

# **The Art of Voice Acting**

**by James R. Alburger**  
**www.VoiceActing.com**

## **Radio Imaging**

From the 3rd edition of *The Art of Voice Acting*  
by Jennifer Vaughn  
www.jennifervaughn.com

Generally, in Radio Imaging, you really had to get in the business about 10 to 15 years ago BEFORE the internet when there were only one or two production companies that had this niche and there were really only a handful of us. Stations/Consultants and Veteran PD's and OM's know who the really good people are and those people have their craft specifically for Imaging/Promo work finely tuned for Radio. TV is similar but certainly not the same. Both of the mediums have always relied on word of mouth to get their talent. They've either heard you on another station in another market, have worked with you in the past or are getting a referral from well thought of professionals at other TV and Radio stations or at the corporate level.

Voice work on imaging has changed a bit, but it's still steadfast on demanding a voice that can cut through the clutter with a presentation style. The Regular Guy/Actor sound really doesn't work in either medium for Radio Imaging and TV Promo work as it gets lost in the clutter with "the regular guy sound" of commercial voice work and surroundig programming. Imaging/Promo work largely continues to be an Announcer dominated style. There are exceptions, but they are short lived or come in fads. You're golden if you have a "Voice of God/Godess" AND are able to drop out of that persona to do conversational or characters, but is not really necessary in this specialized line of vo.

Imaging for Radio is, for the most part, taking on the persona of station voice. You are really the personality of the entire station and are used to position the station within the market. You will be reading largely liners which go in between songs called sweepers, and other liners like show intros/outros, shotguns, rejoins, id's, and positioning statements. On the other hand you will be responsible for reading all or most of the station's promotional material which may include station, feature, contest, music, and event promos. And that's just a few of the elements they require.

All of this work is done within a signed contractual agreement between talent and station. Personally, most of my radio stations are on 12 month contracts that require a monthly retainer and either order weekly or monthly. There's a smaller percentage of my stations that are either bi-monthly, quarterly or are in one year licensed buyouts for a term that are not open ended. Those are normally a secondary position to a primary signature voice already on the station where they would only require a "female" to even out the sound of too much testosterone. I should add that those stations who have 1 year buyouts are either non rated, small market, or stations outside the US and Canada.

If I had any advice for talent going into this type of voicework, you should always be in full control of your material, especially in signature imaging work. It is not wise to work any other way as it is not industry standard and you have no control over your material or how it is used, sold to others, and you'll end up losing hundreds of thousands over the long run. You will lose your marketability in this field, if you sell your voice off and have no control over it. You lose marketability and you lose the ability to make money. This field is relatively small, compared to any type of commercial or narrative work. So, if you do sell off your material you just jipped yourself out of a station in the same market or one close to picking you up for more \$\$\$ or regular income through retainers.

Imaging/Branding/Promo work for Television is also a station voice. In news reads, it should be authoritative, informative, and urgent. In feature reads, this read has to do with the subject matter and can be all across the board. You will read elements like sponsor billboards, rejoins, newscast opens, news topicals, feature promos, weather promos, station event promos, id's, bumpers, etc. Again, personally, all of my tv stations are under monthly retainer on 12 month contracts. The same licensing conditions as mentioned within Radio Imaging above are also industry standard for TV. Some of my TV stations send scripts daily, some weekly and some monthly. Most are daily.

Marketing for TV Promo and Radio Imaging is largely by mouth and reputation. However, I have had limited success in trade magazine ads, trade sites, direct mailers and a talent manager who has taken a personal interest in all of my dealings. I've also added a personal assistant to my staff to help with follow up when my manager is working on the bigger deals. You will need an industry specific demo for each to start promoting yourself and you will need to contact either an agencies or production companies who specialize in this field to help you market your demo as they have the contacts and clients already. You can also direct market to these stations, but the chances of a getting a job out of that are slim to none as they get so many demos these days. It is better to contact people who already have these contacts and contracts to get your foot in the door.

Biggest tip! If you are NOT an actor/on camera talent or if you are an actor/on camera talent and wish to be more successful in your voice over craft, try not to include your age or photograph in your bio, website or any other promotional material.

Question: Why?

Answer: Any person seeking voice talent, whether they are in casting, are a producer, client, agent, etc will make up their mind about how you are "supposed" to sound or, carve out an "image" of you right then and there, before even hearing you. My biggest success is not letting anyone make up their mind as to who I am or what I may sound like or be ABLE sound like based on my appearance. I am largely seen as what I "sound" like rather than what I "look" like and that is to a very large advantage when you are versatile with your voice.

Jennifer Vaughn's average day: (A little light for sweeps actually)

10am to 1055am

Walk into the studio, grab a cup of leaded coffee and sits in front of laptop.  
Prints up all scripts from the night before or early morning hours.  
Traffics rate requests to personal manager and/or assistant.  
Answer any questions from clients on schedule ISDN's/Patches if needed.  
Meets with Manager and assistant on the day's plan of attack.  
Heads into the voice booth with first set of scripts for the day.

1055 to 1142am Recording Session Load 1

- topical for a tv station in Augusta, GA
- sweeps promo for a tv station in Richmond, VA
- two billboards for a tv station in Tuscon, AZ
- 12 bumps for a tv station in West Palm Beach, FL
- 1 promo and a few liners for a radio station in McAllen, TX
- 14 liners for a radio station in Ghana, Africa
- 15 minute tutorial narration for Adobe Creative Suite
- fixes a few errors from a corporate presentation done the day before (audience is the President of China (not kidding), better hope I don't make a mistake)
- Audition for a possible new tv station in Toledo, OH

1140am to 110pm

Back the computer to print more scripts, answer more requests, write some more for this book, schedule more sessions and go over a few bills with bookkeeper. Meet with assistant on any phone calls that she took while I was in session. Meet with manager about a new incoming PD at station in San Diego (you know what that means). Normally new PD, new vision equals possible cancellation of contract upon expiration. \$750 a month, ugh! Grab a meal replacement bar and bottle of water, head's back to the booth for another session.

110pm to 225pm Recording Session Load 2

- local market commercial for a Credit Union
- topical for tv station in Memphis, TE
- topical for tv station in Richmond, VA
- sales narrative for radio station in Montgomery, AL
- revised political spot running in the state of Wisconsin
- 10 liners and 2 promos for radio station in Philadelphia, PA
- 13 liners for radio station in Parsons, KS
- promo & id for tv station in Augusta, GA
- 8 liners and two promos for radio station in Des Moines, IA
- ISDN session with radio station in Monmouth/Ocean, NJ

225pm to 410pm

Major Server snafu for 30 minutes makes whole staff including me go nutty. Once back up, print more scripts, answer a few emails and go out for lunch. Back in now, open this document and start writing away again. Work with personal assistant on a rate for an

IVR tree and on hold narration. Meet with manager about a few irons in the fire. Now back to the studio.

410pm to 540pm Recording Session Load 3

- 30 liner start up package for radio station in Fredericksburg, VA
- promotional tv spot for radio station in Huntsville, AL
- 15 minute tutorial for online banking
- ISDN session with a radio station in Denver, CO
- 2 promos for radio station in Pittsburgh, PA
- topical for TV station in Wichita, KS
- topical for TV station in Syracuse, NY
- 5 minute corporate sales tour for Marriot

520pm to 6pm

Check email once more. Get with assistant on some more quotes she is working on with buyers. Grab another meal replacement bar and water, as I have to wait for a late dinner at 8pm with the family and inlaws.

Clean up desk, organize new projects that came in today or were closed business today for tomorrow. It looks like so far beyond my tv and radio stations, I have two IVR gigs, one On hold narration, two spots, and one another 20 minute tutorial for the bank software for online banking for business. Get with producer to go over tomorrow's day after he is done getting my tracks up on the FTP for clients for the day.

If I am ever light on my time, I quickly fill in those gaps with cattle call auditions. I do not like them, but it is a necessary evil when you are not booked solid. Chances of getting gigs this way are slim when a client doesn't know what they want and is not familiar with your strengths and you only have one shot of a read amongst 50 to 100 other talent reaching for the same job.

Most VO talent do not have a staff to rely on. Any talent not having a support staff would be a whole lot busier, getting mail, taking payments, deposits, writing contracts, selling, paperwork, filing, editing, bouncing uploading to the FTP and dealing with clients having technical difficulties. Thankfully, I have a staff of 4. One producer, one personal assistant, one business manager/bookeeper, and one personal manager. Each handles a different facet of my day to day business. If it weren't for them, I would not be enjoying an 8 hour day, 5 days a week.