Working with Voice Actors

A guide to getting great performances

Intro

Thinking of adding voices to your game, huh? Awesome. Looking for ways to get the best out of your actors? Even awesome-er. You'd be surprised how few people make that kind of effort for actors so you're already a good 'un in my book. On behalf of all the actors who work with you in the future… *thank you.*

Who the hell are you?

For some reason I get asked for tips on directing actors quite frequently. I'm not a director – I'm an actor specialising in video game performance – but in my 30+ years in the voice, stage and screen industries I've seen the good, the bad and the just plain WTF of directing styles.

This document is based on my own personal experiences as a UK actor working in the worldwide games industry, plus conversations I've had with many of the other actors, directors, devs and audio technicians that I'm lucky enough to call my friends. It's not a 'you *have to* do it like this' kind of guide… but it is based on a wealth of experience from all sides of the industry, both AAA and indie.

The benefits of working well with actors

A great director can make a long recording session feel like a breeze and you'll end up with audio that everyone is proud of. However, some sessions can be… less pleasant… and almost without exception the resulting audio is lacking the spark that brings a character to life. I'd like to try to help you avoid falling into that second category.

AAA performances on an indie budget

Getting great performances out of your actors doesn't have to cost the earth – it's usually simply a matter of preparation and communication. Give your actors what they need, then trust in their skills… and watch the magic happen.

We don't bite

Working with actors isn't an 'us and them' situation. They're not weird, scary people (well, some of us are a *bit* weird…) who have to be gently coaxed into giving you what you need. They're also not puppets for you to bark orders at. They're people and recording voice is, at its best, a team effort. We all want this game to be a success.

Audio alchemy

Each actor/director relationship is different and you'll really hit paydirt when you discover that elusive 'creative but also efficient' way of working together. This learning happens on both sides of the glass – we're getting to know you at the same time – and sometimes it can take a little while to hit your collective stride.

Get to know your actor early on and hone your directing techniques to fit their personality (plus make them feel like a welcome part of the team) and you'll be turning scripts into gold together in no time.

Teamwork

At its best, recording the voices for a game is a fun and inspiring creative collaboration – the writers, director, studio technicians and actors all working together to bring characters to life, while trusting and respecting each other's skills.

However, it's easy for actors to be dropped into the project without adequate preparation, leading to a stilted performance, and once the recording is over they often feel like they're no longer part of the team. Go the extra mile to understand your actors, then tailor your direction and you'll get a much better end product (plus they may even help you promote your game).

Yes, we are all individuals!

There's no 'best' way to work with an actor. Annoyingly, actors are real people (sorry about that), each with different training, personalities, background, physical limits and preferences – what works brilliantly for one won't necessarily work for another.

But don't panic. There are a whole bunch of things you can do to maximise your chances of getting a great performance.

Actors and writers

Want amazing, realistic performances full of depth and detail? Then consider getting your actors on board sooner rather than later.

- Casting early will allow your writers to tailor scripts to a particular actor's voice and the personality they bring to the character.

- Have meetings with your actors (in person or via Skype) to discuss their roles. They may be able to give useful, unexpected perspective on story arcs and character traits.

- You could even get the actors to work directly with the writers, holding workshops or rehearsals to play around with ideas and tinker scenes to make sure they work, rather than wasting expensive booth time experimenting.

Delegate

If you've never been involved in recording dialogue before, consider hiring an experienced voice director for your project and watching how they work with the actors.

- You'll get into good habits from the get-go, plus pick up lots of tips and tricks in a single session that it might take you years to learn on your own.

- Directing voice actors is an incredibly specific skill and really good directors are worth their weight in gold – once you've hired one then you may well decide to keep doing so rather than try it yourself. You could be a diamond in the rough … but if you want to *be* the best, *learn* from the best.

- Writers often make great directors and some external game writing companies also have a member of the team who specialises in direction. Sound them out for advice, or consider hiring them directly to handle this side of your project.

Casting

Most directors say that 80% of their job relies on the casting. Cast an experienced game actor who you like and trust and you'll be able to work together to create something awesome.

Prior experience

Acting for games is a very specialised skill. It requires the actor to create a screen-worthy performance without the aid of set, props, costume or other actors, often while sight-reading a script. While there *are* exceptions, in general directors mention:

- Screen actors often freeze up in the booth because you've taken all their toys away…

- Stage actors can have a tendency to be broad or cartoony…

- And neither usually have much experience of mic technique (oh yes, there are many, many techniques to master, all of which will affect the quality of your audio).

- Also, voice-*over* is a different skill to voice *acting*, so even if someone's spent a lot of time in a booth that's no guarantee that they can realistically bring a character to life – they may have specialised in commercials, promos or corporate videos, all of which require very different skillsets.

Look for actors with quality prior game acting experience (or, failing that, radio drama), preferably with a professional acting background.

- Screen acting experience helps for uber-realistic performances.

- Stage acting for more cartoony roles that require comedy timing.

- Both if you're planning to do full performance capture.

Gamers get games

Keep an eye out for actors who play games themselves – these folk will have an inherent understanding and appreciation of what you're creating. They'll get any references that you throw at them, will instinctively find the important beats in a scene, and you won't have to spend precious time explaining why their death cry can't be a full minute long.

Recommendations

Luckily, the dev world is pretty incestuous so it's usually easy enough to reach out to friends and former colleagues at other studios to ask which actors they'd recommend. Actors' demo reels can sometimes be deceptive… but devs are always keen to shout about the talent of actors they've enjoyed working with (and warn you away from those who'll waste your time and money).

Direction

Sending out audition scripts for an actor to record solo can be a great start point for figuring out their skill level but it's usually best to also hold in-person or Skype auditions. That way you can get to know the actor a little, see what they're like to work with and, crucially, figure out if they can take direction or not.

Specialities

Different voice actors have different specialities. Learn to recognise those specialities and you'll speed up your casting process no end.

- Some actors excel at subtle, realistic cinematic acting, others are fantastic at creating huge, larger-than-life characters packed with humour and charm.

- Some have hundreds of different voices at their disposal and can voice all your NPCs in a single session, others only have one but it's memorable and incredibly castable.

- Some actors have specialities that you'd never guess from looking at a photo. A young person may convincingly voice elderly characters, or a grown adult may regularly play children (though it's rare to find one who can voice a child convincingly).

Figure out what style of acting you want your game to have and how many roles you need to fill, then cast based on that. Listen to actors' previous work and demos – what style of role do they tend to get cast in? Multiple roles in a single game hints at versatility, regular prominent roles suggests acting chops.

Prior warning

Sometimes you might be casting for a character whose scenes include difficult subject matter, such as sexuality, mental illness, assault, torture, politics or religion (including the occult or witchcraft).

Always mention this when sending out casting notices, and again during the audition itself – some actors may not be willing or able to take on such roles and you don't want to only find out once they're in the booth.

Authenticity

Most voice actors have a tonne of accents under their belt but if you want the performances in your game to truly shine (and go down well with players) it's preferable to hire authentic talent where possible – that is, actors who already are (or have an element of their ethnicity, voice or life similar to) the character you're casting for.

- Casting for a BAME character? Use the opportunity to audition BAME actors – there are plenty out there, you just have to search.

- If you're casting an English role, audition English actors… if you're casting American, audition Americans… and so on.

Authentic casting brings a wealth of knowledge to a role that's almost impossible to fake (e.g. in Wales we wouldn't say that. We'd say…").

Home is where the voice is

Actors are usually talented mimics and that's not an easy skill to turn off. While it might be handy for picking up new accents, it also makes it easy to unwittingly lose our *natural* accent if we move abroad. A few weeks is usually all it takes for a hybrid accent to evolve.

Hybrid accents can be cool but if you want real authenticity, hire actors who still live in their country of origin. Nothing ruins believability faster than an LA twang creeping into an English accent, or cockney vowels in Californian – risk it and you may alienate (plus annoy or offend) the very people you're trying to represent and sell to.

If you absolutely *have* to hire non-native actors (spoiler: you probably don't because Skype and planes exist), be sure to have a native listen to all the auditions, then budget for a specialist dialect coach to attend the recording sessions to ensure that no odd sounds sneak in.

If you don't ask, you don't get

Not all actors get access to all auditions. For example, certain audio companies only contact certain agents, so if there's a particular actor you want to audition for a role then request them by name (if you're casting via an audio company) or contact them or their agent directly.

- An audio company will be keen to hold auditions on your behalf but there's nothing to stop you saying "I want X for this role" if you want to.

- Likewise, if you've enjoyed a particular performance in a game then a swift Googling will usually lead you to the actor who played them. Drop them a line – they'll be thrilled that you enjoyed their work (especially if you're offering them more).

Give us a clue

The more info you can give an actor about the game before they audition the better their audition will be. Understandably, there are certain things that your company will want to be kept secret… but that's what NDAs are for.

If you can't give out much info at the audition stage then at least give the actor 'touchpoints' to work from, for example:

- "We want a similar level of realism to The Last of Us."

- "This character is similar to Tiny Tina in energy/style."

- An image of the character (or a mood board) will really help.

If you don't give us some idea of what you're looking for then we'll just go with what we *think* you want… and you might miss out on the perfect actor for a role because they couldn't read your mind.

Check the mic

These days most experienced voice actors have their own home studio from which they work on smaller projects that don't have the budget for studio hire. This can be the perfect solution for indies, allowing studios to link up via Skype and direct sessions in real time with actors anywhere in the world.

However (and it's a BIG however), if you're planning on recording remotely *always* check the specification of an actor's studio and equipment before booking them. The last thing you want is to shell out for an actor's time only to discover that the audio is poor quality and unusable in the game.

- Are they in a properly soundproofed space with quality equipment or just a corner in the spare room with a USB mic?

- Pay particular attention to the mic and soundproofing details.

- If you're not familiar with studio tech then get an audio specialist to check the info that the actor sends you about their kit (and listen to the audition files to vouch for their quality).

- Be aware that if you're working with several different actors, all in different studios, then they won't all be working with the same kit and acoustics. Audio quality and tone varies between studios so you may need to do a little tinkering with the final files to make sure that they all sound similar.

The boring money bit

Ugh, that bit. The bit that everyone dreads. It's important, though. If you don't pay us then we don't eat (plus you don't want to get your company a reputation for not paying fair rates). Show consideration and respect for actors' skills when discussing fees and you'll find them much more agreeable to negotiation. Don't be the "We're not paying that much. We think you're only worth £X" guy. Nobody likes that guy.

Note: the following is from a UK actor's perspective. Standard practices differ between countries so make sure you cover fees in detail with each actor and have each point noted in the contract before you book them. **Click here for a general guide to UK voice rates.**

Budgeting for your voice talent

Fees vary between actors and companies but usually they're broken down into sections:

- Voicing fee – This can be one of two types:
    - **Basic Studio Fee** (BSF) – an hourly rate for voicing time only (1hr minimum) or…
    - **Day rate/half day rate** – for recording sessions of 4hrs+ the actor may be willing to be booked at a slight discount to their usual BSF.
    - If you cancel/postpone shortly before the session's due to occur (e.g. 24hrs) you'll still have to pay the voicing fee (as the actor will have turned down other work to be available for you). The buyout won't be payable, though.
- Buyout fee – A fee on top of the hourly rate which allows you to use the actor's voice for your project (exactly how you want to use the audio will affect the price).
    - Standard buyouts are for in-game use for a single title.
    - Any additional usage (e.g. in future games or paid online/TV campaigns) will usually need to be negotiated separately.
-

- Travel expenses – These aren't standard but do consider offering them, especially if your studio's outside of central London. You'll attract interest from experienced (and therefore busy) actors.
- Long-distance travel – If you're hiring an actor who lives in a different country and want them to travel to record at your studio (rather than recording remotely) then it's standard to pay:
    - The actor's travel time at their day rate (as they can't do any other work while they're travelling to you).
    - All travel and accommodation (you'll usually be required to arrange both).
    - A daily fee to cover living expenses (so they don't starve).
    - You'll also need to arrange a work visa (if required) and do any paperwork necessary to ensure that your project complies with the actor's union rules (for example, if they're in the USA and are a member of SAG AFTRA).
- Additional acting fees – Additional fees will usually apply if the actor is also required for:
    - Rehearsals or workshops
    - Mocap and/or full performance capture
    - Facial capture
    - Use of their facial likeness

An actor's life

It can be tempting to compare an actor's fee to a regular salary and wonder why they cost so much per hour but in reality the two things aren't directly comparable. When you hire an actor you're also paying for a bunch of other things directly related to their time in the booth:

- General communication – Whatever we've done to book and complete the job, from reading and replying to your emails, sending over files, recording and editing auditions... basically, anything that in most jobs would fall under 'paid work during office hours'.

- Studio kit – Make use of an actor's home studio and you're also making use of thousands of pounds worth of specialist kit, plus the electricity and internet access used to keep it running. The actor is also simultaneously working as their own studio engineer.

- Rehearsals and research – Any time we spend looking at your script/character info, rehearsing and studying things such as time periods, dialects or other games/films that you cite as inspiration.

- Agent fees – Most actors have to give their agent around 15% of any earnings (often even if the client contacts the actor directly).

- Accountant's fees and taxes – We have no accounts department and tax must be paid on all our earnings.

- Union membership – This gives us access to insurance, protection, advice and legal backup in case of an abusive or non-paying client.

- Travel expenses/time – Many games don't pay travel expenses for either the audition or the job itself (this gets painfully expensive).

- Specialist training – Speech training, three years at drama school, combat training, accent coaching... it all contributes to the performance that you're hiring (and it cost us *a lot*).

Business as usual

Essentially, being an actor is being a whole business on your own, with all the associated running costs. Oh, but because we're freelance we don't get any holiday time. The idea of a paid break sounds like a hilarious dream to most of us.

Try to be considerate of all this when talking to a voice actor about fees. Many will be open to a little negotiation for a reasonable client but be careful – your attitude and phrasing sends a lasting message about how your studio values and treats actors.

You get what you pay for

Generally, the more talented/experienced the actor, the higher their fee will be (significantly higher if the actor is famous for movie/TV work). If performance quality (or fame) is important then be sure to budget for respectable voice rates at the very start of your project.

Stretching the budget

If your budget genuinely won't stretch to an actor's usual rate, you could always try discussing other possible options:

- Consider offering a usual hourly rate but a percentage of any sales that the game makes instead of an up-front buyout.

- Or maybe offer a slightly lower hourly rate but a guaranteed high number of hours (e.g. a guarantee of 15hrs+) and a higher buyout.

Don't be insulted if the actor declines to reduce their rate. Talented actors are busy actors, plus many have been burned in the past by companies not honouring their promises so are understandably wary.

Before the session

Once you've got your cast, there are tonnes of things you can do to help make a recording session go smoothly. Do a bit of prep and your actors will work wonders (plus you won't waste expensive booth time explaining things that could have gone in an email).

I know your game like the back of your hand

That is to say, I know nothing about your game unless you tell me. *Nothing.* It could be the next Tetris for all I know. Once contracts and NDAs are signed then give your actor as much info as possible ahead of time. Try to do this at least a few days before the recording session – most actors work best in the booth if they can focus on being creative, though that doesn't stop them doing homework beforehand.

Trust me

Many devs seem to see actors as a leak waiting to happen and so give them as little info about the game as possible. This makes it extremely hard for the actor to do their job well. More info = better performance.

- Actors are generally *really* good at keeping secrets – we have zero job security and are aware of how quickly word spreads in the dev community. We're not going to do anything to risk our reputation.

- Make it clear to your actors that the info they're receiving is top secret and you'll let them know when they can tell the world (then remember to actually *do* that once the project is announced/launched). Give vague timeframes if possible.

Pronunciation guides

If your script has unusual names or words in it, put together a pronunciation guide prior to the session. If you've already recorded another character pronouncing one of these words then have that audio clip ready to play in the session so the actor can match it.

Sight-reading

An experienced VA will be used to rocking up and sight-reading a script, but you'll get far better performances if they don't have to.

Get scripts to them as early as possible – if they're good they'll probably be recording/prepping for a bunch of other games at the same time as yours (you're still special, honest). Even if changes are going to be made closer to the recording date, just the bare bones of a single scene is better than nothing.

Let's get physical

Set up the recording space so that the actor has room to put a little physicality into their performance (standing enhances realism).

If you're recording effort sounds then giving an inexperienced voice actor weights or sandbags to lift can help… but actors with experience shouldn't need this (and they may find it horribly distracting).

Interaction

If a scene involves my character talking to another person then show me the other character's lines too, so I can get an idea of context. Yes, I can read a bunch of solo lines. No, the result won't be as good.

If you've already recorded the other characters in a scene, have those lines ready to play as cues – the inflection in a cue line will affect how I need to deliver mine and you'll get a far more believable scene.

Ensemble

If you're going for full-on realism then it's well worth recording at least the most crucial or emotional scenes as an ensemble. It might sound like it'll cost more but in reality it may save a bit of booth time (as you won't have to explain to each actor what the other is doing during the scene, plus breaks will be x1 rather than x2 or more). The result you'll get will be infinitely more believable.

- Holding a table read with the main cast prior to recording will make sure everyone's on the same page performance-wise.

- Or you can work with actors recording at different studios anywhere in the world, linked via Skype.

- Even better… have you considered full performance capture?

At the very least, make sure someone is attending the session who is happy to read the other character's lines aloud – an actor will always work better if they've got someone to bounce off.

Time

A rushed actor will only be able to give you a rushed performance. If you want a really realistic performance then budget for far more booth time than you think you'll need. That way you and the actor can play around with scenes to see what works, or tweak the emotion/intensity of a troublesome scene to completely transform it.

- Budget for 5mins or so before the session so you can chat to the actor and get to know them – it may seem like dead time but you're establishing a way of communicating together, which will save you tonnes of time once recording starts.

- Worst case scenario: the actor gives you amazing first takes all the way through and you all get to go for an early lunch.

Don't hurt me

Being a voice actor is a lot like being an athlete – we're asking our bodies to do things that they're not naturally built to do for extended periods of time. Every scream, whisper or death gurgle is forcing air past delicate throat tissue and that takes its toll.

Push an actor too far and they'll have to take time off work to physically recover and in extreme cases the damage could be permanent. Showing an understanding of this will win you a lot of love from your actors.

- Regular talking – 4hrs should be the max session time before taking a break of at least 1hr (a great time for a lunch break).

- Vocally strenuous stuff – If sessions require prolonged vocal strain (e.g. shouting/death noises) 2hrs should be the max (3hrs if you're recording a group and they're taking turns).

- Mixing it up – If the script is a mix of talking and shouts, save all shouts for the end of the session.

- Comfort breaks – Sessions should have regular 5-15min breaks (we need to pee, thanks to all the water we'll be guzzling).

- Recovery time – After a vocally strenuous session the actor should be given at least 12hrs to recover before the next session (so no booking two in the same day).

- Refreshments – Make sure the actor has plenty of fresh water and warm drinks available. Get a pot of Manuka honey, fresh lemons, green apples (they have to be green, annoyingly) and a selection of herbal teabags in and we'll worship you like a god.

Warn the actor when you book them if the session will involve vocal strain – that way they have time to make any necessary preparations.

During the session

Once your actor is in the booth, how do you get them to give you their best work? A good actor can really breathe life into a character… but only if they're given the right direction. If we end up sounding like we're just reading words off a page then something's gone horribly wrong.

Don't tell me how to sound, tell me how to feel

Since you probably know a great deal about your game as a whole, it's easy to start giving direction based on function rather than emotion. If you tell an actor "I want you to sound more tired/upset" they'll be trying to perform while focusing on what they *sound* like… and real people don't do that. Instead, try painting a word picture:

- "You've been marching for days. You ache all over. All you can think of is sleep."
- "This man has been your best friend since you were kids. You trusted him with your life. Now you find out he's betrayed your team to the enemy."

Suddenly the actor will be focused on their emotions rather than the fact that they're in a booth. Use "you" rather than the character's name to help the actor really connect with the role.

Keep an open mind

Going into a session with a firm idea of exactly what you want a character to sound like is a sure fire way to provoke a stilted performance from an actor.

Instead, focus on how you want the character to make you feel, then give the actor the freedom to bring their own interpretation to the role. What they come up with might surprise you and infuse the character with more depth than you'd expected.

When you just don't know

You might have no clue what you're looking for and want to see what the actor can bring to the table, but "We'll know what we want when we hear it" can be a really unsettling and confusing thing for an actor to hear. Instead, try asking questions to focus them on their own personality:

- "How would you feel in this situation?"
- "Do you think this character is similar to you?"

I'm not a parrot

Don't give line readings unless it's absolutely necessary. Giving your own reading of how you think a line should sound is, once again, focusing the actor outside themselves and they'll end up trying to mimic you rather than sounding authentic. If you're on take 10 and they're still not giving you what you want then ask if it's ok to give them a line read, but more often than not you'll get a better result by subtly changing the emotional direction you've given.

Let me breathe

Real people breathe. They also pause or switch thoughts mid-sentence. Give your actors the freedom to ignore grammar and scenes will really come alive. Even though they might not be marked on the script, pauses say something important about how a character is feeling. A half-said word or a shaky breath in the right place will make players feel like they're listening to a real person.

Difficult scenes

Voice acting isn't just pretending to be someone else – for the duration of a take I *am* that person, and I feel what they're going through. Obviously this can be… traumatic at times.

If you're recording a scene that covers difficult subjects or strong emotions, give your actors the time they need to really tap into that feeling, plus a short break afterwards if necessary to emotionally 'come down' from what they've just experienced.

Improv and writing on the fly

What looks good on the page doesn't always work when spoken out loud. If an actor is struggling with a particular phrase then consider re-writing the line with the actor.

- <u>Writer on set</u> – Having the writer present during a session is incredibly helpful, as lines can be re-written on the fly to fit the actor. They're also great for explaining context and occasionally have a flash of inspiration that totally changes the feel of a scene.

- <u>Opportunity, not an order</u> – A skilled voice actor will have excellent improvisation skills and allowing them to use these will really bring life to your lines. Everything in moderation, though… Some actors may see "feel free to improvise" as a demand or a challenge rather than an encouragement to re-word something if the mood takes them.

- <u>Back to school</u> – Take an improv class yourself! If nothing else it'll help you understand the vulnerability and creativity that improvisation requires, and it may open your eyes to new possibilities that are closed off when an actor simply follows the script as law.

Context is key

You wouldn't talk to the Queen the same way as you'd talk to your mates. You wouldn't talk at a funeral in the same way as you'd talk at a gig. Context is everything when it comes to getting realistic performances so give your actor as much info as they need.

- <u>Who am I?</u> What makes my character tick? What are their strengths and weaknesses? An image and short biography can be helpful but try not to overload the actor with unnecessary information (I don't need to know what she got for her 5th birthday).

- <u>Where am I?</u> Cave? Forest? Pub? The location will tell me what to feel and how much to project (have images available if possible).

- <u>Where is everyone else?</u> If I'm talking to someone else, how far away are they? Are we worried about being overheard?

- <u>How am I feeling?</u> What just happened? Are we gearing up for a fight or getting ready for bed? Do I like the person I'm talking to?

- <u>What am I doing?</u> While I'm speaking am I just standing there? Running? Fighting? The action affects how I breathe and speak.

- <u>What else is happening?</u> If there's going to be background noise to the scene (e.g. a battle or music) then it might help to have that audio (or something similar) to play to the actor before or during their session.

Give your actor the information they need and they'll instinctively alter the way they speak to make their character really feel part of the scene you're creating. Give them the *wrong* info… and you may end up with them shouting during a funeral, or two characters having a mid-battle conversation where one is inexplicably whispering.

After the session

So, you've got your audio. Excellent stuff! However, this isn't necessarily where the actor's part in your project ends. If they're experienced then they'll most likely have an existing fanbase who will follow their work, bringing new eyes to your game once it's released. An actor's also a person who speaks for a living and is comfortable being interviewed – that could be useful…

Keeping in touch

Once the session's over it's easy for actors to not feel part of the team, so it's worth making an effort to keep in touch.

- If you enjoyed working with them, drop them an email.

- Follow them on Twitter. Once you can mention that they're in the game an enthusiastic tweet will be hugely appreciated.

- Got merch? Actors rarely get given any. Treat 'em to something pretty and you'll have a friend for life.

When the word's out

Once your game's been announced, is there any reason why your actors can't publicly mention their involvement? If not, let them make the most of the opportunity.

- Get in touch to say it's announced (with launch date, if possible).

- Let them know what you're happy with them mentioning (and anything that you still want to be kept secret).

- Send them links to any trailers, websites or Steam pages for the game. They may well post them online, boosting promotion.

Once the game's actually launched, drop them a line again to say that they're free to talk about their role in full. Most experienced game actors are used to not dropping spoilers about major plotpoints, but it's worth mentioning any that you'd rather they avoid, just in case.

Credit where it's due

Go the extra mile and you'll show your actors that you understand how their jobs work and appreciate their contribution to your game.

- Spelling – Make sure their name's spelled correctly in the credits.

- Namecheck – Mention them by name in interviews/articles.

- Recommend – If you enjoyed working with them, recommend them to other devs (bonus points for posting a recommendation on their LinkedIn page).

- Events – Invite them to speak on panels or livestreams to help promote the game. Some actors won't do this for free but it's always worth asking.

- Awards – If you really loved their work, consider nominating them for awards (great publicity for both them *and* the game).

- IMDb – Make a page for the game on IMDb. I know, most devs don't pay much attention to it but for actors it's a crucial source of publicity (and where reviewers will look to check for a cast list). Make sure the page is online before the game is released so your actors can maximise the publicity they receive during launch week.

That money thing again

Pay us on time. Please…? We're almost out of coffee and the cat's demanding more crunchies.

Good luck...

and don't forget to have fun.