

HOW TO MAKE A VOICE OVER DEMO



A Web Service for Searching, Auditioning and Hiring Language Service Providers

I. Introduction

What is a Voice-Over?

A true voice-over is realized when a voice talent methodically interprets a script and translates that read into a unique vocal performance. Professional voice-over recordings give life to characters, tell stories, guide tours, or can also direct your telephone calls.

Who is a Voice Talent?

A voice talent is a voice-over professional who interprets a script to meet a specific commercial, leisure, or educational goal. Voice talents provide the voices that you hear during a commercial on television, imaging on the radio, narrators for film, voices for movie trailers, telephone systems, educational resources, and a wide assortment of web and kiosk applications.

Another name for a voice talent is a voice actor. A voice actor (or voice artist) is a person who provides voices for computer and video games, puppet shows, amusement rides, audio dramas, dubbed foreign language films, and animation works (including cartoons, animated feature films, animated shorts), and radio and television commercials.

Usually, professional voice talents are enthusiastic, funny, charming, are flexible, and interact well with other people. They have the ability to take direction or criticism from others and can interpret copy to sell a product, concept, or a message. Some common voice-over talent backgrounds include experience in radio or television broadcast, stage performers from the theater, vocal musicians, and stand-up comedians.

Voice Over Marketplace

A voice over marketplace is a site that facilitates interaction and transactions between buyers and sellers of voice-over services, also known as clients and voice-over professionals. Marketplaces offer a wide range of voice-over talent for clients to choose from, often allowing them to post their voice-over projects for talent to audition for. Clients are drawn to



marketplaces because they can gather a significant amount of data in a short time while accessing a generous database catered to meet their voice-over needs. Some of these sites provide service and support to both clients and voice talent while others specialize in supporting one or the other. These sites are required by law to accept either membership fees or take commissions, not both. A true marketplace functions as a portal, not as your agent. Always research companies to make sure that they are a reputable, transparent organization with clear, focused goals and open business practices. Explore the site and the opportunities available to you to make an informed decision. Look for legitimate testimonials from both buyers and sellers.

2. Getting Started

Building a Home Recording Studio

To run an efficient online voice over business, you need to have the tools of the trade. Here is a shortlist of the essentials that you will need to operate your voice over business online.

- Essential Home-based Business Technology
- High-speed Internet connection
- Personal computer, printer
- Business software MS Word, Excel
- Accounting software Quicken, QuickBooks, MS Money
- Telephone w/ voicemail
- Fax

Building a home studio is preferred. This way, you can work from home and record at your convenience. You can set your own hours and also have the flexibility to record custom auditions for clients. Although purchasing a home studio is a considerable financial investment, it is better in the long-term and will save you time, resources, and money, particularly when you have to record revisions for a client.

Recording Studio Equipment

A home recording studio is also called a DAW or digital audio workstation. Your workstation includes all the technology required to plan a recording session, record the voice over and deliver your finished product to the client.

Essential Components of Your Home Recording Studio

- Software: Adobe Audition, ProTools, Apple's Garage Band, Cubase,
- Digital Interface or Mixing board: Mbox or Mackie 1402
- Microphone Neumann, AKG, Shure
- Speakers or headphones

You will want to be comfortable with both the ease of use and the level of investment in your home recording studio.

Build a Relationship With a Local Recording Studio

If you don't have the means of investing of your own recording equipment at this time it is best to develop a business relationship with a local recording studio. You can find recording studios by looking them up in your phone book or yellow pages.

Call at least three studios and be sure to ask all the questions you need to in order to feel confident with your new partners. As a voice talent who does not have a home studio, be sure to ask these questions:

- What is your studio hourly rate?
- What kind of vocal microphone do you have?
- Do you have a royalty-free music library?
- Do you have a sound effects library?
- Do you have script to make a voice over demo?
- Can you deliver finished work for me?
- Do you have an ISDN connection?



- How do you require payment?
- Do you accept cash and credit card?
- How much notice do you need to book my session?
- Do you have any studio rules?
- Are you open on evenings and weekends?
- What is your cancellation policy?

Attending Your First Session

Before you book for your first session be sure to rehearse your scripts in advance. Being prepared will save you time in the studio and affirm your professionalism.

When you arrive at the studio for the first time, be sure to properly introduce yourself. Building a good business relationship starts as soon as you make your first contact. Building a relationship with a local studio is a must if you don't have your own home studio. Ask for a 10% discount on all studio sessions, agreeing that you will work exclusively with them for the next year. Be prepared to put something in writing if you opt for this exclusive arrangement.

3. Your Voice Over Demo

Your Demo Showcases Your Best Work

The first tool that you'll need is a marketable voice-over demo. Your demo will present your voice to clients. They can listen to it and evaluate your services first-hand. Creating a variety of voice-over demos rounds out your portfolio showcasing the styles of voice-over that you can perform.

Ideal Duration of a Voice-Over Demo

The voice-over demo can range between 45 seconds to 2 minutes and 30 seconds. For distribution on the Internet, it is best to keep your demo to 1 MB in size or approximately 1 minute in duration. A 1MB file delivers optimum download speeds while maintaining the highest quality of digital audio.

Voice-Over Demo Categories

- Television Commercials
- Television Imaging and Station Identification
- Radio Announcers
- Radio Commercials
- Radio Imaging and Station Identification
- Business Demonstrations
- Business Presentations and Corporate Videos
- Voicemail, On-Hold Messaging, IVR (Interactive Voice Response)
- Entertainment and Celebrity Impersonations
- Character Voices and Cartoon Voice Actors
- Video Game Voices, Computer Game Voices



- Audio Books, Books on Tape
- Educational Videos, CD-rom, e-Learning
- Government
- Medical
- Foreign Language Voice Overs
- Translation Services
- Music
- Jingles
- Music Composition, Music Production

Soft Sell

- Approach: Suggestive and persuasive without asking for the business directly.
- Music: Pleasant, ambient, ethereal.
- Genres: Adult Contemporary, Jazz, Blues, Classical.
- Instrumentation: String instruments, piano, violin, soft vocals, acoustic guitar.
- Sound Effects: Ambient, gentle, blended.
- Words You Might Hear: Smooth, Relax, Learn, For You, You're worth it...
- Why: Boost self esteem and awareness of product.
- Market: Women, teenage girls, single women, married women, mothers, grandmothers.
- Anticipated Reaction: Trustworthy authority creating a positive first impression.
- Samples: Dove Commercials, Pampers, Danone yogurt commercials, and so on.

Medium Sell

- Approach: Asking for the business, but not in abrupt way.

- Music: Lively, entertaining, memorable...
- Genres: Pop, Broadway show tunes, classical
- Instrumentation: Synthesizers, percussive instruments, brass, voices.
- Words You Might Hear: Exciting, discover, new, adventure, family, fascinating...
- Why: Get you to try something new, create awareness, renew interest, promising a better life, presenting options...
- Market: Families, Mothers, fathers, children, couples, grandparents and so on.
- Anticipated Reaction: Desire to try the product or service or to establish brand loyalty.
- Examples: Restaurants promoting a special or new item or hotels inviting you to book your vacation with them.
- Family & Kids ~ Trip to Disney World

Hard Sell

- Approach: Demanding the business, sense of urgency to close the deal, up tempo, vigorous...
- Music: Rock, Rap, Hip Hop, R&B, Electronic, Techno.
- Instrumentation: Guitars, drums, synthesizers, electronic music and more.
- Sound Effects: Hard hitting, punchy, loud...
- Words You Might Hear: Buy now, Save, Don't pay until... Everything must go, Limited time offer, Sale ending... Come on down, Money back guarantee!
- Why: Get immediate results, generate sales quickly, promising a better life, presenting options that must sell.
- Market: Men, boys, teenagers, young adults and so on.
- Hard sells are frequently employed in television infomercials, pitches by Big Box Stores, in Beer Commercials, for or at Sporting Events, and marketing for Car / Automotive Dealerships.

Voice-Over Demo File Formats

The universal standard audio file for delivery on the Internet is called MPEG-3 or more commonly known as MP3. You should make your voice-over demo available in MP3 format for easy distribution to clients via email or for convenient download on your webpage. The MP3 file should be encoded at the bit rate of between 128kbps (standard) to 160kbps (medium) to 320kbps (highest) for optimum quality yet maintaining a relatively small file size for delivery over the Internet.

MP3 File Equation

When trying to estimate how large a file your voice-over demo will be in MP3 format, consider this equation.

- 1 minute of stereo digital audio, encoded at 128kbps = 1 MB MP3 file

4. Performing an Online Audition

Tips for Submitting Demos in Online Auditions

- Submit custom demos or a generic demo if applicable.
- Mention your name at the beginning and end of your demo, perhaps even your phone number as well.
- Give a few different reads for the client to consider in your demo.
- Let's say you are recording one or two prompts of a presentation. You can give them a sampling of three different stylistic approaches or vocal tonality - perhaps even different voice ages, displaying your versatility and vocal prowess.

Custom Demos

A custom demo or custom audition is a sample recording of the script provided by the client. Sometimes clients submit their entire script or perhaps just a portion of their script. The question of when to submit a custom audition for the client is a good one. You can find the answer by reviewing the script provided. If the script is three or more paragraphs, consider recording a few sentences or a whole paragraph for the client. If the script is brief or generic, it is better to submit a pre-recorded demo that has content similar to their requirements. Recording material from a client's script as an audition constitutes as a "Custom Demo".

You can often avoid submitting a custom audition if you already have a voice-over demo that is similar in nature.

Tip: For short scripts, submit a general demo that is similar in content to the project in question. If you decide to record a custom demo, it is wise to incorporate watermarks, script alterations, or sound logos to protect your work.



5. About The Author

About Voices.com

Voices.com is the leading online marketplace connecting buyers and sellers of voice-over services. Radio and television stations, advertising agencies and corporate communications executives rely upon Voices.com's marketplace to search, audition and hire professional voice over talent with the assistance of a web-based project management application. Voice talents are equipped with a comprehensive set of self-managed tools to effectively market themselves and conduct business online.

About the Author

David Ciccarelli, Chief Executive Officer. As the co-founder of Voices.com, David offers management and marketing experience as well as a clear vision for the future. Most recently, David presented Voices as a New Voices winner at DigiFest, an award recognizing Voices as an industry leader who provides digital media products and innovations that contribute to Canada's economic and cultural future. In 2000, David graduated from the Ontario Institute of Audio Recording Technology with an Honor's Degree in Audio Technology.

Questions?

Contact us at support@voices.com or call toll-free at 1-888-359-3472 for more help.