

# B2B content marketing

– How to design and co-create a podcast series

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### **Abstract**

The thesis studies content marketing and more specifically audio content marketing in the form of podcasts. The main focus is in the content design phase of content creation, even though elements of content distribution and production are covered to provide a more complex view of the marketing ecosystem.

The aim was to create design practices and tools and apply them into real-life cases, which ended up being three cases with a variety of angles to the design process introduced through them. All the cases are featured and analyzed within the thesis and accompanied by theory. The theory applied in this thesis covers aspects of design, communication, facilitating workshops, and marketing. Behavioral sciences, as well as journalistic values, are on the outer rim of the main focus, to remind the reader that people have habits and values and both matters affect the perception that one gets from marketing actions.

From this thesis, an understanding of communications consulting, content marketing, and designing content can be perceived and also a basic understanding of the production of audio content. The work proceeds from the key terms and pillars of service design into the cases and strategic aspects and distribution.

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# Table of contents

<b>1 Introduction</b>	1
<b>2 Research questions and desired results</b>	2
<b>3 The frame of reference</b>	3
<b>4 Commissioner - Bonnier AB and Spoon Agency</b>	4
<b>5 Stakeholder map</b>	6
<b>6 Service design</b>	7
6.1 Alignment and problem framing	9
6.2 Discovery and mapping	10
6.3 Ideation and envisioning	12
6.4 Evolution planning and piloting	13
<b>7 Methods</b>	14
<b>8 Cases</b>	17
<b>9 Podcasts as a medium</b>	19
<b>10 How to get people listening</b>	23
<b>11 Truthful marketing</b>	27
<b>12 Co-designing content - Case Agency</b>	30
<b>13 Content and strategy - Case Client</b>	36
13.1 Content type	38
13.2 Case client	39
13.3 Content distribution	41
<b>14 Building understanding of the medium - Case training materials</b>	42
<b>15 Results</b>	45
<b>16 Conclusions</b>	45
<b>References</b>	49
<b>List of Figures</b>	50

## **Appendices**

Appendix I - The preliminary poll - Case Agency

Appendix II - Presentation for the workshop - Case Agency

Appendix III - Wireframe template - Case Agency

Appendix IV - Client instructions - Case Client

Appendix V - The presentation - Case training materials

Appendix VI - The quiz - Case training materials

# 1 Introduction

The background choices of this thesis lean heavily on marketing communications and content creation for various marketing purposes. The key term of the thesis is “content marketing”, that includes editorial work both in written and spoken form as well as project management, mostly in the form of facilitating workshops but also strategy, creative work, and team-leading.

The need to do the thesis on marketing and ending up finding the co-creational cases that form the research basis for the thesis, rise from the author’s career in audio marketing, and the clear shortcomings that most content creation processes have been observed to miss. After spending almost ten years in various audio content projects, including establishing a podcast-audio platform, it felt relevant to study what goes into the production of audio content and marketing content designing in general. The motivation to mix service design methods, such as the double diamond method and the personas into co-creating content seemed to clarify unformatted processes that are ever-present in creating marketing.

Audio content is making its way to people in the form of podcasts, also the B2B marketing industry. Companies are very interested in getting a footing in this marketing format and big considerable companies want to produce audio content for their co-operating partners and clients. As the ground for the thesis lies in content marketing in general, the workshops and the materials are done with B2B audio content marketing in focus. The goal is to produce workbooks that can be used as guidance for audio content creation.

The groundwork for the thesis is the author’s career in B2C audio marketing and the work will build on that with the help of experiences from the communications industry, theory, and also interviews. The needs of B2C clients and the needs of B2B clients differ greatly on the way it is possible to make an impact on sales and position the company in the market with the help of content marketing. The difference can be seen as a sort of push or pull marketing duality, B2B audiences are smaller and their needs are more niche than the markets that most B2C marketers face. Segmenting carefully is a key element for B2B marketers, this can be seen as something that service design methods can offer a lot to.

The thesis has three cases in it - case agency, case client, and case training materials. They represent different angles to one common problem: How to design good content marketing and how can it be done co-creationally with various types of teams.

First and foremost the underlying theme also touches upon the matter of the rise of podcasts and how getting involved in producing audio content is more than just finding a microphone and a quiet room. As the audio content market is emerging rapidly, it is relevant to discuss behavior change that needs to happen in the desired audience, both decision-makers, and prospects, so that instead of just reading blogs and whitepapers they understand the effortless of tuning in on audio content.

BBC StoryWorks studied the subject of branded podcasts carried out across four continents by neuroscience researchers at Neuro-Insight. It researched the minds of audio listeners to discover the unique benefits of this space for brands (BBC,2019).

Using cutting-edge neuroscience methods, measuring second-by-second brain activity as the content is consumed in passive and active states of activity (BBC, 2019).

Some of the key findings of this study can be listed as follows:

- 94% of listeners consume podcasts while performing other tasks. This mode of listening actually elevates engagement with the brand
- Podcasts are a particularly effective way to reach ad avoiders
- The language of a podcast creates subconscious associations with the brand

The point that clearly can be drawn is that branded audio is very suitable for marketing and in itself has created a niche that most brands would benefit from using as a part of their marketing mix. With the help of designing content based on brand information already at hand, there is revenue to be made with the medium.

## **2 Research questions and desired results**

More than operating through research questions, the focus will be on the workshops and materials that are usable in a professional setting whilst producing content. The findings that come up during the thesis process by taking a look at co-creation processes and designing with a user-focus is the frames the thesis subject. If the work that lies ahead should be presented in a research question form, it would be ‘How to do insightful audio

B2B marketing?’ and additionally, ‘How to co-create and design engaging audio content marketing?’

As podcasts are truly big at this time, it is interesting how much of the actual content produced is not good audio or content-wise and how consistency and planning are not done professionally enough even when big international companies are concerned. Interestingly also people do not know how to integrate audio into their work-related habits and that is also touched upon through psychology and behavioral economics.

The desired result was to produce guidance in the form of workbooks that can be used as a guide through the planning process and provide fresh and practical advice to content producers and editors that wish to improve their B2B communications and enable sales and good customer relations with this format.

### **3 The frame of reference**

A frame of reference describes what kinds of theoretical aspects will be taken into account in the thesis, how these aspects are connected, and how they support the main idea of the thesis. For this particular thesis, the frame of reference consists of terms and entities that have fact-based selling and communication in common. As far as B2B content goes, it is the first aim is to sell ideas and products to cooperation partners and clients, for that to happen, there needs to be a strategy, tools for distribution, well-thought-through and produced content that is informative but also has selling points.

The created frame of reference supports the thesis process in the workshop phases as well as conducting the needed interviews with marketing automation and audio professionals. The intent is to see all the terms form a frame, that allows content to be somewhat generally interesting and informative but at the same time work for the benefit of the company, whatever that is, depending on the client company and its needs.

The progression of the terms and processes is shown in the figure below with arrows. All four key terms that circle around the main objective, that is service co-creation and more specifically content co-creation. The terms chosen are connected but at the same time they can be divided into two: on the left are the terms that represent the selling point of view more and on the right, the content is in the core. These terms are grouped in the way they

are also for the sake of the theoretical content that will be referred to within the thesis, that is introduced later on.

Doing co-creation with any client or affiliate without taking these factors into consideration is not possible, therefore it is crucial to state these as the pillars of such running a workshop. In the modern-day ecosystem that is the communications industry, all these have to be established for any production or ideation to start forming.

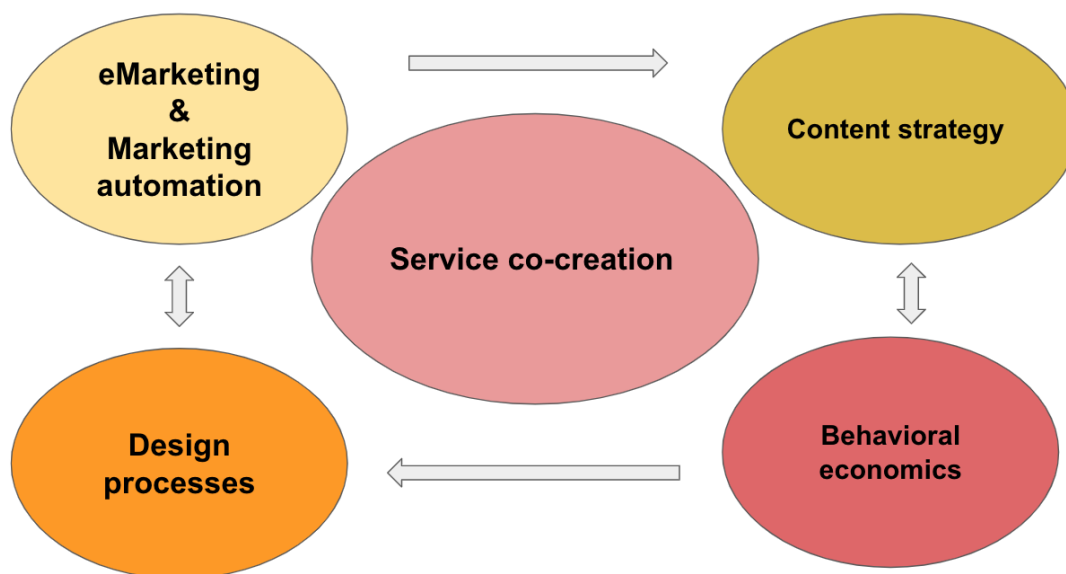


Figure 1. The frame of reference

## 4 Commissioner - Bonnier AB and Spoon Agency

The commissioner is also my employer, Spoon Publishing better known as Spoon Agency in the Nordics. The commissioner has been of tremendous help during the process of facilitating most of the workshops and giving a lot of freedom for the creation and leading processes. Spoon Agency is owned by The Bonnier group that is well known as the publishing powerhouse of the Nordics.

The Bonnier Group is the holding company for a corporate group made up of the Nordic region's leading media companies. The parent company is based in Sweden, with operations in 12 countries, and is wholly owned by the Bonnier family. (Bonnier, 2020.)



Spoon Agency is a subsidiary company for The Bonnier Group and furthermore Spoon Publishing is the Finnish Branch of the chain. Spoon Publishing Oy was founded in 2013. It is a limited liability company domiciled in Helsinki and its main business area is Management Consulting. (Finder, 2020)

The main areas of consulting include various areas that all have to do with content marketing and communications - from insights and strategy to content distribution and employer branding. The Finnish office has 11 employees and a vast base of freelancers at its service up to the end of the year in 2019.

Most management consulting, as is the case with Spoon Agency as well, is highly confidential and critical. The industry is very competitive when it comes to communication consulting - the digital era has put a fast paste timestamp on all of what is done and also multiplied the amount of content available. From this standpoint, it is even more crucial that when companies invest in content marketing the subjects, channels, production, and strategy need to be well thought out, planned, and measurable. At Spoon Agency all this is provided with the production of any content.

Spoon Agency or as the official name in Finland is Spoon Publishing, is very well established with creating journalistic content, that is aimed at a B2B audience. Let the angle be within an area of a business or in some cases inner communications of a company, it is done with the understanding of the industry and the economical and societal situation of the world it operates in. The company has many employees that have worked with audio content before, and continue to do so as journalists, sound engineers, and project managers.

In the year 2018 Spoon and Norstat commissioned the first content marketing study focusing on the Nordic market. A total of 300 marketers from Finland, Sweden, Norway, and Denmark participated in the study, which provides a comprehensive overview of the state and challenges of content marketing in the Nordic countries.

Lena Barner-Rasmussen, director of Spoon's Helsinki office to this date, believed already then that the importance of content marketing is beginning to be understood in Finland as well. More and more strategic work is being commissioned, and the focus is on long-term benefits.

"Content marketing is not just a one-time experiment, but a long-term and systematic work. Loyal audiences are not grown with a single article or some publication, but a clear

vision and tools for storytelling are needed," says Barner-Rasmussen. (Markkinointi & Mainonta, 2017)

Having many different types of content creators and formats to be created is a strong advantage to Spoon. The same can be said about the clients - using different types of formats entwined there will most likely be more people consuming them. Working together with other Nordic countries brings about the possibility to compare and iterate different ways of producing content well. The content produced for case training materials was done for Nordic clients in mind and as such represented the commissioner's position in the markets and portrayed it in a sense.

The commissioner's needs and wants regarding this thesis were minimal. The requirement was that clients were kept anonymous and issues straightforwardly related to them were to be kept private and undisclosed. All the help provided and discussions had during the process of gathering this thesis have been very trusting and it has been easy to advance all the project freely and with freedom of ideas and testing methods.

## **5 Stakeholder map**

In the stakeholder map, it is defined who are the people that are in some way involved in the process of content co-creation work in and for the companies. From the commissioner's point of view, this means that consultants are internal stakeholders. As described in the figure below, the roles of consultants vary from project managers to account directors and editors.

The design process is usually commissioned by and done with the ordering company, as they are the people who are also the benefitting entity of the work. In relation to the internal stakeholders, there are of course the people ordering the work for their specific needs, and people influencing the end product, which are the connected stakeholders. External stakeholders are in this figure below the people that the process is trying to reach and who will bring the return on investment. Also, people using the materials drafted in case training materials are seen as external stakeholders, as they will benefit from the materials, even if they are not being directly consulted during the design process.

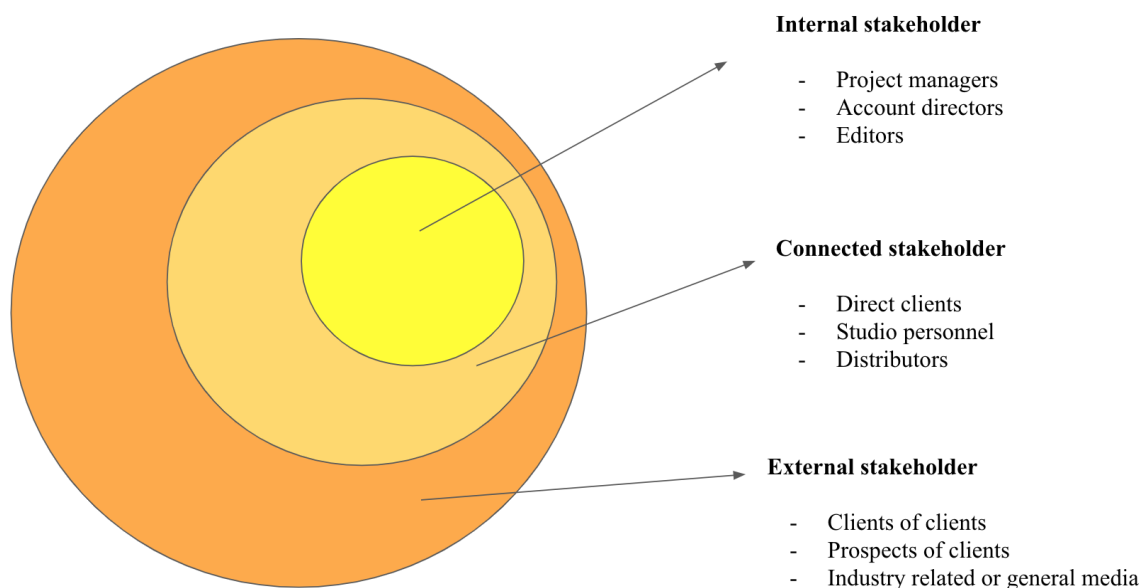


Figure 2. Stakeholder map - example of people involved

The thesis process is conducted in the two biggest circles and will be clarified and compressed as actual results for individual clients by the time it reaches the stakeholders mentioned in the smallest circle. In case three, the whole work is done with external stakeholders in mind. Also, for the workbooks to reach the effect on this stakeholder group, it needs to be mentioned that an actual ‘one-size-fits-all’ solution cannot be reached, but rather good codes of conduct can be suggested for the content creation process to serve all three stakeholder groups.

Making the content relevant, has many factors: current market position, the direction of the line of business in general, the kinds of prospects the company wants to address and who is the persona within the company that the content needs to be relevant to. These are all matters that are addressed in the final documents that can be “mixed and matched” depending on what kind of support the company wants pre and during production.

## 6 Service design

Service design is a many-faceted line of operations that can be applied to endless different sectors of business, lines of work, processes, and at the smallest level simple tasks. Below

are the core principles according to ONE design (2018) that could also be described as the founding pillars that most service design operations are built upon.

Human-centered means that the focus is on the people that the product or service is designed for. Co-creative means that the designing process includes people from the stakeholder groups and also the users. Orchestrated design takes into consideration in a broader sense what are all the possible actions and processes that need to be aligned within a company for optimal services to come into being. Tangibility makes the design process understandable by selecting the touchpoints of the service process that are analyzed. And a holistic approach is crucial in making the experience of a service complete.

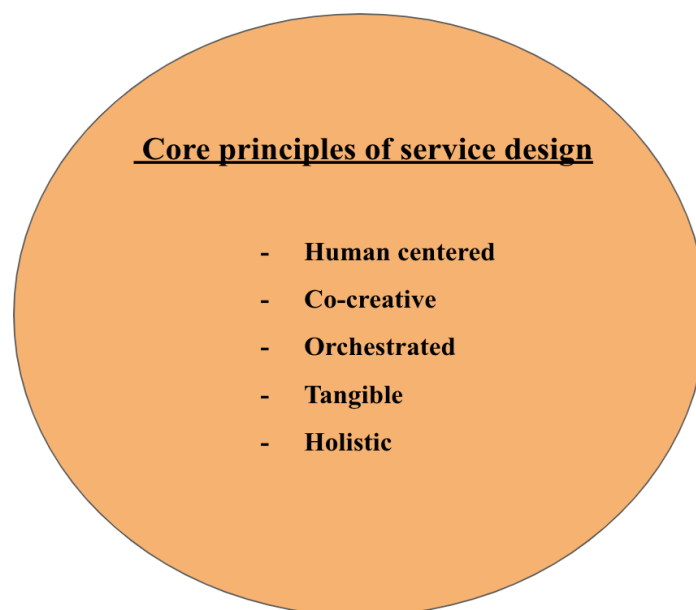


Figure 3. Core principles of service design (ONE design, 2018)

The main subject of this thesis is content designing for various customers. The three cases represented in this entity, have elements of all the core principles mentioned here but lean the heaviest on well-orchestrated and co-created processes that are tangible to the target audience.

When discussing B2B content, the principle most likely to be left aside is being human-centered, or at least it has to be redefined in a sense that when talking business being understandable is a norm but the sectors of business might be very strictly determined,

which makes the terminology or topics hard to grasp to the vast majority of people or even partly to people in the same company, if the company is large enough.

Being holistic is mentioned as one of the principles and further described as an end-to-end experience creation. This is something that is very often forgotten in content creation, longevity and relevance of topics need planning and have to be set to endure time and also be published in the longer run. For a content source to be valid, interesting and something that the audience comes back to, it is important to be persistent in putting out materials that are produced well and support the content arch that is pre-planned.

## 6.1 Alignment and problem framing

Alignment and problem framing is the starting point for all design processes, as it is also that in a way in content creation. Usually, the client ordering content might not have a direct problem but more wants to be seen in a certain way or be associated with certain topics or world views, be more understandable or acceptable to the desired crowd. This might, therefore, be seen as alignment work.

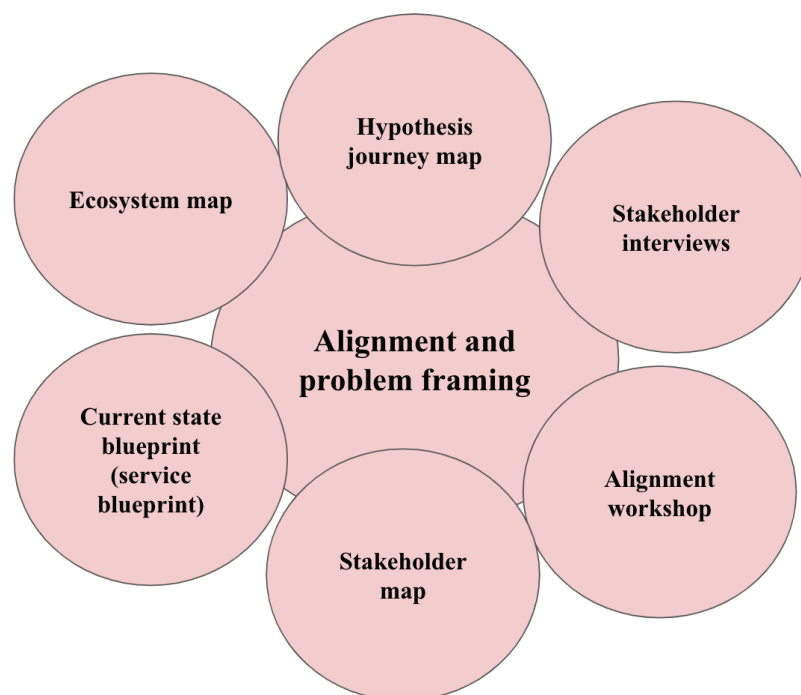


Figure 4. Service design tools and methods - alignment and problem solving (ONE design, 2018)

Mapping out the smaller pieces of the whole can be seen in the figure above. All the topics of the smaller circles are used in B2B content creation but, nevertheless, depending on the client case, some get more weight than others. What is usual, is that stakeholder interviews merge naturally with alignment running a workshop and also that journey maps are not built.

ONE design describes hypothesis journey mapping as something that is a visualization of the customer journey over space, time, and across touchpoints, based on the team's current understanding of the experience. This of course from a communication's point of view is very hard to accomplish.

Analyzing megatrends and understanding the weak signals that might have an effect on an industry or a singular topic help a long way but sometimes the so-called black swan appears, like happened with COVID-19 in the spring of 2020 and changed a lot of conversations and speeds up societal evolution in ways that might be very hard to handle in content delivery and planning.

All of the content marketing is very much done with the understanding of the ecosystem that communicational actions are done in. It is crucial to know, what goes on in the industry, the immediate surrounding, and even world politics on the parts that have an effect or might have future effects on the business that is doing content. Without the understanding of the ecosystem and one's place in it, no meaningful content can be produced.

## **6.2 Discovery and mapping**

The discovery and mapping phase is arduous when doing content planning and actions. Research is done by taking up reading on current issues and usually, there is no fast way to do this but to keep up on the most relevant publications of the industry and see what seems to be trending or showing weak signals of future trends.

What ONE design calls experience mapping can be applied to content delivers, even if the starting point is thought of as something that is more service centered. In content marketing, this might be translated into something of an image-building exercise that holds the view that whilst content should always bring about some new information the

experience that one content source provides should be in its structure somewhat holistic - meaning that the style and the angles should be solid.

This brings us to experiences principles that are again, as said by ONE design, definitive guiding statements that explain what the future customer experience should feel like and enable objective design decisions. In other words, this is the customer promise that is communicated through content marketing.

Using archetypes, or more familiarly personas is very useful and done most of the time. But the exception to the rule is of course when the audiences grow very large, as they might when working with an international clientele. Another insight that might hold true, is that using archetypes is an understated tool and not done in written form even if discussed in most cases, one can only wonder what potential would there be in doing this profoundly every time when there is content strategizing and planning projects that start from the scratch.



Figure 5. Service design tools and methods - Discovery and mapping (ONE design, 2018)

Discovery and mapping phase is what one would describe partly of general education on service design. Keeping up on current world issues and getting to read about subjects and lines of business that one might otherwise never come across, leave most professional content marketers with a vast understanding of current world politics and business developments in many industries.

### 6.3 Ideation and envisioning

Ideation and the prioritization of the framework is something that is done usually before ideas for content are given for evaluation to the client. A point to be made is that this usually requires a bit of teamwork from the company providing the content services as otherwise there is a strong possibility that people doing the discovery and mapping phase get lost in their own strain of thought in a sense and fall in love with their ideas too heavily.

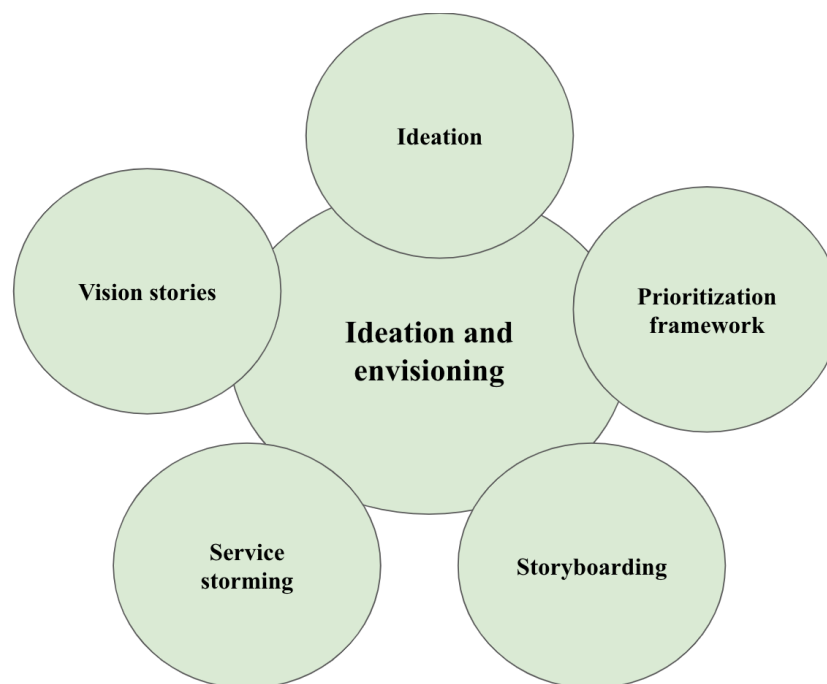


Figure 6. Service design tools and methods - Ideation and envisioning (ONE design, 2018)

In the figure above the teamwork requiring state is named service storming and in the context of designing physical services this phase has parts of actual reenactments of ideas. Content pitching is actually something that as teamwork reminds one of thesis seminars where a person presents their ideas with reasons and the opponents try to balance out the inconsistencies with their comments and in that way help to iterate the end result of the actual client meeting.

Without a doubt, the most exciting moment is here named vision stories by ONE design. Vision stories are the phase where the presentable story is pitched: A story that captures



both the emotional and functional aspects of the customer's experience with the ideal content and angle.

There really wasn't that much to say about storyboarding, as it is not commonly integrated into content designing. Moreover, it is something that is done in visual communications as in where content marketing is done in a more visual way: Videos, pictures, and animations. As this thesis is about content marketing and more specifically about audio content, this element of the ideation and envisioning stage does not give much of an impact on the subject.

## **6.4 Evolution planning and piloting**

The final stage of the ONE design dichotomy is called the evolution planning and piloting phase. It consists of four different functions that might be described as more project managerial than anything else. Future-state blueprint is an operational diagram that depicts how a service will operate in the future, with enough detail to understand, implement, and maintain it.

In content marketing, this might be called annually marketing calendar planning or even simply a service agreement. As the subjects of content might be hard to plan with not knowing how the world turns, there can still be plans made on what is the tonality of content, what are definite no-no's, and what subjects or angles need to be addressed and used if they come up.

Project or feature cards are very useful and also help allocate labor hours, perceive project stages, and communicate between team members and between team and client. These actions are mostly done in this sense in applications such as Teams from Microsoft or other similar platforms that help project communications.

From this, a concrete roadmap can be established. A roadmap or an evolution plan is a framework that outlines the incremental releases of a service from its current state to an ideal future state. Each phase should offer a complete, valuable experience. This is how ONE design describes a roadmap. When this is translated to content designing, we can once again draw similarities with production scheduling and planning, being strategically well established and aware.

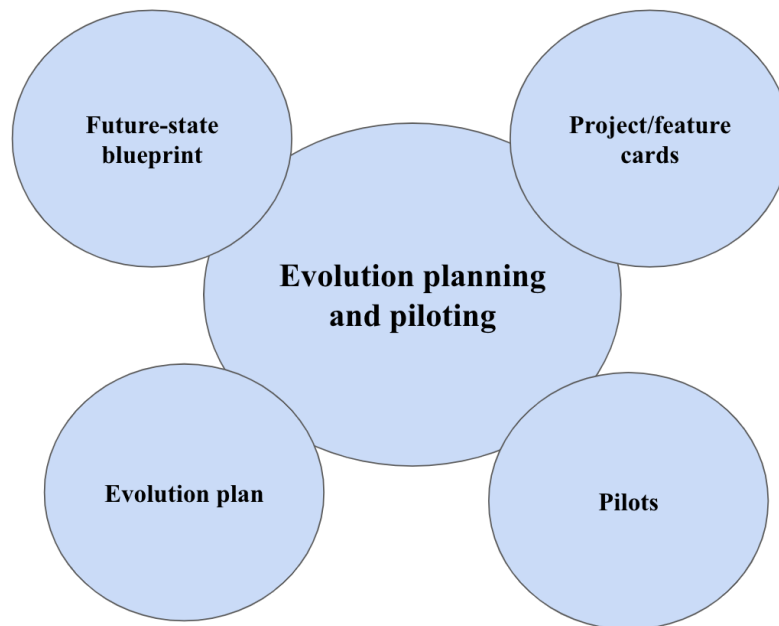


Figure 7. Service design tools and methods - Evolution planning (ONE design, 2018)

Concluding thoughts on service designing in content creation and marketing is that service design tools and methods can be in many ways applied to marketing communications. It is up to the professionals of communications to actually understand the applicable methods and also suitable processes that can benefit from service design thinking.

In many ways, the biggest difference is that with service designing what usually is meant is concrete brick and mortar services but when delving deeper on a more theoretical level the similarities and the benefits can be seen between traditional service design thinking and for example this more abstract content design.

## 7 Methods

To start picking apart the methods used during the thesis process, the double diamond model gives out a structure. The double diamond model (Design Council, 2020) has four actions. For the cases done here, these phases merge with each other in a sense, as these were done not as a design community but within a conversational collaboration with client or brand entities.

The discovery phase was the most informal in all three cases, what was looked for in each of the cases was not defined to each detail from the start, but more bumped into action on the second, defining phase. Continuous communications with the design teams and clients were the key to finding the foundation to which the actual plans and materials were built upon.

The developing phase meant that something was already produced if nothing more than at least a production plan of the final format and content. The delivery phase is the one where the least methods are used, all actions in that part of designing are based upon the previous phases, and what ideas and concrete tools that were to be built beforehand.

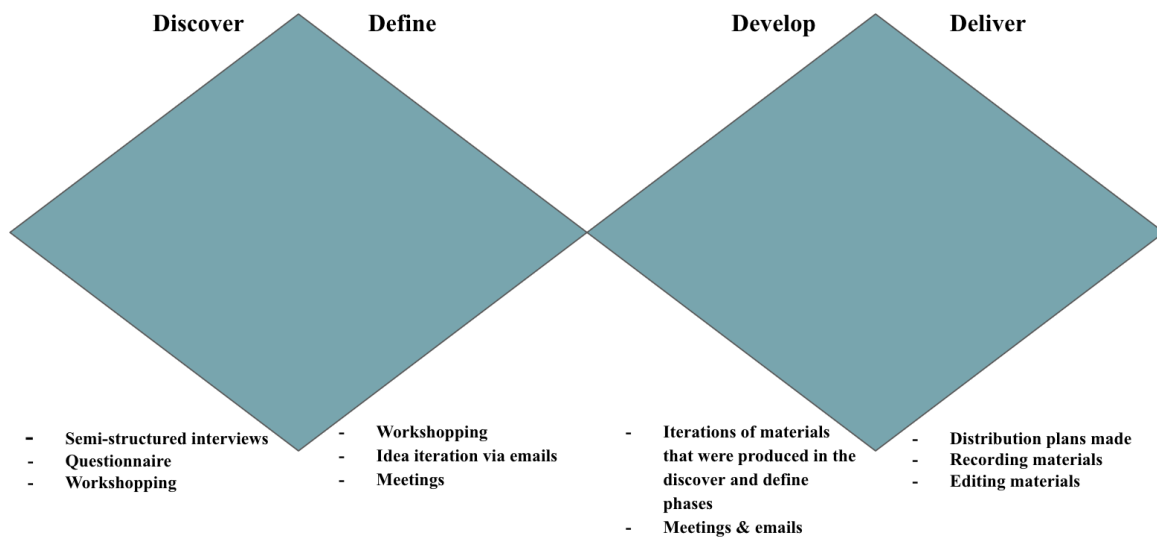


Figure 8. Double diamond analysis - The design actions used in the cases of the thesis

Two separate interviews were conducted to discuss with peers in a similar line of work about the possibilities audio content marketing has. These were done as semi-structured interviews and could also be called personal communication: Beforehand themed interviews that are semi-structured.

For case one, a questionnaire was sent out and the preliminary answers were used to frame a workshop that was facilitated to finalize the format. running a workshop together with the working community to find the format was done in order to find some sort of consensus.

For case two, mini workshop was done with the client in the weekly meeting and the final product was mapped and planned content wise by the client and the format and the delivery were sparred verbally and with the document produced for the occasion.

Case three was done independently for the most part as the commissioner was an internal client but abroad. The needs of the material were communicated through emails and one face-to-face meeting and from there, independent work on the personas and the design levels according to Donald Norman's division was used to clarify the task before production.

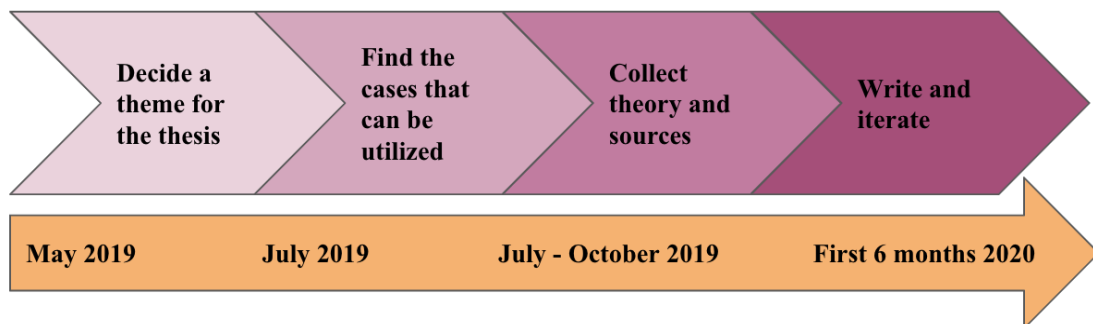


Figure 9. Process chart of the thesis with the timeline

The thesis process started with a clear plan and advanced efficiently from the beginning. Few winter months were spent not advancing the thesis, but those same months turned out to be helpful on the part of reflection and gathering loose ends in the angle that the thesis needed.

Most parts of the theory used here were books and texts that benefitted both the thesis and knowledge base of everyday work-life. Looking at the gathering of the thesis on both theory and practice it is hard to point out which came first and which followed.

As the subject is interesting and up and coming as it is noticed in content marketing as something quite new and yet not fully capitalized upon, the opportunities to handle the cases and practice theory whilst creating something with the design tools learned at Novia, it seems that the thesis almost orchestrated itself naturally.

## 8 Cases

For the thesis, two different podcast series were co-created that are introduced as case agency and case client. For both of them, my role was ideation, workshop facilitation, and iteration of the ideas that came up. Both cases came up through the commissioner and were done partly as client work.

The third case was a case of drafting out a mini-online course on the subject of podcast production aimed for business clients that are set out to doing their own audio content or are already doing some but struggling. The aim of the case was to produce materials that would help and also lead to consultation sales in the long term.

The cases were worked on in a six-month period intermittent with other projects. The results of both of the first and the second case can be already heard as they have been produced and finalized. When doing this directly for an actual need from the commissioner, it meant that the processes were not fast-paced and linear and that different stages took unexpectedly long periods of time, due to decision making and production scheduling and other projects that came up urgently. The third case, case training materials, was from my part handed over for production for another sub-company also owned by the Bonnier group.

For so-called hard businesses, as both cases agency and client represent such, the outlining of what are to be done - can it be sustained? Most plans fail for not planning far enough ahead, resource planning is key to making well-delivered content. What is the mold when it comes to time, host and guests, subjects, and recurring segments is important? These questions are a part of the co-creation phase and are to stepping stone into production.

Also, the tone of voice is important as it is very close to the brand and that stays in the mind of the listeners in a way that written text can't bring about. The secret recipe for audio content is the sound of a person's voice. The micro habits and the tones, how real does a person sound. It boils down to trust and likability - all other factors to the end product can be sharpened in pre and post-production.

For listeners to become engaged, it takes commitment from the makers. This means planning ahead for multiple publications, keeping the brand in mind, and taking care that the content reflects both the times and something unique and timeless. For both of my cases, the project management and the facilitation was aiming to do just that.

To bring structure to the designing process Donald Norman's Three levels of design (The Interaction design foundation. 2016) were used in all the cases. One of the ideas that he explores within it is the idea that there are three different levels of experience and that these experiences can be triggered by three different levels of design.

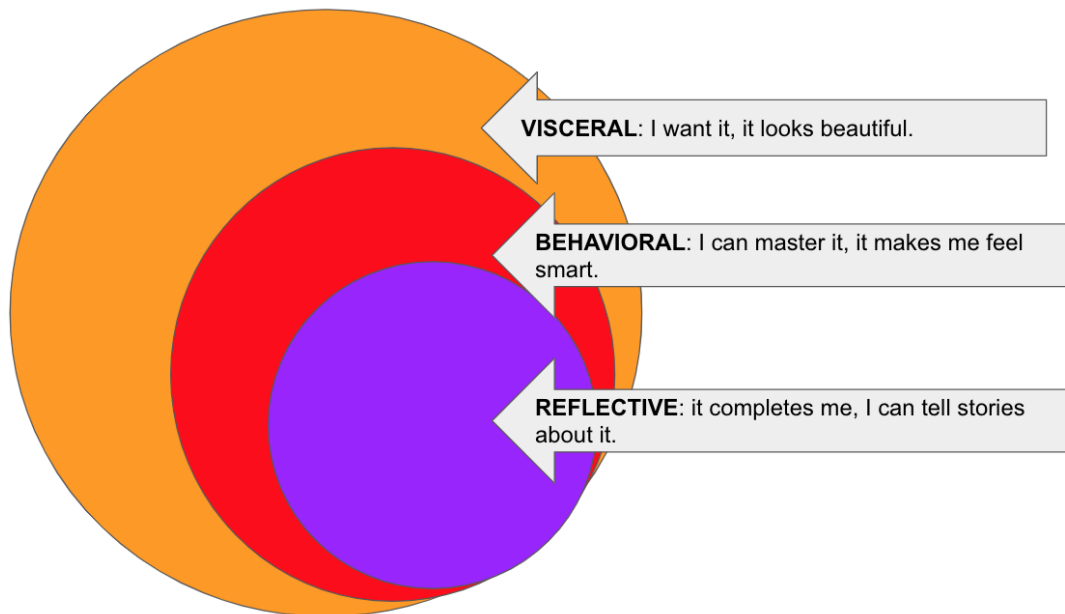


Figure 10. Donald Norman's three levels of design

As is described by The interaction design foundation the levels of Donald Norman's trinity go as follows - outer level called visceral level and it is known as the "gut instinct". It is a subconscious level of reaction to certain experiences. This is a strong factor in decision making and often overlooked, because of its vague nature. The visceral reaction is the one triggered by the initial sensory scan of the experience. It is immediate and often beyond our control.

The middle layer called the behavioral level is reached if a person lets the product pass the visceral level, this happens mostly unconsciously.

On the Behavioral level, the questions to be asked are how does the product feel? Do we still like the way it seems and is? How easy is the product to use or in the case of the podcast, is the information valid, is the time spent listening worth it? Do we feel like sharing the product with our friends and colleagues? The central part of the experience with something comes from the time when we put it into use.

The most inner layer is called the reflective level. There is an experience beyond the initial experience of using a product or listening to a podcast. It is the experience of association and familiarity. How do we feel about the podcast now that it is listened to? What values do we put on the podcast in retrospect? If we walk through the whole process of coming across and listening to the podcast in hindsight; does it change anything about the way we feel or think we feel about it?

## **9 Podcasts as a medium**

A podcast is a series of digital audio files that can be listened to in various applications or platforms. Platforms include such as iTunes, Spotify, and Google Podcasts to name a few of the most popular ones, which provide integrated ways to manage personal consumption across many podcast sources and potential playback devices, usually a smart device such as a phone or a tablet.

Usually, a podcast series features one or more recurring hosts engaged in a discussion about some topic or current event. Podcast productions can range from carefully scripted to totally improvised discussions, combined with elaborate and artistic sound production, with thematic concerns ranging from science reporting to slice-of-life journalism. Many podcast series provide an associated website with links and show notes, guest biographies, transcripts, additional resources, additional commentary, and even a community forum dedicated to discussing the show's content. Podcasting has become a recognized medium for distributing audio content, whether for corporate or personal use. Podcasts are similar to radio programs in form, but they exist as audio files that can be played at a listener's convenience, anytime, or anywhere.

Benchmarking good audio content in the fields of businesses the cases in this thesis represented was crucial to managing the expectations that both receiving parties had for the outcomes, as well as taking a good look at the possible time spent listening that the final product might gather.

Even though audio content is very popular and handy as it can be listened to while commuting or doing other things, it is still up and coming in the sense that many people

cannot really grasp the format and therefore cannot seem to understand the potential and also do not consume the medium regularly

According to Edison Research's study from the year 2019, podcast listening is increasing slowly and steadily among the US population. as can be seen in the figure below. The most significant rise is in the population that regularly listen to podcasts.

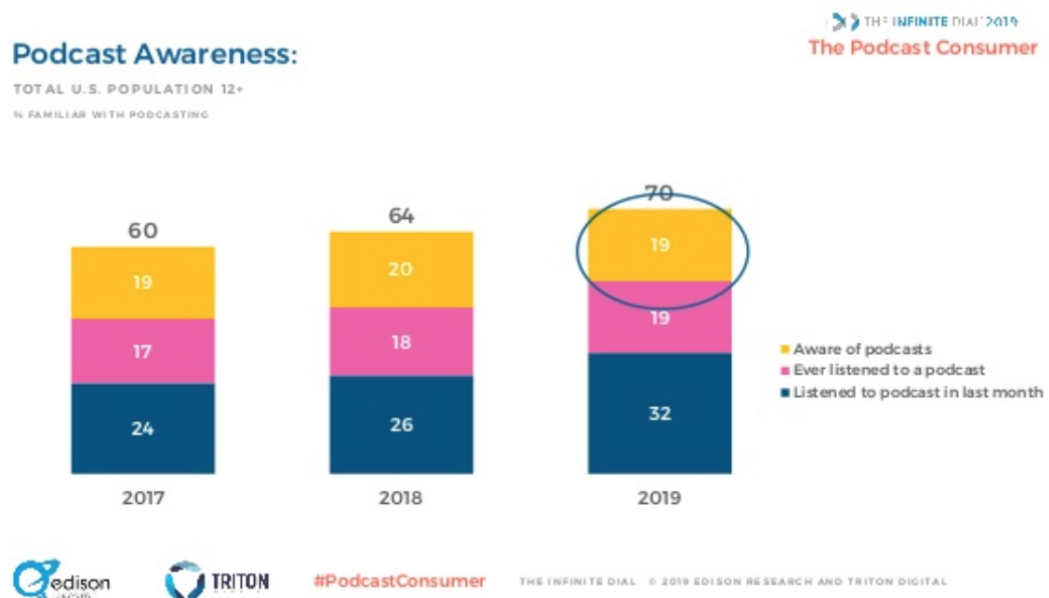


Figure 11. - podcast awareness among US population 12+ (Edison research, 2019)

Edison Research has done annual research on podcasts listening among US citizens for many years. The reason this can be seen as something significant even in the European market or even the Finnish market is that the US market is a forerunner in the use of the medium.

What differs from the European market and even more distinctively from the Finnish market is that the American language and cultural area are vastly bigger and therefore the development is slower around the Nordics. As the English language is very well known in all Western countries and most countries beyond the Western world as well, most studies in that sense can be conditionally applied and seen valid in Europe. As my cases are all done in international environment purposes and in English, this study can be viewed with important indications of the market that all actions aim at.



Edison research's latest study shows that podcasts are slightly more listened to by men and the popularity of the medium is high with teens and young adults as well as the middle-aged populations. The fastest growth in listens is happening in the age group of 12-24 years where the monthly listens have almost doubled in the last two years. Seems that the medium is becoming increasingly a habit of the younger population.

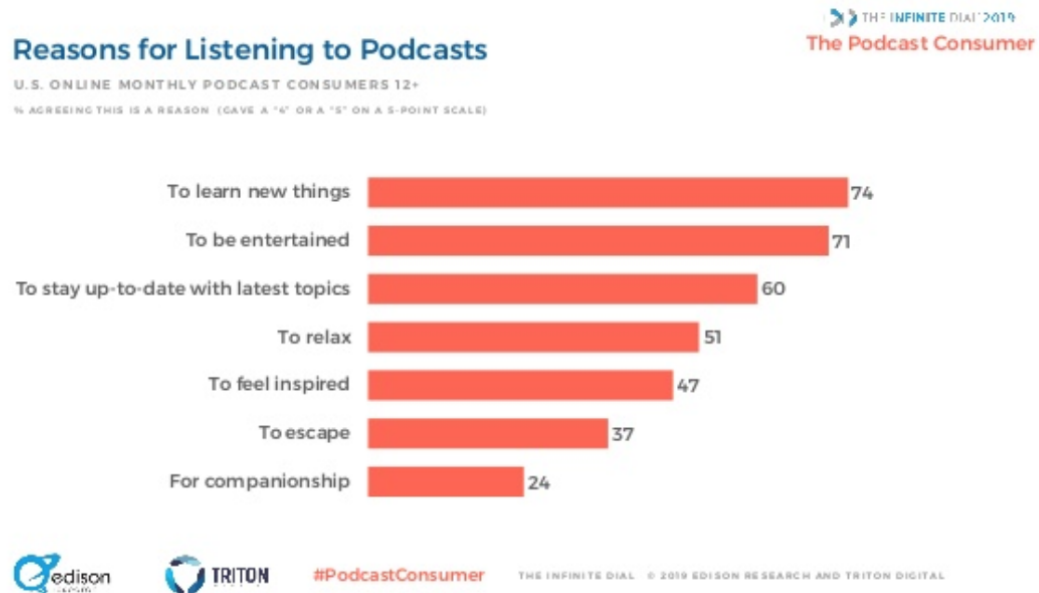


Figure 12. - reasons for listening to podcasts (Edison research, 2019)

As you can see above, the reasons for people to tune in vary and reflect many aspects of humanity. What is interesting related to B2B podcasting is that the most popular reason to turn to podcasts is to learn new things, this is, of course, the call that B2B content marketing aims to answer with expertise and product placement. Also if you take a look at the three most popular reasons for consuming podcasts, you will find the pillars of good content marketing.

Edison Research has also conducted a study on the share of ear and according to the latest 2019 study, it seems that the most classical FM/AM radio has already been levered to second place in the race as podcasts are the most popular sound content format, with streaming music being on the third place.

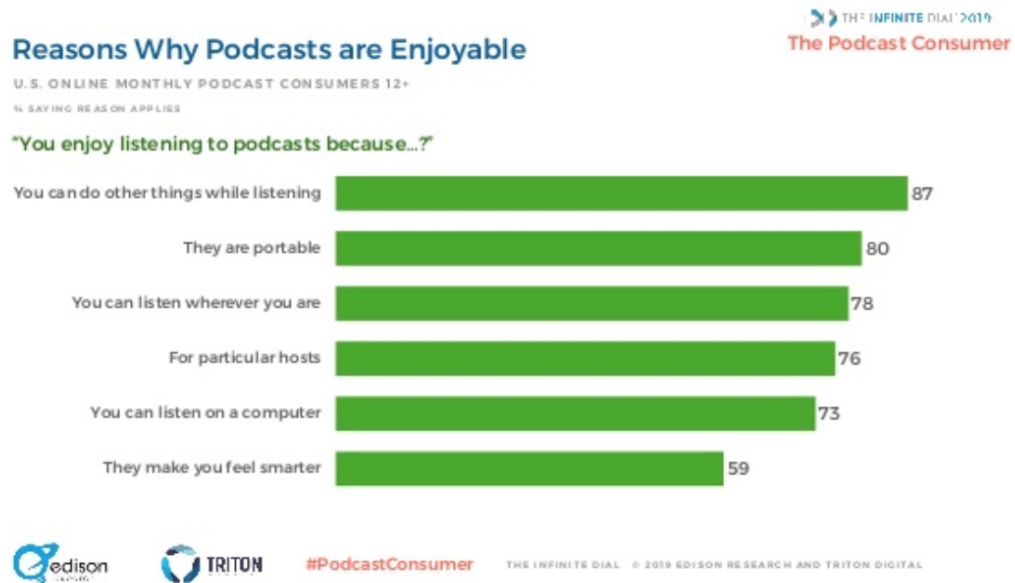


Figure 13. Reasons why podcasts are enjoyable (Edison research, 2019)

Figure 10. shows the attraction of audio content - it is portable, it can be listened to while doing other things, and whenever it feels convenient. With the fast pace work-life of today, these are truly remarkable advantages to written content.

Business and B2B oriented content are most often consumed in written format. From actual news publications to a very specific line of business content that businesses publish, written format dominates as it is the classical way to do communications and enhance sales by showing knowledge of the business, showing personality as a company, and to some extent being transparent to customers and potential customers.

News outlets such as The Economist or the Financial Times have taken up the format and are publishing good business and economy audio, but for individual businesses, the format seems to still be a bit foreign or otherwise hard to grasp. Still, the potential is very much there - there are great possibilities to be a forerunner, if not in the international forums then at least in the European or Nordic B2B business media landscape. A lot is being done, but not a lot in a well planned and organized manner with good audio production.

I had the possibility to talk to Lauri Domnick (personal communication, 17th of September 2019), who is the Head of Audio branding at Bauer Media Finland about using sound as a part of the brand. The first question to him was, how using sound elements influences our mental image of a brand. Domnick's take on the matter started from far down the road: Whenever we hear something, something also happens in us.

We react to sound, mentally and physically, with our cognition but very much with our emotions as well. There is no sound that does not have any consequences. Translating this into the world of business, it is, in his opinion, very important to understand this and take this into action as audio content is planned for any brand.

Sound has a very big effect on our emotions, and most of our decisions are made with a gut feeling guiding us. With sound and sound alone a brand can attach itself to culture and position itself reminds Domnick.

Domnick says that sound activates the limbic system in our brain, which is also linked to our emotions. This is also the area where all mental images, including brand images, get born. With sound, be it music or the tone of a person's voice, all rational filters can be overwritten if the sound is right.

Domnick claims that there are valid studies on how audio content is tested to be more effective on people's opinions than visual content if, of course, the content is done well. With sound and audio, there is a possibility to feel and sound personal in more ways than with written text.

Brand quality can be conceptualized with sound - it requires choices to be made on tone, speaker, music, rhythm. Quality is a sum of technical planning and also strategizing and production. Domnick mentions a BBC stories study that suggested that if the technical requirements are not up to par, leaving the content sounding poor, it leaves the listener feeling that the content itself is not believable, the speaker less intelligent and the whole podcast is less meaningful. Domnick brings up a fun fact - a person makes over 70 000 decisions a day, how many of these are done knowingly? Quality content gives a mental push that might even happen under the radar.

## **10 How to get people listening**

As said earlier, podcasts are popular but the B2B sector has not been able to truly embrace the medium. In order to change that, there needs to be a shift in priorities, habits and to some extent time management and allocation of professionals of any industry, to find and use podcasts as a way to get professional information.

All accounts trying to have an influence on that can somewhat be derived from behavioral economics and psychology, as is done here with the help of Stephen Wendel's book 'Designing for behavior change' (2013). Most influencing ways are familiar from marketing but put into perspective of creating a content consuming habit, the perspective from where the actions can be viewed from changes.

External cues may spark the action, whenever new information needs to be incorporated into the daily actions. It is a fact that we are constantly learning and our experiences teach us whether something is worth our while or not. Our intuitive responses are grounded in simple associations with things in our past, to put it simply: Our intuitive mind responds mostly without our conscious awareness. (Wendel 2013, 8-9.)

Another way our mind saves itself from work is by observing what other people are doing. This is called finding social proof, another way is judging the value by whether experts or influential people in one way or another find the product recommendable. Taking action on a matter like consuming certain content can also be based on something that is common in our peer group. (Wendel 2013, 16-17.)

Wendel lists obvious things about design, that should still be mentioned as the things that affect our behavior; easier is better - the less mental effort is better, familiar is also better - we are more at ease with things we have seen before and actions we have taken before. (Wendel 2013, 19.)

Beauty is also something we appreciate, in the cases of this thesis and sound design all and all, that means good general language and expression, likable voice, and sound engineering for the final product. Rewarding experiences make us want to come back and this is simply cost and benefits calculus in our minds, which brings us to the next point: We avoid failing and doing unsuccessful things. (Wendel 2013, 20.)

Lastly, we do urgent things first. This could be translated so that one must make their content so relevant and easily digestible that people will consume it, like it, cite it and keep a habit going with it so that it spreads in their immediate social universe. A great tip to align all actions is to remember that a designer must remember that the value a user ascribes to a product is what makes the difference, not the value a designer ascribes it. (Wendel 2013, 20, 34.)

The table below is an adaptation of Wendel’s figure on the creation of an action funnel. All the steps apply to create an action funnel for consuming content as well. The five stages mentioned are the ones that the target audience needs to pass through in order to listen to a podcast.

This means, for example, good strategy on when exactly episodes are published and push notifications sent out about them, how are the subjects presented, and how the episodes are designed around issues so, that they are easily understood and consumed with still something beneficial and new information in them.

To the right of the figure, also the possible disturbances are mentioned, which make people drop out each stage. Studying and defining which are the dropout phases is something that is a part of the larger picture of content marketing and is discussed further in the chapter on marketing automation.

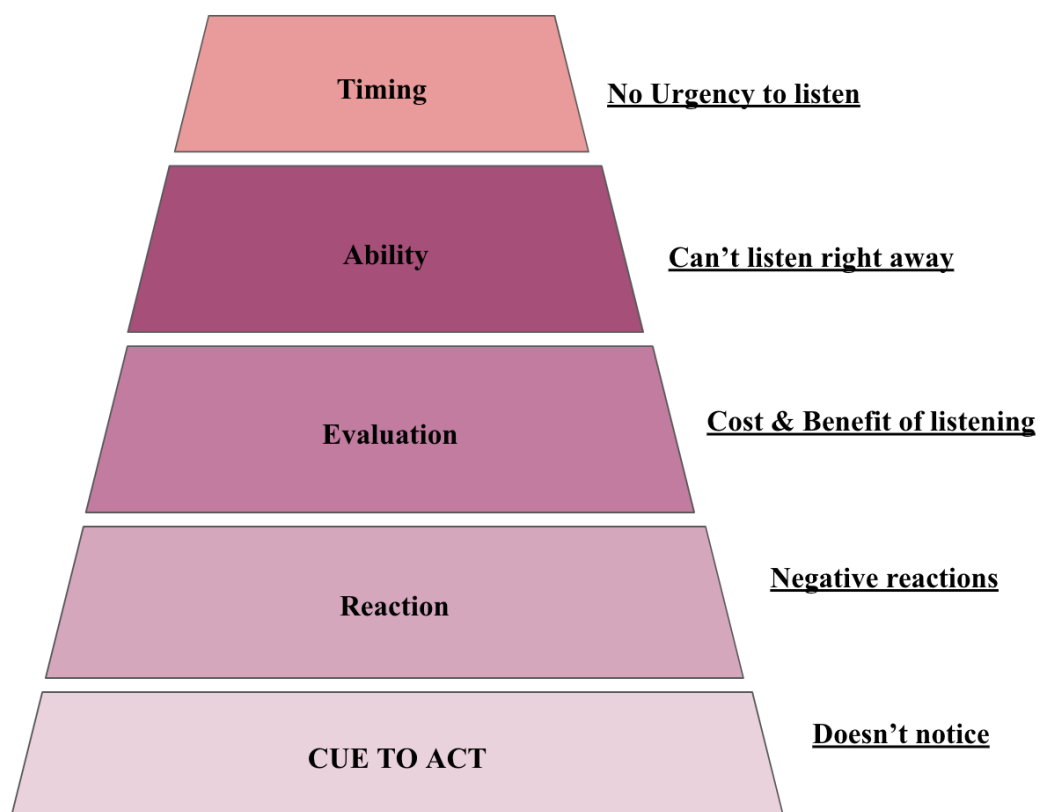


Figure 14. Action funnel of podcast listening

Ways to make people tune in are many. One of them is to default the listening; defaulting it one way or another - for example, a simple “order new episode each Thursday” click might

do the trick. Another way of getting people to come back, again and again, is to make it incidental with something that the listener would have done anyway, such as popping the new episode out every time right in the morning that on their way to work people can catch the latest on the given issue. (Wendel, 2013, 52.)

Wendel makes an effort to explain the meaning of that having an end goal has on a product. When this is applied to content marketing, it means that content series, as well as individual pieces, should have spearhead information on a selected matter or have an angle that is thought through from the point of view of the hoped-for audience.

To help the audience to build the habits needed to keep listening, simple action points would do. Identify a routine (that the content consumption somehow relates to), identify a reward (that is valuable for the user), identify a simple single-purpose cue in the consumer's daily life (that is a reminder), make sure the user can connect the dots between the cue, the routine, and the reward, once the routine has been taken, reward immediately.

In this there are nuances, but this is a simplistic way of deploying habits. In online content, this could be the earlier mentioned action funnel, of an alert to one's phone screen, which has a few words on the podcast episodes topic that is interesting and useful enough for the audience so that the alert gets people listening and they gain knowledge that further makes them appreciate the information and the format one series might have. (Wendel, 2013, 59-60.)

Moving on to who is the audience, whose behavior we want to affect, it is crucial to really define who are the target groups. This ties in with the service design tool of personas, or as some might call it archetypes. Helpful thoughts for the personas building process is to clarify the overall behavioral vision of the product and identify what user outcomes are sought after. From another perspective, it is helpful to get to know the users from the perspective they have - what are they interested in? (Wendel, 2013, 75.)

Generating personas gets easier if research on the possible customers is done well and content is designed based on the gained information. If it looks like all the desired listeners are alike, information has not been used or understood deeply enough. Based on this, a clear statement of the target outcome, it's actors and the actions can be designed. (Wendel, 2013, 109.)

Stating the vision helps the makers and the doers of content marketing - Should the content have what kind of effect and on whom? Which region? How is a success or a failure defined? Always go back to the motivation for the company and for the listener, to keep content production meaningful. (Wendel, 2013, 100.)

## 11 Truthful marketing

In the age of post-truth politics, so-called fake news, deep fake, alternative facts, and misinformation, it is fundamental to point out what marketing and content can or cannot say. Within this realm, a resemblance can be drawn to journalism. In the book 'Totuudenmukainen journalismi' (2015, Grano) Heikki Kuutti explores what is and also what is not truthful and how these things can be defined.

Kuutti's main statement is the truthfulness of the things told requires journalists' to have a strong source criticality. They need to find and take advantage of sources that they consider to be sufficiently reliable and shall only publish information that they have verified with sufficient care. All of this is very much true in content marketing as well.

Kuutti cites Dunwoody (2005) in a way that very closely describes the situation in most content marketing - Dunwoody has criticized the objectivity of journalism for journalists in any case merely repeating the views of the sources they use in their stories. This is the problem that comes also from working with content marketing, schedules, and sales objectives at their worst influence people's ability to use the correct data. When a journalist or a content creator cannot tell what is true, he can only accurately record claims of truth. (Kuutti 2015, 13.)

What Kuutti suggests is that instead of presenting individual facts, a sufficiently broad whole should be introduced to the subject under consideration. The facts included in the story or another content piece like a podcast, should in some degree bring forth a broader whole so that all the matters that are important have mutual balance within the content.

Truth is something that can be received from both companies to customers and from customers to the companies. As the modern age of social media and online presence, many companies find that marketing is no longer in any format a one-way street but interactive in all forums. It can be perceived that also the truth about a company is built together with

its customers with marketing interactions. Matthew Draper writes in Liferay (2017) about the five moments of truth in marketing that have an impact on how the possible product or service is ultimately received.

A customer journey is built on many different touchpoints. The touchpoints are crucial steps in a relationship with a customer, where a business has the opportunity to earn his or her loyalty by engaging with them. While it is important that companies work to improve their customer experiences as a whole, defining their moments of truth and working to improve these aspects specifically can result in major improvements to customer journeys. These points relate to both traditional service design and also content design.

Less Than Zero Moment of Truth aims to look at the earliest instance of a potential customer is beginning their journey and interacting with a brand. At this Less Than Zero Moment of Truth, something has happened in the life of a customer to become interested in a product or service.

A company can actively reach out to a customer via social media, email marketing, advertisements, and more before the customer even comes to them for more information. While this requires advanced targeting and monitoring of customer activities, this proactive strategy can decrease the likelihood of an audience member choosing a competitor. This is where content marketing when done strategically can have a substantial impact and give a company an advantage that this can happen before the actual comparison process has even begun.

Zero Moment of Truth is something that was first introduced by Google, to match the modern online customer journey and deals with the moment when a person begins searching for information regarding a product or service that he or she is interested in. Here an active blog, homepage, or a Soundcloud publication for podcast can help the brand or a company to pop up for search engine results.

The first moment of truth was originally invented by A.G. Lafley who was the chairman of Procter and Gamble at the time. The first moment of truth only lasts a few seconds and can include the customer reading the description or hearing a pitch from a representative in order to better understand how the product may serve his or her needs. This pitch can be in any of the formats mentioned earlier that can be done in the ways of content marketing. This immediate impression depends on a good presentation and the ability to clearly show how the product will fulfill the needs of the audience. This brief moment will have a major



impact on whether a person will move forward with learning more about what your company offers.

After first seeing the product, the audience will then move on to the Second Moment of Truth. Here, the customer truly experiences what your company is offering. This can occur before purchasing the product, such as experiencing a hands-on demonstration of a new phone but may also happen after a purchase, which occurs frequently in the modern age of online shopping where a customer does not truly experience the product until after it arrives. Within this, there is an opportunity to make positive content marketing and distribute it to once again benefit the less than zero and zero moments. When truthfully and credibly done content about positive customer experiences is a powerful way of producing content marketing with relevance.

The last, ultimate moment of truth is when the product's ability to fulfill the needs of the customer, as well as the company's efforts to provide an enjoyable experience along the way to purchasing it, will shape the audience's emotional response to what they have received.

This means that people will return to listen to a podcast or read a blog, even if the intentions behind it are not purely journalistic but still give enough information that the scale tips to positive outcomes in relation to the time spent on consuming the content.

During the ultimate moment of truth, a customer may choose to share their opinions on the service with the company that provided it, write a review online and give their opinions to family, friends, and colleagues. These takeaways will influence whether they become a returning customer.

Being truthful is not as easy as it may sound, it is sometimes also a matter of perception and even more commonly not being deceitful on purpose. Service design and content design have it in common, that it takes a lot of consistency looking into the process and the hoped-for outcome.

## 12 Co-designing content - Case Agency

The thesis aimed at finding good conducts on content design processes, to find them, the figure below was drawn, to clarify the process that leads into the production of good quality content that helps companies stand out and also indirectly drive sales.

For a company, in order for self-oriented content provided to affiliates and customers to be enjoyable, the aim and the form need to be defined before being produced, for it to be profitable. The pre-production process usually takes at least one co-creational workshop, for the content to be valued, presentable, and something that employees feel they can stand behind.

To facilitate such a workshop, there can be a person from within the company or outside consultation and facilitation help can be used. This thesis sees running a workshop and facilitating as a consultation job and also all the cases have been built from a consultational point of view.

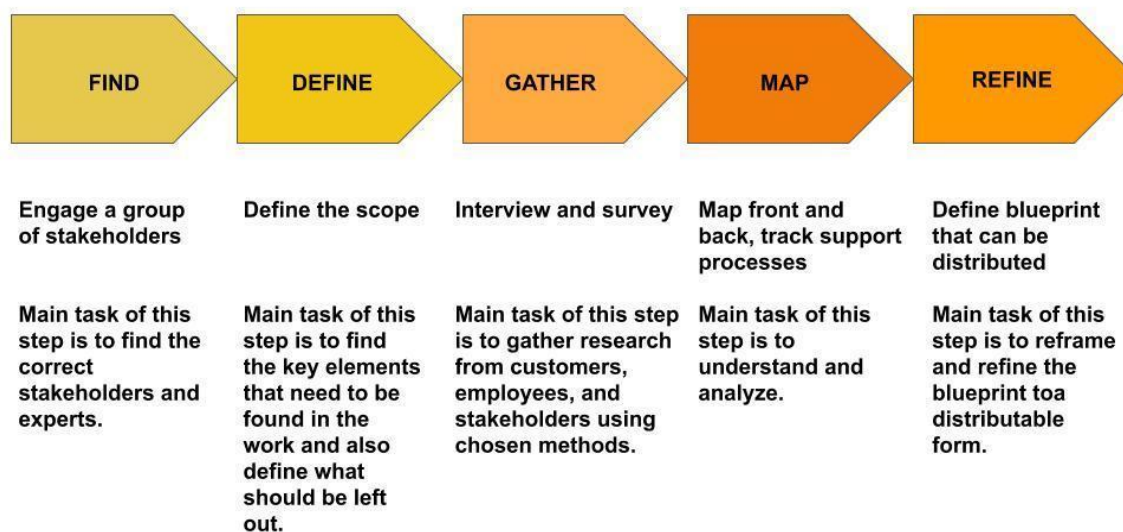


Figure 15. Service design process chart

The first two steps in the figure are to figure out and work through and the latter three are more co-creational and to be iterated based upon feedback each time the content consultation process is ongoing with a company. All of the mentioned are, from a service design point of view, communicative and co-creational. The importance of the steps and

their order is in the process, all of these have to be done, and even better if it happens in this order.

The workbooks are to be tailored in some form for each customer case-by-case and that is the reason an actual manual is not compiled, instead, workbooks can be combined, replicated, and modified. All of these are done with co-creational methods and workshops to get into the content creation process. Appendix III is the final workbook crafted for this case. It answers to the very basic needs that the content production team needs to remember.

Related to the case, there are a few selected choices for good co-creational methods that help a company to align their communication direction for good, continuous, and quality audio content. In case three of the thesis, more overall materials are produced with yet the same aim to help people create and produce quality content.

The first case to be presented is the podcast ideation done for Spoon Publishing Helsinki. Spoon Publishing Helsinki is a branch office of Spoon Agency which is located in Stockholm. In the Helsinki office a little over ten people including project managers, writers, video producers, and client directors work.

The customer base varies within the B2B sector, the work done includes content consultation and/or production, and project and client management. Spoon Helsinki wanted to add audio content to the selection of the products and services it offers and from there it seemed to be a good idea for the office to produce its own audio content as well. In the process the chosen methods were a preliminary questionnaire, a workshop held based on that and a summing up workbook gathered based on the results.

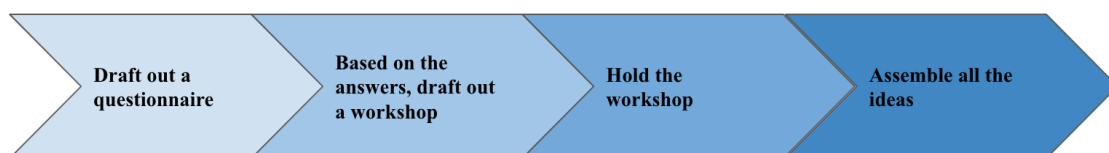


Figure 16. Process chart for case Agency

Above is the raw outlining process chart of Case Agency. These steps were taken in a short amount of time and the production was ready to be started. To have a starting nudge on the production, it was planned that after a preliminary questionnaire was sent to ten people involved as a link. The questionnaire is featured as appendix I .

After that, a workshop was held that pulled together all the thoughts and ideas that the community had on the matter and from there, an actual production started. Based on the answers that the team gave, a presentation was prepared that started off the workshop that was facilitated to the people involved later in the podcast production. The slides are featured as Appendix II. The focus was to gather the ideas that had come up already separately so that people would have an easier time ideating on together in the workshop.

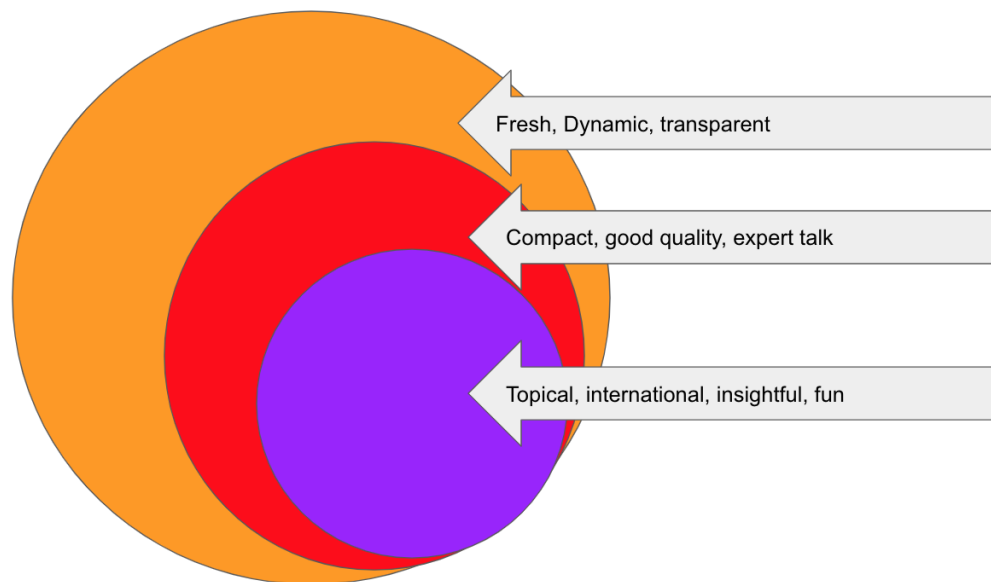


Figure 17. Donald Norman's three levels of design - Case Agency

According to Donald Norman's levels of design, what was aimed for can be visualized as can be seen above.

The case Agency small difficulties were common as producing content for content people might have its own occupational illnesses. Instead of the point being in the content like it is when doing editorial work for clients, the point is in the grasping of the hardest and most current issues in ways that show experiences and ability in content production itself. The ability to present issues in various ways and give them a spin with the right energy is, of course, a craft to be mastered if one wishes to work in the field of marketing communications.

Donald Norman's dichotomy on this case is seen above and in relation to this case, is about meta-level issues. Quality of expression is a key term. To translate this into more concrete form the tool of Personas can be used to clear out who is the target audience.

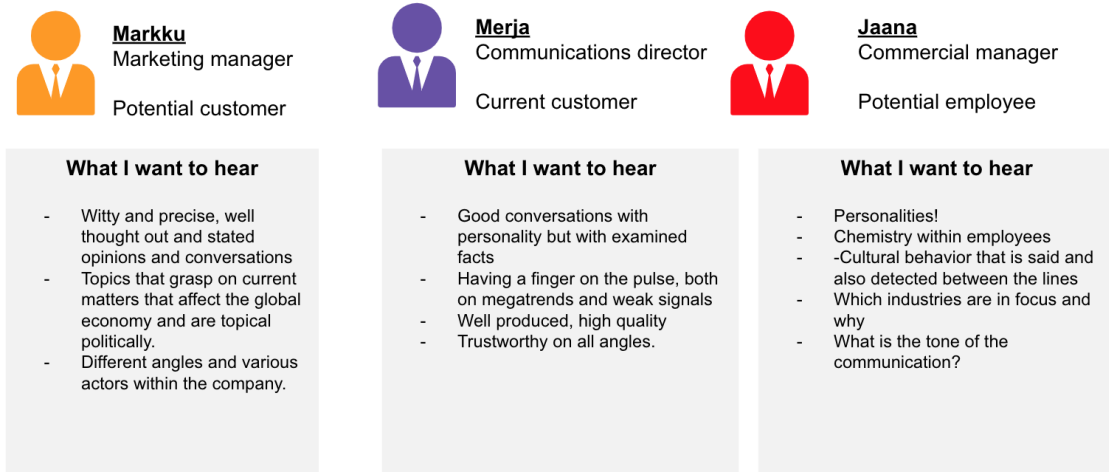


Figure 18. Personas for Case Agency

The learning curve of a case as this one is on designing on meta-level; when facts are missing but the expression is key to success, it is even harder to orchestrate the whole into sounding efficient. Designing the process of content production is the founding element when there is not much industry talk that needs to be communicated.

Facilitating co-creational workshops and giving out advice is a process that can be broken down into actions that all lead to a successful co-creation process. Below, is a figure explaining the steps that can be outlined from a co-creational workshop from the facilitator's point of view.



Figure 19. Co-designing from a facilitator's point of view.

Piritta Kantojärvi defines four key questions in her book 'Fasilitointi luo uutta - Menesty ryhmän vetäjänä (2012). The first thing to ask is how the starting point can be understood and from there, how the right layout of the issue can be found, after that the next step is to ask what kinds of ideas are needed?

Will any solution do or does the solution need to be something truly new and transformational. In the case of podcasting, this would convert into the decision is the content going to be straightforwardly about business and directly aiming for sales as an 'elevator talk' or a problem defining and solving statement or is the content moreover a line of business-related deep dive into something that is meaningful for the industry?

Technical key questions are, how far are the collected ideas refined right away and what happens after the workshop? For the processes that occurred during this thesis process, the matters of these two questions intermingled with each other and became one process that was taking steps towards the end product with idea refining and production advancements happening in turns. Facilitating happens in a predefined space and time, but it does not have to be one occurrence but can also be a series of events.

The first step is usually introducing ideas. In that state, it is crucial to encourage ideation, document the ideas that come up, act non judgemental, keep reactions to ideas neutral, try to combine ideas so that they become entities, and be radical (to an extent) in letting ideas surface. After this, it is time to refine - take an objective look at the ideas and see how they match the purpose and goals. Focusing on the targets subsides the wild ideation phase, although trying to refine even the most out-of-the-box ideas is meaningful at this point. Focusing on what is wanted and needed is more important than what is not wanted. (Kantojärvi, 2012, 25-26.)

In order for both phases to be prosperous, the facilitator needs to be able to both ignite and extinguish without being too dominant. A good facilitator is clear about the goals and communicates respectfully what is heard and what could be produced pre-, during and post live design meetings. Being unbiased, accepting content decisions without the need to manipulate the outcomes and so being supportive of the process instead of coming down with personal opinions on the matter is a competence issue that a good facilitator is able to conduct, like a tightrope dancer. (Kantojärvi, 2012, 40.)

A very important matter is to remember that being lucrative in the creation processes is essential - what is pre planned hardly ever manifests as planned. changing a process, a way of working or the goal ad hoc is normal. What helps is to help decision making, clarify and sum up situations when it is needed. This ties together with making all the group members focus and stay on the same page. (Kantojärvi, 2012, 40.)

Being aware of the most usual pitfalls of a facilitator is necessary, so one can detect a moment when falling into one is close at hand. To list a few that Kantojärvi (2012) finds to be the most usual ones are best summarized with figure 4. below.

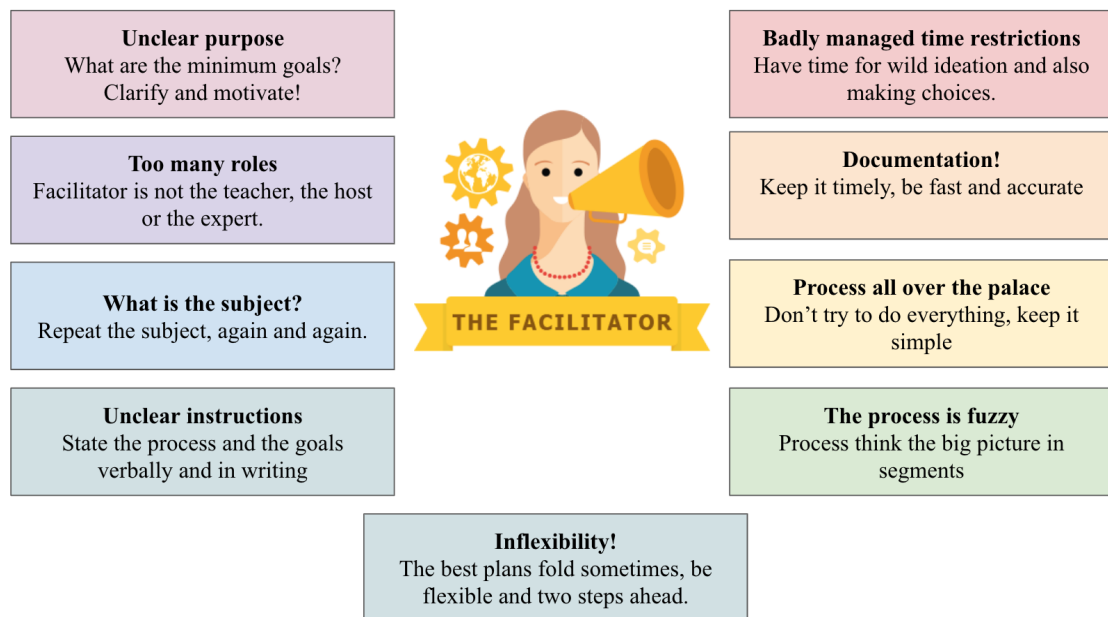


Figure 20. Typical pitfalls of a facilitator according to Kantojärvi (2012)

Like with everything, professionalism comes with experience and not without trials and tribulations. Facilitating workshops are of course very different depending on the crowd, subject, and overall circumstances.

Content creation brings forth the nuances of communities and companies finding a common voice that tells stories, new ones with new tones, old ones with new circumstances and so forth. Facilitating content designing is highly personal as usually the voice used is from within a business community.

## 13 Content and strategy - Case Client

Content marketing becomes a meaningful way of communicating and engaging prospects and clients if the distribution of the content is done in an intelligent way in the so-called buying journey. As Ardath Albee states in her book 'eMarketing Strategies for the complex sale' (2010, 15), interactive exchanges transform push marketing to attraction marketing. With attraction marketing marketers are worth their prospects' time. Attraction marketing invites interactions such as responses, feedback, comments, questions, and participation.

In the context of content marketing distribution, consistency is also very much a key element. consistency can be further divided into consistent delivery of relevant and helpful



content. Each positive interaction develops the trust clients have for the company. (Albee, 2010, 17.)

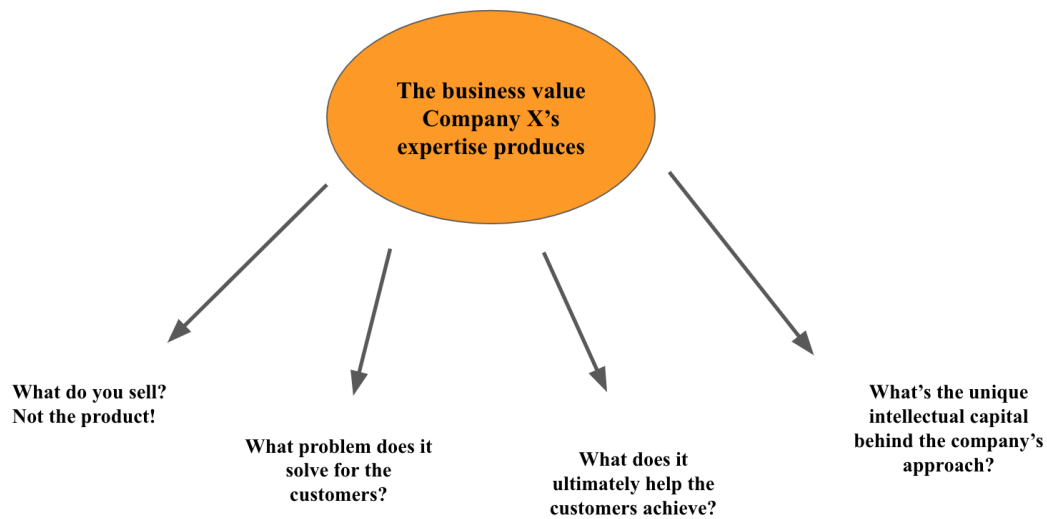


Figure 21. Questions for the content developer (Albee, 2010, 99)

Above is the simple four question template that helps content design. When asking these questions, it is important to step into the shoes of the persona chosen to be the target of the content.

When doing content planning, taking a look at the buying phase, the prospects' and/or clients' situation helps to plan out the angle of the content. Status quo is when a prospect is experiencing a problem or an obstacle, this is the time to introduce new considerations that might effectively eliminate those limitations. When whatever limitation is named and detected, expertise comes to play in more specific content that helps strategic thinking. (Albee, 2010, 44.)

If a client or a prospect is experiencing a priority shift, this is the time for a company to draw positive focus on themselves by being educational and highlighting business-value that collaboration might bring. Showcasing customer success stories, talking about business value and being sure to communicate the business value in partnering is key, but should be done with decency and not add-like. (Albee, 2010, 45.)

To sum up also from a market point of view, both states of clients and prospects described above can also be seen and analyzed from the point of view of any market or overall

economical situation, either for a geographical or a megatrend-considering point of view. These are crucial pieces of information that can be sort of cross-checked with clientele information of any company that is planning on producing their content.

### 13.1 Content type

A very true point that Albee makes in eMarketing strategies for the complex sale (2010) is that content that pulls prospects forward does it best when it is focused on one thing at a time. Being timely, as in seeing what the clients or prospects might want or need is important but being timely in the sense that also the trending issues of whatever industry can and should have an effect on the content as well.

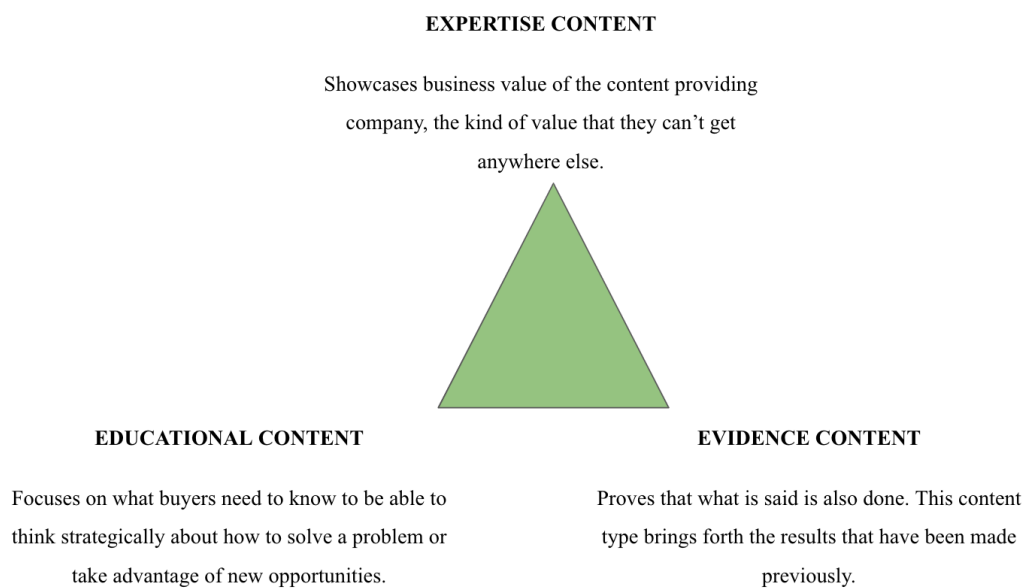


Figure 22. Content types according to Ardath Albee (2010, 96)

Above is the typology that Albee divides sales-driving content to. Of course, the typology isn't always so straight forward with the division, but this helps to assess what might be the aim when creating content to enable sales.

When selecting the style of communication, the choices can be called for example mentoring, being a thought leader/expert, or talking like a peer (Albee, 2010, 130.). Business content is mostly produced from the viewpoint of an expert, but in some cases being a respectful peer works even better. In audio, humanity gets through in the style one

speaks in and that should be noted and used when possible, for example the angle one approaches a subject.

## 13.2 Case client

One of Spoon's clients was interested in testing out this medium as a platform for content marketing. What started off as wanting to try audio content marketing, had to be made into a concrete plan that started out with a thorough benchmarking of the area of business that the company is in audio content-wise. Below is a process chart of the main steps in the production.

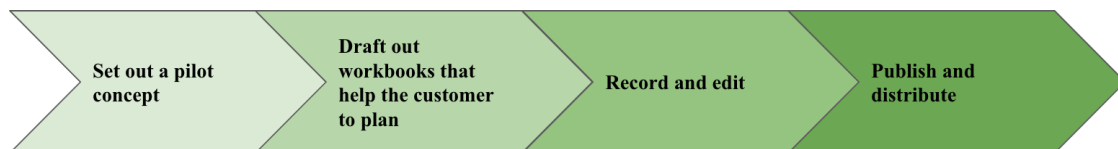


Figure 23. Process chart for case Client

Going through what needed to be said and what sort of pilot was to be done, it was evident that inside the industry there was not a lot of branded content done with fine-tuned entities and continuance in mind. What benchmarking showed us was that there was evidently space for good quality content that was close to the brand and positioned the company in three ways - current customer relationships, potential customer relationships, and potential employees and rivals.

Solely for informative purposes, the content within the industry comes from other sources, and therefore that angle was left out from this production. What was much important was to get the sound and the speakers to work for the benefit of the brand and shed light on the culture while showcasing their expertise.

To get the natural performer out of one's persona, coaching and giving feedback becomes the most important job for the producer. That means social skills most of all and a shared vision of the end product. Brand management comes from the client, manifestation of it, from the producer.

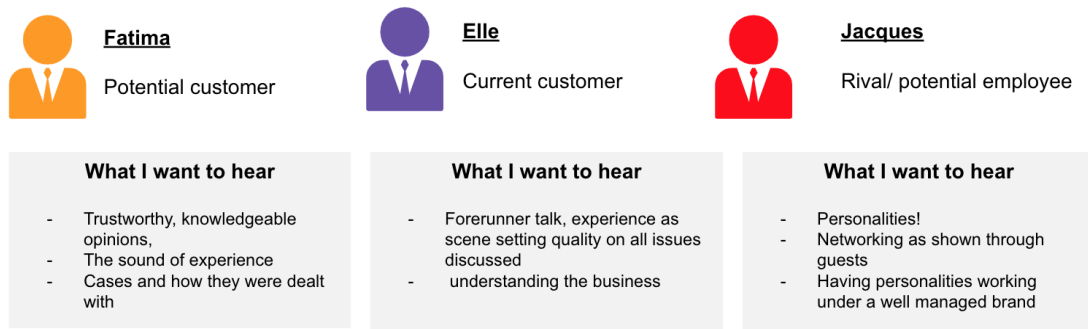


Figure 24. Personas for case Client

Above are the personas for the case Client. The aims were kept simple and low, the brand needed to be the centering thought and the people talking had to incorporate their personas very close to the brand at the same time sounding natural. As an industry, the clients' industry is quite small and all efforts for an outside consultant or a producer to describe it better than the ones leading the process from the clients' side were not considered fruitful, and thus the personas simply acknowledge who is listening and what might be the reasons.

After mapping out what sort of content can be found in their areas of business, we had discussions during weekly meetings with the client about what sort of content they would find natural in producing and ended up piloting the medium with a three-part mini-series to see how the working community and their clients find the format.

In the discussions with the client it was clear that even though they enjoy their news in written form, they were all aware that many of the publications they follow also publish podcasts on a daily basis and deeper "long-reads" every so often as well. Leaning on this information, we wanted to make an entity that would not be too news-driven but that would give out the personality of the company and the main people there.

As appendix IV you will find the instructions laid out for the people at the company before the production of the series started. We ended up using the mold very much while doing the episodes. For each episode, there was a time slot of one hour that was meant to be used almost all the way but still in a way that one episode, when edited, would last a lot less, as the document tells you.

The customer needed emotional support as well as production support but the ideation support came in the form of the document crafted for their use. Besides this, they needed to do a distribution plan that was provided to them through our network. Together with the

mini-series, there was content in other formats produced to support the launch of the podcast.

According to Donald Norman's levels of design, what was aimed for is visualized below.

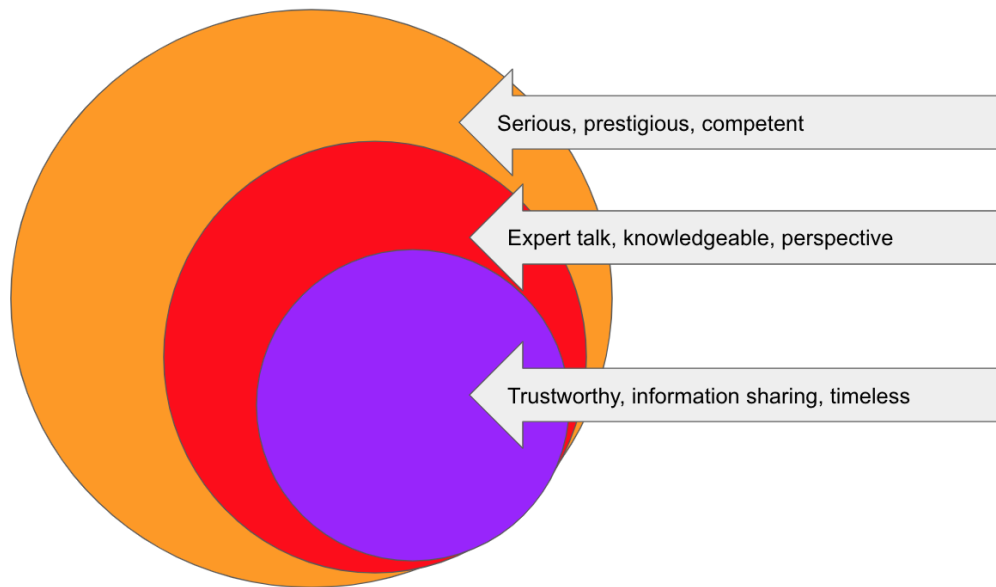


Figure 25. Donald Norman's three levels of design - Case Client.

### 13.3 Content distribution

When it comes to content marketing one important strategic detail is to consider the distribution of the content. In the beginning there were a few platforms mentioned but in reality many platforms live, die, get crowded or languish. What needs to be considered is the format and the actual content of the content.

In the book "Master content strategy – How to maximize your reach & boost your bottom line every time you hit publish" Pamela Wilson describes a few tips on how to tailor content so that its effective distribution is easier and the reach of the message is better.

It is a good idea to link old content and new content together, if the subject is the same. Sometimes it is a good idea to raise old content, by updating it - in this case maybe make a podcast out of a written post that has been popular according to analytics. Wilson suggests that most content can be done in many formats to reach more people - videos to texts, texts to audio, and so forth. Repurposing content in this way makes it spread wider.

Wilson quotes Mark Shafer who is a content marketing veteran, who already in 2014 claimed that we have arrived at a time where simply creating well-crafted content is not enough. Following the basic laws of supply and demand, there is too much content being created. He claims also that there should be as much time spent on making a distribution strategy as there is time spent on creating the content.

I also discussed the subject with a marketing automation consultant with years of experience in the field Erik Stenberg (personal communication, 31st November 2019), who found that the most important thing is to ensure the relevance of the content, the mix of forms of communication is secondary. He went on saying that there is a small risk of over-engineering content according to the form of communication because it is thought that customers search blogs for certain types of content, videos for something else, etc. The most important thing would be to ensure consistent communication across the channels.

Distribution is not so much on how many different subjects and angles can be distributed but more how efficiently different formats with the same message are done and published. There is a lot of content but there should be harder decisions made content wise, more done quality and distribution-wise, with one message on multiple formats, including audio. This is also a natural gateway for many companies on how to start producing audio content - by translating previous text or video content into audio format and seeing how the audience takes in the new variety.

## **14 Building understanding of the medium - Case training materials**

Spoon Agency has a much-varied clientele, who are interested in being involved in producing their own audio content. One-to-one consultation is for a content agency the number one and also the best profitable product. But since one-to-one consultation is not always possible other products to meet the demand for support have to be found.

For this demand, an online course on the subject of podcasting was drafted. Designing the materials and using them in the edited version that also included a video that was done in Stockholm and featured the author of the thesis as the performer in the spring of 2019. The slides can be seen as appendix V. The slides are the first part of the materials and could be

described as something that gives steps to all aspects that need to be considered whilst planning and producing one's own series. The written materials are what the lecture was based upon, it has all the elements on separate slides that need to be either considered or familiarised by oneself before starting production of a professional sounding podcast.

After watching the lecture there was a homework quiz that is meant to be done after completing the online course lectures and after reading all the written materials, the quiz is featured as appendix VI. Drafting these materials, we bounced around ideas via email and tried to get the design process to give ourselves guidelines to what kind of information a person needs on a basic level to get a grasp on the medium.

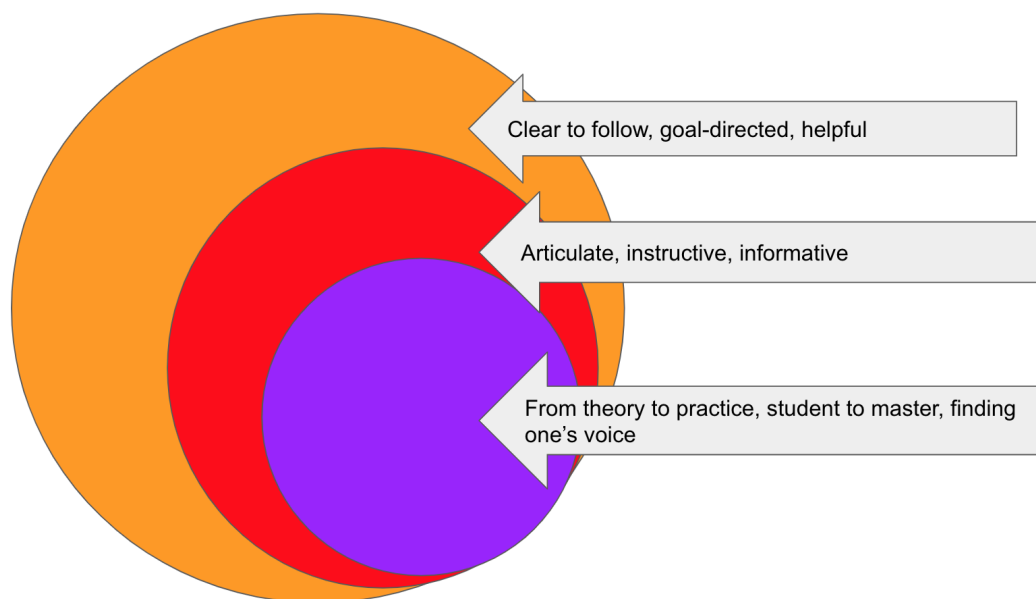


Figure 26. Donald Norman's three levels of design - Case training materials.

The idea was that this training would be a part of a longer series of pieces of training that would be on other media production topics such as video production, social media presence, etc. To design the course materials to match the whole but at the same time bring useful information I used personas (Figure 8.) as a tool to plan my materials.

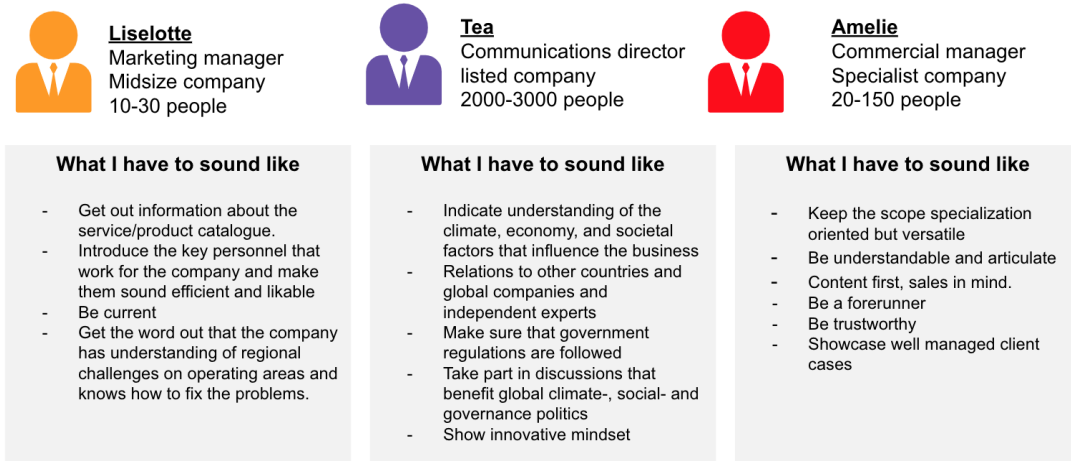


Figure 27. Personas for Case training materials

The personas above helped assess the delivery on the video and adjust it to the brand, under which the entity was done. Having drafted the audience based on the knowledge of it probably purchasing the materials helped to see what was important to say. In this case, important was to give these people the basic knowledge of what equipment might be needed, how consistency is crucial for a content series to become a phenomenon, how there needs to be some interest and understanding of the medium and about the strengths and weaknesses of one's expression on audio.



Figure 28. Process chart for Case training materials

Case three happened from a different angle than the first two, again more from the meta-level of content production as it was not a case of client work for a field of business not centered around communications and marketing. Not being sure of the audience, so that all of their strengths and weaknesses are unknown cast a shadow of a doubt on the design process of the materials.

Case three was in comparison the hardest with so many actual outcomes hanging in the air, a lighthouse in the dark was the brand of content production consultancy that this was produced for and the brand that was already there for them. That made it easier to set a



tone of voice and decide the content. As the podcast production segment was a part of a series of educational materials produced, there was a possibility to see one other subject being taught as an episodic entity that lit the way in creating the content for case three.

## **15 Results**

The three cases done represent different angles on how to familiarise with the medium. For the author the learning experience was on both facilitating and being the leader of the productions but also being the creative and being innovative, with the help of design tools.

All associated parties on the projects were satisfied with the results of the processes done together. Them being meaningful or useful in relation to the end result, is another angle and not a part of this study

Through the thesis, many versions of workbooks were drafted and used, and also put to test. As said earlier in the thesis, creative project management tools such as these workbooks are to be drafted per client and case and therefore cannot ever be seen as ready or done. What can be seen as a result, is finding tools that fit content co-creation and content marketing creation processes.

For case Agency, all the workbooks were to help out the content creation process to be more clear - mapping knowledge, mapping ideas and then summarising them through workshop co-creation and by formatting a guideline workbook.

Case Client was the lightest and for that, the workbook was simply to help to grasp the format both technically and deliverance-wise. Case training materials were then the heaviest in the workload, drafting the script for the video as the slides, planning and writing the quiz was both laborious and educational.

## **16 Conclusions**

All of the cases point out how many professionals are afraid of speaking to a microphone and might not assess the fear. It was evident in the first two cases, how self-awareness

takes away from expertise in a performative environment - even when speaking about something that the subject has unique expertise in, the delivery takes a toll.

The third case was planned so that it would tackle most of the self-doubt if the person going through the course materials would actually prepare themselves through the advice given. It is inevitable that stage fright should be acknowledged beforehand and dealt with as much as possible - rehearsing, testing out the manuscript with peers in a written form, and trusting the editors are good tools.

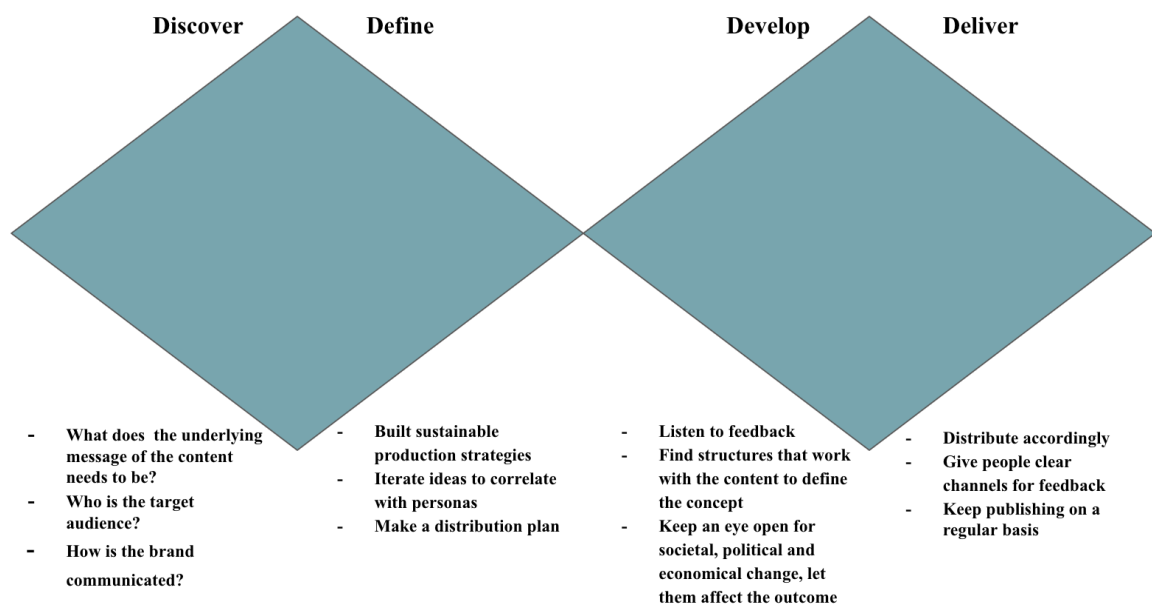


Figure 29. Double diamond analysis on content creation

Using the double diamond model to analyze which areas of design snippets happen in which part of the design entity helped to gather up the lessons of this process into one picture. To see the whole process the division into these four phases helped to assess what needs to be done on every content design process and preferably in which order.

Even when it can be said that the same elements occur in at least the three cases presented in this work, it is still quite obvious that the design process varies a lot depending on the preparedness of the organizations and the authors of the podcasts. Having some interest and listening experiences of the medium even in an unprofessional setting does plenty for the preparedness. This was evident in both productions and needed to be emphasized in the training material.

Coming back to the research questions ‘How to do insightful audio B2B marketing?’ and additionally, ‘How to co-create and design engaging audio content marketing?’ The answers could be that by being very communicative with the production team, listening to the expertise of the client about their understanding about their business, giving people tools in expression and making sure that the brand and the format are in unison and can be sustained in podcast medium format.

Below is a SWOT analysis to sum up the main observations. To master the medium there needs to be a certain understanding of one’s own business, this medium, and also its drawbacks. And like anything that leans on expression, there needs to be patience and courage. After all, all marketing needs to bring about emotions and information, act as an incentive to action but not too bluntly, and still not too subtle so it does not get lost in the noise.

Strengths	Weaknesses
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- The medium is easily accessible with everyday equipment</li> <li>- Can be consumed while doing other things, commuting, working, etc</li> <li>- Feels more personal than written media</li> <li>- Can be done by most people with production help.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- While the format is growing, it is still unfamiliar to some industries and consumers</li> <li>- If not done professionally, will be a turn off for some listeners</li> <li>- Most companies that try this can’t keep production consistent and keep up the quality.</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Can become a number one source of information easily thanks to its accessibility</li> <li>- As the medium is breaking at the moment, there is a momentum to be grabbed in many industries and many geographical areas</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Even when said that there is room in the market for this sort of marketing, everybody wants a piece of the pie, to stand out a company needs to work hard and have the patience to wait. Competition is plenty and hard.</li> <li>- When has measuring marketing been easy?</li> </ul>
Opportunities	Threats

Figure 30. SWOT analysis on podcasts as a medium for companies

From the cases represented in this thesis, there can be a few points to be made besides the ones already stated. Sound is a personal way of doing marketing communications and that is the precise reason it should be done in many lengths and with niche like topics discussed, as the consuming is effortless and growing in popularity all the time.

To master any sort of marketing communications actions, companies benefit from professional consultation on the format and the topics and also help in content production as well as technical production, not forgetting about distribution. All this will make it easy for them to sound professional in their own field of business and gain ROI from marketing.

From all of this the author has learned that creative production processes vary greatly depending on the preparedness and the skill set of the organization that one works with. Once again, good communication skills help out in carving out the bumps that are on every kind of road to a well produced product. From this point here, if the research were to be continued, the subject would be more focused on production and the technical production stages, how the actual physical production could be seen as a service process.

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## List of Figures

- Figure 1. The frame of reference ... 4
- Figure 2. Stakeholder map - example of people involved .. 7
- Figure 3. Core principles of service design (ONE design, 2018) ... 8
- Figure 4. Service design tools and methods - alignment and problem solving (ONE design, 2018) ... 10
- Figure 5. Service design tools and methods - Discovery and mapping (ONE design, 2018) ... 12
- Figure 6. Service design tools and methods - Ideation and envisioning (ONE design, 2018) ... 13
- Figure 7. Service design tools and methods - Evolution planning (ONE design, 2018) ... 15
- Figure 8. Process chart of the thesis with the timeline ... 17

Figure 8. Double diamond analysis - The design actions used in the cases of the thesis ...	16
Figure 9 . Process chart of the thesis timeline ...	19
Figure 10. Donald Norman's three levels of design ...	19
Figure 11. Podcast awareness among US population 12+ (Edison research, 2019) ...	21
Figure 12. Reasons for listening to podcasts (Edison research, 2019) ...	21
Figure 13. Reasons why podcasts are enjoyable (Edison research, 2019) ...	23
Figure 14. Action funnel of podcast listening ...	26
Figure 15. service design process chart...	31
Figure 16. Process chart for case Agency ...	32
Figure 17. Donald Norman's three levels of design - Case Agency ...	33
Figure 18. Personas for Case Agency ...	34
Figure 19. Co-designing from a facilitator's point of view ...	35
Figure 20. Typical pitfalls of a facilitator according to Kantojärvi (2012) ...	37
Figure 21. Questions for the content developer (Albee, 2010, 99) ...	38
Figure 22. Content types according to Ardath Albee (2010, 96) ...	39
Figure 23. Process chart for case Client ...	40
Figure 24. Personas for case Client ...	41
Figure 25. Donald Norman's three levels of design - Case Client ...	42
Figure 26. Donald Norman's three levels of design - Case training materials ...	44
Figure 27. Personas for Case training materials ...	45
Figure 28. Process chart for Case training materials ...	45
Figure 29. Double diamond analysis on content creation ...	47
Figure 30. SWOT analysis on podcasts as a medium for companies ...	48

# Appendices

## Appendix I - The preliminary poll - Case Agency

Spoon Helsinki's podcast

Let's make a relevant and fun podcast, together.

For us to succeed and be able to make a longterm sustainable and high-quality podcast for Spoon Helsinki, we need to have a dream, a plan, the tools and the dedication and a joint vision, to start with.

1. Name

2. What are your favorite podcasts and why?

3. Where do you get your industry related news from - name a few sources and with a few words, describe how the info you are getting makes you a better marketing comms pro.

4. Who do you think we should think of as the audience we hope for? Arrange these alternatives to an order that makes the most sense to you:

Current customers, potential customers, industry rivals, potential employees.

1

2

3

4

5. Related to question 4. What might we be able to offer these groups, what do we think we have that might raise the interest of these group. Answer in the same order as you classified the importance of the groups.

6. How long a podcast should be to hold your interest - Context being work-related. 15 minutes, 30 minutes, 60 minutes, something else? Tell us your thoughts!



7. How often do you want a series to have updates: Once a week, twice a month, once a month, something else? Tell us your thoughts!

8. If you would have your own work-related podcast of 15 minutes or a segment, what would it be about? Go big, go wild, don't worry, tell us.

The questionnaire was planned so that it helped people to get oriented in the medium as a listener but also give a thought to who else might listen to Spoon's audio content. The idea

## Appendix II - Presentation for the workshop - Case Agency

### Who are we doing this for?

Based on the answers given:

1. Potential customers
2. Current customers

Runner up - 3. Potential employees

(And because walls have ears.. Rivals will most probably be listening in as well, at least if we make this a good on-going quality series. Let's keep this in mind.



### The Basics

- ★ Most votes go out for updating the podcast **twice a month**.
  - Twice a month is doable and the minimum that is rewarding to do and for the audience, episodes could be done on one session and released two weeks apart.
  - If there is something big happening, that we want to discuss, we can release shorter extra episodes that can be for example *"Spoonful of video production in marcomms"* or *"Spoonful of IPCC report"*
- ★ Most votes go out for the length of **15-30 minutes**.
  - Aiming for a 20 minute episode, with a little variation, sounds like a starting point that doesn't cause pressure and gets us going.
  - This means that we have to have at least 25-30 minutes recorded per episode/topic.

## Framework of what should the podcast portray of us - according to Spooners

### PROCESS UNDERSTANDING, QUALITY SERVICES

Our news sense and contextual storytelling style, offer an insight into the process of how we come up with ideas for clients, proof that we are knowledgeable in our field and have our finger on the pulse.

### CURRENT, TOPICAL

Unexpected realisations of topical matters, Current affairs affecting client's industry, Understanding of various industries, understanding the political and economical undercurrents.

### FUN, OPEN, SOCIAL

Segments that bring out the personalities and expertise of people currently at Spoon, positive attitude! Laughter improves efficiency! External interviewees & honest opinions & great personalities.

### INTERNATIONAL, WELCOMING, TRANSPARENT

An international team with knowledge of global affairs, the versatility of Spoon is and how interesting a workplace it is, insight into the type of environment clients and potential clients could be involved in and an understanding of how we work, we should make our customers feel good about working with us.

## Things to consider together today

- ★ Who will take the lead - We take turns? **Discussion**
- ★ Rotating host shifts - Person hosts two episodes, guests can bring the topics before hand (at least one week before the recording). **Discussion**
- ★ Materials, inspirations - From where? - **Post-it Brainstorming**
- ★ Reoccurring segments - **Post-it Brainstorming**
- ★ Idea sessions - together within 'Show and Tell' once a month? **Discussion**
- ★ Everyone think of their own "Spoonful" -mini episode. Suggest a "Spoonful" for someone else, what do you want to hear about? **Post-it Brainstorming**

**Everyone: Listen to podcasts of the industry. Keep an ear out.**

## Appendix III - Wireframe template - Case Agency

### Wireframe of Spoon Helsinki's – podcast

- The podcast will be around 15-20 minutes per episode. We need at least 25 minutes recorded per episode.
- One episode consists of two topics that are chosen from the previous 'Show and tell' materials that people have brought in.
- The recording will be done right after the 'Show and Tell' or the morning of the following Monday (so that people are around to record), the episode is edited and out on Tuesday.
- The podcast will air in the first week and the third week of the month.
- The podcast will have a recurring segment: "What numbers don't tell you"

- This segment is put together by Lena or a person that Lena designates prior to this and info is gotten from Statista.
- The podcast will be distributed under Spoon Helsinki's page but also Spoon's blog page.

Things to remember while recording:

- Cite your sources correctly and precisely, mention all the most important identification info before going to the core of the issue.
  - Form an opinion and state it. Also, on the topic that the other person brought in.
  - Be interested, ask questions, be a fun human being – this is not the news.
- A Finnish saying goes “Even if you think you are the best, you might still be shit”, meaning: Flirt with the subject, talk and put forth your best behavior and don't take it for granted that your personality or your case is understandable to people listening, so keep in mind the target audience. And, if you say something completely stupid, it can be edited out.

## **Appendix IV - Client instructions - Case Client**

### Podcast series – Instructions for preparations

We are aiming for 20-minute-long episodes, which means we have to record around 30-40 minutes of material per episode, so we can cut and edit the episode. Each recording session at a professional studio is 60 minutes. This means there is plenty of time for retakes but we have to be mindful of the time since the studio slots are pretty strict and booked in advance. Remember, it is better to have five takes and one good, relaxed one rather than trying to “white knuckle” in a perfect one.

### The structure of an episode is usually like this:

- Jingle – The host/main character tells the **name of the show (this needs to be decided)** and introduces the guests and the topic of discussion. A few kind words are said before getting into the main subject.

- The discussion of the subject will start either with a question by the main character or a claim on the subject that gets the discussion going.
  
- The main topics are chosen beforehand, and the participants have a list of them. The wording and dialogue should not be too carefully planned in advance but all participants should be aware of the probable storyline up to a point.
  
- When aiming for a 20-minute episode, **divide the recording time (in this case 30-40 minutes) to 5-minute segments for planning:** The first five minutes is for introductions and small talk. The following segments will be reserved for perspectives/questions/points and the last 5 minutes is for wrapping the conversation nicely and for goodbyes.
  
- These instructions are not to be taken too precisely but this helps when structuring what points have to be said or what questions have to be asked. If the segments end up being 3 min it is fine, because we have material to cut. The segments should not go much over 5 min, so keep an eye on the clock.

Introduction	First point/ Question	Second point/ question	Third point/ question	Fourth point/ question	Fifth point/ question	Wrap up
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People should be aware of their own ability to let loose and improvise. The best podcasts sound really relaxed and that is also what we are going for here, not too much reading from a paper. Trying to keep in mind that sound is a very intimate medium, sounding like a friend instead of a newsreader is crucial, it brings up trust and positivity.

1. If there will be a panel, three people will be required, and they shouldn't agree on everything, who could they be?
2. Describe shortly your ideal listener.
3. Will the artwork be your logo? Remember, it has to work in thumbnail size as well.
4. We can create a short sound logo/ jingle for your podcast.  
Describe the soundscape you are looking for - major or minor, modern or classical, light or strong, other things to consider etc.  
Based on the description Spoon comes up with a suggestion.

Included are two iteration rounds on the jingle. The cost is included in the quote.

## Appendix V - The presentation - Case Training materials

### Podcasting, what's the deal?

Podcasting is a fun way of giving people knowledge or entertainment on an issue. The podcast scene is booming and for every subject imaginable, there are multiple publications. So make sure you have a passion for the niche you are trying to reach. Have the technical requirements to make good quality production. Have a distribution plan thought through and be consistent.

But really, much of this is also improvisational theater at it's funnest.

### Focus on the delivery and take a stand

- Be self-conscious but don't let it take the best your delivery.
- Before going to the studio, prep yourself like you were going to make a keynote speech. Try to be in a state where you know what to say and in which order, that usually takes care of most of the mmm's and eeerrr's.
- In actuality writing down what you want to say, is not the way to go, nobody likes a person reading from a paper, with dulled feeling.
- Knowing your time limit is good, so keep an eye on the clock.

## Think in seasons, after that, think in episodes

- It is good to have an umbrella theme. Then it is good to think in seasons: Having a theme for a season as well as individual episodes is crucial.
- One season should consist of at least 8-10 episodes, publication interval should not be over two weeks.
- A must remember issue: Recording is only one piece of the puzzle. Editing also takes a lot of time and should be acknowledged when making a schedule for the podcast.
- One episode should to could have some reoccurring elements or segments, what ever they are, so that the show gets it's format.

## Define your niche

- Combine your favourite fruit and least favourite colour, add the word podcast to the end and Google. It will lead you to a podcast on the subject. By this I mean: Really try to define what you are going for and shout it out loud and let it come through in the naming process as well.
- When trying to find your niche and making room for the podcast in your genre, consistency based thinking really helps. Like said before, give the seasonal thinking a chance to tell everyone what the podcast is and where it is going.
- Be aware of trying to please too big of a crowd, generality in subjects is something that is mistaken for profoundly (but simply) explaining the basics, in other words: Ask yourself

## Get the right gear, think about the length

- Since you can't fall back on your good looks with audio content, it's important to provide a quality listening experience to your audience. That means using the right equipment. Think about it like this: It is like good manners, they are not center of action but they sure make a huge difference.
- We never record an episode longer than about 40 mins, with 20 mins being the average. The logic is that people listen to the podcast when they are travelling, quite often commuting by car or train. Anything longer wouldn't be convenient for the audience.

## Business podcasts to listen to:

- Telia's podcast 'Fast Forward' is about their industry and digitalisation.
- Carcotec's 'Investor relations', This series is for present and prospective investors of Cargotec IR.
- Nordea's 'Nordea Markets Insights Global'. A podcast for investors.
- UPS' 'Longitudes' which is a more general podcast on the paths of possible futures.

## Podcasts to follow for multiple reasons:

- What really took home the Podcast-scene: Serial.  
(From the same makers S-Town, highly recommend it!)
- Who dominates the conversation scene: The Joe Rogan experience.  
(Really good runner-up is WTF with Marc Maron)
- Wanna be surprised and have a good laugh? Listen to 'Missing Richard Simmons'.  
(Also good, 'my dad wrote a porno' or 'The mystery show')
- Want to learn something? Then please enjoy 'Freakonomics, the king of fun and useful'.  
(An amazing one is also 'Hidden Brain')
- Are you serious but still want to enjoy content? Go for 'Dan Carlin's Hardcore history'.  
(Or for similar Malcolm Gladwell's Revisionist history).
- Want to be emotional and intimate? Try listening to Esther Perel's "Where should we begin".

Thank you!

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## Appendix VI - The quiz - Case Training materials

1. What is the best length for a podcast?

- a. 10 minutes
- b. 20-30 minutes
- c. One hour

Right answer: It can be any length. A good rule of thumb is, that when you are making a podcast based on a current topic or purely on facts, the length should be shorter. 20 minutes is a good median, it fits both facts and discussion in that time frame. The longer an episode gets, it can have more interviews and discussion, it can even stray from the original topic a bit.

2. What are the needed technical arrangements?

- a. Nothing much, an iPhone and a comfortable couch
- b. Portable recording equipment and the right software
- c. Studio, software and a second opinion on the quality

The right answer is C. All of the above can do, but to ensure good steady quality, it is wise to keep the bar on this matter high. Some very prestigious publications have a very bad sound quality and mixing in their podcasts, which easily turns out feeling like the whole production is secondary quality and compromises also the content that comes along with it.

3. What can you do to make it successful?

- a. Do your best and hope for the best
- b. Share it, make others share it, and be consistent with producing new episodes
- c. Find your niche and go for it

Once again, all the answers are right, but in the correct order of C, B, and then A. It all starts with a good idea and a tight niche that will probably find the podcasts relevant. After that, the keywords are consistency and distribution. Podcasts are everywhere right now, for



a series to become distinguishable and popular, it needs to have a lot of people bump into it. And last, good luck!

4. What is the best kind of host?

- a. Anyone that has something to tell and isn't afraid to do so
- b. Only the types that are talkative by nature
- c. Anyone who can read a script

The right answer is A. After finding your niche and making a plan for at least ten episodes, the time to hit the studio has come. In the studio, anything can happen: The most talkative people freeze and the shyest come out of their shell and clean the table with expertise and wit. The best host knows their business, is relaxed and has a sprinkle of showmanship in them.