Getting Into Voice Over

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KATIE FLAMMAN
STORYTELLER

Hello!

So, you're interested in finding out more about the voiceover industry. I often get asked for advice about getting into voiceover so I have put together this FREE info pack. It's focused on the UK market because that's where I am based. If you find it useful, I'd be grateful if you could show your appreciation by leaving me a review.

Google My Business

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My Journey

I started out in 2014. I bought some kit from Amazon and turned my coat cupboard into a home studio.

I signed up for Voice123 and Bodalgo and started auditioning for stuff. They're Pay-to-Play websites - so called because you pay them a subscription and they send you auditions. After a while, I booked some jobs and slowly built my client base from there as producers came back to me. When I was nominated for a Voice Arts Award in 2016 and went to Hollywood for the glitzy SOVAS Awards Gala, I realised that I had talent and had finally found my ideal career. My business has developed a lot since then.

Now I'm proud to be a multi award-winning voiceover artist, well-known on both sides of the Atlantic, with a professional studio and world-famous clients.

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Not Just Talking

Just because someone said you have a great voice, it doesn't mean that you should become a voiceover artist. It's not just talking...

To understand what I mean, please check out this fiercely honest blog by voice over artist Sarah Sealey.

You could also listen to Episode 34 of Samantha Boffin's excellent "Talking Creative" podcast.

As well as getting your performance right, there are a lot of other things to learn: creating a decent recording environment, managing the technical side of things, working efficiently, chasing and winning jobs, dealing with repeated rejections, turning one offs into repeat clients, networking, creating and maintaining your website and social media, marketing, bookkeeping, doing your tax return... It's a LOT to juggle and it's not easy!

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Types of Voice Over

Still keen? Good! So what type of voiceover do you want to do? There are so many genres of VO - some people specialise in one field, like videogame acting, corporate narration, or even IVR (on-hold) messages, whereas others like me do a bit of everything. Except Audiobooks. I don’t have the patience for those. You need to try things to see what you like and where your strengths are.

Take time to check out the different genres of voiceover showcased on my website.

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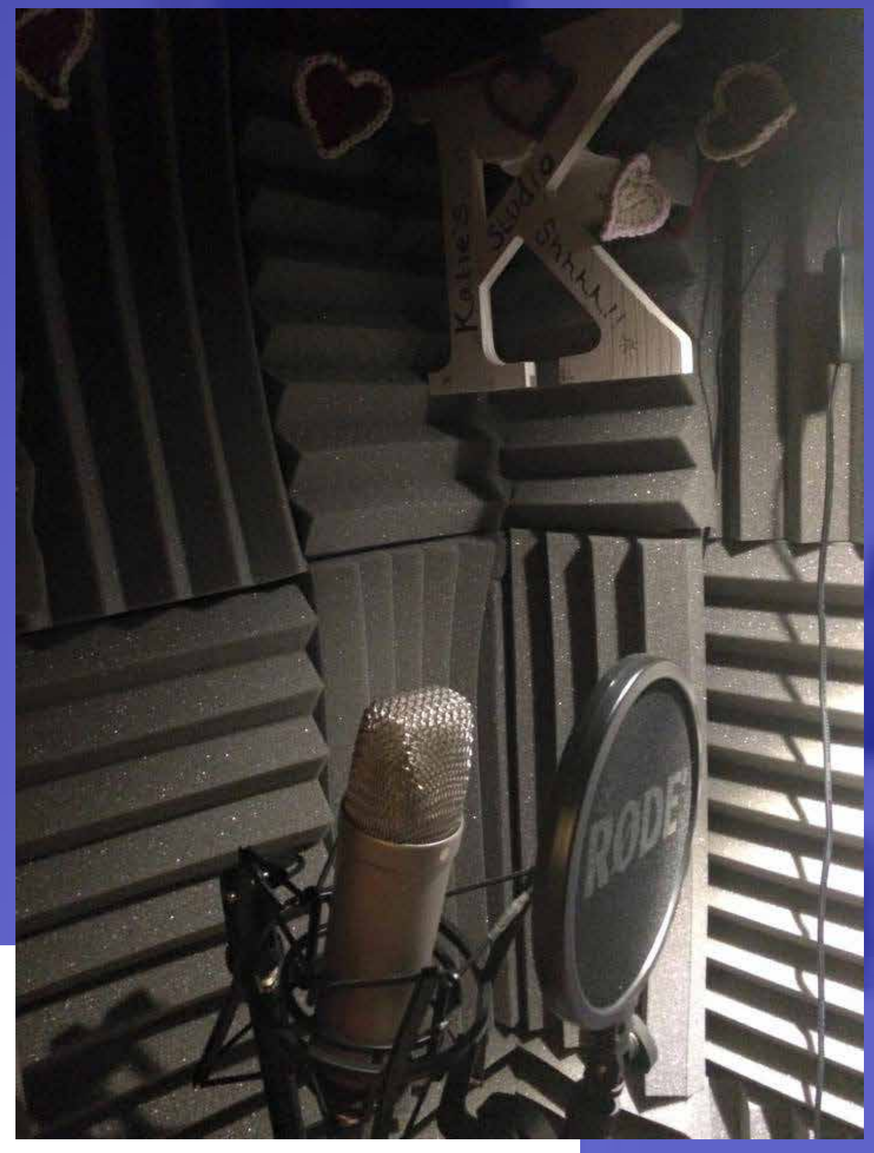
Home Studio



My first studio with a Rode NT1A mic

Unless you're a top celebrity, it's not possible to do voiceover without your own studio. But don't panic – you can create a decent recording space for relatively little money. The main thing is having a dedicated area to record in, which must be acoustically treated or will sound terrible, no matter what equipment you have. I'll repeat that. Your work will sound rubbish (even if you've got a very expensive microphone) if your environment is not properly acoustically treated. There are lots of YouTube tutorials about creating a home studio but first I'd recommend you look at Gravy for the Brain (below) who do a great course on it.

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Home Studio

Neumann TLM103

You’re probably also wondering what mic to buy. A USB mic plugs into your computer and is fine for streamers, YouTubers and sometimes podcasters. A Condenser mic requires an audio interface – that’s what a professional voice actor will use. Different voices need different mics – ideally you need to try one to see how it sounds. The equipment I bought when I first started out was: Rode NT1A condenser microphone with pop shield and mic stand, Focusrite Scarlett Audio Interface, cables, acoustic foam tiles and a laptop!

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Training

As I said, there's a lot to learn. It will take time and effort to prepare yourself for a successful voiceover career. The biggest VO training companies in the UK are:

Gravy for the Brain

Run by Hugh Edwards and Peter Dixon, Gravy offers superb online training for VO.

Their US controller is J Michael Collins and they have territories all over the world. They offer some training for free (look under "free stuff" on their website) and also an excellent Voiceover Rate Guide.

Their membership plan is fairly affordable (look out for discount offers) and is definitely worth it for a couple of months if you're getting started and want to immerse yourself in training. It includes hundreds of useful webinars, mentoring, and excellent online courses which cover creating and running a home studio effectively, setting up your business and creating your own demo reels.

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Training

The Voiceover Network

Run by Rachael Naylor, VON is dedicated to helping, strengthening and supporting the Voiceover Industry. Like Gravy, it's also subscription based, but offers lots of opportunities, workshops and socials for non-members too - you just have to pay a bit more. They run regular free webinars called "The Voiceover Hour" which are excellent sources of free info. You should definitely sign up for their newsletter. Members receive a copy of the quarterly Buzz Magazine – the voiceover industry's only magazine. Follow VON on social media to keep up to date with what's going on. Their workshops are great ways to meet people and learn from each other whilst getting expert coaching.

Nicola Redman

Nic Redman is a wonderful vocal coach specialising in vocal health and accents. She runs online training courses and workshops and in-person retreats. She used to be a stand-up comedian and is very entertaining as well as hugely knowledgeable. Her facebook group, the Voice and Accent Hub is free to join and contains loads of useful information and advice.

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Training

UK Conferences and Workshops

Gravy for the Brain run a brilliant 3-4 day conference in London called “One Voice”. All the talks are recorded, so afterwards you can watch them back. There’s loads you won’t be able to do live, because they have 3 rooms of talks running simultaneously, but because you get the replays, you can catch up with what you missed afterwards whenever you like. The conference also includes free 1 hour workshops and longer in-depth sessions which cost extra.

The Voiceover Network run many in-person workshops and an excellent 2 day conference called “Above and BeVond” featuring speakers, workshops and socials as well as “Get Your Game On” conference in London and LA, focusing on the videogame industry.

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Podcasts

Podcasts are an excellent and free way to educate yourself about the voiceover industry. I'd recommend you listen and subscribe to all or some of the following:

The Voiceover Social (Nic Redman and Leah Marks) is a must-listen – it's interesting, informative and funny.

The Voice Coach Podcast (Nic Redman)

Talking Creative (Samantha Boffin on direction and production for voiceovers)

VO School Podcast (Jamie Muffett) is excellent and comprehensive.

The Voiceover Hour Podcast (Rachael Naylor interviews big hitters in the industry)

Small Business Big Network (Liz Drury on networking)

The Performance Capture Podcast (Victoria Atkin on the mocap and pcap industry)

Tales from the Tannoy (Elinor Hamilton interviews voiceover artists whose voices you hear every day)

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Demos

A voiceover demo is a way to showcase your talent. Most people start by recording a commercial demo (no matter what type of voiceover they eventually want to specialise in). You can make one yourself but I'd strongly recommend you don't do that and go to a professional instead. But never make a demo before you are ready. When you're sending out your demo you want to make the best first impression you can.

Beware! Never put something on your demo which you can't replicate for at least an hour in a live session

Various companies in the UK offer demo production services. I have used:

- Guy Michaels at Voiceover Kickstart
- Rich O'Donoghue at io Audio
- JP Orr at The Showreel

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Getting Work

New voiceover artists often sign up for Pay-to-Play websites which then send them auditions. There's a lot of negativity around these sites because the rates can be low, (below industry standards) and you can audition for 100 jobs and only book one. However, you are auditioning for REAL jobs, and it's basically learning on the job. In voiceover, the auditioning IS the job. Your audition must be super high quality – as if you've already booked it and are doing the work. I recommend you avoid sites like Fiverr (cheap and nasty) and The Voice Realm (just plain nasty). If you're in Europe, Bodalgo is a good place to start.

If you do well, clients who find you on a pay-to-play site may come back to you directly afterwards. If you're lucky enough to have/get a voiceover Agent, they'll send you auditions too. But having an Agent doesn't mean you can relax and will get rich quick. I get approximately 10% of my work from VO agents. I have 2 UK agents and I am on the databases of multiple agencies in Europe and the USA. The rest of my work comes from my own hard work - networking, contacting production companies, marketing and referrals from other voiceover artists.

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Good Luck!

I hope this information helps you on your voiceover journey. If you have the winning combination of talent + tenacity + time, I'm sure you will succeed.

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A big thanks to Richard Worsfold Design for producing this document and to Alex Rickard for her wonderful photographs.

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Good Luck!

PS If you found this useful, I'd be very grateful if you could leave me a review.

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