The Transom Review

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Curtis Fox
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(Edited by Sydney Lewis)

Intro from Jay Allison

As satisfying as the work can be, it's tough to make a living as an independent producer in public radio. Producers have traditionally circumvented this problem with Day Jobs, sometimes capitalizing on public radio skills. That was true with Audiobooks a while back, and it's true of Podcasts now. Curtis Fox is a Master of Podcasts, and in his Transom Manifesto, he tells you how he ended up where he is. He'll also tell you about the implications of podcasting's rise on the public radio talent pool. And you can hear Curtis' recent taped presentation at the PRPD. And ask him questions.

Curtis Fox

About Curtis Fox

Curtis Fox runs a small podcast production company whose main clients are The Poetry Foundation, The New Yorker, and Parents Magazine. He comes out of public radio, where he contributed to many shows, including All Things Considered, Studio 360 and On the Media. He worked on staff for a now defunct show called The Next Big Thing, producing radio drama, cultural journalism, interviews and personal essays. He lives in Brooklyn with his wife and two young daughters.

On Podcasting

There's something about the word "manifesto" that demands **bold <u>underlined</u> STATEMENTS.** And so I will conform my (modest) message to the medium.

<u>PUBLIC RADIO ISN'T THE ONLY PLACE FOR PUBLIC RADIO PRODUCERS TO WORK ANYMORE</u>

I've always thought of public radio as a kind of ghetto for producers (and listeners) of reasonably intelligent audio. And things were crowded in our mostly white, mostly upper-middle-class, always well-mannered ghetto. There was little room for new programming, little appetite for experimentation. But things outside the ghetto looked even bleaker; commercial radio was a cultural wasteland.

Just a few years ago, if producers wanted to earn a living outside of public radio, the best option was books-on-tape. Lucrative perhaps, but not always stimulating, especially if you had to slog many hours editing the latest Danielle Steele. (I did.) Besides, a few entrepreneurial producers had sewn up the market.

But then in 2004 new medium opened up a world of new possibilities. With podcasting, magazines, museums, cultural and political organizations, non-profits, and even corporations could now put out their own audio content, directly, without having to work through a traditional media outlet. Here was a medium with no limits! You didn't need a fortune to buy space on the FM dial. You didn't have to pad your shows to conform to a broadcasting clock. And screw the FCC, you could say anything! The problem? These organizations did not know how to produce or market effective audio programs. Enter the independent public radio producer.

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Pennsylvania Turnpike

I got the idea of getting into public radio late one night on the Pennsylvania Turnpike as I was driving to New York with all my worldly possessions stuffed in my Honda Civic. I was 31 years old, without a career or any inclination for one. At the time I was a poet, troubled that none of my otherwise educated friends ever read poetry and would not be able to appreciate the blinding insights that would one day flash from my brain onto the page. My friends read a lot of fiction, but I never saw any of them crack a book of poetry. Why was that?

Because academia had soured them on it, I figured, and besides, they felt so overwhelmed by the sheer quantity of stuff out there they didn't know where to start. So what could introduce people to the very real pleasures of an art that I loved? A public radio poetry show.

In New York, energized by the idea of gaining skills I would need to be the producer of that show, I took the traditional path into public radio: an unpaid internship (at WNYC's *Leonard Lopate Show)*, then paid work (editing *Bridges: A Liberal Conservative Dialogue)*. I started producing history programs independently, did pieces for some national shows like *All Things Considered* and *On the Media*, and eventually started working on staff for WNYC's *The Next Big Thing*, where along with standard host interviews and cultural journalism I produced comedy, radio drama and audio essays—types of radio that after the demise of that show don't seem to have found a home anywhere inside the public radio ghetto. Along the way I managed to do some literary and poetry segments, but was gradually disabused of the idea that a poetry show would work on public radio, outside a few local markets. Public radio was in full retreat from educational programming in favor of news and entertainment. But now at least I was skilled producer who could earn a modest living in an honorable profession.

When podcasting came along, I took the skills and values of public radio into the new medium and started producing programs that would never find their way onto the schedules of most public radio stations, including several poetry podcasts for the Poetry Foundation.

Poetry Foundation

I originated podcasts for the Jewish cultural website Nextbook.org (which is now ably produced by Julie Subrin, a former colleague at The Next Big Thing), and for Parents Magazine, where some on staff have natural radio talent.

Parents Magazine

I started working with the New Yorker, where we developed the Fiction Podcast and the Campaign Trail, both of which are edited by public radio producers.

Partly by virtue of being in New York, the center of the magazine industry, and partly because it's a time when many media organizations, cultural institutions and advocacy groups want to put out their own audio programs, I've had my pick of interesting projects, and, after producing a long documentary of Walt Whitman for WNYC, I gradually stopped producing pieces for public radio. Deep down I still consider myself a public radio producer, but my last piece, for Studio 360, went up in early 2006.

PODCASTING IS NOT REVOLUTIONARY (YET)

Podcasting is an immature medium. It is far easier to flick on the TV or radio than it is to download or subscribe to a podcast, much less find it on your mp3 player. The technology needed by podcast listeners isn't cheap either, and because they are distributed free podcasting has a ways to go before developing a viable business model. Many of the most popular podcasts are simply radio programs re-issued as on-demand audio.

Non-broadcast podcasts may be chipping around the edges of broadcast radio, but podcasting is still a niche medium used by a small fraction of audio consumers. As data pipes get fatter, podcasting or some version of it will eventually mature into a mainstream advertising medium that serves up network TV shows and a whole lot more, on demand—TIVO for computers and cell phones.

Ultimately, podcasting is simply another medium to deliver audio and video, and major media companies will dominate it as they now dominate TV, radio, print, and, increasingly, the web. So I'm not somebody who sees podcasting as a revolutionary technology in the media landscape.
For consumers, the real significance of podcasting lies in its role in the general and generational shift away from TVs and radios to computers and cell phones; for producers its significance is the new ability to create content for discrete demographics located anywhere in the world—in other words, to *create* audiences that currently don't exist.

Podcasting is the first really effective audiovisual medium that narrowcasts to groups that are not being served by broadcast media—people interested in contemporary poetry, to cite an example relevant to me personally. For independent public radio producers, narrowcasting gives a producer greater freedom to explore subjects without fear of losing a broadcast audience (or station managers) which may tune out when you stray too far from the news or middlebrow entertainment. For the subscribers to *Poetry Off the Shelf* I can safely assume that they're already interested in poetry, somewhat knowledgeable about it, and can stay with us for twenty minutes to look at a poem by Sylvia Plath or to hear a range of poems by the new poet laureate Kay Ryan. This simply does not happen on public radio. (Some podcasts geared to a more general audience may develop a large enough following to be picked up by broadcast radio, as in the case of *The Sound of Young America*, so podcasting isn't only A narrowcasting medium. It can be the proving ground for new broadcast programs.)


Sylvia Plath

Podcasting opens up a market for audio that would never even be contemplated for broadcast.
Businesses that want to talk shop with potential clients are starting podcasts; advocacy groups that want to get their message directly to their members; non-profits that want to

fundraise; political groups and politicians; professional and trade groups; giant corporations that want to reach their far-flung employees.

I don't pretend to know if podcasting will ultimately undermine the mothership of public radio. I suspect not, given how well public radio podcasts have done on iTunes, and the high quality of most public radio programs in general. But podcasting, with its emphasis on the program itself and not the network or station that produced it, plus the drift toward the greater diversity of the web, do threaten public radio's franchise business model.

Poetry Off the Shelf

To survive in the long term public radio stations will have to develop programming and web sites that serve general and niche audiences, or face a gradual erosion of membership and listeners. (Interestingly enough, Poetry Off the Shelf is distributed by alt.NPR, which I think is NPR's attempt to embrace long-deprived niche audiences in the bosomy mothership brand.) Think how few general interest magazines are published anymore and how many specialty titles fill the newsstands. I would not be surprised to discover in the corner store a thriving magazine for turtle lovers; in any case, there's a website! Like it or not, that's the future of audio as well, it seems to me. This is good news indeed for public radio producers who want to find work outside the ghetto.

WHAT A PODCAST PRODUCER DOES

It all depends on the program, of course, but podcast producers like me do pretty much what public radio producers do, plus a host of things unrelated to production. Like radio producers, podcast producers design programs, audition talent, write script, voice, report, record, edit, sound design, pull their hair out, mix. But they also have to come up with budgets and business plans. They have to market podcasts, or at least advise clients on how to get their program noticed. They have to function as audio consultants to the web sites from which their podcasts spring. These last two points are related, because podcasts are unlikely to thrive without a very supportive and heavily trafficked website.

How else will an original podcast get noticed if not for a website that continually trumpets its existence? (Magazines can advertise in their pages, which the New Yorker has done extremely well; they also make the podcasts available as web audio on their website, with links to subscribe on iTunes. Radio stations have the biggest marketing advantage, because they can promote a podcast to an audience that already likes the product; they just have to say, more or less, "Here's another way to listen to this show, whenever and wherever you want.")

But probably the hardest part of being a podcast producer is helping a client identify the potential audience—general listener or specialized group? underserved audience, or are there competing programs?--and crafting a program accordingly. In other words, why do they want to produce a podcast, who is that niche audience they want to reach? Or is it a general audience they want to appeal to?

Deborah Treisman, fiction editor of the New Yorker and host of The Yorker Fiction Podcast

The New Yorker is justly famous for the fiction they've published over the years. Pretty much every writer of note in the last eighty years has appeared in its pages; the magazine's archive of short stories is unparalleled. I thought the natural audience for a New Yorker fiction podcast would be books-on-tape consumers, many of whom were already accustomed to downloading audio from places like Audible.com. Another audience would be New Yorker readers not naturally drawn to podcasts or audiobooks who might nevertheless be interested to hear what the fiction editor of the New Yorker and contemporary writers might have to say about other writers they admire (the guest writers don't read their own work; they choose a story from the archives by another writer, which they then read and talk about).

So the program was designed to address both these audiences with a brief conversational introduction to the story between Deborah Treisman and the guest writer, followed by a straight books-on-tape-style reading, followed by a conversation about the story designed to address both these audiences, with a brief conversational introduction to the story between Deborah Treisman and the guest writer, followed by a straight books-on-tape-style reading, followed by a conversation about the the story. Thanks in part to the New Yorker brand and to frequent features on the iTunes store, as well as advertisements in the magazine, the podcast has developed a sizable audience. It doesn't hurt that the podcast is evergreen. New listeners can always go back and download the entire archive, or cherry pick ones of interest.

In other words, here was a product naturally suited to the medium. (Its only competition is the excellent radio show *Selected Shorts*, where actors read short stories in front of a live audience. Incidentally, I think *Selected Shorts* works better as a podcast than a radio show because unlike the radio version you never tune in in the middle of a story and you can always pause to answer the phone without losing the thread.)

The *Campaign Trail*, another *New Yorker* podcast, is not as suited to the "long-tail" nature of the medium. Information and opinion about the presidential race date so quickly that programs won't accumulate downloads over time. Last week's podcast is like last week's magazine—curious, but you'd rather hear the most recent one. Competition is also fierce, not only from dozens of political TV shows (think "Shields and Brooks" on the *News Hour* with Jim Lehrer), but also from print outlets like the *New York Times*, which also has a political podcast. (The *New York Times* has a formidable array of podcasts, but production quality is uneven and even their good programs are poorly marketed. If they ever got it together I think they go toe to toe with NPR.) But public interest in the campaign is high, and the *New Yorker* has some of the best political

journalists writing (Ryan Lizza, Hendrik Hertzberg, George Packer, Elizabeth Kolbert, John Cassidy, David Remnick, as well as executive editor Dorothy Wickenden, who is the program's remarkably warm and skillful host).

The idea here is not to respond immediately to the onslaught of events in the race, but rather to analyze events from the deeper perspective that these writers and editors bring to the helter-skelter of electoral politics. But the podcast would be quickly irrelevant if it talked about events that the rest of the media has already digested, so production speed is important. We record in the morning and the podcast goes live that afternoon. They have the talent; my job is to direct recordings and do a tight edit and mix that reflect well on the extremely high editorial standards of the magazine. I've noticed that many glossy, well-edited magazines have put out amateurish-sounding podcasts that reflect poorly on their staff and their brand. The idea that audio is easy and cheap to produce well is the first assumption I try to put to rest when talking with potential clients.

AESTHETICS: DOES A PODCAST HAVE TO SOUND DIFFERENT THAN RADIO?

Yes and no and maybe. I think one of the reasons I get hired is because I can bring a public radio "sound" to a program. But podcasting got its start with amateurs who made it up as they went along, technically as well as creatively, and they have left their mark on what audiences expect out of a podcast. Like blogs, podcasts are often rooted in personal opinion, and there is often little sense, as there is in public radio, that you have to be fair and balanced.

Technical quality and consistency don't always seem to matter much either; there is much more tolerance in podcasts for inferior audio—SYKPE recordings and the like. This is not a problem if you are an individual, but for a professional podcast producer different standards apply, according to the client you are producing for. If that client wants to sound like public radio, you have to match public radio technical, aesthetic and editorial standards.

The problem, of course, is that magazines, for example, are set up to produce magazines, not audio. So a professional podcast producer must help clients choose equipment that will get the best possible sound in the available recording space, at a reasonable price. Fortunately, while it's almost impossible to match the dead space of a radio studio in an office setting, with the right equipment and proper direction of talent it's relatively easy to get good sound. Only professional producers will even notice the difference.

FINAL THOUGHTS

It's extraordinary how quickly the media landscape has changed with the rise of podcasting, youtube, iTunes, satellite radio, and smart phones. How things will ultimately shake out remains to be seen, but we're obviously in a period of great

experimentation. All sorts of individuals and organizations are now producing their own audio and video, standards are in flux, and all media to be converging on and connecting to the web.

I do think that in spite of the overwhelming *quantity* of stuff now out there, *quality* content will prevail, and public radio producers are well positioned to bring their skills and values out of the ghetto and into this brave new marketplace. They need us out there.

Comments

Ohman - Oct 1, 2008 - #1

I'm interested in producing podcasts for local groups…I have experience producing for public radio — so, no problems there…but, I have absolutely no clue about what to charge for the podcasts.

As public radio usually pays a dollar amount per minute of finished piece, is this an acceptable approach? And, if so, is there a general standard of how much per minute?

Curtis Fox - Oct 1, 2008 - #2

It's always hard to figure out what to charge. I have various rates, for non-profits and for-profits, but really there are no going rates for professional podcast producers; it's too new.

I wouldn't do a per minute rate, since there are too many variables involved. How can you charge per finished minute for a simply produced talk show, for example?

I always suggest doing a pilot first as a way of figuring out how much time it's going to take and what sort of budget you'll need. And to budget for a pilot, you'll need to calculate external costs, then guestimate how much time you will need to do it and multiply that by your day rate. (Don't have a day rate? They can vary dramatically according to experience and location, but ask around from people at your level and in your area.)

Pilots always take longer than a program that's already underway, so you should make that clear to a client–the pilot will be more expensive. But I know these things are tricky. You want the work, so you're tempted to sell your labor for cheap. Best to resist that urge…

sarah reynolds - Oct 3, 2008 - #3

Do you think that this idea of narrowcasting will push public radio to make different kinds of decisions about their programming to pull listeners back to live radio? Are they worried?

I hope you're right about when you say "quality will prevail" - I'm just starting in this but have found that some organizations just want you to bring a camera and recorder and don't really consider the time or the value of that time. And it's frustrating! Maybe we should unionize!

Curtis Fox - Oct 9, 2008 - #5

I suspect that public radio programmers are worried, not so much about narrowcasting as they are about the future viability of their financial model. With podcasts and internet radio, listeners can get most national programming–and a whole lot more–without turning on their radio, so they will be less likely to send that check to their local station.

In response, for the past few years stations have been beefing up their local production. I don't know if that means more live radio. I do think larger, wealthier stations will survive but a lot of smaller ones that don't have a strong connection to their audience may not.

One thing stations could do is "curate" content for listeners on their websites: provide easy ways to subscribe or stream the best local and national programming, inside and outside of public radio. I find NPR's podcast list quite daunting. Someone needs to whittle it down to the good ones.

About quality prevailing: if the organizations you're talking about actually want people to listen or watch, they have to produce a consistently good product. But that's the argument you have to make to them. Producers have to disabuse clients of the notion that a podcast is simply a matter of opening a mike and nattering on. Play a few podcast for them. Find some that make your mind go numb in the first 30 seconds, then find others that actually skillfully draw you in (hopefully yours).

Sydney Lewis - Oct 6, 2008 - #4

Thanks for taking us so carefully through your path to podcasting. As you say, standards are in flux. The idea that producers can now "create audiences that currently don't exist" is a powerful one. Beyond what you've generously offered, any further advice for producers in terms of how best to approach conjuring a market?

Curtis Fox - Oct 9, 2008 - #6

Good question. I have never quite approached so abstractly as conjuring a market. I've taken on clients who want to do things that I too want to do–usually literary.

If I were really truly an entrepreneur I would come up with my own program and try to build an audience and later raise advertising money–the blogging model. But I've chosen the much less risky path of working for clients who can actually pay me now and not wait for future success.

If that's the way you want to go, I do think there are lots of potential clients out there, depending on your interests and geography. Basically, any organization that has an active website is a potential podcaster.

I think you have to figure out a few that are close to your interests and approach them with an idea on how to reach the people they want to reach. I think you also have to think about underserved audiences and if audio is best way to reach them. I think public radio has really underserved kids, but I'm not sure if audio is a better way to reach them than video podcasts. Hope this helps, and sorry for the slow responses…

Erica Heilman - Oct 10, 2008 - #7

I really appreciate all that you've written here. I've produced a podcast series about parenting. Which hasn't yet launched. It's a conversation format–essentially, I play the confused parent, introduce some perennial parenting frustration, and then Parent Expert and I discuss.

I've also produced a bunch of website audios for the Parent Expert person, and these have launched, and are for sale on her site. I'm trying to do more work like this, but the more I research and plan, the more incompetent I feel.

I don't know how to code, load or market podcasts and website audio. Do you do these things? How do you interface with your clients' IT departments? How much are you expected to know about marketing and actually loading the podcasts? Also…I am totally perplexed about how to create a budget for these projects.

I want to crash forward with this business plan, but I feel like there's a LOT more I need to know, and I'm not sure where to learn it all.
How's that for a big fat emotive only-sort-of question?

H Howard - Oct 13, 2008 - #8

Like Erica, do you take care of all the back room technical issues and if not, how or where do you find these types of people / services.

Even in large companies, I would suspect that the IT department may not have much expertise in the fine points of podcasting.

Curtis Fox - Oct 22, 2008 - #9

First to the technical aspects. I don't publish the podcasts I produce. I simply provide an mp3 with ID3 tags, and clients put it up themselves.

The reason for this is control, mainly. It's their website, and clients generally want to have editorial control over publication timing and any copy about the podcast, not to mention the podcast itself. Also, most web sites are built in-house and it would be difficult for an outsider to start messing with the machinery, especially when it comes to where they post notice of the podcast on the site.

That said, I do advise clients on how to get a podcast stream started–it's pretty simple, and all of it is outlined by iTunes–and I do constantly monitor if they've been posted correctly: if they play, if they download, if their feed checks out.

I sometimes wish I did have control over publication, because I'm often frustrated by delays and mistakes. But frankly, I'm not a web producer, and I'm pretty happy I don't have to deal with the technical aspects of publication.

Marketing is a lot more complicated. A new podcast is mainly an offshoot of a web site, so it's very important how the podcast is presented on that site. Is there a separate page for the podcast with show descriptions? Is their good metadata for each podcast so that it can be picked up by people doing Google searches? Can people play the podcast on-line? Is it easy to download or subscribe? The nuts and bolts are important, and it's something that requires constant monitoring as web sites change.

Another way is to look at what the client already does and see whether the podcast can be advertised there? E-Newsletter? Newsletter? Magazine?

But the larger question is, how does a podcast get noticed and develop an audience? One way is to publish frequently, at a very high quality, with consistency. This could lead to being featured in the iTunes store. They are very good at spotting good new stuff. Also, try to get the podcast listed in various podcast directories. Send out news releases. Do

promo introductions for other podcasts. Marketing is a big topic, so I can only make brief mention of these things here.

On thing I could recommend is to start your own podcast, if only for the exercise of learning how to publish. It's not complicated, but you'll demystify the process by doing it.

Jay Allison - Oct 22, 2008 - #10

Curtis, how do your clients measure success? Are they making quality judgements or monitoring peer reaction, audience feedback, or awards and such (*are* there awards?)?

Or is it mostly a numbers game, basing success on downloads?

And, if it's the latter, isn't that as much a function of marketing as the result of your work?

Finally, how can we know the relationship between downloads and actual listening? I know I have a lot more podcasts on my computer than I'm ever able to actually hear.

Curtis Fox - Oct 27, 2008 - #11

"Success" really varies according the client. Numbers matter, of course, but so does audience feedback through email, letters, blog posts, awards (yes, there are awards, like the Webbies and the MIN Best of the Web Awards, and others).

We get a few emails a week for Poetry Off the Shelf, almost always from listeners who express gratitude for the program. Occasionally we get an email like this: "I have never been a poetry fan, and it was not until my mind was changed by listening to the podcast that I understood why. First, why I like the show so much. The hosts and the guests are very down to earth and really make poetry more accessible to those of us who are artistically impaired…"

This is exactly the audience the program was designed to appeal to–people interested in poetry but somehow intimidated by it. And we get enough of this kind of email to reassure us that the program is working. Last time I checked, the program had a five-star average rating on iTunes, from about 25 reviews.

Comments from inside the organization–from staff members, board members, etc.–also help: is this a product that they are proud of? The numbers have been there, too. We started in early 2006 with just a few hundred downloads a week, and downloads have

grown exponentially since. Also, perhaps most importantly, the podcast (and audio in general) is one of the most popular features on the Poetry Foundation site.

The Poetry Magazine podcast has also done well, and again, it goes beyond numbers. Poetry Magazine is often considered the "establishment" literary journal, and as such has sometimes been seen as remote and rather impenetrable. But since the podcast, hosted by the editors Christian Wiman and Don Share, began last year, we've been hearing from poets and other listeners how the podcast humanizes the magazine. Their down-to-earth unpretentious banter about the upcoming issue has in effect enriched the magazine's "brand."

But the Poetry Foundation is well-endowed and, while numbers are important to the success of their mission of creating new readers of poetry, they don't have to worry about profiting from their investment in podcasts. Magazines are another story. They of course make their money from advertising, and numbers matter here.

Right now, podcasting is still not a mass-medium, and is not likely to command the advertising dollars that print publications or even web sites do. But magazines see advertising money shifting to the web and podcasting is obviously part of the multi-media strategy they need to implement to stay competitive. So magazines seem to be currently investing in podcasting and other web products in anticipation that the numbers will be there in the future.

So success in many cases is building a growing audience and claiming turf in the already overcrowded podcasting landscape.

And yes, I too download many more podcasts than I can ever listen to or watch, but there is some rough justice in the numbers. iTunes, for example, will stop downloading podcasts you don't listen to. Also, you can tell general trends from the numbers–going up? Are there more incompleted than completed downloads, suggesting more people are sampling your program on-line or in iTunes as opposed to subscribing to it?

Marketing podcasts is complicated and varies dramatically on the specific audience you want to reach. But there are so many podcasts out there, it is becoming more and more important to get word out to your potential audience. There's a whole bunch of things you can do, most involving the web site that the podcast comes from, but perhaps the most important marketing a producer can do is to actually produce a quality product on a regular basis. Regular updating, for podcasts and and for web sites, is key.

Rob Rosenthal - Nov 10, 2008 - #12

I'm wondering if you have a quick and dirty checklist that helps you determine who may be a likely client for a podcast. I imagine some organizations/businesses may make better candidates than others.

And, can you tell us about a podcast pitch you made that failed and why?

Thanks for this manifesto.

Curtis Fox - Nov 12, 2008 - #13

I don't have a checklist but I'll invent one on the spot.
A potential client:
1) wants to reach an audience that currently isn't served by broadcast outlets;
2) has a very active, frequently updated website with some multi-media elements;
3) has good print content and is looking to get that content out in different ways.

There are a lot of organizations that fit the bill–magazines, newspapers, advocacy groups, political groups, companies who want to reach their customers or their employees–but not all of them of course will have the resources (financial and human) to do a podcast.

I've found myself in the position of discouraging some organizations from starting one–not at least before taking a hard look at their potential audience and how they are currently reaching it.

I have just a few clients and I haven't had to look for them really. Usually they find me through the grapevine and we spend many, many months talking it through before we get started, if we get started.

I really want the podcasts I produce to find their audience, so I'm unlikely to take on a client who doesn't take my advice seriously or whose web site is not dynamic and shows little inclination to change.

Also, I have to care about the content. This is the curse of my years in public radio: I care. I also really want to work with clients who want to experiment, who are willing to stick with a quality product long enough to see whether it clicks with an audience, and who trust my judgment.

One thing: when working with a new client I always recommend doing a pilot first, before committing to something longer term. Doing the pilot will give everyone involved a good idea of what's involved, how much it costs, and if it's something both parties want to pursue. I once did a few pilots that didn't work out (too much time was required of staff), but that's one of things we did the pilot to find out.

As I said, clients have come to me so I've never had to make a pitch from out of the blue. But in this economy, who knows?

Good luck everyone!

About Transom

What We're Trying To Do

Here's the short form: Transom.org is an experiment in channeling new work and voices to public radio through the Internet, and for discussing that work, and encouraging more. We've designed Transom.org as a performance space, an open editorial session, an audition stage, a library, and a hangout. Our purpose is to create a worthy Internet site and make public radio better.

Submissions can be stories, essays, home recordings, sound portraits, interviews, found sound, non-fiction pieces, audio art, whatever, as long as it's good listening. Material may be submitted by anyone, anywhere -- by citizens with stories to tell, by radio producers trying new styles, by writers and artists wanting to experiment with radio.

We contract with Special Guests to come write about work here. We like this idea, because it 1) keeps the perspective changing so we're not stuck in one way of hearing, 2) lets us in on the thoughts of creative minds, and 3) fosters a critical and editorial dialog about radio work, a rare thing.

Our Discussion Boards give us a place to talk it all over. Occasionally, we award a Transom.org t-shirt to especially helpful users, and/or invite them to become Special Guests.

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ATLANTIC PUBLIC MEDIA

Atlantic Public Media administers Transom.org. APM is a non-profit organization based in Woods Hole, Massachusetts which has as its mission "to serve public broadcasting through training and mentorship, and through support for creative and experimental approaches to program production and distribution." APM is also the founding group for *WCAI & WNAN*, a new public radio service for Cape Cod, Martha's Vineyard, and Nantucket under the management of *WGBH*-Boston. This project received funding from the Ford Foundation, the National Endowment for the Arts. Lead funding was provided Florence and John Schumann Foundation. We get technical support from PRX.