

Producing Commercials, Promos and News



Talent

(“Commercials” refers to commercials, promos and PSAs)

- “Talent” is a generic term that refers to announcers.
- Production people should resist the tendency to produce the “same old, same old.”
- Stop from time-to-time and evaluate your work.

Ask yourself:

“What did I do today that was great?”

“What could I have done better?”



Production Pre-Planning



[The Radio-Mercury Awards \\$100,000 Grand Prize Winners](#)

Script: Check for mistakes:

- Check for pronunciation.
- Check the script's timing – time with a watch or timer.

Technical Considerations:

- Plan how you want to lay out tracks.

Music Selection: Decide on music before you go in the studio.

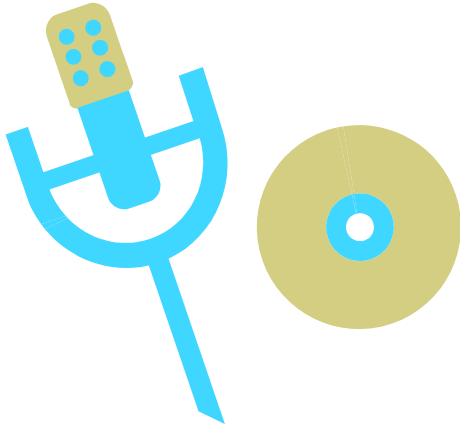
Music selection (cont.)

- Consider the lack of music. Plain voice and dialogue can be effective.



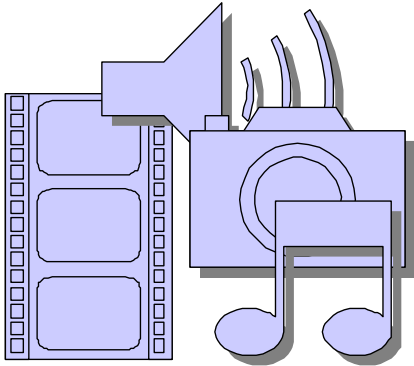
- Listen to voice track without music. Does it sound like it's missing something?
- Production music libraries contain 30- and 60-second (possibly 10- and 15-second) copyright-cleared tracks.

Music selection (cont.)



- Popular songs cannot be used as the bed for spots unless rights fees are paid.
- Music should be in keeping with station's format (unless ironic).
- Music is not the “star” of the spot; in the background. Problem with popular songs?
- Consider music's pacing, energy and emotional level.
- Consider client's type of business.
- “Trial-and-error” process.

Sound Effects Selection



- Purpose is to give listener an audible cue of what is going on.



Buzzed Driving Emergency_Room.mp3

- Can add or detract from spot.
- Less is generally more.

Three ways to use:

1. Background; sets the stage (as a cue to locale).
2. Foreground, or primary; important to understanding the spot. You want the listener to notice.
3. Punctuation (timing is critical).

Specific Sound Effects

- Avoid: police and fire sirens, other emergency alert effects.
- One sound effect that scares broadcasters to death: Silence.
A few seconds of silence gets everyone's attention and can be very effective.
- Obviously, you can't use it often.



Talent Selection



- Voice talent makes a commercial.
- Go for character and style first, voice quality second.
- Difference between an announcer and an actor.
- Each commercial has a personality or attitude; talent should reflect the spot's character.

Production

Recording talent:

- Don't be afraid to ask talent for two or three reads.
- You may mix and match parts of several takes.
- Don't accept, "Don't worry, we can fix it in post (production)." Maybe, maybe not, also it may be possible but difficult.
- Follow announcer's reading word-for-word.



Recording sound effects

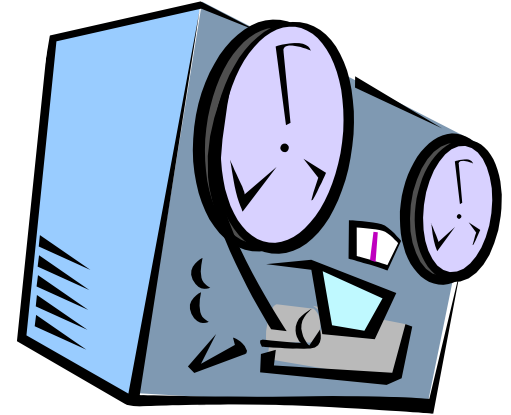


Three sources for sound effects:

1. Sound effects library.
2. “Foley” (named for movie sound man Jack Foley).
Recording effects in studio, using items to create effects.
3. Record the actual sounds in the field.

Editing

- Be sure that edits sound natural; for example, leave in breaths.
- You may overlap voices slightly (see 8.2), if you want a fast-paced effect.
- Use best take as the master, borrow short segments from other takes.
- Match vocal intensity, tonal qualities, audio level and pacing.
- If spot will have a music bed, probably want the vocal track to be slightly short to allow music to establish, fade or “sting.”



Editing Music



- If music is not exactly :30 or :60, you can use time-compression tool (“Clip Time Stretching” in Adobe Audition).
- Small amount of reverb or delay can mask edits.
- Cross-fade feature of editing software can help to join two separate pieces of music (“Edit>Crossfade” on Adobe Audition).

Mixing and Processing

- Applying a small amount of reverb to the voice track takes away the “dead” studio sound, and provides a more natural sound.



- On Adobe Audition, go to “Effects” in the Organizer window, choose “Delay Effects” and then “Studio Reverb.”

Pro Speak



- Donut – ad agency-supplied commercial with hole in the middle for local copy.
- Tag – a 10- to 15-second space at the end of an agency spot over which local copy is added.