

BCL 330.5 ZipCast FAQ

Well, welcome everyone. Davies Owens here, special episode of Base Camp Live, along with... Hey everybody, it's Hannah. It's Hannah, my favorite daughter.

I only have one daughter. You're my favorite daughter, for sure. You always are.

You always have been. Hey, we want to take just a moment. I know a lot of you have been interested in Zipcast.

We thought, why not use this great medium of audio to answer some common questions we get. I'm so grateful. I know, Hannah, you are on the receiving end of a lot of folks who are interested and you take them through a kind of a discovery call.

I know we actually had a Head of School on recently whose Base Camp Live listener said, Hey, Head of School, I got an idea for you. Check out Zipcast. It happens a lot.

It happens a lot. And at the very end they say, I have a question. Are you Davie's daughter? And I say, yes.

So yes, just say hi if you're a listener. I only hire the best. There you go.

Being a good classical Christian grad and the embodiment of the project we're on. So here we are. All right.

Well, hey, let's jump into these questions. If everybody's ready, you may have more, but we think these are the ones that we hear a lot. And we do hope you'll consider Zipcast.

Let's jump in. Awesome. Well, the first one I think is really a big question.

And it's what problem does Zipcast actually solve? I believe that it solves one of the biggest needs in our world today, which is just simply that everyone is moving at a rapid pace. Millennial, Gen Zers, for sure. But really everybody today, hyper busy, distracted, the white noise of life.

We all feel overwhelmed. Everything is attention deficit around us. Attention of a goldfish, whatever examples you want to give.

And I know in organizations having run schools, the most important thing is that relational connection between, well, really between everyone, but for the school leader to really share his or her heart as much as possible, even every week. I remember being told early on that if you do nothing else as a head of school, at least open the carpool door in the morning and greet and welcome everybody. And so I think Zipcast is really a way for your voice, literally your voice to go to your parents or your teachers each week.

And I think that's a really powerful solution, along with the great syndicated content that's

generally more than the typical school has time to create for themselves. Great. So this is the end of our second year.

You could say we did a pilot and then we've done our first full year. What has the response been so far? I think it's been overwhelmingly positive. And I know we did a survey.

First of all, you are in a great position because you're actually hearing from people every week, kind of on the front lines. So you hear real world, Hey, this is great. This is not great.

Help me out. Overall, amazing. I think we did another thing.

We did a survey at the end of the year and sort of that question was, has it helped your communication overall? Has it helped your parents be more aware of best practices? Has it helped your schools understand classical education better? It was like a 4.7 out of five, which is a pretty good score. Yeah. We surveyed both school leaders and the thousands of parents that listen weekly and overall for school leaders, 4.7 out of five said that they would highly recommend Zipcast.

Those that didn't give it five stars. When we asked a little bit about that, they really wanted more customization options, which is something that we're going to be offering here in the next rollout here in the fall for anyone that joins next. And then for parents, it was really, really wonderfully positive.

And you can read a lot of the reviews there on zipcast.media. A lot of people want to know in our discovery calls about engagement rates. And one thing that really is clear with Zipcast is you really get out of it. What you put into it.

So if you just throw up a flyer at the beginning of the year, send out an email and expect for it to work all on its own, that's really not going to be something that has the highest engagement rates, but we truly have schools that have 70, 80% engagement rates every single week. We have others that have 20, 30% engagement rates. It totally depends.

Every single school is different. You know your community better than anyone else, but overall it's been a really, really wonderful response. Jayson.

It's only going to get better. What we're about to address, in terms of answering your questions, is about this new 2.0 platform. It's literally about an \$800,000 retail price on what it's taking technically to develop it with some of the sharpest technical minds in the country.

I wish I could get into all that in here, but I'll just simply say, this is a very robust technology platform with even some patents that we're building into it. So this is something that's unlike anything anybody's seen before. I love the fact that we get to serve schools as our first and primary audience.

Let's jump into another question here that we get a lot. Does Zipcast encourage increased

technology use among parents? It's a great question. I think especially for those of us in the classical Christian space that are always mindful of the fact that we are trying to encourage folks to slow down a little bit, to think deeply, to reason well, to read books that are original source material and all of that.

Along comes Davies and the Zipcast crew. It's like, hey, everybody, we all have attention spans of goldfish. Here's a reality.

Certainly, respecting the fact that there are families that say, we're not going to get smartphones or we're going to stay in a flip phone world. Most families today, moms and dads, are on some kind of screen-based technology, even if they do a really good job of moderating that. I think the idea is we're just going to meet you on the go where you are.

We're not going to have you do a lot more screen time. In fact, it's really designed to listen in the car as an audio only. It's not video while you're driving in school with your kids to prompt additional conversation and to go deeper.

Yes, it is a piece of technology, but no, it's not, I don't think, making it worse. In fact, much like a movie trailer inspires you to go see a movie, every segment of a Zipcast can be linked to deeper content, be it a PDF, a resource, a long-form podcast. It's a megaphone for all your other communication, and it invites you to embodied experiences there in your school community.

I don't think it's increasing technology addiction. I think it's just meeting people where they are and hopefully moving them off of the technology. Does Zipcast replace other forms of communication like the weekly school newsletter? It's a great question.

I think of it as a megaphone for everything else you're doing. We learned in the first year that the lower open rate schools are ones where they would just literally read the news and the dates and the facts and all that are in their newsletter. Who wants to listen to that? What's far better is the fireside chat of the head of school giving just heart-to-heart updates, but also pointing out, hey, here are three or four or five key things happening this week with a reference back to all the dates and the facts and the RSVPs in the newsletter.

It's really, again, a megaphone. I've talked to school leaders that said, hey, we want to do a full-length podcast. Great, go do that, but this is an accelerator or an amplifier for those other communications.

One of the biggest questions that people have is about that syndicated content that we provide because that's really what makes Zipcast different than a podcast. It's not just someone speaking to you and sharing their thoughts. It's a combination of both expert content that's syndicated nationally and that local voice.

How can a school be sure that the syndicated content is actually going to be a good fit for them? It's a great question. I recognize in our broken world, we've got lots of, I mean, how many denominations are there now, how many different associations and folks with strong

opinions about lots of things. I mean, this is the world we're in.

You could take a topic like parenting. You're going to get a wide variant even in Christian circles about certain aspects of discipline or so on. So we've tried to be a little bit of, like I like to say, we're kind of trying to be a little bit of Switzerland here.

We're not going to pick topics in the syndicated content that are maybe more edge topics or more controversial. At the same time, we're going to be very Christ-centered and confident in our answers. But here's the big deal for everyone to know.

You get to preview, and in the new system, you can work three to even four weeks in advance hearing or even reading transcripts for any syndicated content. And you can turn off any segment for any week. You think, you know what, that just doesn't really fit our particular community.

And that's totally fine. And that's part of the beauty of being able to even supplement. And I know we had one of our schools is more of a high church.

And they just said, you know, rather than just having a scripture, we'd love to have more of a catechism. I said, that's great. So in this future version, you can record your own catechism and make it fit your school perfectly.

So that's the spirit of it. We want to be as big tent as we can be and very much at the same time committed to Orthodox faith and belief. Yeah, and helping you to have those deeper conversations.

Basically, the whole premise of Zipcast generally is to help parents think more critically. And so our syndicated content does just that. So one other question that we've gotten quite a lot this year was, how do you have content that fits K through 12? Because that's a lot.

It is. I think I've been fond of saying of late, I'm so humbled that Zipcast has been so well received. And I feel like I opened a restaurant with only one menu item and it's meatloaf.

Everybody come get some meaning. My point there is that not everyone is curious about why we wear uniforms or why we teach Latin. Those are probably questions you ask more likely in that kind of early grammar, lower school experience.

And then when you get to upper school, you're kind of thinking about other things. So we have tried to blend it this year. This new platform is going to allow schools that want to, to literally have two separate Zipcasts each week.

Basically, one is targeting the lower school families, one is the upper. And if you have children in both, the system actually blends the contents a little bit longer because of that. But you get a little bit of both, upper and lower content.

So yeah, that's the idea. And that's a new thing for this year. One other thing that we're adding

this year is custom segments.

People might be a little overwhelmed by the idea of having to come up with content like that that's not exactly like their newsletter. What kind of content can schools create to put in those custom segments? So let me just reiterate what you just said. Because some folks are like, okay, I'm barely surviving here.

I don't have time to do much more than think about my news. Now I'm going to self-record. You know, that's fine.

If kind of the bare minimum would at least be take three minutes. It probably is going to take you 10 minutes all week. But take three minutes and just record the news and announcements or the fireside chat portion of it.

For those of you who have a little more time and maybe bigger schools or communication departments, the idea is you can add another two custom segments. So this is really where it gets exciting. So we in our syndicated have always faster done a joke of the day, which is a national.

We'll pick a student from a school nationally. A lot of schools have said, what if we want our own students to do the joke of the day? Like, well, yeah, that's exactly what we're now going to enable you to do. So you can line up 10 grammar schoolers, have them record these little jokes of the day.

You can load them up in your own custom segment. That might be one use of a custom segment. You could do meet a new teacher or teacher of the week or meet an alumni or meet a senior.

Or these four story based testimonial types even in two minutes can be very powerful. So there's really no end to how a school could use their custom segment. Yeah, we've had schools get really creative on this.

We've had schools that have done a what I love about my school series where a kid comes in every week and shares that, which is great for parents to hear. During the spring, we've had a lot of schools doing senior moments where they interview a senior about their favorite book, their favorite teacher, why they love going to the school. So there are so many different things that you can do.

And it's really the I always like to say the secret sauce of Zipcast is that it's there's so many. You're giving multiple reasons for listening. And the more even at some point, you know, schools have time.

Half the content could be coming from the local school, adding an even greater sense of this is my people. These are these are people I'm in community with and these are their stories. So you can lean in as much customization as you want and you can go a lot easier on yourself if

you don't have as much time.

So can you articulate the difference between a channel and a segment? Sure. A segment is literally each each Zipcast is about ideally now more than about 10 to 12 minutes long. Those segments are brought are probably an average of about 90 seconds.

Like the news and announcements may be a little bit longer than, you know, the word of the week, which we can talk about that in a minute. So, yeah, the segments then are just those individual audio pieces. But then they fit sort of in a series.

So think of it like, you know, on your cable channel back in the day, you'd have the history channel. And under that, you would always have some programming related to history. So for us, we have the parenting channel.

So your fifth segment each week is going to be something from syndicated related to parenting. And we're going to have parenting related to the lower school and parenting related to the upper school in those two different tracks. But, yeah, it's basically just a way of organizing the segments.

Okay. You mentioned word of the week. What exactly is that? Oh, my goodness.

Well, let's, you know, I don't think there's anything wrong with having a little fun occasionally in a Zipcast. So we found that the simple idea was to hide a word of the week somewhere in the Zipcast. So as you're listening, we'll announce that word for that week.

So it might be the word frog or tree or something simple. And then you text it back to us, goes in a national drawing. And the next week we announce the winner of a gift card.

So it's been a lot of fun. You know, it's children definitely get motivated to prompt mom and dad to listen because of that. And then a lot of schools have gone kind of the extra mile and made that a. Hey, if you mention the word of the week to your teacher or in the front office or something, there's another kind of contest they build into it.

So, you know, we got to be careful we don't over gamify things, but it can be fun to create a little incentive. One thing that we're really leaning into this next year is the self recording process. And that's part of our base package now.

It might be intimidating. I know that it's intimidating because people tell me that they have not recorded themselves before. They don't have a big set up.

What all do they need to do that? So now we're custom segment. Yeah. So now we're really talking about kind of how you produce the Zipcast.

And, you know, I look, I think we're probably used to hearing our own voice, but I don't know what it is about humans. Like you hear your own voice. It gets people cringe.

Oh, my God. I sound like you're myself. OK, that's not I get that.

You don't have to be a radio person to do a Zipcast. In fact, I was just talking to a head of school yesterday who was rushing through the airport to get on a flight. And he ran over in the corner literally of an empty, empty gate, grabbed his phone, recorded there on the voice memo, his fireside chat live from the airport and sent it off.

And that was it. So if you if he can do that, literally using the voice memo on his phone and submit that anybody can do this. And so, you know, set aside your performance needs and your worries about your things.

It's it's fairly easy from a tech standpoint. And we've got a hand. You and the team are amazing at just helping people feel really comfortable getting their recordings done.

Yeah, we help you with all of that if you're intimidated. So no worries. How far ahead then can people record? I love people that work ahead.

And that's just fantastic. And you know what? That's one of the beautiful things about the new platform is you can be three to four weeks ahead, meaning you can look ahead. And see what syndicated content we've arranged.

You can go through and listen in advance. And you can always, again, choose to skip that week for that content and or you can add your content. So you can be working on it.

And this is, again, really for you. If you, you know, you can on the one hand, be really ahead of it by several weeks. Probably you're not going to want to record your news three weeks in advance, but you could get everything else queued up in there like your meet the alumni type segments.

And then you have the ability to schedule it really whenever you want, which is another huge advantage of the 2.0. Let me clarify something in there. We are, again, everybody's hearing us say self-recording means you do your own recording. It's your voice.

The beautiful thing about that, too, is that you can wake up, you know, Sunday morning at 2 a.m. Not that I wish you to do that, but and go, oh, my goodness, we forgot to add something. And go add that, rerecord it, put it back in that slot and have it go out on Monday morning. So you can schedule it whenever you want.

You can change it whenever you want. The only limit is if you decide kind of the way we've been doing it for a lot of schools is just send the script and we'll get it cleaned up. And it will have a professional voice talent, human read it.

That requires a pretty narrow. You got to do that on a Thursday and have it back by Friday and so on and so forth. But there's a lot of flexibility in there.

Yeah, that is an upgrade option if people would like that to have voice talent do it. So how do

parents sign up? Do they have to download a lot? Is it complicated? What does that process look like? My hope is that everything is easy from start to finish. I think about Zipcast.

I want it to be clean and concise and simple. So the idea is that we provide an onboarding kit. And Hannah, your team helps school.

Whoever the contact person is goes through kind of a real brief Zipcast boot camp, if you will. Kind of here's how it all works. And we're going to give you a QR code and some materials, including a little animation.

The idea is that we want schools to really honestly insist that this is something all the parents are doing. This is not a, hey, if you get around to it, here's the thing. Everybody is expected to do it.

Your kids have to wear uniforms. You have to do homework. And parents need to do Zipcast.

So here's a QR code. Scan it with your phone. You go through a couple of real quick questions.

Probably in about 20, 30 seconds, you've gone through everything. You're invited to hear a welcome audio. And boom, you're done.

You're in the system. And then that first Monday morning, you get by text a school branded welcome. And within that, you get the opportunity to hit play.

And it loads up on your phone, a little web browser. And you're off and running. It's real simple.

So some of this content that we talked about is about parenting, about maybe discipline. Is that suitable for parents to listen to with their kids around? Yeah, great question. We definitely want this to be... I guess the ideal is you're listening for sure with your kids in the ride into school.

Obviously, if mom and dad aren't probably riding in together, and you also have scenarios where certainly students start driving. But in those younger years, I think that's a great way to do it. And so we are trying to make... We do filter the content, I guess, for more of a kid-friendly audience.

So we're not going to bring up a parenting topic on some awkward aspect of marriage or something that feels probably not helpful with the kids in the backseat. That can be a source of encouragement. We try to filter that way.

We are looking at, in a future version, having the after drive or whatever. After you drop the kids off, now we're going to bring in some content experts on different content subjects that may be a little bit more parent-only years. But for right now, it's for everybody.

One story that I love, I think this happened last year, was we had Keith McCurdy on, who is a beloved voice on Zipcast. And he was doing a segment about parenting and how moms and dads need to spend time together. And he went to a school because he does speaking

engagements, and a little girl recognized his voice because she'd been listening to Zipcast with her parents.

And she told him that she had arranged for a date night for her parents because she'd heard about what he said on the Zipcast and how important it was for them to spend time together. So it is sweet to see the way that they are listening. And children are like sponges.

They hear everything. But it can very positively affect them, too. It's beautiful.

Yeah, it's truly a farsighted chat. I mean, everybody should listen together. And I don't know any other medium that provides that sort of family engagement and then prompting for conversation.

So, again, everything about Zipcast is to go to deeper and richer community and connection. That's the whole point here. Just a few more questions.

But what are the costs associated with Zipcast? I know that's a big question for a lot of people. Yeah. And having worked 40 years in nonprofit, I understand folks are cost-conscious.

So basically, the short answer is we're trying to make it as affordable as possible. We're trying to also scale it according to the size of the school. Obviously, if you have 80 students and you're a startup, you're in a very different position if you had 1,000 students.

So there is a minimum of about \$2,000 a year, kind of 110 students or less, I guess. And there's a maximum of about \$5,800 for a larger school, 325 or so. And then in the middle, it kind of scales up or down roughly around \$18 per student per year.

Now, having said all that, some of you are like, oh, my gosh, that's so much money. Others are like, wow, that's a deal. It just depends on what you're used to.

If you bring a speaker in to a school night, plus airline and hotel and rental car and all these things, you're talking probably north of \$5,000. And this goes 40 weeks the whole year. So we think it averages around \$80-ish per school per week, which I don't know a better deal than that.

Most folks spend more money at the back-to-school night barbecue than they're probably going to spend on Zipcast. And you've got that constant drip of connection and communication. So I think it's a high value.

And then, Hannah, you're fond of saying you can get Zipcast for free. You want to tell them how? Yeah. It's been remarkable to us the way that schools have made this a possibility.

And one of the ways that we love that not only is it helping them to make Zipcast a reality without having to really pay for a lot of it, but they've used the custom content segment at the very beginning to highlight businesses of their parents, which they've sponsored, at the beginning of the Zipcast. So weekly, you're reinforcing community, having parents support

other parents, and use Zipcast without having it be an extra cost to you. The other thing the schools have done is make it a headlining product at their fall auction.

So businesses, families, whoever can bid on it and support the school in that way and make it, if they want to have a custom content segment that they want to give a shout out in every week or however they want to use just a moment of that, it's a great way to make Zipcast a reality. Not a big advertisement, but just a shout out. And those families of businesses see a huge ROI on that for sure.

So yeah, that's helpful. Question for you about content. We have started in the classical Christian space, and that has been really wonderfully effective.

But is Zipcast only for classical Christian schools, or are other schools able to use this as well? No, we're so excited to extend the reach to Christian schools. There's so many versions of schools out there, of course, but Christian schools, absolutely. There are schools also that we're working with that are hybrid.

Instead of five-day, we're talking with schools that are the very big movement right now within Catholic classical schools, talking to a lot of the folks involved there. So we definitely have content that can be turned on or turned off in those different channels. So if you're not a classical school, you wouldn't get the classical channel.

You would probably get the school life channel, and there would be content relevant and helpful to you there. How do people sign up? How do people sign up? Well, the next step is to go to zipcast.media, and there is a Next Step button that's on there. You can sign up, or you can learn more, and that sets you up for a short Zoom call with you, Hannah, or someone on your team to just basically walk through the details of it and make sure all the questions are answered, and then we'll get you signed up.

And then after that, you'll be put in line to go through an onboarding. So we're sensitive to your time, but it's pretty simple. We want to make it as easy as possible, and we definitely would love for as many schools as possible to sign up.

We do have some limited space, but right now we're wide open and excited for schools to sign up for the new year. Why is it named Zipcast? Well, because it's sort of like a podcast in the sense of casting news and voices and messages out there. Zip, because we're moving pretty quickly, but really the Hummingbird logo is from a real experience I had sitting on a back porch.

The Hummingbird buzzed over my head, and I thought, that's the most beautiful creature of God. Wings are beating at 80 beats per second, and that little precision beak is going flower to flower to flower with a very specific little process. And I thought, that's what we're doing.

We're just giving you just enough of information for these different topics as opposed to a big chubby pigeon with a note rubber band to its leg that's trying to clunky email delivery system or a big eagle at a conference standing up on the stage with its wings out. So I think it's where

we're at. I have a friend that said, Zipcast is the next evolution of organizational communication.

I think the days of email and I think long form podcasts are getting harder. I think we've got to find new and better and creative ways to communicate, which we believe Zipcast is. Well, I'd love to meet any of you listeners who think that this would be a great opportunity for you.

I'm the one that runs these discovery calls, so you can go to [Zipcast.media](https://zipcast.media) and click the Get Started tab, answer just a few questions, find a good time on my calendar for us to chat, and I can answer all of your questions and more. But I hope that this was really helpful. Yeah.

Thanks so much for taking the time to listen. Just reach out to us. Hello at Zipcast Media, and we'd love to continue the conversations or go to [Zipcast.media](https://zipcast.media) and sign up, and we will be in touch with you.

Thanks so much.