



The following is the full transcript of Remarkable Episode 7: [Bryan Orr and The Art of Podcasting and Telling Stories](#)

In this episode of Remarkable, I talk with an HVAC technician and small business owner who is making a name for himself as a master storyteller and podcast producer.

Like me, he's a big fan of small business and he originally started podcasting as a way to promote a new app he developed for small businesses.

He has since gone on to produce a number of other podcast series, and is now recognized in the podcasting community as the editor and producer of the Podcast Movement: Sessions

The Podcast Movement: Sessions highlight the various speakers and podcasters that have taken the stage at the Podcast Movement conference, the worlds largest conference focused exclusively on podcasting.

In this episode we discuss his winding path into podcasting, how purchasing a gig on Fiverr led to his involvement with the Podcast Movement Sessions, and the process behind his highly-produced, well-crafted stories.

In a complete one-eighty from my last episode with Glenn the Geek, in this episode we dig into the other side of podcasting, where art trumps money and well-crafted stories rule the airwaves.

My guest shares why you shouldn't go looking for advertisers, the two elements you need to succeed in the world of podcasting, and how you can think differently about interviews in order to craft powerful stories that captivate your audience.

Without further ado, here's Bryan Orr.

Dave: Bryan, welcome to the Remarkable Podcast.

Bryan: Thank you for having me, David.

Dave: Yeah, thank you for your time, glad to have you on the show.

I'd like to get a little bit of your background for those that don't know you or haven't become familiar with you at least through the [Podcast Movement: Sessions](#) and everything you've got going on. So if you could give us a little bit of a background about what you do I guess as far as your profession.

Bryan: I'm actually an HVAC technician by trade. I started in the HVAC which is air conditioning, in layman's term, started in that business when I was 17 years old. When I was 23 I started my own business with my father and uncle, and we've been in business now 10 years.

A couple of years ago I really started enjoying podcasts, I had a little web startup that I was launching that was meant to serve small businesses, and so I thought, well, it might be interesting to start a podcast in order to help market that web startup

Psychologically I think I kind of convinced myself that that was why I was doing it, but the reality was that I just really really enjoy audio as a medium and kind of always have.

And so once I got into podcasting, I was kind of like 'I actually like this a lot more than I like this startup' so I just sort of embraced the podcasting and have produced several podcasts. I'm doing a lot of that with storytelling and narrative and just kind of jumping in with both feet.

Dave: You said you were interested in audio as a medium. What's your background there. What's your history with that?

Bryan: Nothing. Just being a kid. For me, my idea of fun when I was a kid was just sitting in my room with my siblings and playing the 'guess who sings this song' game on the radio. That kind of thing.

And then I listen to sports talk radio and news talk radio all growing up and I just really enjoyed the personalities and their interaction in audio.

I learned how to read with [Sing Spell Read and Write](#). I kind of always attribute that to maybe why I'm so auditory.

So I guess I just really enjoy audio, and always have. I enjoy audio theater, I enjoy audio books. I just never really thought that I could do that as an art form, until I had a midlife crisis, and now I have a ponytail and I drive a Corvette.

Dave: Do you have a gold chain? [laughs]

Bryan: Well, pinky rings mostly. I have 6 pinky rings on each hand. [laughs]

Dave: So, are you still in the HVAC business, or are you a full time podcaster, online entrepreneur guy.

Bryan: No, if you look at my website, and if I were a full time online entrepreneur guy, you definitely shouldn't have me on, because my website is awful right now.

No, I'm sitting right now in my AC business, in my office here. This is my day job, and it really is. It's my first love. I really enjoy this business, it's a family business. I employ 14 family members in my business, so it's nothing that I'm going to give up.

It's a good thing, but it isn't artistic, it isn't something that I can pour myself into as an art form, and that's what podcasting is to me now.

Dave: Very cool. So that's your day job. So you said that you started a podcast to help launch an online business?

Bryan: Yeah, so I had a little web startup called [mentiontribe.com](#). What it was essentially designed to be was almost an affiliate marketing program that any small business could use in order to bring in referrals. So essentially you could use it as a tool to set up quick little affiliate programs for social sharing.

If that doesn't make sense to you, that's probably why it didn't work.

We built it all out, and it was really pretty cool and it worked good, but it didn't work out with small businesses. It was originally called the Small Business Vitamin was the first name for the [WOW Small Business Podcast](#).

It was designed as essentially a medium to connect with other small business owners as a way to help market that product. But really, that kind of never happened. It was just my excuse to tell my wife why I was spending so much time talking into a microphone.

Dave: And, are you still doing that show? It doesn't look like it, but I was just curious.

Bryan: Yeah, so it's been several months, it's kind of on a little hiatus. And essentially the standard that I'm giving on that show is that as I get stuff that I'm proud of, then I put it on that show.

I'm spending most of my time now working on Podcast Movement: Sessions as a way to sort of develop my skills as more of a narrative podcaster, because I really struggled finding ways to be narrative and creative with the small business medium.

I'm actually starting to find ways to do that as my skill grows, and so I will be coming back and putting up new episodes on the WOW Small business.

Dave: I've listened to several of your different shows, and a wide range of your episodes, and it sounds like you're definitely going with more of a produced route, and I'm a little bit curious, how did you get connected with the Podcast Movement: Sessions, and how did that come about?

Bryan: That's a really weird, long story.

So one of my business mentors at one point when I was doing the web startup was Nick Loper, and he's with [Side Hustle Nation](#). I actually connected with him because I hired him on a Fiverr job to do an assessment of my website. And he was just so amazing that I ended up looking up his name and found out he had a podcast. And so that time I was already a big podcast listener.

So a long winding road, he introduced me to some people, found out that [Jared Easley](#), who's one of the original founders of Podcast Movement lives in Florida, and I met him at a meetup in Orlando at House of Blues, and it just kind of took off from there.

We built a friendship, and I ended up being at Podcast Movement 2014. And just met a lot of really cool people and a great community there, and that kind of locked me into podcasting.

Dave: So did you know going into Podcast Movement 2014 that you were going to be doing the Podcast Movement: Sessions, or at what point did you know you were going to be producing those.

Bryan: No, no, essentially this is how this went. Coming out of Podcast Movement 2014, Jared reached out to me and kind of communicated that while the conference went really well they didn't do as well as they had hoped, meaning that they didn't make as much as they had hoped.

Dave: Sure.

Bryan: I said you know, I would love to help produce a podcast for Podcast Movement. I had a great time introducing different speakers, and doing different things there, and I really had an interest in developing my skills as a producer.

So I said 'just let me do this, I'm not going to charge you anything. Just get me the raw content and I'll spin it into a podcast.'

And so Jared and [Dan](#), I think reluctantly, allowed me to do it. Especially because the stuff I was doing before was really more interview driven.

Dave: Sure.

Bryan: But, I just kind of poured myself into it and I've learned as I went.

Dave: What was your inspiration for the style that you ended up producing for the podcast movement sessions?

Bryan: Well so I listen to a ridiculous amount of podcasts. Way way way too many.

Everything from [Radiotopia](#), [This American Life](#) - all those kinds. But probably the podcast that it's modeled after the most is [TED Radio Hour](#).

TED Radio Hour takes [TED](#) talks and then just kind of tweaks them to make them a little more attuned to the ear. So I took that model and kind of did a version of it.

I don't like to say that I'm imitating that, because if you listen to the two, TED radio hour is much better produced - but they also have an enormous team to do it. Where Podcast Movement: Sessions is just me.

Dave: Yeah, that's great. Well just kudos to you on the level of product that you've come up with. Especially being a one man show for that.

Bryan: Well thanks, I appreciate that.

Dave: What's been the hardest part about producing that?

Bryan: Just the voices in my head. That's always the hardest part of everything. Anything that prevents you from doing the work, you know, you sit down in front of a screen and you're wanting to produce this thing and it's just this giant morass of noise and voices and you have to put it together into something good.

The only way to do it, especially when you don't have a lot of experience doing it, which I don't, is to just start slogging through it until you end up with something that's good. And yeah, it's painful, it's really painful, but at the end it's exciting to see what you come up with.

Dave: So yeah, did you have a number of those moments where you were halfway through producing it, or even getting ready to launch, and you just felt like you didn't want to do it anymore - like you were too scared to put it out there, you felt like people were going to criticize or anything like that?

Bryan: No. I'm so used to being criticized that it doesn't really bother me that much anymore. My biggest critic is me.

And so what bothers me is -- [Ira Glass talks about this](#), the idea of the gap. Where you taste is one thing, so you have good taste, you listen to a lot of good stuff or whatever you're producing. You compare to the experts in your field, and then you do something and it's like 'no, the best I can do isn't good enough for me.'

So it's getting comfortable with the fact that that's the case, and doing the best you can in the time allotted, which honestly, is a big reason why I wanted to do it for Podcast Movement, because these are guys I care about, and when I commit myself to produce for them I'm going to do it the best I can and I'm going to do it in the time allotted.

And I can't worry so much about, you know, whether or not it's perfect, because it's not just me, there's other people at stake. And I kind of do that on purpose. Because I could have done something similar for myself, but it just didn't feel right. It felt better to do it when I had that accountability.

Dave: As far as some of the other podcasts that you've done, I guess I'm curious to your approach to podcasts in general. Correct me if I'm wrong, but you've got about four podcasts? Is that right?

Bryan: Yeah, I've done a lot of kind of start and stop projects. So I did one for a local community near me. I actually produced a single, one-off episode for the city that I live in. They're using it as a pilot to see if they want to pursue it further.

So I'm doing a lot of different little things. Some stuff I get paid for, some I don't.

For myself, I've produced two podcasts that are strictly my own interests. One is the WOW Small Business and the other's the [Mantastic Voyage](#). Both of those are on hold right now.

My approach to it is essentially pursuing my interests, recognizing that this is not making a business out of this right now. I'm learning and growing and finding out what it is that I want to make a business out of before I start to laser -- I love what [Bryan Harris](#) says about this: You have to shotgun before you laser.

I've learned that. Sometimes you have to give yourself the patience and grace to try a bunch of different things to find out what you believe in. I think with Podcast Movement sessions I'm kind of finding out what that is.

Dave: So where do you think you're going to go from here. Have you had - or do you have - a long term vision to where you're trying to get with podcasting.

Bryan: It's a controversial stance in that I don't really have a business model behind it. It's not like I want to - it's not like I care so much about the business I'm going to create. I much more care about being able to close that gap between my taste and what I can produce. Just embracing that.

Dave: Sure:

Bryan: All the projects that I'm looking at doing now are related to producing really great stories. And when we say narrative, you know, narrative can mean a lot of

different things. Really what I mean is that you're truly doing something that is more universally interesting, that catches the ears of the people who listen, and draws them in.

So that's more than just a simple interview. Although an interview can be very interesting and can include story. Week in and week out that's going to be hard to do. I want to produce things that week in and week out are going to be very high quality that will be interesting to a large audience.

Dave: So do you see yourself moving more into the producer role?

Bryan: Yeah, the sad reality is that I'm a dude in central Florida who runs an AC company. So if I wanted to become a really big producer or something, I would go get an internship with This American Life or [Radiolab](#) or something.

I can't. I have a big family, I have a business, I'm just in a different life stage.

So for me to produce the kind of work that I want to produce, I kind of just need to do it myself. And I've just become okay with that. So yeah, it'll be a little bit longer road, but it's a road I'm willing to embrace in order to get good at what I want to do.

The way I equate it is it's like playing the guitar. You know, yeah, it would be great if you want to learn to play the guitar to join a band and be able to play the guitar all day long every day, but when you're 33 years old and you have a family and a business, you can't do that anymore.

So you're stuck playing the guitar when you get home in the evening. And, you know, playing it in the office sometimes if it doesn't bother people. That kind of thing.

So that's where I'm at with podcasting. And I've found that, you know, truthfully as soon as I stop making excuses, I can do pretty good work. It's not terrible. And, that gives me hope.

Dave: Yeah, no, I think it's very good. How long does it take you to produce one of the episodes, or one of the sessions?

Bryan: It's hard to say because I produce so many of them simultaneously, so I'm constantly, the term in the biz is 'gathering tape.'

Dave: Right.

Bryan: So I'm constantly gathering tape. I'm just looking for the next thing and gathering tape. So I gather up all the tape, then I go through and log the tape - but I do this all separately, so I don't get bogged on a single story, so I kind of hear it with fresh ears multiple times.

So, I would say if I were to guess it's probably something like 12-14 hours per episode.

A lot of that is a lack of discipline on my part. I'm just really tweaky right now, where I'm not -- I'm learning a lot of new different pieces of software and everything. I think when I get down to it, I can probably produce that quality in something like 5-6 hours.

Dave: Are you writing out the script or the flow, kind of story boarding the episode? Or are you on the fly editing as you go?

Bryan: I do a little bit of both. So I storyboard enough to know what I want the episode to sound like, so once I log it, which I just go through and create little markers throughout the sound, so that way I know the parts that I want to keep, and the parts that I want to get rid of, and what the general themes are.

And then I create a timeline. I write out the timeline, but then when I actually do my narrations - which, in the biz, again, they call it tracking, it's just where I'm talking in and out of the tape. I've done both.

I find that for me, with what I'm doing right now though, it's actually easier for me to just talk and just get multiple tapes and getting it to the way I want it and just using multiple bullet points.

That's controversial. You know, Ira Glass reads everything that he says. I'm just not experienced enough to be able to read and have it sound the way I want it to sound. So, I like it better just doing it in the take itself.

Dave: Yeah, I'm the same way. I think it takes a lot of practice to be able to write out the whole thing and then read it so that it sounds like you're not reading it.

So the big question that I have, and I love the fact that you're a small business owner, and you work a day job, and are doing this in the evening, because I think that encompasses a lot of our listeners. I'm curious, how do you find the time.

So how much time do you spend a night and how do you make that time.

Bryan: Well, okay, so, moment of truth here. I'm at a stage in my business where I have a decent amount of liberty. I mean, right now, I'm at work and I'm talking to you. So I don't have it as tough as some people do in that regard. I can do a lot of stuff when I'm at the office.

How do I find time? The saying that I like that I think is really wise. Is that you make your priorities, you set your schedule, and then everything expands in order to fit what you've committed to get done.

And so yeah, sometimes I don't. Obviously I'm not watching a lot of television. I'm not doing a lot of other things. I don't have other hobbies right now.

I used to play a lot of golf. I don't do that right now. I podcast instead of golf. So those are the type of sacrifices you make. So to me, it's not a sacrifice because it's something I love to do.

So embracing it as something I enjoy and really love and making it a priority in that slot, in that kind of hobby slot, is where I find the time.

It's not a great answer, but it's my answer.

Dave: Is your immediate family and friends supportive - do they get what you're doing?

Bryan: Does anyone really get what podcasting is? I hardly get what I'm doing half the time, so how could I expect that of them?

Dave: Sure.

Bryan: Yeah, so my family is very supportive of me in a 50,000 foot view kind of way. Like 'oh, Bryan always does weird things and we love him, and it usually works out okay, so it's fine, kind of a thing.'

But now, I don't get regular support, where people are like 'oh, I love your latest episode!'

My family doesn't listen to my podcasts. Mantastic Voyage they did, but that's just because my brother was on that one as well, and they all like him. He's my mom's favorite. Don't tell anybody, but.

Yeah, so supportive in the sense that they love me and they don't judge what I'm doing. Not supportive in the sense that they're not down in the trenches beside me in the podcast world.

Dave: Sure. Sure. So I'm a little bit curious into what lessons you bring over from the business world into podcasting. Do you feel like you have a leg up or an advantage in the podcasting world based on your experience from your business, whether it's understanding people, customer service, marketing, anything like that?

Bryan: Yeah, you know, do I have an advantage over an 18 year old kid who knows that he wants to do nothing but audio and goes right into it? No. I don't have an advantage over him, but I have an advantage over other hobbyists, in the sense that it's work ethic. It's just work ethic.

Doing the work, knowing that it's never easy, knowing that it's painful to put things out there when you know it's not great. Those are lessons that I learned early on in my business, and those translate directly into podcasting.

What doesn't translate directly, and what I've had to overcome because of my experience, which isn't a question you asked but I'm going to answer anyway.

Dave: Please, go ahead.

Bryan: In business, I'm always looking at our ROI on things. What's the return on putting this work in, and it's a lot more clear. So I install this air conditioner and the customer pays me.

Podcasting isn't like that, it's much more like art. It's much more like playing an instrument or learning how to draw. It's something that you have to do for a long time in most cases, and of course there's exceptions to the rule.

But the people that by and large do well, do it for a long time before they see a payoff. Having to do that for me has been something I've had to overcome, not so much in myself, but in how I talk to other people about it.

One of my really key moments was, I work in this business with my dad, we're both owners, we started the business at the same time so it's not like a generational thing, but obviously I have a lot of respect for my father.

One day he walked into my office and said 'why are you doing this?' And I said 'well, because someday I can make money doing it.'

And that was such a lie. That has nothing to do with why I'm doing it. And so I ended up having to go back and tell him. 'No, that's actually not why. The reason why is that I really like doing it, and I really want to do it, and that's why I'm doing it.'

And that was a better answer to him as well, strangely enough, because I think that was more true to him. And for me, as a business owner, I had to get over that, to just say 'look, I'm not doing this to make money, I'm doing it because I want to do it.' And that ended up making the work that I produce a lot better, too.

Dave: Sure, sure. Sometimes it's hard to be honest with ourselves, as well, when we kind of get answers we think other people want to hear.

Bryan: Yeah, especially with my wife. When she's saying 'so, when are we going to build this house that you've been telling me?' And I'm like um, the podcasts going to pay off - wink wink behind her back.

Dave: Yeah, don't worry - I've got the HVAC covered.

Bryan: Yeah, I've got this handled.

Dave: So in regards to promoting and building an audience, what have you done I guess specifically with the WOW Small Business podcast? How did you go about getting the word out about that and were you able to build an audience, regardless of size? Were you able to build some fan base and things like that?

Bryan: Yeah, yeah, I was, and that was actually really nice to get emails from people and have them ask me questions about their businesses and how I could help, and their challenges they were experiences.

That was really rewarding, probably the most rewarding part of the Wow Small Business podcast is that element of it. And how did I do it?

Everybody knows the strategy, but it does kind of work.

You know, launch with a few episodes, make sure to get all your friends and family to review your podcast, and then you end up in new and noteworthy and then some people find you. That's sort of the early momentum.

I did a very ill-fated run of twitter-bombing which I documented very carefully with how dumb that was. You know, heavy hashtagging, all that kind of garbage.

And that just doesn't work and I proved that it didn't. As soon as I shut that off, all my numbers went right down to where they were. So anything artificial doesn't work. That's just my stance on podcasting. It's such an intimate medium, you're expecting people to listen to you for so long.

Even if you're the shortest podcast at 10 minutes, that's a long time for someone to commit their ears to you. So unless you really have a relationship with them, you're going to cultivate that relationship, it's just not going to work. So don't try to trick people into it.

One thing that I found that was really useful was just to connect with groups of people that were already out there, whether it was on LinkedIn or you know different Facebook groups, and just being helpful in those spaces sometimes gets you the opportunity to build some relationships, and then people will ask you what do you do, and you can say 'well, I'm a podcaster and I have a podcast, here it is.'

And that's how a lot of people found it.

Podcast movement was a great community. You know, I got connected to a lot of people through that, so it was really organic, and I did some stupid things. I bought some Facebook ads and all that, just to see if it would work, and with Podcasting I just don't think it really does.

I'm sure the guys like [Nathan Latka](#) would probably disagree with me, but I just don't think there's huge tricks to it other than just being really good and really caring about the people who you're serving.

Dave: Yeah, and you mentioned networking, and again, listening to a couple of your shows it sounds like that's been a really critical piece of you building your platform and your audience. What have you learned about networking and how can we apply that?

Bryan: What I've learned about networking is don't go in trying to network. Go in caring about people and being legitimately interested in them.

And if you aren't legitimately interested in people, then learn how to get legitimately interested in them. Find out what is interesting. Learn better questions to ask people.

And what you'll find is as you do that, eventually people will ask about you, and have a couple of sentences that are impactful, and leave them wanting more. Then they'll ask those questions, and there you go.

It's a lot better than coming in with a push that you want to give.

It's amazing, because you can be a total amateur just like I was coming into podcasting in 2014, you can be a total amateur, but if you're really giving and generous and you really care about other people and you're really legitimately interested in them, people like you and they'll listen to your stuff and they'll share it and they'll promote you, and that's what I've seen over and over again.

Dave: Yeah, I would absolutely agree. My recommendation is always if you're going to go to a networking event, try to connect people and add value, and look out for other people instead of looking out for yourself.

Bryan: And the other thing I would say is I've learned a lot recently. I've done a lot of coaching with a particular business coach locally recently and he really harps on looking to support as opposed to help. It's a fine line, but help is all about you being able to do something for someone else.

Support is all about you helping someone else get a win themselves.

And just being there, I know I just said help and support, but you're essentially just living them up any way that you can. A lot of that is connecting them to different people, sharing resources, things like that.

Not needing to be the star yourself. Allowing them to be the star. And finding ways to help other people be the star. And when you walk into a room really looking to do that, it really changes your perspective.

Because even helping can be about self-gratification more than it is about the other person.

Dave: So I'm curious, because you've got a couple of podcasts out there, and they're on pause now and you've switched over to the Podcast Movement: Sessions, have you done anything to maintain that audience?

Do you have an email list, are you connected, is there a place that people can go and connect with you to keep them engaged, or do you just anticipate them just kind of keeping up with what you're doing?

Bryan: I don't anticipate them doing anything.

That's one thing that I changed in my vocabulary is the idea that they should. Well, they should do this, or they should do that. People will do what they do, and I'm happy for them no matter what they do. So obviously if I can't keep up my podcast I can't expect people to be tuning in for my latest episode.

So I recognize that, so a lot of that comes down to the fact that I'm not, for me, I'm wanting to make strides by moving horizontally a little bit at this stage in order to make larger strides overall in the quality of what I'm producing.

And I know that I'm making sacrifices when I do that. So I know that not keeping up with emailing them regularly and producing podcasts regularly on WOW Small Business is going to cause a lot of people to fall off.

But what's really interesting about dormant podcasts is that you still get a lot of new listeners, because you find a lot of new people who find what you did previously and they're listening to that.

And so my download numbers haven't really dropped that much strangely, even with these old episodes that are just sitting there.

So yeah, sure, I know I'm losing some people in some ways, yeah ... am I taking care of my audience? No, not really.

But I'm doing what I'm doing in hopes that I'll actually be able to produce better content for them in the future. And I'm confident that I will.

Dave: Yeah, I think it's really smart, and I'm really fascinated by your approach with the long term vision that you have. You know that you're practicing, right? You know that you're producing live on the stage, but you're getting better and better and you're figuring out what you want to do and not worrying so much about how you're going to make money or how you're building your audience in the business.

And I think there's a lot of validity and I like that approach. I don't think we hear that a lot in the podcasting world.

Do you have other people that you interact with that are on the same wavelength as you?

Bryan: No, not really.

Dave: I didn't think so.

Bryan: I mean there are, but they don't claim to be businesses at all. So there's this whole other world of podcasters out there. And they don't talk to the world of podcasters that you and I talk to.

Dave: Sure.

Bryan: They don't go to Podcast Movement, they go to the [Third Coast Festival](#). They're not on Facebook, they're on the [Air Media](#) list.

These are the public media people who have degree in audio journalism, and those sorts of things. They consider themselves to be journalists. And they're largely starving. And they embrace that because they embrace podcasting as an art form.

Most of the people who you and I talk to embrace podcasting as a distribution model. And that's a key distinction.

I've given up embracing it as a distribution model now, in order to embrace it as an art form knowing that embracing it as an art form will help me use it as a distribution model later. Because I just got so fed up with the lack of quality that I was producing. I just couldn't handle it anymore.

Most people have structured it in such a way that they need to succeed more quickly. And that's fine. It just doesn't work most times, and so you have to know that.

There will be the one off [John Lee Dumas](#) who just rocks it and works his tail off and makes it happen. But most people aren't going to do that.

And I feel like while my way of just embracing it as an art form is assured not to be profitable for a longer period of time, I think it's also much more likely to succeed in the long run, and that's why I'm doing it.

Dave: I think it's refreshing to hear that, and I think a lot of people, I'm hoping, will breathe a sigh of relief because I think there's just this, like you said, in the community, it's all about how are you going to make money and how are you going to monetize.

I get frustrated even in Facebook group with the conversations about download numbers when nobody's even asked the question, of, how many do you need to make the gains that you want to make?

Fifty people listening on a regular basis really could be a game changer to you, whereas five thousand might be needed to be a game changer for somebody else. But nobody's -- it's not apples to apples.

Bryan: It's all just comparing, and that's not how this works. You know, you have to produce good stuff. That's really what it comes down to. And it's good to use metrics to know whether or not the stuff is good if you don't know.

Like if you're not sure 'I think I'm producing good stuff, but I'm not sure' so you can look at the numbers and their growth in order to know whether or not you are, right?

But if you already know that you're not, like you can look at what you're doing and know that what you're producing isn't to the standard that you want, then go ahead and work on fixing that, then.

That's all it comes down to. It's that gap again - having your taste and then working towards accomplishing that.

Some people are comfortable with what they're producing, and that's totally cool - and then maybe it's valid to look at your numbers. Hey, my numbers aren't growing over time, what can I change, what strategies can I use?' That's cool. That's fine. But for the most of us, we kind of know that we're not that good and that we have a lot of skills to grow in.

So if you've given yourself the runway, just grow in the skills, and then you'll come out on top. That's kind of how it works in every other industry in the whole world. You get better and then you do better.

And it's the same for podcasting in my opinion at least.

Dave: Yeah, I would agree. I equate podcasting, now, in some aspects of it to really blogging, as in the past 10-15 years, where you have professional writers, and then you have journalists, and then you have, you know, mommy bloggers, and not everybody's in it for the same reason.

And some people just start out because they enjoy writing, and they're improving their writing skills, and then ultimately they end up making money from it for whatever reason, and some people are just in it for the journey, and I don't think there's anything wrong with that.

Bryan: Yeah, not only is there nothing wrong with it, but you can be simultaneously in it for the journey and also have a goal in mind and the journey serves the goal.

Putting the work in never hurts - but the question is are you growing or aren't you growing.

You can sit there and hammer away at the keyboard and never get to be a better writer, and that's when I would say 'okay, you know, if that's all you want to do that's totally cool - but if you're not embracing the pain of growth, then you're probably not going to make a big change.'

I know people who have done podcasts for 10 years who still have no audience. And more power to them, that's totally fine - but the delusion that that's somehow going to lead to a bigger audience isn't the case.

I think you somehow have to embrace it for the art that it is and grow in it, or you know, learn through the pain of not being as good as you'd like to be OR just use podcasting as a distribution model, and reach a niche audience that is just hungry for what it is that you have to say.

But good luck finding that niche audience anymore. I think it's more rare than it used to be. Everyone was into niche audiences a couple of years ago, and I see very few people who are capitalizing on that anymore without having a good skillset anyway.

I see the need to have a good skillset anyway, if you look at [Becoming Minimalist](#). It's a great blog. But it's also, it's got a great niche, people who want to embrace minimalism, and he does a really good job with his content. His content is really good. That's the marriage where you end up making money at it and you're able to quit your day job.

I see very few people who are putting out garbage that serves a niche, and I see very few people who are just creating art and not serving anybody who do really well, and you have to have a little bit of both. In different measures, but you have to have a little bit of both.

Dave: Yeah, I would agree. And let's talk about improving a little bit. You said a few minutes ago that you weren't happy with the quality of work that you were putting out. What weren't you happy with, and what did you decide to do about it?

Bryan: Well, that's a long list of things. I wasn't happy with my voice, I wasn't happy with the music that I was using I wasn't happy with how interesting the content was, I wasn't happy with the topic I was doing, I wasn't happy with the format.

You know, all it took was me switching from my podcast to [99% Invisible](#), or [The Memory Palace](#), or This American Life, or Radiolab, and I would be like 'oh my gosh, why would anybody listen to my podcast when they have these other options of really interesting, funny, engaging stuff to listen to?'

And the only reason that I could come up with was that my topics were good. And I thought that wasn't good enough.

So what I came up with was there has to be a way to take topics that I care about and that I have some expertise in, and do them in a way that's more like those highly produced shows. And that's the path that I started walking, so it's really everything at once.

It's everything from my voice to the format to the music to the sound quality overall, you know, to the guests to the topics we were covering, to how interesting and engaging the information was.

Dave: Yeah, and how did you go about improving in those areas, did you join a course, buy a book, just trial and error?

Bryan: I've done a lot of different things. I'm kind of an Amazon addict, so I buy a lot of books and read them.

A book that I read recently that was really good was '[Out on the Wire](#)' by Jessica Abel, and that kind of covers radio storytelling in general. That was a really good resource.

I took [Alex Bloomberg's story telling course on Creative Live](#), that was a good resource. Watched a lot of [YouTube Videos](#), listened to everything that I could listen to that had to do with storytelling, and just continued to grow, and making baby steps along the way.

One of the biggest steps I made was going away from using the audio software that I was using, which is Audacity, to learning some other products. First I learned [Hindenburg](#), and then I learned [Reaper](#). And that was a really good step, because it gave me much more powerful tools to use.

And then I got a mentorship through Air Media with Jeff Entman of '[Here Be Monsters](#)', who's a top 75 consistent podcast, and he's an amazing sound designer. So he helped me work through some things that I was learning.

So just a whole laundry list of different things that I did in order to grow, and yeah, even today I listen to the last Podcast Movement episode that I put up, and I still can't stand it. I literally can't.

It's a lot better than what I was doing a year ago, and so I'm happy about that, but I still and totally dissatisfied with what I'm producing.

Dave: So how do you decide to ship it? I mean, how do you know when you're done?

Bryan: I'm done when my time hits. I'm out of time and so I gotta ship it.

I don't have time left in this particular case, it was that the holidays are coming up, I gotta put it in the cue, I'm not going to have time to do it before hand, I know there are some things that I don't like, but I'm getting it in anyway.

In my case it's also knowing that there are certain things I can't fix because I'm just not good enough to fix them. It's not that if I just spent more time I could fix it, it's just that I don't have the skill. I don't have the ear for it yet.

I mean, it's so crazy, I remember some of my early episodes I put out. They had level problems, hiss, in and out, all kinds of stuff. And I didn't hear it at the time. At the time I thought it sounded good.

And now I listen to it and it makes me want to rip my ears out. And so, it just takes time to do that, and I learned to deal with that reality, that sometimes I just don't have the skills to do better than what I've already done.

Dave: And how do you decide when to go get outside help. I mean, are you investing in that aspect of your business. You mentioned the coach, I mean, are you paying for additional editing or paying for additional help?

Bryan: Yeah, all coaching. So I'm a member of [Podcast Incubator](#) and that's been an excellent tool. I mean, Meron's actually gotten down and dirty with me with episodes going line by line through what I'm doing and helping me with things. Like I said I invested in mentorship through Air Media with Jeff Emtman.

So absolutely, reaching out to people, asking questions. Getting help from anyone who's willing to listen to what I do, and give me feedback. That's been a really really important step.

Now as far as shipping things off to people to edit, I've tried that, but almost everyone sucks. You know, it's like - I had a guy straight out of college who had a sound engineering degree, and I was sending him stuff, and he was doing a worse job than I was.

Because those guys are trained to do music, and they're not trained to do studio audio or the human voice, they don't have schooling in that.

So the people who really know how to do it, they all have jobs doing it already at NPR, or WNYC or whatever. So I just embraced the reality that if I wanted a really good sounding podcast, I was going to have to learn how to do it myself.

Because so much of it is taste. You have to be able to weave a story, and that's not something you can really outsource. I mean, I'm sure it is, but what's the point then. That's the skill that I'm wanting to develop, so I need to do that.

Dave: So, as you're thinking about the long, I guess the future of where you're trying to go, are you going to get back into the interviewing process, or are you going to be continuing to take something like the TEDx or the TED talks style, like the Podcast Movement: Sessions.

Bryan: What's funny, is that every podcast is the interview style. Every bit of audio is another person asking - one person asking another person questions.

The question just is do you leave in those questions, are you pairing it down and optimizing it, or are you leaving it raw?

To answer your question - yeah, I'm absolutely going to be an interviewer, hopefully for the rest of my life. That's not really the question. The question is am I going to leave raw interviews, or am I going to continue to highly produce what I do.

And I can't see at this stage, other than the rare exception when something's just really good, or I'm feeling really lazy, that I'm just going to take raw interviews and put them on a podcast, because you can make them so much better by reorganizing them.

I mean, one of my last WOW Small Business [episodes that I did with Aaron Walker](#), it was an interview, but I took it and I cut it up and I mixed everything all around because we did a lot of stuff out of order, and it made it so much more consistent doing it that way.

So while it sounded like pretty much a pure interview it wasn't. It was highly produced still, but it made me so much more happy with the end product.

Dave: And how do you feel about, or what's your process for the interview itself. I mean are you thinking of a story arc through your interviews at this point? Are you thinking about just coming up with a list of questions - doing an interview and then after the fact editing for the story?

Bryan: Well, I mean there's a couple of different ways. At some point, you have a person to interview, and whatever they give you is what you're going to weave into the story, and you're going to make it suit the story.

Like This American Life has a story they want to tell, and then they go out and find people to suit the story. Or they already know what the story is, and then they're going out and just kind of weaving the story together. So it just kind of depends on where you're starting point is. Are you starting with a person or are you starting with a story.

But either way, I'm a big fan now, with interviews, of not having a list of questions that take you through this kind of path with someone. And more so, just provoking the person. Not like irritating them, but provoking them to think, provoking them to be introspective about their past and how they felt in different circumstances.

You know, describe where you were when blank happened, describe your first blank, what makes you mad, who's the villain in your story, what surprised you about blank, how did blank change the way you think about blank. These are all thought provokers that get people to be introspective and start to tell stories.

And then, you go in and you cut it all up and you take just the good parts and you put just the good parts in, and these people sound like they're amazing story tellers, when

really, all you were is just an interviewer. You could have been bumbling and umm-ing all over the place, a perfect example of this is Alex Blumberg.

That guy, 'um' is every other word he says. And yet he's one of the best podcasters in the world. He's not worried about him as an interviewer, he's worried about provoking people into saying really cool interesting stuff.

Dave: Yeah, that's a great example. I think it was [Tim Ferriss that interviewed him](#), and was just amazed at the, at how different it was than the produced final product.

Bryan: And sometimes that's fun. Sometimes it's fun just to get to know a person totally raw. But I can only listen to so many two hour un-edited podcasts. Sorry, I love - I mean Tim's a great guy, but I can only listen to his podcast so much for that reason. I would much rather have them edited to a half an hour and give me the high points.

But, every once in awhile, with someone like Alex, it's okay to hear that.

Dave: So what would you suggest to the person - I mean, it takes hours and hours to edit something down like that. For somebody that's just getting into podcast, do you recommend that they start off that way, or do you think that they should just start by producing, and launching, and shipping, and find their way from there.

Bryan: First of all there is no should. Put in the work. And if the work means that you're comfortable shipping something that you don't like - great. It doesn't matter.

Ship it, don't ship it, a lot of the public media people will tell you produce a hundred stories that are just for yourself that you don't plan on anyone else hearing. I'm find with that too.

As long as you're working at what it is you want to do in the end then great. But I like what [Roman Mars said about this at Podcast Movement 2015](#).

I was standing there, and one of my friends was talking to him. And he asked him 'so, what did you do early on when it was just you and you had very limited time with 99% Invisible?'

And Roman said 'I just made really short podcasts.'

And so, what Roman meant by that is that he didn't worry - whereas now he can gather 20 hours of raw tape and edit it down to 10 minutes, or a 20 minute podcast

now - then, before, he would get maybe an hour of raw tape and edit it down to 7 minutes. And you hear a lot of his early podcasts were 5, 6, 7 minutes in some cases.

And that's okay. Be comfortable with that, because if you get used to producing quality, and you grow in quality, then you're going to attract an audience to yourself. If you get used to producing - I don't want to say crap, because it's not crap, it's just not good quality - then you're going to get used to that and you're just going to produce more of it.

And you'll stay stagnant there. And I would always recommend against that. So even if your podcast is short, do the best possible quality you can.

Dave: I think that's great advice, and a great perspective as well.

I did want to ask you about the money side of things, just because I know you've put some time and money into equipment and software and things like that. Have you generated revenue from the podcast specifically? In order to recoup that?

Bryan: I have. I'm not sure it's recouped it - well, actually, I think it has now.

So, like, I've produced audio for other people. I think that's something that a lot of people forget is that we get so fixated on podcasts, when really what we're talking about is audio files of people's voices. That's really what we're talking about. And you can produce quality audio that never goes into an RSS feed and ends up on iTunes.

And so what I produce for the city, you know, the city I grew up in. I produced an audio story about one of the Olympic athletes who lives here. I did that for them - and you know, I made money doing that.

And I've made money doing tape syncs for big podcasts like 99% Invisible and [Snap Judgment](#), which is really just taking my good quality audio equipment, and driving around the Orlando area and sticking it in peoples faces so they can get good quality audio.

So there's things like that that I've done that are opportunities to make money.

Even in those cases, though, I'm still not doing that for the money, I'm doing it because I would do it if I could do it for free, I would still do it. But some of those things help recoup.

And yeah, I've had sponsors on the WOW Small Business, I think that was a mistake, I think I kind of jumped the gun on that a little bit.

Dave: Why do you say that?

Bryan: Because I was working so hard to convince someone that I was a good place for them to advertise, and I wasn't really that great of a place to advertise. You know, I didn't have the numbers that other places they could have invested in, and what I should have just been doing was producing something until I got to a point where I was a magnet for advertisers.

At some point, you will become a magnet. So when people talk about 'Oh, I want to go out there and I want to get advertisers' I'm like 'eh.'

How it kind of works is that advertisers come and get you. That's more realistically how this works. And I know a lot of people say that's not the case, but it kind of is now.

You know, podcasting is really popular now, and there's a lot of advertisers who are looking at it, and when you get to certain download numbers, Squarespace will be happy to be a sponsor on your show. So you don't really have to worry too much about that.

Dave: So do you have podcasts that you really look up to or respect, but does anything stand out as maybe the most Remarkable or one that you just are in love with that you just can't get enough of?

Bryan: Yeah, it's a really long list, do you have an hour?

Dave: You've got to narrow it down, you've got to narrow it down.

Bryan: First one I would suggest is [How Sound](#). How Sound is a podcast done by Rob Rosenthal, and it's about how to produce great audio. It's not my favorite from the standpoint of being really interesting all the time, but it's very applicable to what you and I are talking about right now. So that's one that I would suggest to anyone who's looking to produce better quality.

I would also suggest that you listen to the Memory Palace every time it comes out. Because Nate DiMeo is the best writer in podcasting.

He's the guy who writes everything out and reads it and that's his podcast. It's so simple, but it's absolutely magical what he produces with such a simple format, and it really shows you what's possible with podcasting, with just a one-man show. Because Nate's just himself.

99% Invisible, obviously, always does a really nice job. Radiolab always does a really nice job. Here Be Monsters does a really nice job with sound design, so if you're looking to hear what can be done with effects and sound design they do a really fun job over there.

And then I have a whole bevy of business podcasters who are my friends who I would love to plug here, but it really has very little to do with what we're talking about, so, I'll leave the list there for now.

Dave: Yeah, those are great, and I'm going to make sure that everything you mention I'm going to put in the show notes and add links. I always love finding new podcasts, and you've mentioned a couple that I've never even heard of, so I'm looking forward to that.

Bryan: Cool.

Dave: Any tips that you would give to somebody that's just maybe getting started, or maybe they're not happy with where they are?

Bryan: Yeah, find a community of people to surround yourself with. You can't do this kind of stuff alone. I really almost don't think it's possible.

So find a community of people that you can surround yourself with. I'm a huge fan of Podcast Incubator. I don't want to plug them too much, you know they're not paying me to say that, I'm just a really big fan of what they do. It's a small group, they're very engaged, and Meron is just an awesome awesome dude.

I would suggest them as a group. I would suggest anyone who's looking to produce really good quality to go to [Transom.org](https://transom.org). Transom.org is really the go-to site for anything related to journalistic podcasting, and they have some great tips there.

And equipment lists that don't exist in the business podcasting world that go over, you know, really detailed stuff. That's a good resource.

And then mostly, find people that can just walk alongside you and encourage you to do the work. Don't surround yourself with people that tell you that it's easy or give you secrets or tips. It's not easy. And there tips that help from time to time when you get stuck.

Embrace time to time learning, don't try to learn it all right up front, because you won't. Get in and start doing the work the best that you can do now, and you'll figure out what you don't know when you hit it. I wasted so much time taking Udemy courses and so much stuff that's never served me, and just filled my brain with stuff I don't use, and now I'm learning Reaper, so I'm just going to get in and learn everything there is to know about Reaper and when I hit roadblocks, I get onto Youtube and I find videos to teach me how to get past that roadblock and I keep going.

Dave: And where can people learn more about you, or where would you like people to go?

Bryan: Don't go to my website. Just kidding. People can go to BryanOrr.com, it's actually a work in progress.

I'm retooling it because before it was more like small business leadership stuff, and I still want to do that, but I'm really focusing on story-coaching now. That's both for small business and also people who do what we do in podcasting. Helping people formulate impactful stories.

And I'm not out here saying that I'm an expert like Ira Glass or whatever, but I do have a mixed experience, where I've learned how to use story in business, meaning my small everyday brick and mortar, you know, 40 employee business. And how to do it with podcasting, and I think a lot of it translates.

So, Bryanorr.com is a place to go to connect with me.

Dave: Yeah, that's great, and I'm going to recommend that everybody go to iTunes or [Stitcher](#) and find the Podcast Movement: Sessions which are fantastic as well.

Bryan: Yeah, yeah sorry I should've said that. Yeah, ratings reviews, listens, subscriptions. I think you'll find if you're in podcasting and you want to get better, I think if you listen through the backlog of episodes there there's a lot of really amazing people, much more amazing than I who can give you some perspective on that show.

Dave: No, they're very well produced, but like you said, the content from the speakers is amazing as well. A lot of tips there.

Bryan: Yeah, for sure.

Dave: Well, Bryan, we can wrap it up at this point, that's a good place to end. I really appreciate your time and your insight. I love your perspective and your long term view. It's been a pleasure talking to you.

Bryan: Well, I've enjoyed it David, and I've enjoyed listening to your smooth crooning voice this entire time.

Dave: Thanks a lot, and I look forward to seeing you at Podcast Movement.

Bryan: Yeah, 2016.

Dave: I'll be there.

Bryan: Alright, thanks David, see ya.

Dave: Take care, bye.

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