



Voice Over Certificate Program

Spring 2020

Applied Intermediate VOiceover Workbook

204CCER4110 AIVO Spr. 2020

N. Kozmo Miller, instructor/course developer

Welcome to AIVO!

This will be your official workbook for all sessions throughout the course. This is not the course overview so please read that document separately as these sections will be coordinated with the scheduled class sessions. Please make sure that you have access to these documents prior to the class session.

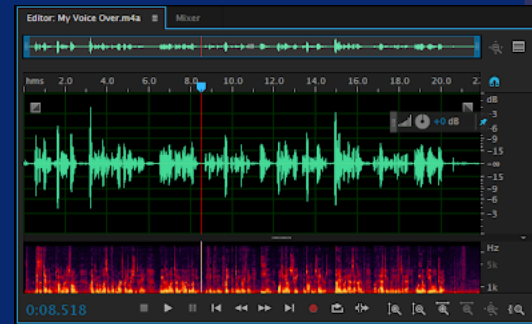
All of the basic elements that each session is built around are contained here. However, students will be responsible for external elements that are needed (samples, templates etc.) to research or complete an assignment.

Additional resources that the instructor will provide will be available in the D2L folders. Students will be expected to access these folders and download the files that they deem appropriate for course study. If there are any access issues to these folders, I will be more than happy to send any files directly to you. Thanks again and we look forward to adding to your success!

-N. Kozmo Miller, instructor

Required for class

Every student will be required to download Zoom and Skype as a back up if the University Google Teams system is not available. Students will also have recording-based assignments and will need to download an audio program to record at home. Your computer will not only be required for audio production but accessing the university D2L system as well.



GARAGE BAND (FREE FOR MAC)
OR ADOBE AUDITION



OR

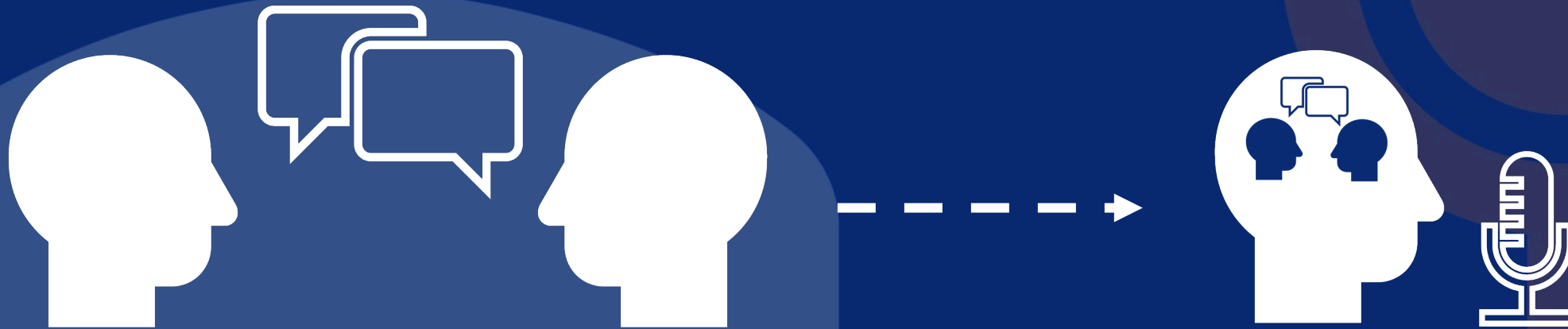


FREE FOR MAC OR PC

Session #1: Modes of expression for voice acting

Using emotional recall in VO...

The VOiceover artist that has an authentic, believable delivery is not just reading a script. That person is having a conversation and/or telling a story. They are telling it with vivid imagination, emotional recall and a good deal of acting in order to connect to the copy. A voiceover actor must maximize their expression by “lifting” the words off of the page. They use their face to react to what they are reading and have their body illustrate how they’re feeling just as in normal gesticulation. It’s an every day conversation at home, in the office, at the game, the mall, wherever. The objective is simply to sound natural.



The Basic VO Attitudes...

VOiceover, like human emotions, comes in various attitudes of expression that act as templates for delivery. Mastering all of them means not only knowing how to use them, but when to use them. Sometimes more than one type of attitude can work.

Friendly- The neighbor you can confide in who wants to let you know about the big sale. The talent is striving to sound as natural as possible like in every day conversation. You're not selling; just telling. You're a buddy. This attitude carries the lion's share of VOiceover delivery in commercial work. Mastering the conversational tone starts here. Allow the face to lighten up your tone and your body to remain fluid as you read. Enjoy it.

Authoritative- The expert who is well versed that wins your trust based on a read with confidence and knowledge of whatever product or service is that they're voicing. Do the homework regarding the brand. Lack of knowledge of the industry, product, and service will greatly compromise this ability.

One to one- A partner read that illustrates a conversation. The talents are focused on each other in dialogue. Practice reading the other actors lines in the copy for the best reaction and interaction during production. One must be tight on the delivery cues yet not clip the heels of the other artist's line.

The Basic VO Attitudes...

Each attitude serves its own purpose in delivery. Once that is fully understood, the artist has then gained a better understanding of how to put them to work.

Soft sell- The un-pushy voice that relaxes you and smoothly gets you thinking about the message. This attitude can be adjusted anywhere from smooth to sensual or a gentle helping hand. Coffee, wine, life insurance and products that like to promote the ease of life normally utilize a soft sell approach.

Hard sell- An intense and sometimes hyped up delivery, this attitude gets the masses moving and excited. Buy a sports drink, go to the game, sale of the century and similar fanfare hype. Boom-shaka-laka!

Urgent- Same intensity but darkened, sensitive, and serious; driving the listener (emotionally) to a cause; or away from it. This is the signature voice for political mudslinging ads. Don't expect to get any work in that realm without being skilled at this particular attitude. Creating Tension in the body drives this sound.

Sophisticated- Similar to Authoritative but non-aggressive sounding like the good life that makes the listener go for quality over quantity. At times the read can be snobbish so don't fall into the British butler/maid trap.

The 5 W's

The strongest delivery comes when the these simple questions are answered to build that imaginary landscape in your head for a more conversational sound and feel.

1. Who are you talking to? *A friend? A coworker? Family member? A neighbor? A gym buddy? A police officer? One of your professors? Your significant other?*
2. What are you talking about? *How great the product or service is? A promotion or sale that's coming up? The new product release? How easy it is to sign up for something?*
3. Why are you talking about it? *Is the product or service new? Is a promotion or sale about to end? Have they changed something about the product or service for a new rollout? Is it just what your friend, family or coworker was looking for recently?*
4. Where are you talking about it? *At home? At the ball park? The pick up zone at school? At the mall? At the grocery store? In church? At a party? On a date?*
5. When or what time of day are you talking about it? *Morning? Lunchtime? Afternoon? Late night? A weekday? The weekend? A holiday? A special occasion?*

The 5 W's cont'd.

These are the logical justifications that will allow your mind to start to reconcile building that real sound that keeps one from sounding like they are reading something and gets them sounding like they're actually talking to someone. Think people, not paper. You must imagine the whole right scene in front of you.

1. Who are you talking to? *You need to actually see someone there listening to you and conversing with you. The goal here is to sound exactly as if you were speaking in every day conversation to people just as you would sound in a read. Building believability takes time.*
2. What are you talking about? *There is no pressure on you to promote the product or service because you are simply imagining that you were telling someone that you know about it.*
3. Why are you talking about it? *Using the proper tone in your voice will make it obvious to the listener as to why. So if this is exciting then you need to sound excited. If it is serious, you need to sound serious. As your skills become more honed in this area, you will literally be able to feel it. These feelings can be generated by your own personal moments in life via memories.*
4. Where are you talking about it? This is the key to building out that imaginary world. See it.
5. When or what time of day are you talking about it? The time of day also influences the tone of voice as well. If there are no clues in the copy then decide what time of day best fits.

Examples of VO attitudes at work...

Take time to review the concepts behind how the attitudes are expected to work. Conduct additional research online to gather additional opinions, perspectives, and delivery technique. It will be very key to find videos of people practicing these examples. Several professional voiceover coaches and educators post videos walking their students right through each step:

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Ue9B_Nf0Has&list=PLNHV_4wtp0GjpKQtonoNz7144uAlciByK&index=16&t=35s

Be that friend...

Be that passive voice that can win the trust of a listener; a.k.a. the potential consumer.

5 Gum (*Friendly*)

I've been chewing a lot of gum, and so far there is only one I found to have long-lasting flavor, that lasts all day or all night. To prove how long the flavor lasts, I'm standing in traffic risking it all, and I won't leave until the flavor ends or I can't chew anymore.

The name of the gum is called 5, it comes in a black package. And you can get it in different flavors like spearmint, cooling peppermint, and Cinnamon. Spearmint is called rain, and it's in a green package, peppermint is called cobalt in the blue package, and cinnamon is called flare in the orange package. Actually, the package is black but the number 5's are in the different colors. The statement they make about it is that it will "stimulate your senses" that is true because the flavor is non stop.

This particular piece of copy is great practice for a friendly read because it actually seems to simulate someone rambling on. That type of speech pattern helps a voice actor to take on more of that natural conversational tone because announcers don't ramble. Again, you're not trying to sell the gum to an audience; you're just trying to tell a friend of yours that it comes in a bunch of different flavors and how cool you think that is. Don't forget to smile; they're listening!

Read up before you read...

Be that passive voice that can win the trust of a listener; a.k.a. the potential consumer

23 women (*Authoritative*)

Women make up seventy percent of the labor force in Uganda, yet rarely get the chance to bring their own products to market. 23 Women is a real story of real women who saw the need to join together, work hard, and deliver the best coffee their country could offer.

Rated the number one coffee in Uganda at the AFCA Taste of Harvest Competition, these women produce some of the best coffee in the world.

When prepping for an audition that is going to require the use of an authoritative attitude, the listener will expect you to sound like you know a great deal of the subject therefore you must exude confidence in that way. In order to exude that confidence, you must do research on the subject , industry, product or service if you're not familiar with it.

What knowledge do you have of the AFCA organization and the project that they're running? Where is Uganda? Do you have any idea what life might be like there for a working woman? What do you know of coffee in East Africa? How can you answer these questions very easily in a short period of time?

A few minutes of simple Internet research or a couple of videos will at least give you an idea of the issues and product that this copy is trying to message to the audience. That's how confidence is built.

“If it doesn’t get yellow, it doesn’t get read”

Never make the mistake of not reading the other actors lines when highlighting.

A-1 Steak Sauce (*One-to-one*)

Jerry: No A-1 for my hamburger???? Miss ... some A-1 please? Imagine, a great place like this without A-1 on the table.

Man: Yeah!

Jerry: Nothing like it on hamburgers ...

Man: You bet.

Jerry: After all, what’s hamburger? It’s chopped steak! And what’s better on steak than A-1? That’s why I have it at home all the time.

Man: So why didn’t you ask for it?

Jerry: Guess outta sight, outta mind. Miss ... some A-1 please?

Man: Ask for it!

The copywriters have already given you a backdrop of the scene to help you imagine and deliver a more authentic sounding read. Always read the other actors lines even if you’re not auditioning for them so that you can produce a more authentic reaction in your own lines. Recording in a studio or shared space with someone is even easier because the talents have their energy to bounce off of. Acting skills really help here.

Lighten up...

Turn your voice into a soothing, welcoming, attractive sonic vacation with a smile.

“At Home Comfort” of King George *(Soft sell)*

There comes a time when you just can't do some things for yourself anymore. You need a helping hand. He took care of you all your life, and now it's your turn to give back, but with a family of your own, there just aren't enough hours in the day. “At Home Comfort” in King George provides in-home care for the elderly. From bathing and dressing to housekeeping and shopping, we're there to help. Call us today at 540-625-2015. “At Home Comfort” of King George...committed to dignity, compassion and quality care.

This type of read needs to sound friendlier than friendly with a little added sugar on top. Winning the listeners trust is very important here and a gentle, understanding approach to the read with a soft sell attitude is what wins the business. You are simply presenting a chill, laid-back vibe.

The copy here can't help the talent easily relate to their own family situations that might be similar to this. We can all relate to family care in one way or another and that level of sympathy/empathy should emote in the delivery of the read.

Being able to come across as a sensitive and understanding voice will be very important for prospective clients who are looking to cast a talent that can take the copy in the right direction.

Toughen up...

Be aggressive but in a positive, slightly hyped way. Using a confident and almost invincible tone, Make the listener want to jump up and follow you.

Adidas Anti-perspirant (*Hard sell*)

Total control. Total performance. Introducing Adidas Anti-Perspirants and Deodorants. Adidas...when life is rough.

Hard sell reads require more intense use of the body but actions as well as squinting the eyes can generate excitement. Some words require emphasis which require you to conduct your body almost in a punching motion. Put yourself in a tough, athletic, take charge mind state. Tighten the jaws a bit.

The talent must find balance in the read between sounding aggressive yet confident; bold yet exciting; tough but not mean. Once again, a smile helps here. It will help balance out sounding too scary unless it is a promo read for a horror film or thriller TV show.

Any type of commercial work regarding sports, military ads, the automotive industry, home-improvement, outdoor products and equipment, and sporting goods are all brands that tend to direct their copywriting teams to write scripts with the hard-sell attitude in mind. A hard sell doesn't necessarily require a deep voice but definitely an aggressive-friendly tone which is all in the attitude.

Listen up...this is serious

Read with the same level of seriousness as a hard sell; minus the aggression. The urgent read must drive the listener to a cause. Controlled, calm intensity is the key here.

Cleaner Elections (*Urgent*)

Smear campaigns...mud slinging...twisting the truth.

Why do politicians resort to such underhanded tactics? Do they think it really helps their campaign?

It's ugly, uncalled for, and deceitful.

So why do we allow them to continue?

It's time to level the playing field.

You want our vote? Then focus on the issues that affect all of us.

This election season, advocate for a clean election process.

Paid for by the committee for cleaner elections.

Urgent reads work best when the cause is fully understood by the VOiceover talent. Understand the premise of the message and the objective of the group behind it as most of these reads are written for political campaigns, fundraising, research, and other types of advertising that drive a specific cause. Again, use the body to produce a slight intensity in order to get across the seriousness of the read.

Get jiggy with it...

Give them a slice of the good life. Sophisticated reads suggest the best in quality products and superior servicing. The slight hint that the listener is better off trusting the brand.

Tax Tally (*Sophisticated*)

It's that time of year again (yikes! Nail-biting). Tax Time (booming voice)!!!! Are your statements in order? Even if you are miles behind, our certified general accounts will get you and your tax forms up to speed, increasing your tax return and giving you peace of mind. Why pull your hair out every April when you can rely on Tax Tally? Tax Tally knows your frustrations, believe me, we do. That's why we're here! Call us today at 555-5674 for a free estimate. Tax Tally, we crunch numbers so that you don't have to.

Sophisticated reads have an implied snobbery driving the listener to want to use the product or service as opposed to not using it or another type from the competitor. This tone is achieved by slightly implying that opting not to do so is unwise or will not bring about the listeners desired results.

In this piece, the Talent will want to imply that not doing your taxes is bad but not letting Tax Tally do them is even worse. The lighter or more positive side of this attitude should also give the listener the feeling that they are in for a quality experience.

Session #1 Review

Read like you talk and don't talk like you're reading.

1. Create that imaginary world in your mind using the 5W's as the main tools so that you can generate the most authentic sound possible. You must see it so you can say it.
2. It is OK to improv lightly on small parts of an audition, just make sure it is the last of your two takes and don't add too much or go too far from the original direction of the copy.
3. Remember that you are an actor as well. The only difference is that the microphone is your camera so your face needs to constantly be at work and alive.
4. Free up your body and use it as a conductor of your speech. Allow it to illustrate what you're saying and accentuate certain points of emphasis.
5. Pay close attention to punctuation in the copy and use it accordingly. Brush up on basic grammar skills so that you can inject correct punctuation into poor copy. This will be frequent.
6. Relax yourself and go with the flow. Try not to overthink your approach to the copy as all of these things will become natural and almost reflexive when you begin a read.
7. Two common methods to emphasize a word are "punching" and "goosing". To punch a word is a quick popping emphasis. To goose a word is stretching it out a bit by saying it a bit longer than usual.

Session #2: VOiceover copy analysis for impact

Take that!

To learn how to make each take count, one must understand what an effective take is.

Simply defined, a “take” is a read of the copy, script or line that is being used for the audition. Almost all auditions are expected to have at least two varied takes of the material in the commercial world. When the client specifies the number; be sure that you do the minimum number of takes under their delivery direction. If you want to add a third take of your own interpretation of the copy, let it come last.

In narration , the client will often ask for 30 seconds of the narration script to be read. Unlike a casting director for a commercial, a producer of a narration project will be looking for balance and consistency in the voice and delivery technique. If an audiobook producer is trying to explore a variety of tones and variations by the talent, it will be to get an feel of what the talent will sound like voicing various character lines. Some audiobook productions cast separate actors to do casual lines.

Gaming and animation clients often request multiple takes to hear the talents variations that they can offer on a given character. Respects to may have specific guidelines as well and some may have none at all because the casting director really wants to voiceover talent to take a license in offering a variety of voice for consideration. And effective take is not just about sounding your best but delivering what the client has asked for in the specs.

Do the math...

Some auditions contain more than one script.

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Gaming and animation clients often request multiple takes to hear the talent’s variations that they can offer on a given character. Some specs may have guidelines as well and some may have none at all because the casting director may want the voiceover talent to take license in offering a variety of voices for consideration.

Interpreting VO specs...

Here's a list of the most common details that a client or casting director will include:

Age range- The age range (EG.- age 35-55) is able to be tweaked depending on your ability to sound older or younger out of your own age group. It is best not to push your voice in a direction in which it does not work, just for the sake of auditioning. It would be looked upon negatively and your agent probably won't submit it.

Region- Some clients may ask the agent to submit talent that have a natural regional accent or those with the ability to mimic a particular regional accent to match their product. While this particular reference should only be interpreted by region and not by race, sometimes clients will make a specific request. Only submit if you feel that you are able to deliver a close match or have mastered a particular regional accent.

Celebrity references- The client will sometimes use certain names of celebrities who have voices that are similar to what they are going for but they are not asking for an exact voice match or impression. It does not refer to the sound of the celebrities voice so much as to their approach, style or swagger. If for some reason you can do some spot-on impressions of certain celebrities, then there is are specific channels for marketing that particular service within the VO industry.

The character behind the voice...

The most important spec is understanding the voice that they envision.

Character type/description-

Sometimes the word “character” is used a bit loosely and the client may not necessarily want you to put on an entirely different persona/voice so much as they want you to take on a bit of flavor from their concept. Their objective is to describe the type of person that they want the listener to feel that they are listening to. They may ask for a neighbor or coworker kind of feel where you would need to employ your friendly or soft sell attitudes for delivery.

Some clients will be as detailed as to write a description of the characters outlook on life or their vibe or approach to things. They may often use descriptive adjectives and very colorful references to give the VOiceover talent a good idea as to the type of person/voice that they are trying to build for the message.

All of these guidelines are suggestions as to what they would like to hear; however, on the second or third take it is understood, and sometimes expected, for the VOiceover talent to add a bit of their own flavor in terms of how they view the character might deliver the message in a slightly different manner, tone-wise.

Become the un-nouncer...

When client specs, instructions or descriptions become confusing and contradictory.

“We don’t want the announcer to sound announcery...”then don’t refer to the talent as an “announcer”. Oftentimes, the clients forget to refer to this work as a “conversation” as opposed to an “announcement”. It will be on the VOiceover talent, to show them that principle in the read as you interpret their instructions to the best of your ability. Keep this in mind; in spite of the fact that you will see the word “announcer” used commonly on copy and spec sheets. Announcing is for live events.

It will be up to you to use your principles of delivery to decide how to effectively voice the copy in the manner in which you think they’re requesting of you. The fact that many of your clients will not be experienced or have your level of knowledge in VOiceover will put you in the pilot seat in this situation. When it comes to the final recording session, they’ll be there directing you anyway.

This also allows you an opportunity to interpret their instructions in a different manner if you feel they may have meant something else in their request. That is, if they are interested in listening to your audition past the average 5 to 7 second window. These days, even slating in character counts.

This is where you will start to build on using your prior tools of determining which VOiceover attitude is the correct application. Use their details in the 5W’s to create that story in your head that you see in their specs. The characters and copy will pretty much build the story background for you.

Slate my name, slate my name

The slate is the voiced identification of the auditioning voiceover talent.

A slate starts all auditions. It is a simple identification tag stating your name and talent agency if they specify to be intending on the slate. Current trends are now pushing towards having Artist not sleep at all for an audition. However when you do, it is now highly advised that you slate in character. If the character in the read calls for a tough macho guy delivery, then the slate should match that exact same tone and attitude.

Clients who do not want slates on an audition at all will specify that to the agent and it will be mandated in the audition email. An audition get that gets submitted with a slate could be rejected. For veteran talents, slating can be a very hard habit to break; however, the instructions on your agents email must be followed to the tee.

If a slate is requested for an audition, it must be heard in less than one second from the start of the audio file. The actual audition read should follow up no more than 1 to 2 seconds after your identification. Again, be sure what the client has specified to your agent whether they do or do not want slating on the audition.

Read the fine print...

The spec details in audition copy, if any at all, will vary from project to project.

Some specs will only contain straightforward information such as gender , ethnicity, and demographic while others will actually spell out an entire story setting and personality of the character that they want to generate the voice. Some will give you tons of detail and others may give you none at all. Some clients don't even include voice or tone direction with the audition copy. It has happened.

1. Pay attention to any details that refer to the style of voice if it is stated.
2. Take any references of character, personality, experience and outlook into consideration heavily if the client has added any type of character description.
3. If you feel that a certain aspect of the character specs are out of your voice range, it's OK to come close but don't push yourself to the point of sounding unrealistic in age or tone.
4. The specs are a heavy suggestion, do not over analyze them to the point where you cross the threshold of confidence in your delivery. Sometimes the artist can go in a slightly different direction on a second take and deliver something that the client or casting director likes even more.
5. Listen to your recording once you have completed the takes that are satisfactory delivery-wise and evaluate them strictly on what was given to you in the specs to make sure that you have voiced everything according to the description... To the best of your ability.

Short and sweet...

Analyze these shorter, more general samples of the client's ideas from actual audition copy. They offer a greater challenge in understanding what the client wants.

Zuprevo

VO Talent: Age 45+. Rugged, authentic, straightforward, not a salesman or theatrical.

Break The Game

TONE: With swagger, self confidence, some angst and slight humor.

Phineas and Ferb – Bobby Long

A muscle-bound teen who might appear to be a dumb jock on the outside, but is actually brilliant and destined for a career at JPL after majoring in chemical engineering in college. Loveable. Possibly African-American.

Carl's Jr

We need an early 30's guy who can show his passion and enthusiasm and LOVE for the Carl's Jr Western Bacon Cheeseburger. All it's glory. All it's divine taste. All it's messiness and dripping sauce and bacon and burger OH MY! And yes, our hero will win this by personalizing the script to showcase their feelings with their own signature style. This guy not a VO guy per se, but more of a social media/influencer type. My point here is that I want the guy riffing, not playing a voice or soaking up the microphone. Think a younger Kevin Hart, or a younger John Leguizamo, or a younger Guy Fieri.

From the horse's mouth...

Sometimes getting into the client's head can be challenging. Some specs may just be overly specific and hyper-focused on the type of voice they're looking for.

Bomb Pop (*Commercial spec*)

Male, Female, and Non-Binary. 18-28 (Must be at least 18 years old to be considered). Please submit all ethnicities.

Looking for someone with youthful exuberance that can match the quirky/off-beat/fun tone of the spots without going over the top. The voice of this campaign needs to reflect the client's "Not-One-Thing-Philosophy" so we're looking for someone who is 100% authentic and compelling; a "real human" rather than someone who feels everyday familiar. Our VO has a distinctive personality that is unique to them. When they speak, we know immediately who they are. Because we are after a one-of-a-kind sound, we are open to hearing natural regionalisms (please nothing artificial or put-on), interesting speech patterns, and off-beat inflections. Nothing commercial sounding at all. The client is particularly sensitive to anything that sounds polished or like a typical ad, as the target demographic for this is teens who have acute BS meters. If you would please dig deep and think outside the box on this one.

It's in the details...

Specificity on the client's part definitely makes for an easier understanding of how to deliver an effective delivery according to what the voice talent feels the client wants.

Concept: The 2017 Nissan models have integrated safety features that help you take on the daily road challenges you'll face in life.

We're looking to choose between two voices:

1) Male: 25-45 year old African-American male, with a mid-range tenor voice. East coast city and urban city accent. Spoken word poet style. Street smart and hip-hop flavor. Bold, confident delivery. Voice style similar to African-American recording artist and Def Jam poetry competition winner J-Ivy or rapper/actor Mos Def.

2) Female: 25-45 year old African-American woman, with a mid-range tenor voice. East coast city and urban city accent. Spoken word poet style. Street smart and hip-hop flavor. Bold, confident delivery. Voice style similar to 1980's female rap pioneer and First Lady of old school hip-hop, MC Lyte or Empire TV series actress Taraji Henson.

Avoid user error...

Failure to pay close attention to label instructions frustrates agents. Following guidelines for audition submissions are key in reassuring them of the talent's professionalism.

These details will always be listed in the email from the agent. Some agencies put them at the very end and some at the beginning while others have them lost in the middle with other details. Regardless, it is the talent's responsibility to review this information and make sure they adhere to it.

LABELING AND RECORDING INSTRUCTIONS

Label your takes: NAME_CITY_SCRIPT

Examples:

CarrieFaverty_LA_1, CarrieFaverty_LA_2

JohnSmith_NYC_1, JohnSmith_NYC_2

Please read each script **2x** in a row so we hear variety in your reads.

Auditions are due 12:00pmPST/3:00pmEST on Fri 6/14

Always submit an audition as soon as possible.

Copy and paste the label into the title space once a file or project is saved before recording. Be sure that you have entered your own talent information.

Get the math right on takes.

Session #2 Review

Things to keep in mind when reading casting specs...

1. Develop an awareness for the age range that your voice can cover. A realistic age range it's about 10 to 15 years your junior or senior.
2. If you have developed a true working sound for an out-of-range voice, then it is OK to audition with it. Outside evaluation of that particular voice never hurts.
3. Listen to celebrity references even if you think that you're familiar with that person's voice. Keep in mind, they are not expecting an impression unless specifically stated. Don't audition if you're not a fit. The audition won't even make it out of an agents office.
4. If you want to try a regional accent that an audition is calling for and you're not skilled in it, you can do some short practice and training by watching accent coach videos. You do not want to render any stereotypical impressions that will come off as unauthentic and offensive. If the audition calls for someone with a Philadelphia accent, then watch a video that talks about the specific pronunciations and nuances that make the Philly accent distinct unto itself. New York has multiple distinct accents.
5. The initial intention for providing character descriptions is to give the auditioning talent an idea of the client's direction, but it may not necessarily be written in stone.
6. Upon completion of an audition submission, after checking for delivery quality, listen again to make sure that your reads reflect what was requested in the audition specs if they were provided.

Session #3: Genres of VO

VO Genre Layout

The family of VO genres exists in two main branches...

Short Form

Commercial Work

Film Trailers

Radio/TV imaging

TV Promos

Voice of God (VOG) event announcing

Audio Dialogue Replacement (ADR)

Animation/Gaming

Political Work

AI Applications

Telephony/EMS

Long Form

TV/Documentary Film Narration

E-learning Materials/courses

Medical/pharmaceutical VO

Audiobooks

Corporate Industrials

Which genres are for you?

Don't just pick and choose. Certain personality types work better in certain genres.

Suffice it to say; regardless of personal traits, anyone can succeed in any branch or genre of VO if the training is taken seriously and the work is put in:

- Research the nature of the specific work that is required to succeed in a particular genre.
- Note what the successful artists in the genre have in common. Find out what makes them tick.
- Be willing to focus on additional training and specific coaching to get more acclimated in that genre. Coaching and training will never stop and sometimes even get specific for certain genres.
- Different genres have different requirements for success and some take longer than others to get traction established.
- Some genres are attractive to certain artists because of the amount of work involved, such as commercial work which will always be plentiful. It is the mortuary industry of VO.
- Other genres like audiobooks and narration appeal to artists who have a specific penchant for reading. Consider the necessary physicality of long-windedness that will be needed of the talent.
- Animation appeals to those who not only have an actor side but also a love of cartoons.
- Promo and trailer work requires very short notice and tight turnaround with precision timing in the recording work. Talent working in these areas are very technically proficient.

Examples of short form VO Genres...

Now that you have some material that you have been voice drilling on to help learn the attitudes, it is now time to see how those attitudes work in the various genres of voiceover work. The challenge to you is now to decide what type of attitude goes with the particular material. You will learn that different genres have different demands on production, time and deadline turnaround etc.

In a world...

Film trailers require a delivery and really challenges the VO artist to use their imagination in becoming a part of the story. There will be little time to catch the ear.

Disney's "Spirited Away" (Feature film trailer)

"Walt Disney Studios presents a Studio Ghibli film, from master film-maker Hayao Miyazaki. In worlds seen an un-seen, where spirits are transformed and sorcerers rule, one girls future depends on her judgement, her courage, her loyalty and remembering one thing above all else. Walt Disney studios presents a Studio Ghibli film. Experience a magical movie phenomenon, embraced by all the world. This fall, prepare to be "Spirited Away".

Delivery on a film trailer must be directly dictated by the type of film that is being promoted. The voice must be able to adjust to several different styles that will be expected and the actor will be using any of the different attitudes according to the type of film. Darker, scarier voices are appropriate for horrors and thrillers but certainly not for this particular example above. Adventures even utilize a more lighter hearted style that may still have some grit and drive to it.

You must react to each scene as you're seeing it vividly while reading the trailer copy. The trailer is driven by your voice therefore you must imagine yourself as a part of the movie completely immersed in the world of the film's story.

So many words, so little time

Promo spots require some of the tightest reading and turnaround times of any genre in the industry. There's very little time to make your words as affective as possible.

24 season opener (TV promo spot)

They can attack him. They can judge him.

But they can never break him

The nation is under siege

and now Jack Bauer is on his own.

The season premier of 24 begins now.

Viewer discretion is advised.

This spot makes it quite obvious that this will be a hard sell or an urgent style of delivery. Tight jaws and a clenched fist will definitely help drive tension to make it sound more serious and darker to get the listeners attention. Regardless of attitude, delivery must be accurate and somewhat pacy because production allotment times for these spots have almost no wiggle room. If the running time note says eight seconds, then it literally means eight seconds. These spots require their own special brand of focus. They are most challenging for kids cartoons when they become really wacky and make for a great delivery skills challenge.

So many words, so little time

Radio and TV imaging voices are cast on the style of the artists delivery according to the swagger that the station brand exudes. Casting is often a matter of marketing consistency.

KNCN C-101 (*Radio imaging spots*)

By the bay and on the beach, no one rocks Corpus Christi like C-101.

WSB-TV Slugs:

Atlanta news, weather, and sports. Breaking stories from around the Metro Area. “Coverage you can count on” from WSB-TV Channel 2.

“Channel 2 Action News; Holding the powerful, accountable.”

When corporate radio books voices for imaging, certain voices are matched for country or rock or hip-hop. The talents that are booked for pop, rock and jazz are all quite distinct from each other.

A TV imaging voice may be a single booked talent that is required to adjust their voice to several different attitudes at various times of the day depending on what they are delivering for the TV station. Various attitudes may be needed depending on the program that is represented by the spot your delivering.

V.O.G...Voice of God

VOG is live event announcer work that is usually performed by the talent from a microphone station backstage near the production control booth. The talent reads from an event script and is cued on each line or section by the stage manager or technical director.

2015 Platform Summit (V.O.G announcement script)

WELCOME

Welcome to Platform Summit 2015.

We thrive on technology and therefore encourage you to use your devices to share the experience and excitement of Platform Summit 2015 through social media. Be sure to use the hashtag Platform2015 when you post.

This unknown voice from beyond simply provides the event with information and guidance as to what will happen next or with the audience should or should not be doing at a given time. It is a calm, professional voice that is articulate with no particular attitude or air.

These gigs are done in a live setting and lines can be changed on the fly so the artist sure should be ready for any type of quick changes if requested by the event client. This work is often done over headset or earpiece communications with someone who actually cue (tell) you when to say the particular lines. Going too early or too late appears sloppy. Relaxation is key for pressure on live jobs.

Politics can get sticky...

This genre is best performed by those who can take on a variety of urgent, sophisticated and hard-sell tones. One can create create tension in addition to casting darkness on the opposing candidate or bolster propaganda regarding a popularly disliked one.

Make America Great Again (*Political spot*)

America has been poorly managed for far too long. It's time for real change. It's time for a bold visionary who is not afraid to say what he believes. A proven success in business. A leader who gets things done. It's time for an American that is ready to lead our country back to greatness.

Again, if a voice actor is supposed to be able to almost believe what they are reading then they must feel it as well. That will present a personal internal challenge if you have any misgivings with the candidates philosophies or their platforms of approach. Some voiceover talent may be able to fake it for the money and still get booked. This is a personal choice.

Others may decide to turn down the opportunity to audition for the job because they do not want to lend their voice to supporting the candidate or party. Some talents choose not to represent candidates that have been associated with racism or homophobia. If the talent has feelings that strong, then there is definitely a low ceiling to a good performance on a spot like this and it should be left alone if that is the case.

If your animated, it's game on

Animation truly turns the microphone into a camera. Acting skills are definitely required here. Despite minor fundamental differences in their script format, they still require the same type of energy and a similar delivery from the talent whose voicing the parts

Star Wars Rebels (TV animation script monologue)

This is Master Obi Wan Kenobi. I regret to report that both our Jedi Order and the Republic, have fallen with a dark shadow of the Empire rising to take their place. This message is a warning and a reminder for any surviving Jedi. Trust in The Force. Do not return to the Temple...that time has past. And our future is uncertain. We will each be challenged. Our trust. Our faith. Our friendships. But we must persevere. And in time, a new hope will emerge. May the Force be with you, always.

The knowledge of the characters, stories and backdrop of that universe will make your sound and delivery far more authentic than if you were trying to audition and knew nothing of Star Wars. Familiarity with a character also helps one develop variations to present a new voice for casting directors who may be interested in switching up the sound of a character from one production to another. The talent that auditions for this part was originally turned down because he did not match the physical stature they imagined. Once the producers listened to him without looking at him, they were sold.

If your animated, cont'd.

Video game scripts require the same level of excitement, fervor, imagination, intensity, and acting as any animated film script. The only difference is that the majority of the dialogue lines are shorter and come in spurts like action cues.

Batman Versus (gaming script)

BANE: You will watch your great city burn, Batman; then, I will give you permission to die.

BATMAN: Not on my watch, Bane.

JOKER: We're just trying to put a little smile on your face. Hahahaha.

Exactly like in a one to one read, the talents are playing off of each other's energy. Sometimes these parts are recorded in unison or separately and that can have an effect on the actor's performance. If recording solo, you may need to bump your energy up even more. Auditions for these parts are also best done in a variety of voices to give a casting producer a sense of range within the direction. Again, please remember to read lines of the other actors in your scene for the most authentic reactions possible.

You're in the system...

The industry of production known as telephony consists of booking talent to record voice prompts for phone and computer systems that are stored as digital files and used repeatedly to guide a user through a system menu.

800 Travel Systems (*telephony script*)

Thank you for calling 800 Travel Systems. If you know your travel consultant's extension, please dial it now.

For the best possible service, this call may be monitored or recorded.

For a company directory, press 9.

For air reservations, press 1.

If you have a reservation on hold or have already purchased your ticket, press 2.

For Las Vegas, Hawaii, and Orlando air and hotel packages, press 3.

To hear these options again, press 4.

A friendly, matter-of-fact delivery is all that is required for this type of messaging. Smile when reading.

Cleaning it up with ADR....

Audio Dialogue Replacement is a dubbing process that is used to replace poorly recorded dialogue in film or replace profanity and other references prohibited in re-broadcasts.

Original character line from the movie:




"You dirty mother
f@#%\$!"!

Re-recorded and replaced in the studio



Sucker!

Edited and re-married in back into the original audio track so the new audience hears:



"You dirty mother
Sucker!"

A bit of voice matching is done with this as well because some ADR is replacing the voice of a popular actor.

Examples of long form VO Genres...

These projects tend to have longer deadlines because far more material is involved.

E-learning training manuals, audiobooks, film and TV narration scripts in the like require patience, longevity, consistency, and a sheer love of reading! Storytelling skills are an absolute must hear. One must be able to understand all of the characters and their rules in the world of the story. Be knowledgeable of the story's background or how a particular industry works. Do whatever research needs to be done to make yourself sound as authentic as possible. Do the homework!!

If you belong to the book club...

Audiobooks have become an industry unto themselves in VOiceover. Long-windedness and a great imagination are absolute requirements here. Because of the amount of material, the talent is best focused on the long game and consistent breath.

100 Years Of Solitude By Gabriel Garcia Marquez (Audiobook excerpt)

Many years later, as he faced the firing squad, Colonel Aureliano Buendia was to remember that distant afternoon when his father took him to discover ice. At that time, Macondo was a village of twenty adobe houses, built on the bank of a river of clear water that ran along a bed of polished stones, which were white and enormous, like prehistoric eggs. The world was so recent that many things lacked names, and in order to indicate them it was necessary to point. Every year during the month of March a family of ragged gypsies would set up their tents near the village, and with a great uproar of pipes and kettledrums they would display new inventions.

In audiobook narration choosing the proper tone is key, because it will have to last for hundreds of pages. The voice must remain consistent as well; which is the challenge for longform materials.

Just tell the story... but vividly

The skill of narration comes in the talent being able to tell the story effectively.

20,000 LEAGUES UNDER THE SEA, by Jules Verne (*Audiobook excerpt*)

The Nautilus was floating in the midst of a phosphorescent layer which, in the semidarkness, seemed extraordinarily bright. This effect was produced by myriads of tiny, luminous animals, whose glitter increased as they touched the submarine's metal hull. I also saw flashes of light in the midst of these waters, looking like streams of melted lead in a blazing furnace, or metal brought to a red-white heat; they were such that by contrast some of the other luminous areas were like shadows in the fiery waters, from which all shadows should have disappeared. No, this was no longer the calm gleam of normal light! It was full of an extraordinary intensity and movement! This light felt as if it were alive!

When it comes to narration, there is no excuse for not being able to create the imaginary world, and using the 5W's effectively because you are already given the imaginative landscape by the very story itself. When practicing this read you should very easily be able to see the waters, tide, plankton and other bio luminescent creatures. Even the tone of delivery is being suggested by the very nature of the text itself. Once the talent can add their face power to the read, that's when the quality comes in.

Learn how to earn...

The authoritative tone rules the day in E-learning. The talent must be confident in their reading and understanding of the material that they are helping the listener comprehend. Research on the subject is definitely recommended.

Abiogenic Theory (*E-learning manual*)

The abiogenic theory holds that hydrocarbons were a component of the material that formed the earth, through accretion of solids, some 4.5 billion years ago. With increasing internal heat, liquids and gases were liberated, and because they were less dense than the rocks, buoyancy forces drove them upward. In favorable conditions, the upward journey from the regions of origin would be dammed temporarily in porous rocks at depths that our drills can reach, and from which we then derive commercial petroleum.

The authoritative tone for this read requires one to know something about basic physical science which is achieved by some brief scanning online. What is a hydrocarbon? What does the term abiogenic mean? What is petroleum? What are the basics of the oil extraction process?

The talent need not be a geological expert, scientist or experienced in oil fracking but projects like these will definitely take a little bit of external research to get familiar with the subject.

Somebody get a doctor!

Big Med and Big Pharma book hundreds of VOiceover talent annually for their training manuals and sales materials for all of the latest medications. The use of lengthy, polysyllabic, scientific words is quite common throughout these materials.

Abiogenic Theory (*Medical abstract*)

As we zoom into a Dupuytren's cord, we see that each collagen fiber is made up of multiple collagen fibrils,⁸ and microfibrils, and each microfibril is made of several triple-helix collagen monomers.^{8,9} The native triple-helical conformation and increased covalent cross-linking contribute to the considerable tensile strength of a Dupuytren's cord.^{2,10,11} Increased synthesis of types I and III collagen and/or inhibition of endogenous human collagenase activity results in increased collagen deposits and thickening of the Dupuytren's cord, which can progress to contracture.^{2,12,13}

The vocabulary in medical and pharma materials can be so challenging that there are actually specialty voiceover artists who focuses mostly on coaching talent in mastering reading this type of material. For talent with greater than average patientince, you can succeed in this particular arena. Those who get easily frustrated with themselves over regular flubbing will definitely have to approach this type of work with an entirely different mentality. There will be plenty of flubs!

Keep them coming back...

Corporate industrial work is popular because of the great rates and consistency with clients. Corporate clients tend to develop relationships with their VO talent over longer periods of time as opposed to commercials that are constantly looking for fresh voices.

Advantech (*Corporate industrial video copy*)

“Advantech’s five business units are involved with every aspect of daily life to help realize your dreams. Inspired by the vision of a ubiquitous and connected world, each product is designed with this clear concept in mind. Advantech brings new technologies and groundbreaking applications to many fields, like medical care, digital home, transportation, factory automation, and video surveillance.”

Have you researched your clients company history first before even recording the project? Understand their industry, service platform, product history and their general philosophy. With corporate narration work, several attitudes can apply. That will be determined by the conversation that you have with the client as they expound the direction in which they want to go with voicing the material. Friendly and authoritative tone’s rule the day here. Master them both in servicing corporate clients.

Session #3 Review

There are plenty of opportunities but VOiceover work is not a money grab.

1. Make sure that your personality and voice type are best suited for a particular genre of interest via professional feedback.
2. Talent looking to represent themselves across multiple genres will need to invest in a demo for each of those genres. Some boys actors have up to six or seven demos.
3. Make sure that you are trained and coached properly before you invest in making a demo for a certain genre. Have you taken any specific training in that area? Have you gotten any professional feedback?
4. Each genre is an animal unto itself. It is most advisable to explore the nature of the work that is required for the success and how the success track works for each genre.
5. Although genres of VOiceover delivery may differ in their writing styles, they all offer several universal clues to help the artist deliver the copy effectively.
6. To start off strong on a particular genre path, intense research is required without question. No two genres is this more true for than in medical and pharmaceutical. Separate practice aside from reading the copy on polysyllabic words is key: chemicals, compounds, diseases, body parts, and other medical conditions must flow with the level of ease as if the VO Talent were a physician or chemist themselves.
7. Keep a consistent eye out for any of the finished products that represent a particular genre of interest. Study the finished product closely as you will be expected to produce it someday.

Session #4: Home studio design and budgeting

Your new home office...

Find a recording space at home. This space will be your official workspace and central hub of your business. Like any office, a quiet space denotes a professional space.

Considerations in picking a potential and improving an existing recording space:

- A basic non-professional space should be as noise-free as possible and away from appliances, washers/dryers, family rooms, garages etc. That basically leaves a closet which is a great space especially if you have a master closet. The carpet and clothing make the acoustic difference that dampen any echoes which make for poor recording. This serves the same purpose of acoustic foam or can at least help you buy less foam.
- All domestic circumstances being different; each talent must determine a plan that will work for their home space. If one can avoid all of the aforementioned factors in their home, then they're very lucky. Many factors will have to be worked around but they cannot threaten a deadline.
- Some unavoidable noise factors can be dealt with through scheduling. Don't plan projects or schedule a session at the same time that the landscaping crew is coming.
- Moving? Consider places away from airports, public parks, outdoor sports/music venues, malls, major train depots and highways. Semi rural and older subdivisions offer more space between homes and are in generally quieter areas.

Your sound chain elements...

Purchasing audio and electronic gear is an important investment in your VO business and the products that you purchase should be researched prior to purchase.



Your laptop should be up-to-date and have a stable operating system. If you have a desktop, please make sure that the operating system for it is definitely up-to-date because any overheating will cause the fan to run. That is an advantage of having a newer solid state hard drive in a laptop which now removes that risk. Old tech will fail you when you need it most!



Microphones come in a wide range of prices and there are several factors to be considered before making a purchase or even determining if the mic is right for you. Obviously your personal budget will dictate that but if you have no recording experience, you do not want to spend a few hundred dollars on an expensive microphone. Only advanced level students and professionals should spend money on the microphones that range from the high three digits to four digits. For the green VOiceover novice, a \$80-100 microphone price range is appropriate.



Your interface device will connect your microphone to your computer and convert your analog voice signal into a digital one. As you start to get more advanced in production, you may want to consider adding a preamp or small eight channel mixer to your sound chain as well.

Choosing the right mic...

Learn the basic types of microphones and how they function and differ:

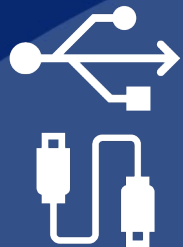
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Yyjh_x3_dI&t=320s

NO



Dynamic

Dynamic stage mics are designed for live performance as opposed to studio recording. They are not suited for someone who is recording for quality of voice. Don't do it.



USB

Well, kinda "No". USB mics can work but are generally not recommended because they do not generate an analog signal originally which is more power and voice quality before digital conversion.



Condenser

Large diaphragm condenser microphones are the way to go for solo or group voice recording in studio environments. They pick up the full frequency of the voice.



Shotgun

Originally used for recording TV and film scenes, shotgun mics became popular in VO for picking up some of the smallest nuances of the voice with less effort and exertion. Shotguns digitally process the full range also.

YES

Determining your gear budget

Everything listed here are the basic essentials for start up in home voiceover production. An actual booth is not required but a good space in your home is.



LAPTOP

(tablet not recommended)



MICROPHONE



**MICROPHONE
INTERFACE**



**MICROPHONE
STAND**



HEADPHONES



POP FILTER



**AUDIO RECORDING
SOFTWARE**



**HOME RECORDING
BOOTH**











**Of course prices vary. Consider buying on the low end first if you are completely new and own no gear. If you go forward and start making a VO income, then you can get higher end equipment as it will start to pay for itself.*

All bundled up...

For those making their first gear investment; bundles are product deal packs that have all the elements of a VO starter kit for a reasonable price. Deals will vary from brand to brand.

The cost value in a bundle comes with all the elements included, if purchased separately, will add up more in the total spend in comparison. These deals are normally seen on the lower end of the price scale because of their lower price points per item. Some deals may include stands or booms.

High end mics and other pro-level gear can't be priced at that range. However, there may be a higher end bundle deal for a mid level VO who's looking to make a full spectrum upgrade. There's nothing wrong with hand picking these elements separately if the consumer has specifics in mind and knows how they want to build their sound chain. Below are random median prices for comparison purposes:

+		 \$100	Decent quality beginner mic		 \$20	XLR cable 10'
		 \$80	Input device or...		 \$50	Headphones
		 \$100	Input box/preamp	<div style="border: 1px solid orange; padding: 5px; display: inline-block;"> Separate items Total: \$270 </div>		
			<div style="border: 1px solid orange; padding: 5px; display: inline-block;"> Online deals with comparable 4-piece quality lower shelf bundle total: \$150-\$200 </div>			

The influence of COVID-19

These factors apply now more than ever and the investment in such will be tantamount.



It will become your professional responsibility to keep your machine up-to-date! Repair services will not be what they used to be. Do not put the client's work at risk by not being able to produce quality work in a timely fashion because your laptop is too old to handle the work and has not been updated well. Make sure that your operating system is stable enough to handle your audio recording program. If you cannot maintain these standards, you should not be doing business as of yet.



Always have your work backed up. There are a variety of file sharing account services and if you cannot afford enough space to back up your entire computer at least just back up your VOiceover files. This may also become a preferred method of sharing with a client if the files that you were rendering wind up to be too large to send via email.



Phone patch and talkback capability used to be a bonus; in the COVID-19 era it is becoming a requirement in some circles. This will be a regular expense that you will need to incur in order to be a competitive VOiceover artist because the clients want to talk directly to you while you're recording the session so they can direct you. Skype and cell phones are becoming less popular options although they have proven effective in the past.

Session #4 Review

Setting up shop: are you truly ready to do business?

Considerations in picking and improving an existing recording space:

- 1. In order to produce a quality audio product for a client, you must have all of the basic sound chain elements in place. Doing business without being able to produce quality recordings will end your VOiceover career before it begins.**
- 2. Prepare a realistic start up budget on the opposite end of all of the latest and greatest. If your finances are not ready, then do not proceed until you can secure those finances. Upon your first investment, you will automatically have the burden of recovering it. It is a hobby until your first booking pays for your investment.**
- 3. Study basic sound acoustics and sound booth designs to get some ideas as to how you will “treat” your recording space. How will you reduce echo in the space?**
- 4. Maintenance and care of your equipment is important including updating your computer. As stated before, faulty tech will fail you when you need it most.**

Session #5: Developing and launching your VO brand

Basic Marketing Elements

All elements should reflect a consistent well thought out branding theme.

Branding yourself is truly whatever you put into it. As stated before, please keep in mind that your branding builds your business image. It can reflect negatively thus doing more harm than help if your “look” comes off as cheap. This goes for anything; website, demo quality, whatever.

You don't have to have all of your marketing elements ready for launch at once. You may not be able to financially; therefore, some prioritization has to come into play. Please spend wisely and know the importance of where it falls on the priority. For those who have not built a website, that is the main priority above all.

SLOGAN/MOTTO



LOGO



BRAND
COLORS



SM
ACCOUNTS



WEBSITE



BUSINESS
E-CARD



Assembling your brand

Never jump at the first good idea that comes to mind. All branding starts with many ideas.

WEBSITE-This is the single most important element in your marketing platform. If you do not have a VOiceover-themed website, then you should thematically convert the site that you have or make an entirely new one devoted solely to your VOiceover business.

SLOGAN/MOTTO-Don't make it too deep, too catchy or too witty. Let the statement reflect you and your ability to deliver quality VOiceover in as few words as possible yet they must deliver maximum impact. Create several options and choose or blend them.

LOGO- Start where your heart is and what you feel represents you best. Something from your lifestyle or a popular symbol that denotes audio production and VOiceover. Animals, crests, and icons are definite staple images. Use of religious or political images is not advised. Your logo should university attract everyone.

Assembling your brand

Bounce your branding ideas off of friends and family for feedback or see a marketing consultant.

SM ACCOUNTS-No one has an excuse for not maintaining social media accounts. It is the most effective form of free marketing in the history of business and commerce. Be consistent and non-political in your postings and be all about you and your voiceover work.

BRAND COLORS-All colors represent a meaning. A simple color chart will give you the definition of all humans that will give you an idea of what colors represent your personality and work ethic best. One can all Saul simply choose colors that they easily identify with light colors of a favorite sports team or social organization.

BUSINESS CARDS- They used to mean so much back in a day but with environmental concern for tree populations and the onset of the COVID-19 circumstance, a digitally transferable electronic info card is now the way to go. An easily homemade version of this is designing your own graphic and keeping it in your phone to send to new contacts.

Session #5 Review

Think of your marketing package as a block of clay ready to be molded. Sculpt carefully!

- 1. Review a professional marketing plan before developing your own. There are tons of samples online. Many VOiceover resource websites each have one of their own for a free download.**
- 2. Consider your marketing elements like tools on Batman's utility belt. These tools are used to make you stand out and pull business from your competition.**
- 3. Branding is an outward reflection of inner attitude and work ethic. Make sure that what you're showing the world is a picture of someone that is attractive to work with and professional about the work.**
- 4. If you are unsure of your branding package, consult an expert or people that you know that work in marketing and promotions and have them evaluate it.**
- 5. Prioritize your marketing budget wisely. The most important and non-negotiable element by hook or by crook is your demo. It will be Ground Zero.**

Session #6: Personal Website Development

Website Development

With the current platforms, it's all in your hands

1. Choose your domain name wisely. If you already have a current website and want to start a separate one for VOiceover, make sure that your VO website domain carries that distinction. (www.johndoe.com then www.jdvoiceover.com)
2. Look up as many professional voiceover artist websites as possible to gather ideas and understand industry standards. Notice how almost all of them have their demo and a means of contact as soon as one lands on their homepage.
3. If you have budget enough to hire a designer, make sure that you have a side conversation with them about the world of VOiceover so their ideas can have more potential of theme.
4. The organization and functionality of it can also reflect the way a potential client will perceive doing business with you. Use friendly colors and stay away from affiliations of any kind; be it political, sports, religious etc.

When they log on...

Make sure the following elements are on display for all eyes immediately without clicking anything else after they have landed on your page.

YOUR DEMO

This is the crowning jewel and the very point of even having a website. It should be very easy to find and click on.



CONTACT INFO

Assume that visitors are logging on to inquire about possibly booking you. Have at least 1 of the 3 means available at first sight.

Session #6 Review

Don't leave home without it...

1. For those with a limited budget, building a website by yourself is not as scary an option as it seems. With open ended user platforms that are now available, it is more like putting together a social media page.
2. If you have a little design creativity, there are several do-it-yourself website platforms that are as user friendly as a social media account setup. If you have a budget; a pre-fabricated website is a great option. There are also companies who specialize in Voiceover-themed websites with VO-related icons and backgrounds.
3. Make sure that your branding package is ready to go so that you or whoever is designing your site has a full understanding of how to present yourself. It is not a bad idea to share any of your designs with a colleague or professional in that area for an evaluation.
4. **THERE IS NO POINT TO A WEBSITE WITHOUT A PROFESSIONAL GRADE DEMO TO PLACE ON IT.**

Session #7: Where to find VO work

Finding VO Work

You are an independent sales and marketing team outside of your agent

1. It is very important to get out of the mentality early on that your only source of VOiceover work will be through your agents. Your voice is a product and you must sell it like one would sell vacuum cleaners or encyclopedias: marketing!
2. It will be your personal business responsibility to establish and maintain social media accounts that are reflecting and promoting your work as a VOiceover talent. You don't necessarily have to take selfie's at the mic daily but just post things that are related to VOiceover that give you visibility to potential clients and the VO community.
1. Part of investing in your career will be in paying for memberships to particular sites that will give you access to work in VOiceover. Pay-to-play sites are sites that you can sign up to promote yourself on as a VOiceover artist and audition for projects that clients are posting from the other end. These sites vary in service so definitely check them out beyond first look. What are other users saying about them? How is the UX?

Is your demo ready for the workspace?

Getting listed on websites is key. But are you prepared to be listed?

Communicating with anyone about doing VOiceover work without a professional demo is unadvised unless they have inquired with you first and are fine that you do not have a demo. That will be very rare. Getting a demo produced is tantamount to getting a VO business off the ground.

It is critical to understand the difference between a few clips that are edited together and an actual demo that has been planned out with copy that accentuates your style, hiring someone to be there to direct you through and a professional engineer who will mix your voice properly with the music beneath.

Some pay to play websites will not even allow users to purchase a membership without first having proven that they've had a demo produced and the sites will then review it. They have to maintain their brand integrity with a certain level of quality VOiceover talent to present to their potential clients in cyberspace.

Your demo will be your main business card. The quality of production that goes into it will reflect the quality of work in terms of how you handle your business for clients and they may interpret that as such.

More about the specifics of pay-to-play...

Cyberspace has created an opportunity for clients of all types to have direct access to VOiceover actors bypassing the union and agencies....somewhat but not really.

Pay-to-play websites operate on fees from two different streams of revenue. Clients who are seeking voice over talents pay a fee to be able to audition and book these talents. VOiceover talent to join the same website and pay a membership fee in order to have access to auditions and have their demo be heard by perspective clients. Bookings are guaranteed by no means in any form or fashion by the website. The website is just acting as a conduit for talent and client.

Several of these sites dominate this business and are set up on different models in terms of managing talent and client deals. It is up to the talent to determine what situation works best for them. Some of the sites even operate on filters that directly correlate with aspects of your profile.

This can be very convenient in terms of filtering auditions that are meant for your demographic but also limiting. If it becomes an algorithm that the website starts to firmly operate off of, it can cut versatile artists out of other opportunities that they may have been able to book. As with any investment in your voice over career, do the research and seek multiple opinions:

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2uvTATaylQM&list=PLNHV_4wtp0GjpKQtonoNz7144uAlciByK&index=21&t=0s

Getting listed in the workspace

Building an online presence through the various types of portals will be a job in and of itself.

There seems to be an endless abundance of places to be listed online as a VOiceover talent. Companies like production houses keep a pool of VOiceover talent for their clients even though they mainly provide audio engineering services. Local communications agencies that handle advertising and other media also wind up needing to cast voice talent as well. One has to think beyond the traditional outlets when it comes to finding opportunities to get attention to your demo.

Casting calls

Talent agencies

Local for-hire service listings

Pay-to-play VO websites

Local media businesses

Public information offices

Event production companies

Radio/TV stations

Audio Dialogue Replacement (ADR) houses

Political VO websites

Animation companies

Film and TV production companies

Advertising agencies

Audio production houses

Session #7 Review

The work won't do itself

1. Along with the popular social media accounts, you should definitely have a profile listed on various utility sites. Any type of free small business listing website that will allow you to make a profile and possibly provide a link to your demo is an advantage you do not want to pass up.
2. Pay to play website memberships are not the golden key to VOiceover success but they are a viable option. They work well for some and others don't like the way they work or the type of client that uses them. Some even question their validity as there have been some questionable sites. Seek additional outside feedback before investing in a membership.
3. Never ever forget about the small businesses right in your market. They may not have a budget to advertise on TV or radio but approach them about writing and recording a voice over for them and combine it with video clips or pictures of their business. They can post that video on any of their social media accounts.

Session #8: Understanding rates, negotiation, agencies and the union

Getting paid from the workspace

One must study market trends and rates from various resources to understand how to get compensated for the work and what a fair ask range is commiserate with the project.

1. VOiceover rate sheets are available everywhere online. You will need to study them to develop their own. While rates may vary from resource to resource, it is up to the talent to ultimately gauge the fair rates that match a lot of the work that's going on in their market. Los Angeles, New York, and Chicago command a higher rate than markets like Dallas or Atlanta.
2. You will also be able to negotiate for a higher rates in work as your experience and client profile expands.
3. National scale projects are not negotiable. If there was any negotiating done, it was done with your agent once they accepted the job. It is simply a question of auditioning or not auditioning if the rate is not desirable.
4. The majority of your negotiation will be with mid-level and local clients who seek you out to do business for smaller non-broadcast projects.
5. Some clients will ask you your rate while others will offer you a fixed number they already have in mind.

Developing rate negotiation

There's no one system in which to determine rates. Rates are often based on market value, feedback from other voiceover artists, or simply take-it-or-leave-it offers from various clients.

Some business principles are simply universal. Negotiating an offer is a delicate dance based on the belief that you have in your talent and what you think your client can compensate you with. Study basic business negotiation guidelines for additional help.

Know that when a client that is negotiating with you, they will almost always attempt to lowball you. The counter measure for this practice is carefully fluffing your original number so that they will negotiate down to your bare minimum acceptance. Be wise not to over inflate your original number and completely scare off the potential client altogether.

If you possess any additional skills like copywriting, pro-level editing, or demo production, offer those services to the client as well if you see a need. Some voiceover talent may have additional skills that can build an al-a-cart menu for potential clients.

Union versus non-union

The union will not get work for the VOiceover artist but regulate rate negotiations in the industry for talent nationwide. The union scale system is what clients agree to comply with once they book an artist through an agent. The union provides a similar framework to that of a corporate benefits/pension system as paid for by union membership dues.

Advantages

Higher pay rates

Pension, 401(k) and other financial plans available

Medical/dental benefits

Negotiation authority for fair rates

Insurance of payment

Various SAG-AFTRA membership privileges

Disadvantages

Fewer casting opportunities in general

Far fewer opportunities in right- to-work states

B2B prohibited

Recurring dues

Upfront membership fees

Required strike compliance

Get the facts of the source...

Clayton State University, its faculty, staff, board, nor affiliated contractors remain neutral regarding union memberships. Union membership is a decision that is to be made by each individual on their own personal volition. Any advice given in the matter should not be taken as an endorsement nor admonishment of SAG-AFTRA.

Find out from union members if the time is right for you to join, if at all. The biggest determining factor will be the work situation and the union status of the state in which you reside. If considering a union membership, the most important thing to do is contact the local SAG-AFTRA office. SAG-AFTRA has locals (or offices) all across the country and if they do not have a physical office in the market which you reside, you can contact the nearest regional office for instructions.

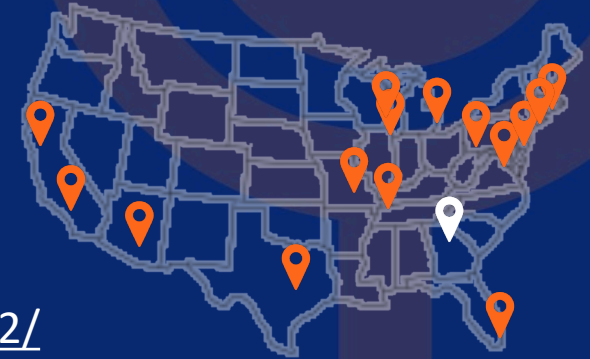
www.sagaftra.org

SAG-AFTRA Atlanta

3565 Piedmont Rd NE Bldg. 2, #720, Atlanta, GA 30305
(404) 239 0131

Interesting article for non-members:

<https://www.backstage.com/magazine/article/non-members-need-know-sag-aftra-58712/>



Finding an agency

There are very few professional VOiceover agents that will offer you representation without the demo. If they do, you will most likely be expected to produce one soon after being signed on.

1. When looking for a prospective agency to submit your demo to, the first thing one should consider is the agency's client list. Have they represented major brands? Does Agency X have a good variety of talent? How old is the agency? Are they reputable in the market? How long have they been representing Voiceover artists (*some agencies start out doing TV and film then add a VOiceover department years later*)? How will they know the inner workings of the Voiceover industry?
2. Understand how the agent operates and get an idea of their philosophy as to how they deal with talent. Look up commentary and ratings about the agency. What are other talent saying about them?
3. Be patient with agencies because they receive multiple demon submissions daily. Following up with an additional email at a later time is a good idea but multiple, consistent, frequent phone calls will definitely set the stage for irritating the staff members at the agency. Keep in mind that most major cities have quite a few agencies to choose from. Demo rejection is based on any number of reasons some of which may have nothing to do with the way the talent sounds.

Session #8 Review

Read up as much as you can from all of the different Voiceover resources online one out and get in the game, and dominate it.

1. The union status of your state, whether it is right-to-work or not, will determine whether joining the union will be the best option for you. Seek numerous opinions. It is often agreed in the professional community that a union card in a right-to-work state will lock a talent out of even more opportunities and often not recommended.
2. Once your demo is completed, start locating all of the local talent agencies in your city that represent VOiceover artists. If there aren't any, look to the nearest major market. When logging onto their websites, be sure to their follow specific demo submission guidelines as they vary from agency to agency.
3. It is perfectly legal to have multiple agents. Many VOiceover artists are represented by multiple agencies nationwide. Commonly, most agencies ask that you honor exclusivity in the specific market where the agency is based. There are rare scenarios where two agencies will mutually agree to share an artist in the same market.



Let them hear your face!