

sound advice

the most complete voice-over demo service

February 2005

"If I've gotten anything right here—it's probably a mistake."--John Grisham

"As actors—we live for 'happy accidents'!"--Kevin Kline

"Surprise yourself—take after take, within the parameters of what's being asked of you."

--Kate McClanaghan

How Many Agents Are TOO Many?

Routinely, we get calls from (often frustrated) talent who when asked, "How many agents are you with--locally?" reply: "All of them."

Well, that's not a proper answer. All that tells me is that *no one* knows them personally or professionally. And that's counter-productive. No wonder they're frustrated.

Ideally, you want to be 'multi-listed' (especially in Chicago) with about two to three decent Union-franchised agents. It's important to note: even if you are non-union, you can audition and land Union work. However, once you are Union you can ONLY audition for Union jobs. Having a Union agent allows you access to Union auditions for on-camera, Industrial as well as for voiceover. Additionally, if you live in Chicago and you're non-union, you want to be registered with at least one of the three Milwaukee talent agents. They are wonderful agents up there and they have access to a market the Chicago agents might not.

Then, for voiceover, I HIGHLY recommend you do your level best to secure three to five agents outside your *local* market, for example: Voice123, Earworks (Virginia Beach, VA), Impact (Columbus, OH), Studio City (Las Vegas & New York) and even agents, dare I say it, in Canada! (Maybe it's about time we woo some of the work away from them for a change!) You can find all of these agents, *and a great deal more*, along with their contact info on voicebank.net.

You want to *continue* to pursue representation until you are receiving at least 5-10 auditions a week from at least *two* (talent agent) sources and at least one third of those auditions are national spots.

That's what will ultimately get you to moving into the next stage of your career.

Until then, keep promoting to the agents.

In the meantime, it's perfectly appropriate to promote your demo to producers and copywriters. Unlike how things used to be, you no longer have to wait for representation before promoting yourself. (Another good reason to be sure your skills are continually sharpened!) Never wait to promote.

Erik's E-Mail

Hey Kate: I don't know what's coming day-to-day in my blossoming, alternate-universe life (of voiceover), which really makes everything so much more enjoyable.

It seems all of my targets, the ones you and I went over from your list and Voicebank are responding (all) about the same time.

(Directly) after I sent in my Demo mp3's for submission, (one) agency (based in two states, responded), and this is a good story about you all... two (of the) women who worked there cc'd me on their internal email saying how awesome the demo was and that "it was so good...and that's the way it should be done"... they wanted to have it for their staff or new talent meeting, of course to demonstrate how a top notch demo should be PRODUCED!!! I've always meant to tell you that. It was obviously the Production that blew these folks away. So, it's quite obvious we make an awesome combo...thank you very much!!!!

So far, I have four agencies and one in Chicago. So, hope to see you very soon. --Erik Pedersen
Thanks, Erik! It always nice to hear--isn't it? Very reassuring.-k

What Goes Around—Gets Around...

Last month I found myself crippled by a voiceover's greatest nemesis: laryngitis! ("Squwauk!") It's been *years* since I've had a bout with it. Luckily Geoff Long, our trusty web designer and colleague, referred me to a site he designed for six vocal experts/doctors: (www.voiceproblem.org).

It was there I discovered there are two types of laryngitis. They are determined by how long the inflammation lasts. Acute laryngitis is short-lived inflammation of the larynx, lasting maybe a week or more (although it seems like an eternity!) and chronic laryngitis, which is an ongoing or prolonged inflammation of the larynx. Naturally, if you don't take care of the former, the latter will inevitably result. (Which is why I bring it up at all.)

Generally, laryngitis is not contagious, however there are a variety causes, including: upper respiratory tract infection from bacteria, viruses, and some fungi or molds. Other, less common, causes include exposure to highly concentrated air pollutants (such as spray paints, oven cleaners, or other solvents), smoke inhalation during a closed-space fire, deliberate inhalation of heated fumes (such as with smoking crack cocaine), even blunt or penetrating trauma to the larynx.

Chronic laryngitis is when the exposure to the irritant is prolonged. Common causes of chronic laryngitis include: allergies, tobacco smoking (cigarettes or cigars), marijuana use, use of inhaled steroids or other oral inhalers, some fungal and bacterial infections, voice misuse or abuse and chronic cough.

Obviously, treating laryngitis involves treating the underlying cause and/or removing the irritant from the environment. Keeping **hydrated and resting the voice** are the primary components of treating laryngitis. Steam or mist humidifiers can help to lubricate the vocal folds. Avoiding exposure to drying agents such as caffeine. Soothing cough drops can help preserve the lubrication of the larynx. (I personally like the traditional Luden's, myself.)

But rest assured, resting your voice seems the only sure way to accelerate the healing process. So if you find yourself in this same situation: take a nap. I know, easier said than done, but I honestly I felt infinitely better afterward. (Thanks, Kourt, for letting me do just that!)

If left untreated, laryngitis is thought by some physicians to lead to the development of hyperfunctional voice disorders such as muscle tension, which may contribute to the formation of nodules, polyps, cysts and scarring.

Well, now, isn't that pleasant?

Suffice it to say, if you have laryngitis or a cold or a fever or some other malady, and your agent calls you for an audition—you are EXPECTED to sit this one out. I realize this goes against every fiber of your being, considering your training, but if you show up sick and get others sick (or nervous, for that matter) you will not be making fans of anyone present. Not to mention, you are always expected to *deliver the best of your ability* at an audition. Always!

No one needs to hear, "Well, (cough, cough) I'm sorta playing through a (sneeze) handicap here—but I'll try really hard (sniff), Mr. Selznick!"

Save yourself and don't waste anyone's time. *Please*. If you have laryngitis, or a horrible cold or flu—you're not playing at the top of your game. So stay home and get better. By doing so you will protect your health AND your professional reputation. And while you're at it... hydrate, hydrate, hydrate! Drinks lots and lots of water.

There's a new product called 'Zicam Cough Spray'—great stuff if you have a cough, and it's homeopathic. (Which we prefer when and where ever possible.) 'Airborne' is another new remedy you can find at Trader Joe's or the like. And, of course, there's our old standby, 'Emer-Gen-C' (those little packets you've seen on the top of our water cooler), with 1000mg of Vitamin C and minerals to get you through that long afternoon when you need to keep going *just* a little bit longer. Keep this stuff on hand while the winter season

carries its share of 'catch-able' ailments right past your door. Wash your hands a lot, too, and take care of yourself! (Phew!)

Updates

Is your 'Sound Advice Encyclopedia' dog-eared to death? We've updated so much of it recently I don't even recognize the book myself! Give us a call and order another one if your book is more than a year old. There's so much you may be missing.

If you're interested in further literature on pursuing this business, allow me to refer you to some of the best 'required' reading possible:

SECRETS OF SCREEN ACTING, BY PATRICK TUCKER, SECOND EDITION (NEW YORK AND LONDON: A THEATRE ARTS BOOK, ROUTLEDGE, 2003)

HOW TO SELL YOURSELF AS AN ACTOR: FROM NEW YORK TO LOS ANGELES AND EVERYWHERE IN BETWEEN (HOW TO SELL YOURSELF AS AN ACTOR) BY K. CALLAN, SWEDEN PRESS, 2002

THE NEW YORK AGENT BOOK: GET THE AGENT YOU NEED FOR THE CAREER YOU WANT (NEW YORK AGENT BOOK) BY K. CALLAN, SWEDEN PRESS, 7th EDITION, 2003

THE LOS ANGELES AGENT BOOK: GET THE AGENT YOU NEED FOR THE CAREER YOU WANT (ANGELES AGENT BOOK) BY K. CALLAN, SWEDEN PRESS, 8th EDITION, 2003

SELF-MANAGEMENT FOR ACTORS: GETTING DOWN TO (SHOW) BUSINESS, BY BONNIE GILLESPIE, CRICKET FEET PUBLISHING, 2003

CASTING Qs: A COLLECTION OF CASTING DIRECTOR INTERVIEWS BY BONNIE GILLESPIE, CRICKET FEET PUBLISHING, FIRST EDITION, 2003

WORKING ACTOR'S GUIDE: TO LOS ANGELES (WORKING ACTOR'S GUIDE, LA) BY KRISTI CALLAN, AARON BLAKE PUBLISHERS, 17th SPRL EDITION, 2004

Peruse these pages and you'll discover you received some rather detailed tutelage through Sound advice after all. There's very little here we haven't imparted to you, it's just it's nice to have it backed up by another source or two once in a while.

What's the Word?

In keeping with our attempt to include a small portion of the updated 'Speak the Speak' section of "**The Sound Advice Encyclopedia of Voiceover and How to Be a Working Talent**" in our monthly Newsletters, here is this month's installment:

branding—This is a term used in marketing and advertising with regard to making or upholding a distinctive trademark of a name which (ideally) will immediately associate or identify a product or a manufacturer with a very specific concept or notion

'Branding' refers to establishing a product line so well it ultimately becomes iconic in popular culture

Coca cola is traditionally the most notable form of successful branding to date. For example even when Pepsi held their "Pepsi Challenge" campaign and Coke drinkers all chose Pepsi over Coke in a blind taste test. Coke drinkers continued to buy Coke and never even considered switching brands. Now that's successful branding!

Branding also refers to a distinctive category or a particular 'type'

A 'branding' spot would be a commercial that advertises the entire brand rather than sub products within the brand. For example a spot advertising McDonald's as a whole not about the Big Mac fries and a coke. Generally these spots are produced by the Senior Creative Directors on the creative team at the Ad agency. Therefore 'branding' spots tend to yield a great deal of cache' and power to junior producers and copywriters at larger Ad agencies.

Branding spots determine the overall focus of the campaign and convey the concepts the brand is attempting to embody.

What's New

We are no longer putting the workshop on CD (unless absolutely necessary). Instead we now post the entire workshop on our web site and send all participants a link to that designated location on our site. (These files will not be readily available to the broad public—only those with a specific link to those workshop files.) This way each talent will be able to download the workshop files onto their home computers and burn their own CD copy. This is what is referred to as a 'ftp site' (file transfer protocol). I want you to get used to doing this because this is precisely how we now 'collect our elements' (in other words, this is how we collect the commercials we've actually done) from producers. Ain't technology grand? Exhale, all you techno-phobes, it's easier than ever. I promise.

Closing Chit-Chat

Until next month—adieu, adieu. Keep us up to date on what's going on with you!

Keep warm. Stay healthy. Sip cocoa. (And fly south if at all possible!)

Kate Kourtney Jim Maya Dan & Lambie (brrrrr)