



Nick Ivanov: "I would advise voice talents not to aim at projects, but rather at work providers. It is much more important to build long-term relationships than to argue over the pricing of a specific project."

VoiceOverXtra Interview
**Nick Ivanov, CEO at Graffiti Studio:
International Voice-Over Opportunities**

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American English, Arabic, Armenian ... Croatian, Czech, Danish ... French, German, Greek ... Italian, Korean, Lithuanian ... Romanian, Russian, Serbian ... Turkish, Ukranian, Vietnamese ...

Hop through the alphabetical listing of more than 30 voice talent languages that [Graffiti Studio](#) offers to international clients, and you get the feeling that the CEO there is a guy to talk to about VO opportunities worldwide. That CEO is **Nick Ivanov**.

Based in Sofia, Bulgaria, Ivanov oversees this large audio/video production company - including a 1,000-square meter TV sound stage - serving major international clients. Founded in 1994, Graffiti Studio also offers clients advertising consulting - including advice for penetrating local markets with local language voice-overs.

The following Q&A with Ivanov reveals that while North American English remains the "predominant" VO language, the growth of marketing to local markets could be a bonanza for bilingual talent.

Read on for more - including the technology preferences of international clients, and how they pay!

Nick, which language are you finding is the predominant voice of the global advertising business?

I find North American English to be predominant. However I notice a huge increase of interest toward the new markets -Eastern Europe and Asia. In my opinion, this interest will grow over the next decade. Much of the international opportunity for voice acting will be in meeting the demands of those export-oriented countries.

So bilingual skills in those languages will certainly be of value to voice actors. But for English-speaking jobs, is there more demand for British English, North American English, or other English dialects?

In our geographic area, we meet a demand for British English rather than American.

Is there a difference in pay for particular dialects?

Yes, and that depends on how rare a certain language is.

What particular types of voice-overs are most in demand now? For instance, promos, movie trailers, audiobooks, e-learning, narrations, web sites, games ...

That would be definitely e-learning media voice-over.

Do North American advertisers use your services?

Yes, when they aim toward the Eastern European market.

Is any one sector or country showing a lead in the voice-over industry in terms of quality? Technology? Talent?

Technology is not the main issue in any business nowadays. In our business, human capital is the leading element - the production team and our voice-over talents.

What is the most common criticism from your clients if they seem reluctant to use North American voice-talent?

We provide native speaking talents, including North American. If they aim to that market they would be obliged to use a North American talent.

But most of the voice-over work we do is in the context of providing many local languages. Meaning we rarely work on a single-language project. Most of the time, we record a text in multiple languages and that is our value to clients - to provide a single contact and solution for a group of languages for a better price and less management complications.

What is the single most important quality that international voice-seekers expect of their English-speaking voice actors? For instance, quality of recording? Turnaround time? Good self-direction? Price? Availability? Other?

All these factors build the talent's profile and affect the hiring decision.

How much opportunity exists for translation and/or script doctoring services? Is offering this a good selling point for voice actors?

I think the real opportunities for voice-over talents is in building long-term relationships with employers. Self-marketing is very expensive and not cost effective.

And if a voice-over talent is easy to work with, he or she could expect projects from any business area on a regular basis.

What other advice would you offer voice actors for dealing with international producers and casting people?

I would advise voice talents not to aim at projects, but rather at work providers. It is much more important to build long-term relationships with voice-over agencies and to have work on regular basis, than to argue over the pricing of a specific project and lose a potential income source.



Sound stage at Graffiti Studio.

TECH NEEDS

Does it matter to you if North American voice actors have union affiliation? Agency representation? ISDN connections?

ISDN is important, as some customers insist on that. Everything else is a matter of how his or her voice fits the production, if he or she is easy to work with, and of course, pricing.

What is the most common recording format voice clients desire?

wav.

And what is the best way to deliver a demo to you or your clients?

FTP.

When working with first-time or “unrecognized” clients, is it common to offer these clients or producers a lower-quality file for review and approval, and then accept payment, before delivering the higher quality file?

Nope. Most customers even work with 30-day payment delay. They need to get the job done, and being a responsible partner, we do our compromises to get it all going.

Partnership is even more important in today's global financial crisis.

How often would a North American voice talent expect to do a phone-patch session with an international client?

If it is a film dubbing or a TV commercial project, pretty much every time.

GETTING PAID

Should an English-speaking voice-talent expect to have to sign a contract?

Yes.

Time zones can make communication difficult between voice actors, producers and clients. How do you handle this?

We pay overtime to our employees and thus we can rely on them to face any challenge at any time.

For payments, what methods are used?

Both Paypal and bank wire.

Since budgets may vary greatly from country to country, what is the best way to negotiate price?

The best way to negotiate price is to come up with a deal that satisfies both parties. As a service provider we want customers to come back next time.

What payment options can be expected?

If it is a huge production, we generally arrange one-third prepayment and make a payment schedule at different stages.

ABOUT GRAFFITTI STUDIO

Nick, when was Graffiti Studio created? And could you describe your services and operation?

Founded in 1994, Graffiti Studio is a leading audio and video media production company in the Balkans. We provide



business-to-business audio, video and animation solutions to advertising agencies, telecoms and end customers.

We have worked on projects for Microsoft, Nokia, Adobe, HP, Warner Bros. and many other international companies.

And please tell us about your own career, and professional and personal interests.

I am a TV journalism graduate. In 2000 I was among the pioneers of premium phone billing media content development in the local market, including TV shows, web media and media marketing services and analyses.

Since 2006 I have been a shareholder at Graffiti Studio.

Brokering so many jobs in many different languages, what sort of logistical challenges do you encounter?

Our overall challenge is to satisfy our customers' needs and to provide a solution rather sell a service.

Do you handle billing, collection and payment for talent, as well as production?

Yes.

How do you master the advertising pitches or appeals that you must have to develop for the different cultural populations you cater to?

For big voice-over projects we work with local marketing consultants and linguists.

Would you like to hear from voice actors who would like to work with you and your clients?

Yes, always.

What is the best way to contact you and to submit demos for your consideration?

By email, to sales@graffittistudio.com.

Finally, Nick, what DIDN'T we think to ask you?

I would just like to take this opportunity to wish lots of luck and joy to all readers at *VoiceOverXtra* in the coming 2009.

Thank YOU!