



The Human Signal

Make thoughtful videos, live streams, and podcasts that earn attention and build lasting connection

Show up. Make meaning. Keep going.

SHAD EDDIE MONGRUE

Free preview · Introduction and Chapter 1
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SHELF 18 OF 32 · STREAMING · CORE BOOK

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Every statistic, study finding and documented example is numbered and listed in the Sources, with a link to the page it came from. Each was checked word for word against its source in October 2026. Stories marked "composite example" are illustrations drawn from common situations; their names and details are not real people. Stories marked "documented example" come from the cited sources.

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An Invitation

There is a particular pleasure in finding a voice you want to hear again. It might explain a tricky repair without making you feel foolish, tell a story that puts an old memory in a new light, or simply keep you company while you make dinner. A good show does not have to change the world to matter. It can make one idea clearer, one evening less lonely, or one small group of people feel more at home in its shared interests.

You may be thinking about making something yourself. Perhaps you have a skill people ask you to teach, a collection of stories you keep meaning to tell, or a question you would enjoy exploring with others. You do not need to begin as an expert with a studio, a perfect voice, or an audience waiting at the door. You need a subject worth returning to, a way to welcome people into it, and a willingness to learn by making.

The audience for podcasts and video is already broad. In 2025, 73% of Americans age 12 and older had consumed a podcast in audio or video format, an estimated 210 million people¹. And more than half of that age group had watched a video podcast². Those figures describe a large and varied landscape, not a promise that any particular show will find a crowd. They do suggest that people are open to listening and watching in many forms.

Streaming is also not one single kind of experience. Some people tune in to a live conversation; others prefer a recorded episode they can pause, replay, or save for later. YouTube was the service used most often to listen to podcasts by 33% of U.S. weekly podcast listeners, according to Edison Research¹. That fact is a useful reminder that audiences do not always draw neat lines between video and audio. But the right format for you is not necessarily the most popular one. It is the one you can make with care and keep improving.

This book is about the human part of the work: choosing what you want to share, shaping it so people can follow, and making room for others to respond. The camera, microphone, and software are tools. The connection happens when someone understands what you mean, recognizes a little of their own experience, or feels invited to add something of theirs. Sometimes

the audience will be small. A small room can still hold a lively conversation, and a focused group can make a show meaningful even when the numbers do not look impressive.

There will be awkward beginnings. You may talk too fast, lose your place, or listen back and wonder why your voice sounds like that. (It is a universal mystery, or at least it can feel like one.) Those moments are not proof that you should stop. They are ordinary material for practice. The goal is not to become polished overnight. It is to make something clearer, kinder, more useful, or more enjoyable than it was last time—and to build a way of sharing that leaves room for you to be a person, not a content machine.

Reasons to fall in love with this subject

- **You get to follow a real curiosity** A show gives a question somewhere to go. You can return to a subject from different angles, invite someone who knows it differently, and notice what you learn along the way. You do not have to claim expert status or pretend to have every answer. A thoughtful point of view can begin with what you have lived, made, noticed, or wondered about. Curiosity gives you a reason to keep going without requiring you to perform certainty.
- **Small circles can be meaningful** A view count cannot tell the whole story of what a show means. One listener might use your explanation to try a new skill; a few regulars might make the comment space feel like a familiar room. Reach can matter, especially if you have something useful to share, but it is not the only measure of value. A specific show for people with a shared interest may feel more alive than a broad show that tries to please everybody.
- **The format can fit your life** You can speak to a camera, record audio, host a live session, or have a conversation with someone else. Each choice has trade-offs. Live work offers immediacy and audience participation, while recorded work gives you more chances to shape and review what you make. A conversational format can take pressure off a solo performance, though it asks you to listen as well as speak. You can choose a form that suits your strengths and constraints.
- **Practice makes the work more comfortable** You do not have to wait for confidence to arrive before you begin. A simple routine can help you prepare, record, review, and try again. You might discover that a short

outline helps you stay on track, or that a test recording makes the real one feel less strange. Progress often comes from small adjustments rather than a dramatic transformation. The reward is not only a better show; it is also becoming more at ease with your own way of expressing an idea.

- **A show can become a shared project** When you invite people to ask questions, offer perspectives, or suggest what to explore next, the work can become more than a broadcast. You still guide the conversation and set boundaries, but you are not the only person bringing something to the room. Participation takes attention: newcomers need a welcome, and disruptive behavior may need a clear response. Done thoughtfully, interaction helps people feel that their presence matters rather than merely adding another number to a screen.
- **The work can grow without becoming your whole life** A sustainable show makes room for breaks, changing interests, and the rest of your responsibilities. You can review what is working without chasing every trend or treating every dip as a crisis. Some creators may explore memberships, sponsorships, contributions, or related services; none is guaranteed, and each involves time and trust. You can decide what support makes sense for your work while keeping honesty with your audience at the center.

BY THE END OF THIS BOOK, YOU WILL BE ABLE TO

- Choose a subject you can revisit with curiosity, then shape it into a clear promise for a particular audience.
- Turn an idea into a repeatable show format with an inviting opening, a useful middle, and a satisfying close.
- Decide whether live, recorded, audio, video, or conversational work fits your strengths, schedule, and goals.
- Prepare stories, explanations, interviews, and demonstrations that respect people's time while leaving space for spontaneity.
- Build a manageable routine for speaking, recording, reviewing, and improving without waiting to feel perfectly confident.
- Invite participation, listen well, welcome newcomers, and set practical boundaries for a healthier conversation.
- Make your work clearer and fairer through accessible language, captions or transcripts, privacy choices, respectful sourcing, and basic disclosure and copyright awareness.
- Use audience feedback and simple measures to make thoughtful experiments, consider realistic support options, and define progress in terms of craft, connection, and well-being.

How to use this book

Read the book in order if you are starting from a blank page. The chapters move from finding your reason to make a show, through choosing a format and practicing your delivery, to welcoming an audience and sustaining the work. If you already have a show, you can start with the chapter that addresses your next practical question and return to earlier ideas when they become useful.

Treat the suggestions as invitations to test, not rules you must obey. Try one exercise, make a small piece of work, and notice what felt clear or clumsy. You might sketch an opening before recording, try a short practice session, or ask a trusted listener what they understood. Keep what helps; adjust what does not. The aim is steady learning, not a perfect first attempt.

As you practice, pay attention to both sides of the experience: what your audience can follow and what you can sustainably make. A format that looks impressive but drains you may not be the right fit. You are allowed to revise your subject, pacing, schedule, or definition of success as you learn more about the people who show up—and about yourself.

HOW THIS BOOK HANDLES EVIDENCE

This book distinguishes documented examples, which are based only on the numbered facts cited in the text, from composite examples, which are fictional illustrations of common situations rather than accounts of real people. Citations identify the supplied sources behind factual claims; they do not mean every recommendation is a proven formula or that results will be the same for every creator. Guidance about copyright, sponsorship disclosures, and earning from a show is general education, not personal legal or financial advice. When a decision has significant consequences, seek advice suited to your circumstances.

A Voice in a Noisy World

A COMPOSITE EXAMPLE · NAMES AND DETAILS ARE ILLUSTRATIVE

Mara props her phone against a jar of rice and checks the frame. Behind her, a stack of laundry is doing its best to look like a bookcase. She has spent the afternoon learning how to mend a torn jacket, and now she wants to show the two stitches that finally worked. The first recording is stiff. In the second, she forgets what she planned to say and explains the mistake that kept unraveling the seam. That version feels more like her.

She posts it without expecting much. A few days later, someone asks whether the same repair will work on a backpack strap. Another viewer says they have a jacket waiting in a drawer. Mara does not suddenly become famous. She has not solved anyone's entire sewing life. But a small exchange has started around something she knows and enjoys.

That is a useful place to begin thinking about streaming. The point is not to shout louder than everyone else. It is to make a clear offering: an idea, a skill, a story, or simply a good conversation. When the right person recognizes that offering, even a modest audience can make the effort feel worthwhile.

Attention is not the same as connection

A view count can tell you that a piece of content was played or watched. It cannot, by itself, tell you what someone felt, learned, or carried into the rest of the day. A person might click away quickly. Someone else might listen while cooking, remember one useful tip, and try it a week later. Those experiences can look very different from the creator's side of the screen, even if the counter records them in similarly plain digits.

This does not make numbers useless. They can help you notice whether people are finding your work and whether one format seems easier to follow than another. The trouble begins when a number becomes the whole

definition of success. If you treat every quiet response as proof that your voice does not matter, you may abandon a useful idea before it has had a fair chance to find its people.

Try asking a more human question: what do you hope someone receives from this? Maybe you want to make a confusing process less intimidating. Maybe you want to preserve a family recipe, talk through a book, or make room for people who share an interest. A clear intention will not guarantee an audience, but it gives you a reason to shape the work carefully whether the room is crowded or small.

A small room can be a real room

It is tempting to imagine that a worthwhile show must grow as large as possible. But a focused community can offer something broad reach often cannot: a shared context. People return because they recognize the subject, the rhythm, and the kind of conversation they can expect. One person asks a question; another adds a perspective; the host learns which parts deserve more time. That exchange can be meaningful without becoming enormous.

A small audience is not automatically a close community, of course. People may watch quietly, arrive once, or prefer not to participate. You cannot assume that every viewer wants to be recognized or spoken to directly. The invitation matters more than the pressure. You might say, “If you have tried this, tell me what worked for you,” while making it equally comfortable to listen without commenting.

Digital gathering can take many shapes. In a 2020 Pew Research Center survey, about a third of U.S. adults said they had held a virtual party or social gathering with friends or family³. That finding is tied to a particular moment, not a timeless measure of how people relate online. Still, it is a reminder that screens can serve as meeting places as well as places to watch. Your show does not need to imitate a party; it can simply give people a reason to share attention.

Make the offering clear and generous

A viewer should not have to solve a riddle to understand why your show exists. A simple promise helps: “I explain one small home repair each week,” “We talk about the choices behind a favorite meal,” or “I interview people

about how they learned their craft.” The promise is not a slogan you must obey forever. It is a friendly sign on the door, helping people decide whether this is a place they want to enter.

Useful information is one kind of offering, but usefulness does not have to mean a formal lesson. You can make a topic easier to understand, show your process, compare options, or name a question people have been carrying around. Entertainment, curiosity, and companionship count too. A thoughtful conversation can be valuable because it gives someone a fresh way to look at an ordinary subject.

Generosity also means respecting attention. State what you are doing, give the audience a reason to stay, and avoid padding a short idea just to make it seem grand. If you do not know an answer, say so. If you are sharing an opinion, make that clear. The confidence to be honest is often more welcoming than the performance of knowing everything.

Choose a measure that serves your purpose

Different formats invite different kinds of connection. A live stream can make room for questions as they arise, but it asks you to respond in the moment and manage the room. A recorded video lets you edit and organize your thoughts, though the exchange may happen later. A podcast can travel with a listener through parts of their day, while an interview or conversation can bring another voice into the center. There is no universally best choice; there is the choice that fits your subject, energy, and available time.

The audience for podcasts is substantial in the United States: Edison Research reported that 73% of Americans age 12 and older had consumed a podcast in audio or video format, an estimated 210 million people¹. That tells you the medium has a broad presence. It does not say that a new show will be discovered, or that every listener wants the same thing. Treat it as context, not a promise.

Pick measures that connect to your purpose. If you teach, notice which questions repeat or where people seem confused. If you host conversations, notice whether guests and listeners have room to contribute. If you tell stories, ask whether the structure feels clear and satisfying. You can still check views, listens, or comments. Just let them inform your decisions rather than make them for you. A steady practice of

making, noticing, and adjusting is more useful than trying to guess what will make the biggest splash.

RESEARCH SPOTLIGHT

Research spotlight

Edison Research at SSRS reported that, in 2025, 73% of people in the United States ages 12 and older had ever consumed a podcast, 55% had consumed one in the last month, and 40% in the last week. Each measure was an all-time high in that report². The same research said that 51% had ever watched a video podcast, 37% had watched one in the last month, and 26% in the last week². These figures show that podcasting includes both listening and watching, and that many people encounter it regularly. They do not explain why people tune in, how connected they feel to a creator, or whether a particular show will find its audience. For your purposes, the takeaway is modest but encouraging: people use more than one way to spend time with podcasts. You can choose the form that best suits what you want to share.

A life example

A DOCUMENTED EXAMPLE

A shared project, not a giant stage

The Smithsonian's NESST network brings young people together to collaborate on sustainability projects and learn from experts and one another about complex issues facing the planet⁴. That is the documented shape of the program: a network, shared projects, and learning among participants and experts. The available description does not give a head count or report particular outcomes, so there is no need to invent either to see what the example offers.

Its relevance here is the design idea. The network is organized around a common subject and the opportunity to work together, rather than around one person delivering everything to a passive audience. A creator making a much smaller show can borrow that principle without pretending to run a global program. You might invite listeners to compare approaches, ask a guest to explain a difficult idea, or return to a question

in a later episode. Participation does not have to mean constant live chat. It can mean that people recognize a shared interest and have a useful way to contribute. Reach matters when it helps the work travel; connection matters when people can meet the work with their own curiosity.

TRY THIS

Name the reason for your show

Before you plan a format or check a counter, write a short promise that tells you what you hope to offer and whom you hope it helps.

1. Write down three subjects you genuinely enjoy returning to, not just subjects that seem popular.
2. For each subject, name one kind of person who might welcome it and one question or need they may bring.
3. Complete this sentence in plain language: "This show helps people..."
4. Make the promise specific enough that a new listener can picture an episode, but flexible enough to leave room for discovery.
5. Choose one sign of usefulness you could notice besides audience size, such as a thoughtful question, a recurring point of confusion, or your own growing ease with the subject.
6. Read the promise aloud. If it sounds like a pitch you would never say to a person, revise it until it sounds like an invitation.

Myths and honest truths

- **Myth:** If the audience is small, the work has failed. **Truth:** A small audience may still include people who find the subject useful or enjoy the conversation. Size is one measure, not a verdict on the value of the work.
- **Myth:** You need to be an expert to have something worth sharing. **Truth:** You can share a well-defined perspective, a learning process, or a skill you can demonstrate honestly. Be clear about what you know and what you are still figuring out.

- **Myth:** A successful show has to be live and interactive. **Truth:** Live participation suits some creators and subjects; recorded video and podcasts suit others. Choose a format you can make thoughtfully and sustain.

KEY TAKEAWAYS

- A view count cannot tell the whole story of what an audience receives.
- A focused community can matter even when it is not large.
- A clear promise helps people understand why your show is for them.
- Choose a format and measures that serve your purpose rather than chase attention for its own sake.
- The pleasure of sharing what you know is a real reason to begin.

REFLECT

- 1. What would make creating this show feel worthwhile even if its audience grew slowly?*
- 2. What shared interest or question could bring the right people into the same room?*
- 3. Which format would let you express yourself clearly while respecting your time and energy?*

Nine more chapters are waiting

You've read the Introduction and Chapter 1. The full 92-page book continues with:

CH. 2 Find the Thread You Want to Follow

CH. 3 Make a Show People Can Recognize

CH. 4 Tell It So People Stay

CH. 5 Build a Comfortable On-Air Habit

CH. 6 Welcome People Into the Room

CH. 7 Make It Clear and Fair to Everyone

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Plus the research analysis "What the Evidence Says", a 30-day practice plan, a glossary, and every source with full research credits.

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Sources for these chapters

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