

While Tioga Publishing Company's podcast, "What We Hear in the Northern Tier," is still very much a work in progress, feedback from the community has been vital in making constant improvements.

The weekly podcast is recorded by a different reporter each week and is typically edited by one person. Topics vary from the Pennsylvania Lumber Museum to soccer to the coronavirus.

One of the early criticisms of the podcast was that it sounded too rehearsed. We heard that from a couple of people after the first two podcasts were published. And that was true. It was our first time recording ourselves and we practiced a few times until we thought it sounded good. After the first few podcasts, we worked harder at making sure we sounded natural and, as with anything, it got better over time.

When editing, it can be easy to go overboard and delete every single "um," extended silence or stumble over words. While I will delete some stutters and some filler words, I try to keep the authenticity of it to avoid having it sound rehearsed. Deleting some of that will create a nicer listening experience and keeping the rest reminds people that we are humans too and that's just how humans talk.

Other feedback we've gotten is that it's too long. We usually keep it between 20-25 minutes. I think that if people don't typically listen to podcasts, that would seem like a long time. The podcasts that I regularly listen to are usually between 30-40 minutes. In my mind, 20-25 is a good length for what we're doing, but we do keep that in mind when we're recording and editing. The podcast is split up into two parts; the interview and the "inside scoop," where we talk about our favorite pieces in that week's paper. Some weeks when the interview went a little longer than normal, we've opted not to publish the inside scoop portion, in an effort to keep it shorter.

But, the weeks that we've done that, we've heard from listeners that their favorite part is the inside scoop, and they were sad that it wasn't in that week. So, it's not always a win-win. But we do our best to keep the whole episode to a reasonable length.

One reason we wanted to create this podcast was to connect with our readers on a different platform and on a different day of the week than the day the paper is published. A week before the first podcast went live, I published an editorial about the grant, the podcast and how people could listen. Each week we have a 2x5 ad in the paper that states who the guest is, what they're talking about and how/when people can listen.

A final piece of feedback we got was to have more sports content. It was hard to do that during the shutdown part of the pandemic, but our sports reporter did a great job getting people from Mansfield University and other local high schools to talk about the sports world.

A mistake I think we made is not promoting it more in the paper. That's obviously the biggest platform we have. I'm not sure the ad is eye popping enough to begin with but then we're really just relying on people seeing that one ad in a sea of other ads. I think writing about the podcasts and getting a little more about it in the paper will help gain more listeners.

Soliciting feedback on our social media, and even in the paper, I think will get us more, too.

We don't get a ton of listeners, as it's still new. We can usually count on 50, though some episodes have gotten a lot more than that. That doesn't seem like much, but it's enough

to keep us going. We currently just rely on our website to host the podcasts, but I would like to use something like BuzzSprout to get it on Spotify and the Apple podcast app.

Because we are a newspaper, we don't have a professional, soundproof recording studio. We record in our conference room, which is very much not soundproof. We haven't heard any complaints about it, but it's not uncommon to have a little background noise in the episode. It's something I'm more aware of and try my best to keep it as quiet as possible, but it's not always easy or doable.

We did originally plan to have episodes go live twice a week. After a few months, I realized this wouldn't be an easy task with our staff. We only have four reporters covering a wide area. It could be a possibility to split our normal once a week episode up into two parts, and have the interview go live on Monday and the inside scoop portion go live on Friday, a day after the paper is published. For now, we'll continue with the current plan and see how it continues to pan out over the next few months.