



Successful Voice Acting Recording Sessions

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with
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and
Spontaneous Confusion actors

This session will give you some tips on how to cast actors and reveal common mistakes to avoid in the studio. It will also help you gain confidence in directing actors by watching real actors act out various situations you may encounter. Finally, it will model good direction techniques.

Prerequisites: Previous studio recording experience helpful but not essential.

How can you make your next narration recording as successful as possible?

First let's look at what can go wrong on the producing side...

Common casting problems

- Can you trust the voice sample?
- Getting recommendations from other actors
- Casting by demo tape or open auditions?
- Should you pay by the hour or by the session?

Common problems once in the studio for directors

- poor (or just plain wrong) casting
- poorly written script- -- actors keep suggesting changes
- miscalculating recording time
- poor scheduling of other actors
- actors can't/won't take direction
- actors talk too much and are too relaxed

Now let's look at the actor's side...

Common problems actors have with directors/producers

- directors don't know what they want and are too vague
- directors chose useless "actors" to work with (no budget for professionals)
- directors want the actor to parrot them EXACTLY, just like a robot
- no graphics or back story
- too many directors giving pointers/arguing
- low-quality recording booth with no air-conditioning due to budget constraints
- working alone on dialogue without other actors present in the studio

Tips for better performances from voice actors

Three things voice actors love

1. Be specific

"I liked the low voice that you did on the Princess Moon anime "

"No -- it's too sexy and breathy. Talk more firmly and straight."

2. Give character info

"Here's a picture of your character. He's very cunning but he's a good person underneath. We want you to play this scene so that we don't know he's a good person."

3. Provide well-written scripts

Make sure you've had a NATIVE check by a WRITER. Just because someone has an Australian/American/British passport and had to take English at school, it doesn't make that person a writer. Writing and editing are high-level skills, so make sure your native checker really is a writer/editor, not just an unskilled native speaker.

If you can't afford or find a skilled writer/editor, get checks from several different native speakers with CLEAR instructions on what kind of feedback you need.

E.g. " Can you check this for (a) naturalness of dialogue (b) grammar and spelling (c) layout (d) all of the above!

Use at least a size 14 font with double spacing...it's easy to read.

COURSE NOTES SUMMARY

How can you make your next narration recording as successful as possible?

Casting tips

1. Get actors to record 10 lines of script at home -- in character -- and email it in as a sound file
2. Listen to other actors. If they say another actor is “difficult,” they are probably telling the truth!
3. Talent is cheap -- an actor with good character and behavior is much more valuable than the “perfect” voice
4. Open auditions are notoriously time-consuming. Only hold them if you’ve got a lot of time and enough people to go through all the samples. Otherwise just cast from voice demos

Successful recording reminders

1. Make sure you’ve had the script checked by a native WRITER prior to the studio recording.
2. Make sure you’ve checked the timing of the script beforehand
3. Provide pictures and/or short character histories to help actors
4. Listen to actors’ feedback and be open with them. “That’s a great idea -- let’s record it your way” saves a lot of arguments and angst on the part of the actor. Then you can also get them to record it YOUR way! Win win!
5. Watch the clock. Don’t let actors eat up your time. Be strict
6. Make sure the sound booth is air-conditioned and water is available. Screaming hurts vocal cords!
7. Decide beforehand who is the director. Don’t make the actor’s job more difficult position by requiring them to take instruction from several different people.
8. Make direction and feedback as specific as possible
9. Make sure you have actors sign confidentiality agreements beforehand. You don’t want them blogging about your project!!
10. Try not to ask for a million different takes. Be decisive about what you want.