Welcome to the **Stoplight Network**! I hope that this introductory letter will answer most of your questions, but feel free to email me at any time at publisher@mymac.com or call me on my cell at 269-986-5013.

A little history
I started podcasting in 2004 as part of a website I own, **MyMac.com**. I had wanted to create something audio-related going back as far as 1999 as part of the site, so when Podcasting was invented, I jumped right in and started the **MyMac Podcast**. Over time there were a variety of hosts who joined me on the show. There were also many segments we played that were recorded by other people. Eventually, there were more content being created as segments as the main show itself, so we spun off another show titled "**The MyMac Mini Podcast**".

Eventually, I "retired" from the MyMac Podcast to create a new show (among other things) for the company Other World Computing. **OWC Radio**, like MyMac, was focused on the Apple market. There was somewhat a conflict of interest in doing both shows, one I owned, and one I created as an independent contractor for another company, which was why I retired from MyMac and turned it over to my co-host, Guy Serle.

I did OWC Radio for over a year, until I took a position (which I still hold as I write this) for an Apple Specialist in Chicago. Because that company sold products for OWC, I again felt there was a conflict of interest, so I left OWC Radio. I didn't simply want to go back to the MyMac show, which I still own, because Guy and new co-host Gaz had done a terrific job in making that show their own. So instead I created yet another show, this one not focused on Apple, but technology in general, and called it **TechFan**. My one-time MyMac co-host David Cohen joined me on TechFan in 2010, and the show is still going strong. (I also started a show called **Geekiest Show Ever** with some of the MyMac hosts, and while I don't do that show any longer, it is still alive and doing great under Mark Greentree!)

As you can tell, I really enjoy podcasting, but my passion for it ran deeper than just wanting to own or host a show. I wanted to help other people get into podcasting, be it with advise or helping produce a show. This passion quickly turned into creating a podcasting network. Because I still owned MyMac.com and that podcast, I called it "**The MyMac Podcasting Network**". While a fine name, it was simply too limiting, as I didn't want to restrict the network to Mac or even Technology related shows. I wanted to help podcasters no matter what their focus or interests were. So in October 2011, the **Stoplight Network** was born.

Where did the inspiration for the name come from? Sitting in my car, listening to a podcast, stopped at a stoplight. Oh, hey, Stoplight...

Welcome!
Now that you're joined the network (or are still thinking about it), let's talk about some of the reasons you probably did so, and what you and others in the network hope to get out of this.

Finding listeners to your podcast is hard! Seriously, it's really hard! Unless you have another outlet to promote your show, such as being a radio show host, have a popular blog, or you're famous, finding listeners is very difficult. I was fortunate to have started in podcasting right as it was invented, getting in on the ground-floor if you will. That allowed me to build an audience much more quickly than is usually possible today, for the simple reason that there were very few podcasts to chose from.

Today, there is no official count as to how many active podcasts there are, but I would wager thousands, if not tens of thousands. That makes it much more difficult for potential listeners to discover your show. That's where the Stoplight Network comes in.

There is really only one requirement to being in the network: promote another show in the network. That's it. In turn, other shows in the network will promote your show. As the network grows, so too does the opportunity for more people / listeners to learn about and discover your podcast.

Now, is anyone going to police your show, make sure you are in fact promoting / playing an ad for another show in the network? No. Another podcaster in the network may listen, and hear that you're not, but no one is going to go out of their way to check. But you would be kind of a jerk if you did that. They are promoting you, you should promote them.

DropBox
We use DropBox to share files in the network. Dropbox is free, is compatible with every major operating system, and is very simple to sign up for and use. Chances are, if you are podcasting, you're pretty tech savvy and already have a Dropbox account. We will simply ask that you provide the email address you use with Dropbox to us so we can invite you to share a folder. Once you accept, you will have a new folder called "Ads" in your Dropbox. This folder is where all the other podcasters place their ads for you to use, and where you will place your ads for them.

Inside the DropBox folder are more folders. Each folder, for the most part, represents the other shows in the network. Inside each of those folders you will find the audio files for the ads for that show. If no folder for your show has been created, feel free to make one. Once you have recorded your ad, place the audio file (.aif, .mp3, m4a, .wav, etc...) in your shows folder for the other podcasters to find and use.

One bit of advise, and something I myself have been lax in doing: keep your promotional ad fresh. Record a new ad every couple months at least. This will give the other podcasters fresh sounding content, and the listeners won't start to ignore the ad they have heard a bunch of times already.

Paid Ads
Another reason the Stoplight Network was created was with the long view of eventually luring advertisers to pay to promote their products on our shows.

The problem with advertising on podcasts is finding the advertisers and convincing them that your show is worth sponsoring. If you thought finding an audience was hard, try finding a company that will write you a check! Yikes!

The idea, for an advertiser, of communicating with tens or hundreds of different podcasts is daunting. If you worked for a company, and your job was finding podcasts to advertise on, would you rather contact each show individually, or would you rather contact a network that has a bunch of shows? I think anyone would rather deal with a network, and not a hundred different podcasters.

We will offer competitive rates, but as a network, we will not deal with any affiliate groups. By that I mean we will not sell ads that only pay if a listener buys the advertisers product. Let me give you an example of affiliate advertising and why I believe it is a scam.

Let's name our advertiser Dons Insurance Check Kompany, or DICK for short. (Yeah, I know Company does not start with a letter K, but it makes it funnier this way, and more appropriate.) So DICK comes to my show, TechFan, and wants us to join their podcast affiliate advertising group. They tell me that for every new customer that they get by advertising on my show, I will receive $5.00!

"If even 100 of your listeners become DICK customers, you would get $500! Imagine if that happened every week!" the DICK affiliate advertising manager says. "Just tell your listeners to go to our website and use the Promo Code "TechFan" and they will receive half-off for the service!"

Sounds good, right?

No. It's a scam.

I know, you have heard this sort of advertising on quite a few podcasts out there. It must work, right? Why else are you hearing these sorts of ads?

Here is the problem. A week after you stop playing that ad, one of your listeners decides to give DICK a try. But they forgot to use your promo code. Or they heard the ad on your podcast, but also five others. Which promo code do they use? If not yours, you don't see a dime of that advertising money. But wasn't that new DICK customer influenced by your show to become a DICK customer? Too bad. You get nothing.

I have tried these affiliate programs. On more than one occasion, I have had an advertiser pay me nothing, claiming they didn't get ANY customers from the ad. Yeah, right... Except twice I knew they HAD, and had proof. Scams...

So, what sort of advertising ARE we interested in running? Those that actually pay us to advertise. Let's say Carls Oatmeal Oasis Lunch company, or COOL, approaches us wanting to advertise. We tell the COOL company that for $2,000, they can have twenty ads on the network for one month. They agree, and either PayPal us the money or send a check. Once the money is there, we go to the podcasters in the network and ask who would be interested in running this COOL ad. (Okay, I am getting sick of that now as well...) Five shows agree. Each show will run the ad four times. The $2,000 will be split five ways, meaning each show will receive $400. We will have full disclosure, so you will know what the ad budget is and what your cut will be.

Still with me?

It's simple: if a company wants to advertise, they have to pay. No exceptions. Affiliate advertising is a scam. They don't pay the NFL money only if they get new customers for their ad during the SuperBowl. They don't try and scam newspapers or radio stations this way. Just podcasters and bloggers.

I hate to say it, but most advertisers still look down their nose at podcasting. They are still clueless about the real power or targeted advertising that podcasting brings to the table. In time, this will change, and when that time comes, I want to be part of a network ready to take advantage of those changes. I hope Stoplight Network will become a big player in this.

And no, you do not have to run ANY paid ads that the network brings in. None. You are under zero obligation to ever play an ad you don't want to. Ever.

Ever.

Your show is just that: your show. Stoplight Network owns none of your show, has zero control over the content of your show, and there is no contract to sign. You can leave the network at any time you want, without reason.

If you have the wherewithal to procure your own advertising from sources outside the network, you are free to run those ads. You are under no obligation to share any of the advertising dollars you make and procure on your own. You are also under no obligation to play ads for other podcasts in the network you may not like. You make all the decisions for your content, and what ads you may or may not want to play.

Your show. Your rules. We take no responsibility for your content, and make no demands of you or your show.

Hijack

Before I get into some technical information on the following pages, I did want to tell you about a fun thing many other podcasters in the network do once a year.

A couple years ago as I write this, I thought of a fun idea called "Hijack". It happens in October. Like children wearing Halloween costumes that month, many of the podcasters do something similar. For one show, we swap shows.

Say what?!?

Okay, it works like this: for all the podcasters who want to participate, I put all the hosts in a "hat" and randomly pick who is doing what show. For instance, David Cohen and I (hosts or TechFan) may end up doing the Nintendo Club Podcast. The guys from Nintendo Club do the MyMac show. The MyMac hosts do Geekiest Show Ever. And on it goes...

It's fun, and yet another way for you to reach a new audience. You do not, by any means, have to participate in Hijack, but it can be a lot of fun. I will send a email out sometime in September asking who wants to participate, and then help coordinate the swap. You can do your own content on the other show, or try and do it in the same way that show is usually done. For instance, the MyMac show is about Apple, iOS, and Macs, but maybe you have a show about Pro Wrestling. Do you try and do a Mac centric show for your hijack of the MyMac Podcast, or do you do your Pro Wrestling content there? It's entirely up to you and, to a lesser degree, the hosts of the show you are hijacking.

It's fun!

Technical Goodies
I explained on page two that we use DropBox as a means to share our promotional ads within the network. That is the basics of what we do, but there are a few other technical details to get into.

We have a Stoplight Network website (http://www.stoplightnetwork.com) in which we post every new episode of each show in the network. Well, when I say "we post", I really mean "I" post. I do this for a number of reasons, but the biggest is that it helps the Google search rankings. Google is still the biggest search engine in the world, and the higher you rank in a Google search, the better. So when you post your show on your website, and we do so on the Stoplight website as well, people have a much better shot at finding it one way or another.

It also helps promote the network itself, showcasing the wide variety of shows to both listeners and potential advertisers.

Stoplight Network also has an iTunes feed. A listener could subscribe to that feed in iTunes and get every show in the network in one fell swoop. This is a great way for new podcasts to get immediate listeners.

To do both the above, I need your help. And the more help you provide, the easier it is for me. (Remember, I am not being paid to do any of this, so I welcome any help I can get!) When you have a new show go live, I need to know about it. The easiest way is for you to send an email to publisher@mymac.com (that's me!) and tell me a new show is online. A link would be very welcome to the episode page as well.

That is the least you can do, and while helpful, still leaves me with a ton of work. But don't fret, there is actually more you can do to help out poor 'ol Tim! Read on!

DropBox II
Remember how I shared the "Ads" dropbox folder with you? Well, if you REALLY want to make my life a LOT easier, and help get your new episode listed much more quickly, I will create another shared Dropbox folder. This one will be shared by just you and I. In it, there will be a couple documents that will make my life infinitely easier. And while they may seem a little daunting or confusing for the less tech-savvy of you, it will quickly become second nature and very simple.

The first file is easy: it's a document with your show notes. Your show notes should consists of the name of the episode (example on the next page), a description of the episode (not too long, not too short) and some keywords from the show.
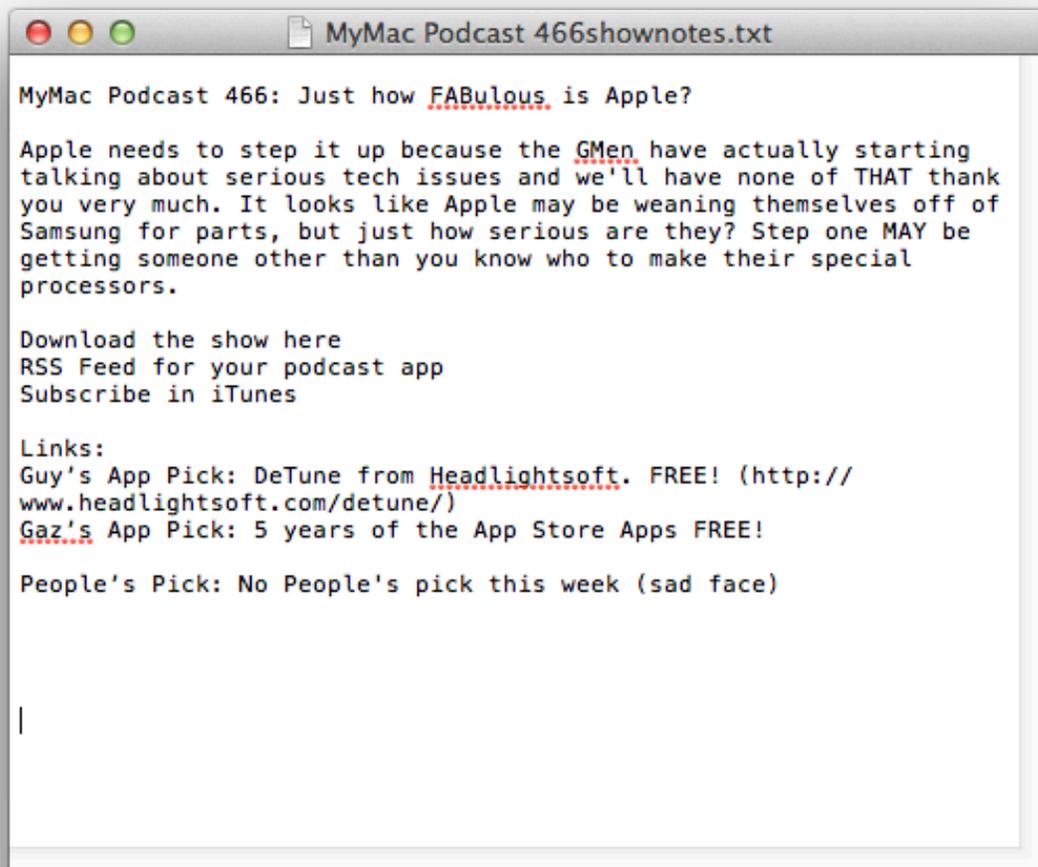
Name	Date Modified	Date Created	Size ▼	Kind
MyMac-Podcast-466.mp3	7/14/13 1:36 PM	Jul 14, 2013 1:36 PM	29.9 MB	MP3 audio
mymac466.jpeg	7/13/13 3:53 PM	Jul 13, 2013 3:53 PM	70 KB	JPEG image
mymac.xml	7/7/13 8:59 PM	Jul 7, 2013 8:59 PM	2 KB	TextW...ument
MyMac Podcast 466shownotes.txt	Yesterday 11:49 AM	Jul 14, 2013 1:36 PM	68 bytes	Plain...cument

This is a screen grab from a recent show of the MyMac Podcast. You can see there are four files here, one of them being the actual MP3 show file itself. If I am hosting your podcast on my server, this is something you will need to put in our shared DropBox folder.

The second file is a .jpg. That's there because for every episode, the MyMac Podcast has a different graphic. Not every podcast has different cover art for every episode, but I would still appreciate if you would put a copy of your shows graphic / logo in this folder in case I have need of it.

The next file is an xml file (the scary part) that I will go into later.

The last file is the show notes document. Opening that file shows this:

MyMac Podcast 466shownotes.txt

MyMac Podcast 466: Just how FABulous is Apple?

Apple needs to step it up because the GMen have actually starting talking about serious tech issues and we'll have none of THAT thank you very much. It looks like Apple may be weaning themselves off of Samsung for parts, but just how serious are they? Step one MAY be getting someone other than you know who to make their special processors.

Download the show here
RSS Feed for your podcast app
Subscribe in iTunes

Links:
Guy's App Pick: DeTune from Headlightsoft. FREE! (http://www.headlightsoft.com/detune/)
Gaz's App Pick: 5 years of the App Store Apps FREE!

People's Pick: No People's pick this week (sad face)

This is a completed show note document.

The first line is the name of the show:
MyMac Podcast 466: Just how FABulous is Apple?

The next paragraph is the show description:
Apple needs to step it up because the GMen have actually starting talking about serious tech issues and we'll have none of THAT thank you very much. It looks like Apple may be weaning themselves off of Samsung for parts, but just how serious are they? Step one MAY be getting someone other than you know who to make their special processors.

The next is what I try and put on each show note on Stoplight Network, and they are each very important and, I hope, self explanatory.

Download the show here
RSS Feed for your podcast app
Subscribe in iTunes

The only thing that changes on a show to show basis would be the link "Download the show here". The other two are linked the same for every show. Don't worry if you don't know what the links are, I will help you with that.

So, what does that look like as a final product? See next page for what it looked like on the Stoplight Network page.

Just how FABulous is Apple?

MyMac Podcast 466

MyMac Podcast 466: Just how FABulous is Apple?

Apple needs to step it up because the GMen have actually starting talking about serious tech issues and we'll have none of THAT thank you very much. It looks like Apple may be weaning themselves off of Samsung for parts, but just how serious are they? Step one MAY be getting someone other than you know who to make their special processors.

Download the show here
RSS Feed for your podcast app
Subscribe in iTunes

Links:
Guy's App Pick: DeTune from Headlightsoft. FREE!
Gaz's App Pick: 5 years of the App Store Apps FREE!

People's Pick: No People's pick this week (sad face)

By admin • Posted in MyMac • Tagged DeTune, Headlightsoft • Edit

See, pretty simply, yes? And because Guy Serle, the host of the MyMac Podcast and the fella who wrote up the note, was so helpful, I got that show posted the same day he emailed me that the show was ready.

Scary XML!!!
This is the part that many podcasters new to the network worry about. "I don't know code" I hear often, and I understand. So I will try and make this as simple as possible, but please, if you have any questions about this, go to page 1 of this document to get my email or cell #, contact me, and ask! I am here to help!

iTunes, nor any Podcast directory service or app, reads show notes like those above. They read an RSS feed, which is made up using the XML Mark-Up language. In fact, Apple recently updated the specifications for the formatting of RSS feeds that iTunes will read correctly, and that all new podcasts must conform to if they (Apple) are to accept you in iTunes. I won't go into all that detail here, but rather concentrate on just the XML post for one episode of a podcast.

The following is the XML from a recent (as I write this) episode of AppMinute.

<item>

<title>Book Creator</title>

<itunes:author>Stoplight Network</itunes:author>

<itunes:subtitle>AppMinute Episode 16</itunes:subtitle>

<itunes:summary>Donny Yankellow reviews Book Creator for iPad By Red Jumper Studio</itunes:summary>

<itunes:image href="http://www.mymac.com/appminute-900-full-white.png" />

<enclosure url="http://www.mymac.com/podcast/appminute-podcast/AppMinute-16.mp3" length="1666435" type="audio/mpeg" />

<guid>http://www.mymac.com/podcast/appminute-podcast/AppMinute-16.mp3</guid>

<pubDate>Friday, 19 July 2013 19:00:00 GMT</pubDate>

<itunes:duration>02:17</itunes:duration>

<itunes:keywords>Book Creator, iPad, Red Jumper Studio</itunes:keywords>

</item>

Yikes! That looks pretty confusing, doesn't it? It's not, trust me. Once I break it up for you, and explain what each this is, it's simple.

But first, a bit of a cheat if you are a Mac user. Whenever I edit a .xml file, I use a program called **TextWrangler** from **BareBones Software**. It is a free program, which you can find here: http://www.barebones.com/products/textwrangler/ or on the Mac App Store here: id404010395

The reason I use this (fantastic) free software (oh yeah, did I mention it's FREE?) is because it colors lines of code, and if you break something, it's easy to spot because the colors will change. (I will show an example below)

Now, looking at the same code from the page above, in TextWrangler it looks like this:

```
1  <item>
2
3  <title>Book Creator</title>
4
5  <itunes:author>Stoplight Network</itunes:author>
6
7  <itunes:subtitle>AppMinute Episode 16</itunes:subtitle>
8
9  <itunes:summary>Donny Yankellow reviews Book Creator for iPad By Red Jumper Studio</itunes:summary>
10
11 <itunes:image href="http://www.mymac.com/appminute-900-full-white.png" />
12
13 <enclosure url="http://www.mymac.com/podcast/appminute-podcast/AppMinute-16.mp3" length="1666435" type="audio/mpeg" />
14
15 <guid>http://www.mymac.com/podcast/appminute-podcast/AppMinute-16.mp3</guid>
16
17 <pubDate>Friday, 19 July 2013 19:00:00 GMT</pubDate>
18
19 <itunes:duration>02:17</itunes:duration>
20
21 <itunes:keywords>Book Creator, iPad, Red Jumper Studio</itunes:keywords>
22
23 </item>
```

Looks a little less intimidating this way, yes? Note how the files are listed in red? And plain text in black? And the code lines in blue? If you break your code, the color will change on that line. Just using the Title line correctly and incorrectly:

```
1
2  <title>Book Creator</title>
3
4  <title>Book Creator title>
5
```

Makes it much easier to see you goofed something up, yes? I bet even the most non-technical person can quickly see that the </ was left out on line 4, which caused the color change.

So, if you're a Mac user, get yourself TextWrangler. It rocks.

Let's go over the above line by line, and you will quickly see what to do.

One thing first, and this is **very important**. In your descriptions and file names, do not user odd characters like these: !@%+/>< Those things will break your code. But don't worry, if you do, I will find and fix it for you.

<item>
This is the first line. Each <item> is an episode. This tells iTunes to start reading the new episode at this point.

<title>Book Creator</title>
This is the name of your episode. This will change every week. In this case, you would change Book Creator to whatever the new episode name is.

<itunes:author>Stoplight Network</itunes:author>

This does not change. In this case, it says Stoplight Network. In your case, it will be the name of your podcast. Or maybe your name! It's up to you.

<itunes:subtitle>AppMinute Episode 16</itunes:subtitle>

This will change every episode. For the next episode I would simply change the 16 to a 17.

<itunes:summary>Donny Yankellow reviews Book Creator for iPad By Red Jumper Studio</itunes:summary>

This will change every week. This is the actual show notes, what this episode is about.

<itunes:image href="http://www.mymac.com/appminute-900-full-white.png" />

This only changes if you change the graphic for each episode Otherwise, it stays the same.

<enclosure url="http://www.mymac.com/podcast/appminute-podcast/AppMinute-16.mp3" length="1666435" type="audio/mpeg" />

This changes every week, and in fact two things will change here.

This is where your podcast episode is actually located. In this case, the actual podcast file is AppMinute-16.mp3. (don't leave spaces in your file names.) The rest of the URL is pointing to where the file can be found on the server. In this case, iTunes (or any RSS Podcast Reader) would go to http://www.mymac.com and then look for the directory (folder) named podcast, then another directory (folder) name appminute-podcast, and finally look for the file AppMinute-16.mp3.

Because I always use the same directory (folder) for each show, the only thing I would have to change for my next episode is the name of the actual .mp3 file, which would be AppMinute-17.mp3.

The next part of the code is **length="1666435"**. Where does that come from and what is it? Well, if you are on a Mac (can't tell ya on a PC, sorry) you get that by selecting your file in the finder and doing a "Get Info" on it. See picture below:
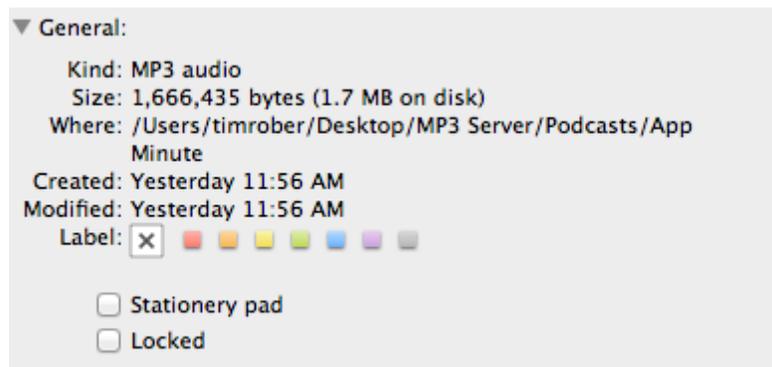
See it? Under "Size"? Yup, that where it's from! Pretty simple, yes?

type="audio/mpeg" won't change. This is for .mp3. If you use .m4a instead, it will be **type="audio/x-m4a"**. Either way, it won't change unless you go from one format to the other. But why would you do that?

<guid>http://www.mymac.com/podcast/appminute-podcast/AppMinute-16.mp3</guid>

I honestly don't know why this is needed. It's the exact same as the enclosure from above. Same thing, minus the length and type. Huh. But yeah, you change his every time as well.

<pubDate>Friday, 19 July 2013 19:00:00 GMT</pubDate>

I bet you can guess what this is, and yes, it will change for every episode. I don't change the time portion (19:00:00 GMT) and only change the year once a year (Duh!) but the rest changes. If weekday does not change, in this case Friday, you don't have to change it. The 19 July will change to the date your show goes live.

<itunes:duration>00:02:17</itunes:duration>

This is pretty simple, and will change every episode. It's how long your show is in hours, minutes, seconds. So, in this case, this episode is two minutes seventeen seconds long. If it was one hour, two minutes, and seventeen seconds long, it would read:

<itunes:duration>01:02:17</itunes:duration>

Again, very simple!

<itunes:keywords>Book Creator, iPad, Red Jumper Studio</itunes:keywords>

These are keywords, one word descriptions of what your show is about. Each keyword is separated by a comma. These are the same keywords I will use for the description on the Stoplight website. These are important to use, as iTunes uses them for searching. Don't get crazy with them, I usually keep it to under eight keywords. But remember to separate them by using a comma. In the above, Book Creator is one keyword, no comma separation between Book and Creator.

There is another piece of code not represented here that you will need to use if you have explicit language in your show.

<itunes:explicit>Yes</itunes:explicit>

You would put this right after the Date line if need be. Don't use it at all if you don't use explicit language. If you do, use the above code.

</item>
This line won't change, and tells iTunes this is the end of the code for this episode.

Pretty simple after all, yes? I told you it's easier than you thought it would be. But again, when you're in the Stoplight Network, you're not alone! There are other podcasters here to help you with any of this stuff.

We do have a Stoplight Network **email list**. I don't usually like to add people to the email list unless they want to be on it. It usually does not get a lot of emails, but it's nice to be on it if you have any questions or comments. For instance, if you have a co-host who can't podcast with you for an episode, and you need someone to fill in, it's the perfect place to put out a call for help. I can almost guarantee you someone will step up and give you a hand. And enjoy doing it!

In the Ads folder is a sound file named "Spotlight-Network-Opening.aif" You are not required to play this, but I urge you to do so. It helps build continuity, makes the network more well known and popular, and that leads to advertisers and more listeners. Most podcasters put that audio at the beginning of their show, but you can pretty much put it anywhere. Kinda works best at the start, though. Just saying...

Also, don't move files around in the Ads Dropbox folder. When you do, it moves it in everyone else's Dropbox as well. Honestly, it tends to piss some people off. If you accidentally delete something, just shoot me an email and I will fix it.

Wrapping it up
So that's it. I know this is fifteen pages of a lot of text, and if you thought it was brutal to read it, imagine me having to write it! HA! But seriously, I do hope this helped you, answered most of your questions, and did an adequate job of explaining who and what we are. We are not a huge, faceless content network bent on world domination. (well, not faceless or huge anyway) We are a collection of podcasters, like you, who are passionate in what we do, would love to earn some extra money by doing what we love, and want to make our shows more popular.

Ready to jump in?

Tim Robertson
Written July 20th, 2013