

VOICEOVER STORIES: MIKE BAKER

Every voice actor's journey is different. What does it take to be a voice actor? Find out what it took for Mike Baker to snag his first agent and dig out a niche for himself. Check him out at MikeBakerVO.com.



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When did you first discover voiceover?

About ten years ago, I was working in the eLearning field as a tech writer and editor, helping rooms full of nerdy engineers and software developers communicate their ideas to actual humans. One afternoon, a friend called and told me that a local dairy was looking for a new announcer to put a fresh spin on their

venerable and regionally-famous radio ad campaign, and were looking for the best cow impersonator they could find. He thought I'd be perfect. I wasn't sure whether to be flattered or insulted, but I tried out...and got the gig. Suddenly my deranged bovine impressions were saturating the airwaves across Northern California, and I was a working voiceover talent.

What was the first step you took to get started?

Honestly, that was it. The tech firm had an ongoing need for voiceover and a growing client list that soon included Intel, Apple, IBM...within a couple of years, based solely on my work for that company, I had a decent list of credits.

HOW DID YOU MAKE THE DECISION TO PURSUE IT?

My cow impersonation story made the rounds, and a friend of mine hooked me up with a friend of hers whose tech firm needed eLearning voiceover. He had me come down and audition and then gave me the gig on the spot. I think it was at that point, when I realized that my ridiculous cow story was going to work that I decided "ok, let's do this!"

WHAT HAS YOUR COACHING EXPERIENCE BEEN LIKE?

I haven't had that much in the way of coaching, but the little I have had has been extremely helpful. I had one hour-long phone session with Carrie a year ago where we touched on required experience, demos, finding eLearning work, and basic presentation. It was great to realize exactly where all my ad hoc voiceover career building had been effective and where it had fallen short, and I walked away with a clear and specific list of action items to move my business to the next level.

HOW DID YOU BALANCE VO WITH YOUR OTHER DAILY OBLIGATIONS?

I was in the fortunate position of having steady work from a repeat client for many years which provided the bulk of my income, so frankly, juggling obligations wasn't much of an issue. When my daughter was born a few years ago, that definitely complicated things, but not to any unmanageable extent.

IF YOU COULD GIVE ADVICE TO YOURSELF WHEN YOU WERE JUST GETTING STARTED, WHAT WOULD IT BE?

“Voiceover is a huge field, and there are a thousand different paths to go down. Find one that works for you and then just go for it.”

WHAT HAS BEEN THE HARDEST PART ABOUT BUILDING YOUR VOICEOVER BUSINESS?

Finding serious clients with large and/or ongoing projects has definitely been the biggest issue. I've had great interactions with the majority of the people I've worked with, as well as some repeat work, but haven't yet been able to tap into any longterm relationships that have really moved the needle.

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I'm currently spending a lot of my time prospecting for eLearning work, researching and compiling lists of potential clients, sending cold e-mails, that sort of thing. I'm also experimenting with doing small jobs on some of the P2P sites, hoping to land some repeat clients that way. I'm also branching out into a related field, using my web development and online marketing experience to build websites for other voice actors.

WHAT HAS BEEN THE MOST FUN PART?

I find that I really just enjoy tracking audio. Honestly, if most people read the technical copy that I spend the majority of my VO time with, their eyes would glaze over inside of 30 seconds. For some reason, I find that stuff just as challenging and rewarding as doing a character for a commercial - just lucky, I guess!



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