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the most complete voice-over demo service

“Do or do not... there is no ‘try’.”

December 2005

- Yoda

Back To The Future

About a month ago, the future arrived with NBC Nightly News boasting the very *first* news to broadcast nightly on-line with the aptly named ‘NBC Nightly News Netcast’ with Brian Williams. You may have thought broadcasts of this nature (on-line) were commonplace by now. Nope. This event marked the beginning of something quite significant. Naturally, within the month since, CBS, ABC, Fox and CNN have trekked rather rapidly right behind just to stay in step. What makes this form of broadcasting so important is that it marks the first real merging of network television/cable and the Internet. You can expect to find nearly every production on television to follow suit. Within the year it’s very likely that everything broadcast over television will be available on-line. Coinciding with this merging of media is what commercial advertising is referring to as the “death of the 30 second spot”. Sounds scary at first blush, especially if you happen to be breaking into advertising as a commercial talent at present. Rest assured all it means is: spots on-line aren’t held to the same 30-second time standard generally applied to most television commercials. We can expect talent will see an increase in commercial web usage in the coming year. I’d call that something of a bonus, wouldn’t you? Question is: when will the web completely replace network and cable? It’s coming in the next few years. Until then, I’m sticking with my old TV and Comcast for just a little while longer.

Christmas Present: ‘Podcasts’

It’s likely you’ve heard this term bantered about by your 13-year-old niece for the last couple months or maybe you’ve seen it on the news or somewhere on-line, but you’re probably wondering: what the heck is a ‘podcast’? Well, aside from being one of the greatest *features* found on the most sought-after holiday gift this year anyone over the age of six, a ‘podcast’ (according to one retailer) is: “the web’s new frontier, the radio of the future...With Podcasting anyone can be a DJ, talk show host, producer, commentator and more. Unlike traditional radio, Podcasts are on-demand—download them and play them in your favorite mp3 player whenever and wherever you want. Bands can Podcast their latest and greatest performances. Club owners can Podcast the performances of hot local bands. Comedians can Podcast their latest set. Create your own Podcast radio program and sound off about politics, sports or entertainment.”

Okay, so what does ‘podcasting’ have to do with *voiceover* or **Sound Advice**? Well, now you (our Sound Advice devotees) have the opportunity of subscribing to the weekly podcast of our hugely entertaining and informative **Monday night workshops**.

We now offer our workshops via ‘podcast’ because it’s simpler to subscribe once, and let your computer automatically download the workshop, rather than downloading each individual mp3 each week. It’s sort of like an audio magazine subscription that will automatically arrive in your iTunes playlist every week for your listening/learning pleasure. To subscribe to the Sound Advice workshop podcast, see our clients-only website at www.soundadviceclients.com. Should you choose not to subscribe to the podcast—the workshop is still available in good old-fashioned mp3s on that same website. So if you’re taking the workshop, you can chart your progress—and if not, you can still listen and be inspired by those who are arriving. Neat, huh?

While the term ‘podcast’ is derived from the ever-popular iPod, you don’t need to have an iPod to play a podcast. According to wikipedia.org: “Podcasting” combines the words ‘iPod’ and ‘broadcasting.’ However, the term is a misnomer since *neither podcasting nor listening to podcasts requires an iPod or any portable player, and no broadcasting is required*. Any digital audio player or computer with audio-playing software can play podcasts. Some writers have also suggested reinterpretations of “pod”, such as “Personal, On-Demand.”

How nice. How personable. Look for more podcast productions from the crew here at 944

N. Noble in the coming year! It's an ideal opportunity for PinDrop AudioBook (www.pindropaudiobook.com). In fact, since podcasts aren't strictly for audio, you may discover a short video included in one or two of these Newsletters over the next year. Matt and I have a few ideas we want to flesh out, so we'll keep you posted.

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As I was wrapping up this month's Newsletter, I ran across this article... I abbreviated it for you here.

Podcasting Invades Hollywood

Entertainment Podcasting Begins *By Dana Greenlee, WebTalk Radio*

Hollywood is no stranger to embracing the new media trends of the Internet. The television networks are now beginning to integrate podcasting as a means to promote their news and entertainment offerings. Podcasting is a method of publishing audio programs via the Internet, allowing users to subscribe to a feed of new files, usually mp3s. Both the ABC and CBS networks launched their news division podcasts earlier, pioneering the move to integrate this new online audio distribution tool to create a personal and automatic connection to their viewers and listeners. CBS is the first major network to enter the domain of using podcasting to generate interest around its television shows with an initiative called Netcast. The network began a search for a podcaster to interview CBS stars for the new fall season.

Larry Kramer, President of CBS Digital Media, is behind this early adoption in the entertainment side of the network's programming. He has a history of using the Web successfully, most notably as founder of MarketWatch.com, the financial news site. CBS liked what he was doing and invested in his company, more popularly known as CBSMarketWatch.

"Podcasting has become one of the fastest growing programming and promotional tools in media today," said Kramer. "With this dedicated site, we plan to be part of this new medium in a big way. With this move, we continue to expand our entertainment programming portfolio on CBS.com in way that engages the consumer with a unique experience that complements the broadcast on the Network." CBS's Entertainment division agrees. "Podcasting is another smart, creative way for viewers to access and experience their favorite television programs," said Nancy Tellem, President, CBS Paramount Network Television Entertainment Group. When CBS Netcast launched earlier this month, one of its first podcasts was the longest running series on television, Guiding Light, now in its 70th broadcast year. Guiding Light started on radio before being televised on CBS in 1952. Now available in an audio format again at CBS.com, it's come full circle.

"This new technology harkens back to the infancy of this enduring medium, when fans gathered around their radios to follow their favorite stories and characters," commented Barbara Bloom, Senior Vice President, CBS Daytime Programming. "Podcasts offer the convenient opportunity to listen on computers or portable handheld devices."

All you need to get started is a Podcasting application. Once you download and install it, simply click on the RSS (really simple syndication) icon for the feed you want, then copy the URL from the address bar of your browser and paste it into your Podcasting application. The software will automatically check for updates and download the files to your computer so you can load them onto your MP3 player. There are several free or commercial Podcasting applications available for download: iTunes (PC/Mac), Doppler (PC), iPodderX (Mac), iPodder (PC) and Playpod (Mac).

Stick that on your hard drive and play it!

Another Good Reason To Have a Talent Agent

As you might have guessed, I'm not a fan of talent dirtying their hands with quoting potential clients a rate as to what they are worth. Talent have a tough enough time placing a value on their skills and justifying their existence. Besides that they will almost always

underestimate the amount of work involved on a pending project and generally don't have a clue as to what their going rate really should be. This is the primary reason you have an agent and is how they earn their 10 percent (or 20% if they're non-union). For example... Lockheed Martin just posted this VO job on Voice123: "Auditioning male and female voiceover artists (middle age voice) for a safety computer-based training (CBT) course. This course will be for internal (company name) use only. Audio will be recorded at a studio yet to be determined, in the Orlando area. Exact length of audio is TBD, but CBT will be approximately 40-50 pages with voice over on most pages. Please send a quote for hourly and daily rates." The location is not a factor ...but I am not sure what to quote them price was (daily and hourly) ...my usual for narrations is \$150 per page ...(up from \$75 a couple of years ago.) This looks to me like an all day session if they want daily rates ...New ground for me ...HELP! -"Tommy Talent"

Quoting a rate for something like this should be based primarily on the length of the piece when it's finished and whether this may be one of a series of sessions for the same client. A flat fee of \$3500 (based on approx \$75 per page) or \$350 an hour (for the first 2 hours, minimum of 2 hours total) and \$175 every hour there after. (Rounded up to the nearest half hour.) If you get 3 pages done in an hour and there are 50 pages that's about \$3300, which is about comparable. How's that? Trust me that would be extremely competitive by anyone's standards. AFTRA scale (the lowest rate available) is \$360 for the first hour and \$105 for every additional *half* hour after that, minimum of three. That, too, would be the least expensive of about four 'categories' available through the union. Like I said, yet another good reason to have an agent! -Kate

To Coin a Phrase...

Every year about this time I like to impart a few of my favorite quotes in the Newsletter. Quotes I consider especially pertinent to the season, embarking on a career in voiceover or upon this business in general. In doing so this year, the phrase 'to coin a phrase' resonated with me, which provoked me to inquire further as to it's origin. Apparently, according to *Oxford's English Dictionary*, the phrase comes from the verb *to coin* meaning 'to create' or invent something, including words and phrases. In 1940, the specific usage of the phrase '*to coin a phrase*' was used, ironically, to introduce a banal statement or cliché. This version may have been in error, as the meaning could easily be derived from '*to quoin*', a printer's term meaning to secure a block of type with a *quoin*, or metal wedge. So '*to quoin a phrase*' would mean to set it into type or make it permanent. Fun facts... if you like that sort of thing.

Acting is not being emotional, but being able to express emotion. —Kate Reid

Thinking is easy, acting is difficult, and to put one's thoughts into action is the most difficult thing in the world. ~ Johann Wolfgang von Goethe

Stop acting as if life is a rehearsal. Live this day as if it were your last. The past is over and gone. The future is not guaranteed. --Wayne Dyer

Life's like a play; it's not the length but the excellence of the acting that matters. —Seneca

Treat people as if they were what they ought to be, and you help them to become what they are capable of being. —Johann Wolfgang von Goethe

IF YOU ALWAYS DO WHAT INTERESTS YOU AT LEAST ONE PERSON IS PLEASED. —KATHARINE HEPBURN

Acting is a question of absorbing other people's personalities and adding some of your own experience. —Jean-Paul Sartre

Be miserable. Or motivate yourself. Whatever has to be done, it's always your choice. —Wayne Dyer

With any part you play, there is a certain amount of yourself in it. There has to be, otherwise it's just not acting. It's lying. —Johnny Depp

WHEN IN DOUBT, MAKE A FOOL OF YOURSELF. THERE IS A MICROSCOPICALLY THIN LINE BETWEEN BEING BRILLIANTLY CREATIVE AND ACTING LIKE THE MOST GIGANTIC IDIOT ON EARTH. SO WHAT THE HELL, LEAP. —CYNTHIA HEIMEL

Christmas, children, is not a date. It is a state of mind. —Mary Ellen Chase

From a commercial point of view, if Christmas did not exist it would be necessary to invent it. —Katharine Whitehorn

Christmas begins about the first of December with an office party and ends when you finally realize what you spent, around April fifteenth of the next year. —P.J. O'Rourke

Blessed is the season which engages the whole world in a conspiracy of love. —Hamilton Wright Mabie

Oh look, yet another Christmas TV special! How touching to have the meaning of Christmas brought to us by cola, fast food, and beer.... Who'd have ever guessed that product consumption, popular entertainment, and spirituality would mix so harmoniously? —Bill Watterson, *Calvin & Hobbes*

I WILL HONOR CHRISTMAS IN MY HEART, AND TRY TO KEEP IT ALL THE YEAR. —CHARLES DICKENS

Something Worth Sharing

Some months ago, Dave Shropshire (whom I've mentioned earlier in this and many of our Newsletters this year) sent me the following article from a fellow named Roy H. Williams on the subject of confidence. I liked it so much I chose to edit the heck out of it and offer it to you here—in part because December always seems to evoke inspiration and because January, with all its resolutions, always seems to arrive ahead of schedule and generally requires more courage than usual. (Thanks for the inspiration, Shrop, by submitting this piece. If Mr. Williams is a friend of yours, please offer him my pardon for the liberties I've taken with his text.)

Confidence, Where to Get It and How To Keep It

Getting confidence and keeping takes emotional muscle, like developing and maintaining any other muscle; it requires daily exercise.

But where does confidence come from? Is it merely a feeling – the product of an optimistic attitude gained through positive thinking rituals learned at motivational seminars – or is it something more substantial?

According to Baltasar Gracian*, confidence comes from authority, *"...and the highest authority is that which rests on an adequate knowledge of things and long experience in different occupations. Master the subject matter and you will come and go with grace and ease and speak with the force of a teacher; for it is easy to master one's listeners if one first masters knowledge. No sort of abstract speculation can give you this authority; only continual practice in one occupation or another. Mastery arrives from an action done often and well... this mastery leads to authority. Authority lends itself to ease and allows you to hold nothing back: to shine, both in words and actions, in every situation. Even mediocrity, helped out by authority, has a certain eminence, and can make everything come out right."*

Keys to confidence:

1. Do your homework. Know what you're talking about. Study, prepare, experiment then experiment some more. Become an expert. Prepare true answers—not canned responses—for questions you may never be asked.

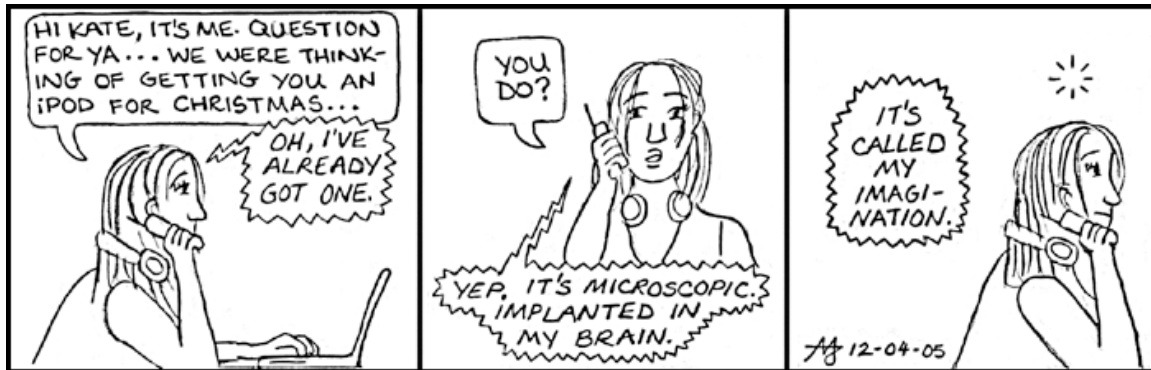
2. Tell the truth. You can't have real confidence when you know you're lying. A lie that makes you a dollar today will cost you a hundred dollars tomorrow due to the erosion of your own confidence. When you don't know the answer, say, "I don't know, but I'll find out and get back to you," and then do it for the building of your own confidence even if you suspect the person has utterly forgotten your promise. The confidence you gain in yourself will make the whole exercise worthwhile. There's that word again; *exercise*.

3. Be a little bit showy. Experts, due to their deep knowledge of their subject are at ease about that which they speak, so they are free to be entertaining. And the response you get to your performance will only increase your confidence.

*Baltasar Gracian, lived three and a half centuries ago but his advice remains on target

because some things never change.

Here's one of my own slant on the subject: confidence comes from experience. Prior to having experience—you have to assume the role of 'talent' or 'actor' or 'voiceover'. You have to *be* the 'profession' you are trying to accomplish, from there you *gain experience*, from experience you *gain confidence*, from there you can have just about anything you want! Have at it!



A nod to the past

This past year we've seen more change than we've experienced in about ten—in both the industry as well as here at Sound Advice/Big House. Happily, we've managed to successfully acclimate an entirely new cracker-jack staff, all of whom I'm very proud: **Maya Kuper, Priscilla Quirino, Matt Welton, Barbara Figgins, Jenn Harrell, John Purcell, Alan Janis, Mike Rudel, Lindsey Kuper, Mark Gartwright and Jon Monteverde.** Without their continued support we would all most certainly be lost. This fine bunch has managed to dedicate themselves to you, our clients, often without your even knowing it. These folks have committed themselves to the delivery of excellence and without them Sound Advice would surely be a thing of the past, because I most certainly cannot do any of this on my own. And without our past crew: Kourtney Vahle, Jim Frazier, Geoff Long, Ben McKinney, Lynette Maas, Alan Lawrence and Erik Martin lending their expertise and assistance under fire, we would be at best a faint memory had they not stepped in when they did. We thank them wholeheartedly for having been who they are—for they are made of greater stuff. We greatly appreciate our crews' (past and *present*) intense dedication to the work, often above and beyond the call of duty. It is due to their commitment, Sound Advice has managed to step up to an entirely new level this past year, allowing me to streamline our coaching, our workshops, our production and delivery to an extent I couldn't have imagined prior to this. Our current clients are now afforded the best we have ever had to offer and we have always imparted the very best. We deliver a discipline that is unique to Sound Advice alone. This training affects *all* acting, in every media, not just voiceover. With it, we hope you discover your association with Sound Advice to be the most fulfilling, supportive, effective and useful training of it's kind. We hope you find it continues to resonate with you for the length of your career.

Wishing you great success in the coming year and your most heart-felt dreams—fulfilled. (Sorry for getting so mushy. But a girl's gotta do something to stay warm—even if it is only on the inside.)

-Kate and her steadfast crew

Year's end is neither an end nor a beginning but a going on, with all the wisdom that experience can instill in us.

—Hal Borland