

Voices.com

2013 Voice Over Trends

Introduction

In order to thrive in a changing industry, one must adapt and participate in the manner that is required of them to prosper. Should an individual fail to comply with the mainstream philosophy and the requirements therein, they forfeit their position amongst their peers in the new order.

Freelance and professional voice-over talent that work online have already made the first leap, have acknowledged the current state of the industry and the accepted practices for receiving work and promoting their services to a global audience.

Because you are reading this document, you may count yourself among the enlightened that have become accustomed to digital technology and have embraced the Internet and its many purposes. This white paper will give you an exciting forecast of where the industry is going and how you can stay on top of it.

Enabling the Digital Revolution

We are certainly in the midst of the digital revolution. Some say we are still in its infancy. This revolution can be characterized by the wide-spread adoption of hardware devices, software programs and apps and digital content.

The demand for high quality content, commonly referred to as digital media, has never been higher. Consider how each of us has changed our daily behavior, just in the last couple of years. All media is now "digital media."

Freelancing on the Internet

With the advent of the Internet, opportunities of global proportion have descended on business professionals, including those in the voice-over industry. Using this new medium, talent are able to communicate, audition, and deliver their audio to employers at the speed of their technical capabilities and the Internet.

Work opportunities are achieved in one of two ways online. Either employers contact talent directly from their personal business sites or they select from a pool of talent using a voice-over service provider or marketplace.

Transforming the Value Chain

Before the Internet, mobile devices and portable audio recording devices, there was the age of the walk-in audition. This was followed by telephone casting, CDs being sent in the mail, and employer referrals. These activities were for the most part engaged in by agencies representing talent, however, many entrepreneurs began to champion their own careers in addition to the efforts of their representation and union affiliations, resulting in the prominent rise of the freelance professional.

Though these methods are not entirely obsolete, the environment and processes for auditioning talent has changed as have the enhanced parameters defined by employers and the technical knowledge and self-representative capabilities possessed by individual voice-over talent.

Nowadays, the majority of the voice-over work is procured online. Again, a prospective employer is searching Google or ultimately ending up at an online marketplace such as Voices.com. The employer's hiring process tends to start and end online.

Managing Time & Costs

Collapsing Time

One of the primary reasons that employers, be they creative producers, advertising agencies, marketing executives or video editors, choose Voices.com is because of extremely tight time constraints. Simply put, they can't find a voice talent using their traditional means, so they start to explore.

The value of an online marketplace lies in the single point of solicitation. In effect, the client can post their job, receive proposals, quotes and most importantly auditions from a variety of talent in a matter of minutes, if not hours. The "wow" factor is a common reaction when clients realize that by working through Voices.com, they can cut their production timelines by as much as 80%. Projects are often completed within 24-48 hours.

Controlling Costs

The other reason why clients choose Voices.com is the cost savings. To be clear, the savings come from the elimination of administrative burdens, travel, studio time, day rates for in-person casting sessions and engineering time. The amount earned by the Voices.com talent has remained the same. Session fees or project fees have certainly remained competitive. In fact, at Voices.com, the average fee per job has increased by 10% in the last year.

Recognizing the Opportunity

Facing the Challenge

The challenge for media and entertainment companies is not in the distribution. For the last 100 years, the distribution system has been working well. Traditional radio and television stations, movie studios and distribution partners are all examples of that system in effect. Presently, mobile platforms, social networks and more broadly, the Internet serve as the distribution system.

The fundamental problem facing the media and entertainment industry is creating high quality content at scale. This is the friction point. Digital media content creation is the most efficient part of the process and production companies can't keep up with the demand to create digital media, which consists of mixing audio, video, images and text into a compelling story.

Recognizing the Opportunity

Having stated the challenge, this also highlights the opportunity at hand. In the coming pages, six vertical markets will be described revealing what they are, how fast the market is growing and how big the market is currently. All the statistics will be sourced when appropriate.

People use smartphones, tablets, laptops, desktops, e-readers, game consoles, connected TVs and set-top boxes to access video and other content, and they expect that content to flow seamlessly across devices and media platforms. This presents opportunities for brand marketers and content owners that understand how to deliver to increasingly demanding customers.

Advertising

The global advertising market reached \$495 billion this year, up +3.8% on 2011. The US remains the largest market with \$153 billion in advertising revenues. Japan, China, Germany and the UK complete the top five.

Video is the fastest-growing segment of online advertising, and for good reason. The amount of online and mobile video content is exploding, and most of this content is supported by some type of video spot. The ubiquitous voice-over helps tell the brand story in a compelling and meaningful way.

Viewing online video is a burgeoning habit among the US population, with 50.5% of the population engaging in this activity in 2011. Growth will continue at a modest pace through 2015, when penetration will increase to 60.1% of the general population. Advertisers looking to connect with prospective buyers will be relying more heavily on video, regardless of if the sale is to be made to a consumer (B2C) or a business (B2B).

Broadcasting

Television

Conventional TV will continue to dominate spending: At \$64.5 billion, TV will make up 38.9% of total media ad spending in the US in 2012. In contrast, online video's \$2.9 billion will contribute a mere 1.7%. That imbalance is why Dave Morgan, chief executive officer of Simulmedia, said that digital video advertising "is more of a compliance buy when the clients say they want multiscreen."

Radio

Over-the-air radio spending was up 7.2% last year, and will rise a further 2.5% in 2011. Radio had a positive year, partly because it's an inexpensive, flexible medium often used to drive traffic and promotions when branding campaigns are reduced in challenging times.

Educating

Explaining with Video Tutorials

Another form of demonstration which has become very popular as of late are “explainer” videos. These can take a variety of forms including animated characters, stop motion, paper cut-outs, claymation and white-boarding. CommonCraft, a pioneer in this field, created simple videos using paper cut-outs to represent the characters and then adding voice-overs for the dialog between the characters. Today, SwitchVideo is a leading provider of explainer videos. The goal of these videos is for the viewer to understand what it is the product does. If a business shows a video to a person in their target audience and that individual understands what the product does after watching the video, the video is then considered successful, mission accomplished.

Demonstrating New Products with Video

When companies innovate and introduce new products to the market, video is becoming the go-to format to explain how a product or service works. An example is how inventor Josh Guyot’s highly successful Kickstarter Campaign included a product prototype video that conveyed to the world the amazing possibilities of Galileo™.

Gaming

The video game industry is one of the fastest growing sectors in the U.S. economy. The North American video game market will continue growing by approximately five percent annually through 2015. From 2005-2009 the industry's rate of growth was more than seven times the rate of growth for the entire economy. In addition, computer and video game companies posted strong overall sales in 2011 with revenues of nearly \$25 billion.

As Brandon Curial, president and CEO of game developer and publisher Venan Entertainment Inc., says, "You have the older gamers that haven't stopped playing, and you have younger kids that are getting into it every day. Each year, the market just expands, and it's going to keep expanding for, well, a long time."

There is a positive economic impact of the gaming industry. Currently, video game companies directly and indirectly employ more than 120,000 people. The average compensation for direct employees is \$90,000, resulting in total national compensation of \$2.9 billion.

Publishing

eReaders and eBooks

eReaders and eBooks will follow similar growth trajectories over the next several years, reflecting the close link between content and technology. eMarketer estimates the number of US adult eReader users will reach 53.9 million by 2014, up from 33.3 million in 2011. US eBook revenues are expected to soar to \$4.5 billion in 2015, from \$1.7 billion in 2011.

Audiobooks

The Audio Publishers Association recently conducted two surveys that show the industry's continued growth and highlighted the value of audiobooks to the consumer marketplace. Unit sales were up nearly 10% in the past year, showing continued consumer interest in audiobooks.

Streaming

Cloud-based music streaming has arrived in force. Over the past 12 months, on-demand streaming service Tech giants Apple and Amazon launched file-locker systems that allow users to integrate their personal digital music libraries with cloud-based streaming servers; internet broadcasters Spotify and Pandora continue to gain users; and a plethora of other services rose to meet the competitive demands of a reshaped market.

Online Audio Ads

An important finding is that digital audio listening is not a trend—it's a behavior. TargetSpot, with 40 million monthly unique listeners, reaching over 64% of all online listeners (17), has observed the following: The audience is growing, and listening days and time spent are consistent and lengthy. Listeners simply want access to content via the most convenient delivery option. Engagement has grown as consumers become more comfortable with the medium and functionality of digital audio content sites. Audio ads work. New consumer access points and high engagement levels have led to notable increases in both ad recall and response.

Concluding thoughts

What is clear is that there is overwhelming amount of digital media content for every interest imaginable. This content is packaged in both bite-size pieces as well as long formats. The common thread is that it's all digital.

For the foreseeable future, the voice-over, performed by a professional voice talent, will remain an important means of telling the story. Yes, the visual element tends to take center stage, however it's almost always accompanied by a voice-over. And, for those situations where there is no visual element such as radio, streaming audio content, online audio ads, audiobooks and the like, the human voice shines.

As a community of professionals, it will be our responsibility to work together and rise to the challenge of creating digital content that we can be proud of. Join us in this revolution, the digital revolution.