



*No longer just for neophytes: Businesses,
universities and churches are tapping into the emerging media*

CASTING A WIDER NET

When looking up the term "podcast" be sure to use the 2005 version of the New Oxford American Dictionary – it didn't exist officially before then. The dictionary named it as the word of the year in December 2005 and described it as "a digital recording of a radio broadcast or similar program, made available on the Internet for downloading to a personal audio player."

Podcast is a mix of the words "broadcast" and "iPod," Apple's popular device. Though iPod has become the market leader in personal audio devices, it is not the only option for accessing podcasts. Several manufacturers, including HP, Dell, Sony and Vancouver-based iRiver make devices to download audio and video podcasts.

iRiver spokesperson Vanessa Camones said the podcasting trend has not directly resulted in new-product offerings from the company, but iRiver's products support the playback of audio podcasts, and some, including its new U10 series, play videos.

Podcasting has, however, opened up new markets for iRiver. Unlike iPods, iRiver users can record audio directly onto their devices and later transfer it to their

computer for podcasting.

"The ability to record directly onto the devices and turn that into whatever (users) want to on their PC is really powerful," said Camones.

iRiver's product was

featured in the book "Podcasting for Dummies" for its recording ability, she said.

Podcasts evolved from the popular Web journaling known as blogging. Podcasters began creating audio commentary and talk shows on every topic imaginable. As personal audio devices gained popularity, the podcasts were made available for download to them. Podcasting has continued to evolve into video feeds.

As with blogging, which is being done by everyone from politicians to CEOs, podcasting is for more than just entertainment. Podcasts are emerging as powerful tools in marketing, education and training and as the newest advertising medium.

Microsoft has a podcast

focusing on its own products. Beginning this month, Georgia-Pacific is sponsoring Mommycast, a podcast about motherhood. Publisher Prentice Hall uses podcasts to train its sales force. And universities such as Stanford,

students access to learning," said Lisa Edwards, executive dean of workforce development and continuing education.

The proliferation of the use of personal audio players among college-aged students

Executives are interested in ways podcasting can help their business, such as making available corporate meetings and training sessions, says Lisa Pletcher, who spearheads Clark College's Workforce Development efforts.

Columbia and Princeton podcast lectures.

Clark College recently became one of six colleges in the nation to partner with Apple as a participant in iTunes U. Glen Jenewein, Clark's director of distance learning, said the college could be podcasting classes by fall 2006.

"In higher education, podcasting is becoming a valuable way to provide

makes education a natural extension for podcasts.

"You see a lot of students with iPods on campus," said Jenewein.

The service is free to Clark College. Apple provides Clark with the equipment it needs to record lectures. Clark, however, will have to train its professors how to record classes, and students have to cover the cost of purchasing their own personal audio

devices.

The podcasts will be supplementary to the course and not replace required attendance.

Clark College already offers classes online using a Web-based classroom called Blackboard, where professors can upload video clips to supplement instruction. But Apples technology allows for much larger video clips, such as an entire lecture.

"It's just another way to offer students a way to study, learn and retain knowledge," said Jenewein.

Edwards and Jenewein agree podcasting classes could become a tool to attract students.

"Education is becoming more and more consumer driven," Edwards said.

"People want real-time access to education and learning."

Keeping up with the latest technology can be difficult when it "is right at your heels," said Jenewein.



PODCASTING:

Technology could lead to new ad markets

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Churches are also integrating technology into their services. Vancouver's Living Hope Church podcasts audio of its weekend service and is increasing its capabilities to include video. Senior Pastor John Bishop said it began after the church recorded a service discussing Hurricane Katrina. Living Hope received a lot of requests to have it made available online.

Other pastors raised concerns people would stop attending church, but this has not come to pass. The church is able to track where and when their service is downloaded. Each service is downloaded between 600 to 800 times, with 70 to 80

percent of viewers coming from outside the county, even internationally.

"It's exciting to think thousands are watching our services from around the world," said Bishop.

Podtrac, a company measuring the podcasting industry for prospective advertisers, suggests there are nearly 30,000 podcasts today, up from just 10,000 six months ago.

Some podcasts, such as British comedian Ricky Gervais' "The Ricky Gervais Show" – averaging 260,000 downloads each week – have moved from free to per-download or subscription-based fees.

And aside from more podcasts, Edwards expects the emerging technology will spur ancillary businesses to start up as a result of podcasting's popularity, such as companies that produce podcasts for clients.