

HOW TO FIND AND INVITE PODCAST GUESTS



WHO YOU SHOULD BE
TALKING TO, AND HOW TO
GET THEM ON YOUR SHOW

FIND AND INVITE GUESTS

Most B2B podcasters have a podcasting strategy that involves talking to guests. It's an important part of business development style podcasts, and also has a role in Audience Engagement, and Thought Leadership shows.

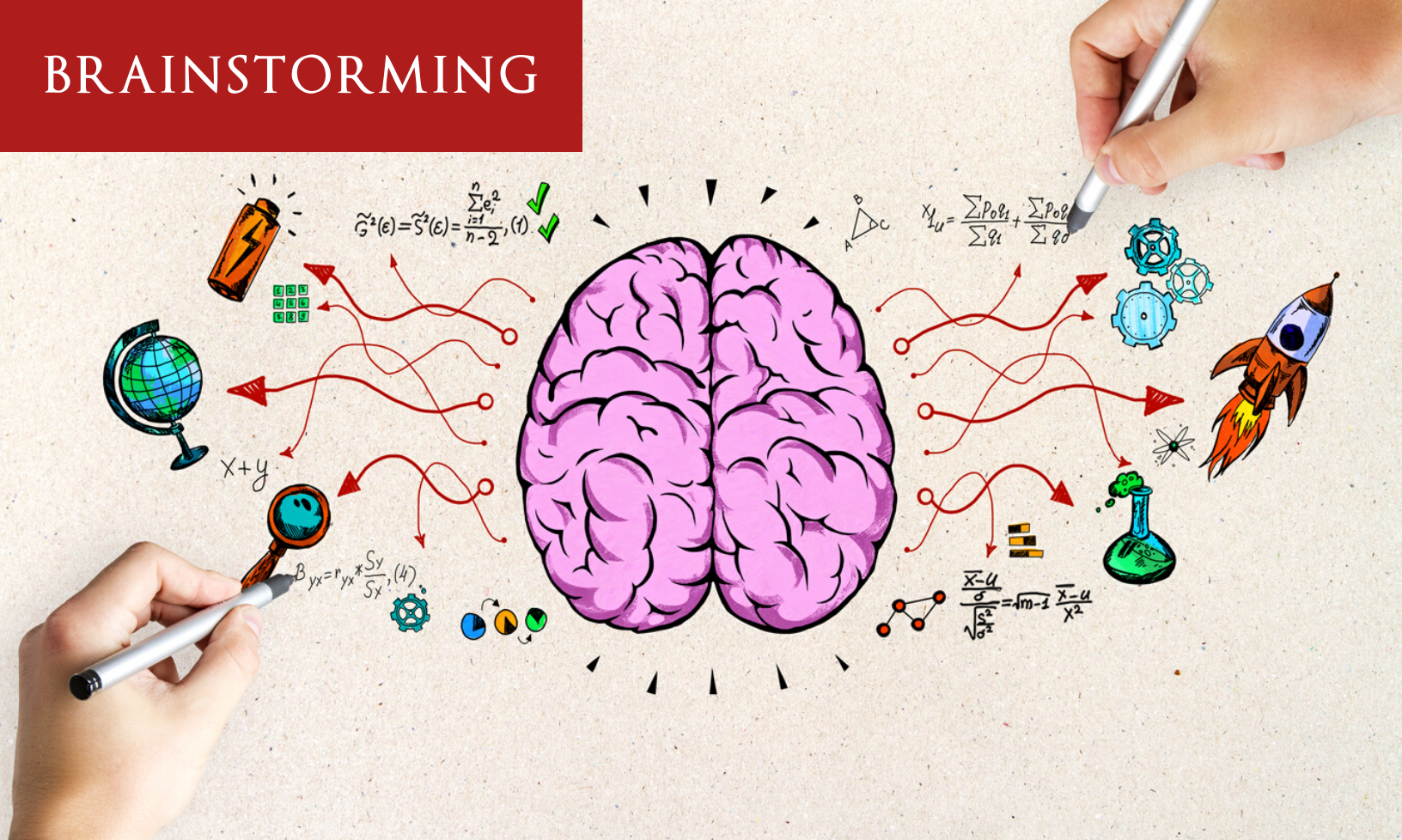
But guest wrangling can feel like an entire job you have to do in addition to preparing for, recording and having the episodes produced. It's not a minor part of the process.

And it has to be done with some strategy in mind; you don't want to be in a situation where you're scrambling and have to talk to ANYONE who happens to be available if you can avoid it.

So you need a process for determining the right kind of guest for your show and audience, and a simple, effective way to invite, and then onboard them into your show.

Let's get started.

BRAINSTORMING



THINK OF ALL POSSIBLE OPTIONS

First things first – we want to create the biggest possible list of potential candidates. You'll want to start a new spreadsheet or other tracking document with possibilities that you can update over time. Who should go on this list? It depends on the type of show that you're creating, and the general tone and topic of your show.

Here are the high-level guidelines (these are rules of thumb, NOT hard and fast commandments!) for each show type:

Thought Leadership

For a thought leadership podcast you want to make sure that you're speaking with people at your own professional level, or higher – people with whom you can have a deep, sophisticated conversation, and whose name is going to mean something to your listeners. Think: Authors, Executives, Directors, Scientists, Commentators, Journalists etc.

You want to have guests that can bring information to the table that you don't already have, but with whom you can explore ideas really thoroughly.

Business Development

For a Network or Business Development podcast, you certainly have to talk to interesting people who will help you create great content for your listeners, but they should also be people who are going to be valuable parts of your own network. They might be working in a complementary industry, be your own clients, potential promotional or joint-venture partners, or even possible future clients.

The best guests will be industry colleagues, people who have been on your “I’ve got to meet them” list for ages, popular figures in your space, people who create their own content you might be able to contribute to as well, and people who can provide great case studies and examples of the work you do.

Audience Engagement

In an Audience Engagement podcast, the most important qualification a guest can have is that they are interesting to your community – people who can answer their questions and help them fulfill their goals. Hopefully, your audience will suggest ideas – or even offer themselves up as guests!

Who these people are specifically will vary hugely from topic to topic, so think about people whose work you find interesting, who are working in areas that are related to yours, and that your audience could benefit learning from, as well as any kind of person from the first two categories.

Other Ways to Generate Guest Ideas

You are by no means restricted to a certain type of guest for your podcast based on its high level type. You’ll want to make sure that *most* of your guests help you reach your business objectives, but there’s something to be said for having fun and interesting conversations with great people for the sake of making good content for your community!

This means that, while keeping the above guidelines in mind, you can also pitch your favorite content creators, general “topical” fits, and based on personalities you’re drawn to. Consider your favorite authors or podcast hosts! What about the people who organized that great conference you went to last year? The most active person in an industry forum. The people who work at the software companies you use.

Once you start generating ideas, they tend to keep flowing, and it never hurts to add the question “who else should I talk to?” to your interview list.

Now you can start brainstorming!

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You can do this in any kind of document you like, but we, and most of our clients, like a good old fashioned spreadsheet where you can include names, websites, email addresses, phone numbers, and critically the date you pitched and what the response was. This is important – you don’t want to accidentally pitch the same person multiple times – that’s embarrassing for everyone.

Here’s a quick demonstration of how it can look. (You can also make it a part of your broader episode tracking document!)

Name	Website	Email	Type of Expert	Notes	Date Pitched
John Doe	JohnDoe.com	John@email.com	Industry Podcaster / Consultant	Has done several great appearances on shows I like	Jan 27th

List names, websites, and contact information if you can get it- this is an awesome task for a VA or intern if you have one! Open a new document and try to come up with at least 50 names.

Feel free to google “your topic area” + Experts, scan through your own podcast list (other podcasters are almost always a good bet!), your bookshelf, social media – anywhere people are actively talking about their expertise is a good place to look for guest candidates.

PREPARING TO PITCH



Before you start pitching guests you'll want to make sure that your house is nicely in order. This is especially true if you're approaching people who are industry-famous, highly in demand, super busy, or otherwise hard to pin down.

You should prepare:

1. A short description of your show and its audience.

For example: The Weekly Pickle is a panel-style podcast where each week we bring three experts together to discuss fermented produce, the health benefits of pickles, movers and shakers in the pickling business and our favorite recipes.

2. Your current metrics, like monthly downloads, audience engagement, geographic information etc.

For example: We get an average of 3000 downloads a month, with each episode receiving approximately 1200 in the first 30 days after release. Our audience is primarily from the North American west coast, with a significant minority from the UK and Australia. Our Pinterest and Twitter posts about episodes receive an average of 34 engagements and 50 re-shares.

Now, if your podcast is quite new, and your numbers aren't that impressive, focus on your targeting, or other platforms you'll be promoting on.

You should also mentally prepare yourself for a bit of rejection and a bit of being ignored. Pitching is a numbers game, and it's not personal. It can be helpful to set yourself a quota of 1 invitation a day, or 4 a week so it becomes a part of your usual habits.

We'll be getting to all of the other message customization you'll be doing as we go through each invitation type, below.

USE THE WARMEST POSSIBLE OUTREACH

There is a hierarchy of ways to reach out for podcast guests – just like there is to pitch yourself as a guest, or do any other kind of networking. Personal referrals and introductions are the best. Warm emails (that they know are coming) are the second, and cold emails are last. All of these methods can be effective, and none of them are guaranteed.

First of all – referrals. Referrals and warm introductions are wonderful, and one of the best ways to get great guests. You're being pre-vetted by someone who knows you, so look to your personal and professional network for connections and ideas for guests. When you have a guest in mind, see if anyone in your network, from among your clients, or friends and colleagues who knows them well enough to make an introduction on your behalf. On the flipside, you can also tell your friends, clients and colleagues that you're looking for guests and asking if they have any recommendations they could introduce you to.

Here's how that might look:

"Hey [YOUR CONTACT], I've got a topic I want to cover for the show that I think [PERSON] would be amazing for, and I'm wondering if you'd be willing to make an introduction for me so I can ask if they'd like to join me for a conversation?"

Of course, this won't work if you haven't been nurturing our own network. The only thing worse than spamming a bunch of people asking them to please be on your podcast is spamming a bunch of your semi-distant acquaintances asking them to make introductions for you!

Keep in mind: asking someone to introduce you to someone influential is a BIG ask. You're asking them to put THEIR reputation on the line for you, and you should only ask it of people who know you well and trust you deeply. Before you send that email asking for a referral, ask yourself: How would you feel if that person asked YOU for a referral? Would you feel comfortable introducing them to your boss, your most influential colleague, or your mom? Was the last time you talked with this person longer than a couple of months ago? If it feels at all weird to ask, DON'T. You're better off sending a cold email than asking for a referral from someone who doesn't know you well enough to recommend you.

Now, let's talk about the next best method of reaching out – warm emails that they know are coming.

This is a strategy you can use with anyone you're connected to on social media. It won't really work for brand new contacts, but if you've been following someone for a while, and occasionally engaging with them, or, just as likely, their social media manager, you can reach out ON social media to test the waters of a guest invitation. Just open a private chat, or even comment on a post related to the topic you'd want to chat with them about on your show, and ask if they have a specific email you should send an invitation to. Then your email can begin with "Just following up our chat on social media..."

All of this goes out the window if there are specific instructions about how to book someone on their website. In that case, follow the instructions unless you have a personal referral. Nothing is more likely to get you on the "do not engage" list than ignoring direct instructions.

Now, you might not be able to get a referral to your ideal guests, and if you're not huge on social media, you may not be able to do a lot of pre-engagement – that's fine, it's why they invented cold email.

Writing good cold emails is a little bit of an art. You don't want to become junk mail. Junk mail, for our purposes is any mail someone doesn't want to be getting.

You also don't want to send spam. The rules around spam vary from region to region, but you can feel safe sending one cold message and a single follow-up without an opt-in. Any more than that and you're getting into spam territory.

If your cold emails suck, you will also likely be flagged as spam from the get go. But you have this guide, so your cold email will be as pleasant as email can be.

Preparing a Good Cold Email

Now, you already have the basic details about your show, and you know who you're writing to, so now it's time to craft your message.

You want it to be short. Really short. Way shorter than you probably think is appropriate. All you're going to do in the first email is open up the discussion and ask if you can continue it with them.

In other words, you're going to say you think they're great and ask if you can send them more information about the podcast. That's all.

Here are the parts you'll want to include in your very short cold email.

1. Who you are
2. Why you're writing to them
3. Ask if you can send more info

Let's break each of these down:

Who You Are

This is where you can use that brief podcast description you created a few pages ago. Something short and snappy.

For example:

My name is Megan Dougherty, I host the Weekly Pickle Podcast which features lively roundtable discussions with fermentation experts from around the globe.

Then you move right into why you're writing to them. If you've done a little chatting on social media, this is where you mention it.

For example:

I'm writing to you because I absolutely loved your twitter thread on pickled figs, and think you'd be a perfect fit for a discussion I'm planning about pickles of the Mediterranean.

Or – if you have some engagement history:

I'm writing to follow up on our twitter exchange about pickled meat – that recipe you shared was fantastic! I would be honored if you'd join me on the show to share it with my audience.

Then make the ask which isn't a link to your calendar – let them chew on things a little!

For example:

If you're interested, may I send you more information about the show?

The simple question with a yes or now answer at the end is the key to getting a response. You're not asking them to commit to spending an hour talking to you, you're just asking if you can give them a little more information. It's an easy yes.

Of course, sometimes it will be a no thank you, or radio darkness, but you'll get some positive responses, I promise.

After The Yes

If your potential guest responds saying that they'd like more information, you can prepare a little paragraph about your stats and your audience, and at the end, include a link to your calendar so they can book either the time to chat or a pre-call to get to know you a little better.

You'll have other emails you want to send them after they book, which we cover in the guest management workflow document you received along with this one.

And that's all there is to it!

You brainstorm guests who will be a great fit for your show, spend a little time researching them, send a pleasant email with a yes or now question at the end, and ask them to book.

Go forth and talk to strangers!