



Prison Inmates Credit Recovery Podcast with Saving Lives as Sober Speak Surpasses 2.9 Million Global Downloads

Dallas-Based Show Breaks Into Top 1% of All Podcasts Worldwide, Expanding Treatment Center Directory as Founder Celebrates 36 Years of Sobriety

DALLAS-FORT WORTH, TX, UNITED STATES, September 11, 2025 /EINPresswire.com/ -- A recovery podcast that began as one man's way to "give back" has quietly become a global phenomenon, [surpassing 2.9 million downloads](#) while reaching the top 1% of all podcasts worldwide. Sober Speak, founded by John Michael in 2017, now serves listeners across every country on earth, including a surprising audience that has become central to the show's mission: incarcerated individuals who access episodes through prison tablets and credit the podcast with helping them maintain their sobriety behind bars.

"I receive emails and messages almost every day from people saying we inspired them to get sober, stay sober, or that we saved their lives," said John Michael, who has been sober since 1989 by what he calls "God's Grace." "One of the things that brings me the most joy is hearing from inmates who tell me we were a ray of light in their darkness and helped them stay sober inside prison."

What started as John Michael's response to a gap in recovery-focused podcasts has evolved into something much larger. After nearly three decades of sobriety, he recognized that existing recovery podcasts "simply weren't providing what I needed," so he created his own. The format remains elegantly simple: honest conversations with people working through the 12 steps of Alcoholics Anonymous, sharing what they were like, what happened, and what they're like now.

But the impact has been anything but simple.

From Inspiration to Action: Building Treatment Bridges

The numbers tell a story of unprecedented reach in the recovery space. With 2.9 million downloads spanning every country worldwide, Sober Speak consistently draws between 5,000 and 15,000 listeners per episode. The accompanying website attracts 18,000 monthly visitors, while a private Facebook community has grown to nearly 4,000 members alongside 4,000 Instagram followers and more than 4,000 email subscribers.

Perhaps most remarkably, the audience extends beyond traditional recovery demographics.

According to John Michael, roughly 10% of listeners aren't in AA recovery but participate in other anonymous programs: Al-Anon, Overeaters Anonymous, Gamblers Anonymous, or are simply seeking hope and inspiration in their own struggles.

Now, John Michael is leveraging that reach to address what many in recovery know as the critical gap between inspiration and professional treatment. He's strategically expanding the website's "Find A Rehab" directory to connect the podcast's massive audience with vetted treatment facilities across the country.

"The podcast and the website are really two separate entities," John Michael explained. "People rarely come to the website to listen; they use their podcast players for that. However, the website can serve as a comprehensive resource hub for recovery. My goal is to grow our monthly visitors from 18,000 to 50,000, particularly through the rehab directory."

His plan involves partnering with treatment center owners, offering them the opportunity to secure positions in their respective states within the directory—a natural monetization strategy for a podcast that has never charged listeners a penny.

Reaching the Unreachable

What sets Sober Speak apart isn't just its reach, but where that reach extends. John Michael regularly reads listener feedback at the end of episodes, sometimes longer than the actual interviews, with many messages coming from correctional facilities nationwide where inmates access the podcast through approved tablets.

"Sometimes people are located in remote areas and can't get to meetings," John Michael said. "That's why I call this a 'meeting between meetings.' The real work happens in the trenches with face-to-face 12-step work. I'm not here to replace that I'm a supplement."

The supplement has become essential for many. Beyond the podcast, John Michael and his team organize live events, help connect individuals with sponsors, and maintain regular correspondence with inmates through both email and traditional mail. The platform also promotes Alcoholics Anonymous conferences and recovery events, weaving connections across the broader recovery community.

Authentic Voices in a Crowded Space

What resonates most with listeners isn't polished production or celebrity guests; it's the genuine connection. It's raw authenticity. John Michael brings 36 years of sobriety experience to each conversation, along with a willingness to share his own ongoing struggles and setbacks.

"They know I'm for real and I try to be vulnerable with my own struggles in sobriety," he said. "That creates trust, and trust creates connection."

That authenticity has translated into what John Michael describes as an overwhelming response.

He estimates he could share "literally a thousand emails" from listeners whose lives have been transformed by the podcast. The feedback comes through Facebook messages, Instagram comments, and direct emails to john@soberspeak.com, all of which fuel his commitment to expanding the platform's impact.

Strategic Growth in the Digital Recovery Space

As the podcast approaches 3 million downloads, John Michael is strategically positioning Sober Speak as more than just audio content. The website already features free step worksheets, sponsored posts from treatment centers, and resources for connecting with local recovery communities. The enhanced rehab directory represents the next evolution, transforming occasional website visitors into an engaged community seeking comprehensive recovery resources.

"I've never monetized the podcast itself, but I see potential in building partnerships with treatment providers who align with our values," John Michael explained. "The rehab space is competitive, but our audience trusts us. When someone's ready for professional help, we want to make sure they can find quality treatment options."

The expansion comes at a crucial time when addiction and mental health awareness have reached new heights, with digital platforms playing an increasingly vital role in connecting isolated individuals with both peer support and professional care.

A Meeting That Never Ends

For John Michael, Sober Speak represents something he never expected when he launched the podcast eight years ago: proof that recovery stories, honestly told, can reach people in the darkest places imaginable.

"I've been given a gift I don't fully understand," he reflected. "I don't know why God picked me up and gave me sobriety, but I can share my experience and create space for others to share theirs. Sometimes that's enough to save a life."

Join the Conversation

Sober Speak releases new episodes weekly and is available on all major podcast platforms. Community members can access free step worksheets, connect with sponsors, explore the expanding Find A Rehab directory, and join the private Facebook community at soberspeak.com.

For immediate support, the platform's secret Facebook group provides 24/7 peer interaction among nearly 4,000 members, while the website's comprehensive resource section connects users with both community support and professional treatment options.

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Digital Marketing Partnerships: soberspeak.com/digital-marketing

Available for interviews: Podcast founder John Michael selects community members and treatment center partners.

About Sober Speak Founded in 2017 by John Michael (sober since 1989), Sober Speak has become the world's most-downloaded Alcoholics Anonymous-focused podcast, ranking in the top 1% globally among all genres with 2.9 million downloads worldwide. The platform serves as a "meeting between meetings" for a global community spanning every country, offering weekly recovery conversations, free step worksheets, and connections to local resources through its expanding Find A Rehab directory. Uniquely reaching incarcerated individuals through prison tablet systems, Sober Speak regularly receives testimonials from inmates crediting the show with maintaining their sobriety. The platform maintains a private Facebook community with nearly 4,000 members, 4,000 Instagram followers, and over 4,000 email subscribers, while partnering with treatment centers and promoting AA conferences nationwide.

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