

The Lana Turner/Ted Williams Syndrome:



Waiting to be “Discovered” for your Voice?

By Randy Kaye

Voice Actor, & VO Coach Edge Studio

I taught two voiceover students at Edge Studio today. One (Alan) will make it in Voiceover and the other (Bill), I predict, will not. Why? How dare I say such a thing?

Alan and Bill both have marketable voices. Each has made the wise decision to get training before making a half-baked demo. They both want to make a living at this, and think it’s fun.

So what’s the difference?

Alan expects to *work at getting work*. Bill, on the other hand, is hoping to be *discovered*. He thinks he will make a great demo and the world will start offering voiceover work to him. Somehow. Like VO Karma.

According to movie legend, Lana Turner was “discovered” while sipping a soda at Schwab’s drugstore in Hollywood. The recent voice acting equivalent is Ted Williams, a homeless man whose golden voice was noticed, then featured in a small online video by a 20-year news veteran – which went viral within a day, and led to national voiceover work for Ted. Ta Da! Instant voice over star is born.

All true? Who knows? But, true or not – you can be sure it’s not *likely* to happen to any one of us. You may land a great booking, catch the ear of a terrific agent, become the voice of an evergreen corporation – but, odds are, you worked your little tail off to get to the right place to be heard in the first place.

And PS – let’s say you do, somehow, beat the odds and get discovered. Are you good enough to *stay* there? Consistent work beats a one-time shot. Even Lana Turner had to know – or learn – acting skills to stay employed.

Alan comes into every session with his *homework* done, and more. He goes beyond the exercises and reading I’ve assigned and looks for fun stuff on *YouTube and Google* to supplement. He comes in prepared to work. He has started his *home studio*, has a file of *potential clients* waiting to know when his demo is ready, and he actually *trains his ear* by actively listening to voice talents everywhere – on television, on websites, in museums,



via audiobooks. Alan is *preparing to get booked* – not “discovered.” And, when he is hired, he’ll be able to do the job. He gets it.

Bill, on the other hand, tells me he “didn’t have time” to do his homework. I ask him, “so, when you open your business, when will you find time to do your *marketing*?” He looks at me like I’m just kidding. Then he adds – in all seriousness – “can’t I just get an agent who will do the marketing *for me*?” (OK, agents, you may now get up off the floor where you have collapsed from laughter. I know, I know.)

So –repeat after me: *I will not get “discovered” as a voice talent.*

But – here’s the good news. You can *succeed*. It’s just that it takes good old-fashioned work. Sorry about that. But it is worth it. I love this job. You will too.

TO BE SUCCESSFUL ...

So - what *does* it take? Here’s some of the specific work. There’s lots more here at Voice 2012 about each of these layers – you are in the right place!

1. Your Voice

Figure out what *kind* of voice you have. Where would it fit in this industry? Listen, ask, evaluate. Get a good set of ears on you. Also – you will need *control* of accents/speech defects/regionalisms. Can you *breathe and support* your voice properly? Yes – again – more work to be done. How? Singing lessons, speech therapy, learning about the care of your instrument.

2. Reading Skills

You must be able to read fluently, fluidly, and with comprehension. Many of us do not.

Can’t read well? This may not be the job for you, as much of it is cold reading. Practice *reading out loud* until it is smooth.

Can’t diagram a sentence? You’ll need to be able to find things like subjects, verbs, and objects, especially in long drawn-out copy. Drag out the English 101 book and relight your *grammar* spark.

Part of your brain has to think ahead, part must stay in the moment. It’s called *lateral reading*. Without it your reads could be too choppy and unpredictable. It’s essential to be able to phrase well as you read.

3. Acting Skills

Who are you? Who are you talking to? Why are you saying these words?

It’s not called “Voice Reading” - it’s called “Voice Acting.”

Are you free enough, relaxed enough, to deliver *variety and confidence* in the booth? Not yet? More work ahead. What can help? Acting and/or improvisation classes. Voiceover workouts. Always keep learning.

4. Technique

You'll need to know how to control tempo, pitch, volume, articulation, microphone placement, etc. Clients will expect this professionalism.

The answer? Training, then focused practice until technique is so second-nature you don't have to overthink it anymore. Yep, more work!

5. Business and Technical Skills

Things have changed. You will need *home studio skills, computer savvy*, and some basics in *marketing, accounting, and running a small business*.

Does all this take work? Money? Time? Absolutely! But the key is to *find fun in the process*. It can be done. And it's worth it. This is the best business ever. I remember that every time I get to play a baby owl in the morning, a surly teenager in the afternoon, and then discuss fibromyalgia solutions later in the day. Sometimes even in my bunny slippers.

The work is worth it. And if you want everyone else to think you were "discovered" – that's your choice. We all need a little mystique.

ABOUT RANDYE ...

*Randye Kaye. Warm, rich, intelligent, creative voice. Plays well with others. Randye voices for clients such as Continental Airlines, Priceline.com, Dannon, Hilton Hotels, and Kyocera, and remains an enthusiastic lifelong learner. She is also a voice over coach with **Edge Studio** in NYC, CT and DC.*