Auditioning for Projects with Little or No Direction

If you regularly audition for jobs on P2P and Casting sites, then chances are you've come across more than a few job postings that feel "incomplete".

The client will list some details about their project - the budget, deadlines, etc... but they seem to gloss over what many would say is the most important piece of information - the direction! When the job posting fails to give any detail on the type of voice they are seeking besides "Male" or "Female" - there are still a few things you can do to gain a sense of what they are looking for and deliver a competitive audition.

1. Context Clues from the Script

The most obvious place to look to get a sense of the style of read the client desires, is the sample script. Read the script to yourself in your head and pay attention to the way you read it. **Oftentimes your first instincts in the way you read and interpret the words will be correct or at least close.**

What adjectives are present in the sample script? Do they give a sense of the tone or mood of the project?

How is the script worded and phrased? Is it a hard sell with words and phrases like "Right Now!" "Call Today!" "Don't Wait!"

Or is it more conversational and casual, with words and phrases like "Hey, let me tell you something..." or "Look, we all know that blah blah blah...."

Also, look for common script formats and styles that may sound similar to past projects you've worked on or auditioned for - some examples are "Meet Jim, Like most smart shoppers, Jim blah blah blah...." or "Desire. Passion. Determination. These are the qualities that make ....."

Those 2 examples are common in scripts and you've probably heard similar reads before. How did you read the first example in your head? Upbeat, Friendly, and Conversational? How's about the second - Serious, Strong, and Inspirational?

If the script is well written, you should be able to extract a pretty decent idea of what the client wants just from reading the words, even without them giving any indication of the style they are seeking.

2. Past Videos or Projects from the Product Company

Another great source of direction for projects can be past projects from the same brand or company. This is assuming you can get the name of the brand or product from the job posting, which won't always be the case. But let's assume it is and let's say a job is posted with a great budget, but no direction, for XYZ Travel Tour Company. You read the script and look for clues and you have a few ideas on how this script can be interpreted and read. The next step you can take, is to do a bit of detective work and track down previous spots for XYZ Travel Tour Company.

Start with Youtube, then try Vimeo, then Google. See if you can come up with any past videos promoting XYZ. The more recent the better. If you find any, how is the VO delivered? Can you see your audition being delivered in the same way, and would it feel right to do so?

3. Past Videos or Projects from the Product*ion* Company

Similar to Number 2, another source of inspiration can be past work from the production company that is producing the spot. Many production companies produce all types and styles of projects. But many have a sort of "signature" to their work that comes through in most or all of their projects. Track down their website, check out their past videos, see if you can pick up on any signature themes and if they would work and be applicable to the project you are auditioning for.

Is every single project on their site read in a conversational way? There can be more upbeat and more serious projects, but are they all conversational and casual?

Or maybe everything is very technical, articulate, and deliberate? See if you can pick up on any trends and get some ideas for your own audition.

4. Audition - *twice*

This is an audition strategy that can be helpful on any project you audition for, but especially those for which there is little or no direction. Include 2 reads in your audition.

Do you have 2 different styles in mind that you think could work but aren't sure which the client wants? Good, do them both and put them one behind the other in your audition.

Maybe you only have 1 read style that you've decided on - that works too, still do 2 separate reads just to give a sense of variety.

The client is forcing you to take a shot in the dark by not providing clear direction, so increase your chances and take 2 shots. **This serves the dual purpose of increasing the odds that you provide a read that the client is looking for, and demonstrating that you are capable of variety and can be directed.**

In conclusion...

To sum up - auditioning with no direction is never ideal, but by looking for context clues in the sample script, checking out past projects from the product and production companies, and providing two reads in your audition - you can hopefully gain some sense of direction and provide a quality audition. Great jobs are posted all the time with not-so-great direction,**there's no need to pass them up**. Try some of these tips out and see if they help land you some more gigs.

Action Steps

Reading, learning, and absorbing content is great - but it does absolutely nothing if you don't take action. With that in mind, here are some action steps you can take based on the info in this post

The next time you come across a job posting with little or no direction *(which if you are a full-time VO talent who auditions regularly, will probably be in the next day or so)* - pull up this blog post and go through the 4 strategies and use all that apply - see if you don't have a better idea of how to perform the read once you go through them than you did when you first read through the job posting.

Have you ever landed a gig from a job posting where little or no direction was given? How did you figure out how to audition? Let me know in the comments.

Talk soon!

-Mike