

Hotel Business®

Freepoint Hotel Partners With RadioPublic to Offer Curated Podcasts

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CAMBRIDGE, MA—Listen up. Podcasts have been around for years, but as travelers increasingly desire local experiences and a technology-enabled hotel stay, these digital radio programs are beginning to gain traction as a key differentiator in the hospitality space. Freepoint Hotel, a new boutique hotel here, has teamed up with RadioPublic to offer what the partnership believes will be a standout guest amenity: curated podcast playlists.

“We haven’t seen many hotels explore creative ways to integrate podcasts into the guest experience, so we saw a partnership with RadioPublic as a way to really make some noise within the sonic space,” said David McCaslin, EVP of HHM, the hotel’s management company.

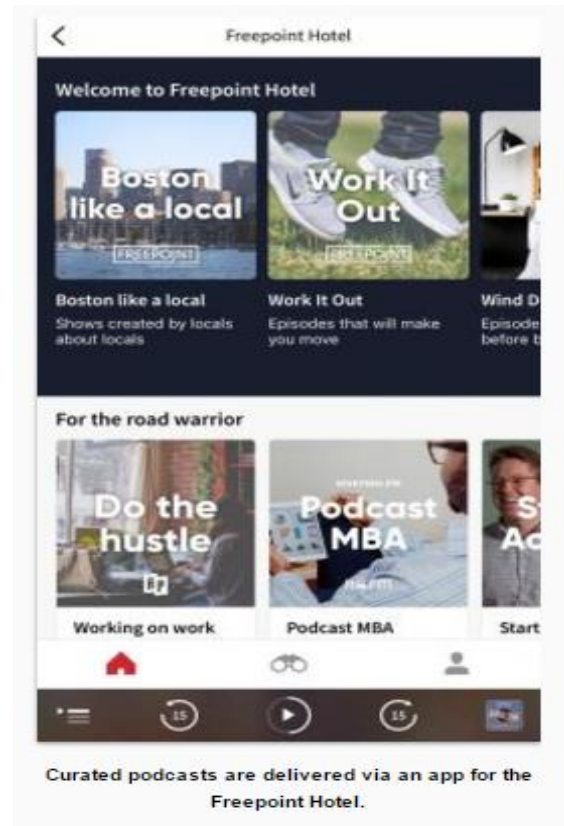
To get the effort off the ground, the hotel team first spent hours exploring Cambridge and Boston as a whole to source a number of unique and authentic partners and products that had synergy with the Freepoint brand.

“We wanted Freepoint to embody that intellectual and innovative spirit that has become synonymous with the Cambridge community, so we did a lot of exploring within technology, especially at a local level. Considering that podcasts continue to be such a force within media and public consumption, we saw opportunity for a hotel to deliver to this demand in a fun and thought-provoking way,” said McCaslin.

Podcasting is a medium with staying power. According to a study by Edison Research and Triton Digital, 40% of Americans age 12 years and older have listened to a podcast; the weekly online radio audience is now at 140 million Americans, or 53% of Americans; and time spent listening to online radio has surged to an all-time high of 14:39 minutes per week.

“There’s over 250,000 podcasts and 15 million episodes full of something for everyone, and we loved the idea of putting this at our guests fingertips. It also seemed like an amenity that a solo traveler might really appreciate as we see a lot of business travel to the hotel during the week,” said McCaslin. “They created a dedicated Freepoint Hotel channel on the RadioPublic app, and we worked together to curate playlists that mirrored the guest experience. We basically sat down and said, ‘OK, how can we create playlists that can really enhance a guest’s visit to Boston?’ The Listen Like a Local playlist is full of episodes that are about Boston, created by Bostonians, and it really allows you the opportunity to dial in on the pulse of the city.”

The team also made sure to add a local angle in the other playlists and curate programs designed to accompany a guest on a trip to the fitness center or out for a run. There is also a “Winding Down” playlist, consisting of episodes to listening to before bed, including an episode from the Berklee College of Music podcast. Freepoint’s Chef Matthew



Gaudet also created a playlist of food and beverage-centric episodes that highlight some of the local food scene. There is also an episode from Bon Appetit's podcast, and many others.

"It was also important that we make it easy for guests to access in an effort to keep it simple for everyone to use. We were able to create a link that can be texted directly to a guest's phone, once they check-in, that prompts a download of the RadioPublic app and to check out the Freepoint Channel. There's also an option to subscribe to the channel so that a guest can stay up to date on content, which will be updated monthly with new episodes and playlists. We liked the idea that a guest can take a piece of the Freepoint Hotel with them even when they check out," McCaslin said. "We also purchased several devices that have access to the RadioPublic channel and a number of other recommended podcasts that guests are welcome to use while spending time in the hotel lobby. These devices can be checked out from the front desk."

Upon opening in April, the hotel had a soft launch to roll out the podcast programming over the past few weeks. Already, the team is seeing opportunities to take this new amenity even further.

"We have also created a event series called "TalkingPoint: Conversations with Podcasters at Freepoint Hotel" that is designed to complement the podcast initiative and take it out of that sonic space and into a social environment," he said. "The monthly series will feature an evening of conversation with some popular local and visiting podcast creators and hosts. Guests will be joined by a moderator and share insight into their podcast journey—how it started, what they've learned and what the future may hold. Guests will have the opportunity to mix and mingle with the guest of honor and each other over cocktails and snacks at Freepoint Kitchen & Cocktails by Matthew Gaudet."

—Corris Little