

# Launching Out of the Day Job & Landing a Career in VO



**Alan Shires**  
Voice Artist and VON Business Development Manager



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**T**ired of working a day job? Longing to work full time as a performer? Mentally and physically exhausted from juggling both? Well, I have good news!

One of the questions I get asked regularly is how to escape the day job? Though not the desirable answer, it is simply by training and marketing yourself. I reached out to over three thousand production companies worldwide when I started out. This taught me everything NOT to do whilst at the same time building up my address book. I would get home at 5pm after working a 10-hour day and then sit researching production companies sometimes until midnight! It was hard but there was no other choice. I had made up my mind that I wanted to work full time as a VO and leave my day job behind, so this was my solution.

So, training and marketing are your typical answers, right? Well as long as you have your reels and a recording space there is one other thing which I believe to be VITAL in getting out of the day job and that is to network. Human beings are built to have relationships and the vast majority of my breakthroughs in VO have come through networking.

Don't know how to approach someone? Neither did I!

The first networking event I went to I could barely get two words together but through making friends within The VoiceOver Network, this became more normal as time went on and not only did it feel natural but I felt wonderful too. Don't beat yourself up if you struggle a bit, it takes time to build confidence.

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Now identifying the problem we all face at the moment - how do we network during a pandemic? Simply make good use of platforms like The VoiceOver Network, social media, virtual events and workshops because they are all fantastic avenues for us to connect with new people. All we have to do is reach out!

Finally, if your agenda is just about making money, you're probably going to find this hard. My drive is to connect with people. Whether that be actor, VO, casting director or agent. It also doesn't matter where in the world they are. For me it is all about connection and if work comes as a product of that then wonderful. People want to work with people who resonate with them



**Ally Murphy**  
Voice Artist

I was a working actor in my teens but the work dried up when I was 20 so I started working as full-time long-haul cabin crew for Virgin Atlantic. I would only have about 9 days in the UK a month, and whilst it was a lot of fun and I had so many adventures around the world, the tiredness took its toll after 14 years! When redundancy loomed in 2016, my (now) husband asked me what I would do with my life if money didn't matter. I had dreamed of going back into acting & voiceover in particular. With a little persuasion and the purchase of a basic home studio set up, I took redundancy.

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Leading up to my leaving date I took as many courses as I could on my days off so that when I left Virgin, I could start working towards being a full time VO as quickly as possible. Training is key! But not just the fun performance stuff, you need to also learn the business side of your profession. The only way I went from no jobs to full time in 6 months was by learning about marketing, CRM systems, branding, networking & communication. Remember that spending money on learning and development isn't a cost that you can scrimp

on, it's an investment and a necessity if you want to be earning a full-time wage.

You also have to knuckle down and work hard. Spend all of your available minutes learning what every full time VO knows so that you're prepared and not playing catch up when you leave. Remember that ten minutes a day is better than zero minutes a day! You should always be open to continual development, and accountable for your own time & effort. Successful people are always working hard and open to opportunity. Work on your mindset as much as the technical stuff! Mindset is key to making sure you don't have any limits to your own success.

The best part about going from an employee to a business owner is that I now have financial and creative freedom! I love that it's completely my responsibility how successful I am. I was institutionalised working for a big corporate brand and didn't realise my own potential because the company was using my potential to their advantage. I was made to feel like I needed to stay in the company because I would fail on my own. Now I'm confident, motivated and always open to opportunity which has led to some wonderful parts of my life.



**Kimberly Crookshanks**  
Voice Artist

It has always been my dream to be an actress; when I found voice over, it was like coming home after a very long journey. It was the best feeling in the world. Like many people in this industry, when I first started pursuing voice over, I had a full-time job. I had a set schedule so I was able to work my classes around my work. Being a parent made it hard, I budgeted for one class a week, syncing schedules with my husband, and making time for family.

In 2018, there came a time where I felt I had done the classes and the work. I was ready to leave the "day job". I left my job and decided I was going to get a demo reel, and really pursue this career that I loved so much. I learned very quickly that while I was submitting up to 20 auditions a week, it was a lot harder than I thought it would be. I soon realized I should look into going back to work full time.

I found a wonderful job with a video game developer. While I was back to working full time, it was with a much more flexible employer and I continued to take classes and improve my craft. As I worked there, the job grew but I did not and I couldn't meet the demands. It's hard to work a full-time

job when your focus is not fully in the role. Like many people I was laid off just before the pandemic really took a turn.

This turned into a blessing in disguise. I didn't have a home recording set up so I dove deep into voiceover. I started taking more online classes, attended VO workouts over Zoom, and networked more than ever. Now, with a broadcast quality set up, I recorded a commercial demo reel with one of my favorite studios to work with. In the end, I came to realize that this industry takes patience; it's not a sprint, it's a marathon and no matter how long it takes me, I will get there. However long it does take, this is my journey, my path and I need to follow it how I see fit.

You need to follow YOUR path how you see fit. If you have to work full time while pursuing this, it's okay. Classes and demo reels are expensive. But take the time you need for yourself and you will get there. Know when you're ready to take the leap into it full time, but if you need to step back and work in a regular job for a little bit, that's okay too. Voiceover will always be there.



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