

sound advice

the most complete voice-over demo service

August 2006

"The most important thing a producer does is cast the most effective actors possible. If you think of it, a bulk of the shots for film and television (and commercials) are either MCUs (medium close ups) or CUs (close ups). That requires a directness and an understanding of what's needed (from the actor)—*even above and beyond the ability to interpret copy.*" —Dick Wolf, executive producer and creator of the "*Law and Order*" franchise

The Aim to be a 'Seasoned Journeyman'

I'd like to assume the aim of *every* talent we work with here at Sound Advice, regardless of media specialty (television, film, stage or voiceover), is to become a *seasoned journeyman*. In other words, to *be* a professional through and through—one who never ceases exploring beyond the 'safe', the 'comfort zone' and forever aiming to expand upon their performance abilities. One who intends to go the distance to deliver the best results and behave at the top of their form, often against unusual and often difficult obstacles and even great odds. One who seeks to master their role in this business.

Here's how *Merriam-Webster's* defines this term...

seasoned

2 a: to treat so as to prepare for use **b:** to make fit by experience <a *seasoned* veteran> to become [seasoned](#)

journeyman *noun*

2: an experienced reliable worker, athlete, or performer especially as distinguished from one who is brilliant or colorful <a good *journeyman* trumpeter -- New Yorker>

We'll do our best to prepare and make you fit to deliver the goods. Simply make it your aim to be a 'seasoned journeyman.' It can be done.

Craftsmen have committed themselves to excellence for generations. Why should today be any different? It doesn't take much effort to rise above the standard and the run-of-the-mill. It only takes a little effort and commitment to be better than average. ☺

Inc vs. LLC

Often I am asked, "Should I incorporate? Or maybe I should LLC?"

Good question.

Two of our ardent 'Sound Advisers' have offered up their personal experience and wisdom, which I impart to you here so you can discern for yourself.

Hey Kate,

(Here's) the info I found regarding the difference between Incorporations & LLC's. Here are some links that may be helpful:

A link to the bizfilings.com "learning" section, which has tons of info on incorporating all types of businesses:

<http://www.bizfilings.com/learning>

Benefits of the Inc.:

<http://www.bizfilings.com/learning/benefitsinc.asp>

Benefits of the LLC:

<http://www.bizfilings.com/learning/benefitsllc.asp>

Hope this is helpful. :) —Donna

In a nutshell, as I understand it, an LLC (Limited Liability Corporation) is more expensive (approx \$500) at the onset, but infinitely more valuable to you in the long run. There's less maintenance

throughout the year with an LLC and less paperwork to set it up. Incorporating (as an 'S' Corp or Sole Corporation or Proprietorship) costs \$150 to establish. You can set either up by downloading the paperwork from your local Secretary of State's site on-line.

According to another notorious 'Sound Adviser', Kimberley Reid, "Had I to do it all over again, I would have LLC'd, rather than Inc," she recently told me.

Additionally, both certainly legitimize your expenses in this business, including workshops, coaching, demo production, promotional mailings, headshots and so forth. Ideally, you should establish your own name as your corporation, such as 'Joe Talent, LLC' or 'Joe Talent, Inc' to help legitimize your industry expenses and make write-offs easier.

Here's the thing: if you call yourself 'Excalibur, Inc' it may conflict with some unrelated business that may already be in operation and may even link you to some conflicting reference. To add to this, it will be confusing and/or difficult to simply deposit session fees and residuals--payments typically are made out to you in your name. If you find yourself insisting at each job your checks be made out to 'Lady Gwenivere, LLC', you may find it take repeated attempts to get that billing straight. Why? Because it's odd and ultimately something of a non sequitur. Besides you may find explaining the origin of your corporate name to the next producer that hires you may prove to be a bit more awkward and confusing than you had initially anticipated.

The links above will allow you access to the info you need to determine for yourself what you feel will work best for you should you choose to go this route. ↩

Does God Have a Gender?

Ardent Sound Adviser, Nike Basurto, sent me this article, which I think instills great interest.

"Challenging The Voice of God" by Joan Baker -- *Broadcasting & Cable*

(Joan Baker, a top voiceover talent, questions the idea common among advertisers that a woman's voice isn't as impactful as a man's.)

As one of the auspicious few who have been able to navigate the world of voiceover acting successfully, I am grateful I have had the opportunity to work with great producers and writers and extraordinary voiceover actors around the world.

Indeed, it was the joy of doing voiceover acting that led me to write, *Secrets of Voice-Over Success: Top Voice-over Actors Tell How They Did It*. The book includes some of the greatest talents in the business: Don La Fontaine, Les Marshak, Nancy Giles, Sylvia Villagran, Keith David, Joe Cipriano, Cedering Fox, George DelHoyo, Stephen Newman, Valerie Smaldone, Fred Collins, Steve Zirnkilton, and many others. They are truly the cream of the crop. Clearly, the voiceover industry has been good to me on many levels.

It is important to note, however, that there are still important opportunities for improvement, particularly for women. The multi-million dollar voiceover industry is biased against women's voices to the point that insiders see it as just the way things are. As such, men regularly feast upon the incredibly lucrative voiceover contracts that are the meat of the industry. Women's opportunities are sparingly sprinkled.

Why is that? Do men's voices have some innate God-given ability to enthrall and inspire while women's voices can be no more than frivolous accessories?

In the voiceover biz, there are common expressions to describe the deep-voiced pitchman. He's the voice of God," or "thunder throat." Those men have "authoritative, bigger than life, powerful" voices. "The voice of God" label is the most troublesome. When we think God, we *all* think male. The God as man myth has tipped the scales against women—yes, even women in the voiceover field.

And the myth has insidiously crossed gender lines. Often in auditions, even female listeners tend to pick male voices over women's. A producer for a major cable network reported that his network president—a female—looked him straight in the face and said, with great managerial brio, "I think our network voice should be male. I'm very sexist when it comes to that."

So why isn't a woman's voice strong enough to inspire you to buy a fourth generation iPod with Navisplay and Bluetooth speakers?

The issue is far bigger than advertising and promotion, but what a great place to start the revolution! As an industry with global influence and as fellow human beings we owe it to ourselves to evolve beyond decisions made with the involuntary knee-jerk rationalizations.

It is not the gender, but things like intention, desire and need that create the magic of an inspired performance, whether for commercials, film or stage. To the executives, writers, producers and marketers who cast the voices that make the whole world buy, I say cast them fairly, according to talent. Let the consumers decide.

Baker is also SVP, public relations at New York-based advertising agency Push Creative. She is conducting a Learning Annex seminar about the voiceover business on Aug. 15 in New York.
<http://www.broadcastingcable.com/article/CA6350082.html>

(Joan's preaching to the choir as far as I'm concerned. Personally, I've found it always pays to risk beyond the conventional. However, I'm in the minority in more ways than one on this issue.

Currently, for every 30 auditions the average 30-40 year old male is called on, females of the same age average only *one*. It's usually Corporate America who have the final say in these matters. These guys play it "safe" as a rule, for fear what the "powers that be" might think. Joan of all people should know that given her position at *Push Creative*. Get those guys to venture beyond the standard cliché and we could really on to something.) ☞

Summer Assignment

This month discover first hand who and what these directors have done, do and are slated to do with our "Director's (or Producer's) Challenge Exercise":

1. **P.T. Andersen** (dir. "Boogie Nights")
2. **Spike Jonze** (dir. "Adaptation")
3. **Ridley Scott** (dir. "Alien," "Thelma & Louise")
4. **Jerry Bruckheimer** (prod. "Top Gun," "Pirates of the Caribbean")

Q. How many of these guys directed/produced commercials? A. ALL of them.
(Just in case you were wondering what this challenge had to do with voiceover or transferring your skills to other mediums such as commercial work.)

This is a terrific exercise created to expand your knowledge of the industry by making yourself familiar with film as a parallel medium to voiceover.

Again, the objective is to observe and study specific the film styles of a handful of top Hollywood directors, thereby increase your ability to deliver a more effective, informed, imaginative performance in this and other mediums—provided you know what to look for.

Go to www.imdb.com and pull up *each* of the directors listed above. Then make a point to actually *see one or more their most well-known films* as well as the recent summer blockbuster they directed. Then observe the following:

- What does the film look like?
- What concepts/topics do they concentrate on most?
- Have you seen this style somewhere else? In the latest BMW commercial perhaps? Or in that insurance ad you couldn't turn away from?

Okay, now we're getting somewhere. Do your homework—and this is certainly part of doing just that. If nothing else you'll have a greater understanding of the 'pop-culture reference' the next copywriter (CW) may give you at your next recording session and you'll be able to imagine something quite specific.

I'm telling you--love your work. Embrace it! It'll love you back if you do. ☞

'Bout Frickin' Time!

"Cable Actors Get Raise in Residuals" BY GREG HERNANDEZ, Staff Writer, LA Daily News

The producers of such live-action cable shows as "The Shield" and "Monk" have reached an agreement with the Screen Actors Guild on a two-year contract that includes a 21 percent increase in residuals, officials said Friday.

The agreement, which came after six months of tough negotiations, covers shows produced specifically for basic cable television and runs through June 30, 2008. The new residuals formula is retroactive (beginning Jan. 1.

"For many members of Screen Actors Guild, these extra dollars mean the difference between whether or not they pay rent, qualify for health care or earn points toward their pensions."

Rosenberg called the residuals hike a victory for middle-class actors, since residuals are often a "lifeline" for them in addition to more money up front.

He described the negotiations as "lengthy and difficult" and said the union worked long and hard to convey to producers just how much is at stake for SAG members.

While basic cable has exploded in popularity over the past 16 years, this marks the first new contract and pay raise since the first one was negotiated with no end date in 1990.

Although the residuals hike was not as high as actors had sought, they will have a chance to renegotiate in two years when the agreement will expire.

"After 16 years of extraordinary growth in the cable TV industry, in which actors helped producers generate billions of dollars in profits, our members deserved a new contract that protects their health and pension plans and puts more money in their pockets to support their families."

The residuals formula for the first repeat airing of a show increased from 12 to 17 percent of a performer's minimum pay for live action programs made directly for basic cable.

The bottom end increased from 1 percent to 1.5 percent of the minimum for the 13th rerun and subsequent airings thereafter, a figure that is particularly important to actors.

In addition, the second, third and fourth reruns will be paid in one lump sum when the show first airs, resulting in a larger check for actors. This results in accelerated and guaranteed payment for these first four airings even if the show doesn't reach that many reruns.

This is the second agreement covering basic cable television reached by the guild over the past few months. A new contract covering animated programs produced for basic cable was ratified by the Guild's national board on April 21 (2006).

There's hope for us all, after all! Yahoo! ☺

Welcome Aboard!

This past month we welcomed **Colleen Archer** on board and she's making everyone's life a whole lot easier around here. Yours, mine & OURS! Colleen's fully trained and expert in imparting our unique performance disciplines developed here at **Sound Advice**. So if you're lucky enough to train or do a workshop with her, I'm confident you will be able to apply the principles as readily and effortlessly as if you had done so with me directly—I mean this girl is on top of it! So, come on in and coach or take a workshop with us and meet her yourself. I'm certain you'll find her a great asset to your training. We're happy to have her!

One month to go and counting...

August is a key month for promotion, training and preparing to deliver the goods when production shifts into high gear in September and October, as if often does every year. Come on in for a tune-up on your coaching, take the workshop or do a mailing. If you need a good shot in the arm—now's the time to hop on it. Do your homework... you ain't getting any younger, Darlin'. Time's a wastin' and we're here to help you move forward. We're dedicated to it! **773.772.9539**

-Kate & crew