

sound advice

the most complete voice-over demo service

October 2005

"Courage is very important. Like a muscle, it is strengthened by use."

-Ruth Gordon

"If you can dream it, you can do it." -Walt Disney

Proper Internet Etiquette

By the time your first piece of promo hits a talent agent's desk, your web page should have already gone 'live' (be up and working). Even **prior** to sending out your *first* correspondence to the copywriters and producers, your voiceover web page should be *fully* functional. The **ONLY** time it's appropriate to refrain from promoting yourself is in this instance—don't send out a single postcard with your web address on it until it is working. The agents (and producers alike) will be very impressed if you have a smart looking web page provided it actually works. If it doesn't—you're going to disappoint more than one interested party. Let's avoid that, shall we?

Be sure to include your web address on *all* your correspondence: notes, e-mails, postcards. (It's not necessary on the flipside of your demo CD. After all what will they find there but your demo, which is precisely what they have in their hand, right?)

Your web page should NOT include your headshots unless you're over 65 or under 16. It should be dedicated to promoting you as a voiceover **ONLY!** And, as with anything related to voiceover, we want to IMAGINE what you look like—so please don't kill the illusion for us. The imagination is your most powerful tool as a talent. This is another opportunity for you to use it to your advantage.

Besides, an effective promotional plan needs to be *single-minded* in its approach. Don't try to accomplish a zillion different things with your site. Great advertising and promo communicate a singular concept. In this case it's voiceover. Don't try to secure on-camera or stage work with your site. (And, yes, I know, all the other kids are doing it. Well, frankly, I don't care how many of your friends are jumping off that bridge, Susan! It's just plain WRONG! And I won't have it—not as long as you live in this house!)

I've never known a *single* talent to land a stage or commercial on-camera job from a personal (non-celebrity) web site that included headshots. Once you've landed that hit sitcom, you can have that elaborate fan-zine web site! Until then, leave your headshots on-line to your local talent agents and save yourself all that energy, money and time. Think about incorporating your headshots and resume only after you've landed that nice secondary role opposite Bill Murray in the next Wes Anderson movie. That's when your career will warrant a web site that's all-inclusive. By that time you will be an overall presence and you can include a clip from the film and maybe snippet from that AOL commercial you booked. Until then—focus your web page on promoting your voice-over work only.

If you hope to land some Independent film with this web site, okay, sure, I've known *one* person to land *an audition* for an Indy film from a personal web page. One. But that's it. *Only* one. However, that was a rather costly audition, wouldn't you say? I doubt the film paid as much as it cost to create the site. Besides, Indy film is a whole other nut to crack. Let's concentrate on generating an income, here... and from voiceover, shall we?

If, even after all that, you honestly feel you *must* have a web site featuring your on-camera, I suggest your headshots and resume be featured *on a separate page* and link **ONLY** from your on-camera to your voiceover *but NOT the other way around* so as not to confuse the issue. Avoid mixing metaphors. (See, there? You've buttered your bread—now you get to lie in it!)

Another vital tip: nothing on your web page should make a sound UNTIL you click on it to do so. It's just bad manners and violates proper Internet protocol, which is completely off-

putting, so it should be avoided. It's annoying when something goes 'boing-boing-boing' or 'swoosh' or creaks like a squeaky door when all you've done when you're visiting the site is scroll over the item with your mouse. This sort of web design is childish and akin to, say... a big, strapping virile guy suddenly opening his mouth and breaking into baby-talk in a feeble attempt to get his own way. Ick. Don't do that. It's weird. Just sit there and look pretty.

Again, it's off-putting and NOTHING should make a sound on your site until the visitor *clicks on it to do so*. At that point, what plays should only be an **mp3** of your demos. *Not a wav file, not an AIFF file...an mp3*. That's it. AIFFs and wavs are used for broadcast only and typically weigh a ton. They are completely unnecessary for your web site. Mp3s are standard and used because the quality and accessibility is there.

How many demos are too many? According to our surveying: *no more than five*. Anything more than that is overwhelming. (Including any *full reads* you may have available.)

Also, AVOID placing logos for clients you've worked for on your site or on your promotional postcards. (For example: Coca-Cola, McDonald's, IBM and so forth.) Why? Because it destroys *your own personal brand identity* and it fails to make you synonymous with those products, which seems to be the intention of this sort of promo. The only result is upstaging yourself with a famous brand. We're trying to establish your identity through your graphic and your demo(s). Adding logos inevitably defeats this purpose completely. It's just bad advertising. (Haven't you seen "The Apprentice" enough to know better?) Additionally, to a producer, these logos usually scream 'conflict', which is not the best foot to start off on, now is it?

Oh, and none of this 'Hi-fi, Lo-fi' business on your site, please. If you aren't on high speed Internet access by now, you're not even on the board therefore you aren't even in the game. Raise your head, walk like a pro and all will be well. Your site is for players only, the rest are on their own.

Also, it may seem silly to bring it up but your web page should load in within **two seconds**. Not five, not eight, not ten. Eliminate any 'intro' or extended, elaborate flash sequence at the opening of your site—they take too long and no one has the time or the patience. Allow the visitor quick access to your name and to click on your demo(s) *immediately*. If they have to click more than **twice** to hear your demo—you've more than likely already lost them. And we can't have that. Now, can we?

Additionally, your site should list your OWN contact information—not your talent agents. *Unless you are strictly exclusive with one talent agent only, nationwide, and they are absolutely magnificent and work you incessantly*. Amen.

Conversely, if you list a half dozen talent agents on your web site you will confuse the issue completely and clutter up your web page unnecessarily and, well, ultimately pit agent against agent. I'd avoid it. Again keep it simple. Let them contact you (a rarity, to be honest) the producer generally contacts the agent which is typically where they found you listed on voicebank.net.

The link to your e-mail should work swiftly and easily. Be sure to test everything *before* giving your final approval and having your site posted.

Most importantly, this **single-page web site** devoted *strictly to voiceover* should be available where there are lots and lots of other voice talent. Other wise your web site is on par with stuffing a note in a bottle and tossing it out to sea. It's *your* responsibility to direct as much attention toward your web page as possible and place it where there is a good deal of attention and traffic by producers and those most likely to hire you **for voiceover**. If you're off alone on your own I'm afraid the odds simply aren't with you. So, just like the old real estate phrase states, the mantra here is: Location, location, location! If we produced your demo here at **Sound Advice**, you should be hosted on our web site where we get thousands of hits a week from individuals interested in hiring voice talent because we promote our site and services with great frequency. Once you secure representation with a talent agent who is registered with **voicebank.net**, I strongly suggest you secure a **Premium Page** for yourself. (Contact www.voicebank.net to learn more about Premium Pages.) A Premium Page further increases the likelihood of being

cast directly from your web page on voicebank because it draws attention to your name using a flashing red star and by making your name a link directly to your site. You will be listed under your talent agency's heading on voicebank but the added attention and access to your site raises your game dramatically. Aim to impress—but do it simply. If you follow our promotional advice and continually send out postcards directing producers to your site, I'm confident, you will. If you follow even the basic Internet etiquette laid out for you here, you should be in fine shape in no time at all. Persistence is key!

How do you spell that?

Collecting the spots you've actually landed has changed dramatically since the beginning of the year. Those in business and production are very familiar with this process, but talent, generally, are not. You need to know the lingo or you may be waiting longer than the cast of "Waiting For Godot" waited for a laugh to receive a CD in the mail of that last commercial you landed.

The one term you need to know to expedite collecting your spots (or 'collecting your elements' as it's called) is:

ftp—This acronym stands for 'file transfer protocol'. In other words this is *how a file* can be *transferred* from one place to another. (As in 'ftp site'.)

As technical as it may sound, there are two primary reasons why you need to know this term:

- 1) Because this is how you can (and often will) collect the spots you've actually done.
- 2) And because this is how most of your voiceover and many of your on-camera jobs will be forwarded.

How an ftp site works is fairly simple. Every web site, depending upon its size, has a certain amount of space on it that is not accessible to the average web surfer. In that space you may store digital files that contain scripts for auditions, for example, or mp3 files of the auditions themselves or even the finished product of the job itself. You would be e-mailed a designated code (or password) that will act as a key to allow you access to download the script or fully produced commercial or to upload an mp3 of your audition. This designated space, or ftp location, acts like a virtual 'filing cabinet' on the web site. This is the same technology that makes voicebank.net so valuable and has become commonplace in the industry.

So, if a producer you just did a voiceover for asks you, "Can I ftp this spot to you?" You will now know what they are referring to and you will reply, "That'd be great!" The producer wants to send it to you this way, because this is how he will collect the spot himself for the agency archives and it won't add an additional step for him to simply include the password in an e-mail to you.

'ftp'-ing (as it's often called) **is used as a verb**. This process of posting files to a designated area on the Internet where interested parties can obtain them, is liable to completely replace **sending** an mp3 of the commercial spot by e-mail if it hasn't already because it is less work to send a link to a site and allows for a more pure, less-compressed quality to the final product you receive.

He will e-mail you a link to the ftp site, which you will either:

- a) simply click on and download the spot to your computer desktop... or
- b) you will copy and paste the link into your web browser and you will download the spot to your desktop from there.

An ftp site makes it far easier to download and upload large files that may dramatically slow up or even crash the average home computer if they are sent in an e-mail. And with everything (film and video) reverting to HD (high-def), certainly the trend is quicker, sleeker, seamless and easy for all involved. Including you, the talent.

(Check out www.voicebank.net as well as the "How to Collect your Elements" section in "The Sound Advice Encyclopedia of Voiceover and The Business of Being a Working Talent".)

Your Job Description

If you continually flex your voiceover muscle by continually exposing yourself to cold-reading, auditioning and working your articulation *while simultaneously making yourself*

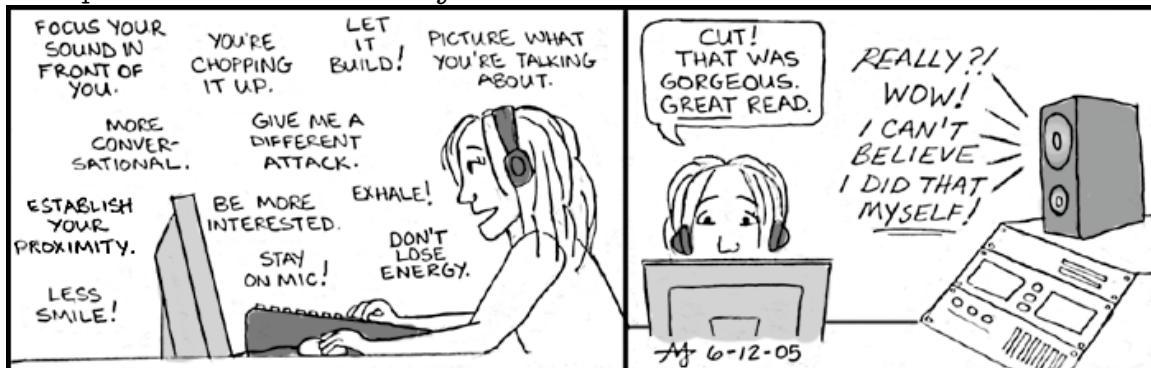
accessible to the work through promotion to both the talent agents and those most likely to hire you, there is absolutely no reason you shouldn't be working steady.

Take an Improv class with Jimmy Carrane to increase your spirit of play and to get you thinking on your feet. (773) 946-0684 or e-mail him @ jcarrane@aol.com. His next class begins on October 19th!

Or join us for our Monday night workshop concentrating on cold-reading and working your audition skills. Even scheduling a couple of good one-on-one coachings to increase your agility and get your ability up to speed again if you've dropped the ball and been out-of-the-loop can do wonders. You can't expect to work even 'part-time' as a voiceover if you aren't logging in the hours on your performance skills or promotion. Beyond persistence, these are your most vital assets. If you devote *or even aim at* 8-10 hours a week for each (performance and promotion), there is no reason you can't be working fulltime within the year. The sad fact is most folks who consider themselves 'professional talent' (whether they are Union or not) barely log in an hour a month on promotion or developing their skills, which would account for the great failure rate that prevails in this industry. Knowing that fact alone *should* give you a great advantage. But only if you act on it! Make time to work your skills three to four times a week for 20 minutes to a half hour for starters. Gradually increase your attention to keeping your skills up and promoting yourself. Just get on it and stay on it. It's up to you and no one else. They don't call it voice-over 'work' for nothing. It's your job. However, if you persist, you will succeed.

Many Talents

Our chief engineer, Maya Kuper, has many talents even above and beyond recording, mixing and occasionally imparting direction to our talent in the booth, *cartooning* among them. In fact, here's something Maya created based on Sound Advice. (Sound familiar?) We hope to continue to scratch Maya's illustration itch in future Newsletters as well.



New Arrivals

We have two new additions to our loyal crew: Mr. **Matt Welton** and Mr. **Mark Cartwright**. Matt, a talented actor and improviser, joins us as an Associate Producer and gifted Casting Director. While Mark, an experienced recording engineer, Internet and IT guru, will assist Maya as our 'Second' engineer. We're thrilled to have them grace our humble crew with their pleasant presence and expertise. Welcome aboard, Fellas!

Changing of the Seasons

The colors of autumn will be everywhere soon and leaves will begin to fly. Strange to imagine as this month begins in 90 degree weather, it's unprecedented even for Chicago. Enjoy the season! Take in the sights, buy a pumpkin, take a long walk, take a deep breath of fall. Then take in a good scary movie...my personal guilty pleasure is "**Warlock**" circa 1989, starring Julian Sands and Richard E. Grant. It's scary and ridiculous and awesome on a chilly October night. If scary movies give you the willies, check out one of my favorite Frank Capra movies, "**Arsenic and Old Lace**" starring Cary Grant. It's hilarious and so sweet it almost smells like baked apples. Enjoy! -Kate and crew