

The 10 Mindset Tweaks You Need to be a Successful Voice Actor



CARRIE OLSEN
PROFESSIONAL VOICE OVER

Your mindset as a voice actor may be the most important thing to keep in check as you start and run your business. From making the decision to start your business in the first place, to how you handle rejection, to how you allocate your time, to how much you invest in yourself, your mindset is an overwhelmingly large determining factor in the number and type of clients you attract, and even the rates you charge.

There are 10 mindset Tweaks that are essential for voice actors, and can be the difference between a hobby voiceover career and a thriving one.

The first Tweak is **know your why**. This can be a tough one, especially for voice actors who are just getting started. Maybe you read a too-good-to-be-true account of someone who jumped into the business with minimal effort and started making bank right away. Maybe you have the misconception that voice acting isn't really work at all, and that starting a career as a voice actor will essentially allow you to make money while slacking off. If these are the reasons you would like to get into voice acting, you won't be successful.

But if your "why" looks something like, "I want to make a living by using my gifts (my voice) to help tell stories," or "I want to be able to express myself creatively while having the flexibility of running my own business," you will likely have the motivation to keep you going when things get tough.

The second Tweak is to remember that you're running a business. Voice acting seems like such a glamorous business. And sometimes it is. But for most voice actors, the talking and recording part of their business only makes up a fraction of what they actually do. The rest of their time is spent marketing, invoicing, researching new clients, editing audio, networking, and a slew of other things it takes to keep a successful business running. If you forget that you're running a business and have the expectation that recording is your only responsibility, your business will never take off. Because essentially, you won't have one.

The third Tweak is understanding that you have to happen to your business. If you expect to buy your recording equipment, set up a website, and then sit back and wait for the cash to start rolling in, consider your bubble burst. As mentioned in mind Tweak number two, there is a lot that has to happen for your business to get going, much less fully support you. And when it comes down to it, no one is responsible for taking your business from Point A to Point B but you. You can't

depend on your website, your demos, your contacts, or even your agents to get you work. No one is as invested in your business as you are, so it's up to you to get out there and be a force for acquiring business. This means you must be willing to invest in quality equipment, quality training, and invest the time you need to implement a solid marketing plan.

Tweak number 4: Know who you are.

And don't be afraid to tell people. If you're familiar with marketing, you have probably heard the saying, "If you are targeting everyone, you are targeting no one." The same is true with voiceover. This is a hard mind Tweak to make if this concept is new to you. But once you get it, you'll see just how powerful it is. The tendency is to want to market to everybody because you'll get the best chances of being hired, right? But the fact is, if you market to everyone, your brand will seem very generic. And generic brands don't tend to excite people. People want something that speaks to them. So it is in your best interest to brand yourself specifically as opposed to claiming that you can do anything (which probably isn't true anyway). So, if you're a character actor, brand yourself that way. If you're the guy next door, let your branding reflect that. Of course, it's okay – and even good – to have range. But you do want your branding to be clear so that you don't confuse potential clients. And to give yourself the best chance of resonating with your target.

Tweak number 5: Knowing your voice is a process.

Some people who get into voiceover feel they know exactly the type of work their voice and personality are good for. Some others hope to unlock the secret of where their voice fits in during their first voiceover lesson. But one of the reasons that voiceover is such a coveted and respected line of work when done well, is that it is a process. If anyone could take one voiceover lesson and instantly know exactly where his or her voice fit into the industry, there would be way more working voice actors, and as a result, rates would be much lower. It takes patience, work, perseverance, practice, and more patience to really get to know your voice and understand how it fits best in the voiceover world. If that sounds like a downer to you, you probably need to check your "why" from Tweak number 1. Like any business, it takes time and investment to get it off the ground.

Tweak number 6: The client is always right.

Some clients you come across will be pros. They'll know what they want, what they need from you as a voice actor, and they'll know how to work with you so that you're able to give your best performance. Other clients may be brand new to the business, and it will take a little more time and effort to get to a spot where they're comfortable with the read you give. But in both scenarios, remember that your job is to voice act. Which means you take direction. So even when the client gives you a seemingly ridiculous bit of direction, it is not your job to judge whether or not that direction make sense for the piece. It is your job to take their direction and do what they ask. You have to trust your director (and producer and engineer if you have them) to do their jobs. There may be times when it is appropriate for you to make

suggestions, but it is never your job to go against what the client or director is asking for. Even if you *know* the spot would sound better that way.

Tweak number 7: You are the best.

Here's a difficult mind Tweak, especially if you're new in the business. It may be your tendency to qualify all of your auditions and jobs with a line like, "I'm brand new to voiceover. I haven't done many jobs before, but I think I'd be pretty good for this project. I hope to get the chance to work with you." After reading something like that, do you think the client is going to be knocking down your door to get you to work on their project? They will probably be turned off because it looks like you have no confidence in yourself. If you don't believe in yourself, how can you convince anyone else to? Now, I'm not saying that you should be conceded, but any time you audition for or win a job, you should be confident that you can do the job as good as or better than anyone else. Remember, you're running a business (Tweak number 2), and it's your job to market yourself well. So as much as you might want to ask for affirmation from clients, or as much as you might feel like you need to be affirmed from others, it is not anyone else's job to make you feel good about yourself. Your job is to acquire the training you need to be good, produce quality work, and then be confident that your work is excellent.

Tweak number 8: It's all fun and games.

This point may seem contrary to Tweak number 2 (you're running a business), but hear me out. Yes, building a voiceover career is hard work. And yes, as a voice actor, you are responsible for a lot more than just making funny voices into a microphone. But you don't want to get so focused on the business aspect of the business that you forget to have fun! At the end of the day, we voice actors get to read into a microphone for a living! We get to connect with people through our voices, and play pretend as we take on different personas in our daily work. When you start to lose sight of the fun, you will likely start to lose motivation, recording will start to feel more like work, and your reads probably won't be as good as they could be. Let's remember that we're lucky to be in this line of business, and remind ourselves regularly that this is a fun job!

Tweak number 9: Pay attention.

Voice acting is a very isolating industry. There are some days I don't leave my house, and I spend hours in my booth every day (which may or may not be a converted closet). So we may start to operate on an island and forget that there is whole world of voice actors out there. If you want longevity in this business, you have got to stay connected in the VO world. Join networking groups, subscribe to blogs and podcasts, even attend industry events. You also need to stay aware of trends. So if you're a commercial voice actor, you should be watching commercials regularly. If you're in radio imaging, you need to be paying attention to what's happening in the world of imaging. Don't let yourself get too comfortable in your own private little VO cocoon.

Tweak number 10: You're the CEO

It's up to you to set the trajectory for your business. If you want to expand into other niches, that is your call. And it's your responsibility to set in motion the research, the training and the plan to break into that niche. This also means that you're in charge of workflow, but you have the freedom to delegate if you want to. If you hate invoicing, or editing is taking valuable time away from the recording booth, you can hire people to do those things. There is no blueprint for how your voiceover business needs to look. As the CEO, you are free to unleash your creativity and run your business in the way that is most profitable for you.