

The World of Podcasting, Screencasting, Blogging, and Videoblogging

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INTRODUCTION

A podcast is a Web feed containing audio or video files which is then placed on the Internet for anyone to download. What makes the podcast distinct from traditional media like broadcasting and streaming is that the podcast file will arrive in archived form. A Screencast is a digital recording of computer screen output, which contains audio narration. Screencasts are useful for demonstrating simple and complicated new software to others. It is a neat way to show off work, report bugs, and show how a task can be accomplished. Screencasting is a term for recording a movie of a computer screen to a file that others can view. Screencasts are mostly used for tutorials, overview/tours, reviews, and demonstrations. Screencasts may also be used as a way to enhance regular movie files. A Weblog, or blog, is a Web site where the owner or user of the Web site posts messages on it so that others can log on and read them. Blogs often focus on one subject, for example, if the blogger is a computer programmer, then the topic of his messages is mainly related to programming languages. However, many are using the blogs as online diaries where they post messages describing their daily news or how they feel about certain subjects. Videoblogging is a new form of blogging, which includes posting videos on the Web. It is a new paradigm for people to place aspects of their personal lives on the Web. Videoblogging is rising in

popularity partially due to the release of the Video iPod and the availability of videoblogs on iTunes. So this means that with the recent boom in iPod sales, they will see this one as the most updated one and this will also hit the computer industry by storm. The rest of this article examines the new phenomenon of podcasting, screencasting, blogging, and videoblogging.

PODCASTING

A factor which is influencing the popularity of podcasting is cheap MP3 players such as the iPod. A possible reason why Podcasting allows users to keep up to date with items that interest them, for example, local radio shows, events in a city or region, favourite radio talk shows, sermons, technical talks, or simply listening to their music (Farkas, 2005). Really simple syndication (RSS) is a type of Web format which is widely used with Podcasting (King, 2004; Zawodny, 2004). The Web feeds that the RSS provide simply link to the podcast. At present, there is no clear revenue model related to podcasting (Kerner, 2004). There are only a small amount of podcasts which actually make money from subscriptions. Some podcasters are beginning, however, to place advertisements in their podcasts. The other problem is also the sheer amount of rubbish placed online in podcast directories. Due to the nature of brief podcast (or none) descriptions, one has to generally

download the podcast and listen to it to ascertain the actual relevance and quality.

History of Podcasting

Podcasting started in 2004 when David Winer, a software developer, created a program from home to allow him to record broadcasts off the Internet radio stations and play them on an iPod. He wanted to be able to save them to his computer so he could return to them later. He released the software online and eventually other software developers improved on the idea and Podcasting gained momentum. The name Podcasting actually comes from two different words - pod came from the iPod and casting came from broadcasting (Morris & Terro, 2005). The net caught onto pod casting quickly. For instance, in September 2004 a blogger and columnist, Doc Searls, began keeping track of how many people searched Google for the word "podcasts" and the result was 24. A week later, it was 526, and after another 3 days, it was 2,750. It then doubled every couple of days, passing 100,000 on October 18, 2004. In October 2005, there was more than 100,000,000 hits on the word "podcasts" on Google.

Production of a podcast is not complex. Equipment needed is a computer with access to the Internet along with a microphone to record sound and software to record the sounds to the computer. Fortunately, there is free software available for recording sounds and editing them. One popular package is gold wave¹. Once a podcast has been recorded, it can be uploaded to a podcast directory. Many are free, but some, such as iTunes, charge for adding content.

Podcast Examples

In 2004, Musselburgh Grammar School in Scotland started handing out Podcasts in class as revision help for foreign language classes². Churches and religious groups are also broadcasting items ranging from church music to sermons, talks, and prayers. The number of people that are using what the church would refer to as Godcasts is growing. Many podcasters see it as a hobby. Many podcasts disappear over time as they rapidly find out that it takes a lot more time than initially expected to produce a weekly or daily show. Most of these podcasters do it just to reach others on the Web about something they believe in passionately. They do not rely on ratings which often allows them to talk

about anything from how to cook an apple tart to just playing music all day long. Many of these take a liberal view on copyright issues.

SCREENCASTING

Screencasting is where a video file of the running of a program is used to help people understand the functions of the desired program. It achieves this by using a narrator and capturing video of the program actually performing different functions. A narrator will talk through the process describing operations mirrored on the video. This can be extremely helpful in the use of training staff on a new system, as it will show them what to do with narrations. This can be more cost effective than normal training. Another use of this is to use it as a presentation, with the Screencast explaining all the information, along with someone answering questions that the viewers may have about what they have just seen. This would be effective in marketing new products to a large audience at once.

History of Screencasting

The term was created in 2004 by Jon Udell, a columnist who wished to show his readers applications that he found interesting. He noticed that geeks caught onto the computer concepts immediately. Therefore, Jon wanted to transmit this knowledge to regular people as well, so he made a screencast. He had hoped that it would attract a wider, less technical audience, and it worked. Screencasting, however, has been around since 1993, when Lotus introduced ScreenCam. This never gained popularity due to the size of the files and the limited features and indeed the size of the created files (prebroadband). Modern screencasting produces compact files and possesses more advanced features that which allow more detailed changes. For example, there was no sound available with ScreenCam and there were a lot of problems with trying to locate and specify the location that the pointer should reside.

A popular programme for creating screencasts is Macromedia Flash MX. This provides editing features for manipulating even the smallest details on the screen. There are two main types of screencasting, screenshots and fluid movies. Screenshots are just pictures of the screen every time the mouse or a button has been clicked; this is produced by the screencasting tools,

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