenticity. Frequency of podcasts influences the level of effort that will be required.”

Resources for VMA executives

“How To” Information

The task force reviewed many articles about podcasts and identified the following resources as especially useful. While there is overlap between several of the primers, there are also useful differences that the task force believes will be instructive to a VMA that is considering podcast delivery.

- **IVMA Vet Chat** – Lisa Perius and Lourdes Syndram talk about the [Indiana VMA experience with podcasts](#) and provide an example of how VMAs can use the podcast medium in communicating with members.
<https://anchor.fm/lourdes03/episodes/VMAE-Podcasts-e20raf>
- **Through the Noise** – A podcast interview of Dr. Lisa Greenhill (of the Association of American Veterinary Medical Colleges) “about the podcast she got off the ground” for AAVMC on diversity and inclusion in the veterinary profession.
<https://throughthenoise.us/mediacast/332-podcasting-organization-dr-lisa-greenhill-association-american-veterinary-medical-colleges/>
- **Podcast Basics** – A primer from Will Carlson at [Willpower Consulting](#); shared by permission. The task force found this resource especially useful, and it can be found on the VMAE website by following this [link](#).
- **Be Heard: A Podcasting Primer** – By Craig Sorrell, published by the American Society of Association Executives.
https://www.asaecenter.org/resources/articles/an_plus/2016/september/be-heard-a-podcasting-primer
- **7 Podcasting Best Practices** – A blog post from Cision, a communications company helping customers reach, target and engage their audience.
<https://www.cision.com/us/2015/04/7-podcasting-best-practices/>
- **15 Things to Consider Before Starting an Association Podcast** – An article by Tony Veroeven, published by AMPED Association Management, discusses both strategic and implementation aspects of podcasting. Note the sample equipment list contained in item 9 in the article.

<http://www.manageassociations.com/index.php/news/blog/entry/15-things-to-consider-before-starting-an-association-podcast>

- [How to Start a Podcast](#) – One of an array of free, A-Z podcasting resources from The Podcast Host. <https://www.thepodcasthost.com/planning/how-to-start-a-podcast/>
- [A Step-by-Step Guide to Start Your Own Podcast](#) – A podcast on starting your own podcast from online marketing expert (and Instagram sensation) Jenna Kutcher. <https://jennakutcherblog.com/podcasting101/>

Equipment

A VMA seeking to deliver podcasts will need a mixer with USB cable, good quality microphone(s) with cable(s) and table stand(s), microphone pop filter(s), a headphone amplifier, and headphones – plus a computer for capturing podcast audio. Quality equipment can be obtained on a modest budget. Equipment recommended by VMAE users can be found here:

- [Audio-Technica](#) microphone
- [Audio-Technica](#) two-person podcasting package
- [Blue Yeti](#) microphone
- [Equipment list](#) referenced in AMPED Association Management article “[15 Things to Consider Before Starting an Association Podcast](#)”

Editing Software

- [Acoustica Basic Edition](#)
- [Audacity](#)
- [Free Audio Editor](#)
- [Ocenaudio](#)
- [Sound Forge Audio Studio](#)

Hosting / Recording Services

- [Anchor](#) (used by the Indiana VMA)
- [lybsyn](#)
- [SoundCloud](#)
- [The Podcast Host](#)
- [Zencastr](#)

Resources for VMA Websites

For veterinary professionals

- **[Blunt Dissection](https://itunes.apple.com/us/podcast/blunt-dissection-best-minds-in-veterinary-medicine/id1219236947?mt=2)** – Dr. Dave Nicol, veterinarian, author and speaker presents the Blunt Dissection podcasts “where the best minds in veterinary medicine, business, academia, not-for-profit and politics are profiled/deconstructed so you can learn the habits, routines, though processes and anything else that makes these individuals so good at what they do.” <https://itunes.apple.com/us/podcast/blunt-dissection-best-minds-in-veterinary-medicine/id1219236947?mt=2>
- **[Diversity & Inclusion On Air](http://aavmc.org/diversity/diversity-and-inclusion-on-air)** – A growing library of conversations about diversity, inclusion and veterinary medicine. Published by the Association of American Veterinary Medical Colleges (AAVMC) as part of its Diversity Initiative, the show is hosted by Dr. Lisa Greenhill, Senior Director for Institutional Research and Diversity at the AAVMC. <http://aavmc.org/diversity/diversity-and-inclusion-on-air>
- **[Healthy Practice Podcast](https://aspirevet.com/podcasts/)** – Randy Hall, leadership consultant and CEO of Aspire, shares tools and strategies for building the kind of culture “you’ve always wanted for your practice.” Many episodes include interviews of veterinarians, practice managers, and subject matter experts sharing their ideas and expertise on topics such as change management, leading with vision, and taking the guesswork out of practice finances. <https://aspirevet.com/podcasts/>
- **My Veterinary Life** – This AVMA podcast shares stories from across the veterinary profession that explore the amazing world of veterinary medicine and what one can do with a veterinary degree. Listeners will hear first-hand how guests got to where they are today – not always a straight line and often including some challenges. The hosts, Drs. Anna Reddish and Marci Kirk, discuss with guests how they overcame these challenges, what lessons they learned along the way, what the guests are passionate about and what drives them in veterinary medicine. Through these light-hearted, often hilarious stories, listeners will better understand what is possible in the veterinary profession, feel positive and hopeful about the future of veterinary medicine, and encouraged to live their veterinary life to the fullest. Visit www.avma.org to find the podcast series, which is set for launch in the second quarter of 2019.
- **[Off Label Veterinary News](https://itunes.apple.com/us/podcast/off-label-veterinary-news/id1337770280?mt=2#)** – Veterinarian Dr. Ernie Ward’s podcast series dedicated to breaking news, practice and personal life tips, and covering the most controversial and provocative pet, animal and veterinary topics. <https://itunes.apple.com/us/podcast/off-label-veterinary-news/id1337770280?mt=2#>
- **[Podcast A Vet](#)** – “Sharing the stories of all of the awesome people who make up the vet profession,” Dr. Jon Arnold conducts interviews that “take us on a journey with leaders

in the veterinary community, with a focus on personal, passionate and practical conversation.” <https://podcastvet.com/>

- **[Purr Podcast](#)** – A podcast series for veterinary healthcare providers about everything feline. Dr. Susan Little and Dr. Jolle Kirpensteijn discuss medical and surgical issues of cats highlighting simple and practical solutions. They say “If you like cats, you will love this podcast!” <https://www.stitcher.com/podcast/jolle-kirpensteijn/purr-podcast>
- **[Southern California Veterinary Medical Association](#)** – A monthly teleseminar series hosted by Dr. Peter Weinstein, executive director of the SCVMA. The teleseminars are presented to a live audience and recorded as approximately 30-minute podcasts on professional issues, small business matters, social media, veterinary clinical subjects, and more. <https://www.dropbox.com/sh/dusrn9d4eexst0w/AAAbh1vU03C4z6yaRbynEiHUa?dl=0>
- **[Voices of Veterinary Medicine](#)** – This podcast series “gives future veterinarians a broader perspective on the field of veterinary medicine so they can more proactively steer their own careers. Listeners get to hear personal stories, struggles and triumphs of a variety of people working in veterinary medicine so they can learn from, and be inspired by, the experiences of others.” <https://itunes.apple.com/us/podcast/voices-of-veterinary-medicine/id1323236577?mt=2>
- **[VetFolio](#)** – Focused on continuing education in clinical topics, VetFolio includes a growing [podcast library](#) that includes personal finance and career development as well as clinical topics. <http://www.vetfolio.com/>
- **[VetGirl](#)** – VetGirl is a subscription-based podcast and webinar service focused on clinical topics and offering RACE-approved veterinary education through a smartphone, tablet, or laptop. <https://vetgirlontherun.com/>

For the public

- **[American Veterinary Medical Association](#)** – The AVMA Animal Tracks podcast series for pet owners features pet health and safety tips from some of the leading veterinary experts in the United States. <http://feeds.feedburner.com/avma/fOIV>

Recommendations

1. VMAE generated podcasts

In its charge, the task force was asked to “Formulate a recommendation for board consideration about VMAE generating podcast content for use by VMAE members in their

organizations, including whether VMAE should seek RACE approval for such content and what resources would be required to produce an ongoing series of such podcasts.”

The task force recommends that VMAE not engage in generating podcast content, for several reasons:

- A significant number of podcast producers are already using this medium to deliver an array of useful and relevant information to veterinary professionals. Many producers are identified in this document so that VMAs interested in linking to this existing content may do so. Given this richness of existing podcast content there is little need or incentive for VMAE to dedicate resources for redundant effort.
- In considering what niche content opportunity might exist should VMAE undertake podcast creation, task force members were particularly attracted to the concept of using podcasts for storytelling. For example, the VMA could tell stories about its programs, services, vision, members, etc. through podcasts. Or the VMA could tell the stories of association members whose interesting experiences and lives are of interest to colleagues. These stories are of highest interest locally and should be created locally for the highest resonance, authenticity and value. The task force believes such stories may be highly useful for member engagement, community connection, and organizational loyalty (rather than being generated for continuing education credit).

2. VMAE curated podcasts

The task force discussed the concept of VMAE serving as a curator of podcast content. While reviewing the current landscape of podcast content specific to the veterinary community, the task force identified several podcasts (see Resources for VMA Executives, above) of potential interest to VMAs that wish to publish podcast links on the VMA website. The resources identified were selected for a combination of qualities including content appeal, production quality, producer reputation, and ease of access. The task force envisions that VMAE can, through an informal and ongoing effort, be watchful for and advise members of additional appropriate podcast content resources as they are identified. The task force recognizes that VMAs have the wisdom and the freedom to identify additional podcast sources that they think may resonate or have value with their members.

3. VMAE education

The task force recommends that, following distribution of this report to members, the VMAE Board of Directors ask the Professional Development Committee to develop educational programming on the “how to” of podcasting. One suggestion is to engage Will Carlson (of Willpower Consulting, whose primer is referenced above) to deliver an archivable webinar for VMAE members. Additionally, it would be useful to engage him for an in-person, hands-on workshop at a VMAE conference where he could demonstrate

podcast production from start to finish and help members understand how to think about return on investment for podcasting. The Podcast Task Force respectfully requests that the VMAE Professional Development Committee (PDC) implement this recommendation, and task force members stand ready to assist the PDC in this endeavor.

Conclusion

The task force appreciates the opportunity to explore the topic of podcasts for the benefit of VMAE members. It is a fair statement that the task force began its work with a positive bias towards the merits of VMAE creating a podcast series that all VMAs could utilize. As the task force digested available literature, identified useful “how to” guides, discovered numerous existing producers of valuable content, and appreciated the time investment required of VMAE to sustain an active podcasting program, the group’s thinking evolved to embrace the value of podcast stories produced by individual VMAs featuring unique, locally focused content that deepens the bond between members and their veterinary medical association.

The task force encourages VMAs to:

- Identify members with an interest in bringing this digital platform to life for the VMA
- Make (or obtain sponsorship for) the modest investment needed to buy equipment
- Develop a creative content calendar and identify members who can tell those stories
- Try it then refine it
- Measure it, recognizing that audience numbers build with marketing exposure and time, and that metrics should be wide ranging (the member cohort(s) engaging with podcasts might be just as important a measure as the number of downloads for an episode)