

"You name

We have



**Adam Morgan**

0414 392 412

**Victoria Morgan**

0422 927 823

**Phone:** (08) 8377 5574

**Fax:** (08) 8377 5575

[biz@voiceoversonthenet.net](mailto:biz@voiceoversonthenet.net)

[www.voiceoversonthenet.net](http://www.voiceoversonthenet.net)

## Audio for effective **E Learning**



### **Our VOICE OVER Service is EASY**

#### **Engaging**

Effective engagement with any learning material, is intimately connected to the presence of a voice making sense of that material, supporting it, constructing meaning and giving it context.

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An approachable and straight forward process that allows you to be in the driver's seat, we encourage all stakeholders to be part of the session "Live" online.

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### **You name it, we have the voice**

An accent, a nuance, a tone, you can imagine it, you can almost hear it, but you just can't put your finger on it.

At Voiceoveronthenet, we can!

Bringing you the very best, online, 24 hours a day, 7 days a week.

Professional Australian, New Zealand, North American and UK voice artists, all available from one studio.

Contact us for casting suggestions, supply details of your production requirements and we'll bring your Audio to life within 5 working days.

We produce only the finest talent in our own Digital Studio and work with award winning, creative writers and multimedia production houses.

# Audio for effective e Learning

Prepared by Rob MacPherson, Lecturer School of Communication - University of South Australia

For Adam Morgan's *Voiceoversonthenet*

There is little debate that audio-based learning is well-placed in the contemporary pedagogical mix for a wide range of ages, learning needs and contexts. In the current rich and dynamic media environment, competition to successfully market e-learning products will rely less on the technologies used than on the quality of engagement offered by the content delivered by that technology.

Effective engagement with any learning material--text, image, graphics, etc.--is intimately connected to the presence of a voice (a tutor, an instructor) making sense of that material for the intended audience, supporting it, constructing meaning, giving it context. Printed words by themselves, such as the familiar PowerPoint dot-points, lack paralinguistics--tone, emphasis, colour, and relationship to the audience. The 'common-sense' of this observation is precisely what obscures the vital importance of voice for learning. For e-learning, then, the voice can humanize the technology that mediates delivery.

But what voice? What are the qualities of the recorded voice that best support e-learning? This paper will argue that a provision of professional vocality, the province of professional voice-over artists, far from being a "luxury option", is essential in successfully engaging e-learners. The trained actor's innate ability to construct "audience" through creating a "mediatised presence" conspires to lower the "affective filters" of learners and so effectively engage them.

In particular, the "net-centric generation" reflexively values its ability to create self-paced, customized, and on-demand learning paths that include multiple forms of interactive, social, and self-publishing media tools. This generation is pre-disposed, then, to a mediatised absorption, creation and negotiation of culture. It follows that in such a media environment, competition for e-learning material will rely less on the technologies used than on the quality of engagement offered by the content delivered by that technology.

The question considered here focuses in particular on the quality of recorded voice in audio-learning and asks what advantages content-providers might gain from employing trained, professional actors to deliver their content. The paper will argue that a provision of such professional vocality, far from being regarded as a "luxury option", is essential in successfully engaging e-learners. The trained actor's innate ability to construct "audience" through creating a "mediatised presence" conspires to lower the "affective filters" of learners and so effectively engage them.

Engaging any given audience may seem to those outside the industry to be a "hit-and-miss" affair, though the entire field of marketing is founded upon the opposing premise--that is, by a sound knowledge of the intended audience, of vocal technique, of communication theory, communicators can decisively narrow the risk of failing to engage and move people.

The bread-and-butter income streams most professional actors rely upon is advertising (closely allied to marketing), whether in TVCs, radio voice-overs, and similar media. Indeed, professional actors become professional in this field by a combination of training, technical craft and experience, forming what may fairly be termed a "sense" of how to reach the audience.

In a profession as unforgiving of mediocrity as performing arts, and in the high-stakes field of advertising, success breeds success. Indeed, materials for the blind—an audience demanding of professional quality voice acting—has long been aware of the efficacy of using professional actors. "Learning the techniques to hold an audience's interest for long stretches of time by using only one's voice is an asset to any actor" (Caballero, 2000). In the study *Talking Books*, Philips (2007) convincingly argues that there is a direct relationship between the rise in the sales of audio books and the increased use of high-level professional actors.

Indeed, the evidence of the efficacy of using professional actors' voices in audio books both for the blind and for general consumption suggests that the "mediatised presence" of the actor is actually an expectation of the contemporary audience. Dixon (2007, p 132) points out that "presence in relation to audience engagement and attention is dependent on the compulsion of the audiovisual activity, not on liveness."

Thus as cultural experience moves from live presence to mediatised presence, actors can expect to have a higher level of audience engagement and attention than tutors, lecturers, or other non-performers. Further, the relationship between performer and technology has a longer pedigree than one would expect. Dinkla (2002) reminds us that the artistic practice of applying technology within a performance setting as an integral component of the artistic process can be traced back to the 1960s!

Given that actors are intimately aware of and skilled in creating the mediatised presence through their voices, it remains to ask what affect the actors' mediatised presence may have on the e-learner audience. Many language educational scholars including Krashen (1993) insist that students need comprehensible input (a.k.a., meaning) with a "low affective filter". A low affective filter refers to the state of ease and comfort of the language learner. A high affective filter refers to the anxiety produced in stressful situations and inhibits language acquisition because people do not acquire languages as well in high stress situations.

In a culture saturated with actors' voices, the very familiarity of the e-learner with voiced media products—TV, film, etc—predisposes the e-learner to regard actors' voices as a known quantity, and one associated with leisure. Thus their level of anxiety is lowered by the familiar sound of a trained voice. In the context of e-learning, lacking a tutor or classmates with whom to negotiate identity and relationships

In other words, e-learners are more in their "comfort zone" when engaging with the mediatised presence of an actor, hence lower affective filters and better learning. Further, this mediatised presence is not a new phenomenon, harking back as it does to the early days of television. Well-established applications of using actors' voices (books for the blind and audio books) encourage confidence in the efficacy of using actors for e-learning materials.

Finally, aspects of the professional actors training and experience support the professional actor's ability to reach an imagined audience. It therefore follows that e-learning content providers would increase the chances of their market success by using this essential resource in producing quality audio-based material.

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For Adam Morgan's *Voiceovers on the net*

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