

Mastering Perfect VO Demos – Part 1

Class Notes

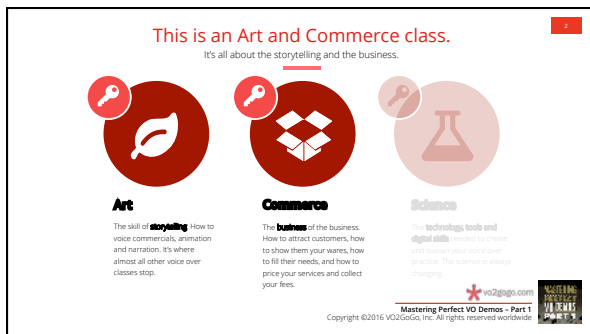


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presents

Mastering Perfect VO Demos - Part 1

Created by David H. Lawrence XVII

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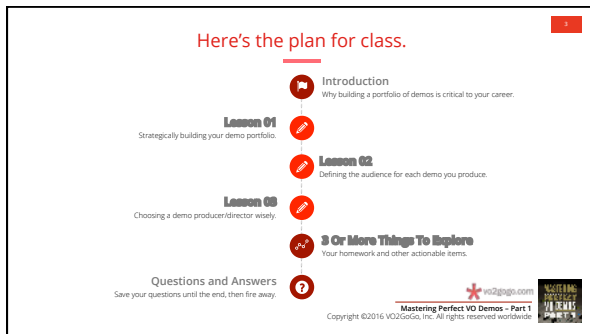


This is an Art and Commerce class.

It's all about the storytelling and the business.

- Art**
The skill of **storytelling** - how to voice commercials, animation and narration. It's where almost all other voice over classes stop.
- Commerce**
The **business** of the business. How to attract customers, how to show them your wares, how to fill their needs, and how to price your services and collect your fees.
- Science**
The **technology, tools and digital skills** needed to create and execute above-the-water practices. The science is about changing.

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Here's the plan for class.

- Introduction**
Why building a portfolio of demos is critical to your career.
- Lesson 01**
Strategically building your demo portfolio.
- Lesson 02**
Defining the audience for each demo you produce.
- Lesson 03**
Choosing a demo producer/director wisely.
- 3 Or More Things To Explore**
Your homework and other actionable items.
- Questions and Answers**
Save your questions until the end, then fire away.

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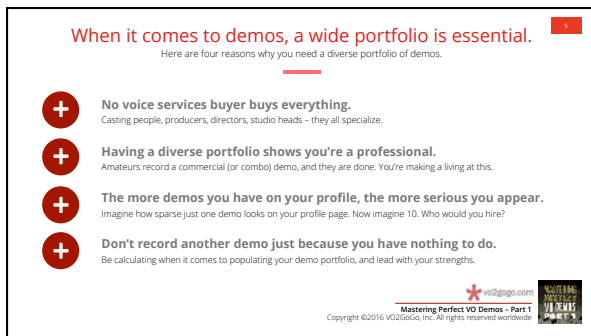
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Introduction
Why building a portfolio of demos is critical to your career.

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When it comes to demos, a wide portfolio is essential.
Here are four reasons why you need a diverse portfolio of demos.

- + No voice services buyer buys everything.**
Casting people, producers, directors, studio heads – they all specialize.
- + Having a diverse portfolio shows you're a professional.**
Amateurs record a commercial (or combo) demo, and they are done. You're making a living at this.
- + The more demos you have on your profile, the more serious you appear.**
Imagine how sparse just one demo looks on your profile page. Now imagine 10. Who would you hire?
- + Don't record another demo just because you have nothing to do.**
Be calculating when it comes to populating your demo portfolio, and lead with your strengths.

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Lesson 01
Strategically building your demo portfolio.


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Start with the big four demos, then add from there.

Some demos are more important and useful than others.



01 Commercial
The most important demo in your portfolio, as it is traditionally the most expected.

02 Audiobook
With the advent of ACX, audiobook demos allow you to grab the low-hanging fruit. You should have a series of category-specific audiobook demos.

03 IVR
By far, the easiest and fastest VO skill to learn, and the jobs are plentiful.


04 Documentary Narration
An image demo not only to get work in the category, but also to show a more dramatic side to your voice.

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“ The commercial demo should be recorded first. It is one that buyers will consider in lieu of a demo in their category. ”



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“ Adding audiobooks to your demo portfolio not only serves you on ACX, but for other major publishers as well. ”

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“ The IVR demo allows you to take advantage of the 10 billion phones that have voice mail attached to them. ”



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“ Adding documentary narration to your demo portfolio gives your buyers more dramatic options. ”

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And what beyond the Big 4?

Here are the demos I suggest, based on availability of work in each of their categories.


 <p>Training Training and industrial, e-learning, creating your own content.</p>	 <p>Specialty Specialty narration, creating your own content.</p>	 <p>Animation Not just cartoons, but videogames and apps as well.</p>	 <p>Promo Trailers, promos, EPKs and other promotional material.</p>	 <p>News and Info Podcasting, news, periodicals, short form information content.</p>
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And beyond that?
These are optional, unless your voice is perfectly suited to this work.



- Voice matching**
Recreating exact versions of celebrity and other recognizable voices.
- Accents/Dialects**
If you can successfully compete with natives from a particular region or area.
- Multilingual**
Again, if you sound like a native – but if not, move on.
- General US**
Non-US residents that can create a non-accented US voice.

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Lead with your strengths.

Prioritize your demo portfolio expansion by looking not only at the amount of work to be had, but also at your strengths.

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Lesson 02
Defining the audience for each demo you produce.

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To define your demo's audience, answer these.

Here are four questions you need to answer to zero in on who you're producing for.

Their audience is?
Who do they provide choices to?
Who does their category of work serve?

Their expectations of your demo?
You should always aim for a clear immersion in their world: they need to imagine hiring you for the job, and what you'd sound like if they did.

Are you demo-ing well?
Your ability to be perfect for the job should be clear from your demo. It must be competitive in your market.

Your buyer is?
Usually, it's a casting entity: agent, director, owner, etc. of a particular category of work.

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Aspects of the perfect demo.

If your demos include all of these, then you're providing your audience with exactly what they need.

Total realism
Envelop the audience you're aiming your demo at in their own world - they should clearly see you doing this work.

Focus
Don't aim for incredible versatility. Instead, focus on your core brand and how you'd sound doing the work.

Confirmation
You should be displaying your brand over and over again, with every clip or beat in your demo.

Clip variety
Vary each clip by energy, the size of the room, your characters and your approach.

Clarity
Make sure the listener experiences the best facets of the "jewel" that is your voice.

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Build your demo portfolio slowly and deliberately.

There's no need to rush.

Make sure you're good enough.
Are you capable of playing with the big boys and girls in the category in which you want to build a demo? Be sure.

Husband your resources well.
Don't overspend, and don't try to build your portfolio too quickly. Go for potency, and self-produce where appropriate.

Manage the idiosyncrasies of each demo.
Each demo is constructed differently, so pay attention to creating demos that exemplify best-of-breed industry norms.

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Lesson 03






Choosing a demo producer/director wisely.

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Use a producer only for the demos you need to.

Here are the demos that need the touch of a great demo producer.

				
Commercial The most important and first demo to create.	IVR/Phone Prompts You need to re-create the environment of a phone tree session.	Animation Not just cartoons, but videogames and apps as well.	Promos/Trailers Trailers, promos, EPKs and other promotional material.	Narration Documentary narration, not specialty narration.

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Listen to sample demos created by the director.

Put yourself in the position of a casting director and ask if this demo would make you want to bring the talent in for an audition.

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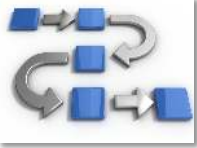
Discuss your brand and the work you've done (if any).

If you have content, discuss what can be useful to your demo and what to leave behind. **It's OK if you have no paid work.**

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Chat about their production and business processes.

How do they work with clients? Any prep activities? Where is the work done?
How do they create scripts? What are their revision policies?

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Beware of demo pricing.
Pay too much or too little, and you'll be making a big mistake.

\$99 DEMO GUY	THAT'S \$8000.	\$1500 TO \$2500.	\$999 TO \$1299.
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Too little.
Don't fall prey to cut rate demo production. Your finished product won't be competitive.

Too much.
There are some celebrity demo producers that charge way too much for no evident quality.

About right.
This is the going rate for the best demo producers in New York, London, Sydney and Los Angeles.

VO2GoGo.
Animation demos cost \$1299. All others, \$999. We charge 20% less for Pro members.

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6 demos you can probably produce on your own.
While you can use a demo producer, you don't have to if you can authentically demonstrate your mad skillz.



- 01** Specialty narration.
- 02** Audiobooks. All of them.
- 03** Podcasting and News and Info.
- 04** Digital VO, Apps, Web help files, Site tours.
- 05** Training and industrials.
- 06** E-learning and testing.

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“ Don't rehearse or practice specific copy. You don't want to get married to a particular performance. ”



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“ Let your producer pick your copy. Don't fall prey to "I know what content I'll be good at (or like)." ”

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Build your demo portfolio carefully and deliberately.

**Remember, your demos are not checklist items.
They are living, breathing, evolving snapshots of your VO skills.**

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3 Or More Things To Explore

Your homework and other actionable items.

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3 or more things to explore.

Next steps: take what you've learned, explore and learn more, then put that all to work.

- + Pay attention to your skill level in various areas of VO work.
- + Plan your fiscal health to be able to readily pay for demo production.
- + Identify what content each buyer of VO work expects.
- + Focus on which areas of VO you want to create demos for.

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