Types of Voiceover Work

This section was formerly included as part of Chapter 1 in the first four editions of *The Art of Voice Acting*. It is included here as an additional resource.

Where do You Fit In?

There are only two ways to "do" voiceover: either as a business or as a hobby. Both are completely valid approaches, and this book will help in either case. However, the real focus on this book is in how to work in the voiceover business as a professional voice actor.

You hear voiceover messages many times every day, and you may not even be aware of it. When most people think of voiceover, they think of radio and TV commercials. These are only a small part of the business of voiceover. There is actually much more to it.

Here are just some of the many types of voiceover work that require talented performers, like you.

RADIO—On-air, Commercials, Promo

There are three basic categories of radio voiceover work:

- **The radio DJ**—This is a specialized job that requires a unique set of skills. Most radio DJs are not considered to be voice actors.
- **Promo & Imaging**—Most radio promos are produced in-house, using station staff. Outside talent will be used for station imaging.
- **Commercials**—Most commercials are produced outside the station by advertising agencies. However, many radio stations will produce local commercials for their clients, usually with station staff.

TELEVISION—On-air, News, Commercial, Promo, Programs

Television stations use voice talent in three ways:

- **Promotions Department—**Handles the station's on-air promotion, including VOCs (voice over credits), promos, and marketing. Voice talent may be on staff, on contract, or booked through an agent.
- **Production Department—**This department is responsible for the production of commercials, programs, sales presentations and other productions. Voice talent may be on staff or hired per project.
- **News and Sales Departments—**News reporters handle their own voiceover for news stories. Sales will usually use on-staff VO talent or work through the Production Department.

Most TV stations have an established pool of voiceover talent on staff or readily available. Staff announcers may come to the station to record on a daily basis, or, more often, the copy may be emailed or faxed to the talent a day or so before it is needed. The voice actor records it in their home studio and delivers the track to the station for production, or it may be recorded at a local recording studio. Some TV stations are equipped with *ISDN* or Internet technology that allows for a live, high-quality recording of a voiceover performer in another city, or across the country.

CORPORATE/INDUSTRIAL—Training, Web Learning, Marketing

There are literally thousands of locally produced audio and video presentations recorded each year for the business community. Here are just a few examples of corporate and/or industrial voiceover work:

- **Telephony**—Messages-on-hold are what you hear while on hold. Also includes voice prompts (IVR) and outgoing messages.
- **In-store Offers**—These are part of the background music program played over a store's speaker system while you shop.
- **Sales and Marketing Presentations**—Video presentations that are designed to attract clients and promote vendors or products. Talent could be either on-camera or voiceover. You will often find these videos as ongoing product demos in department stores or shopping mall kiosks.

- **Convention and/or Trade Show Presentations**—These are similar to sales and marketing presentations, but target potential buyers at a convention or trade show. These are usually video presentations.
- **Training and Instructional**—These projects are designed to train personnel on anything from company policies and procedures, to the proper use of equipment. Most corporate presentations are rarely seen by the general public.
- **Web Learning—**The Internet has opened up an entirely new world of voiceover opportunities for online training.

ANIMATION—Cartoons, Anime, Video Games

This is a highly specialized area of voiceover work and is not for everyone. It can be difficult to break into. Good animation voice actors can perform a wide range of character voices and have many years of acting experience. Most animation voiceover work is done in Los Angeles. Anime and video games are done in many cities.

INTERACTIVE MULTIMEDIA—Games, Training, Marketing

This market for voiceover talent developed as a result of the explosion of computer-based games and instructional software. Some software manufacturers produce audio tracks for these products entirely in house, while others are produced by outside production companies.

FILM—Looping, ADR, Dubbing, Voice Matching, Narration

Looping (recreating the background crowd ambience of a scene), ADR (Automatic, or Automated Dialog Replacement), dubbing and voice matching are specialized areas of voiceover work that require a high level of acting ability and often a talent for mimicking other voices. Film narration is common for documentaries, instructional, and marketing programs.

AUDIO BOOKS—Entertainment, Story Telling, Reading Services

Recordings of books and magazines fall into two basic categories: commercial audio books for sale and recorded books or magazines for the visually impaired. Audio books of best-selling novels are often read by a celebrity to make the recording more marketable. However, there is a growing market for audio book projects that use unknown voice talent. Recorded books and

magazines for the visually impaired may be produced locally by any number of service organizations or radio stations. The pay is usually minimal or nonexistent (you volunteer).

Most reading services prefer their "readers" to deliver their copy in a somewhat flat tone in order to maintain a degree of continuity in the "reading," over a span of several readers. This type of work is excellent for improving reading skills and acquiring the stamina to speak for long periods of time, but it limits opportunities to develop characterization and emotional or dramatic delivery skills. An Internet search for "Reading Services" followed by your city will reveal many opportunities. Or contact your local PBS radio station and ask about any reading services they might provide.

INTERNET STREAMING AUDIO—RSS, MP3, Web Learning

The introduction of the iPod® by Apple Computer created opportunities for streaming audio podcasts on the Internet. Basically, a podcast is an RSS (Really Simple Syndication) streaming audio program that is designed to synchronize with subscriber's computers. It is commonly used to provide news feeds and other audio content that is automatically downloaded to a computer for listening at a convenient time. Many podcasts are also available online in the form of downloadable MP3 files.

Podcasting gives anyone with the ability to record audio on their computer an opportunity to record their opinions and original creations or performances for the world to hear. Many podcast programs are recorded by people who are not trained in the craft and performance of voiceover.

Web learning, or Internet-based, online training, is becoming very popular with many businesses that need to efficiently train a large number of people on a small budget.