

Your international voice

Not long after graduating from university (with a major in Education), at job interviews I used to ask what opportunities my prospective employer might offer for working internationally. At the time this probably wasn't a particularly smart move, as although my intentions were good this was about 25 years ago before the age of the internet, and before globalisation had really changed the world we live in. I had grown up watching my father develop the data processing department for a large US company across Europe, and even before most who read this had even seen a computer, knew it was possible to use these to communicate between countries.

At around the same time I lived in a hostel for international post graduate students, in England. In fact for over three years I was the token British resident, and I shared my accommodation and living space with folks from 110 countries. I saw the world!

As a small child I spent hours recording my own radio shows on our reel to reel tape deck, read the lesson in church, was fortunate to sing in a church choir with a talented choirmaster. These continued through my teenage years when I also stage managed school and youth club plays, visited BBC Radio, participated in some TV broadcasts, and took a couple of short workshops about interviewing for radio.

Fast forward twenty years or so, and I moved to Istanbul, Turkey. Here I had the opportunity to begin to put the pieces together, and finally realise (with both definitions intended) my dream of becoming an international voice artist. The background above is intended to illustrate that I believe what we do today is a culmination of our experience, none of which is irrelevant. It also begins to illustrate that "international" is not just an "over there" concept, but really starts from where you are.

Here's the Merriam Webster definition:

in-ter-na-tion-al

adj \,in-tər-'nash-nəl, -'na-shə-n^ə\

1. : of, relating to, or affecting two or more nations <*international* trade>
2. : of, relating to, or constituting a group or association having members in two or more nations <*international* movement>
3. : active, known, or reaching beyond national boundaries <an *international* reputation>

Interestingly, since I am based in Istanbul, Turkey, every time I record in English (nearly all of my work) I am contributing to an international production under definition #1 *even if* the recording is for a Turkish client, for use in Turkey. This is a very different application of the term "international", but suggests that many projects which voice artists contribute to may have an unexpected reach, and perhaps unintentionally affect an international audience.

In my introduction I mentioned living with people from 110 nationalities – this was in a small city in the UK. One must therefore wonder if what is defined as a “local” spot is *only* heard by “locals” whatever they may be.

A more classic view of international voiceover would be the artist in one country, and the client in another. For many this is the dream, and yet with the resources of the internet this is now technologically very simple. In fact it is usually no different in process from delivering audio to a local client. The steps involved are actually so similar that on several occasions my clients have only learned that their audio has come from overseas after the completion of their production!

Definition #2 refers to the association of people across several nations. VOICE 2012 exemplifies this: the VoiceOver INTERNATIONAL Creative Experience. It does what it says on the can! (Sorry, that’s an old British slogan!). Furthermore, the “International VoiceOvers” panel brings you an eclectic selection of global talent, and the opportunity to discover a wide range of perspectives on what it means to work in different global locations, experiences of working with clients based around the world, ideas on how to cope with problems thrown up by irregular translations, or cultural differences, and much, much more.

The panel comprises natives of five continents, based in five different time zones (Los Angeles represents a sixth time zone!), and will not only share a wealth of experience, but also be open to responding to questions.

- Andy Boyns (British VO – Turkey)
- Lofty Fulton (Australia)
- Mehmet Onur (Turkey)
- Pocholo Gonzales (The Philippines)
- Priscilla Groves (Ireland)
- Simone Fojgiel (Uruguayan – Spanish VO – USA)



Association with others is undoubtedly one of the most efficient ways of developing, and one of the huge benefits of an event such as VOICE comes from meeting others and broadening one’s own horizons through learning of their experiences.

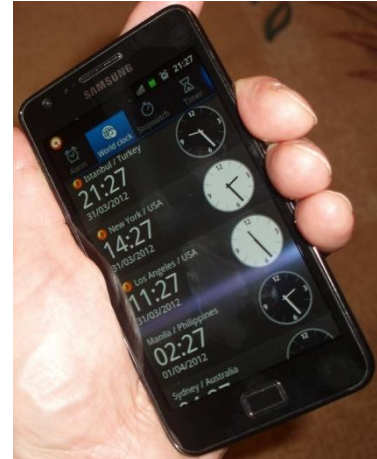
One of the questions which will undoubtedly be raised relates to definition #3. “How does one become active, known, or reach beyond national boundaries?”. Fortunately this is not rocket science, but it does take a little application.

In fact there are already many clues to this scattered through this article. VOICE 2012 provides the opportunity to expand connections in person, and this is all about reaching out and saying “Hello”. This is the importance of its strong **community** theme. Here *active participation* is the key, and *you* have to make that happen.

As main sponsor of the convention, Voices.com is one of the **technology** links which many find critical to expanding their client base globally. As with other similar voice

market places, Voices.com is a tool which provides the opportunity to connect with potential clients who might be based anywhere around the world. One advantage here is that the client/talent workflow is clearly defined, and the awkward questions about payment options are normally sorted out before the job begins.

Contributions to discussion on the various social media platforms (yes, Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn, VoiceoverUniverse etc) are also tremendous ways to build reputation and get yourself known. When I started as a voice artist in 2005 it was an interesting experience in the studio to often be the only person who understood the script. I had no-one to guide me. This rapidly changed when I became involved in the online communities. Today I am grateful for the support of my voiceover compatriots around the globe, and I find myself constantly aware of different international timezones, and imaging what various individuals are doing at this moment in their part of the world.



How you build your reputation is also connected to how you market yourself. Consider how others might perceive you if they've never had the chance to meet in person. This is reflected not only through one's use of social media, but also through the availability of a good personal website. Voice artists provide a professional service. Is this how you are portrayed? Here the World Voices Organisation (<http://world-voices.org>) deserves a mention. Rather than only asking the question "Can I trust the client to pay me?", it's important to also consider the client's anxiety: Can I trust this person to deliver a good audio product? World Voices is an independent membership organisation which will set standards of professional quality and skill to produce recorded audio in a home environment for the expanding commercial market. It will also serve as a guild to train voice artists on how to attain those standards.

VOICE 2012 has **education** as a third theme which provides an opportunity for a recent reference a free teleseminar conducted by the event producers, Penny Abshire and James Alburger. Although the teleseminar was strictly speaking outside the scope of the VOICE event, it illustrates that in bringing people together, a simple question may deliver an unexpected response.

As the guest on the call, Stew Herrera was asked whether one should impose a personal limit on an approach to marketing, and target only markets similar or smaller to the size of one's locality. His reply perfectly fits with the explanation of "international" which I've described here:

Stew Herrera: "You know, I don't know that it matters any more... because the internet has democratised the whole darn process. There are guys in every state,

every place you can think of who are competing in every size market. Market size almost doesn't matter. I don't think anyone cares where you are - they care what do you bring to the table: what do you sound like?"

The ability to work as a voiceover artist is no longer tied to geographical location, and with a good internet connection even a home based studio can reach out to clients around the globe. Good relationships within the international voiceover community, and a solid international reputation can only help.

If this has changed your perspective of what it means to have an "international voice", then join in the conversations and ask your questions either at the "International VoiceOvers" panel at VOICE, or later online in one of the many voiceover groups.

Andy is a British voice actor, originally from London, England, and currently based in Istanbul, Turkey. His voice literally flies the world on inflight documentaries, and can be heard on countless corporate videos, documentaries, commercials, and other projects. He is an active member of several voiceover social networking groups and is a firm believer in the principal whereby if you keep seeking opportunities, you are bound to succeed. As an attendee of VOICE 2010, Andy used the occasion to interview many voice artists for his website podcast series "The Person Behind the Voice," a program that he plans to expand this year. He also wrote and produced several of the unofficial promo videos for VOICE 2012. He is married and a proud father. Andy also teaches English to Turkish students preparing for their university studies.



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