Building A Voiceover

Many are aware, but for those who are not, producing a voiceover for a 60 second commercial requires much more than 60 seconds of time and labor. Similarly, producing an hour of finished voiceover for eLearning or an audiobook can require many hours of work. In fact, ACX.com, an industry leading website that supports Amazon audiobook production and sales via Audible.com, calculates that one hour of a finished audiobook requires 6.2 hours of voiceover production. What follows is a breakdown of some of the most common procedures involved as a way of explaining why time and cost may be different than initially expected.

Copy Familiarization

This includes reading the copy before recording to see where problems may occur. It might be a matter of getting comfortable with technical jargon or specific language or regional pronunciations. Also, not everything written sounds "natural" when read out loud. Any of these issues, or others, may require feedback from the client. If the copy doesn't sound normal or natural to the ear the listener may become distracted, whereas listener engagement is usually the goal.

Initial Setup

This procedure may be very basic on projects with lesser content but can become much more complex on longer projects. Such projects may require many individual audio files that can be handed off to the client to be added to videos or slides as part of training courses or other presentations. For everyone's sanity, it's best if the voiceover talent takes the time to organize the material into discrete segments with descriptive filenames such as "Chapter 1 Slide 1", "Chapter 1 Slide 2", etc. This will be more helpful for the client not only when taking possession of the files for the first time, but also down the road if they need to revisit the project.

Voice Recording and Editing

No one can read everything perfectly in one take, although professional voiceover talent are more practiced at this than most. We want every phrase to sound perfect. Sometimes that means going over certain sentences a few times to get it right. Maybe there's a stumble, maybe there was a mouth click that has to be taken out, maybe a distracting breath, maybe a mistake went unnoticed while recording and has to be revisited, or any number of other things. This is all normal for any voiceover talent. Editing out these imperfections and blending the voiceover into a seamless whole may be the most time consuming part of voiceover production.

Packaging

This will depend on the project, but with eLearning for example, individual files that could number in the hundreds may need to be exported. For the most part, this is automated, especially if organized well in the initial setup. But those files may need to be converted to a different format. While it may be automated, it takes time.

Uploading Files

This is usually pretty simple, but there is time involved in uploading the files to a client, especially if it must be done a certain way.

The Bottom Line

This is just some of what goes into voiceover production, especially projects that have a lot of content to record. Please note, the work done before sending the copy to the voiceover artist is an important part of this process and can mean a smoother experience for all involved. But, when a quote is generated at a higher cost than expected, or the voiceover is calculated to take longer than envisioned, please take into account the time and work that goes into nearly every voiceover project.

Jeff Johnson

Voice Actor
Jeff@JeffJohnsonSpeaks.com
www.JeffJohnsonSpeaks.com

(inspired by a similar work from Mike Klassen)