

**Do You Own the Rights to Your Voiceover Project**

**When Submitting It For An Award?**

Awards. Go on, be honest… we all like them! I’ve still got my Cycling Proficiency and Bronze Swimming Survival Awards stashed away from my youth.

We all like recognition for attaining a certain level of achievement, or, more relevant to the world of media, peer recognition. There is no doubt that media awards have become big business, with the Oscars® at the top of the tree, the SAG awards (for which I know a large number of our members had the opportunity to vote), the Emmys®, and a whole bunch of others.

***The Emergence of Voiceover Awards***

Now, that partial list didn’t include much for the poor voiceover, did it? There may be some categories in the Emmys® for narration, but in general, with the notable exception of the Audies®, there is not much in the way of peer recognition for the working VO.

Well, over the past couple of years, that has changed. There is now an award program for voiceovers, and it seems to have been well received by a large segment of the voiceover community. However, there is one main difference between the established movie & TV awards and the new voiceover awards: Submissions for the major awards are made by (or actively supported by) the studios themselves, not by the individual talent. Leonardo DiCaprio did not submit himself for best actor!

***Who Holds the Rights to Your Voiceover?***

I recently submitted a corporate video for an award. The presenters clearly stated that I needed to have the right to submit the work for consideration. They also asked that they be given the right to publish the video on their website, although the right to publish was not a prerequisite of entry. So, I needed to get permission from the rights holder. First stop, the production house. They sent me to the ad agency, who then gave me the contact in the client’s PR department, who said, “By all means, you can enter it, and they can use it on their website.” All of this had a clear and unambiguous paper trail.

***Do the Due (Diligence)***

Be very aware of any terms and conditions you are agreeing to when submitting work for consideration. Make sure you understand what you are granting. More importantly, find out whether you (as the voice) have the right to grant permission for the videographer, producer, music, animator, and any other party involved in the production.

In most cases, the end-client will have the rights to all aspects of the work, and their permission must be obtained before anyone else can use it. Also, be aware of terms like, “in perpetuity”, “all derivatives”, “all media”, and so forth. In almost all cases, these rights are not yours to grant. While I’m not a lawyer and this should not be considered legal advice, if you do grant rights to the material (which you do by virtue of agreeing to the award’s Terms & Conditions), you could find yourself on the wrong side of litigation.

So, play by the rules, get the rights, and good luck!

Peter Bishop, Executive Vice-President

On behalf of the WoVO Executive Board