

IPVANISH

AUDIOHOOK

AdBridge

bluewire

IPVanish drives a 26% performance lift with Blue Wire using AI host-read ads

How a podcast ad campaign shifted budget out of announcer-read creative and into host-voice AI cloned ads, capturing host-read-caliber conversions at run-of-network scale.

A LIVE, IN-MARKET STUDY ACROSS THE BLUE WIRE NETWORK

250+
participating shows

13
hosts, cloned & approved

3
ad formats tested head-to-head

+26%

More subscriptions vs. announcer-read baseline

9%

Gap to genuine human host-read performance

0

Listener complaints across millions of downloads

IPVanish × Blue Wire

Executive Summary

Running across Blue Wire's podcast network with opted-in hosts, IPVanish's AI host-read ad campaign drove **26% more subscriptions** than announcer-read ads. Activated by Audiohook, the ads were powered by AdBridge.ai's legally licensed, AI-cloned host voices to generate a unique ad per show, at scale. The AI host-read ads also came within reach of genuine human host reads in performance.

The takeaway for advertisers: budget sitting in announcer-read and programmatic RON can move into Trusted Voice Ads and work materially harder, with zero listener complaints across the campaign.

The Marketplace Challenge

Host-read ads are the highest-performing format in podcasting. Announcer-read ads, while much less labor intensive to deliver, were comparatively **62% less efficient** according to Magellan AI's Q1 2026 report.

Yet host reads are difficult to scale. They cost meaningfully more than announcer-read and programmatic media, and carry real operational overhead: host approvals, airchecks, copy refreshes, makegoods for human error, and long lead times. Labor is the bottleneck. To justify that effort, host reads flow to the largest shows, while the mid- and long-tail of podcasting often doesn't benefit from the premium pricing associated with direct-deal host reads.

These dynamics force a compromise. Performance-focused podcast buyers move budget into announcer-read, run-of-network and programmatic inventory chasing the lowest possible CPMs to offset weaker performance. The impact is multifold: lower rates force publishers to increase ad loads, listener fatigue grows from hearing the same ads, and equitable performance becomes difficult for buyers to achieve.

The Solution

Blue Wire and IPVanish partnered with Audiohook and AdBridge.ai to deploy AI-enabled host-read ads that outperformed announcer-read ads, eliminating operational bottlenecks and allowing smaller shows to be better monetized at scale.

PUBLISHER NETWORK

Blue Wire

Represents 250+ sports podcasts. Each participating host opted in to have their voice replicated by AI and approved every campaign message and audio output, understanding the monetization benefits.

ADVERTISER

IPVanish

A premium virtual private network (VPN) service operating on the cutting edge of podcast marketing.

VOICE TECHNOLOGY

AdBridge.ai

Uses its Trusted Voices technology to clone the voices of consenting creators and package AI host-read ads into a media product buyers can activate efficiently and at scale.

PERFORMANCE PLATFORM

Audiohook

A performance-driven audio advertising platform where brands pay only per conversion, such as a new IPVanish subscription.

CAMPAIGN DESIGN

Three-Way Live In-Market Test

The four partners ran a live campaign with three components: announcer-read run-of-network media, traditional host-read ads, and AI-enabled host-read ads, with all other targeting and configuration held identical. The campaign measured net-new paid subscriptions to IPVanish's VPN product.

TRUSTED VOICES TECHNOLOGY

OPT-IN & HOST-APPROVED

PERFORMANCE-BASED MEDIA

RUN-OF-NETWORK SCALE

The Results

+26%

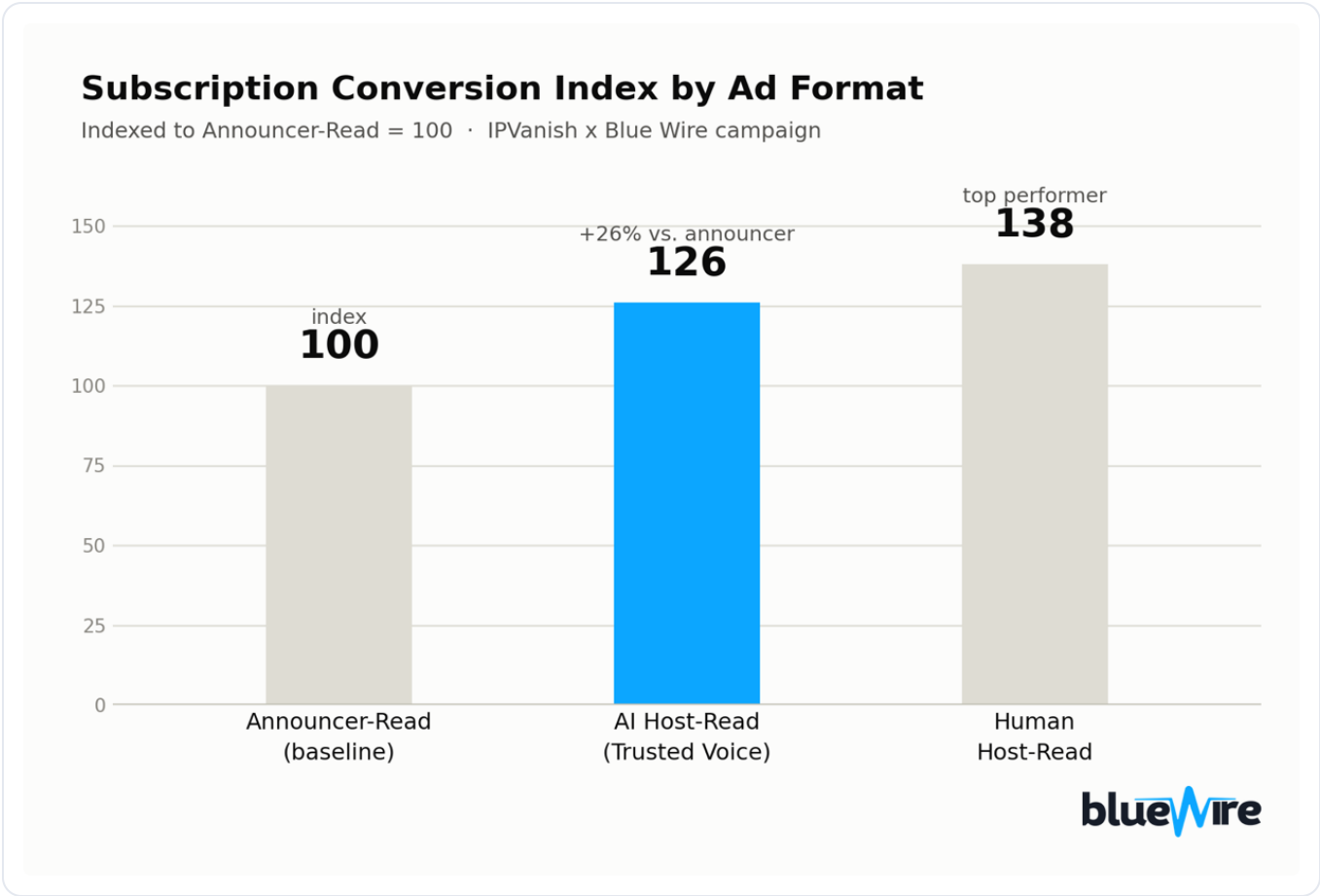
Trusted Voice Ads beat the announcer-read baseline, delivering the same approved message in a trusted host's voice.

-9%

Only gap between AI host-reads and genuine human host-read performance, the top performer as expected.

0

Listener complaints across all participating hosts and millions of downloads.



There is legitimate concern in the industry about AI-generated audio content, with some reports estimating up to roughly a third of new podcasts are now AI-generated. Part of this campaign was designed to test listener sentiment. Across all of Blue Wire's participating hosts, the campaign did not experience any listener feedback or complaints across millions of downloads.

In the Context of Price

AD FORMAT	TYPICAL CPM	POSITIONING
Run-of-network, announcer-read	~\$10	Lowest cost, lowest efficiency
AdBridge Trusted Voices (AI host-read)	Between the two	Host-read performance at announcer-read economics
Human host-read (direct deal)	\$20–\$25	Highest performance, highest cost & scarcity

What It Means

For Advertisers

AdBridge's Trusted Voice Ads bring near-host-read performance to run-of-network scale, across participating networks and their podcast hosts. This expands optionality beyond what was previously a binary choice between the efficiency of programmatic and the performance of host reads.

It opens the door for buyers to strategize how voice-AI-enabled ad products can drive media plan efficiencies and reach incremental audiences across the mid-to-long tail of podcast inventory.

For Publishers & Creators

Trusted Voices turns opted-in inventory into higher-yielding supply: impressions that would otherwise clear at low programmatic RON rates instead carry a performant, host-voiced ad that commands higher rates. This opens host-read-style demand to shows that weren't previously large enough to entice brand direct deals.

Creators stay in control throughout: they opt in, and approve every ad before it runs. Hosts in this campaign reported the process was fast, and that reviewing finished ads let them protect the quality and authenticity of their own voice.

Trust, Disclosure & Listener Response

The campaign followed the IAB's Transparency and Disclosure framework for AI in advertising. Every ad was authorized by a living creator whose voice was used for scripted commercial purposes only, and every ad was host-approved.

Combined with **zero listener complaints across 13 hosts**, this campaign is early, concrete evidence that responsibly produced, disclosed, host-approved AI ads have a place in podcasting: expanding host-read access for advertisers and smaller shows alike, without eroding the authenticity listeners value.

Hear the campaign in action

Listen to ad examples produced for this campaign

[Listen to Ad Examples →](#)

In Their Words

"When I first heard about AI ads, I went into the campaign with some reservations about how everything would work, but I came away surprised at how seamless the process was and impressed with the overall outcome. Blue Wire and AdBridge made the process incredibly easy, and approving ads was as simple as you could possibly imagine. The overall result was a net positive and I look forward to working with AdBridge again in the future."

Andy Herman Host, Pack-A-Day: Your Daily Packers Podcast

"The time saved was the ultimate feature for me. Being able to listen to the repacked ads allowed me to maintain quality control to ensure there wasn't an uncanny-valley effect on my voice. Would use again."

Pat Mayo Host, The Pat Mayo Experience

"I was very impressed by the ease with which Blue Wire and AdBridge put together the campaign for IPVanish. The process was simple and straightforward."

Al Galdi Host, The Al Galdi Podcast

About the Partners

IPVanish

A U.S.-based Virtual Private Network (VPN) provider owned by Ziff Davis, featuring unlimited device connections, over 3,200 servers in 150 global locations, and a verified no-logs policy. Founded in 2012, it encrypts web traffic and shields IP addresses across Windows, macOS, iOS, Android, and Fire TV. www.ipvanish.com

Audiohook

A technology company built for measurable growth across digital audio and podcasts, enabling brands to pay only for conversions, not downloads or impressions, with advanced targeting, brand suitability controls, and integrated attribution. www.audiohook.com

Blue Wire

A network of independent sports content creators comprising 250+ shows — from 4th & 1 and Funky Friday with Cam Newton to the 89 Show with Steve Smith Sr. and the Wy Network with Dwyane Wade — alongside local influencers covering dozens of teams, leagues and niches. www.bluewirepods.com

AdBridge.ai

An advertising technology firm that works with podcast networks to package audio inventory based on creators' AI-enabled voice replicas, its Trusted Voices technology, giving brands a way to scale high-performing audio across the mid-to-long tail of podcasts. www.adbridge.ai