Effective Self-Marketing for Voice Actors
A guide to building a successful self-marketing strategy.

On behalf of the entire Voice Coaches team, we are delighted that you have reached this point in your training. Our web-based Effective Self-Marketing Program is designed to provide you insight into developing professional relationships as a Voice Actor. It is important for you to remember that each person entering our field has different strengths and interests as well as their own unique goals. The information covered in this class will introduce you to the basics of marketing yourself as a Voice Actor.

This guide is intended as a resource to assist you in planning and implementing an effective self-marketing strategy as a Voice Actor. It’s important to understand that not everyone is successful through the same methods of marketing. Our goal is to present a range of ideas and information that you can draw from to create a marketing plan that will fit your lifestyle, goals, and personality.

We strongly suggest that you utilize the information in this class to develop an individualized marketing approach that is appropriate for the goals that you want to achieve.

Do Something

Resist the temptation to put things off!

Prior to discussing any specifics regarding self-marketing, it’s important for you to understand that building success in a field like voice acting will require effort. As strange as it may seem, more than a few people put off their marketing efforts to the point that they never do anything to move themselves forward at all.

Though each person’s methods for self-marketing may vary, keep in mind that putting regular effort into developing success will ultimately help you reach your goals and distance yourself from your competitors.

Basic Requirements of Successful Self-Marketing

#1. Perseverance

Throughout your voice acting career, you will continually adjust your marketing efforts to capitalize on your individual strengths and to achieve your goals. Regardless of the individual methods that are best suited to you, there are five basic requirements for success in self-marketing. Understanding and applying these five specifics to your marketing plan will, at the very least, offer you a very stable foundation to work from.

Without question, the primary reason for finding a lack of success in our field, or in any other entrepreneurial endeavor, is failing to stick with it.
Though it may seem difficult for you to believe, there are many people who go through a training process, develop a demo, and never send a single demo out to a perspective client. Even more would-be voice actors give up on success after only a few months.

Here is a statistic that will really drive the point across:

Approximately 80% of new voice actors will give up and discontinue their self-marketing within 12 months!

Though it is very possible that you will find work within your first six months of self-marketing, sometimes it can take longer. One of the most successful voice actors that we had the pleasure to train didn’t really begin to work until 14 months after recording her demo. The reason she is successful today is that she stayed the course.

One of the greatest ways for you to differentiate yourself from your competitors is by simply sticking with it. If you are still regularly marketing yourself after 12 months, you will have already out-marketed 80% of your competitors.

Keep in mind… the day you give up could be the day before you would have gotten your first work opportunity!

#2. Persistence

In many cases, making a single contact with a prospective client will not be enough to make them aware of you and the benefits that your skill can offer them. Too many times we observe voice actors simply sending along a demo and never following up.

While there is certainly a chance that the single contact you make will generate a result, it will often take persistence and tasteful follow-up to truly make a potential client aware of you as a voice actor.

There are many methods for follow-up including a thank you note, forwarding an updated demo, sending out a quick letter or e-mail to advise potential clients of new work you’ve done, or even a phone call if you are comfortable on the phone.

The point is, the more contact you make with a potential client, the greater the likelihood of building a relationship with that client.

#3. Commitment

It’s natural for individuals new to any field to wonder if they will be successful.

Once in a while we run into someone who has seemingly “decided” to be successful. Instead of wondering and worrying about success, they have
convinced themselves that voice acting is their field and that success is imminent.

Though we can’t dictate this state of mind to everyone, we can suggest strongly that you make a regular commitment to your self-marketing efforts. Try to do a little something every day to move yourself forward and to remind yourself that you ARE a voice actor.

If you set aside a little bit of time on a regular basis to dedicate to building success in our field, you are, in effect, making a commitment to success.

#4. Professionalism

Regardless of how effectively you market yourself, professionalism will play an important role in developing continued work relationships with your clients. Each time you meet or work with a new client, you have an opportunity to impress them with both your voice ability and with your professionalism and studio etiquette.

In voice acting, producers and those who often hire voice actors have a strong tendency to use the same voice actors repeatedly. It is therefore incredibly important to impress your clients in an effort to develop long-term repeat work relationships.

One recent study suggests that it takes five times the effort to develop a new client relationship than it does to get new work from an existing client.

You do not want to be in the position of always looking for the next “first” job. Instead, you should balance your marketing efforts between seeking new clients and doing your best to create long-term repeat work with clients who are already familiar with your work ethic, voice ability, and professionalism.

#5. Awareness of Opportunity

Why do some individuals just seem to have all the “luck” when it comes to finding work in our field? It can certainly come down to a number of things, but often, when examined closely, luck doesn’t have a lot to do with it.

Besides having the right voice for a job and making that employer aware of you as a voice actor, many of the most successful voice actors have something else in common.

Successful voice actors are typically very aware of continuing and emerging opportunities in our field, as discussed in other chapters. In addition to these outlets you should always be aware of specific opportunities in your region. You should also be aware of opportunities that fit your specific voice style or expertise.

One of the best resources for emerging opportunities is your community’s business newspaper or the business section of a local paper. This is where you will find new companies, changes in leadership or position at existing
companies, new projects coming to your community, and a variety of other leads that can help you be the first to target a new voice opportunity.

As an example, in just one recent edition of our local business paper we found:

– A new museum approved to open next fall. Museums and public attractions typically use a lot of VO and often have their own in-house production facilities.

– Changes in leadership at two local public service organizations. New leaders often want to bring in new ideas and that can mean new voice work.

– A major influx of new business for a local video game company. Here is an obvious opportunity! A major video and film company hiring a new marketing director. An e-mail or letter with a congratulatory note and your demo is a great way to make an introduction! These are all great opportunities to develop new relationships before most of your competitors will even know that an opportunity exists. Awareness of opportunity should be a characteristic that you utilize throughout your voice-acting career.

**Places To Seek Work as a Voice Actor**

Below is a starter list of the types of businesses and organizations that often hire voice actors. This is intended as a starting place as you begin to research work opportunities in and around the area that you live in and beyond.

As you proceed with marketing yourself to some of the common types of voice acting employers listed, you’ll also begin to discover new and emerging opportunities that you can capitalize on.

Keep in mind that each individual business or organization is different. While an advertising agency in one city might be very interested in receiving your demo, another may have no interest because they only do print work. While one recording studio will happily add your demo to their library, another may have no interest or regard for you because they only do music work. The point is that this list is intended as a basic starting place.

1. Advertising Agencies
2. Public Relations Agencies
3. Video & Film Production Facilities
4. Telephone System Services
5. Translation & Transcription Firms
6. Web Site Designers
7. Marketing Consultants
8. Independent Producers and Directors
Continued Ideas On Seeking Work

In addition to the ideas above, here are some other avenues you may choose to follow that can help make those who hire voice actors aware of you.

Job Fairs, Business Expos, Bridal Fairs, etc.

Though these types of events may not scream “voice over” to you, they are actually a great way to meet and talk to business owners and to personally put your demo or business card into the hands of individuals who are responsible for creating their business’ advertising or audio communication. In the case of Bridal Fairs, be sure to speak with the videographers who are attending. You may find that they or their colleagues create other professional video work that may require the services of a voice actor. In any case, ask about them and what they do. Also, be sure to introduce yourself as a voice actor.

The Web

One of the easiest ways to search for potential work opportunities as a voice actor is with the web. Using search engines like Google™ can help you narrow your search to specific areas and types of businesses and organizations. For example, let’s say you live in Portland, Oregon and you are curious about doing voice work for museums. By typing words like “Portland,” “Oregon,” and “Museums” into the search box, you will see several web sites related to the city of Portland and the local arts community.

Another example might be a voice actor looking for State Agencies in Albany, New York. By searching words like “NY State Offices” or “Albany NY State Agencies,” you will again return many useful results.

Another way to use the web is to research information about a specific company. By viewing an organization’s web site, you can often find news about recent projects that a company has worked on or about specific staff members at that company who you may want to target with a demo or correspondence.
Tools For Effective Self-Marketing

Your Demo is Your Resume

When seeking traditional employment we’ve been taught the importance of a good resume. In the business of voice acting, your demo is your resume. You’ve worked hard to educate yourself and put a good audio representation of your voice on your demo.

In addition to your audio demo, there are a few physical marketing components that can come in handy, especially in instances where you are able to meet people face-to-face and talk about being a voice actor.

Here are some basic physical marketing components to consider:

- Business Card
- Stationery
- Mailing Labels
- Post Cards

Things to Consider

Some important do’s and don’ts regarding your marketing materials:

- Always be sure anything you’ve printed represents the real you.
- Keep it simple. Let your recorded demo do the real selling.
- Get help or advice with the design work of any printed materials if you’re not an artist or experienced in graphic design.

The All-Important First Communication

Getting your demo into the hands of a decision-maker is just the start of the process of getting voice work but it is a most important step. Sending your demo unsolicited isn’t always the best way to get noticed or have someone consider you for a voice acting job. It’s always best to make some type of initial introduction and contact.

Telephone Calls

You’ve had great telephone conversations in your life. They happen when you’re relaxed and just being yourself. This is the way you should approach every call you make. Be confident and remember that you’re a professional voice over artist. You’ve completed training and have all the tools you need to do the job. You’re not “new at this” and you are absolutely not looking for feedback on your demo. You’re simply interested in getting your demo to a fellow professional.
In many cases you’ll find that the first person you will communicate with is the receptionist, or “gatekeeper.” This individual is quite likely to intercept your call well before a creative director, producer, or other decision-maker. If a decision maker is not available, it is often perfectly fine to address your demo to the person you are speaking to. Here is an example of how a phone conversation might go.

This example is a conversation wherein you know the minimal amount of information about the recipient.

“Hi, I’m _______ and I’m a local voice over talent. I’ve just put together my latest demo and I wanted to make sure you have a copy. Is there a good email address I can use to send that along? Great, and who should I attention that to? I appreciate your time and look forward to talking to you again soon.”

Or, if you have done your research...

“Hi, I’m _______ and I’m a local voice over talent. I have to tell you I was very impressed with the commercial spot that you folks produced and I wanted to be sure to get you my most recent demo. Is ________ still your Creative Director? And is her email address still _______? Excellent, and your name is? Terrific, I appreciate your time, and I look forward to working with you.”

Knowing a little bit about the entity you are calling can go a long way toward creating a positive dialogue.

Be careful not to ask permission to send a demo. Asking permission gives an individual a chance to say no. Always use positive language like: “I wanted to be sure to get you my latest demo.”

**E-mail**

It’s easy to email somebody your demo. It’s another thing entirely to make sure they actually get your email and then take the time to listen to your demo.

One of the biggest problems with email is that when you attach a large audio file or two to an email, it will very often get automatically directed to someone’s SPAM or junk folder.

In order to avoid this, we recommend sending an initial introductory email letting the recipient know that the audio files are forthcoming, and then sending your demo in a separate email. This way, even if the email with the attachments goes to the junk mail folder, the recipient will know that they
should have gotten it and will hopefully keep a more watchful eye out for your actual demo.

Here’s an example of an introductory email:

“Hi, I’m _______ and I’m a local voice over talent. I’ve just put together my latest demo and I wanted to make sure you have a copy. I’m going to send it along in a separate email so you can file it easily, and I just wanted to draw your attention to the fact that it will follow shortly after this email. Thank you for your time, and I look forward to working with you.”

Follow Through

If you’ve been asked to send along your demo by someone, get it sent right away and be sure to include a short, personal note.

Follow-up starts about a week later. Make a quick phone call or send an email to make sure they received your demo and to thank your contact for giving it a listen. If they’re not available, ask when a good time to call might be. Leaving a voice message isn’t as helpful, it’s the live interaction you’re after.

A follow-up thank you note is also a great way to remind potential clients that you are interested in working with them.

Looking for Leads in Local and Regional Publications

As we mentioned earlier, the key to your success in business is staying on top of the latest business news. Be sure to regularly read the business section of your local daily newspaper and consider a subscription to your regional business weekly. These publications are excellent sources for voice over work leads. Look for:

- New business start-ups
- Businesses relocating to the region
- “On The Move” announcements of hiring and promotions
- New client announcements
- Announcements of business awards and nominations
- Listings of upcoming association/club meetings

All of this information can provide you a reason to contact a business that might be able to use your talents. Send a personal congratulations note or email along with your demo and remind them you’re here to help them should they have the need for a voice over artist.
Best Use of the Internet

The growth of digital communication and online services has made the internet an ever-increasing source of contacts and job opportunities. Online versions of traditional newspapers, magazines and business weeklies are rich with ideas on how to grow your business. Using the internet for research on a prospective client is now commonplace. You’ll be able to get all the contact information you need at most companies’ websites. You can also learn about a company’s latest projects, hours of operation and directions to their location.

There are also websites that will post your demo for prospective clients to hear. These web-based voice marketplaces are membership sites, meaning you do have to pay for some member services. The advantage of membership to a voice over marketplace site is that you can respond to numerous leads for voice opportunities all over the world. The disadvantage of membership to one of these sites is these web sites are so enormously saturated with hopeful voice over artists that the odds of regular work are not great.

Many of these opportunities will require you to provide the finished audio, so in this case having home recording capability is a plus. Remember, however, that these sites lists thousands of voice actors, so directing a prospective client that you have personally developed to your listing on their page may not be wise. For your own potential clients, utilize your I Can Voice web site that’s included with your training at Voice Coaches. There, a client can immediately review your demo and contact information without being able to browse demos from your competitors.

Print Advertising

Believe it or not, advertising yourself as a voice actor is an effective way to make individuals aware of you. We’re not necessarily talking about a newspaper ad or billboard here, but instead utilizing resource guides used by the professionals who will have the need for your services.

Examples are marketing resource guides, regional business papers, and Chamber of Commerce publications. Often, advertising can be as simple as a listing or a business-card advertisement in a printed directory. Web site services also have various levels of involvement. For a small annual investment, you can be seen as a professional on many web sites. Persistence can pay off with this type of advertising. If you score even one job it will usually bring you a full return on your investment.

Networking

There may be a number of local clubs and organizations in and around where you live with members who may be able to use your services. By attending one or two of their meetings, you’ll be able to decide if it’s worth the membership investment. Being able to freely network with local
business decision-makers can advance your voice acting career quite quickly. Remember, besides your voice, success comes down to making people who hire aware of you.

Our best advice is to never ignore real-world opportunities in and around your own community. These are often opportunities that become the most regular -- and best paying -- work.

Check into your local chambers of commerce, advertising clubs, marketing associations, independent film societies and business organizations. You’ll get noticed even sooner if you volunteer to help out at events like small business mixers or professional luncheons. Ask if you can be of assistance at the event’s sign-in table or as a greeter. It’s a great way to make a good first impression and meet many people one-on-one.

In fact, members of our team here at Voice Coaches are on the boards of directors of a number of local organizations and charities.

Some of the organizations to consider (all of which can be found easily online) include:

- American Marketing Association
- American Women in Radio & Television
- Ad Club
- Public Relations Society of America
- Business Marketing Association
- Your local Chamber of Commerce

The Volunteering Advantage

Here’s a great way to get continuing experience as a voice actor while networking and providing valuable assistance: volunteer! Offer to read for the visually impaired, either through a local charity or perhaps a service broadcast by your local Public Broadcasting Service (PBS) station. Spend a little time each month reading articles from local newspapers and national news magazines or other material that will benefit others. Remember, in most cases you will be able to get copies of material you record to use to update your demo.

You can also approach your church, local school district, and not-for-profit organizations. Ask if they need a voice for their telephone messaging system, public address announcements or recorded public service announcements. You’ll also make some great contacts with other community leaders who volunteer their services.

A Great Start!

Taking advantage of all the ideas included here can be a great place to start, but it’s important to remember that perseverance, persistence, commitment, and awareness of opportunity are the best methods to apply in reaching success.