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# Bank Marketing

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**Listen More, Talk Less**

Social Media

MCIF/CRM Trends

Marketing Metrics

MARCH 2008



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# PODCASTING:



## A NEW ALTERNATIVE TO RADIO?

SOME BANKS ARE UTILIZING THE INTERNET TO  
DISTRIBUTE MARKETING MATERIALS IN THE FORM OF  
LOW-COST AUDIO AND VIDEO MEDIA FILES.

by Steven L. Lubetkin

**N**ot long ago, the Sun National Bank of Vineland, N.J., was developing a campaign to promote its new mortgage subsidiary.

Rather than use traditional media such as print, television or radio, the bank, which has assets of \$3.3 billion, decided to use a form of podcasting, which in this case, consisted of an audio media file distributed over the Internet.

The podcast contained an interview with the subsidiary's president and the chief loan officer, who described for first-time homebuyers the process of applying for a mortgage. The officers discussed such things as what to expect, what documents to pull together and how the process works.

The bank thought a podcast had the potential to reach beyond a traditional hard-sell campaign that focused only on products and services. In essence, the podcast publicized the subsidiary's expertise and "thought leadership" in a low-key, informative way.

The bank was attracted to the medium's long shelf life. "It's not an ad or radio spot where you're in for a day or a few seconds," says Ed Malandro, senior vice president and director of retail banking and marketing. "Podcasts can be kept on Web sites or used to complement other marketing activities..." For example, you can hand out podcast recordings at trade shows, he notes.

Podcasts are also a good option when you're trying to stretch out a marketing budget, he adds.

### **Delivered 24/7**

As the Sun National example shows, financial institutions are dipping their toes in the waters of the so-called "social media," that is, media that use the Internet to distribute news, photos, and audio and video files. Podcasts, which consist of either audio or video files, offer a fresh new way to communicate with customers as well as employees and stockholders.



## Researching Podcast Sites

To find podcasts to listen to, check out some of the podcast directory sites. Podcast.net ([www.podcast.net](http://www.podcast.net)) is a sort of Yahoo! for podcasting, with programs categorized by topics. And take a look at "The freshest podcasts in the known universe" (<http://audio.weblogs.com>), which automatically lists all new podcasts as soon as they are broadcast to the Web. Another good source is PodcastAlley.com ([www.podcastalley.com](http://www.podcastalley.com)), which also features helpful forums for podcasters to exchange tips, and links to software for creating or downloading podcasts.

**Podcasts can expand the reach of a bank's marketing dollars at a fraction of the cost of direct mail or radio or TV advertising. 'This technology is so basic, anyone can do it.'**

Effective podcasts entertain and inform audiences, providing them with useful information, whether or not these listeners do business with your bank.

Unlike broadcast advertising, which can be expensive to produce and place, or audio- and video-news-release packages that may be used only on small broadcast stations late at night or not at all, podcasts are full-length programs that are delivered to a global audience 24-hours-a-day through the Internet. Podcast programs are served via Web sites, through the Apple iTunes Music Store ([www.itunes.com](http://www.itunes.com)) and through syndication technology known as an RSS "feed," which alerts podcast listeners automatically when new program content is available.

The increasing availability of high-speed broadband Internet makes it convenient for podcast audiences to download audio and video files for offline review.

Podcasts can expand the reach of a bank's marketing dollars at a fraction of the cost of direct mail or radio or TV advertising because podcasts reach prequalified audiences that self-select the content to which they listen.

A January 2008 study by market research and consulting company Horowitz Associates indicated that 60 percent of high-speed Internet users either watch or download online video content at least once a week, and more than 85 percent do so on a monthly basis.

And the production costs for podcasts are significantly lower as well.

"This technology is so basic, anyone can do it," says Neville Hobson, a British communications consultant who participates in a twice-weekly podcast about communications trends ([www.forimmediaterelease.biz](http://www.forimmediaterelease.biz)). "Somebody who wants to get out a quick five-minute message to a team, which might be dispersed across different geographies and different offices, can just get a little headset and record something on his own laptop."

## How to create effective podcasts

Creating podcasts is reasonably simple, although taking some time to learn about sound recording can be advantageous. Many novice podcasters simply connect an inexpensive headset to their computers and use the Windows recording application that comes with the PC. The problem is that the quality sounds amateurish and could make listeners impatient.

Professional podcasts take advantage of a number of specialized sound-processing programs that permit pinpoint editing of digital sound files, insertion of music or remote reports, and the mixing of sound effects and ambient sound from location reports.

Podcasters need to treat their programs as if they are producing "long-form" programs for National Public Radio or the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation (CBC). Tod Maffin, a veteran broadcast journalist for the CBC, has even adapted his "From Idea to Air: The

Freelancers' Guide to Selling to Public Radio," ([www.fromideatoair.com](http://www.fromideatoair.com)) for use by podcasters.

Podcasts can bridge the gap between professional consulting firms and widely dispersed consultants who travel frequently. They can be used to deliver news, updates about a firm's activities or training content in a format that's easy to manage and disseminate, either by Web, on audio CDs or loaded on digital audio players.

#### **Really simple syndication: alerting the listeners**

Uploading digital audio files to your Web site is nothing new. What distinguishes podcasting from simply posting an MP3 audio file on a Web site is the use of "really simple syndication" (RSS) technology to distribute the audio to subscribers.

RSS alerts subscribers to new Web content by creating a separate page of code that updates itself whenever its related Web page is updated. Subscribers use special Web sites called "aggregators" or software "feed reader" programs to monitor their favorite blogs. When a new item is posted to a blog you're monitoring, the RSS technology alerts you to that news, sort of like getting a new e-mail message in your "in" box.

Podcasts are inserted in RSS feeds as if they were e-mail attachments, but the actual podcast file is not transferred to subscribers. They just get a link to where the actual audio or video file is stored.

Feedburner.com, a Web site that provides the RSS technology to distribute podcasts, says that it is supporting producers of more than 150,000 audio and video podcasts. And owners of Apple's popular iPod can choose from thousands of audio and video podcasts for free in the iTunes Music Store.

"One of the things this does for smaller businesses is give them a low-barrier entry into some of the media that has been available only to businesses with bigger budgets," said podcaster Shel Holtz, a public relations expert who lives in Concord, Calif. ([www.holtz.com](http://www.holtz.com))

#### **Promoting a reverse mortgage product**

Another New Jersey Bank that has experimented with podcasts is Amboy Bank (assets: \$2.6 billion) of Old Bridge, N.J. It produced a podcast program

to help its market learn about a new, internally developed reverse mortgage product aimed at senior citizens. Most reverse mortgage products are structured according to a federal model. The Amboy product was designed by the bank, and its closing costs can be significantly lower than costs associated with the federal reverse mortgage products—a competitive advantage in the heavily banked New Jersey market.

The Amboy podcast ([www.amboybank.com](http://www.amboybank.com)) features two interviews, one with customer Bud Addis, a retiree who describes how the Amboy reverse mortgage has helped him manage expenses on a fixed income, and the other with a bank reverse mortgage counselor who describes the terms of the product and the bank's program for educating prospective customers and their families. Seniors frequently involve other family members in the reverse mortgage decision, says Dennis Kane, Amboy's vice president and director of Marketing.

"This gives us an opportunity to let one of our satisfied customers speak in detail about the Amboy Bank reverse mortgage in a medium that's accessible 24-hours-a day-worldwide," Kane says. ■

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