Ten Year Reunion: Creating a podcast with advice from successful young professionals to help recent graduates navigate their twenties

Clay Paciorek

Iowa State University

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Ten Year Reunion: Creating a podcast with advice from successful young professionals to help recent graduates navigate their twenties

by

Clay Paciorek

A creative component submitted to the graduate faculty
in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

MASTER OF SCIENCE

Major: Journalism and Mass Communication

Program of Study Committee:
Deni Chamberlin, Major Professor
Jan Boyles
Sridhar Ramaswami

The student author, whose presentation of the scholarship herein was approved by the program of study committee, is solely responsible for the content of this creative component. The Graduate College will ensure this creative component is globally accessible and will not permit alterations after a degree is conferred.

Iowa State University
Ames, Iowa
2020

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DEDICATION

I dedicate this project to my two children, Davis and Ada Mae. May you find a dream job of your own and never lose your thirst for knowledge.
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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to thank my committee chair, Prof. Deni Chamberlin, and my committee members, Dr. Jan Boyles and Dr. Sridhar Ramaswami for their direction and support throughout the course of this project. I am also grateful to my guests for sharing their time and experience to make this project a success.

I would also like to thank the department faculty, staff, and students at the Greenlee School of Journalism and Mass Communication as well as the Office of Admissions at Iowa State University for making these years a wonderful experience.

I grateful to my parents for lending their guidance and expertise. Finally, to my loving wife, Ellie. Without her support, this project would not have been possible. Thank you for your endless encouragement as we both chased our goals while raising two children. There is no one I would rather have by my side.
ABSTRACT

The first 10 years of an individual’s career can be such a pivotal time to grow as a person, find their passion in life, and establish themselves in their field. While there are some resources out there for job searches and career advice, much of that information is not targeted at young people looking for their dream job. With this project, I’ve created a podcast where I interview successful young professionals about their career path to serve as a resource for young people just starting their career.

My goal is that these interviews can be listened to and shared by recent graduates as they map out their career path and shoot for their dream job. I talk with Emmy winners, Forbes 30 Under 30 honorees, professional athletes, and award-winning architects, comedians, and entrepreneurs. These young professionals are leaders in their field and offer their perspective and advice to young people just starting out. In this paper, I lay out the blueprint I used to create this project and discuss the process of running my podcast, 10 Year Reunion.
INTRODUCTION

2020 marked the worst job market in the United States in over a decade (Maurer, 2020). The situation was especially bleak for recent high school and college graduates (Cho & Winters, 2020; Maurer, 2020). Entry-level starting salaries were down over $5,000 from the previous year and the unemployment rate for those ages 20-24 reached 23.3% in May 2020, right as millions of students were graduating college (Blake, 2020; U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics A-10, 2020). In comparison, the May unemployment rate in each of the previous two years for that same age group was 7% (U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2020). This made the task of securing employment for those just entering the workforce a daunting challenge.

The market for career advice, self-improvement, and job hunting is saturated. There are dozens of job search websites and just as many blogs advertising advice and solutions for finding a job. The $200 billion-dollar industry of job recruitment can be difficult to navigate, especially for those doing it for the first time (Bersin, 2017). In addition, not all of that content is directed at young people, nor does it come from a young professional’s perspective. With little to no work experience and a depleted job market, this can lead to a feeling of helplessness for recent high school and college graduates.

Despite the crowded job recruitment industry, a platform that focuses on young professionals telling their story directly to recent graduates could break through and benefit them in their search. With testimonial-style storytelling, job seekers could see that the advice they are getting has worked for people in the real world. Another reason to specialize the advice with personal stories is that different industries operate under different rules. Job search advice that is relevant for someone interested in working in politics is not the same advice that would benefit
someone looking to break into the music industry. While similar mindsets and strategies can carry over from field to field, the stories must consist of professionals from a variety of industries to best provide advice for a wide audience. The ideal professionals to tell those stories would have less than ten years of work experience but have still established themselves as industry leaders.

This paper will provide the layout I used to create a podcast which serves to provide job search and life advice to young people just entering the workforce. Based on research of the job recruitment industry, as well as different types of media, I carried out this plan and conducted over a dozen hours of interviews with professionals in a variety of industries and produced 14 episodes of a podcast called *10 Year Reunion*. The goal is for these interviews to be listened to and shared by young people in high school, college, or those just starting their career. I also created an Instagram page to drive traffic to the podcast and provide additional job seeking advice. Finally, in this paper I will provide reflections on my process and list critiques and advice for continuing the project or beginning similar ventures.
LITERATURE REVIEW

Everyone from Snoop Dogg to Kate Hudson to Michelle Obama have jumped on the podcast bandwagon. Celebrities and non-celebrities alike have been captivated by podcasts not only as listeners, but by getting behind the mic as well to host their own shows. Podcasts have cemented their place as one of the primary media forms in the United States. Newman and Gallo (2019) defined podcasts as an “episodic series of digital audio files, which you can download, subscribe to, or listen to,” (p. 8). They can be a series of stories, biographies, news, interviews or discussion of current events. While many podcasts are educational in nature, there is also a large market of podcasts for more causal or entertainment listening. Podcast categories include news, comedy, society and culture, self-improvement, business, true crime, and sports.

An estimated 104 million people listen to podcasts regularly and that number is expected to climb (Edison Research & Triton Digital, 2020). Tech giants Google, Apple, and Spotify have all invested in creating podcast platforms while news services such as The New York Times, The Washington Post, and National Public Radio have established themselves as podcast creators. All of this is further proof that podcasting is poised to become a billion-dollar industry by the end of 2020 (Deloitte Insights, 2020).

Initially, I debated doing the project in video form, as a photo essay, creating a website, or conducting the interviews as a series of written articles. Compelling stories can be successfully told through all of these types of media. I have also studied and worked professionally in each of them, so my skills were suited to any one of those avenues. In the end, there were three main reasons why I decided to carry out this project as a podcast.
The first reason was the rising popularity of podcasts. As previously mentioned, podcasts are a growing industry that continues to see a yearly increase in listeners (Newman et al., 2020; Edison Research & Triton Digital, 2020). In 2019 in the United States, 36% of people accessed a podcast monthly (Newman et al., 2020). Monthly podcast listeners have tripled in the past decade, up to 36% from just 12% in 2010 (Pew Research Center, Audio and Podcasting Fact Sheet, 2019). That percentage is even greater for younger audiences: 49% of people ages 12-34 listen to a podcast on a monthly basis (Edison Research & Triton Digital, 2020). While the audience for podcasts decreases as age increases, a podcast is an effective way to reach someone in the 18-30 demographic. The ability for podcasts to reach young adults is why podcasts are an important field for businesses to establish themselves, despite reaching less than half the population.

In creating this project specifically for young adults, the format needed to cater to the ways in which they consume media. This media diet for young people consists primarily of accessing content on their smartphone. Almost half (45%) of 18-24-year-olds first come in contact with the news each day through their smartphone (Newman et al., 2019). That means content young adults can easily access on their phone, such as podcasts, will be that much more likely for them to consume.

Podcasts can also be very educational, not only making it a form of entertainment, but a popular way for people to stay informed on the news or improve their knowledge of the world. The two most popular podcast categories for ages 25-34 are news and current affairs (34%) and specialist podcasts (28%) (Newman et al., 2020). Specialist podcasts are defined as podcasts about health, technology, or business. Both of these categories contain podcasts meant to inform
their listeners while sparking interesting discussions. Listeners ages 18-24 also enjoyed news and current affairs (23%) as well as specialist podcasts (18%), but equally listened to lifestyle podcasts about food, fashion, and celebrities (23%) as well as true crime podcasts (18%) (Newman et al., 2020). These figures highlight that while young people are interested in being entertained, they still see podcasts as a way to stay informed and educate themselves.

The second reason a podcast was the ideal format for this project is the long-form style that podcasts allow. The average length of a podcast episode is 41 minutes and 31 seconds (Misener, 2019). This is roughly the time of an hour-long network television show without including commercials. Although many podcasts do contain commercials, they typically only occur at the beginning or in the middle of the episode.

This provided uninterrupted time for discussion, interviews, or deeper dives into the topic at hand. Television news segments and interviews often last less than ten minutes, which does not give the interviewer opportunity to ask follow-up questions or get into specifics. Podcasts however, can take advantage of that longer format to better inform their listeners. Unlike live television, podcasts also allow the audience to listen at their own convenience. Podcasts can be started or paused at any time, with the ability to come back and pick up from the same spot.

A focus group conducted by Perks & Turner (2018) showcases why podcasts have been able to displace other forms of media:

Podcast listening won out over radio because of podcasts’ engaging, always changing content. Listening was preferable to television viewing in many in-home situations because podcasts do not command the visual sense, and they can be listened to on portable devices, thus enabling people to accomplish housework and other tasks. (P. 112)

In addition to being able to multitask while listening, podcasts also require less “mental energy” than other media formats such as written articles (Riddell et al., 2020). This means that
while they can be very educational, listening to a podcast does not feel demanding or taxing, making them enjoyable while people are still able to absorb information.

The final reason I compiled these interviews as a podcast is the flexibility that podcasts offer the creator. One reason we saw the creation of over 200,000 new podcasts in 2019 (Newman & Gallo, 2019) was because of how easy it is to create a podcast. With a computer, microphone, and internet connection, anyone can create a podcast and post it on iTunes, Spotify, or Google Podcasts within minutes. More complicated setups and equipment can improve the quality of the production, but the simplicity of the process remains the same.

During the course of this project, after the proposal and initial planning, the COVID-19 pandemic spread across the United States, causing businesses to close their doors while many that did remain open conducted operations virtually. During March, April, and May, much of the country was in lockdown, as people stayed in their homes other than to make essential trips to the grocery store or to seek medical care. This made conducting in-person interviews near impossible as people tried to socially distance themselves from others. However, podcast interviews can easily be recorded between two parties on the computer. While I could not travel to visit businesses or sit down with my guests, I was still able to converse through the computer. In fact, with much of the country in lockdown, it actually opened up availability for some guests to talk with me as they suddenly had unforeseen free time.

While I recognize that there is an overabundance of podcasts available, I decided a podcast would give me the most freedom to conduct thorough interviews and allow more flexibility than other options. There are other podcasts with similar ideas to this one. Rebecca Jarvis interviews women entrepreneurs and business leaders about their paths to success for her
ABC podcast, *No Limits*. Brian Koppelman discusses the pivotal moments that fueled the careers of entertainers on his podcast, *The Moment*. Both Jarvis and Koppelman have unique yet exceptional interview styles as they discuss people’s careers.

However, I wanted my podcast to speak directly to young people. I wanted to have my interviews and stories touch the lives of a high schooler trying to figure out what he wants to do after he graduates or an engineering student finishing her junior year as she looks for internships. If I could tap in to young professionals to close that communication gap with Generation Z students, I could have my podcast relate to them in a way that an interview with Penn Jillette or Ann Curry could not. Their careers are so storied and vast that nailing down points of advice may not seem relevant to a 19-year-old in 2020.

According to Thompson (2018), communicating with young people “involves having a good understanding of the world adolescents live in, which can be very different from the world that adults occupy” (p. 191). The rules that apply to a 50-year-old with 30 years of professional experience are not the same rules used by a 22-year-old, fresh out of college in a world that is very different from the 1980s and 1990s. While people have always navigated the job market and tried to break into a career field, the struggles of young people today are unique to them, because they are taking place in this time and space. The current job market, technology, trends in hiring, education system, career opportunities, and current pandemic are all factors unique to this generation of young people.

To be able to relate to young people, first, I must understand their world. I wanted to find guests who could speak to those current market factors by having gone through them recently and come out the other side successfully, so that I could better reach my target audience. By
having guests who are less than 10 years into their career, I was able to directly enter the listeners’ world and relate to them on a level they understand. Not only does the advice seem more relatable since it is coming from someone from a similar generation, it is also more effective because the interview guest has just gone through that period in their life. Those shared experiences help my listeners connect with the guests. I also wanted to provide guests who are well-known. While there are a lot of interesting people out there in a variety of professions, finding notable or fascinating guests to talk with assisted in getting my message across more effectively and created a better product.

During the time of recording, the economy was in one of the most interesting and difficult job markets in recent history. According to the job search engine and review site, Glassdoor, job postings with the phrase “entry level” in the description were down 68% in 2020 from the previous year (Stansell, 2020). Not only were companies not hiring new positions, the retirement market was also upended, resulting in even fewer openings in the workforce. In the first quarter of 2020, 401(k) plans fell 19% while individual retirement plans fell 14% (Fidelity, 2020). “This decline in retirement security will motivate many older people to work longer to increase savings and delay Social Security claiming to increase monthly benefit amounts” (Bui et al., 2020).

During this time, young people felt confused, hopeless, and defeated as they left high school or college with very few job prospects. Being able to provide hope and inspiration to my audience is a rewarding experience. One way I provided inspiration is through the use of high-profile guests. Celebrity endorsements are one of the most common and effective ways marketers promote their products (Spry et al., 2011). An endorsement from a well-known individual or
expert provides a level of brand credibility that can be used to get more people to notice your product. Convincing high-profile guests to appear on my podcast not only provided my listeners with expert advice, it also gave credibility to my podcast as a platform that celebrities and influencers appear on for interviews.

With the idea and medium sorted out, the next step was to record the interviews. These were all conducted over the computer, either through Zoom or the similar cloud-based conferencing software, RINGR. By conducting the interviews virtually and not meeting the guests beforehand, I had to work to establish a connection to not only create a charismatic conversation, but also allow them to open up and share personal details about their career. Sedorkin and McGregor (2002, p. 12-17) identified six top techniques for handling interviews: preparation, eye contact, atmosphere, concentration and listening, silence, and respect and curiosity. Creating a comfortable atmosphere and maintaining eye contact can prove difficult when conducting the interview over a computer. This meant I had to rely more on preparation, concentration and listening, silence, and respect and curiosity to succeed.

Before going in to each interview, I familiarized myself with the details of every step of my guest’s professional career, maintained an understanding of the field they were in and the company they worked for, and researched details about their life that would provide interesting talking points. Did they end up working with a long-time friend from college? Were they let go of their job at some point? Were there any key circumstances that led to their career choice? Having an idea of those questions and potential answers before-hand better prepared me with follow-up questions and to not be thrown off-guard when new information was presented. Personalizing the questions was essential in order to make the guest feel like their time was being
valued or they may have gotten the impression that they were talking to someone who did not grasp the issues being discussed (Sedorkin & McGregor, 2002, p. 13).

Although I came into each interview with an outline of general questions, the most valuable technique I utilized was listening to exactly what each guest was saying. If I were to have asked a question and waited until the guest was finished with their answer and then asked the next question on my list, I could have missed a chance to ask a follow-up, push back on their answer, or pivot to a similar topic. Sedorkin & McGregor (2002) elaborate on how crucial it is to critically listen to the interviewee’s answer:

You’re thinking, how am I going to phrase my next question. What’s my segue into the next question, instead of actually listening to the bloody answer which will probably give you the cue that you need for what is—in the audience’s mind—the next most logical question to ask anyone (p. 15).

It was important for these interviews to feel very conversational, as if I were to meet these people at a cocktail party and start inquiring about their career. Keeping the conversation natural put my guests at ease and gave them the freedom to be more open and honest with their answers. When meeting strangers naturally in real-life situations, people do not keep sheets of questions to study during the conversation. Likewise, it was important that I listened and asked ensuing questions based on what piqued my interest from the previous answer.

Effectively utilizing strategic silence allowed me to get the most out of my interview guests. People often feel compelled to fill any dead air that occurs during a conversation to avoid an awkward situation. Oftentimes, this can lead to interesting
information that the interviewee had not planned on originally sharing. With the benefit of having a pre-recorded podcast, I was able to go back and edit any long pauses where the guest did not continue to share information. But it is still an important technique I used strategically when I felt the guest may have had more to share.

Finally, it was important that I respected my guests while also maintaining a curiosity to ask insightful questions that got at the answers my guests were interested in hearing. In an interview Sedorkin & McGregor (2002) conducted with Australian journalist, Kerry O’Brien, O’Brien said, “Even when you’re in a live situation and you’re thinking ‘I really want to ask this question but it’s going to sound silly’. In most cases you should go ahead and ask it anyway” (p. 16-17).

Especially with the benefit of being able to edit down the final interview, I asked a lot of questions that may have seemed unimportant or silly but that led to an engaging conversation. Sometimes the question was a dead end and did not spark a conversation and, in those instances, it was simple enough to edit it out in post-production.

This foundation equipped me to conduct thorough, insightful, and unique conversations that inspire my listeners and provide young students with the tools to chase their dream career. If these interviews can impact the life of even one student and aid them on their path, it will be a rewarding experience. While the future may be uncertain, my hope is that listeners will be able to learn from these interviews and pick up some tips and advice about job hunting, or gain some inspiration about a future career path.
CREATIVE COMPONENT PROJECT

The Idea

The idea for this podcast came several years before this project when I had been brainstorming ideas for a potential podcast with a friend of mine. While we ultimately never ended up pursuing any of the projects, the idea of hosting an interview show where I would speak to guests about their career path stuck in the back of my mind. Two years later, I went back to my notes and found the original outline along with a list of names I had written down as potential interview guests. Looking over that list, I felt the same sense of excitement as I had when I first thought of the idea. People have always been fascinated by stories. From books to movies to TV shows, people consume stories all around them. By focusing my podcast on the stories of successful young people, I was better positioned to capture my audience and pull them in to be fascinated by someone’s story.

Once I started mapping things out, I wanted to pull out my phone right on the spot and start dialing up people to record an episode. I was excited to get going. But first, I had to lay some groundwork before I would be able to start recording. As I mentioned previously, because of the COVID-19 pandemic, the podcast would need to be conducted entirely virtually. I had a FIFINE Technology USB microphone on hand that would work to record my end of the interview and any other introductions or cut-ins that would be necessary. I did consider myself lucky to have a microphone on hand because many stores saw a decrease in the stock of items like headphones and USB microphones because of the pandemic (Tikhe, 2020). Toilet paper and hand sanitizer were not the only items in high demand as many people had similar ideas about starting a podcast with their unexpected free time.
To record the podcast, I purchased an application called RINGR that can record each side of a conversation separately and then seamlessly integrate them, providing studio sound quality. A unique link to record the conversation would be sent to each guest and with two clicks, we were connected and the application would begin recording. Following the conversation, I downloaded an .mp3 file and began editing. My biggest concern when looking for a way to record the conversation was making the process as convenient on my guest as possible. I did not want to frustrate them with instructions or a complicated setup before we even had a chance to talk. This relates back to the respect that Sedorkin & McGregor reference in their book Interviewing (2002). To show respect for my guest and their time, this process needed to be simple and efficient. Because of this, I felt comfortable paying for a quality recording service to make the technical side of the conversation easy.

With the technical side sorted out, the next task was to create a name and an image for my podcast. Before I could release any episodes, or even ask a guest to appear on my podcast, I would need to come up with the brand of the show. Beyond just helping me appear professional when I pitched the idea to guests, I would need a name, logo, and description in order to put my podcast on app stores.

The name came easily to me. By interviewing professionals in their late twenties and early thirties, the key answer I am seeking for is how to make the most of those first 10 years after graduation. Those are the pivotal years where people get their first job, move to a new city, find an interest in a particular field, or even have several job changes. As I was thinking about those years and how people want to make their mark on the world, I thought of the one event that happens at the end of those 10 years; people attend
their 10-year reunion. Whether it is high school or college, there seems to be pressure to impress at school reunions. Typically, the 10-year reunion is the first big reunion for a class, with ensuing reunions coming every 5 or 10 years. Not only is this a cause to give my listeners to impress at their first reunion, 10 years also serves as an important landmark to reflect back on the start of their career. Often with decades still to go in a professional career, those first 10 years can provide an important jumping off point to get on the right path. Thus, *10 Year Reunion* was born.

Next, I created a logo and an introductory statement. The logo must allow people to instantly identify the podcast as they see it online or in the podcast store. It must be simple, clear, and professional. I wanted the text to stand out to make the title easy to read and understand. Because podcast logos can be displayed at very small sizes, there would not be room to include any details or information about the podcast. It would need to stand out and intrigue listeners on its own. I created a double-arrow graphic to allude to forward movement and progression; I want my audience to prioritize bettering themselves while listening to my podcast. The color selection is a personal nod to match the colors of the high school I attended, Northville High School.

![10 Year Reunion Logo](image)
In addition to a logo, I also wanted to create a tagline to serve as the podcast description in podcast stores, “A podcast from successful young minds about making the most of your twenties.” In an instant, people could glance at the logo and read this description and understand what my podcast was about and the intended audience.

**Preparation and Planning**

Once I had a look for the podcast established, I could begin booking guests. My initial plan was to find young people in a variety of fields and either email them or send a message to their social media account, inviting them to appear on the podcast. I created a standard message that I would personalize based on the individual I was asking.

Dear [NAME],

I am a graduate student at Iowa State University, working on a podcast about young people and their careers as part of a project. I am interested in interviewing you to give listeners an idea of your background as well as your path at [WORKPLACE]. I am hoping the podcast will serve as an inspiration to the younger generation in high school or college, trying to figure out what the next ten years of their life will look like and what types of paths other professionals took.

The interview should take about 30 minutes to an hour and we can conduct it online at a time that is convenient for you. Please let me know if you have any questions. I appreciate your time considering my request.

Thank you,
Clay Paciorek

I acknowledge that the current platform of my podcast was not large enough to entice people to appear in order to promote an upcoming project. Until I could prove to my guests that I had built a loyal audience and they would be able to reach a certain amount of people by appearing on my show, I would need to appeal to them in a different way. I decided to pitch this
podcast as part of a project and a way of assisting young people on their career path. In a way, the guests who appeared on my show would be volunteering their time to give back to younger people at the start of their career. If I could appeal to my potential guests that they had the chance to impact someone’s life or make a difference in their career path, I would have a chance at booking guests.

The first day I sat down to email potential guests, I sent 30 messages. The list was a mix of people whose work I had admired over the years or who had appeared in Google searches for winning awards for the work they had done. I relied heavily on the Forbes 30 Under 30 awards, as they provided me with a list of young people in a variety of fields. I also searched local newspapers for their award lists to find people who were thought of as leaders in their own community. These award lists proved to be very helpful; even if there was someone doing outstanding work in their field, unless they garnered news coverage or won an award, it would be difficult for me to hear about them.

Brainstorming people to interview and finding their contact information was the most challenging part of this entire process. I would spend night after night scouring the Internet, looking for potential guests. Once I found someone I was interested in interviewing, finding their contact information was the next challenge. Many people had Instagram or Twitter accounts with open messaging which allowed me to send my request directly to them. However, those with a large following on social media often receive so many notifications that they rarely check their messages, or if they do, their inbox could be overwhelmed with other requests. Many people had personal or company websites that I could direct messages through and for some, I was able to find a professional email address or make an educated guess at their email address. For
celebrities and very high-profile guests, I sent messages through their agent or a public relations firm. This type of contacting showed very little success, but it did not require a lot of time on my end, so in many cases, it was worth trying.

Within a week of sending messages, I had four interviews scheduled: Comedian Emily Catalano, architect Samantha McCloud, entrepreneur Tyler McNaney, and master distiller Molly Troupe. After sending hundreds of messages, many of which felt like I was sending emails into the void, it was a thrill to hear back from someone who was excited about participating in my project. After months of planning and set-up, it was such a boost to finally have an interview scheduled.

Going Live

Table 1. 10 Year Reunion Episode List

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Guest</th>
<th>Profession</th>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Link</th>
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<td>Comedian</td>
<td>May 27, 2020</td>
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<td>Samantha McCloud</td>
<td>Architect</td>
<td>June 3, 2020</td>
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<td>Software Engineer</td>
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<td>Ben Lindbergh</td>
<td>Baseball Writer</td>
<td>July 1, 2020</td>
<td>sptfy.com/10yearlindbergh</td>
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<td>Taylor Dunn</td>
<td>News Producer</td>
<td>July 15, 2020</td>
<td>sptfy.com/10yeardunn</td>
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<td>Carly Grenfell</td>
<td>Social Media Manager</td>
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<td>Lorin Crawford</td>
<td>Professor of Biostatistics</td>
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<td>Will Roland</td>
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My first guest was comedian Emily Catalano (sptfy.com/10yearcatalano) who, in perfect character of her dry stand-up personality, responded to my initial email, “Sure, I’m available for a chat. (Although, I’m not very young or successful.)” Emily is a comedian based in Los Angeles who showcases her dry wit in her stand-up routine. She appeared on CONAN and has opened for Sarah Silverman, Pete Holmes, and Patton Oswalt, among many others. She was chosen as one of 10 comics to watch in 2020 by Time Out LA, which is how I came across her name.

She was very gracious with her time and we spoke for almost 50 minutes. It was a very smooth conversation and I never felt like I had to reach for questions or try and keep the conversation going. However, looking back, I did not utilize silence enough to my advantage. Perhaps I was over-eager in my first interview or afraid of creating too much dead air. I interjected with my own comments too often during her answers, as opposed to letting her entire answer play out. I often find that in everyday conversations, humans provide indicators that show we are listening and engaged in the conversation. I often will say things like, “uh-huh,” “right,” “oh, interesting,” to show the other person that I am tracking along with what they are saying. While this might work in a normal conversation, I find that it can be distracting during an interview. A few of these used sparingly throughout the interview might be natural, but I noticed I was cutting in with these occasional phrases far too often during this interview. In the future, I focused on staying quiet during the guest’s answer unless I really felt it was right to interject with something meaningful.

My next guest was architect Samantha McCloud (sptfy.com/10yearmccloud). Samantha’s story stuck out to me because of her role in her company as Director of Equity, Diversity, and
Inclusion. She had written a number of freelance articles on the topic and I thought it would be especially important for my listeners to understand this topic as they entered the workforce. Samantha was very prepared for the interview and gave well-thought-out answers. She discussed the way she advocated for her position to be created and also explained some of the ways people can be advocates for equality, diversity, and inclusion in the field of architecture, or any professional workplace.

One week before I planned to post the interview, George Floyd, a Black man in Minneapolis, Minnesota was murdered by a White Minneapolis Police Officer. The news of his death, and shocking video, spread across the country. While the pandemic had consumed the media for months, this was the first time since the COVID-19 outbreak where a different news story dominated the headlines. The video sparked intense discussion of racial inequality and police brutality. Minneapolis saw days of protests, some of which turned violent, as protesting spread throughout the United States. The day before I planned to post the interview, many people on social media decided to either take the day off from posting to elevate black voices, or chose to simply post a solid black square with a message in support for Black Lives Matter. As I had planned to post the interview for the next day, it did not feel right in such a volatile and strenuous time to post an interview and promote my podcast.

Because Samantha works in diversity and inclusion, I thought it would be appropriate to follow up with her and have a side discussion specifically about the murder of George Floyd and how this might be able to spark discussion around equality in the workplace. Samantha again was very gracious and willing to talk. We talked for about ten minutes and I included the conversation at the beginning of my original interview with a short editorial.
First and foremost, I want this podcast to help people. I can do this by providing job seeking advice and tips for success in the workplace. I also do not want to be oblivious about the issues that people are facing. If there is an opportunity for me to use my platform to speak out and bring light to certain issues, I want to be able to do that. Silence, or maintaining business as usual during times of racial unrest and protest in the streets also sends a message for not speaking out. While I want this podcast to be about inspiring young people to chase their dreams, I need to be aware of the issues people are facing in America and speak to those as necessary.

My third and fourth interviews went very well and I felt like I was improving with each episode. I talked to founder and CEO Tyler McNaney of Filabot (sptfy.com/10yearmcnaney), a sustainable 3D printing company, as well as the youngest female master distiller in the United States, Molly Troupe (sptfy.com/10yeartroupe). Both were extremely friendly and left a lasting impression on me when the conversation was over. I found that I was improving markedly with the listening part of the interview, and in both conversations, we trailed off from my list of planned questions but ended up with fascinating discussions.

As I started to post episodes, I created an Instagram account to help drive traffic to my podcast. I acquired 62 followers on the Instagram page, which served as a landing page for my podcast and in order to spark interest as social media came across the profile. Instagram made sense not only because it allowed me to post photos, video, and written content, but it is also one of the most popular social media platforms for ages 18-24 (Pew Research, Social Media, 2019). I posted short, edited clips from each interview to advertise the latest episode, and would also post other job-related content at least twice a week. Continuing to create content outside of my podcast would allow me to grow my reach as it increases the likelihood that my posts will be
seen. I created unique, infographic posts about careers and job-hunting to supplement my podcast posts during the week. I used relevant and trending hashtags to try and stay at the top of searches and also interacted with similar accounts.

One of my very first posts was related to the racial injustice occurring with the murder of George Floyd. During the subsequent protests, I posted a graphic showcasing businesses owned by black people. I wanted to keep my content related to business and job creation, and decided this would be an effective way to stay on brand while also highlighting an important issue in society. I designed a branded graphic, tagged the businesses in my post, and captioned the post with several related hashtags. After getting a combined 32 likes for my first seven posts, this post received 419 likes and 5 comments. 334 people also saved the post to their profile to come back to later. An influencer named Sierra Schultzzie with 287,000 followers tagged my post to her profile which sent tens of thousands of her followers to my post. It was an exciting way to begin the second week of the podcast and good reminder of the power of social media. If I stayed committed and continued to make content that I enjoyed, I could gain traction and people would take notice.

After the first four interviews, bookings started to slow. I had run out of the initial names I brainstormed and needed to get creative with finding people to interview. I used snowball sampling which turned up several names from acquaintances I knew. Through snowball sampling, I relied on current contacts to generate names of potential guests in order to expand my network (Noy, 2008). This was also helpful because this gave me direct contact with the individual. I reached out to people I knew personally to see if they had any friends or contacts who might be a fit for the podcast. Using this method, I interviewed software engineer Cassidy
Williams (sptfy.com/10yearwilliams), professional basketball player Josh Young (sptfy.com/10yearyoung), and social media content manager Carly Grenfell (sptfy.com/10yeargrenfell).

One of the most thrilling moments for me during this project was interviewing my sixth guest, Ben Lindbergh (sptfy.com/10yearlindbergh). Ben is a baseball writer and podcast host. While he is not well known in circles outside of baseball, as an avid baseball fan, I had followed his work for almost seven years. I have read both of his books, listened to almost every episode of his podcast, and am a faithful reader of his articles. I reached out to him through the Facebook group for his podcast and set up the interview. While it was not necessarily a brush with fame, I was still very nervous for the interview. I wanted to impress him and not waste his time. I prepped for several hours, trying to think of questions no one else would ask, while also remembering that many of my guests may be unfamiliar with him, and I would need to allow time for his background and basic introduction.

In the end, Ben was very kind and shared wonderful stories about his career. He was very honest and talked about some of the disappointments he faced early in his career when his path changed from working for a baseball team to writing about baseball. It was surreal to talk to someone whose voice I hear several times a week while listening to his podcast, but I was able to keep my focus and conduct a thorough interview. This was also the episode where it was made apparent to me that I needed to work on getting my guests to tell stories.

Ben told some fascinating stories about working for the New York Yankees and it hit me that content like that captivates the listener. Looking at other interviews or late-night shows, I realized it is common to hear hosts ask questions that start like, “Tell me about the time…” or
“So-and-so said that you all did…” Both of these are techniques used to prompt a story. These stories can delight the audience and also serve as great content to promote the entire episode. I know that stories are interesting to people but I had not yet put it together that I needed to be more active in creating opportunities for my guest to tell a story in their answer. If I could ask questions that reminded my guest of an experience they had that sparked a unique story, I could make my podcast more interesting.

My next interview was with Taylor Dunn (sptfy.com/10yeardunn), a producer at ABC News. Taylor produced a podcast on Theranos’ founder Elizabeth Holmes called The Dropout that won iHeartRadio’s Podcast of the Year award. This was one of my favorite interviews due to Taylor’s personality and generosity. She gave such insightful and meaningful advice; I often recommend this episode to people if they are interested in my podcast but have not yet listened. It was clear that she felt a responsibility to help others and wanted to use her appearance on my podcast to impact someone’s life. Not only was she a great interview, I had one of my better interviews of listening to her answers and interacting in ways I thought my listeners would want to hear.

Another reason this interview was such a success was the amount of preparation I conducted. I listened to every episode of Taylor’s podcast, watched segments and documentaries she produced, and traced her career back through ABC News, familiarizing myself with the shows she helped produce. I was not able to be this thorough with every interview, but guests like Taylor with a larger profile allowed me to dig more into her background. While this advantage of being able to conduct extensive research helped me in this instance, I also had success in interviews in which I knew little about my guest.
A friend recommended I interview Toson Knight, a youth leader and educator in Detroit, Michigan. From my research, I learned about Toson’s work with Caught Up, a mentoring program he created for at-risk boys in the inner city. While I learned about his organization, I knew very little about Toson’s career and what motivated him as a person. That ended up working in my favor as I was able to ask what issues were meaningful to him and give him room to talk and share what was on his heart. He told a story about the time he received a phone call in the middle of the night from a police officer who told him one of the boys he mentored lost his life to gun violence. It was such a raw moment to hear Toson be very open about failures in his life but also reflect on his opportunities and identify ways he has grown as a person. That was a distinctive moment as an interviewer where I understood the power I have if I can find ways to make my guests feel comfortable about opening up.

Unfortunately, in the most disappointing moment of this project, Toson’s audio did not upload properly from the RINGR server. After days of troubleshooting, and spending hours on the phone with technical support, I was never able to recover the audio file. I was disappointed to lose such a compelling interview and was frustrated that I wasted my guest’s time. I did not want to trouble Toson with doing a repeat interview and had to chalk this moment up to a learning experience. With each ensuing interview, I made sure to check that the entire interview had properly uploaded before ending the call.

Despite the mishap, I had two interviews saved up and was able to continue posting on a regular basis. At this point, I had posted ten episodes and began to think of ways to wrap up this project. I still wanted to conduct a few more interviews but my regular avenues of booking guests had dried up. After hundreds of messages, it was rare for me to get any response from
individuals, and when I did, it was often an email declining the interview. At this point, I consulted with the producer for the *Art of Manliness Podcast*, Jeremy Anderberg. The *Art of Manliness Podcast* is a one of the most popular philosophy podcasts and averages 2.5 million monthly downloads. Jeremy shared some tips for booking guests and recommended I follow up on the previous messages I had sent. He indicated that his regular practice was waiting a week after the initial email request, and if he had not heard a response, following up with a second email. He also suggested finding multiple ways of contacting someone, in order to ensure they see the request.

With this advice, I circled back to my original list and sent follow-up emails to everyone I had contacted initially. Living in central Iowa, one name that had been at the top of my list was Democratic congressional candidate, JD Scholten (sptfy.com/10yearscholten). After having no connection in politics, he ran against Steve King for the congressional seat in the 4th district in Iowa in 2018. Despite losing, JD captured the attention of the nation by running an incredibly close race in a district that was historically overwhelmingly won by Republican candidates. Two years later, he ran for the same seat again.

JD agreed to the interview and became my highest-profile guest up to that point. While many of my interviews could be recorded and saved for a later release date because they did not touch on current events, with JD, I wanted to be conscious about current issues in the news. If there was breaking news in the days following our interview, our conversation would be outdated or irrelevant. For this reason, I recorded the interview close to my targeted release date in order to give myself just enough time to edit and post as quickly as possible. With each interview, I felt my skills improving and was able to fine-tune my interview style. I was not
interjecting as much as I did in the first few episodes and when I did, I was very purposeful in order to get my guest to expand more on the point they were making.

Although he was in the middle of a congressional race, I made the decision not to ask JD specific questions about his policies or issues directly related to the campaign. There are other shows that better serve audiences interested in politics. I wanted my show to continue to focus on career growth and hearing JD’s story and pathway into politics. At 40 years old, he was several years older than my other guests, but with the local Iowa connection and his unconventional entrance into politics, I decided I could not pass up the chance to interview him. Because JD is very active on Twitter, I tweeted a link to the episode and mentioned JD, who retweeted it to his 131,000 followers. In addition to Instagram, I was also able to strategically use my personal Twitter account to promote my podcast.

As I felt my momentum build back up following the lost interview with Toson Knight, my next interview was with Lorin Crawford (sptfy.com/10yearcrawford), a Forbes 30 Under 30 recipient and one of The Root 100 Most Influential African Americans. Lorin, an Assistant Professor at Brown University, provided the challenge of navigating a topic I knew very little about: statistical genetics and cancer pharmacology. As a former communications specialist for the Department of Aerospace Engineering at Iowa State University and NASA’s Iowa Space Grant Consortium, I do have experience interviewing scientists on topics of which I have very little understanding. I have found that asking similar questions back-to-back helps me to drill down at the topic the researcher is explaining. If their first answer is too technical to be understood by a broad audience, I can try to target certain parts of the answer and see if I can get my guest to break down their answer in a way that is easier to understand.
With Lorin, I found that to be much easier than I expected. He was very personable which made the conversation feel like I had been speaking with someone I had known for years. He also had a passion for basketball which broke through in a few of his answers. I was able to use our mutual interest in basketball to find a way to relate to these very technical topics related to genetics, statistics, and cancer research. In this interview, I also felt more comfortable adding my own thoughts to the end of his answers to try and expound on his insights and continue the topic. There was a comfortable connection in our conversation which helped this process flow very smoothly as we talked.

Two days before I planned to post Lorin’s interview, a line of intense, fast-moving windstorms known as a derecho, swept through Iowa and knocked power out for hundreds of thousands of residents, including myself. My home was without power for five days and without Internet for seven days, making podcast recording very difficult. With the unusual week, I decided to do some reflection and create a “best of” (sptfy.com/10yearbestof) episode where I highlighted one answer from each guest. This gave me time to reflect on my interviews and also create a succinct episode full of the best advice from my podcast. If someone were to only listen to one episode of my podcast, this compilation would provide them with a wide variety of the best advice. I also wanted to keep my schedule of posting an episode every Wednesday. Outside of a holiday break, I had not missed a week up to that point and wanted to continue to give my listeners what they had come to expect.

It seemed like the “best of” episode would be a great place to end the podcast, though I then heard back from a publicist and knew I had to do one final episode. For my final episode, I was able to book actor and Broadway star, Will Roland (sptfy.com/10yearroland). Will was very
gracious and worked to reschedule after the derecho. Will was by far my most well-known guest, having won a Grammy Award, Tony Award, and appearing in two Broadway musicals and a Showtime show. Needless to say, I was nervous but wanted to conduct my best interview. Will ended the conversation with, “Thanks, Clay! That was a blast!” It was a delightful conversation and ended my podcast series on a high note.

With Will, I was able to put everything I learned over the previous 12 interviews in to practice. I researched extensively, watching clips of his Broadway shows as well as his Showtime show, *Billions*. I watched countless interviews from over the years, including profiles, red carpet interviews, and day-in-the-life videos. Will had the most amount of previous media coverage of any of my guests and reading and watching those interviews were instrumental in my process. I was determined to not ask Will questions he had heard a thousand times. If I was watching an interview during my preparation and heard a question I had written down, I crossed it out and thought of a way to rephrase it in a more compelling way. By doing this, I hoped to achieve higher quality episode by breaking Will out of his normal habit of answers. If I could keep him on his toes with questions, I would ensure that I got insightful and unique answers that could help my audience.

Another element of Will’s episode that made it so compelling was that he gave advice I had not heard up to that point. He talked about not pursuing something if you no longer have a love for it, finding joy in the process, and staying true to yourself. I believe his advice will ring true for a lot of young people who feel like they have hit their limit or are still waiting for their big break. I can attribute some of that to my initial research and finding what issues were important to Will, based on his social media activity and previous interviews. We talked about
his love for character development and his process of creating a new character for his role on *Billions*. This was based on a quote I read from a 2018 interview about how special it was for him to create his character, Jared Kleinman, in *Dear Evan Hanson*. I got the notion that character creation was something he really enjoyed and decided to ask him about that process.

As I disconnected from the interview with Will, I was ecstatic about the entire project that had just wrapped up. More than anything, it was fun to strike up a conversation with these interesting people. I often had nerves going in to the interview but ended each time feeling energized. My hope is that energy transferred over to my audience and they felt as if they were part of the conversation through their phone.

After conducting hours of interviews and hearing all sort of career advice, I decided to put my thoughts down into a concise article. I summarized the advice I heard into three main action steps that young job seekers can take to break into their dream field. I am currently pitching the article to a number of websites, hoping that it can provide inspiration as well as drive people to my podcast. If I am able to create a podcast, provide content on Instagram, and write articles for blogs and websites, I can establish myself on a variety of platforms which will give me touch points with my audience. For all the advantages a podcast offers, much of the content shared on social media is visual, which makes articles and infographics effective ways to reach people.

**Listener Data**

While I did find enjoyment in creating *10 Year Reunion*, I also wanted it to be a successful venture. I posted new episodes every Wednesday on the podcast hosting site Podbean, starting May 27 and running until August 26, only taking a break the Wednesday following the
July 4 weekend. Through Podbean, my interview was then distributed to Apple Podcasts, Spotify, Google Podcast, and Stitcher. My audience could listen to my podcast through any of those mediums. I posted 14 episodes and averaged 35 downloads per episode. The most downloaded episode was comedian Emily Catalano with 57 downloads. Taylor Dunn’s episode had 39 downloads and Will Roland’s had 34. Emily’s interview has been available for the longest amount of time, so it is not a shock that her interview has the most listens. Will Roland’s episode was only just posted at the end of August and already has the third highest listener count. Although I cannot pinpoint the exact reason his episode had a faster start than others, I would attribute it to his name recognition and the intrigue of an interview with a Broadway star. If people were scrolling through the episodes looking for one to listen to, his description might stick out more than others.

Table 2. 10 Year Reunion Episode Downloads
My podcast had listeners from five countries: the United States, the United Kingdom, Canada, India, and Peru. Within the United States, which made up 85% of the total audience, listeners came from over a dozen states, with Iowa (34.85%) and Michigan (18.18%) making up the largest percentages. These states are not surprising, as I currently live in Iowa and grew up in Michigan. I have many close friends and family in both states, and can contribute some of the downloads to those people. I also captured an audience from states as far west as California, Oregon, and Washington, as well as much of the east coast.

Just over half my audience used Apple Podcasts (54.55%) to listen to the show. These listeners accessed the podcast through the Apple Podcasts app on their iPhone, while another 6.49% listened through the iTunes app on their computer. Well behind Apple Podcasts was Spotify (14.29%) and Google Chrome (9.09%). To put this data to use in the future, I could research ways to make my podcast a better fit with Apple’s search algorithms. This could include tailoring my keywords to help my podcast in the Apple Podcasts search tool, getting people to give my podcast a 5-star rating, and adding video to accompany the audio (Berker et al., 2020). Since I know the majority of my listeners come through the Apple Podcasts app, focusing on search engine optimization (SEO) techniques specifically for Apple will help my podcast grow.

Future Work

If I were to continue this project, there are a number of steps I would take to grow my podcast. Creating a website would be one of my first steps, not only to increase SEO, but also to give people a place to go if they are interested in learning more about my podcast. On the website, I could display biographies about my guests, photos, video clips, as well as other content such as blogs or infographics. All of this content would help my podcast appear in
searches for career and self-improvement advice, and create new listeners. Of all the potential content to include on the website, video will be the most important.

YouTube, the online video-sharing service, has a massive platform of over two billion users each month and is especially popular with the younger demographic (YouTube; Newman et al., 2020). Recently, some of the most popular podcasters like Joe Rogan and Marques Brownlee have started dedicated YouTube channels to post their podcast content to this audience (Alexander, 2019). Full episodes are available as well as clips as short as 3-5 minutes. Users can stumble across these bite-size podcast clips while surfing YouTube and be exposed to a brand-new podcast. Due to the ease of watching short, viral clips, YouTube passed Spotify and Apple Podcasts as the number one platform used to access podcasts (Chan-Olmsted, 2019; Vidler & Ulster, 2020). Both Chan-Olmsted (2019) and Vidler & Ulster (2020) found YouTube to be the platform with the highest percentage of users.

In addition to posting full episodes, I could also clip out individual answers or captivating moments from my interviews to share as short clips. If a listener is not able or willing to listen to a full 35-minute episode, they might be more willing to watch a two-minute clip, especially if it is accompanied by video. With YouTube’s recommended video function, viewers can watch clip after clip of my show in a matter of minutes. Many of the successful podcasts on YouTube feature high-definition, tightly edited clips with eye-catching titles. Pursuing this venture would not require creating a lot of new content, but it would mean dedicating resources to recording video of the interviews as well.

Adding video, creating a website, and continuing to build the Instagram page are three ways to build my audience. Expanding my podcast to additional social media such as Twitter,
Facebook, and TikTok could be useful avenues to pursue, but with limited resources, I believe it would be more effective to focus my efforts to video and a website for the time being. It would also be important to continue to book the most high-profile and interesting guests as possible. Using the recognition of past guests as an approval or endorsement of my podcast might attract the attention of future guests. If people hear that an Emmy winner or U.S. Congressman has appeared on my podcast, they might be more willing to participate. Eventually, I could get to a place where people are pitching me to appear on the podcast to promote their latest project.
A close family friend of mine graduated college this past May. She majored in psychology at a small liberal arts college and had little idea of what direction she wanted to go with her degree. Entering a difficult job market with a major without an obvious career path, her professional career got off to a slow start. Not long after she graduated, I interviewed Taylor Dunn who had also majored in psychology during her time at the University of Virginia. Fresh out of college, Taylor moved to New York, took a job as an assistant on a news program, and waited outside the human resources office at ABC News with her resume. She is now an award-winning producer who is turning her podcast into a Hulu show starring actress Kate McKinnon. I sent Taylor’s episode to my friend in hopes that she could see the parallels and identify a blueprint for what her career could look like.

These were the type of connections I was hoping to make when I started this project. I do not expect every episode to resonate with each recent graduate. However, listeners can find episodes that appeal to them and pick up ideas or see avenues they had not previously thought about pursuing. By targeting a variety of professions as well as a diversity of individuals, I aimed to cover a broad spectrum of professional paths and backgrounds. The further along in the process I went, the more I found myself searching out certain fields, hoping to add interview guests from professions I had not yet featured.

After speaking to 14 successful young professionals, I picked out three main pieces of useful advice that I saw woven throughout each interview. While every guest had their own advice and personal story, they all mentioned elements of these three items. The first common thread was they turned the idea of networking into just being friendly. While networking can
carry negative connotations such as busking business cards at conferences, the guests I talked to were friendly and mentioned times they reached out to people who crossed their path. Software engineer Cassidy Williams sent a thank you email to one of the judges of a hackathon in which she competed. That woman reached out to Cassidy six months later to ask her to compete in a different hackathon. Cassidy’s team won the prize of speaking at the United Nations. In 2007, a musician named Joe Iconis performed in Will Roland’s class during his Freshman year in college. Will sent a follow-up email to say thank you and that he enjoyed hearing Joe’s music. 11 years later, Iconis went on to write a Broadway musical and Will played the lead. My guests demonstrated that networking does not have to be cheesy or forced. It is simply about saying “hey” and “thanks” to the people who pass through your life. It doesn’t even need to be in a way as if you’re looking for something in return. Just be friendly and you will build friendships throughout life.

Second, the people I spoke with advocated for themselves. Instead of waiting for a promotion or for their dream company to call them up, my guests asked for opportunities in which they were interested. Baseball writer Ben Lindbergh was an intern for the New York Yankees, writing for their magazine. However, he would have much rather preferred working in the department known as Baseball Operations where they draft and sign the players. So on the last day of the season, Ben approached the Baseball Operations department and asked if he could help out. They said yes and the following season, the Yankees won the World Series and Ben picked up invaluable experience working in the most coveted department in all of baseball. Samatha McCloud saw a need at her architecture firm for a position that advocated for diversity and inclusion in their projects. Her company agreed and she was able to create her own role.
The last piece of advice I took from these interviews was that everyone I spoke with woke up one day and decided to put themselves out there. Whether it was as grand as chasing after a dream they always had or just deciding to talk to someone, they made a decision to go for their goal. With no background in politics, JD Scholten decided to run for Congress in 2018. His campaign had the 3rd largest point swing of any district in the entire country. Taylor Dunn waited outside the office of the hiring manager at ABC News so she could hand over her resume in person. The position she wanted was taken but Taylor was offered a different opportunity. Six years later, Taylor produced one of the top podcasts of 2019 for ABC News. It was greenlit by Hulu to create a TV show starring Kate McKinnon.

In addition to gaining valuable advice, I also found myself feeling inspired by this project. I was inspired by my guests’ careers and their generosity. As I mentioned previously, with such a small platform, guests were essentially donating their time to offer advice to my listeners. I was inspired by their openness and ability to reflect on both the good and bad times in their career. It restored my hope that there were so many people willing to help others and, in a sense, reach back to guide the next generation through the path they went down.

In another personal anecdote, I was sharing updates about my Will Roland interview with a colleague who was not familiar with his work but told her daughter about the interview. Her 13-year-old daughter happened to be a huge fan of Broadway and Will is one of her favorite performers. It was humbling to play a role in the excitement she had when listening to the episode. As she prepares to enter high school, she will begin to contemplate a lot of the career-related questions my interviews aim to answer.
I was also able to improve my interview skills in such a short amount of time. While I admit I have a long way to go, I am pleased with the progress I saw in 14 episodes. From interruptions in my first few interviews, to relying too much on filler phrases, I was able to work on my technique each interview and get progressively better. There is a comfort that comes with repetition, but I also found myself having more engaging conversations during the second half of the project. Before recording an interview, I would often remind myself about how I wanted to avoid a game of ping pong. This is when I ask a question and my guest answers, and we go back and forth from question to answer until I run out and the interview is over. I always wanted to try and achieve a genuine connection with someone and have the conversation feel as if we bumped into each other at a party, and struck up a conversation about life and work.

When I think back on this project, I will most remember the connections I made. Connections where it would not be unusual for me to send Tyler an email if I ever found myself in Vermont or shoot Taylor a message if I had a friend looking to get into news production. The topics we discussed were often deep and very complicated, which allowed me to connect with my guests and establish a trust. The best way for my podcast to gain traction is to have engaging conversations that will captivate my audience and teach them something new.

The most common question I get from people is if I want to continue making episodes. It was such an enjoyable experience for me that I still have a strong desire to continue the podcast and build on what I have created. Not only did I enjoy myself, but I still believe I can have an impact on young people. My podcast will only continue to grow with the more interviews I conduct and the more subjects I speak with. It would be satisfying to have a 10-year reunion of my own with this project and look back years later to see the impact my podcast has made.
REFERENCES


