



Session #303

Everything You've Ever Wanted to Know About Narrating Your eLearning Program

David Gilbert



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“Everything you’ve ever wanted to know about narrating your own eLearning program* *But were afraid to ask”



*But were afraid to ask”



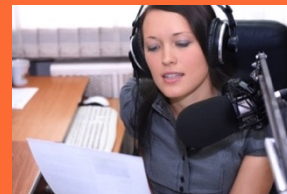
Environment



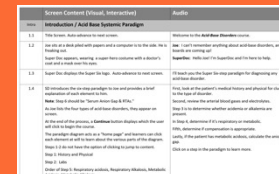
Equipment



Editing



Elocution



Essence

A LITTLE ABOUT ME...

- SPENT 24-YEARS IN SALES & MARKETING ROLES IN CONSUMER GOODS INDUSTRY
- STARTED IN VOICEOVER IN JAN 2016
- HAVE ATTENDED OVER 300+ IN-PERSON EVENTS SINCE
- SINGLE DAD, LIVING IN TORONTO, CANADA

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How this is going to work...

- Presentation & Resources PDF are available!

(email david@davidgilbertvoiceover.com or scan QR code at end of presentation)

- Brief Q&A after each of the 5 sections
- FULL Q&A at the end
- There are NO dumb questions! 😊

Environment

Sound quality starts with your environment

Environment: Basic principles

- Your recording environment matters far more than anything else for sound quality!
- Block out ambient sounds
- Sound absorbing materials
- Avoid large rooms

Environment: Basic principles

- Find the quietest place to record
- Clap in the room to test for echo
- Talk loudly
- Buy or build sound panels to trap sounds
 - Good DIY panels (link in resources)

Environment: Resources

- Vocal Booth To Go
- Thick, heavy moving blankets with grommets for easier hanging at home/office
- Sound treatment resources

Environment: Q&A

Ask away!

Equipment

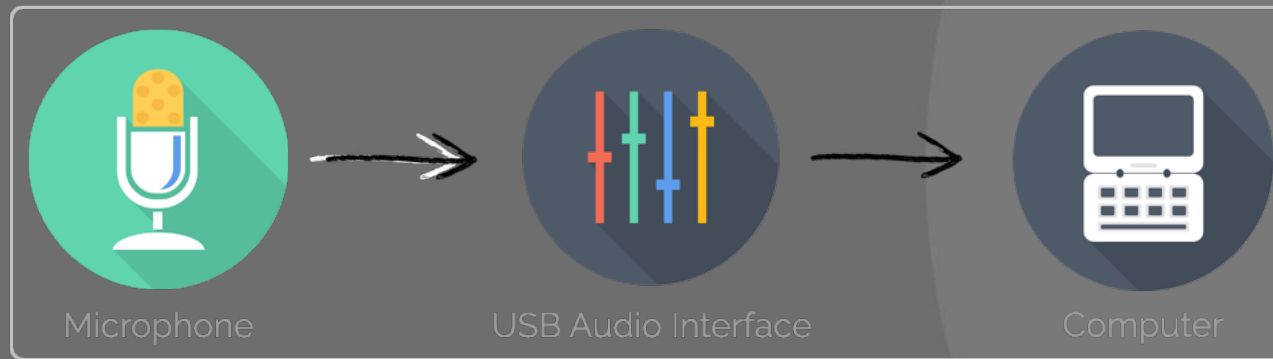
Golden rule - buy the best you can afford for the environment you work in.

Equipment: Basic principles

Microphone:

- How do I decide which one to get?
- Where are you going to be recording?
- If quiet → condenser mic, if ambient noises → dynamic
- *Note: condenser mic needs a pre-amp, dynamic doesn't*

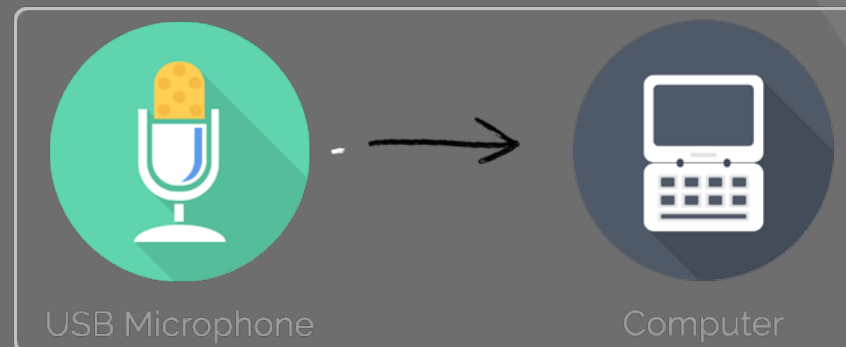
Equipment: Basic Principles



XLR

(X Connector, Locking Connector, Rubber Boot)

OR



USB

Equipment: Basic principles

Interface:

- What are you talking about Dave?
- Provides power to a condenser mic and an interface between the mic and your computer
- Analogue to Digital converter

Cables:

- XLR - microphone cable - USB to your computer



Equipment: Basic principles

Microphone:

- What's your budget?
 - *Don't need to buy a Cadillac, but also don't buy cheapest model*
- *What is your vocal quality?*
 - *(high, sibilance, breathy, deep, etc.)*
- *Try before you buy!*

Equipment: Basic principles

Headphones:

- What's your budget?
 - *Don't need to buy a Cadillac, but also don't buy cheapest model*
- Even sound quality/tone
- Mostly used for editing work anyway

Equipment: Basic principles

Computer:

- Mac vs PC?
- Doesn't really matter - both work equally well - personal preference
- BUT....
 - Watch out for hum or fan noises - if you buy one that heats up, get a laptop cooling pad

Equipment: Q&A

Ask away!

Session QR Code

*Scan now for
your goodies!*



Editing

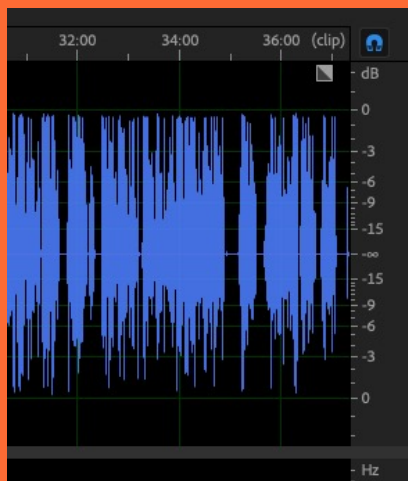
Learn the basics well.

Editing: Basic Principles

DAW - Digital Audio Workstation

General editing flow (no matter what DAW you use):

- Set your recording levels - once! (peak @ -9db to -6db max)



Editing: Basic Principles

DAW - Digital Audio Workstation

General editing flow (no matter what DAW you use):

- Set your recording levels once! (peak @ -6db to -9db max)
- Rough recording - including pickups or mistakes
- Clicker or snap & remove mistakes
- Processing & file marking (for splits)
- Exporting as MP3 for your authoring tool

Simple! Right!

Editing: Basic Principles

So then which DAW should I use?

IT DEPENDS!

- Cost: free to expensive
- Recording often or occasionally?
- Lots of files to split or very few?
- Adobe Cloud = Adobe Audition!

Editing: DAW Options

Free:

- Audacity
- Oceanaudio

Paid:

- Adobe Audition
- Reaper
- Twisted Wave - Mac or online only
- Sound Forge
- Word2Wav - PC or Mac with Boot Camp

Editing: DAW Options

Things to consider:

- Audacity - basic features
- Oceanaudio - more advanced features
- Adobe Audition - complete suite of features
- Reaper - native punch & roll, non-destructive editing
- Twisted Wave - versatile, iPad compatible
- Sound Forge - quick and like “Audacity +”
- Word2Wav - fantastic tool if you do many, many file splits

Editing: Plugins

Plugins - VST's

- Extra programs you “add” to your DAW for specific audio effects/restoration
- Remove mouth noises/clicks
- Remove background noises
- Remove breaths
- Mild compression of audio
- Fix clipping (*SHOULDN'T BE AN ISSUE - SETTING GAIN CORRECTLY*)
- Etc..

Editing: Plugins

- Popular VST plugins include:
- RX 8 suite - Noise Reduction, Mouth De-click, De-clip
- Waves - DeBreath, DeEsser, Sibilance

Editing: Tips & Tricks

Fixing boo boos - while you're recording:

- Punch & Roll
- Dog Clicker / finger snap



Editing: Tips & Tricks

- Systemize your editing flow (find what works for you)
- Create a marking system for your files
- Breaths: Two schools of thought:
 - Remove - reduce by 8 to 25db so they are not noticeable → or silence completely
 - Reduce - only loud breathes by 3-8db but remove breaths between paragraphs
 - NEVER hit delete!

Editing: Tips & Tricks

- Editing is always used as a scalpel, not a sledgehammer!
- Remove background noise first - prior to doing full editing
- Always, always, always, keep every audio file in an archive
- Always save files during every stage of editing (if using destructive DAW)
- One long track vs multiple tracks - depends

Editing: Tips & Tricks

- To outsource or not to outsource
- Great if you have the time and budget
- Free up multiple hours of your time (ie 1hr recording = 2-3hrs of editing)

Editing: Q&A

Ask away!

Elocution (Delivery)

Narrate so your learners... well... learn.

Elocution (Delivery): Warming Up

Vocal Health:

- Drink lots of room temp water - before, during, & after
- Be cognizant of your throat - don't stress it
- If you know you're going to be recording the next day, don't exert your voice the night before (ie avoid raising your voice at loud areas)

Elocution (Delivery): Warming Up

Vocal Health:

- Don't "whisper" if you are trying to rest your voice - it's actually quite bad for your vocal folds
- Clearing your throat = bad!
- Best cure for sore vocal cords is to rest and not talk at all!
- Warm water with honey and lemon



Elocution (Delivery): Warming Up

Vocal Health:

- Gargle with warm salt water - as far down as you can go
- How long to warm-up?
 - Depends on how much narration you're doing (ie if <10 min, not a big deal compared to 1-hour) Same as physical exercise (walk around the block vs 10k run)

Elocution (Delivery): Warming Up

- Watch all of Elissa Weinzimmer's videos!
- Warm-up starts with your body, abdomen, neck, jaw, laryngeal massage, mouth & tongue
- Humming is a fantastic warm-up exercise
- Lip trills - regular or scales
- Rodney Saulsbury Tongue Twisters and Vocal Warmups (book)

Elocution (Delivery): Mic Placement

Don't speak directly into a microphone!

- Always off-axis (except for dynamic mic's)
- Excellent blog post by tech guru Dan Lenard
- “hang ten” is optimal distance from condenser mic
- Reduces/avoids “plosives” - those pesky low-end sounds from P's and T's
- Keep your head in the same position relative to the mic



Elocution (Delivery): Tips & Tricks

- Headphones - don't use when recording! Or at most, keep only one ear on
- Keep the volume low - don't want to bleed into the mic!
- Forget about how you “think you should sound” - talk like you normally would
- Forget about the quality of your voice - it doesn't really matter!
- Record at the same time every day (long projects)

Elocution (Delivery): Tips & Tricks

- Relax - don't try for perfection, try for understanding
- Stand up (if you can) & use your hands - you use them when you talk normally
- Smile (technical) - in most cases (except serious compliance training), adding a real smile to your narration will brighten up the read and make it more friendly

Elocution (Delivery): Tips & Tricks

Dave Walsh - TrueTell™ method:

- What + Who + When + Where + Why = How
- What: understand exactly what you're talking about - if you aren't sure, "we" will know it!

Elocution (Delivery): Tips & Tricks

Dave Walsh - TrueTell™ method:

- Who: Remember, who “you” are most likely may not be “you” in L&D
- Who: Make an educated choice who you are talking to, the learner.

Elocution (Delivery): Tips & Tricks

Dave Walsh - TrueTell™ method:

- Keep your “acting” choices subtle - keep it realistic and small
- When: at what exact point is your learner in their journey?

Elocution (Delivery): Tips & Tricks

Dave Walsh - TrueTell™ method:

- Why: Why is the training even important? Why should the learner even care about this training?
- The more you personalize your delivery, the better the result.

Elocution (Delivery): Tips & Tricks

- Think in terms of phrasing instead of reading each, word, separately, and, distinctly.
- Larry Hudson:
 - Look for the meaning in the text → repeat that 3x!
- Think about the cadence of how you talk to someone



Elocution (Delivery): Tips & Tricks

- Pretend you are answering questions from your learner
 - What is ECRM? Well, ECRM stand for...and it helps with...
 - You are always responding to unspoken questions
- Don't hit words over the head - there are no important words, only important ideas! (LH)

Elocution (Delivery): Tips & Tricks

The alteration of the syncopation triggers the meaning, not tone!

- I was born in Australia (You, on the other hand, were born somewhere else.)
- I **was** born in Australia (How dare you imply that I wasn't?)
- I was **born** in Australia (I'm a native - not a newcomer.)
- I was born **in** Australia (Not outside Australia.)
- I was born in **Australia** (Not in New Zealand.)

Elocution (Delivery): Don't sound like a robot

- Formality scale
 - 1 to 10 (normal conversation = 5, with friends out for drinks = 1, TED talk to room full of politicians or neurosurgeons = 10) Know your audience!
- Avoid over articulation - unless you want to sound robotic - we don't talk that way!
- Overly hitting glottal stops (t, p, d, k - ie Toronno vs Toronto, cotton, kitten,)

Elocution (Delivery): Don't sound like a robot

- Bring your own personality to the script
- Inflections - don't go crazy with them!
- Avoid upspeak at all costs!
- Use your hands for lists or comparisons
 - Literally use your hands to count out items in a list
 - Also helps to keep the ideas together
 - Find those natural pauses

Elocution (Delivery): Don't sound like a robot

Vary your pacing

- Slow down for important details, speed up through unimportant parts
- Don't sound predictable - same pacing for every sentence
- Varies depending on audience knowledge of content

“Billboard” important info

- Don't use a sledgehammer! Use pacing and micro pauses (beats) to create distinction, not volume

Elocution (Delivery): Tips & Tricks

Pickups - after you finish recording or during editing you find booboos to fix

- Mark the spot in the file using a marker and, on the script
- Create a new file called “pickups”
- Record all pick-ups, clean up the file with any edits, noise reduction, processing, etc. so that it matches your original final audio file
- Then simply copy and paste the sections back into the main file and remove the markers

Elocution (Delivery): Tips & Tricks

Always, always, always remember: whatever is going on in your life, any major stressors, tension, anxiety, etc. WILL come through in your read if you don't center yourself FIRST, before recording.

Take a few deep breaths, meditate or do whatever you enjoy prior to recording.

Elocution (Delivery): Q&A

Ask away!

Essence (The Script)

The script is where the magic begins (or ends).

Essence (The Script): Tips & Tricks

- Write the way you would talk to someone - conversationally, not like a novel or textbook
- Remember the W's - who, what, where, etc.
 - Presenting info to one department or entire company?
 - Be super specific - speak to that audience
 - Sitting beside someone at their computer or in a boardroom

Essence (The Script): Tips & Tricks

- Read EVERY script out loud - how does it sound - conversational or not?
 - If YOU stumble on parts, then you know you need to rewrite it
- Avoid long, run-on sentences → aiming for understanding, not eloquence
- Contractions - use them! Makes the script more conversational

Essence (The Script): Tips & Tricks

- All things being equal, estimate 140-150 words per minute (WPM) when drafting scripts - how long do you want your learners to listen
- Write as if you're having a conversation with the listener
- Focus on the main ideas and phrases within the ideas - is every word necessary?

Essence (The Script): Tips & Tricks

Format:

- Ideally, split into columns/table in a Word document, with minimum:
 - Column 1: file name (of audio file)
 - Column 2: script to be narrated
 - Column 3: any visual cues/direction/pronunciations - context

Essence (The Script): Tips & Tricks

- Character / role play scenes:
- If character-based scenario, think about who the characters are and the situation they are in with as much specificity as possible
- Again, back to the Who, What, Where, etc.
- Specificity matters!

Essence (The Script): Q&A

Ask away!

How to hire a voice talent if you can outsource

Things to keep in mind when budgets/time allow for a freelancer.

How to hire a voice talent if you can outsource

- Where to find:
 - Peer recommendations
 - Google search - more specific the term, the better the results (ie “male voice talent eLearning”)
 - Social media search - LinkedIn or Twitter
 - Social media groups - find VO’s in groups
 - World Voices Organization talent roster site - (quality talent)
 - Online casting sites (P2P sites like Voice123 - posting for jobs or search for talent)
 - Get what you pay for - rates vary (check GVAA rate guide for averages)

How to hire a voice talent if you can outsource

- Voice talent are there to help you
 - Free up your time so you can move on to other tasks instead of narrating
 - Provide feedback (if asked) on script
 - Assist in casting for other character roles

BONUS!!

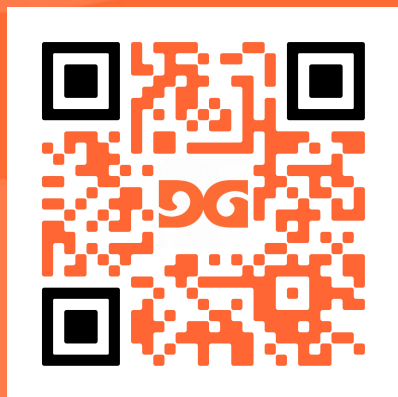
1 free audio quality, editing or
performance review!

Q&A

I'm always here to help.
Contact me anytime for any
questions you may have.

THANK YOU!

CONTACT INFO:



← *SCAN FOR THE RESOURCES*

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