

In Pod We Trust

2021 Sautter Award Submission

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Project Team:

- Miguel Rodriguez, Educational Technology Analyst
- Todd Anderson, Administrative Assistant
- Angie Lu, Project Manager
- Paul Krueger, Project Manager
- David Carlos, Research Information Service Field Support
- Doug Bonilla, Communications Specialist
- Mark Hersberger, Communications Manager

Summary

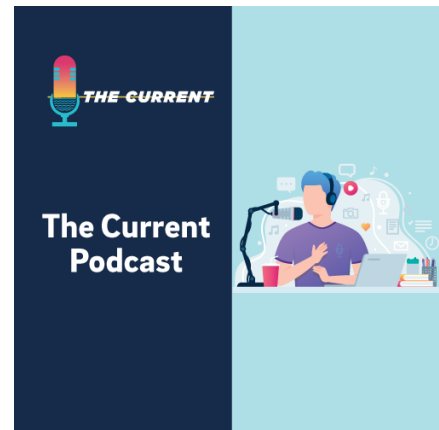
With COVID-19 bearing down and employees dispersed to home offices, how could a department of some 500 wary, uncertain souls stay connected? Easy! Start a department podcast and keep it going for 159 episodes and counting.

Project Description

On March 18, 2020, employees of UC San Diego IT Services were greeted with the soothing intonations of ed tech analyst Miguel Rodriguez. His voice rang out: "You are listening to *The Current Daily*, a new podcast keeping us up to date with the latest news for UC San Diego's Information Technology Services department."

It was a time of great uncertainty, with the transition to remote work just beginning. We no longer had the opportunity to gather in a large conference room or post important messages in breakrooms, or even huddle around a manager's desk. To fill the void, the podcast introduced a new format to reach IT Services with timely updates, and was paired with a daily e-mail communications digest that summarized the latest news.

Mojgan Amini, Director, Process Management and Continuous Improvement, tapped Miguel initially to read out the script and also produce and edit it. The IT Services communications team, primarily Mark Hersberger and Doug Bonilla, was brought in to provide a script and distribute new episodes.



Early topics focused on summarizing the rush of information – everything from what office equipment could be taken home to parking permit refunds to new COVID-19 leave allowances. The podcast was originally available exclusively on the department intranet, but Doug worked to open more distribution channels including Apple Podcasts, Spotify, Podbean and more. It's just like any other podcast, but without the ads for Ziprecruiter and Simplisafe!

At the time of submission we are at 159 episodes and counting, including an astounding, mind-boggling and truly ill-conceived 126 episodes published *every business day* from March 2020 to September 2020. At that point we transitioned to one episode per week.

As the days and weeks flew by, the rush of breaking news slowed and the podcast evolved to include more storytelling and voices from IT Services and beyond. To date we have been joined for interviews with

- 60+ full-time IT Services staff describing their jobs, successes and how they're coping with COVID-19
- 10+ student employees on their experience and courses of study
- CIO Vince Kellen and all senior directors (multiple times each)
- Two faculty members, including 2020 Pulitzer Prize winner Anthony Davis
- Other members of the campus community, including the president of the Staff Association and the team that put on virtual homecoming
- An improv comedian describing how we can incorporate the fundamentals of his art into brainstorming and office relations

The best episodes, though, are the ones that truly capture the employee experience as we all cope with living out the cliché of “the new normal.” Highlights include interviews with:

- Staff who've continued to work on campus
- The Service Desk leads, recounting how they helped dozens of student staff transition to remote work and churned through an insane uptick in ticket volume
- A panel of Veterans describing their past career in the military and the ups and downs of the transition to civilian life
- Employees who have persevered and completed major projects

At the time of submission, our 159 episodes have collectively been ***played over 10,000 times.***

Our story is spreading. We've already presented to the UC San Diego Marketing Council, and have future presentations accepted at the NCCI and CHEC conferences.

A unique element is that podcast production is crowdsourced from across the department, giving individuals a chance to explore and grow skills beyond their day-to-day responsibilities. For example, some of our interviewers belong to our growing Toastmasters club, and podcast participation allows them to try out and build on what they learn via Toastmasters. Our current editor/producer is an accomplished musician and already knows sound mixing from a musical perspective, but can now develop in an alternative format.

We feel that departmentwide involvement broadens appeal. Far too many communications are one-sided as just the voice of management, or a communications department as proxy. Our format, however, lets the rank and file interview leaders, or talk more peer-to-peer about what they're working on and challenges they face.







The "pod squad" includes:

<u>Name</u>	<u>Day Job</u>	<u>Podcast Role</u>
Miguel Rodriguez	Educational Technology Analyst	"Voice of Pod" Editor/producer (March – September 2020)
Todd Anderson	Administrative Assistant	Sound editing and production (September 2020 – current)
Angie Lu	Project Manager	Interviewer
Paul Krueger	Project Manager	Interviewer
David Carlos	Research Information Service Field Support	Interviewer (June – December 2020)
Doug Bonilla	Communications Specialist	Interviewer, distribution, analytics, communications
Mark Hersberger	Communications Manager	Interviewer, script writer

The number of listens and participants demonstrates the podcast's popularity, and its value in keeping the workforce connected and united. We do light editing to tighten things up, but the finished product is 100% the guest's own words, emotion and story – the nervous laughter, the mental ruminating to find just the right word, the honest reactions. That realness is what we believe sets The Current Podcast apart, and makes it a key element of life in IT Services.

Selected Episodes for Your Listening Enjoyment!

Click episode titles to play in browser!

<u>Episode 158: Outdoor Classroom Tech & More</u>	 The image shows a vertical banner for Episode 158. It features the 'THE CURRENT' logo at the top, followed by the text 'Outdoor Classroom Tech & More', 'Episode 158', and a photo of a man wearing a face mask with the name 'Alvin Argetes' below it.
<u>Episode 148: Telecommuting Playlist</u>	 The image shows a vertical banner for Episode 148. It features the 'THE CURRENT' logo at the top, followed by the text 'Telecommuting Playlist', 'Episode 148', and a photo of a person working at a desk.
<u>Episode 142: Life on Campus</u>	 The image shows a vertical banner for Episode 142. It features the 'THE CURRENT' logo at the top, followed by the text 'Life On Campus', 'Episode 142', and a photo of people outdoors.
<u>Episode 140: Service Desk Adapts and Responds</u>	 The image shows a vertical banner for Episode 140. It features the 'THE CURRENT' logo at the top, followed by the text 'Service Desk Adapts & Responds', 'Episode 140', and a graphic of a person at a service desk.
<u>Episode 134: Veterans Roundtable</u>	 The image shows a vertical banner for Episode 134. It features the 'THE CURRENT' logo at the top, followed by the text 'Veterans Roundtable', 'Episode 134', and a graphic of an American flag.
<u>Episode 61: Manisha Kanodia Gives Tips on Working from Home with Two Teenagers</u>	 The image shows the 'THE CURRENT DAILY' logo. It features the 'THE CURRENT' logo at the top, followed by the text 'THE CURRENT DAILY' and 'an IT SERVICES podcast' at the bottom.