

How to Recognize a Voiceover Scam

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For many years, so-called “Overpayment Scammers” have gone after people selling cars, selling items on Craigslist, looking for roommates, and even people offering services like graphic design and sign painting, for example. More recently, they’ve discovered our fabulous little corner of the world, and they want in.

By all reports, they’ve been hitting the VO community pretty hard lately, so we have to assume that it’s a profitable niche for them. In the interest of helping the community protect itself, this post should give you a pretty good idea of how this scam plays out, from start to finish.

I’ve heard from scores of voice talent who’ve gotten a message that nearly identical to the one below.

First of all, know this: **There. Is. No. Job.**

It’s all part of an overpayment scam that really has nothing to do with voiceovers, and everything to do with getting you to send them money. And the way they set up the scam, they want you to believe that the money you’re sending them is theirs to begin with, and that you’ve got nothing at risk. That, of course, is NOT the case.

Here’s the basic scam: you receive an email or a text message letting you know that you’ve been selected for an upcoming job. Once you show interest – by responding to them and sharing your address and phone number – they claim to set up a recording session (apparently using Google to find the name of a studio near you), and send you a check that’s written for much more than they owe you. The check is fake of course, but it’s good enough that your bank won’t spot it right away. In fact, they won’t realize it’s fake until it’s sent to the “issuing bank” who, a couple of weeks later, will refuse it. By then, you’ve cashed the check, and sent “the remaining balance to the consulting engineer,” (aka the scammer). Once your bank realizes that the check is fake, you’re on the hook for the amount that you’ve cashed and sent back to the scammer.

In hopes of giving you a full understanding of the process so you can spot these scams more easily, what follows has been compiled from a number of reports from fellow talent. And it's helpful to know that all of the talent whose stories are represented here knew from the beginning that they were dealing with a scammer.

I'll be chiming in along the way (in bold).

Here's a typical first email from the scammer. Be on the lookout for red flags as you read:

Hello and how are you doing today? My name is Jamie Bridge. I found your profile while surfing the internet, and found it interesting. We are currently seeking voice over artist for an upcoming audition in your area next month. Kindly respond to this email if you are interested. I look forward to reading from you so we could proceed with further details. Thanks,
Jamie

If you respond to that first email, you'll get something like this next (and there are a ton of red flags here):

Thanks for your response .It is a 850 CAD voice over (Assignment) for you, . A new corporate client of mine wants to create their online website.This assignment is for either professional or non professional voice. You don't have to worry about your experience, we have specialists,and Contract Studio Engineer who will bring the real perfection to the job. It's a 1 day job and wouldn't take more than that least 1 hour each day. I wouldnt be able to send you the script because my client have "copyrighted" it and confidentiality is of utmost importance until we have agreed to terms on the job.The Job cannot be done in your personal studio as it needs directing by a voice coach as well as it must be mastered by our consultant engineer.Job Location: The recording will be held at a rented studio close to your location, so you don't have to worry about traveling, the name and address of the studio will be forwarded to you before the date of the recording.

Company: TS Media

Job Description:

We are creating an animated marketing video to be distributed through web and social media. The overall video is approximately 10 minute in length with the Game Show host part being about 5 seconds. The Game Show Host voice must be boisterous, fun and entertaining.

Please title the audition file with your name to assist the client in selecting an appropriate candidate.

Sample Script:

(Contestant) Uh, I'm no rocket scientist but I'd say.. traffic congestion.

(Contestant) Well, I'm no rocket scientist but that's a no brainer. Mass Transit is the better option.

Expectations: You need to be in a good mental and emotional state of mind. Basically this is all that is required of you, Kindly, get in touch with me as soon as possible if you will take the job. More details will be provided to you and we can continue from there. Please, no time wasting. Let me know if you will take the job to commence with next arrangement. Please I'd like you to check your email on a regular basis, I might have updates for you.

If you're still up for it, the scam is on:

Thanks for keeping in touch. I received your email indicating your interest. Your total pay for the job as discussed in my previous email is \$850 .You would be paid an initial upfront deposit for \$400 to guarantee your participation for the recording and ascertain the job, and your balance of \$450 would be paid to you in cash or pay check on the final day of the recording. I will get in touch with our financier, and the part payment will be mailed to you,

until you receive and confirm payment before the recording will hold. Once you receive the payment, you are expected to cash and deposit it into your bank account. After which, you deduct your initial payment of \$400 to guarantee your participation in this project, and then send the remaining balance to the consultant engineer who will take care of all technical aspect of the job and studio rental with other planning.

That previous sentence is the key to their scam. More on that in a minute. The email continues ...

Kindly get back to me with the details below for payment and other info if available upon request

Your Full name to appear on the Check:

Complete Mailing address (No P.O Box) where the payment should be mailed:

Phone numbers (Cell and Home):

Please be informed that we would be making arrangement for your transportation if need be. There is nothing to worry about. Kindly keep in touch with the details requested as soon as you can. The venue for the recording shall be communicated as soon as all the requested details above are confirmed. Concerning the date of the recording, you have the opportunity to choose the two most convenient days for the recording. Kindly indicate that in your next reply.

Warm regards

Jamie

P.S . Please be informed that this is a one time recording. No contracts. All necessary paper work would be signed on the 1st day of recording.

Once you've sent them your contact information, they let you know when and where the recording session has supposedly been scheduled. Some talent have told me that they called the studio to confirm the session, and of course, the studio had never heard from anyone about the session in question.

One talent pointed out that the "recording studio" the scammers claimed they'd booked the session at, wasn't a recording studio at all, but a duplication facility which, in fact, never did any recording on site, and didn't even own a single microphone. Interestingly, that studio's "Google/My Business" listing includes the designation "Recording Studio," which must have been enough to have convinced the scammers that it was a believable choice.

Back to the scam:

Hi,

Congratulation on your new job. I want to assure you that everything would work out fine as planned. Kindly get back to me to reconfirm your interest in the job.

Venue: Realtime CD, 334 N.E. 89th St. Seattle, WA
98115

Date: 7th of March

Time: 10am-11am

As soon as i receive a confirmation from you, i would let you know when to receive the payment. I look forward to your email.

At this point, they overnight you a fake check, following up with a message like this:

I am write to inform you that gig payment has issued and should deliver to you today.You track your payment here at www.usps.com with tracking numbers

8100574610560484123119 and i also like to remind you that you are paired with the Consultant Engineer, as soon as the payment arrive, I want you to proceed to having it Deposited at your bank for confirmation/verification as soon possible and it will take about 24hours to clear at the bank and once cleared, deduct \$400 as your pre-payment for your services and have sent the rest to the Consultant Engineer who will take care of all technical aspect of the job and studio rental we are going to use for the recording with other planning. Your remaining \$450 will be given to you on the day of the recording.

Acknowledge receipt of email and understanding of contents

Warm regards,

Gary

Acknowledge receipt of that email, and you'll get this:

Glad you have received payment. i sent you text message. Let me know when you deposit the check at your bank

According to talent I've spoken with, the fake checks they've received have been written for between \$1,600 and \$2,700, meaning each one represents a potential profit of between \$1,200 and \$2,300 to the scammer. (This check was written for \$1,870, which would have meant a \$1,400+ profit for the scammer.)



By the way, a close look at the headers from the emails above revealed that they originated from somewhere in the the UTC +0100 time zone. This is the Central European Time Zone, which is in use in Nigeria and other African countries. (Researching this information led me to [this interesting and exhaustive report](#) on the lengths to which these scammers will go.)

Anyway, once you confirm that you've received their check (which again, is totally fake), all communication switches to texting.

Interestingly, their English skills improve dramatically at this point, making it likely that the original, possibly Nigerian scammers have handed the operation over to someone here in the States. And since they're hoping to be able to pick up the funds that you send them at a Walmart or CVS near them, that would make sense.

Also, in every case, at this point the conversation completely stopped being about a recording session, and centered only on the transfer of money.

Postscript:

A number of talent have told me that they played along for a while, thinking that at least they'd waste a bit of the scammers' money by forcing them to send the bogus check via FedEx. But of course, it turns out that they use stolen FedEx account numbers so even that doesn't have the intended effect.

Dave Courvoisier recently wrote [a fabulous and informative blog post](#) about protecting yourself from VO scammers, Nigerian and otherwise.

If you've been contacted by scammers you can always file a complaint with the [Federal Trade Commission](#) and the FBI's [Internet Crime Complaint Center](#). Also check your state's Attorney General site as they often have resources to report these types of things.

Finally, read up on the [Internet Crime Complaint Center's scam page](#) and familiarize yourself with the common characteristics of scams so you aren't victimized.

The biggest red flag: if anyone ever sends you a check, wire transfer, ACH payment, etc., and then asks you to send all or part of the funds to a 3rd party, don't. It's a scam.

