

ISOJ 2022: Day 2

Panel: Audio journalism and social audio: Listen up, it's a new frontier of digital storytelling

Chair: [Tamar Charney](#), editorial strategist, formerly with NPR

- [Sarah Feldberg](#), editor for emerging products and audio, **San Francisco Chronicle**
 - [Nina Gregory](#), head of news and media publishers, **Clubhouse**
 - [Rebeca Ibarra](#), host and producer, **The Refresh, Insider**
 - [Maggie Penman](#), executive producer, **Post Reports, The Washington Post**
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Tamar Charney So yes, audio is the new frontier in digital storytelling. And we're going to talk a little bit about how you can make the most of it if you are at your organization or venturing into the audio pool. So we're going to dive into it, I guess. We'll use that analogy. I think in a lot of ways, audio used to be synonymous with radio, and like so many things digital, changes in computing technology have really changed that and really changed how people are getting content. So, we've seen a lot of the more recent changes in computing technology actually kind of favor audio, if you think about it. There's been podcasting and RSS feeds. There's been streaming of like everything from music to radio stations. Mobile computing means you can take it along no matter where you go. Kind of like transistor radios. Remember that, anybody? We've got Alexa, and Google, and Siri, and finally social audio. This has really been kind of a bit of a game changer in the audio space. And it's really opened up all kinds of new doors for audio storytelling and for the organizations who've been able to get involved in audio storytelling. So it's not just radio anymore. It's newspapers. It's big tech.

And in a lot of ways how we're getting audio has really changed in recent years. What this is showing is the number of radios in households, and in 2008, there were only 4% of households without a radio. Okay, everybody else had a radio. Flash forward to 2022. 40% of households don't have radios. It's even worse when you talk about young people. Almost 60% of households with young people don't have radios. And sure, you could say, okay, well, they can just stream it online, or go to Alexa, or get radio and all kinds of other ways. Yeah, that's possible. But it's kind of not really happening to the degree that you would think it is. A slide in a recent presentation from Edison Research. It found among young people when you look at the amount of time spent listening to spoken word audio, 16% of listening was to radio. The other 30 something percent was podcasting. But basically what this is showing is there's been a profound shift in how young people are actually consuming spoken word audio, and it's moving away from radio and into on-demand formats. So that really means there has been a profound shift in how we're getting our audio content.

So we have a number of radio people on this panel. And by radio people, I kind of mean people who formerly worked in radio and got their training in radio, but they're now doing audio journalism for newspapers and for tech companies. So again, big game changing because people are getting their audio in way more spaces than radio. So we want to dive into this today. On this panel, they've been introduced. We've got, you know, The Washington Post, the San Francisco Chronicle, Clubhouse and a kind of a new approach

to podcasting with The Refresh and Insider. So thank you all for being here. It's great to have an all-women panel, by the way, so super cool. So we're going to really dive into podcasting and social audio and really talk about what's working and what's not working. What I would love to do is just have each of you give a quick overview into why your organization, that really isn't traditionally an audio organization, dove into audio and kind of why. So, Maggie, let's start with you.

Maggie Penman So I think that a lot of organizations are realizing some of the things that you were just talking about with those slides, which is that people are not consuming journalism the way they used to, and you have to meet them where they are. Right? So if they're listening to podcasts, you need your journalism in podcasts. If they're watching things on YouTube, your journalism should be on YouTube. And The Washington Post has started experimenting with all of these things. And I think it's been really exciting to see how Washington Post journalists have embraced that and how our audience has embraced that and grown as a result of this. I remember, like early in the days of Post Reports, which is the flagship daily news podcast of the Washington Post, one of our reporters said to me, "I love coming on Post Reports because I hear from my teenage cousin who I know for sure has never read any of my articles, but he listens to Post Reports. And every time I'm on the podcast he calls me." So I think this is what news organizations are learning is that, you know, just because people aren't reading print newspapers or aren't listening to the radio, that doesn't mean they're not curious about the world. It doesn't mean they don't want to learn what's going on. And so you just have to meet them where they are, and so we've tried to do that with Post Reports. We've experimented with audio articles. We have experimented on Twitter Spaces and Clubhouse, and I'm excited to talk more about that. But we're trying to just be everywhere right now.

Tamar Charney Cool. Sarah, what about with you? A similar story?

Sarah Feldberg Yeah, I think a lot of what you said really resonates with the San Francisco Chronicle. You know, the 12-year-old cousin who doesn't read The Washington Post. That's part of it for us. We're trying to reach audiences who don't consider themselves Chronicle readers. They don't consider themselves part of our community. And through podcasts and through audio storytelling, suddenly they are. And I think one of the other big pieces for us has been a transparency element. Our flagship news podcast is called Fifth and Mission. That's the corner where our newsroom is, on Fifth and Mission Streets in San Francisco. And really, the genesis of that show was bringing people into the newsroom. It was talking to Chronicle reporters, not just about the news, but also about their process, how they report, how they find their sources, why they make the choices they do, why they're telling the stories that they are, and connecting our community, and our subscribers, and our listeners to the reporters in a different way, and making them understand who's on the other side of that story or that photograph, who's making the journalism that they're consuming, and helping to connect with our journalists. So people understand that there's a human being who is producing this for you, and there's reasons they're making the choices that they are. And if we can share that with you and explain it to you, hopefully that builds trust and connection.

Tamar Charney Cool. Now, Rebeca, you with Refresh from The Insider kind of took one of the big challenges of podcasting, which is you produce a podcast, and if it's about news, it's out there. But the news is changing and the podcast is still there. You guys have kind of addressed that issue. Talk about why you decided to take a leap into that idea of like, let's figure out how to refresh it.

Rebeca Ibarra Yeah, definitely. And the Refresh, our kind of working tagline is "fresh like live radio, but on demand, like podcasts." And this was very much the brainchild of the CEO of Insider Henry Blodget, and my boss, the head of audio at Insider Andy Bowers. And really they were like, why can't I have the latest news on my phone that I can listen to? Why do I have to go to the radio, and I have to wait to the top of the hour or the bottom of the hour to be able to listen to it? And that's what they wanted, and then that's what we made. Right? And the thing is that, for example, NPR has actually a very popular podcast, which basically just has the latest newscast that a lot of people do listen to, but it isn't made for the digital audience. It isn't made for the podcasting audience. And the Refresh for Insider is very much made for people who might not actually listen to radio, but do listen to podcasts. And we weren't about to really compete with the great shows that are already out there that do daily news. Right? But where there is a hole is, you know, Mike, Andy puts this really well. It's like you make a podcast, and it's very much like the print edition of a newspaper. It's out there, and it can't be changed. Whereas with the Refresh, we think of ourselves as the home page of the newspaper with little different modules that can be like plucked out and then plucked back in without really affecting the integrity. So that means that every time you come to us, you know, right now, just from 7 a.m. to 1 p.m. Eastern, because we're a tiny team and we just launched a month ago, but every time you come to us, you have the latest news. And we can change it without having to go back and change this whole show thanks to new tech through a company Spooler that we're working with. So yeah, that's our challenge, and we're new. So, go try it out.

Tamar Charney It's kind of a boundary-pushing thing, so congratulations on doing that. Nina, you are doing something completely different, social audio. Talk a little bit about why Clubhouse got into the journalism space and actually really started helping people unpick what's going on in the world.

Nina Gregory I think that the people who use Clubhouse, the Clubhouse Community, wanted news. It is one of the things that is, I think, the stickiest thing on Clubhouse, whether it's news about Ukraine, news about politics, news about the Oscars. Clubhouse provides a space for people to unpack the news, and I think that having a journalist within a tech company thinking about how to bring newsrooms and journalists into that was their goal of hiring me. So that's what my job is, is to bring journalists and news organizations onto the platform. And since it is a new medium, it's experimental, and it has a very college radio vibe to it, which is really exciting for me after working at the network for about the last 15 years. So when I left NPR, I said, I'm not going to talk of the nation, I'm going to talk of all the nations, and it's global. And so we get to also think about global news consumers as well, you know, and what people want and hear what they want. So we're trying to give the people what they want.

Tamar Charney We're going to dove more into Clubhouse and social audio in a little bit. But I want to concentrate the first part of this conversation on podcasts. So let's start with you. I mean, you talked a little bit about pulling back the curtain, but in terms of the overall organization, like how has podcasts kind of played into your work in serving your community at San Francisco?

Sarah Feldberg Yeah, I think it's been an important part of serving our community in San Francisco. And, you know, we have a number of different podcasts and they do different things. Our flagship is Fifth and Mission, which is a daily local news podcast, but we also have a wonderful arts and culture podcast called Total S.F., where one of our culture critics and one of our city columnists go out into the community and meet fascinating

people and celebrate San Francisco. And every episode is this sort of reminder of why the city is an incredible place, and it's vibrant, and it's fun, and it's like a call to arms to leave your house and go have an incredible day. And every time I listen to it, I just am motivated to, like, get off my couch and do more in my life. And so I think, you know, we're trying to connect. There's a lot of connection. I think there's an intimacy to podcasts that sometimes gets lost in daily news production, where we're so focused on providing the most accurate and quickest information that we can to our audience that we don't stop to connect with them on a human level. And podcasts, they are voice. You are hearing our voice. You cannot escape the human in the podcast. And I think that's a big part of the benefit for us is really getting those voices out and also hearing from community members. A lot of our podcasts, our news podcasts, frequently talks to reporters in the newsroom, but we also get to bring those community voices on. And it's a different thing to read a quote in a text article than it is to hear somebody saying it and to hear the emotion in their voice, the richness, the character that comes through in a podcast. It's such a powerful medium, so we really are finding that that resonates with people, and they feel an emotional connection. They feel the intimacy of it.

Tamar Charney Because it is such an incredibly intimate medium. I mean, everything audio is, and I think podcasts even more than other forms. Maggie, I think you mentioned how different people were hearing the journalism from Washington Post because of the podcast. But has it changed the way you all think about your journalism or the types of stories that you cover?

Maggie Penman I think it has. I mean, one thing we have really tried to center on Post Reports is that The Washington Post is not just covering politics. We are covering arts and culture. We are covering sports. We had this week one of our economic reporters on to talk about the rise and fall of Peloton and how he sees this as a metaphor for the entire pandemic economy. So like the range of subjects we're able to cover on Post Reports I think is really cool and really demonstrates everything that the Post has to offer. I think another thing that I've thought about a lot is, I have a feeling I'm going to be echoing you a lot, Sarah, but we talk a lot about the transparency part of this, and pulling back the curtain, and how I think that can have such an important role in building trust. And there's been a lot of really great discussion this weekend from a lot of smart people about the erosion of trust in journalism and in journalists. And I think when you hear someone not just talk about what they found in their reporting, but how they did their reporting and showing their work, which is something podcasts lend themselves so well to, I think that really has an impact. And, you know, I've been thinking a lot about our coverage of the war in Ukraine in the last month, and we have these amazing foreign correspondents on the ground there. And one of them, Siobhán O'Grady, she's an incredible writer, and she has been writing stories about the continued bombardment of Kiev, especially this past week, after Russia said that they were planning to pull back in negotiations with Ukraine. And it's one thing to read her reporting on that. It's another thing to hear a voice memo she recorded of herself at 5:15 in the morning when she was woken up by these bombs and by these air raid sirens. And you can't help but relate to her and trust her when you hear that on Post Reports. So I think that that is another important thing is in pulling back the curtain, we're able to build that trust with our audience and show them how we do our work.

Tamar Charney I'll let any of you jump in on this one. But I think that's something that for those of us who worked in radio, like, you know, that the audio just takes people there. What has it been like for the print journalists to sort of realize like, "Oh, we've got this tool

that can really just like immediately in a heartbeat bring somebody into a scene." Has that been something people have noticed or?

Sarah Feldberg I think that's an ongoing opportunity for us.

Tamar Charney Interesting. Say more.

Sarah Feldberg I think integrating the podcasts into the newsroom, and into the sort of reporting process, and the thought process of reporters and editors, different people have different interest and aptitude for participating in the podcasts. One of our reporters, Ryan Kost, did this wonderful story last week that turned into a fantastic podcast episode about a rooster in the Tenderloin neighborhood in the center of San Francisco. And the Tenderloin is struggling with a horrifying fentanyl crisis and rampant homelessness. There are a lot of major issues, and people in the community were like, the rooster is the last straw. We cannot take this rooster. This is a problem we need to solve. And so we had audio of the rooster crowing, and we have community members talking about the problems. And he wrote this wonderful story. And he recorded all this audio, and he sent it to us. And he came on the show. And when he heard the podcast episode, he went, this should have just been a podcast. We didn't need the story. This is the richest way to tell this story. This is the most transportive way. How can you talk about a rooster without hearing the rooster? And I think that's an exciting thing for me, is to see reporters who really all they want to do is tell the best story possible and connect to the audience the best way. And sometimes that is through podcasts. And when they see that, and they recognize it, and they get excited about it, that's really exciting for me.

Tamar Charney I love the examples range from war in Ukraine to roosters. But anyway, so Rebeca, I'm curious from your point of view, I mean, you all were a digital publication, and you had to set up almost a workflow for audio that becomes constant updating. What was that transition like for the newsroom at Insider?

Rebeca Ibarra I mean, our team at the Refresh were six people, and three of us are experienced audio makers. And the other three, including my co-host, had little to no experience in audio. So that was basically like a training camp for people to learn how to do audio. Is there tape, is still a question I'm constantly asking our team and now the broader people at Insider because print reporters just don't think tape first, and we're slowly getting people to like you know bring us a little bit of tape. It's hard. Like, first of all, because we had to train people to think audio-first within our team, and then we had to train them to think audio-first, making a podcast that very much functions like a daily news show. Like I start my day at 4:45 a.m.. We're throughout the country. We're in New York. We're in Toronto. We're in California. So we had to really train people to write for audio, write concisely, write vividly. And then on top of that, we do interview our reporters at Insider because it's just such an interesting organization with such a breadth of coverage. And we've gone from piloting where we could not get that many reporters to, like, give us their stories beforehand. They're like, "Well, what if you scoop us?" And we're like, "No, we need to train you to think that we are a team. We work with you." Now, slowly people are sending us Slacks like, "I want to be on the Refresh. Can I be able to Refresh? How can I be on the Refresh?" So it's just a switching of mentality, and it's very much an ongoing thing.

Tamar Charney So as the audio people in your organization, what has it been like for, you know, basically print-legacy organizations, in a lot of ways, to do this? What have been some of the challenges, the pitfalls, the lessons learned? We'll start with you, Maggie.

Maggie Penman I think my biggest fear when I came to The Washington Post was that journalists would see this as just another thing they have to do in their already very busy day. You know, Washington Post reporters are not only reporting and talking to their sources all day and writing their stories, but they're also asked to go on TV. They're asked to go on the radio. And I think my fear was how do we get buy in from these busy people and get them to be excited? And I think that I haven't had as many challenges with that as I feared. And I've been really pleasantly surprised by the excitement and enthusiasm people have about the podcast. I will echo everything Rebeca said about "is there tape" is a constant question still, years in. And you know, I think it does take a mentality shift when you stop thinking about getting the quote and taking notes, but think about, "Oh, I should get out my phone and hit record on an audio voice memo." I will say, like a huge thing that has helped us is that this technology is in everyone's pockets now. You don't need a big, complicated recording kit. You just need your phone. And I think the pandemic has also forced a lot of reporters who weren't comfortable with that before to get comfortable. Because every time we talk to a reporter who is remote, we have them, you know, recording themselves on their iPhone and like putting headphones on to talk to us on Zoom. And it's a very complicated process, but they've all learned it now. And so they're more familiar with taking out their phone and hitting record, and so that has gone a long way.

Tamar Charney There's like the pro tip there. So, you know, if you're doing a story, if you're going to take pictures or get a quote, you probably ought to get audio too, if you're going to do audio. Sarah, anything you want to add on that?

Sarah Feldberg Yeah, I mean, I would echo the same things. I think one of the ongoing challenges for us is getting looped in early enough in the process on some stories, where we can do a two way with a reporter and that can be a great episode, but there's so much more potential. And even if the reporter doesn't feel comfortable getting their own tape or, you know, isn't going to have a great ear for ambient sound, we can send somebody with them sometimes. We can help bolster their reporting and make it richer if we know in advance. And I think it's an ongoing challenge. Our newsroom has done a great job in recent years of starting to think more about photography when you're conceptualizing a story, what are the visual opportunities? What are the graphical opportunities? Is there a data opportunity? And we're starting to do that with audio, but we have not been doing it for as long. So it's still a process.

Tamar Charney That's probably pro-tip number two. Bring in the audio experts early if you're thinking about audio. Rebeca?

Rebeca Ibarra I don't think I have that much to add. I mean, it's really just the same challenges. I think we, who work in audio, know that someone could be one of the most colorful and amazing writers, and then they sit in front of a mic and it's just deadpan. So, you know, letting people get comfortable talking about their stories, letting people get comfortable painting scenes. Right? Because print, you can do numbers in print. You can do a lot of images. But in audio, you really want to set scenes. And that's something that we keep urging people to do, and as you know, they just keep getting more comfortable.

Tamar Charney Do any of you find the issue where people think, "Oh, I'm a good talker, I'll do a podcast. It'll be super easy."

Rebeca Ibarra I mean, I adore my co-host, Dave Smith, but he doesn't have that much audio experience. And one of the things we've been playing with a lot is playing with format. We're like we have some amazing stories in Insider. Do we always have to interview the reporter? Can Dave and I just sit down and talk about it and like read the best quotes out loud to us? And we've actually done that several times, and we figure out it works. You know, a three little minute piece telling people what we think is the most interesting part of the news. But, you know, our first iterations of that, Dave, was like, we can just sit and chat about it, right? I was like, "Okay, man, if you want." And then what results is a 30-minute conversation that completely destroys my producer, right? Who's like, "How can I make this a three-minute chat?" I'm like, we have to have a little tiny, tiny bit of scripting, or bullet points, or at least an idea. You know, we can't just sit down and just chat for 30 minutes for what is ostensibly a ten-minute daily news show. So, yeah, that's been a learning process, but he learned that pretty fast, though.

Tamar Charney Just like in writing a story, audio, you know, even if you're doing an interview, there has to be a focus. So what about ethical issues? Has that come up in any of your shops? Like just things that folks don't realize you probably shouldn't do with audio or different levels of editing and oversight?

Maggie Penman It's really interesting. I think one of the things that we thought about from the beginning is how do we fact check the podcast as rigorously as everything in the print newspaper? We're working on tight deadlines, and so there are challenges. But I think it's so important that we treat audio journalism with the same rigor that we treat print journalism. And I think one thing that we've tried to do on Post Reports, which again going back to that building trust with our audience, is to be really transparent when we do have a correction. And in a couple of cases, we've actually done a story based on a correction, where a listener has written in and said, "Oh, you didn't get this quite right." And we're like, "Okay, well tell us why, and let's interview you about it, and talk to an expert, and figure it out." And I think obviously no one enjoys having a correction, but those moments where you can be transparent and say to your audience like, "Hey, we messed up. Here's what we got wrong." I think it really goes a long way to build trust.

Tamar Charney Any other thoughts on that?

Sarah Feldberg Well, I'll just say one of the things that's been really wonderful with the Mission, our new show, is our director of news Demian Bulwa is actually the co-host with our host, Cecilia Lei. So having Demian intimately involved in the podcast, and with his own stake in it personally beyond just something that's good for the organization, it means that on our more complicated episodes or stories where we might be worried about, you know, are we portraying this the right way? Have we gotten this completely right? Not only is he available to listen, but he's part of making the podcast. And he's intimately involved, and sometimes he's hosting. And sometimes he's hosting stories that he has seen through the editing process, so there's a depth of questions and a depth of conversation that can happen because he has been part of the journalist's process the whole time.

Tamar Charney Great. Excellent. Any final thoughts on podcasting before we turn to social audio? We'll come back to some pro tips in a little bit. I mean, definitely podcasting, I think, has been the primary way many news organizations and many outlets have been getting into the audio game if they were traditionally print. But it's been really interesting to watch how social audio is becoming more and more this way that news organizations are engaging and also working with their journalists to get the news out in a different way, in a more conversational way. And it's really interesting to watch. You know, Nina, in the case

of your organization Clubhouse, that you guys have also got into covering the news in a social audio format. And I'm wondering, what is it like and how is it different, you know, working in a space like Clubhouse and social audio from doing journalism on the radio?

Nina Gregory Well, journalism on the radio, I think, has many hands, and that takes some time to produce even if it's live. You still have a certain machinery that needs to be in place. You need a satellite. You need an uplink. So I think one of the obvious changes is that I no longer need that equipment to do news on Clubhouse. You can just be on your phone. I think one of the really most striking changes to me is getting to really hear from people, as opposed to reading studies about what people say or an occasional member station visit to have the audience actually co-creating the news with us. And so the ability to experiment has been the biggest change. I think, in an organization like NPR, we strive for a level of perfection. And I know for myself personally, reflecting on that time now that I'm in this new sort of in a tech company where there's a very different methodology of working. I think it was uncomfortable at first for me to be told to just go do it, to just go take risks. But as we've done some little calculated risks, I'm now really feeling invigorated by the process.

Tamar Charney Tell me a little bit about how you have been working with journalists at outlets all across the country to do things, and what's happening in some of the almost programming that you've developed on Clubhouse.

Nina Gregory So I'm trying a few different approaches. We have a programmatic approach that's kind of like a traditional daily radio sort of news show with host Tanzina Vega with a co-host, his name is Chad Carter, who was a writer on The Daily Show. And I was an editor on Morning Edition for many years. And after I'd leave morning, I would go listen to Howard Stern, and I just needed to laugh. And one of the things, after so many years of reading studies about what, you know, news consumers wanted, they wanted the news to lighten up and go deeper. And I feel that we've been able to experiment with both of these things. On the going deeper front, there's a really cool news app, which is like a news literacy app. It's like a Fitbit for news, and the founder has been doing for the last 12 weeks in his club, a deep dive with Harvard's Ukrainian Research Institute. And this was prior to the war, and so we've had these experts on Ukraine giving us a weekly, deep dive into the thousand year arc of history between Russia and Ukraine. Including last weekend, we had several people who are involved in NATO's policymaking in the energy front, and they were talking about extremely complex geopolitical issues between sort of gas, and oil, and various European relationships that went on for four hours, and community members to join that conversation and ask questions. So we're seeing a range of opportunities for people who are open to experimentation. The other way that news organizations, obviously the traditional come sort of do a panel and talk to people, you can do that sort of like a virtual station visit, but we also have reporters who are coming in. I know I see certain reporters who are going into, especially because we have so many global rooms in Iran, where you can listen, rooms in Russian and Ukrainian, for reporters, especially international reporters or reporters who speak or understand other languages, there are a lot of opportunities to hear sort of the town square. So we have also had sort of community-generated news. There's a room that's been going on since the start of the Ukrainian war, and I think some 800,000 people have come through there today. So they bring experts in, and then the community can participate in the conversation. So those are a couple of examples.

Tamar Charney Now, you had mentioned when we were talking, you know, prior to this panel, that on one hand you're doing journalism, but on the other hand, it's almost civic engagement?

Nina Gregory I think so. And community building. Another example is Kitty Eisele, who works with NPR, as well as doing a podcast with Texas Public Radio. It's called now, I think, Twenty-Four Seven Caregiving. And Kitty had kept an audio diary, talk about the intimacy of audio, of herself taking care of her father the last five years of his life as he struggled with dementia. And she learned in her reporting for this podcast that there are some 50 million caregivers in this country who really have no resources. And I said, "Hey, this is a great experiment. Let's see if we build a place for them, will they come? And can you bring these experts to them so that you can share your expertise?" So we're experimenting with community building and finding, really, it's a low lift. All you need to do is sort of like put up your shingle and say, "Hey, we're going to be here every Friday at noon, stop by." And then you just hold the space, and the audience shows up. And then for the reporter, or editor, or a producer who asks, they just start talking. You can report it. You can download it. You own the audience. Box on demand.

Tamar Charney Wow. Wow. And so what kind of reaction do you get from the journalists who participate?

Nina Gregory You know, it's a lot like when reporters would do member station visits and they would come back and they were elated and filled up with like, "Oh, that was so wonderful." Because I think a lot of them are maybe a bit nervous that their work might not be well received or they might make a mistake. But really, the audience is so generous and forgiving, and they want to support the reporter. So I think that people find a deeply engaged community of news consumers, and like both the quality and level of questions I think surprises people.

Tamar Charney Very cool. Now, Sarah, your organization has gotten involved in social audio with Twitter Spaces. What caused you to sort of venture into that?

Sarah Feldberg I think mostly because it was there, and we like to experiment. We're always trying to reach our audience in new ways. And if there's a new opportunity to engage with people, we're pretty open to trying it. And we've had a really great response. We've done a number of Twitter Spaces at this point, really. For Fifth and Mission, we've actually collaborated with our social team and the podcast team to do hosted Twitter Spaces from our podcast host that later become episodes. So right as the Omicron surge was building, there were a lot of questions about how we should be adjusting our behavior in light of this new strain, we brought on some prominent public health experts in the Bay Area community, people who we quote in stories regularly and turn to, who also have their own really robust Twitter communities and followers, and we said, "Let's have a conversation. We can take questions from our audience about how they should be living their lives right now. We can get really great conversation going around Omicron." And we saw huge engagement. We had, you know, thousands of people tuning in live. And then we have that recording, and the content was not evergreen, but had a shelf life enough that we could edit it and turn it into a podcast episode a day later that then reaches thousands more people. And so it really became this wonderful feedback loop of live audio, engaging this live audience, and also an opportunity for us to gather questions via Twitter. And we can't answer all of them in the live Twitter Space, but it's an opportunity to see, okay, what is our audience curious about? What do they want to know? And even if we can't get to it in this Twitter Space right now, maybe we do another episode on it.

Maybe we ask somebody else that question. And it's, you know, sort of taking the temperature of what people are curious about.

Tamar Charney Nice, nice. Maggie, you jumped into that space as well. How has your experience differed from Sarah's?

Maggie Penman It I mean, it's been great, and I've seen a lot of the same things that both Sarah and Nina we're talking about. I think one really cool thing that we've seen at the Post is that Twitter Spaces is not just a platform on which to share your journalism, it also is a place where journalism can happen. And we actually had one instance where our tech reporters were doing a Twitter Space, and this was right after the Facebook whistleblower's revelations about how harmful Instagram can be for young kids and girls, especially in their self-esteem. And one of our tech reporters noticed that the head of Instagram was listening, and he was like, "Hey, I don't know if you want to talk at all, but like we probably have some questions for you." And so they actually broke news on a Twitter Space because the head of Instagram said live like, "I actually think Instagram for kids is a good idea, and we should still do it. And this was a project that Facebook had shelved." So just one example. But I think we've just seen that this live space can be so dynamic, and we find readers, and listeners, and audiences there, but we also can learn things from them.

Tamar Charney Nina, is that something common where something comes up in one of these conversations, and it's almost like the journalists are using it in the same way they use Twitter to mine for stories, and the next thing you know, they're like writing about it, and doing, you know, other journalism based on something that came up in a conversation?

Nina Gregory Absolutely. Yeah. Straight up, yes.

Tamar Charney Yes. Are you seeing this in your organizations? Like your reporters come back after doing one and go, "Oh, I've got five story ideas after that"?

Maggie Penman Oh, yeah, for sure. And I mean, I think what's really cool about Twitter Spaces as well is you can actually, like, see the avatar of everyone who's listening. And so you get this real time sense of there is a community of people, both experts often, but also, average people who are here. And it's this really cool feedback loop, as Sarah said. You get ideas for questions. You find out what people are curious about. I was part of a Twitter Space about a project we did on the great resignation last year called Quitters, and I got so many DMS from people afterwards because people are so energized by this topic and so curious about it. So I think it gives you a sense of like, what are people curious about, and what are people listening to, and what are their questions? And then that can give you so many story ideas.

Tamar Charney Nice. Nina, what works well? I mean, this is kind of an emerging way of creating audio journalism. You know, for the news organizations and folks from news organizations in the room or listening online, what are some ways to be successful in this space and creating kind of a happening, or an event or a thing on social audio?

Nina Gregory I think depending on what you want to do, that answer is going to differ. If your news organization wants to share out some enterprise reporting and take a deep dive. You know, I know as an audio editor working with reporters, they would come out of interviews with sources and say, "Oh, I wish I could just play the whole thing for the

listener. That was so fascinating." And this is sort of that opportunity. So if there are people that you want to share with your audience and go beyond the headlines, I think, that just basic planning, and put it on a calendar, and let us know you want to do it, and then we support it across social, and promoting and things like that. So just your sort of standard planning. And then I think the other thing to do is to really engage with the community. I think listening to what people have to say is a big part of the success of social audio, that we speak and we listen. And so I think we're developing a new opportunity for relationships between news organizations and new audiences because certainly Clubhouse is not the same audience that I was serving at NPR. And so one of the things that I've observed, that we've observed, is certainly that Gen-Z really loves Clubhouse, and they're very sticky. They want to hear and engage with news. So don't be afraid to take a deep dive, bring a diversity of voices and listen. Those are the things I think that are key.

Tamar Charney Maggie, what have you all discovered in doing this that's like working, or what kind of playbook have you sort of developed for doing a good job of social audio?

Maggie Penman I think one of the things our host said after doing a bunch of these is like, "Oh, wow, this is like the fun part without the hard part after." So I think if you need to sell anyone on social audio, it's basically like doing a podcast except you can't go back and edit it. So you're just doing it live. You're having a conversation. I think one of the things that we've found, and I'd be curious to hear what Nina has to say about this, but it's cool that these things are happening in real time. People are in their houses, on their phones. You hear noise in the background. You see the seams. It's not perfect. And I think that is one of the best parts about it, is that it's real. And as we were saying, like the intimacy of audio, people respond to that, and they want authenticity. And I think especially Gen-Z is, you know, demanding it. And so I think that is what my advice would be is like lean into that. And be transparent about if you're, you know, calling in from the train, and you can hear the announcer in the background, address that, and lean into it, and be okay with it. So yeah, I think showing the seams is what's really cool.

Tamar Charney Nina, you are nodding your head.

Nina Gregory Yes to everything she said. You know, it's come as you are and people like that. And that's what does make it intimate, and that is what makes it authentic is that, you know, your kid might run through just like on Zoom. But here you are having that conversation with, you know, Karen Grigsby Bates from NPR. You hear her, you know, whatever paying for her coffee in the morning. And that humanizes the reporter in a way that it's like they're there getting the coffee with them. And I think the audience, you know, they don't really become audience. They become part of the conversation. So it's also a different relationship. With linear audio, whether it's radio or podcasting, you're talking to, you're not talking with. Be a normal person, and people respond. Yeah, that's what we're saying.

Tamar Charney I think that's really interesting.

Nina Gregory Or don't be human. Just be yourself.

Tamar Charney Yeah, I think that's really interesting because one of the almost superpowers of audio has been that people create that kind of intimate relationship. You know, so much, I saw somebody tweeting the other day about how sad they were that a podcast host that they didn't even know died because they felt so connected to them.

Same with radio. And it sounds like what you're saying is social audio, it's a real connection. It's not a parasocial connection. It actually is that they are almost talking to one another, and I think that is incredibly powerful. Sarah, have you all found any kind of like little tricks of the trade in doing social audio?

Sarah Feldberg I think we've found one of the most important tricks for us is testing first, and like really walking people through how this is going to work. The Twitter Spaces platform is definitely still being developed and improved, which is wonderful. But that means sometimes you do a Twitter Space, and it has a certain functionality, and then you come back a week later after giving somebody detailed directions on how to participate, and things have changed. And they are confused. So we've been working on doing test runs. We've had some technical difficulties where guests have been unable to join because they have an outdated version of the Twitter app on their phone. That's never fun. Having frantic Slack messages with people or texts saying, "Please download the new version of the app. The conversation started 5 minutes ago." So we've been working through those challenges, and we've been learning a lot about how to prepare. One of the fun things that we did a couple of months ago, we did a collaboration with the L.A. Times ahead of a cross-California sporting event. So we had our sports reporters and L.A. Times sports reporters in conversation before the game, and that was so much fun. It was an opportunity for us to reach audiences who we don't usually talk to. They were reaching audiences who they don't usually talk to. And we get to have this wonderful conversation between journalists with listeners weighing in. It was so much fun and I'm really looking forward to do more collaborative Twitter Spaces and social audio with our media friends and with collaborators in the Bay Area and across California.

Tamar Charney Nice, so a little other pro tip there. Do the check ahead of time. This is why like concerts, there's always a sound check. Super important in audio to do the tech check. So let's turn a little bit to how audio is working out because there's so many new things, podcasting, social audio. You know, we haven't even talked much about voice assistants. So I'm curious, you know, this is an investment for your organizations to be doing audio. And Rebeca, I'd love to start with you on this, like how is it working for Insider? Like are they getting what they want to get out of being in the audio space, whether that's a revenue, or audience or diversifying the audience? What's kind of in it for Insider?

Rebeca Ibarra Yeah, that's a good question, and one that I don't necessarily have an answer to right now just because we are so new, right? We've only been around a month, and we still haven't even gotten to the phase where we want a lot of audience and listener feedback because from the very beginning we were like, "The show we are today will not be the show we are in six months." Like that is the whole point. If we can't evolve and change with what our audience wants, then like we shouldn't even be doing this. And we haven't even gotten to the point where we want to like bring people from the Refresh to Insider, right? Like that's something that we'll probably be doing in six months, maybe in a year. But I know that the reason we went into it is because there wasn't a show that was giving you the latest news in the podcasting space, so that's definitely an opportunity. And in terms of the tech we use, like right now, it's just in collaboration with the Refresh, but eventually it'll be open there for other news organizations and other places to use. And it isn't just in news. Like right now we're using it very much for news. But a tech where you can basically make your own podcast, and stitch it together, and change it, and it goes through a process where everything sounds seamless, like everyone is in the same room, even though we're in separate countries, is something that I feel very excited about because artists can use it, organizations can use it for something that has absolutely

nothing to do with news. So I don't have like a great answer for you, but because we're still figuring it out.

Tamar Charney So the San Francisco Chronicle, Sarah, has invested in audio. I mean, is this investment paying off for them?

Sarah Feldberg Yeah, I hope it is.

Tamar Charney Like I've got a position on that line.

Sarah Feldberg I'm still here. So yeah, I think it is. You know, it generates revenue. There is a revenue aspect to this, and that's important. And I think, one of the big things for us, that I mentioned earlier and that Maggie spoke to as well, is about creating connection with journalists and helping our audience get to know the people and hear their voices. And I think we're seeing that pay off. We did an audience survey last fall for Fifth and Mission podcast, and we're really trying to get to know why people listen. Who listens to us? Why? Are they also listening to Post Reports? Are they also listening to The Daily? How should that affect our story choices and our episode choices? And one of the things that was the most gratifying to me to see was that our audience wasn't just connecting with the host who they hear every day, but they were connecting to specific reporters. Our health reporter Erin Allday is terrific. Someone on one of the panels earlier, someone said, "Oh, you see the news now, but you don't remember the byline. You have no idea who told you this." Well, people on the podcast know that it's Erin telling them what they need to know about COVID, what the trends are in our community. And I think that's really powerful in seeing podcast listeners on a survey on like Question 25, who made it all the way down, call out Erin by name, was so gratifying to me because it meant it's working. They're connecting to our people. They're hearing what they have to say, and they're building that relationship and that trust.

Tamar Charney That's such an important point. Because, you know, like at NPR, it's like people would name their kids, and their pets, and their goats after reporters. And I think that is one of those big differences with audio. There really is that personal relationship. So it is such a good point that it is a way for the bylines to become, I don't want to say celebrities, but at least known, trusted people. Maggie, what about you from for Washington Post?

Maggie Penman Yeah. I mean, you gave me such a great segue to talk about our fabulous host, Martine Powers. She is like what I attribute a lot of our success to because she is brilliant, but she's also incredibly accessible. She's curious, and she is not afraid to ask the questions that we all have about these complicated issues that are in the news. So she will ask the question about NATO. Like, "Okay, but like what is NATO again? Can we just break this down?" She'll ask the question about inflation that you have, and I think that does build a relationship with listeners to the point that poor Martine can't go on vacation without our listeners freaking out, and tweeting at us, and emailing her and saying, "Where is Martine?" And everyone's panicked. So like you're saying about that relationship that you build with the podcast host, it's such a real thing. And as to the question of whether it's working, I think it really is. And actually, March was our best month ever in terms of downloads. And I think a lot of that has to do with our coverage of the war in Ukraine, and I think it speaks to the fact that people aren't just interested in politics. There was this big question that The Washington Post, and I know other news organizations got a lot after the 2020 election, like, "How are you going to keep people interested in the news now that

Trump isn't in the news every day?" And people are still interested, and more people than ever are downloading our podcast. So, yes, it is working would be the short answer.

Tamar Charney Nina, I want to flip the question a little bit for you. So how is journalism working out for Clubhouse?

Nina Gregory I think we've had some really successful experiments. I think it's a new medium. And so to be able to say it's working or not working, it's still too soon. Clubhouse is two years old, and I've been there for four months. So I do think that as people sort of shake off their fear of being imperfect, and just like put on their headphones, and download the app, and get on and listen, and then once they start talking, they get it. And they get that this is a new medium. And so I think it's way too soon to say what's working and what's not working, but we learn little lessons along the way and little challenges reveal themselves. But what's interesting is some of them are really the same challenges that we had at NPR, for example. Search in live audio or audio. So some of the same issues persist, interestingly enough. But I think that one of the fun experiments that I'm really proud of was a partnership with the NPR National Geographic Society for four weeks over Black History Month, where Geographic had a podcast called Into the Depths, where Black scuba divers explored sunken slave ships. And we had an explorer on in the NPR club one each week with a different NPR correspondent hosting them, and people could come in and talk about it. There was a poet in one. You know, experimenting with poetry, experimenting with natural sounds, these are the things that I'm really looking forward to getting into and playing with. So for people who want to sort of play in the audio space, there's that. But also for people who want to do community building, I think that there are some real opportunities. But, you know, one of the things I'm learning is you've got to show up to do it. So as somebody had said earlier, knowing how much working journalists already have on their plate, giving them what feels like another platform to file for is really the challenge I try to overcome and say, "Just come, listen. Just come share your reporting." Once they're there, they're like, "Wow, people care what I'm doing?" I think it's very meaningful to people who are journalists get to have the opportunity to connect with their audience and to see how much their work matters. And so I hope that we can continue to provide opportunities for that and for journalists in news organizations of all sizes to be able to connect with a new audience.

Tamar Charney I've been looking at some of the questions that are coming in, and a lot of them are mimicking kind of where I want to go next with this. So I'm going to bring in a couple of questions here. We have a question from Erica, who asks, "What would be some tips to better connect with the audience?" And Erica asked through podcasts, but I'm going to widen that out to all audio. So what are some tips that you've learned? Maggie, we'll start with you. What tips would you give to help journalists who are starting in audio to really connect with an audience and build audience?

Maggie Penman I think my advice would go back to what I said about social audio, which is like, don't be afraid to show the seams, and don't be afraid to be human. I think it's so compelling when you hear someone being themselves in audio, and it is such an intimate format. And I think as much as we can use that to our advantage and not try to shed our humanity, but actually really embrace our humanity. So I think some of the most powerful moments we've had on Post Reports have been when our journalists have shared how reporting a story affected them, and how connected they feel to their sources, and how invested they feel in them, how invested they feel in the stories. And I think, again, that gets back to what we were talking about with building trust and really just reminding people that journalists are human. I think it's always going to be the most compelling audio. It's

also, I think, key to our mission. And so I would just say lean into your humanity. Don't try to be a robot who is 100% objective and not affected by anything you're seeing and doing. That's not going to be as interesting and it's not real. So I think we just need to let go of that.

Tamar Charney Rebecca?

Rebeca Ibarra I think the first thing you need to do is decide what audience you're trying to connect to, right? Because it's okay to not want to serve everyone. At Insider we were very clear. We're like, "This isn't a show for everyone, because if we're doing a show for everyone, we're doing a show for no one, right?" We know that the people who come to Insider and Business Insider sometimes are younger people. They're ambitious people. So in knowing that, you know how to craft a show. I really love what Nina said about lightning up, because when I decided to join Insider, I was very excited that we were doing a show that gives you the news in a way that is, in my opinion, a bit lighter. We do joke around. We call a spade, a spade. We don't have necessarily that like, serious sense of objectivity that you have in a show like NPR. Right. Like, you know who you're coming to. We're not trying to present say a story about Elon Musk without maybe doing a dig at Elon Musk and like incredible wealth and power. Always punching up, though. That's an important thing. I feel like if you punch down, that's a very easy way to alienate audiences. So know who you're speaking to, decide who you want to speak to. And if that's a very niche audience, that's okay, because then you know actually how to reach out to them. So pick an audience first.

Tamar Charney That is such an important piece of advice. Like highlight that one if you're taking notes. Nina, what about you? Advice?

Nina Gregory This is how to connect with the audience. I think show up and listen. I think it's simple. If you're interested in checking out social audio, as an individual or a news organization, just set up a profile, make a pub, and then show up once a week, and listen to what people have to say. It's sort of like, imagine a coffee shop. You go by every day. You start to get to know everyone in there, and then they start to tell you what's really happening in the neighborhood. You know, it's that kind of thing. If you build it, they will come. So I think exactly like Maggie said, I mean, I feel like I'm just plus-one-ing, everything everyone's saying here. But don't try to be perfect. I think that is actually quite alienating. And I think that people like to hear that journalists listen, and think, and wander around ideas, and they like to be part of that process. So don't be afraid. I think it's really fun, and it also provides access to people when we have spent so much time not getting to wander around and have these casual interactions. And I think as journalists, it's like having some of your senses cut off. So other ways to communicate with and talk to people in live synchronous ways are now available, and so I think it's a fun and exciting time.

Tamar Charney So, Sarah, what would you add there?

Sarah Feldberg Well, I would echo something Maggie said earlier about the host sort of asking the basic question. And I think one of the things that I love is sometimes we will take on a story. One example would be recently Oakland was moving to close a number of schools, and the school closures were primarily going to affect Black and brown students in lower income neighborhoods in the city. And there was a major movement against it. And it's a complicated story that involves lots of debt, and budget issues, and movement during the pandemic, and many different things. And I live in Oakland, and I have lots of friends who send their kids to public schools who were trying to understand how all these

threads come together. How do they connect? And one of them reached out to me and said, "You know, your podcast was the first time I got it because your host just asked the basic questions, and just really broke it down slowly." How does this affect this? Why does this affect this? What would this mean for this? And was a proxy for the listener, and for the audience, and imagined, "I'm not a journalist. I'm coming to this. I don't understand. Help me make sense of this." And I think when we can do that, we're really serving our audience's best interests. And if they can walk away and hopefully they can then explain it to someone else and go, "Oh, now I get it. Let me tell you what I learned today on Fifth and Mission." And that's incredible.

Tamar Charney Nina, are you seeing that on Clubhouse? Because this is something I've seen in NPR One data that sometimes the explainer or the break-it down kind of story does really well in engaging audience. Do you see similar things in the types of issues and questions coming up in Clubhouse conversations?

Nina Gregory Absolutely. I think breaking news is where the conversation starts, but what people really want is the deep dive. And I think our Ukraine rooms have shown that consistently. I think that the kinds of guests who come on, whether they're politicians or policy wonks, the conversations just keep going, and people really want to take that deep dive. So I think as a space for complex issues, audio is really excellent because as people have said across this panel, you hear the humanity in the voice.

Tamar Charney I'm going to throw another question at you. This one comes from Jonathan, and you are not going to get off the hook. So think about your version of this. Jonathan is curious about what's been the most successful journalism use case on Clubhouse?

Nina Gregory The most successful journalism use case. This is a hard one because it depends on which section you're talking about, because people into sports might have a different answer, versus people who are there for culture, versus international affairs. I will say the biggest news event I think that happened on Clubhouse, or use case, was, this is prior to my working there full disclosure, but when Clubhouse came out in China, it was out for like a week. My mentor, Madhulika Sikka, her husband Jim Millward, is a specialist on Uighurs at Georgetown. And I believe it was Jim who was the one who said this was like the week of free speech in China, and people who were able to understand what everybody was talking about as soon as Clubhouse came out in China. We were all talking about the Uighurs, it was like this week. And I think for me that was the moment. I remember being at NPR trying to get my. I guess I've always been an early adopter of technology in the newsroom, and I was trying to get some of my colleagues on Twitter. And I remember the moment when the Arab Spring happened, and people in the newsroom started taking it seriously. I feel like that was, for me, a moment similarly. Another moment was during George Floyd. Again, before I started working out. During the George Floyd protest period, there was a related protest on the streets of New York City, and there was a woman running for, I think she was running for Manhattan D.A. Eliza Orlins. And there was a protest on the streets of New York and Eliza Orlins' walking down the street, giving you like a local, color commentary of like, "People were walking down Broadway and I'm on 53rd. And people are hanging banners out of their windows." And like you hear the chants and you hear it. And then you hear, actually, Jenny 8 Lee, who used to be a reporter at The New York Times on the metro desk. Jenny gets on, and Jenny is like, "Where are you guys? I want to come meet you." And in this moment, we have this organizing that's happening, and we hear it. And then she goes and meets up with a protest. And I was like, "What did I just hear? That was incredible." Here I am in L.A.

listening to this thing happen. So there are these moments when news is happening where you hear connections, and then there are moments after news happens where people really want to have a deep dive.

Tamar Charney Nice. Nice. Sarah, I'd love you to weigh in on like what have you done in audio that you would say was the most successful? And pick any measure of success. Audience size, engagement downloads, what have you.

Sarah Feldberg Oh, that's such a hard question. I don't know if I would say it's the most successful, but one of the things I would point to that I think has been impactful and has been really additive to our coverage overall has been the way we deal with fires at the Chronicle. Covering wildfires has unfortunately become a pretty regular part of our year. And we have reporters and photographers who are out there at the fires in person, really putting themselves in, we hope not harm's way, but very close to it. And we get to hear from them during fires. When there isn't an immediate breaking fire situation, we will do sort of short dispatches throughout the day. We'll have an episode regularly, but then we will sometimes do updates and little dispatches that flow throughout the day. And you'll get to hear one of our reporters, you know, walking, trudging up a hill saying, "Hey, I'm here. This is supposedly where the fire started. I'm looking for the ignition. Point up. There's some leaves over here. This is a burnt tree." Or we'll have a photographer saying, "You know, I was here. I watched this family evacuating. Right now, I'm standing here next to this firefighter." And sharing the experience of reporting on a fire, and I think that's been incredibly impactful. We see our audience respond to that. And it helps people understand, not only what's happening with the fire itself and how the fire is developing, but also how as a newsroom, we're committed to providing the best possible information and to being there. We're not aggregating Cal Fire tweets. We have people there who are covering the situation on the ground and hearing their voices and hearing what they're experiencing, I think is really important for us.

Tamar Charney Rebeca, what about for you all? What has been the most successful thing? And I know it's early days, but?

Rebeca Ibarra That's an interesting question because we're still trying to figure it out. But I know that we hear most from our listeners when they hear something that either makes them laugh, or it makes them go, "huh," like just interesting facts. And that really is one of the main objectives of my co-host and I. This is a ten-minute news show. We want you to leave with at least three nuggets of information that you found either fascinating or funny, maybe sad or maybe made you feel. So, I think when we cause reactions in our listener, whether, again, that is a laugh, or that is a "I had no idea about that," or "that's so interesting," or news you can use, that's when I think we're working at our best.

Tamar Charney You're cracking me up because every time I ask you a question, you like answer with something that I use when I teach about audio. It's like key things to do, and one is like lean into emotion. But it's hilarious because you keep saying things, and I'm like, "Yes, that. Focus. Know your audience." Anyway. Maggie, what about for Washington Post? What's been the biggest success?

Maggie Penman I would plus-one everything Rebeca just said. I think if you can evoke an emotion, whether you're making someone laugh or making them cry, like they will remember it. And I think about some of our episodes, like we did an episode called The Life of George Floyd, where we looked back at this man's life after everyone knew so much about his death. We wanted to know who was he? What was he like as a friend, and

as a father, and as a nephew, and a person in his community? And we interviewed so many of his family members and friends, and that audio was so intimate and so powerful. I also think about an episode we did called Four Hours of Insurrection, where we reconstructed the events of that day on January 6. We interviewed police officers, congresspeople, journalists, all these people who were there that day and reconstructed what it actually felt like to be there. We really brought our listeners there, and I heard from so many people who said the same thing that you've heard, which is, "I didn't understand what it was like until I heard that episode," or "I didn't understand how bad it was until I heard that episode." Just to end on a lighter note here, we recently did an episode about Daylight Saving Time, and we have never gotten so many emails. Like seriously, within minutes of publishing we had emails from our listeners telling us how they felt about Daylight Saving Time. Did they think we should stick with Daylight Saving Time all year? We should actually get rid of it entirely. People have very, very strong feelings about that. So I think, all of the things that you all said. News you can use, things that make people laugh, make people cry. Like any time you make someone feel something, you're going to stick with them.

Tamar Charney I love that example about Daylight Saving Time because that's something that everybody has a stake in. Like everybody knows why they care. So in a lot of ways it doesn't surprise me that that really resonated. So we have a question, and we might riff a little bit on this question. But the basic gist of this from Claire is that it's kind of expensive to create a good podcast. And is it really going to be sustainable for news outlets to all have podcasts? And in some ways is this pivot to audio kind of creating a podcast bubble? So hot takes on this, are we really seeing an audio bubble?

Rebeca Ibarra I do have a take on that because our team started fully remotely. We don't work in a studio. We work from our homes, and we work from all over the United States and Canada. And that just wasn't something that I saw as possible two years ago. The amount of tech we use is very basic. We can interview people all over the world with very basic tech. So in a way, I think it is becoming more accessible to actually make podcasts. Whether we're in a bubble or not, I don't know, but it is not as expensive as you would think. However, it does require a lot of man, woman power, so that's where it starts getting pricey.

Sarah Feldberg Yeah, I would agree on the man, woman power, and the time investment is often surprising to people who don't work in audio. So, pro tip it's going to take longer than you think. I would echo, you know, we went remote, and we're doing things with minimal setup that we never thought we were able to do before. As an organization, we have fewer podcasts now than we used to. When we started getting into audio, we had a little bit of like, "You get a podcast. And you get a podcast. And you get a podcast." And just anyone who wanted a podcast was like, "Yeah, of course we should absolutely have a podcast about that very niche thing that like we don't really know that much about. Let's do it." And now we have contracted, and we are trying to have fewer podcasts that are better, and that serve our audience, and are more strategic and more thoughtful about who we're speaking to, and are we reaching them effectively? So our own little San Francisco Chronicle podcast bubble has shrunk.

Tamar Charney Maggie?

Maggie Penman Yeah. Again, echoing everything that you both just said. We actually have done a similar thing at the Post where we have fewer podcasts, that we are investing more energy in, more producers behind, to try and make this sustainable. Because I think

that is something that at organizations that aren't audio first, people are always surprised by. It's like you need this many people to make a podcast? And it's like, "Yeah, it's a team sport. It's collaborative. You need producers. You need a sound designer. You need a host." Like it's not going to work if you don't have all of those things. So that would be my big soapbox to organizations that want to start a podcast is just don't underestimate the number of people you need to make it sustainable. But I also want to echo everything Rebeca said, which is that this is easier than ever. Everyone has a high-quality recording device in their pocket right now. Any phone now can take a voice memo, and it's easier than ever to get great quality audio.

Tamar Charney Nina, do you think this is a bubble? And you can widen this out to audio, not just podcasts?

Nina Gregory I think that the interest in social audio, for example, is growing and that many companies now have sort of clones of Clubhouse. And I think that, as everybody said, it's become easier than ever to make high-quality audio. I think the challenge remains search and discovery. And so, the longevity of these things, we don't know. We're in early days. So obviously, I hope. But I think it's like if we're going back to companies like Snapchat or YouTube, and you think about what Snap was when it first started and what it is now, are two totally different things. And so I think, giving people the power to sort of make their own audio, and making it easy to record it, and share it, and have audiences will hopefully make this even more democratic. And let people maybe have a little shows where it's like they can just. You know, my dream is that everybody can go around their neighborhood, and gather songs of birds on their block, and then come share them. And like, that doesn't have to be a heavy-lift podcast, but it could be something that if you're like me and you like the sound of birdsong, you might really find that a valuable use of your time. So hopefully we can find some way to make this sustainable for the creator. I mean, I think we could do a whole session on the creator economy, but the idea of giving people tools that are easy to use to both capture and distribute is, I think, making this more fun and easier for more people. So I don't think that answers the question.

Tamar Charney But it's a great note to wrap up this panel on, because I think it really is a great point. Because I think a lot of times when we talk about podcasting, we're shooting for the super successful big one. And to do that does take a lot of resources. It's really hard to build an audience. The idea of, you know, you launch a podcast, you build it, they'll come, you'll get a huge audience. Those days are long gone, but there is a lot of space for smaller things and niche products, products that really serve a particular community. And that's a lot more accessible and practical than back in the days when radio dominated audio, and you had to have a broadcast tower and an FCC license. And there really was an enormous barrier to entry. Now, anybody can do it. It's just a matter of can they find the right audience, whether that's on Clubhouse or a traditional podcast. So thank you, all. I hope you got your questions answered and learned a lot about podcasting, and audio, and clubhouse. So thank all of you for all the great insights.