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THE SOCIALLY- CONSCIOUS VO MARKET

What's in this eBook?

In today's world of modern media, we're constantly bombarded with messages of all kinds. Take a moment to think about the messaging you encounter in your day-to-day life, whether you're tuning in to your favorite radio station while driving to work, watching TV to unwind after a busy day, or surfing the web. It's a lot!

Now imagine you're the director of a charity, and you've been tasked with creating media messaging for your cause. It's your

job to make sure that your message can stand out among all that noise. You care deeply about your work, and you're determined to create a media campaign that can put a spotlight on your cause and attract people who are willing to help. As part of your campaign, you'll likely need voice over work done... and it falls to you to choose a voice for your cause that will command attention, attract genuine interest, and expand awareness.

From charities and public service announcements to social justice, environmental conservation, and more, the modern age has given groups who are passionate about their cause more ways to reach out than ever before. However, this greater potential for outreach comes at a cost: there's also never been more competition.

When it comes to creating truly effective messaging, the right voice can make all the difference.

Whether you're passionate about social justice, charity work, or the environment, there's never been a better time to combine your passions with your pursuits as a voice actor. By pursuing voice over work for causes you believe in, you'll be accomplishing two very important goals. First, you'll be gaining invaluable knowledge and experience in the voice over field. And second, you'll be contributing to something you truly care about - and using your voice for good.

This eBook is designed to offer some insight into opportunities for

socially-conscious voice over work. We'll discuss the importance of genuine, believable delivery in today's world of voice over. We'll talk about how pursuing voice over work for causes you care about can help to strengthen your own self-motivation. Finally, we'll discuss where you can look for these types of voice over opportunities and offer some guidance to help you get started.

It's time to put your voice into action!



PUT YOUR VOICE INTO ACTION

The voice over industry represents a constantly changing and ever-shifting landscape - and in recent years, it's seen more change and growth than ever before.

The voice over field used to be dominated by one kind of voice. You may be familiar with this voice: it's booming, announcer-style, and more than likely, it's male. For many years, the only way it was possible to build success within this industry was by possessing a voice that fit those exact characteristics. And if your voice didn't fit the mold, well... you were likely out of luck.

But that was then, and this is now.

The voice over field today couldn't be more different than it was a few decades ago. Now, listen in and you'll hear all kinds of voices. Whether you're old or young, male or female, there's room for every voice - in fact, your uniqueness is what can set you apart!

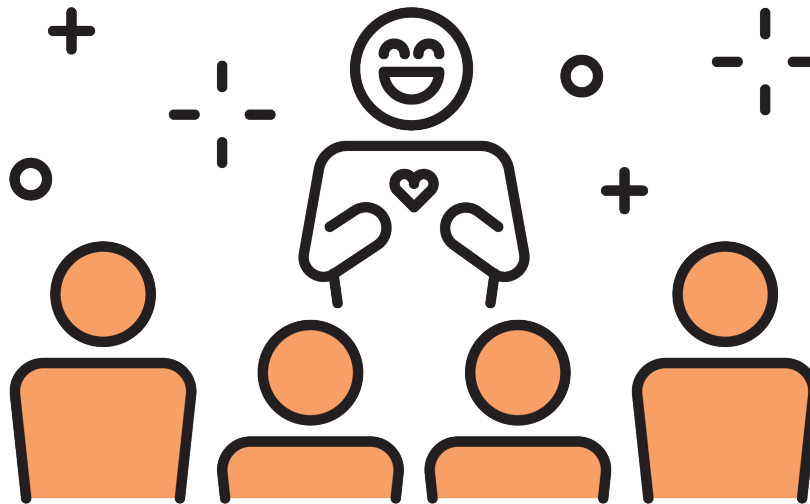
Today's voice over field has moved from that traditionally announcer-style voice over to a favored delivery that is genuine, believable, and realistic. In other words, in today's world, the voices that are the most sought-after are those that sound like real people. Gone are the days of one-size-fits-all voices shouting loudly from the rooftops, telling you what to buy or where to go. That may have worked 40 years ago, but now it's a different story! Today, we don't respond nearly as well to being yelled at or talked down to. We would much rather hear voices that sound believable and genuine, voices that talk to us as if we're individuals. It's more important than ever that you can come across not as if you're shouting to a faceless audience, but talking naturally with a close friend.

This means the opportunity for real, diverse voices is greater than ever before. And that's especially true when it comes to voice over for socially-conscious causes!

Think about it - spreading the word about a charity or cause is much more effective when the voice that's doing the talking sounds like they genuinely care about what they're saying. You wouldn't

want a generic announcer-style voice shouting at you to donate or get involved; at best, the average listener would likely tune them out pretty quickly, and at worst, they may even get annoyed or feel frustrated that the message was being delivered to them in such a forceful, loud way. In order to convince people to join your cause, you've got to do just that: convince them. Your messaging should treat them as real people with real thoughts, feelings, and concerns.

That's where you come in! As a voice actor, it's your job to deliver the message in a genuine, believable way - to inspire action and draw the listener's attention to your cause.



VOICE OVER FOR A CHANGING WORLD

Now more than ever, people are more likely to make choices and decisions based on how those choices impact the world around us. We're driven by our need to be part of something bigger than ourselves and our desire to effect real change. And that shift in mindset is reflected in the type of voice over that's now used most often in advertising and other forms of media messaging.

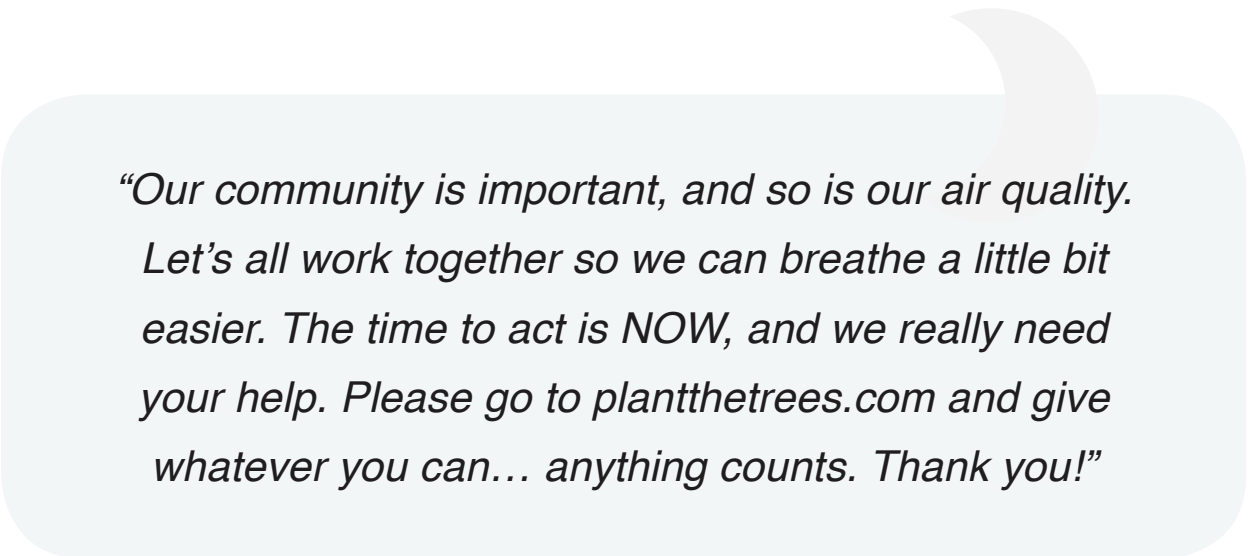
To illustrate this point, let's look at an example. Let's say you're listening to the radio and you hear a message from a local environmental group talking about their latest fundraising drive to gather enough funding to plant 1,000 new trees. The message you hear is of a loud, boomy voice saying something like:



**“NOW IS THE TIME, IT’S UP TO YOU! ACT NOW!
GO TO PLANTTHETREES.COM AND DONATE
DONATE DONATE!”**

While you can certainly admire the energy level they’ve put into the performance, it likely won’t make you pull up the group’s website the next time you’ve got a free moment. It sounds too impersonal, too fake, too much like an infomercial you might hear on television at 2am.

Now, let’s say you’re listening to the radio and you hear a radio spot for the same local environmental group, except this time, it’s a calm but serious voice telling you:

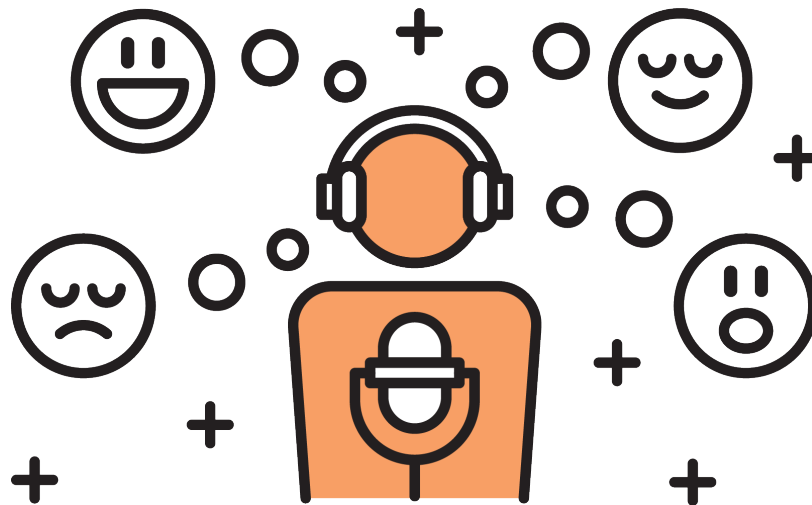


“Our community is important, and so is our air quality. Let’s all work together so we can breathe a little bit easier. The time to act is NOW, and we really need your help. Please go to plantthetrees.com and give whatever you can... anything counts. Thank you!”

You're likely much more inclined to take this genuine voice seriously, and their sincere message makes you believe you might really be able to help. By appealing to the listener in a genuine, conversational tone and asking them for help in a way that's more realistic, the message is much more likely to be heard and acted on - and that's the goal!

Psychological research tells us that offering a greater sense of purpose is a great motivator for human action. According to recent reporting from Forbes, today's workforce is motivated best by a sense of personal empowerment and a feeling that they're part of something bigger than themselves. The same is true when it comes to the consumer mindset. In many cases, it's not enough that a product simply "works"; we want products that also make us feel like we're contributing to a greater cause. These changing attitudes are especially relevant when it comes to people of the millennial age bracket or younger.

It's within this greater marketing ecosystem that charities, social justice organizations, and other groups interested in enacting social change must make their appeals. And that's why voice over can become such an important part of their outreach campaigns. As a voice actor hired to speak for a cause, it becomes your job to consistently deliver copy in a way that is genuine, believable, and conversational. You need to make sure that people listen.



THE SOUND OF SOCIALLY-CONSCIOUS VO

By now, you might be thinking, *“The psychology behind marketing is interesting... but what should I SOUND like?”* That’s a fair question - after all, you’re here because of your voice! The short answer is this: you should sound like yourself. As we discussed before, today’s world of voice over isn’t focused on just one type of voice anymore; there’s a need for every voice. What’s most important is that you develop the technical skill to be able to consistently deliver copy in a way that is conversational and truly genuine.

Like the greater world of VO as a whole, the niche of socially-conscious voice over is also made up of a diverse range of voices of all ages and styles. However, the unique needs of this facet of

our industry do sometimes require a more particular set of skills on the part of the voice actor.

Generally, socially-conscious voice over is focused on two characteristics: **authority** and **reflectivity**. Let's take a closer look at these two characteristics and what they sound like in a human voice.

A voice that is **authoritative** sounds like it's coming from an expert. If a voice sounds like it's coming from a place of authority, listeners will subconsciously assume that this voice is in charge, and they'll be more likely to pay attention. Please note, this doesn't mean that the voice is louder than usual! It should simply sound as if the voice actor is very knowledgeable about the subject on which they're speaking.

A voice that is **reflective** sounds like the speaker is talking about a past experience or memory. The voice may be calm, thoughtful, and even wistful. A reflective voice makes the listener feel as if they're being given a firsthand account of a past experience.

Voices that exhibit these qualities are sometimes favored for socially conscious voice over opportunities because they're very effective at holding listeners' attention. In practice, this means that these types of voice over opportunities often go to older-sounding voice actors. When we hear a voice that sounds older than us, we subconsciously assume both that they're in a position of authority and that they may have valuable firsthand experience to reflect

back on.

Please note, we didn't say *older* voice actors... we said *older-sounding* voice actors. It's important to note that your age isn't important. What is important is how old you *sound*. The overall range of ages you can believably portray is called your **vocal age range**, and this range can strongly influence your career and work opportunities. Don't worry - there's no bad vocal age range! Producers are constantly looking for voice actors with vocal age ranges all over the spectrum.

There are plenty of other vocal qualities that may be favored in this area of our field; these will generally come down to the individual project. Another important skill set for your marketability to these types of voice over opportunities will be your ability to accurately and convincingly deliver copy that evokes specific emotions, tones, or moods. Again, these will generally come down to a specific case-by-case basis, informed by the cause, the copy, and the producer's vision for the project. As a quick mood guide, here are some emotions that you might be called on to portray for more specific socially-conscious VO projects:

Charities

The voice: caring, upbeat, understanding, reflective

Public Service Announcements

The voice: trustworthy, authentic, authoritative, calm

Social Justice

The voice: passionate, level-headed, urgent, energetic

The Environment

The voice: compelling, meditative, upbeat, hopeful

As you begin to develop a strategy for approaching these kinds of voice over opportunities, the first step is to get to know your own voice. Start to ask yourself questions like this:

- What do *I* sound like?
- What are my voice's strengths?
- What is my vocal age range?
- What does my individual voice do best?

It's alright if you don't have clear answers for these questions right away! The important part is that you start to think about your

individual voice and how you can leverage your unique strengths to best accomplish your goals. If it helps, try a brainstorming session: think about your voice and write down all the words that come to mind. Discovering and narrowing in on what makes your voice unique will be of great value to you as you approach this ever-growing industry. Because in today's world of voice over, it's not about "blending in" or "fitting the mold" - it's about showcasing your voice's uniqueness in order to stand out.

In addition to understanding where your own voice might fit best within this industry, one of the most important things you can do to set yourself apart is develop technical skill as a voice actor. Practice your craft, and make an active effort to become better at what you do. By investing the time and energy to develop technical skill, you'll be putting yourself ahead of many of your peers - and you'll also be ensuring that when you're given an opportunity, you can deliver the most effective product to your client. And that means the next time there's a need for voice over work, you'll be the first person they think of to call!



SOCIALLY-CONSCIOUS VO: WHERE TO LOOK

And now for the part you've been waiting for...

...where to look for socially-conscious voice over work!

Now that we've talked about industry changes and the need for genuine voices in this unique part of our field, it's time to get down to the nitty gritty. What's the best way to go about looking for these types of opportunities?

In the next part of this book, we'll offer some insight into where to look for socially conscious VO work and how to approach potential contacts. Let's get started!

1. Follow Your Passion

Is saving the planet a cause that's dear to your heart? Do you volunteer regularly at your local animal shelter? Are you involved in your city's local social justice group? Do you spend spare hours at the food pantry down the street?

Whatever you're passionate about, it's time to combine that passion with your pursuit of voice over!

Reach out to others who are involved in furthering the causes that you care about. Make sure they know that you're a voice actor and you'd be delighted to lend your voice to their next awareness campaign. Volunteer your services for groups and organizations you believe in. The result is a win-win for everyone involved: the organization ends up with a terrific voice over product, and you secure valuable experience and exposure for a cause you believe in.

2. Do Your Research

A little active research on your part can quickly turn up plenty of opportunities for voice over work with socially-conscious organizations and groups. Make sure you're reading your area's local business news. Some communities have a separate publication for business news, while others include it as part of their primary publication, like the business

section of a local paper or website. Look for updates and new developments from local charities, and use these developments as opportunities to reach out with a note of appreciation for the great work they do. Make sure you include a mention that you're a voice actor and a link to where they can hear your voice over demo.

You can also gain valuable insight by signing up for regional charity newsletters or email lists. Many charities maintain an active list of newsletter subscribers in order to get the word out about events they're organizing or new initiatives they're working on. These types of newsletters can help to show their supporters how their donations are being used and update them on how they can stay involved. Often, new initiatives and events will require a dedicated marketing campaign, and these types of campaigns almost always need voice over of some kind! Be on the lookout for opportunities like these and reach out to make sure they know about you, what you do, and how you can help.

3. Get Involved

Stand up for what you believe in! Use your voice over as a chance to get even more involved in your local community and the causes you believe in. Join groups and be a participating member. We can bet that you'll never come to

think that the time you spent helping a charity or spreading awareness about an important cause was wasted. Not only will you feel more fulfilled for having helped your community, but you'll also be making deep, meaningful connections with like-minded people - and those connections can open unexpected doors.

Over our 30-plus years of experience in this industry, we've seen many voice actors succeed, and we've also seen many give up. Among those voice actors who are able to build positively toward their goals and achieve success, a common thread has emerged. More often than not, success comes to those who are active in their pursuits - those individuals who are always doing *something*. By showing up and making a consistent effort to expand your skills and grow your experience, you'll be putting yourself far ahead of many of your competitors. Simply being an active member of your community and devoting your time to doing *something* to further a cause you care about will ensure that when an opportunity does come, you'll be there for it. And in the meantime, volunteering for your local library or devoting a Saturday morning to canvassing your neighborhood for a cause you believe in definitely beats sitting on the couch.

4. Spread the Word

We've said it before and we'll say it again: if they don't know you're a voice actor, they won't hire you as a voice actor. You never know who can help you on your path to success... but if you don't tell them about what you do, they'll never be able to help at all! We've heard from many voice actors who struggled for months to find work opportunities, only to tell someone they regularly interact with in their day-to-day life about their voice acting aspirations and then hear something like, "Oh, you're a voice actor? My brother's cousin's nephew's charity is organizing an event and they could really use someone with your skills... I'll have to introduce you!"

You can also build connections by reaching out personally to local organizations via phone or email. Call them up or send them a message thanking them for the work they do, and include your contact information and a way they can hear your demo. Follow up your initial contact with a handwritten thank-you note - a personal message that will help you truly stand out.

Make sure you're actively telling others about what you do. Have an easy way to share your demo and contact information with anyone who might be able to help. Stay organized and keep track of your contacts in a way that allows you to go

back and easily reference things later on.

5. Look Online

There are countless organizations, web groups, and social media pages out there that serve to connect like-minded individuals under the umbrella of a common cause... all you have to do is look! A quick web search for “charities near me” returns thousands of promising results. You can narrow your search to reflect specific causes you’re passionate about, and go from there! Social media sites like Facebook are also great places to look for pages and groups dedicated to serving your local community. There are also many websites dedicated to building databases of charities to connect individuals with causes they support:

- **Greatnonprofits.org:** This website is an invaluable resource for those interested in getting involved within their community. The site offers a massive database of charities, foundations, and organizations searchable by location as well as by issue/type keywords so you can quickly connect with local groups you care about.
- **Yellowpages.com:** The same big Yellow Pages phone book you’re used to, gone online! This easily searchable database can help you to look for organizations in your area. When you create a free YP account, you can also

save searches and access your favorites from multiple devices.

- **Hulafrog.com:** Hulafrog is a national-local media company dedicated to providing parents with local activities and resources for their children. Hulafrog's websites include a business directory, an event calendar, and localized weekly newsletters. Their directories also offer lists of charities and foundations for kids.

These are just a few ideas to get you started - get creative and you'll be pleasantly surprised at the opportunities you can dig up with a little research!



CHART YOUR OWN COURSE

Why are you here?

This might seem like a straightforward question, but understanding your own answer will help to inform the goals you set for yourself and the path you take to reach those goals.

Your best chances of success in this or any field come down to how much you care - and how much you're willing to put in the time and effort to build something you're proud of, something you're truly passionate about!

The World Happiness Summit is a 3-day event that unites the world's leading experts in the science of happiness and wellbeing

with a global audience to learn practical tools for a happier life. Every year, professional researchers, psychologists, and health experts gather to discuss the latest discoveries in the field of happiness. Throughout their work, they've confirmed through scientific research something that may seem relatively intuitive: as individuals, we're generally happier when we're self-motivated to accomplish our goals.

When our driving force comes from within, we're much more likely to continue working toward our own success, and we're also more likely to enjoy the process.

Think about this: you're pursuing voice over for *you*. You're doing this because it's something you're interested in, something you enjoy - and if you can harness that knowledge as your driving motivational force, it'll help you greatly as you work toward your goals.

Voice over is an entrepreneurial endeavor, and like any other entrepreneurial endeavor, it isn't easy. If it was, everyone would be doing it! Building success in this field takes commitment and effort. But if you can find the self-motivation to continue to work step-by-step toward your idea of success, you'll be on your way toward accomplishing your goals. And when your voice over goals are also aligned with a charity, social justice group, or another cause you care deeply about, finding the motivation to continue to

pursue your passion is even more rewarding.

What better way to give yourself even more motivation to work toward your goals than by tying them in with other causes you're passionate about?

In voice over, as in any other industry, growth is driven by change: changing attitudes, changing societal concerns, and shifting ideas about what we should value most. The modern world has given us many ways to make our voices heard and create the change we desire for our society. There's now more opportunity than ever for voice actors who choose to do so to devote their time and energy to causes they care about. The time for change is now - and the voice of change can be yours.

It's time to put your voice into action!

We invite you to check back at our website voicecoaches.com for regular updates. For the past ten years, we've published a podcast called Voice Coaches Radio, where we talk about all things voice over - and the best part is, it's free! In addition, we also offer introductory seminars for individuals interested in pursuing the voice over field.