



THE BIG VERSUS (E-BOOK)

By Joshua Alexander

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Excerpt from "Voiceovers: A Super Fun Pursuit" by Joshua Alexander



THE BIG VERSUS

KERNELS OF WISDOM AND NUGGETS OF TRUTH

This will be a delicious book. I'm going to hit the pause button (as best as I can) on the humor side of things and keep it on the straight and narrow. There are things that are of foundational importance to you as a voiceover artist that I highly encourage you to adopt if you want to be a successful business owner. This book is dedicated to those things.

I make no bones about that fact that I have never once approached voiceovers as a hobby. Not once. I didn't look at it and say to myself:

- “Hmm. I think I might like to try that.”
- “Maybe I'll be successful.”
- “Let's give it a whirl and see what happens.”

No. For me, *this was it*. If you've read anything I've put out, you'll know how much they mean to me. They're a saving grace, and in fact a ministry. I don't hide the fact that I'm a Christian who loves Jesus – woe to me if I don't preach the gospel – but in this business there are strains of actual *ministry*, both to me and to others. To be chosen to voice someone's script is an incredible extension of trust. To be able to bring their script to life and minister to them through the spoken word is an exquisite privilege the likes of which I had never been exposed to. Oh what an honor it is to be chosen, even if it's about cat food!

***A hobbyist tries. A
business owner
does, because there
is no try.***

But therein lies the nugget. The truth is that the clients are trusting you. They're bestowing upon you a massive amount of hope that you'll be able to produce, and in so doing, represent them well. Now, true, they chose you because your audition compelled them to choose you. But what you and I have to remember is that they didn't have to. They could have chosen *anyone*. The fact that they chose *me*? I don't take that lightly. That's something I resound gratitude over, and I am very “overthanky” in my responses. I want them to know how truly much it means to me to have been chosen.

So now that the weight of the world for the successful delivery of their script is upon your shoulders, what do you do?

It's time to produce.

Yes, this business is a fun pursuit. But it's still a pursuit, and it's still a business.

HOBBYISTS VS. BUSINESSPEOPLE

If you're doing to be entrusted to produce quality audio and compelling messages for people, it's time to evaluate where you sit in terms of professionalism. Is Audacity good enough? Is a Blue Yeti mic really going to cut the mustard? Is a handshake deal going to protect you? Or is there something here so worth

fighting for that you *must* envelop it in structure... branding... logo... reputation... contracts... clauses... professional audio... investing in yourself... coaching... networking, and more?

Do you want to be a hobbyist and do it well? Or do you want to be a businessperson and do it *best*?

Remember, good is always the worst enemy of best.

I recently had a discussion with someone on Facebook where they said that they're just in voiceovers for the enjoyment. While I understand where they're coming from, that statement presumes, incorrectly, so, that I am not. I am in this both for enjoyment AND profit. I want a career that pays me...but that I also enjoy, no? Is it an unreasonable expectation to do what I love *and* be able to get paid for it?

Where many of the "do-it-for-love" crowd come from is a place that I never want to be at with voiceovers. My brain just isn't capable of wrapping itself around that. *Yes*, an emphatic *yes* I love what I do, and I want to continue to love it. But it's because I love it so much, that I want to *protect* it within the confines of a business structure that can promote growth, evolution, mastery, and, ultimately, a nice full 401K in the end. Those that proceed in voiceovers purely out of love and don't have the ambition or see the need to charge market rates, will never attain a career that pays their mortgage or funds their dreams. They are missing an inherent sense of self-worth.

In short, they're hobbyists.

So with that, this book is hellbent on one mission: to reveal for you The Big Versus...to reveal to you the huge colossal chasm of difference between hobbyists and business owners. Here we go. I suggest disengaging your defenses so that you're not offended, because the next few minutes may just rub you the wrong way. We'll be friends when I return...or will we?

MONEY

Hobbyists make hobby money. Maybe a bit of coffee money here and there. Business owners create revenue. Hobbyists are thinking it might be nice to have a bit of short term chump change. That name is not a coincidence. Business owners on the other hand are focused on building something that lasts; constructing something that has foundations for the long term.

This industry is far too good to think you can subsist on Fiverr or Just Say Spots or Casting Call Club or The Voice Realm and think you're "making it."

You are missing out on the bigger picture by settling for. There is far too much revenue to be generated in voiceovers, and each time you settle for less, you hurt us all because you're setting improper precedents in the minds of clients that they can get you on the cheap. I'll quote Paul Strikwerda again: you don't want to attract "clients that expect a gourmet meal at a fast food price and at drive-through speed."¹

You deserve more. Lose the hobbyist and earn what you're worth.

PASTIMES

Hobbyists have a pastime. It's an occasional fling. Business owners create an ecosystem. The former jump in every once in a while, subject to their emotions and whims; the latter erect a foundation that

weathers time, economy, and more. It's building your home out of straw vs. bricks. There are only a few wise little pigs. Don't get the big bad wolf come blow down your hobbyist house of straw. This is not a leisurely activity that you pop in and out of. My voiceovers are 8am to 5pm Monday through Friday, just like a normal job. They're in an office, just like a normal career. They are growing and I'm moving up, just like a normal vocation. Hobbyists dance around success; business owners *are* the success.

REPUTATIONS

Hobbyists are a dime a dozen. They're the sheep. Business owners are one in a thousand. They're the shepherds. They're the pace-makers, the trendsetters, the goal-hitters.

Hobbyists follow along and aren't convinced that they need to take notes. "Give me a break, I'll remember this for sure." Meanwhile, business owners are scribbling detailed notes to refer back to.

Business owners take everything they've learned and assimilate it into a focused, tailored approach that is unique to their gifting and styles, enabling them to do what they know, and live how they can best grow in skill. They don't stagnate; they start producing, and people take notice. In the end, even chimpanzees have leaders that all the others follow.

ETHICS

Hobbyists have fly-by-night morality that depends entirely on what it will cost them. They don't see the need to obtain a business license because that means that they'll have to pay taxes on their hobby money. They see no need to get an LLC that will cover them in the event of a legal disagreement because of the one-time cost of \$150, which seems insurmountable to them.

Business owners, on the other hand, happily register their business with local, state, and federal authorities because they want to be established, and they firmly believe that paying taxes is the right and ethical thing to do.

Hobbyists hope no one notices and seek to stay under the radar. Business people take great pride in knowing how much they've made and knowing that paying taxes is what is required of responsible citizens.

BRANDING

Hobbyists see no need for a logo, branding, or any symbol of who they are. Their identity isn't wrapped up in their craft yet; so there is no need to adopt a symbol of their greatness or their skill. It's futile to pursue any kind of epitome of their offerings; they haven't arrived yet at a place where they see their vocation of monumental importance yet.

Business owners, on the other hand, see a logo and branding as utterly definitive of who they are, and what sets them apart. They are self-aware, and know that providing great service doesn't make them unique; providing great service that is absolutely a cut above the rest is what they strive toward, and *that* is what makes them unique. Concordantly it's easy for them to look at symbols and choose something that demonstrates the qualities that they already, or want to, showcase.

It's what Christian Bale said in *Batman Begins*:

As a man, I'm flesh and blood, I can be ignored, I can be destroyed; but as a symbol... as a symbol I can be incorruptible, I can be everlasting.ⁱⁱ

INVESTMENT

Hobbyists look sadly at every cost, and wish that life didn't exact so much from them. Business owners on the other hand look at expenses as investments. The problem hobbyists have with expenses is that they lack patience: they don't grasp that it first requires a willingness to plant a seed before you can watch it grow and enjoy its fruit. They just want the fruit, and they want it now.

And sometimes, like Queen, they want it all, and they want it now.

Any good thing worth pursuing takes investment. Business owners who have skin in the game know that their investment can pay back dividends. The pride a business owner feels when they own something outright and bought it with their hard-earned dollars far outweighs the joy the hobbyist feels when they've been given a handout.

The business owner feels gratification. The hobbyist feels relief. That relief, once put into words, would sound like "Phew! Dodged a bullet there. Almost had to spend some money!"

The business owner can successfully say "*I did this. No one else. Me.*"

The hobbyist uses everything free and hopes that a producer will like the garbage they churn out with all their free goods: Wix/Weebly, Audacity, \$39 mics on Amazon, cheap headphones, USB mics, and discounted computer speakers. Then they get mad and jealous of all those around them who are succeeding. They wonder why it's not fair and they shake their fist at the world.

I know of one such aspiring voice guy who I gave a *free* consult to that got everything for free and was expecting to succeed. The next post I saw from him he was asking his Facebook friends to give Christmas gifts to his son because he couldn't afford it.

Skin in the game.

CUSTOMER RELATIONSHIPS

Hobbyists have simple email agreements and handshake deals. Business owners seal their deals in blood, with contracts that contain clauses that protect their interests.

Hobbyists throw their finished audio out there and hope to be paid in a timely fashion, with no recourse if they're not. Business owners contracts that contain net terms with defined grace periods and 1% daily late fees.

Hobbyists go for the one-and-done approach with their "clients." They're grateful for that one payoff and then goodness knows if they'll ever see that client again. Business owners develop long-lasting relationships intent on future work.

Hobbyists hope their clients come back. Business owners *intend* for their clients to come back.

Hobbyists don't feel the necessity to create structure or anything that guarantees them a real shot at success. It's not a system for them; it's a random happenstance occurrence of maybe's and hopes and what-if's.

Business owners don't work that way: they don't wait for their dreams to come true; they *make* their dreams come true through concrete and comprehensive goal tracking and intention.

Remember, intention trounces hope every single time.

PAYMENTS

Hobbyists have simple email agreements and handshake deals. They'll take PayPal and maybe Venmo. Even better, they'll just take straight under-the-table cash. Why report that to the IRS?

Business owners provide their clients ease of payment, with multiple possibilities. PayPal. Zelle. Square. Authorize.net. Venmo. Check. ACH. Bill.com. ChasePay. TransferWise. And others.

Business owners know that big clients who pay big bucks work on net terms and issue checks or pay via ACH or direct deposit: all trackable income that hobbyists don't like.

SELF-WORTH

Here's the most important one. Hobbyists undervalue themselves. They'll allow themselves to be taken advantage of because they don't know the immeasurable value of their own service.

Business owners charge what they're worth. They have a firmly ingrained sense of deserving market rates, and charging rates commensurate with not their identity or length of experience, but rather commensurate with what the service simply costs. It's not based on how long they've been in business, is the economy on a downturn, do they need something on their resume, or feeling they somehow don't deserve it.

Business owners know the worth of their service, and they charge accordingly.

Hobbyists will charge well under market value out of desperation and wanting badly just to list some "big name" client on their resumé. They have no idea that many clients on the paying end are well aware of what a voiceover artist should make, and when they see the paltry rates that the "voice talent" is charging, they know instantly that they're a novice. That they're not a team player. That they're desperate. That they can be taken advantage of.

These are not the clients you or I want, so why on earth would you be the voice talent that such clients want?

A business owner knows that the service costs what the service costs...period, end of story.

There. Are we still friends? You mad, bro?

The bottom line for myself and for many vetted, tried and true voice talent for whom voiceovers are not a vocation you dip in and out of, is that this is serious. This is a calling, a career, and a service that has immeasurable value to the client. You are carrying someone's messages to the masses. You are their brand

ambassador. You are the one chosen to speak for them. They know that if their clients don't believe you, then they won't believe them either. It's your job to make your client's clients believe your clients. If they don't believe you, they won't believe them.

You therefore have an enormous responsibility (read: privilege) of being a storyteller. That is a calling and career that every business owner knows is highly sustainable; they just need to approach it the right way.

Perhaps the great prophet Yoda said it best when he told a budding Jedi "No. Try not. Do or do not. There is no try."

A hobbyist tries. A business owner *does*, because there is no try.



TAKEAWAY & ACTION STEP

Intention trounces hope every time.

*How long have you been hoping to succeed, without a concrete intention to do so? In what ways are you clinging to an unrealistic dream that you're going to attain it? What can you do today to start **intending** to attain and fulfill your dreams? Write down 3 false or unrealistic hopes you've clung to, and then see how you can turn them into intentions.*

NOTE: The preceding was an *abridged excerpt* from the book from Joshua Alexander entitled "VOICEOVERS: A Super Fun Pursuit." For more information or to purchase Joshua's book, visit www.supervoicoverbook.com

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Please purchase only authorized print or electronic versions and do not participate in or encourage electronic piracy of copyrighted materials.

ⁱ *Making Money in your PJ's: Freelancing for voice-overs and other solopreneurs* by Paul Strikwerda, 2014 edition, page 325

ⁱⁱ *Batman Begins* movie, quote from Bruce Wayne to Alfred the Butler