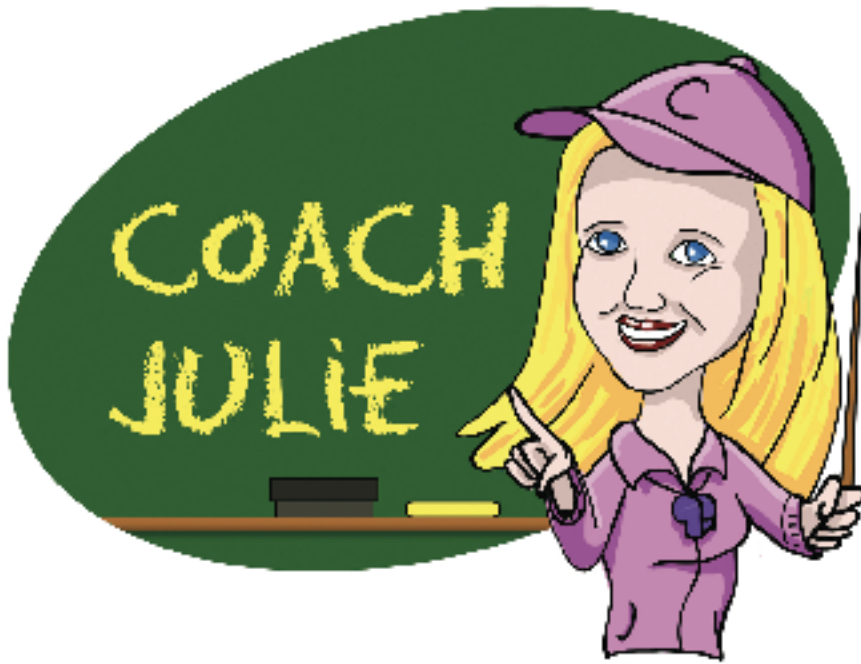


# I've got my demo...NOW WHAT?

A short course in beginning  
and running a voice-over business



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## Business is Business

Your VO business is a business. If you treat it like a hobby, then you'll reap far less in the way of financial rewards. This means you need to invest time and money for the proper tools.

I teach a simple 1-2-3 approach to beginning your VO business

1. You get a product to sell. This includes training and refining of your skills and talents.
2. You create your free sample—your primary marketing tool. This is your demo(s). You do NOT want to cut corners on your demo.
3. Sell your services. Marketing yourself is the business of the business. You will need to create a plan and stick with it. Fortunately, we don't have to reinvent the wheel. Here's a simple plan you can implement and modify for your individual needs.

### The Demo

There are a number of things you'll need to do as you begin your voice-over business. First and foremost—before you do anything else—get GOOD training by a reputable coach, and when you're ready (not before then and not according to their curriculum...but according to your readiness) produce your demo(s). Finding a coach could be a challenge because there are so many scam artists and incompetents, as well as talents who are teaching because they can't make a living at VO. These are not the people you want to train with. Feel free to email me at [julie@Voice-Overs.com](mailto:julie@Voice-Overs.com) and let me know what genre of VO you want to focus on first, and I'll be happy to recommend a coach to you. (Note: It won't always be me I recommend!)

### Now What?

Now that you've got a good demo there are a number of things you need to do. I've outlined them below. You may have already completed some of

these or have them in process—so you'll be creating your own plan for success.

## What You Will Need

### A. Demos

One for each genre

Professionally produced only (do it yourself in a radio station production room and I PROMISE they WILL know and you won't be hired!)

### B. Quality Studio

Dead—No Reflection

Sound Proof

Able to get online

Editing Software (TW, Audition, Audacity, ProTools, etc.)

System such as ipDTL

### C. Branding

Sound

Message

Web Site (You can get this done for under \$500)

D. A Priority Management System (We'll work on this)

E. Business Cards

F. Agents

G. Casting Directors

H. P2P Memberships

I. Social Media Strategies

J. Networking (We won't have time to delve into this, here.)

We'll now take these and put them into the business prioritization planning chart.



## SUGGESTED DEMOS AND DEMO PRODUCERS

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FALSE	Commercial Demo	Absolutely necessary to get an agent.: Julie Williams, Bill Holmes
FALSE	Narration Demo	Encompasses: eLearning/Explainer videos. One of the fastest growing genres in VO. Julie Williams
FALSE	IVR/Telephony	This is a low budget genre. You can produce this demo yourself. Make sure there's music behind some of your cuts, and at least one has a voice on hold segment. You really only need three good cuts for this demo.
FALSE	Medical Narration	This is a form of advanced narration that has absolutely NOTHING to do with terminology (most coaches think it does!) Julie Williams is the foremost coach in medical narration whom all the top coaches send their students to. It's about telling a story—even if you don't understand the story that you are telling! Do NOT produce this demo by yourself! Julie Williams... Sorry, for this I really can't in good conscience recommend anyone else!
FALSE	Political	Needs to be professionally produced. Julie Williams, Marc Graue
FALSE	TV Promo	Needs to be professionally produced. Joyce Castellanos, Gabrielle Nistico
FALSE	Radio Imaging	Needs to be professionally produced. Gabrielle Nistico.
FALSE	Audiobook	Production can be done in your studio if you're a good enough editor to provide pristine audio (especially important in this genre) However, coaching should be provided by a great coach. Pat Fraley or Julie Williams. Note: If YOU do the post production, get a discount on the normal demo price All you'll need is perhaps ONE HOUR of the demo producer's time!
FALSE	Character	Absolutely MUST be professionally produced. Pat Fraley, Lisa Biggs.
FALSE	Children's demos	Absolutely MUST be professionally produced. Lisa Biggs.

# DEMOS

You will need a professionally produced demo for most of the above areas. Don't worry, there are coaches who will do a number of demos at very reasonable prices. Which genres do you want to work in?

# YOUR STUDIO

## QUALITY

- DEAD—No reflection.
    - Auralex on walls
    - Comforters on walls
    - In a closet
    - Clap and listen for any echo at all
    - Window Plug (photo below)
    - Cloud (Photo below)
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- SOUNDPROOF
    - Often difficult for talent who work at home battling neighborhood landscaping noises, as well as planes, cars, and motorcycles.
    - Double doors
    - Window plug
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- INTERNET
  - Able to get online (from anywhere in the house?)
  - Highest speed you can get

- EDITING AND RECORDING SOFTWARE
  - Twisted Wave- mac only —~\$80 (also on iPad & iPhone)
  - Audacity—Free
  - Adobe Audition—~\$300 (one month trial?)
  - Sound Forge—~\$80
  - ProTools—~\$500 with purchase on M-Box

- INTERFACE
  - Scarlet 2i2 \_\_\_\_\_
  - Centrance Mic Port Pro \_\_\_\_\_
  - MBox \_\_\_\_\_

# BRANDING

## REFLECTION OF

- Your sound
- Your service
- Your name
- Whatever makes you memorable and describes you

## MUST REFLECT YOU!

- Fruit Loops/ All bran
- “ This Cat’s Got Pipes!”

# CONNECTING WITH CLIENTS

- ISDN
- Source Connect
- ipDTL (Chrome only)
- Phone patch

# WEB SITE

- Should reflect your brand
- Have your demos on home page
- All above the fold
- Simple requirements
  - Home page (demos and welcome)
    - with player to play all your demos in ONE player (less clutter)
  - Bio page (can include friendly looking headshot of you)
  - Clients (IF and only if you have a lot of name clients)
  - Contact with whatever contact info you want to share
- Can get basic site done for \$450-\$800!

# PRIORITY MANAGEMENT SYSTEM

See Proactive/Reactive above

## BUSINESS CARDS

Make sure they reflect your brand

- Glossy
- QR Codes
- [VistaPrint.com](http://VistaPrint.com) (Try [VistaPrint.com/VIP](http://VistaPrint.com/VIP))

## Agents

- Easier than ever to get representation
    - [VoiceBank.net](http://VoiceBank.net)
  - Check web site for submission policies
  - Most are non-exclusive & many building non-union roster—playing numbers game.
  - Get to know and market to them
  - Note: For non-union, many increase the commissions from 10% to 20%
- Agents I'd like to be with:

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# Casting Directors

- Going directly to source
- But many get leads from [VoiceBank.net](http://VoiceBank.net) and charge higher commissions than agents do.
- Often go through agents, but don't always. Sometimes, they contact you directly. Stay in contact with them! Market to them.

Casting Directors I'd Like to Approach. \_\_\_\_\_

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# Pay 2 Play

- Pay to Play Marketplaces can hire both union and non-union talent
- Not all jobs are lowballed!
- Who I DON'T RECOMMEND and why
- Who I DO RECOMMEND and why
- All have free profiles

Which P2P, if any, do I want to pursue:

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# SOCIAL MEDIA STRATEGIES

- Not my area of expertise
- Facebook—GROUPS Join groups to help you such as the “Twisted Wave” user group, the eLearning group (if you’re an established eLearning professional, the Audiobook Narrators user group (if you’re an established audiobook narrator)
- BUT spend most time on a dedicated page for CLIENTS...not other talents or your mother!

I’m on: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

I want to be on: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Marketing Strategy: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

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# NETWORKING EVENTS

- This has been called the “company picnic.”
- It’s a time to get to know prospects... not to promote yourself.
- Get THEIR business card for follow up later. Only offer yours if it’s asked for!

Events to go to in the future that will give me access to key folks in the genres that I want to work in.

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Ideas to make a difference at these events!

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Articles by Julie Williams:

## Keep the Spotlight On the Star

By Julie Williams

“Pay no attention to the man behind the curtain,” the Wizard told Dorothy and her friends. And for good reason. Once they saw the Wizard, the magic was gone.

In voice-over, YOU are the man behind the curtain! The star?? It’s the cartoon character to which you give life, the story you’re telling, the message you’re portraying, the lesson you’re teaching, the reassurance you’re giving, the product you’re selling, and so on. That’s why the voice itself is not only relatively insignificant in voice-over, it can actually get in the way.



“I’ve always been told I’ve got a great voice and I should do voice-overs,” Newbies often say. They were misled to believe that they’d be “discovered” once someone heard their “great voice!” And most likely, the person recommending a voice-over career actually knows nothing about the industry!

But whether you’re a voice-over Wanna-Be, Newbie, or Worker- bee, the message is still the same. Keep the spotlight on the star! You can’t let your voice mask the message . This is easier said than done, of course. But it is essential. If the listener is distracted by your great voice, or an insincere delivery, they look to the man behind the curtain. And they can’t see

the star if the spotlight is on the man behind the curtain. It's nice for VO folks to get a little attention now and then, sure, but the client is paying good money for you to use your voice to focus the spotlight on the star!

How can you keep the spotlight on the star? Three ways.

First of all, understand the story, message, and purpose of what you are voicing, and the audience to whom you're talking. That will help you set the mood and tone for the VO. Then just "tell" the script!

Secondly, use all the tools in your arsenal to make the script your own. It must sound sincere—as if you wrote the words you're saying! Nothing moves that spotlight off the message and on to the man behind the curtain faster than an insincere read. And using improper inflection, punching words rather than coloring them, sounding like an announcer, and not "feeling what you're saying" are the fast track to sounding insincere.

And finally, focus YOUR attention on the star—and not the man behind the curtain! Don't think about how you sound when you're talking! Think about what you're saying! Just let it come out naturally. One well known coach, while producing a demo for a VO talent who was obviously enjoying the sound of his own voice, said to a colleague, "He's having himself!" If you cannot focus on the star as you voice the job—how can the end listener?

Like with the Wizard, once focus is on the star and not the man behind the curtain, magic happens! Of course, the process is not an easy one. Most voice-over artists cannot, or do not do it. That's why those who do have the potential to make very good money! By focusing the spotlight on the star—they deliver a stellar performance!

Julie Williams is a voice-over talent with decades of experience and thousands of voice-overs to her credit. An acclaimed talent, she is also highly regarded as a voice-over coach who's students have gone on to do national commercials, and narrations for Discovery Channel, DIY, and other national networks. For more information, contact [Julie@voice-overs.com](mailto:Julie@voice-overs.com) or check out [JulieWilliamsCoaches.com](http://JulieWilliamsCoaches.com).

## The Girl in the Red Coat

By Julie Williams

In the movie Schindler's List, scenes were shot in black and white. And the audience got used to that. But do you remember the girl in the red coat? Amidst the dreary black and white—your eyes were immediately drawn to the girl in the red coat, right? BE the girl in the red coat.

When a prospect is listening to dozens of demos or auditions, they all begin to sound black and white. But if you add an additional dimension to your read—through your own unique style (the style that is YOU and not just a nice generic, “anybody coulda done it” read,) -the ear will gravitate toward you.

Even if there are a couple of other competitors who have savvy enough to be in color, your odds are one in three, perhaps, to land the job. Then it comes down to—not who is the best talent, but who is the “right” talent for the job. In this way, you have no competition. There may be many voices—but there is only one you.

Who is the right talent? It may be the one who sounds like the voice in the clients head when he approved the copy. Or the style that makes him think, “Wow, I never thought of it that way.”

We'll discuss how to find your personal style in a future article in the VoiceOver Insider. Meantime, let me leave you with this final thought. We can't presume to predict what is in the minds of those who cast VO jobs. We can only know that if we do the copy well (as so many will) the one who will stand out is the one in the red coat.



## What Does It Take To Be An Audiobook Narrator?

By Julie Williams

“Who are those voices telling the story?” you might ask as you listen to an audiobook. “I’d be good at that,” you think to yourself. You may be right. Audiobook narrators come in all shapes and sizes. By that, I am not referring to the diversity of talent so much as the diversity of their backgrounds.

Scott Brick, for example, spent his early career touring California in a Shakespearean repertory company; that was usually about half of his income, “so I spent the other half of his time at a day job, World Trade Bank in Beverly Hills, answering phones and trying to stave off boredom,” he says. Also a freelance writer of more than 300 articles, Brick is so grateful that he discovered audiobooks. He has since voiced about 600 titles, “all of which thrill me no end. Far more satisfying than answering phones,” he exclaims.

Then there’s Randy Haymes who spent decades as a morning co-host of the Hudson & Harrigan show on KILT in Houston. He made a seamless transition into the audiobook industry and has now voiced close to a dozen books.

Grover Gardner narrates and casts books for Blackstone audio. He began narrating audiobooks for the Library of Congress’ “Talking Books” program when I was a graduate acting student in the early 1980s. “It was something I’d always wanted to do, based on my love of reading, theatre and radio broadcasting.” To date he’s recorded more than 800 books.

Vanessa Hart was a full time professional actor for 25 years, before she transitioned into voice-over and subsequently audio books. Her first break in audiobooks came when another narrator dropped out a mutual acquaintance recommended Vanessa for the job. She got acclaim for that first book and her career took off. She has voiced more than 65 audiobooks in the past 5 years.

Unlike the voice-over industry, the audio book narration field is fairly easy to get into—no matter what your background—if you have the skills to perform books. And by that I don’t necessarily mean character voices and dialects, or even acting (I am not an actor) but rather the ability to tell a story. There is a place for characters and dialects—usually in fiction audiobooks such as books set in other countries or regions of America that you don’t live in—and books such as Huck Finn, narrated by Pat Fraley, the man of about 4000 voices you’ve heard in Hollywood.

How do you know if you have what it takes to excel in audiobook narration? Here are a few indicators that you might be a good storyteller.

- Do you love reading aloud?
- Do you like working at home?
- Are you a self-starter who is good at meeting deadlines?
- Could you handle auditioning and NOT getting the job without taking it personally?



- Do you like reading stories using character voices?
- Do you read a lot?
- Do you listen to audiobooks?

If some of these describe you, you may want to look into the field of audiobook narration as a career or a second career. Don't be discouraged if you don't say yes to all of the above. Neither do I. But the first three, in my opinion, are essential.

Because it is so easy to market audiobooks on sites such as Audible.com, iTunes, and Amazon.com, audio book narration is one of the fastest growing fields today. There are literally thousands of books awaiting narrators, and anyone can audition for them. The glut of books to be voiced is somewhat temporary as the industry strives to get almost every book (older titles) on audio.

I've heard it said that only celebrities get cast for audiobooks. While it is true that celebrities are often cast, that is usually for retail product; abridged versions of audio books. There is an increasing demand for unabridged versions to sell online and to libraries, who want books to be "true to the author's intent," read word for word. These projects are hours long. Hiring celebrities to voice them is cost prohibitive.

Compensation for audiobooks varies based on experience and skill. Narrators are typically paid on revenue share basis (percentage of sales) or pfh (per finished hour). That means if the final product is ten hours long, they're paid for ten hours. It typically takes me about 15-20 hours to voice a 10-hour book, depending on the difficulty of the text. The hourly rate can range anywhere from \$100-\$400 pfh. Note that it is a minority of talent who receive the high end. Typical narrations pay \$150-\$300 pfh. The average freelance narrator (based on my experience and not on and scientific data) can expect to earn about \$200 pfh. Beginners will command less in the free marketplace.

Not everyone is cut out for a career in audiobook narration, and some choose to voice books part time. That's the beauty of working for oneself! Voicing audiobooks is far from the most lucrative voice-over genre, but for those who love to read aloud, tell stories, and leave a tangible legacy, it doesn't feel like work. It feels like having fun and getting a present from the mailman when the check comes in!

*Julie Williams is a voice-over talent, audiobook narrator, and talent coach of more than 35 years with thousands of jobs to her credit. She was a 2010 Audie Award finalist (The “Oscars” of audiobook narration.) While she does private coaching on a regular basis (contact [julie@voice-overs.com](mailto:julie@voice-overs.com))*

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