

## Who's podding why and where? An interview with Stephan Ridgway

**Interviewer: Jo Murray**

*Jo: Welcome to The Knowledge Tree Everyone, today we're speaking with Stephan Ridgway, who's based in Sydney, Australia. Welcome Stephan.*

**Stephan:** Welcome Jo

*Jo: So Steph, you work with Technical and Further Education, New South Wales, can you tell us briefly about your role there please?*

**Stephan:** Yeah sure, I work for the Sydney Institute and I'm the e-learning coordinator and I work for a unit called Learning and Innovation and we look after the professional development needs of staff across the Institute as well as supporting teachers delivering flexibly online etc across the Institute.

*Jo: So in the last couple of years, Stephan, you've emerged as a national contact and hub for information and networks on podcasting for teacher professional development, so how did you get interested in podcasting?*

**Stephan:** Well it's true... it's amazing the interest in podcasting is phenomenal and we scheduled a workshop here a few weeks ago and we got more people than we've ever had turn up to a workshop so it's fantastic. But I first got interested in Podcasting through a LearnScope project in 2006, 2005 sorry, last year, and I have to give credit to Sean Fitzgerald who was my colleague on that project because he first mooted the idea that we should explore podcasting in an educational context and we put together a LearnScope project that was very successful and really that's when podcasting was starting to emerge into the sort of mass consciousness Apple had yet to provide podcasting support in iTunes, so it was just a coincidence that in 2005 it just suddenly took off.

*Jo: Ok, so we'll be able to find access to that project and the write up in your Wiki space won't we?*

**Stephan:** Um should do, there's also an EdNa Group we very much used EdNa as the sort of information hub for the project, so if you go to EdNa and you... EdNa Groups and you type in Casting the Net or podcasting you'll find us there.

*Jo: Great thanks a lot. So, what are some of the podcasting projects that you're in touch with at the moment then?*

**Stephan:** Well of course Sean and I... we refocused the podcast that we had created for that project and we continue to have a regular podcast called 'Casting the Net' and that's more about Web 2.0, Network Learning, Distributed Learning but also I'm involved in another podcast which in a way is about.... it's a VTE podcast..... so any conferences, seminars, material that's useful to a VTE audience .....we cast through a podcast which is titled 'Talking VTE'.

*Jo: And VTE stands for Vocation and Technical Education, is that right?*

**Stephan:** Indeed that's the replacement for what was VET.

*Jo: OK.... so, that project we'll be able to link people to so they can catch up there with people's reports on conference sessions and interviews with LearnScope Team Managers and that sort of thing, is that correct?*

**Stephan:** Yeah that's the idea basically, I do that with a colleague Alex Hayes, Alexander Hayes, and I mean.....each of us will interview people on Skype or face-to-face but if I attend a conference or he attends a conference we'll just record it, with the permission of the speakers and the organisers of course, and put it up there on Talking VTE and share it.

**Jo:** *Great well that's obviously going to be a mine of information for people wanting to start looking at podcasting. I believe you've been doing something with the BAIT (Business Arts and Information Technology) Curriculum Centre as well. Can you tell us a bit about that?*

**Stephan:** Sure, well I'm a peripheral to that project but they did ask me to come along and assist them on the day but that was Stanley Tonkins and Tony Winningham and Agnes just um I just can't think of her name, (Vukovic)...she is the Project Manager for BAIT here and basically what they did is they put out an expression of interest to TAFE teachers in the IT area across the state (New South Wales) to attend a workshop on podcasting and wikis and they had a tremendous interest in that and I think they got about 30 people to come to a two-day workshop that Tony and Stanley ran over at North Sydney Institute of TAFE and the idea there was they set them up into teams, six teams and they were to basically create an audio resource that would be used for podcasting to support a competency in a new training package, the new IT training package and oh it was a really fantastic workshop and some great stuff came out of that.

**Jo:** *And you've provided us with a link to the wiki space for that as well so people will be able to have a look at some of those project reports, is that right?*

**Stephan:** Yeah, yeah and of course perhaps I think probably Stanley and Tony's contacts are there so you can get in touch with them and find out more about the... he created some templates for making podcasts that would be useful for teachers who are wanting to explore it for their own resource development.

**Jo:** *Great, ok so where do you think we're headed with innovations in podcasting for teaching and learning?*

**Stephan:** Well I think at the moment we have to get over the podcasting being sexy and just how we can actually make it a part of mainstream teaching and learning out there in the TAFE Institutes. Part of that's professional development, part of that's providing a means for teachers to be able to do it very efficiently and very effectively so that means providing server space for teachers to be able to put their files um, and an easy way for teachers to be able to record their material and get it up and out because it's all about being able to do it very quickly and efficiently. You don't want to be spending one or two hours post-processing audio after the event.

**Jo:** *[laughs] Yeah, I can understand that. I've heard that there's some moves into video blogging as well. How does that relate to podcasting?*

**Stephan:** Yeah well V-blogging or Video-blogging or Vodcasting is another term for it, it uses exactly the same syndication and distribution technology that is RSS as podcasting. The only real difference is it delivers a video file as opposed to audio files so all the concept is exactly the same.

**Jo:** *And so how do you see teachers being able to do that simply and easily? I noticed the other day you had on Talking VTE you had Skype window –a video Swindow with Robyn Jay in it beaming in from [laughs] Montego Bay in Jamaica so is that a strategy for how teachers might bring in special interest teachers into a classroom?*

**Stephan:** Well now that would be a great thing to do and you could do that quite easily with software like Skype. The difficulty is that Skype is still very much under the radar in TAFE certainly in our Institute, It's only special people or people with special permissions who are able to use it, it's certainly not one that is, how you might say, allowed by network managers, so we would have to overcome some issues there, but there might be some other technologies that would provide exactly the same capabilities. We've seen the roll out of Breeze for instance, we've seen Elluminate used by some institutes. All these technologies enable VOIP (voice over internet protocol) and screen presences of some kind or another... like video so you could use those just as well as Skype.

**Jo:** *Ok so, I'm just winding up now and thinking about the best way for people to get in contact with networks of other people who are getting comfortable with podcasting, is, apart from the Casting the Net group, is there any other networks that you think people should know about?*

**Stephan:** Absolutely yeah, there's the National Networks project that Sean FitzGerald and a whole range of other people are involved with.... called Connected Learning Community and I'll give you the URLs for that so you can put that on the show notes... that's fantastic.

**Jo:** Great! Thank you.

**Stephan:** For those people who are more newbies to online and network learning etc they can join the Online Mentoring Network which was something that was a 2005 Networks project but has continued to live on beyond that, and that's Wendy Zammit's project. She has created a space there for people, who are experienced and a little bit further down the track, to mentor new people online -sort of online coaching, online mentoring network so they have Skype chats every Tuesday and Elluminate on Thursdays and they'll be using and exploring a range of technologies for people to learn how to use. But of course I've mentioned my national Networks projects any of them are fantastic and the EdNa Groups are great as well and the NSW LearnScope blog or I can give you a link for that too but I imagine there's probably similar things of blogs in all states, similar networking presences for all of the LearnScopes in each state.

**Jo:** *Ok Stephan well look, thanks very much for providing us with that insight with what's going on in podcasting. You've provided us with some great links to follow up, some networks to join and some models of teacher professional development and learner engagement so thanks again for speaking with the Knowledge Tree*

**Stephan:** It's a pleasure, Jo, thank you.

## Useful Links

Business Arts & Information Technology (BAIT) Curriculum Centre project  
wiki

<http://tafepod.wikispaces.com/>

blog

<http://podtafe.blogspot.com/>

Casting the Net

<http://www.groups.edna.edu.au/course/view.php?id=272>

Connected Learning Community

<http://clcommunity.wikispaces.com/>

LearnScope New South Wales blog

<http://www.nswlearnscope.com/>

Online Mentoring Network

<http://castingthenetpodcast.blogspot.com>

Stephan's home page

<http://sridgway.wikispaces.com/>

Talking VTE

<http://talkingvte.blogspot.com/>