Pocket Casts is making its podcast app free and launching a subscription service



Pocket Casts, a popular podcast app, is changing up its money-making strategy and launching a subscription service. The company previously charged users between $4 and $10 to download the app, depending on the OS and platform. The app will now be free, but users will have the option to pay $0.99 per month, or $10 per year, for a premium service.

The subscription service, called Pocket Casts Plus, includes access to desktop apps, exclusive app icons and themes, and 10GB of cloud storage for people who want to upload their audio and video content. People who previously purchased the desktop app will be given three years of Pocket Casts Plus for free.

Pocket Casts CEO Owen Grover imagines that podcast creators will use the cloud storage to listen or watch a show before

publishing it. He also says it lets people who like Pocket Casts' functionality use it for all of their media. As for the new subscription model, Grover says the team realized the one-time download fee was "antiquated," so they dropped it.

Pocket Casts Plus costs $0.99 a month or $10 a year
"Not because we're trying to move users to Pocket Casts Plus and regain that revenue, but so we can better align with the open-access philosophy of our public media ownership," he wrote in an emailed comment to *The Verge*. "In fact, we predict only a small percentage of power users will opt for Pocket Casts Plus." (NPR, WNYC Studios, WBEZ Chicago, and *This American Life* acquired Pocket Casts in 2018.)

If Pocket Casts doesn't expect most people to pay for its premium service, it's unclear how it'll recoup the lost revenue from app downloads. Grover says the company will have "more details on monetization in the future."

Pocket Casts has always competed with Apple Podcasts on iOS but was also considered one of the best podcast apps for Android. Now, however, with Spotify looking to capture more of the podcast listener market and Google Podcasts launching, Pocket Casts has more competition, and it's a tougher sell to get people to buy a podcast listening app.

https://www.theverge.com/2019/9/17/20870656/pocket-casts-plus-podcast-app-subscription-update-price