

# sound advice

## the most complete voice-over demo service

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July 2005

"Courage is resistance to fear, mastery of fear -- not absence of fear."

-- Mark Twain

"Do something every day that you don't want to do; this is the golden rule for acquiring the habit of *doing your duty without pain*."

--Mark Twain

### **Notable E-Mails**

**Subject:** Gee! Kate's marketing plans really work.

Hi. Just thought you would appreciate this. Seems your marketing ideas make sense. You would think you knew what you were talking about or something. I have done my best to follow the rule in your bible and last week I was brought on board Stewart Talent by Wade. I walked some Pics/Resumes and CDs in the office and gave them to the receptionist. Wade can see the front desk from his office and to quote him, he "recognized my envelopes" and knew who it was. He called me on my cell phone 30 seconds later and asked me to come back in without even opening the envelopes. He said he had me on his radar as a result of me submitting my stuff on a regular basis without being obnoxious. He said he had my resume on the side for sometime and each time I submitted it he would check it and see how it had grown. So... anticipate good things. Thanks for all your help and I will keep you posted. --Todd Neumann

Wade is one of the best Print agents in the city! Well done. Certainly your perseverance played a great role in your success, Todd. We have this idea, sometimes, that all of our promo and hard work is falling on deaf ears or no one is actually receiving this stuff. Well, now you know! There is a recipient on the other side of that mailing! Happy to hear the good news. Well done! --Kate

Shrop: What are the best times (most effective) of the year to do mass mailings of postcards and CD's ? And the worst (least effective)?

Kate: NOW is always the best time to promote. The truth is you should NEVER wait to promote. It'll take that much longer to get a return if you do. So there's no time like the present. Get on it! The fact is I recommend you promote yourself directly to Ad folk in various markets at least three to five times a year. I've been proven wrong too many times over the past couple years expecting a mailing to be less effective around Christmas or in August, so I quit telling people that. Christmas time and August seem to be the best to promote to the talent agents for a response.

Other than that, the industry is always producing commercials and since our direct mailing process is a five week process (every other week for five weeks, that is), seems sooner is always better than later. You want to create an interest. The sooner you do, the sooner those hiring will be interested. The key is repetition, persistence and to possess a true joie de vive! That oughta do it!

### **The Best Laid Plans**

Here's an update of interest that came in off the AP...

Associated Press **Committee Vetos Voice Actor Contract** 06.22.2005, 08:54 AM

The Screen Actors Guild rejected a contract proposal that would have given performers who provide the voices of video game characters a 36 percent raise over three years, according to a published report. The terms of the deal, which failed to secure residual payments for actors in top-selling games, was approved by SAG's sister union, the American Federation of Television and Radio Artists, the Los Angeles Times reported Wednesday. AFTRA's deal takes effect July 1.

"It is unfortunate that our brothers and sisters at the Screen Actors Guild have chosen another path," AFTRA President John P. Connolly told the newspaper.

Some SAG members argued the union should hold out until makers of video games agreed to share their profits and also acknowledged the contribution of stars, who are increasingly tapped for games.

One of the key demands from actors had been to receive extra money when a game sells more than 400,000 units, but representatives of the \$25-billion game industry refused to budge. Actors currently are paid a minimum of \$556 per four-hour session. The 3 1/2 -year agreement that was scrapped by SAG on Tuesday would have increased the rate to \$759 by 2008, with an immediate 25 percent increase to \$695.

Kinda falls under the "what could they be thinking" category, now doesn't it? Two days after this vote, this arrived from SAG via e-mail...

"Paul Christie, Guild 2<sup>nd</sup> national vice president and president of the NY division, wrote this in an e-newsletter that was sent to NY members this week:

'SAG union democracy and the opportunity to make a living took it on the chin on Tuesday, June 21, 2005. Mark the day, because 11 members of the National Executive Committee from Hollywood voted down yet another contract. They chose, in the most shameless and unprecedented display of bitter arrogance, to vote down an Interactive agreement recommended by the entire SAG Negotiating Committee. They voted *No*, and killed a contract that you, the members, told them by your vote that you did not wish to strike over. They *voted no* on an agreement with an unheard of 36% increase, a payday of \$759 for four hours work, a possible payday for motion capture actors of over \$2,277 for eight hours. They voted *no* because they wanted residuals or nothing and could not give a damn whether you work tomorrow or not. These same folks had voted *no* on the last Commercial Contract, the last TV-Theatrical Contract, now the Interactive Contract, and probably this Saturday on the Animation contract. Welcome to SAG *on strike* 24-7. Let's hope the 14 actors left working the Industrial Contract nationwide can make enough to keep the Health Plan afloat for the rest of us.

'When the time came to vote on the Interactive agreement these same folks voted to qualify the voters so most of you didn't get a vote. Stranger still is that not one of the NEC folks who voted *no* works the Interactive contract and the SAG Negotiating Committee who recommended it all *do*. Now for the next animation contract, since you didn't vote their way, and give them their strike, they want everybody to vote again. Kind of strange because the Animation contract has always been qualified voting in the past. Are you still with me here? This stinks. This was the worst display of sheer political manipulation ever seen on the NEC, and they have again made us a joke in the industry.

'So where do we stand? *Nowhere*. AFTRA has an Interactive contract that they approved, so we are out of the *video game* business. There is no plan B. What did the *no* voters propose? *Nothing*. There were no proposals, no plans, absolutely nothing but bitter arrogance and gloating over killing a contract. We had talked in NY about trying for open access for actors to work this contract. I asked if they thought the average man or woman working Background might like a shot at a \$759 or \$2,277 payday and they said nothing. I asked if any other unions *ever* got a 36% increase on any contract on the planet and they said nothing. So what it means is that you and I and all 120,000 of us, have been unduly punished by these 11 people who so wanted a strike and didn't get one. Sorry for the tone, but we hope every member is as mad as we are and sends an email to SAG national and lets them know.'

The end result is that the ability of SAG members to earn has been diminished. Although the majority of the NEC voted to accept the contract, because of the Hollywood division "no" vote, acceptance failed since 60% were needed to vote "yes" for the motion to pass."

**Variety, June 22, 2005 SAG Rejects Vidgame Deal Guild Snag Sends Gamers to AFTRA** By BEN FRITZ

Thanks to a yet another rift between the dueling Membership First and Restore Respect factions in the Screen Actors Guild leadership, jurisdiction over the vidgame biz now belongs entirely to AFTRA. In a surprising conclusion to the protracted negotiations over a new interactive contract, SAG's national executive committee voted by a narrow margin Wednesday to reject a contract that was previously recommended unanimously, though reluctantly, by a negotiating committee composed entirely of working voiceover actors.

The vote came on the same day that AFTRA's administrative committee approved the deal, meaning its members can start working under the deal beginning July 1. The rift also means union work will largely continue in the vidgame industry, but exclusively under AFTRA jurisdiction. Many thespians who work in games belong to both orgs and will thus now work under AFTRA, meaning all pension and health contributions will go to that union and not SAG.

SAG rules require that 60% of its national executive committee, a subset of the national board, vote to ratify the contract. But while a majority affiliated with SAG proxy Melissa Gilbert's Restore Respect group voted in favor, the Membership First coalition voted against the deal, denying the needed supermajority. It's unclear what next steps, if any, SAG can take. With AFTRA onboard, it's extremely unlikely reps for the vidgame industry will be willing to renegotiate with SAG. A previous strike authorization vote held among guild members who work under the interactive contract garnered around 60% in favor, far short

of the 75% supermajority needed, indicating a strike is also extremely unlikely.

Unless a new vote is held, SAG would simply be excluded from jurisdiction over interactive work for the remainder of the new contract, which lasts through the end of 2008.

*Aids merger push?*

A split decision between SAG and AFTRA on a contract is exactly the nightmare scenario that many proponents of merging the unions had predicted and is likely to fuel further debate on whether the two orgs should join.

"This is an incredibly destructive decision to make, as our union appears to be one with which nobody can bargain in good faith," said a SAG board member on the Restore Respect side. "The Membership First people have taken SAG out of the interactive business entirely."

In a statement, SAG exec director Greg Hessinger said only that the org would now "explore our options."

Most insiders had expected the deal to pass after it got the nod from negotiators, but discontent apparently came to a head at an informational meeting Monday night. According to accounts from the Membership First side, some negotiators indicated they felt misled by Hessinger, who had indicated that if the contract was rejected, SAG would be in violation of federal labor law if it attempted to discipline members who worked without a contract.

After learning that might not be true, some negotiators apparently indicated they would have voted differently had they known that, thus raising the ire of Membership First leaders who ultimately voted against the contract on the national executive committee.

**Screen Actors Guild to Reconsider Video Game Deal** by Jesse Hiestand LOS ANGELES (Hollywood Reporter) - The **Screen Actors Guild's** surprise rejection of a new video game contract will be reconsidered at a special board meeting on Wednesday, raising at least the limited prospect that it still might be accepted, the union said.

The board will review and possibly overrule the national executive committee, which took the unprecedented step on Tuesday of rejecting the contract over the unanimous wishes of negotiators.

"When the NEC rejected the tentative contract earlier this week, we said we'd explore all of our remaining options," national executive director Greg Hessinger said Thursday. "Since then, we have received feedback from enough of our membership to conclude that this matter must be brought before the full board for its consideration."

The entire process has been steeped in SAG's political infighting, which has pitted supporters of SAG president **Melissa Gilbert** against a group that includes actors like **Valerie Harper**, **Esai Morales** and **Elliott Gould**. The latter group used its clout on the national executive committee to prevent the contract from receiving the required 60% of votes for approval.

Members of Gilbert's camp decried the move as not only reckless but also a blatant attempt to seize political ground ahead of the fall election.

SAG secretary-treasurer **James Cromwell** said the video game contract affair likely will repeat in the current television animation talks and upcoming basic cable agreement, potentially leading to back-to-back strikes.

Michael Bell, one of the chief video game negotiators, countered that there is no point to trying to predict the unknown. Bell said. "Nobody knows where this is really going to go." Reuters/ Hollywood Reporter

Well, the more things change, the more they stay the same, I guess. The NEC (National Executive Committee) is peopled primarily with the *former* SAG Administration prior to Melissa Gilbert's reign as SAG President. These individuals managed to instigate the botched commercial Strike of 2000, which cost the Union and it's members far more than money, these folks also did their level best to keep AFTRA and SAG from merging not once *but twice* in the past seven years. They are a hazard and a caution to put it mildly. All Union members should be both wary and mindful of their motives and actions. Melissa Gilbert and James Cromwell deserve all the support and assistance we can afford them given the minefield this group routinely creates for them to maneuver through. As the man said, "What a tangled web we weave..."

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#### **More Terms of Endearment**

This month's featured term from our recently updated **"The Sound Advice Encyclopedia of Voiceover & How To Be A Working Talent"** is as follows. (Just a little snack food for thought while you sit at the beach or by the pool.)

**matching**—The term used when you are trying to *recreate* the timbre emotion inflection phrasing volume/proximity and tempo of a delivery to make a slight adjustment or to correct a minor error in the initial read

Also if at a session the client preferred a specific take and simply wants to change a line or phrase they may have you 'punch in' the corrected line This requires you 'match' the original delivery as much as possible

Notably actors (both novice and 'established' alike) often harbor the *misconception* they are expected to deliver one perfect read and therefore attempt to 'perfect' a single delivery repeatedly take after arduous take as if they were trying to *match* a read

The truth is there are only three circumstances in which one specific delivery is required from you:

- a When you are understudying a role on stage According to Actors' Equity you are expected to recreate the original actor's performance as closely as possible
  - b When you are in a professional touring company of a stage production (such as "The Producers" or "Hairspray") These productions are very strictly choreographed in every way because a very specific product is being presented and the original show is the blueprint for the touring company which is often followed to the letter Additionally these productions are often heavy 'tech' shows and straying from the program could increase the risk of injury to cast and crew
  - c And when adding or correcting a line in a voiceover or on camera production
- Other than that *matching* is not the desired goal of a performance it's only a tool and nothing more

In fact the real objective of a skilled professional talent *in every medium* is to deliver a variety of deliveries with every single take all within the context of the scene character and circumstance That takes a great imagination and agility Mastering the art of variety takes courage and the willingness to truly risk That gives you an awful lot of rope to hang yourself with which is why it can be a very scary notion at the onset But continually building that agility and engaging your imagination fully is forever the requirement of an effective artist—in any medium So never underestimate the demands of the profession They are always required of you That takes intention on your part

So if until now you have always thought all that what was required of you was to match your initial take again and again and again then you have thought acting was simply 'matching' Well for what it's worth you're in good company It's an honest misconception Again to clarify you're expected to deliver a limitless number of 'perfect' or at least appropriate reads Eight to ten takes of this one over here utilizing this direction eight to ten of that one over there utilizing that direction and eight to ten of yet another delivery that maybe a hybrid of the two different directions—this is the norm albeit the best kept secret in the industry Our job as talent is to give the director options within the context of what's being asked of us regardless the medium So play It's your job How many people do you know can say that?

#### **Where'd they go?**

As you may know, **Kourtney Vahle** and **Brooks Ralston** were married in Italy in early May. Wedding festivities continued through this 4<sup>th</sup> of July weekend. Kourt, like her new husband, is now working for coffee reps Café Umbria and is managing the first of hopefully many cafes in the Chicago area. In the meantime, our former chief engineer, **Jim Frazier**, is now teaching the motorcycling-challenged how to properly ride without burning the bottoms off their boots. While we're sad to see our long-loyal crew move on to other endeavors, we wish them the very best in everything they do and will miss their expertise and sparkling spirit here at Sound Advice. Cheers, Kourt & Jim. You raised our game greatly and for that we thank you! You'll be missed but will always remain very close to our hearts.

#### **Glenn Haines Returns!**

In case you didn't get the e-mail already, our very-own **Glenn Haines** will be returning to Chicago in July and will be available for one-on-one coaching sessions for film, television, commercial, audition, theatre, voice-over and overall career counseling. He's simply remarkable and even a single session is liable to improve your ability for a good long time to come. There's no one even remotely like him! Contact him directly (and as soon as you can, he books up fast!) 206.949.9990 or e-mail him at glennfh@earthlink.net.

#### **Just keeps rollin' along**

This has already been the busiest summer I've seen in years. Hope you find time to relax, smell the flowers, read a book, swim, sun, burn a few burgers—kick back. Our new crew is gearing up and preparing to deliver. Wishing you a pleasant, memorable summer!

--Kate and crew