

COLD

COLD: How to make an Investigative Story into a Hot Podcast

Tip sheet from Sheryl Worsley and Dave Cawley of KSL Podcasts

What makes sense for an investigative podcast?

- Consider the stories that haunt you.
- Identify new sources, angles or untold aspects of the story.
- Find themes to help direct the course of longer narratives.

How to drive an investigation?

- Become the expert.
- Read everything, then ask what's still unknown.
- Ask and/or demand agencies provide public records.
- Push back when agencies refuse to provide or play dumb.

What did not work

- Split focus at start meant months of slow progress.
- Big productions require someone not in the day-to-day turn.
- All episodes were not complete at launch.
- Rolling production schedule meant long hours, 7-day work weeks.
- Podcast is not broadcast. Ads need more conversational tone.
- Loudness mismatch between content and ads will cause complaints.
- Reddit/AMA occurred too early, missed peak popularity.

What works

- Tap in to existing social groups active and interested in topic.
- Social: Facebook Live Q&A, Instagram Stories/interviews, subreddit, Twitter.
- Say yes to all interview invites (or as many as possible).
- Leverage other podcasts to grow audience.
- Consider hiring a composer to give podcast a unique, cohesive sound.
- Build a custom website/jump page with unique articles and embedded audio player.
- Create ready-made content for TV/print partners (if you have them).
- Ask for ratings/reviews. Shameless self-promotion is required to stand out.