

Podcasting for Lawyers

WHAT THE VCR AND TIVO HAVE DONE for video content, podcasts are doing for audio content. A podcast is an audio stream, usually in mp3 format, that is downloaded via the Internet and can be played on an mp3 player. Apple has set the standard with its iPod (from which the word “podcast” derives), which allows users to load their favorite music and audio content into their iPod. The major advantage of an mp3 player is that it allows the user to carry a large amount of audio content in a compact gadget. For example, my 4-by-2-inch iPod, with its 20 gigabytes of memory, can hold 5,000 songs. Having an iPod can be very much like having a jukebox with about 500 compact disks in it.

The portable mp3 player has generated a tremendous supply of online content that includes all types of audio. The podcasting community is producing thousands of podcasts every day. Some of these audio programs are produced by businesses. For example, my law firm posts podcasts on legal topics that can be downloaded from its Web site. Titles include “Terminating the Employment Relationship” and “Alternative Fee Arrangements.” To download either of these two podcasts, a user goes to the Web site, selects the podcasts link, and clicks on the desired podcast.

Other sites offer a host of podcasts for downloading. For example, iTunes.com, which is Apple’s Web site for music and podcasts, offers over 25,000 podcasts from a variety of sources. Users download the iTunes software for free and select the desired podcasts. A user can also subscribe to podcasts, with the result that podcasts are automatically downloaded (and synced with the user’s iPod) each time the iTunes software is run. This feature allows users to get the latest podcast for a particular topic or program. For example, legal professionals can subscribe to a serial podcast called *Coast to Coast*, which contains discussions about current legal issues by attorneys and bloggers Robert Ambrogi and J. Craig Williams. National Public Radio has series now available as podcasts (for example, *Sunday Puzzle*) that can be downloaded through iTunes or at www.npr.org/rss/podcast/podcast_directory.php. Those who need to get a daily dose of *Bill O’Reilly’s Radio Factor* can obtain it via iTunes or by signing up at www.billoreilly.com. Similarly, liberals will be comforted to know that they can download a podcast of Al Franken’s radio program on Air America Radio from iTunes (or, alternatively, at www.airamericaplace.com/archive.php). There are even podcasts that help you brush up on your French (at www.frenchpodclass.com) if you are so inclined.

Finding Podcasts

Because of the sheer volume of podcasts proliferating on the Internet, some Web sites are devoted to helping you find podcasts on particular topics. A few of these podcast search engines include: www.PodCastPickle.com, www.PodCastAlley.com, www.PodCast.net, www.AllPodCasts.com, www.PodCastBunker.com, www.PodCastDirectory.com, www.IdiotVox.com, www.EveryPodCast.com, and www.GetAPodcast.com. Most of these sites are organized by topics and allow for key word searches. Many of these sites also have listings of new podcasts, rankings, and articles about podcasts. These types of sites are a good place to start your podcasting searches.

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titled *Conversations with F. Lee Bailey*. This show covers topics ranging from investigations and cross-examinations to the Boston Strangler case. Writer and lawyer Evan Schaeffer publishes a podcast titled *Evan Schaeffer’s Legal Underground* (found at <http://www.legalunderground.com/podcasts>). The show discusses cutting-edge legal topics. A Web site called Legal Jive PodCasts (found at <http://www.businessjive.com/law>) offers a few legal podcasts, which it describes as “interviews with hotshot attorneys talking about the law.” In addition, in 2006, the Los Angeles County Bar Association intends to begin offering several of its MCLE programs via podcasts on the Association’s Web site (www.lacba.org). On April 7, 2006, the International Law and Employment Law Sections of the Association will be sponsoring an International Employment Law Symposium that will be held in Los Angeles. Employment lawyers from around the world will be speaking at the symposium, and it will thereafter be available as a podcast on the Association’s Web site.

Listen in Your Car

For many, Los Angeles is a particularly good place to listen to podcasts during the city’s traditionally long morning and evening com-

Nicholas P. Connon is a partner with Connon & Wood LLP in downtown Los Angeles (www.connonwood.com). His practice includes employment litigation and complex business litigation. He currently serves as vice chair of the International Law Section of the Los Angeles County Bar Association.

mutes. Many car manufacturers are developing iPod integration with their car stereo systems, and older cars can have this feature added. BMW and Mercedes already offer full iPod integration for several of their models. You can review a list of car manufacturers who have, or will soon have, iPod integration on Apple's Web site.

iPods and other mp3 players can be fitted with a device that broadcasts a weak FM signal. This allows for a cheap method to listen to podcasts while driving. With the iPod in the car (for example, in the glove box or on the seat next to the driver) and broadcasting on its FM adapter, the driver tunes the car's stereo to the iPod's frequency, and the podcast is heard over the car's stereo. This accessory eliminates wires, but its major drawback is sound quality. Interference from other radio stations can cause the sound from your player to be interrupted, fade in and out, or simply be difficult to hear.

A more expensive and better method is to hard-wire podcast capability into a car's stereo system. This can cost from \$600 to \$900. However, there are some major advantages to hard-wiring your car. Foremost, the sound quality will improve. Further, because the wiring is adapted to the vehicle, the owner can place the wiring where he or she wants it to be. For many commuters, the front seat is cluttered enough already, and having a dedicated place for the mp3 player is welcome—especially if it keeps the player from sliding around during cornering and braking. For example, in my vehicle, I have a center arm rest that opens up for storage. I placed the iPod wiring inside this storage area for ease of access and so that the wire is out of sight when not in use.

Adapters are also available that allow iPods or mp3 players to play via a car's cassette player. The cassette adapter produces pretty good sound quality (not as good, in my opinion, as the hard wiring). The major drawback, however, is that the wires from the cassette adapter dangle outside the stereo, which can be distracting while driving.

As iPods and other mp3 players continue to sell well, useful accessories proliferate. For example, the JBL On Stage speaker for the iPod is compact and provides good sound. The iPod plugs into this circular speaker and can fill the room with music or other audio. This is ideal for using your iPod away from your computer. Another advantage is that the speaker system also charges your iPod while it is docked in the speaker.

Podcasts offer an ideal way to keep current on topics of interest, and the legal community will undoubtedly continue to offer more content options, supplementing newsletters and client alerts with podcast versions as this medium continues to grow. ■