Should I start a Podcast?

Most podcasts fail. Here's how to tell if yours will.

A 20-minute decision framework for coaches, consultants, founders, CEOs, and senior leaders weighing the real cost and real return of a branded show.

HOW TO USE THIS BRIEF

Three sections. Twenty minutes. One decision.

Most podcast guides are written by producers who want you to hire them. This brief is structured around a different question: should you do this at all, and if so, how do you do it without it eating your calendar?

The structure is deliberately short. If you're a senior leader, your time isn't well spent reading 30 pages on microphone selection. It's well spent on the three questions that determine whether the show will actually work and whether you're the right person to host it right now.

Section	What It Does	Time
1. The Diagnostic	Five questions that reveal whether a podcast is the right move for you right now. Score yourself honestly.	5 min
2. The Real Cost	What it actually takes to ship a professional show, in hours, dollars, and operational complexity.	8 min
3. The Decision Worksheet	A fillable artifact that captures your thinking and turns it into a defensible decision you can revisit.	10 min

What this brief deliberately doesn't cover?
We don't walk through microphone recommendations, editing software tutorials, or how to compress an MP3. That information is freely available, and it's not what's stopping you. What's stopping you is clarity on whether the upside justifies the operational reality. That's what this brief gives you.

SECTION 01

The Diagnostic

Five questions. Score each one honestly from 1 to 10. Total your score at the end. The result tells you something specific about whether a podcast belongs in your strategy right now.

This is not a marketing exercise. It's a filter. Most executives who score below 30 should not start a podcast yet and recognizing that is more valuable than launching one that fails.

01	Do you have a defensible point of view on a topic your buyers care about? *Not "opinions about your industry" — a genuine, distinctive perspective that would make a senior buyer want to hear you for 45 minutes. Score 10 if you've been told repeatedly that your thinking on something specific is unusually sharp.*	/ 10
02	Is your business model one where trust and reputation drive revenue? *Score high if your average deal size is meaningful (>$10k) and prospects spend weeks evaluating before buying. Score low if you sell low-ticket transactional products where podcasts have weaker leverage.*	/ 10
03	Can you commit to recording 60–90 minutes of content per week, every week, for 18 months? *Be brutally honest. Most shows die between episodes 8 and 14 because the host underestimated the consistency required. If your calendar already breaks under existing commitments, score low.*	/ 10
04	Do you have access to compelling guests, or strong solo conversational presence? *Score high if you can pick up the phone and book three notable guests this week, OR if people repeatedly tell you you're a good speaker/communicator. Solo shows work too — but only with strong on-mic presence.*	/ 10
05	Are you prepared to either invest 10+ hours per week yourself, or pay for proper production support? *There is no third option. Shows that try to split the difference (host plus a part-time freelancer) almost always degrade in quality by month four. Score 10 if you have clarity on which path you'll choose.*	/ 10

Total Score	What It Means
40–50	Strong fit. A podcast is likely to perform as a real business asset for you. The remaining decisions are about format and execution model — covered in the next two sections.
30–39	Conditional fit. A podcast can work, but one or two specific gaps are likely to cause failure if not addressed first. Identify the lowest-scoring question and resolve that before launching.
20–29	Premature. The strategic upside is real, but the foundation isn't. Returning to this framework in 6–12 months after the underlying gap closes will likely yield a different score.
Below 20	Not the right move right now. Podcasts compound returns over years. If multiple foundational pieces are missing, the time and capital go further elsewhere. Revisit when the business has shifted.

A useful reframe.
If you scored below 30, that's not a failure, it's a saved 18 months. The executives who regret launching shows almost always say the same thing: "I knew the timing wasn't right." Trusting the diagnostic is the cheaper outcome.

SECTION 02

The Real Cost

If you scored 30 or above on the diagnostic, the next question is operational: what does it actually take to ship a show that performs?

This is the section most guides skip or sanitize. We'll walk through what professional production actually involves, not so you can do it yourself, but so you can make an informed decision about whether to.

What goes into a single polished episode?

A show that sounds professional and grows is the output of a system, not a single recording session. Here's what each episode requires:

Stage	What It Involves	Realistic Time
Strategy & booking	Identifying the right guest, outreach, scheduling, briefing	2–3 hrs
Pre-production	Research on the guest, question development, run-of-show	1–2 hrs
Recording	The conversation itself plus setup and contingency	90–120 min
Post-production	Editing for pacing, audio cleanup, music, transitions, intro/outro	4–8 hrs
Show notes & assets	Episode description, timestamps, key quotes, transcript review	1–2 hrs
Distribution	Publishing, hosting upload, podcast directory checks, scheduling	30–60 min
Repurposing	Audiograms, video clips, social posts, newsletter copy	3–5 hrs

Total: 13–22 hours per episode. And that's before any marketing strategy, guest follow-up, sponsor coordination, or analytics review.

This is why most executive-led shows die. Not because the host stopped caring because the operational load is genuinely incompatible with running a business.

The hourly-rate math

Here is the question that changes the decision for almost every executive who works through it honestly:

> What is your time worth?
> If your hour produces $150+ of business value when spent on activities only you can do, sales, partnerships, strategy, key client work then every hour spent on podcast editing or social media graphic production is costing the business that amount in opportunity. A 20-hour episode at $150/hour is $3,000 of executive time, spent on tasks that have no strategic value and could be handled by a team that does them every day.

This isn't an argument that you must outsource. It's an argument that the decision should be made deliberately, with clear numbers rather than drifted into. Some founders genuinely enjoy the production craft and account for that in their reasoning. Most don't, and discover too late that they've spent six months building skills they never wanted.

The three operating models

There are three ways to run a podcast operation. Each has a real use case. Most executives who fail chose the wrong one.

Model	What It Looks Like	Best Fit For
Full DIY	The host owns everything. Tools, editing, scheduling, marketing. Time cost: 15–25 hrs/episode	Solo creators whose time is the asset, not the constraint
Hybrid	The host owns strategy, booking, and marketing. Outsource editing only. Time cost: 8–12 hrs/episode	Founders with strong existing marketing teams who can absorb repurposing

Model	What It Looks Like	Best Fit For
Full production partner	The partner owns everything except the recording itself, strategy, booking, editing, distribution, marketing system. Time cost: 90–120 min/episode	People whose hour is worth more than $150, and whose business benefits materially from the show being a real asset

What does this section really tell you?
The decision is not "podcast or no podcast." The decision is "which operating model can I actually sustain and is the upside worth the version of this I'd realistically commit to?" Most failed shows are honest people who picked an operating model that didn't match their real bandwidth.

SECTION 03

The Decision Worksheet

This is the artifact most executives end up working from. Fill it in. Print it if helpful. Revisit it in 30 days and see if your answers have shifted.

If you can complete the entire worksheet with conviction, you have the clarity needed to move forward. If you can't, the gaps are exactly where to focus before launching.

Strategic foundation

My ICP listener:

The point of view I'll bring:

How I'll know it's working (12-month metric):

Format choice

Check the format that best fits your bandwidth and strengths:

- ☐ Solo monologue or short-form, ~15 min episodes, host-led insights. Lowest production cost, highest demand on host content output.
- ☐ Interview or guest-led conversations, 45–60 min. Highest leverage for relationship-building, requires a strong booking pipeline.
- ☐ Co-host, recurring conversation between two voices. Lower booking burden, requires reliable co-host commitment.
- ☐ Narrative / produced, scripted, edited, multi-voice. Highest production cost, strongest authority output. Rare at executive level.

Operating model

Check the model you're committing to:

☐ Full DIY: I'll own everything. I have 15–25 hrs/week to commit and I'm prepared to develop the production skills.

☐ Hybrid: I'll own strategy and host duties. I'll hire a freelance editor. I have a marketing team that can absorb repurposing.

☐ Full production partner: I'll show up to record. I'll work with a partner who owns the rest. I'm clear that this is the right trade for my time.

Commitment

Date I'll launch by: ______________________

____

First three guests / first three episodes: ______________________

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What I'll stop doing to make room for this: ______________________

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The most important line on this worksheet.
What I'll stop doing to make room for this. Almost every failed executive podcast was launched without this question being answered honestly. If the calendar is already at capacity, the show will lose. Decide what loses *instead* before you start.

YOUR NEXT STEP

If You're Ready to Move

If you've worked through the framework and the answer is yes, strong diagnostic score, clear operating model, real commitment, the remaining question is execution. And execution is where most shows fail.

Not because the strategy was wrong. Because nobody owned the boring, weekly, never-glamorous operational work of getting an episode out the door, on time, every time, for years.

That's what we do. We are an end-to-end podcast production studio for senior leaders who want a show that performs as a real business asset, strategic positioning, full production, distribution, and the surrounding marketing system. You bring the expertise and the conversations. We build everything around it.

What does a strategy call look like?

Thirty minutes. No pitch. We start by asking what you'd want the show to do for the business in 12 months. We work backwards from there to whether and how we'd build it with you. By the end of the call, you'll have a clear next step regardless of whether we end up working together.

If your worksheet is filled in and the path is clear, this is the fastest way to move from decision to launch.

Schedule a strategy call!
https://cal.com/umar-yoosuf-2ncpux/30min Bring your completed worksheet. We'll use it as the starting point.

Podcast production for personal brands