

8 tips to order voice over services

Do you often use voice over services? Or is it the first time and you want to know the mistakes to avoid. Read this article to know how to order a voice over without a problem.

1) Listen to the right sample

You don't need to listen to all the demos of a voice over to build your opinion, only to the right one! For instance, if you have a project of cartoon, listening to a demo on corporate movie won't be very useful to make up your mind... The type of project will definitely impact the interpretation of the voice actor.

Of course, each project is unique and you will not always find the appropriate demo, with the expected tone. In that case, listening to at least 3 to 4 demos can give you an idea of a voice's range and skills.

But the point of contacting an agency, among other things, is that you can get precious advice from professionals who know the voice actors and can be critical about their profile. With Presta Voice, you can ask for an audition and describe your project. This way, you get a custom selection of talents and the demos you receive are already chosen according to your project.

To be sure to make the right decision, you can even ask the agency to have few lines of your text recorded by the actors of the selection. This will allow you to compare voices on a common sample and in the very context of your project! Most of time, it won't be a problem for voice talents to record this for free: this is part of the audition.

2) Demos, with or without music?

You might be thinking that a demo is more "honest" without music and you are certainly right to some extent: Music will hide the imperfections by covering mouth clicks, too loud breaths or other similar minor problems. Furthermore, music is often meant to create emotions, which will impact your judgement of the voice and make it less impartial.

Yet, keep in mind that if your project uses a background music, listening to the voice in a similar audio environment might be more relevant than hearing it dry. Even if the quality of the voice itself will be harder to asses, it is an easier way to imagine what your project could sound like once fully edited.



Furthermore, it is precisely the job of a voice over agency to select voices for their quality. Despite this, be careful not to trust any platform, since many of them only gather as many so-called “voice overs” as possible, without caring for their professionalism. As far as we are concerned, each voice actor or actress is carefully selected to join our data basis. So with or without music, you can expect quality from the audio definition, as well as the acting.

3) Did you say Home Studio?

For some people, “home studio” means a bad quality. And this is no surprise, because many actors record with poor quality audio equipment and in a terrible acoustic environment. On the other side, some invest up to 30 000 euros in their home studio. Then, the quality reached can compare to professional studios (only considering voice over recordings).

In the case of voice actors recording from home, the problem is generally not the audio equipment itself but the acoustics of the room. You can have a very good microphone for instance, but still have a poor quality due to the acoustics.

To ensure the quality that a voice reaches through a home studio, information on the equipment is needed, as well as listening to dry recordings. This means spending a lot of time researching, listening and selecting demos and actors. Once again, it is a work that Presta Voice makes upstream to guarantee a professional outcome.

On the side of voice talents, investing that much to be available remotely has a certain interest. This way they can offer their services in the best timing, or internationally! So this is a good way to find talents abroad, but in that case, the help of an agency is even more precious to make a selection on quality.

4) The vocal range of a voice actor.

Most of time for a corporate movie or an e-learning, when the tone will be straight and neutral, it will not be necessary to know the vocal range of an actor. But for a cartoon character or if a jingle needs to be sung, it might be relevant to ask the range and/or the pitch of a voice.

A distinction must be made between those two.

In few words:

- Range: It includes every note a voice is able to reach, from the highest to the lowest one.
One may have a range of four octaves for instance.
- Pitch: This is determined by the part of the range in which a voice naturally feels comfortable. When it comes to singing, there are specific terms for the pitch, that you heard all before: bass, baritone, tenor, soprano...



You might be able to make a voice really low or really high (as parts of your range), but it is certainly uncommon to feel confident with all pitches. That may sound obvious, but always ask yourself, while choosing a voice, if the pitch seems to match your character.

Of course, listening to several demos is what you need to really assess vocal skills.

5) Editing and Post production

Editing is key. It is the part that will make the quality of your file optimal for use (based on a quality take, of course).

On a voice over, the post production work will consist in removing (or lowering) mouth clicks, noisy breaths and some unpleasant frequencies.

When listening to a sample, focus on the transitions and breaths of the voice.

If the ends of some sentences seem roughly cut and some beginnings abrupt, this means the editing was not made carefully and with precision (which happens more often than you might think).

The editing and post production steps are essential to make the audio take ready for diffusion, yet it is not necessarily provided among voice over services: voice talents are not sound engineers. Always ask about this part as well before having a project recorded, or you may need to find and to pay a sound engineer afterward. Make sure this service is included in the fees of the agency, as it is the case with Presta Voice.

6) The fees and the level of service

Many people assume there is no specific requirement for being a voice over, since anyone can talk! So you will find, around the voice over industry, countless alternatives that are amateurish or of poor ethics. More specifically on the internet, the offers always come in greater numbers for cheaper prices. The professionalism of an actor or a platform must always be assessed.

If you are not familiar with the world of voice over, it can be risky to search for an actor without the help of an agency. For instance, a voice talent can have a very good project, recorded in studio for a big brand, presented as a demo on his/her website. But when you contact him/her directly you can be offered a take from a home studio, which may be of very different quality.

Always make your request to several actors, to make sure the prices are in the same range, or use the services of selective agency such as Presta Voice. Even with the agency fees, you can be sure to get a price that corresponds to a professional service.



7) Be specific!

Our experience suggests that most of the projects that did not turn out well suffered from a lack of precision, often regarding the deadline, the brief and the script

Therefore, it is essential to:

- Define a precise deadline and make it clear from the start.
- Make a detailed brief, that is to say the acting expected, the pace, the tone...
- Only give a finalized script for recording.

On this last point, some projects are compromised because the script is modified along the way, as recordings are being made. The translation is flawed, or your clients judges the quality of the texts after the script is recorded.

Then the actor can ask rightly to increase the fees of the performance, because of the additional takes. This will impact directly the fees of the agency as well.

Regarding the timing, if there is a deadline to meet, it must be specified before the project start, so the voice talent knows directly if his/her availabilities match the requirements. The acting indication must be given in advance too, if possible with a vocal example, such as a video from the web for instance. It is often easier to make the actor listen to the tone he must do, rather than just describing it.

8) To avoid retakes

When you are not satisfied by the vocal performance of an actor, you can ask for a new recording, a retake. Each voice talent can have a personal policy on this question, but most of the time, consider things this way: you can expect a retake for free, as long as you ask it for a reason that relies on the actor, rather than you.

For example, you asked for a dynamic tone and the outcome sounds still a bit too calm or too excited for you. In that case, a retake should not be a problem. But if the text does not sound as well as you imagined and you want to have it recorded again with modifications, it is not because of the actor. It doesn't mean that the actor will necessarily charge you the retake, but then, it is a bit like a favor. Otherwise additional costs can rightly be asked for additional work and it can reach up to 100% of the initial price, for a total retake.

Furthermore, if you are being offered one or two free retakes, try not to ask more. These won't stay free very long and moreover, that means the problem may come from the choice of the voice. If you often order voice over services, this is one more reason to avoid repeated retakes: it would give you a bad reputation as a client, in the world of voice over.



So, to avoid retakes, make clear all the required precisions (see previous tip) at the start of the project. Keep in mind that each take that reaches you required work from the voice but also from the post production.

For wide scale projects, consider making some tests at the start, on short parts of the script, to check the result and rectify potential imperfection or misunderstanding on the brief or anything. This way you make sure to have the best outcome before moving on to the whole recording and editing process.

Conclusion

When you order voice over services, don't forget to fully describe your project, to provide the final version of the script and the questions you have to your agency without hesitation. The agency is there to bring you answers, advice and help with your project. Apart from that, make sure to always listen to the demos with your project in mind. Asses the voices with the tips provided in this guide your project should go just fine!

Any question?

We hope you found this article useful; If you have any questions, you can contact us by phone or by email. It is always a pleasure to bring you our expertise in this domain.

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