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Ms. Mutabanna,

I appreciate the chance to listen and review your podcast *Inside Tech Comm with Zohra Mutabanna.* The podcast episodes have informative content structured in a logical order, and the guests you interact with are engaging and subject matter experts with a lot of valuable insights in their area of expertise.

Specifically, I have reviewed four podcast episodes from Season 2—"Recruiter Tips for a Killer Resume with Jack Molisani" (S2, E1), "Acing That Job Interview with Jack Molisani" (S2, E 2), "Don't Quit, Pivot with Denise Kadilak" (S2, E 4), "Tips to Sharpen Your Job-Searching Skills: Gems from a Recruiter with Olivia Farmer" (S2, E5). The comments below are general observations about the four episodes with some specific examples cited for support.

All these episodes have useful information for the listeners who are new to the technical writing profession, technical communication students and recent graduates as well as educators who teach technical writing courses. More importantly, these episodes also address topics useful to job seekers who may not be aligned with the technical writing field but still need pointers on resume, job interview etiquette, etc. The following review takes the varied audience into account and aims to enhance the listener experience with useful additional insights.

Content

The content in the podcast is highly informative and not a lot needs to change. However, altering or modifying the episodes at strategic points during the podcast will lead to an enhanced listening experience. The comments below address some of these modifications.

Introduction and Sign Off:

All your episodes are centered around interviewing guests who are subject matter experts in their field. This lends credibility to the podcast and assures the listener of the authenticity of the primary source. Considering this, make a slight tweak to your introduction portion which will benefit the episodes greatly.

You start every episode of the season with a 22 second standard introduction line (season 2 is about "resumes, interview for success and ultimately advance in your career") and immediately segue to the guest. However, this part of the episode sounds a bit choppy and abrupt. Instead of the listener

getting an introduction to the guest (Olivia Farmer) by the host (you), the guest is asked, "Tell us about yourself?" This open-ended question is vague and expansive in nature.

In addition, this abrupt transition from the host to the guest makes the guest the primary driver of the episode. For example, in "Tips to Sharpen Your Job Search Skills", Farmer introduces herself for the first five minutes of podcast time in which she also answers a key question that you had meant to ask her. Similarly, in the episode "Don't Quit, Pivot with Denise Kadilak" (S2, E4) Kadilak talks, uninterrupted for 15 minutes about her career trajectory and how she stumbled into the tech writing field after quitting her journalism career. A listener tuning in late may get the impression that this is Farmer's or Kadilak's podcast not Mutabanna's.

I suggest taking no more than two to three minutes to do a brief introduction about the focus of the episode and a mention of some of the topics that will be explored, for example Applicant Tracking System (ATS) versus human aspect of shortlisting/ tracking an applicant. Then, introduce the guest's credentials to establish their expertise and authority in the subject matter that will be discussed in the episode. This approach will not only streamline the introduction portion of the episode, but it will also give the listener an idea about what the episode is about and what information to expect instead of having to read the show notes. It will also keep them interested in staying with the podcast episode till the end.

Talking about staying till the end, I also suggest revising the last few minutes of your podcast. Currently, your standard sign-off for all episodes is asking the guests if they'd "like to add anything?" This approach gives the reins of the episode in the hands of the guest rather than the host. Instead, consider summarizing some of the key points discussed in the show before calling an end to the show. This will help a distracted listener to remember key points discussed in the podcast and add value to listener experience.

Questions and Answers:

You do an excellent job of summarizing the guest speaker's answers and often supplementing their answers with your personal experiences to validate their point. The questions you ask on the podcast are incisive and often open-ended that allow the guest to expound on the topic at length.

However, sometimes, the sequence of the questions is a bit jumbled up and in more than one episode the conversation appears to jump from question to question without any logical progression. For example, in your conversation with Farmer in episode 5, season 2, the topic of cover letters is broached out of a conversation about ATS and human connection.

I realize that the conversational nature of a podcast sometimes leads to organic follow-up questions but in this instance, you preface the topic of cover letter by saying "let's get it out of the way." Midway in that same episode, you tell the guest, "I should've asked you first, how you come up with the job description?" To a listener, it indicates that you are not in control of the conversation and are losing focus.

I suggest giving the guests a set of questions a few days before the episode taping so they can collect their thoughts. Then, on the day of the topic, take charge of the questions and stick to the order as much as possible. If a topic that isn't on the agenda comes up organically, let the guest know politely that it is a topic you'd like to discuss during the second half of the podcast. This will reinforce to your listeners that this is your podcast, you are the star and facilitator of the show, and the guests are there to inform at your behest.

Conflict of Interest:

The guests on your podcast work in the technical writing field and some of them are even colleagues or former colleagues. There is an added charm to talk to a familiar colleague on a podcast because the conversation takes on a more intimate, personalized tone and makes the listener feel privileged to listen in.

However, consider declaring these affiliations in the introduction portion instead of them coming to the fore during the conversation. For example, quarter of the way through episodes four and five, Farmer and Kadilak, respectively, mention how the former hired you as a tech writer and the latter was your team manager at Blackbaud, where you are also employed. Full disclosure at that juncture come off as an afterthought.

On the other hand, an honest disclosure during the introduction of the guest cements your credibility with the listeners and goes to show that you excel at maintaining and nurturing professional relationships and contacts.

ORGANIZATION

The organization of your podcast page speaks to your credentials as a technical writer. The format is very clean, has lots of white space and the information, namely the episodes, are easy to find. There are also convenient buttons to listen to the podcast on different podcasts, like Apple Podcasts, Spotify, etc. and a share button to social media sites like twitter, Facebook, and LinkedIn. However, some features can be modified, and others added to enhance listener experience.
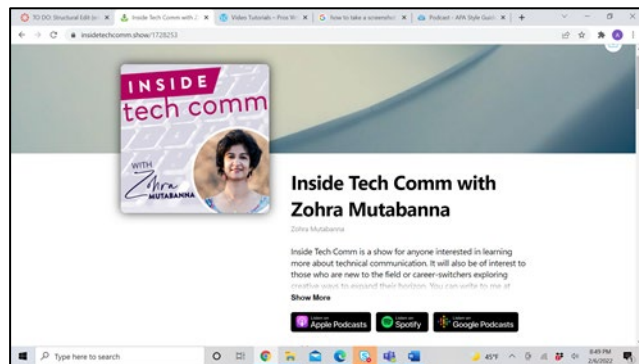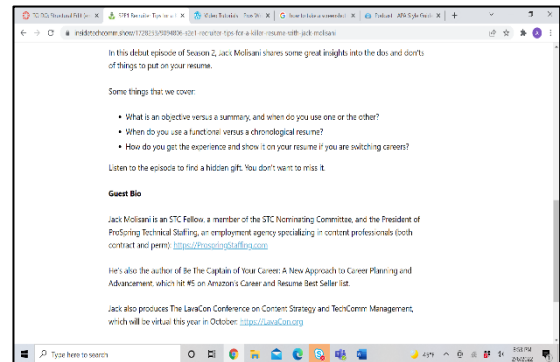

Show Notes:

The show notes on the podcast page provide a summary of the episode and a brief bio of the guest. The section also lists some of the questions that are discussed in the interview. This potentially serves as a hook or launching point for a listener to decide whether to listen or skip the specific episode.

In the episode you do an excellent job of summarizing the guest's answers and sometimes cite your own experience to strengthen a guest's point. For example, in episode five you talk about your habit of writing thank you notes and using them to answer an unanswered interview question to support Farmer's assertion that an extra step like thank you notes helps the candidate stand out to the recruiter. However, these key points can get lost in an approximately hour-long podcast unless they are emphasized in the show notes.

Additionally, the sequence of questions highlighted in the show notes do not match the sequence of questions asked during the podcast episode. For example, episode five, featuring Farmer, has the question "What are creative ways to build relationships with recruiters in a company?" at the top in the bulleted list. But this topic is explored in detail only in the third quarter of the episode. This

mismatch of question sequence has the potential to confuse a listener who may be tuning in for an answer to a specific question.

There is also a disconnect between the show notes and the content of the podcast because the show notes only give a very brief glimpse of the contents covered in the episode. For example, in "Acing That Job Interview with Jack Molisani" (S2, E2), Molisani tells your listeners that he has a discount code for $200 off that they can use to attend a tech conference he hosts. He spells out the discount code and gives the dates of the conference. In the earlier episode, "Recruiter Tips for a Killer Resume", Molisani also tells the listeners to connect with him on LinkedIn if they'd like him to look at their resumes.

In both these instances, it would be useful to add these key details in the show notes by linking to Molisani's LinkedIn profile and spelling out the discount code. These small additions help the listener easily access vital information and add value to their listening experience.

Transcript the Episode:

I realize that producing two podcasts a month that focus on interviewing subject matter experts who provide useful and current information on the technical communication field is labor intensive. Not only do you have to schedule the interviews in advance, a lot of time and effort is involved in research, preparation, and production of a podcast. I should also emphasize that a lot of the topics covered in these episodes can also be applied to general job markets. Which is precisely the reason why your podcast should be accessible to a wider audience that may not listen to podcasts.

To achieve this, consider adding a transcript of the interview to the episode page so it is available to a wider audience such as hearing impaired or people with a hearing disability. An audio transcript also makes it easier for non-native speakers to access your content.

I suggest using a voice-to-text app that automatically types what you speak. You can also use transcribing services, like Rev or Descript, that cater to transcription needs of podcasters.

In addition to increasing your listener base, a podcast transcript has many other uses like maximizing SEO search and more backlink opportunities (great for SEO). An added benefit of a podcast transcript is the many ways in which you can repurpose the written content—email newsletters, social media promotions and blog posts. It is also an impressive addition to your portfolio.

I hope these suggestions and comments are useful. I appreciate the opportunity to listen and review your podcast. I gleaned some valuable insights into resume structure and interview etiquette that I will impart to my Tech Comm students. Please reach out to me if you have any questions, clarifications, or comments.

Best,

Jaya Wagle