

UNPACKING THE BLACK BOX OF VOICECASTING

JILL KERSHAW

FOUNDER/CEO

Jill is a globally recognized audio creative with an expert ear for what resonates with consumers and the intuitive ability to shape a brand's success through sound.

As a highly sought-after producer, director, educator, and speaker on the power of branded audio, she has collected hardware from every prestigious advertising award show, including three Radio Mercury Awards.

Over 25 years, Jill has mastered radio from both the production studio and creative agency, bringing an uncommon depth of perspective to every project. During her tenure as Head of Radio and Audio Content at Crispin, Porter + Bogusky, she helmed radio production for iconic clients like Burger King, Volkswagen, Miller Lite, Domino's Pizza, Coke Zero, and Truth.

Her belief that how a story is told is as important as what it has to say led her to found Sound & Fury in 2009 with a mission to perfect the art of voicecasting. Today it stands as the industry's premier studio—responsible for more North American and global localization voicecastings than any other. By discerning the subtle nuances that make a voice resonate, Sound & Fury transforms creative ideas into compelling audio that makes brand stories unforgettable.

TINA MORASCO

VP/HEAD OF CASTING

Tina Morasco brings an exceptional blend of industry expertise and creative artistry to her role as Head of Casting at Sound & Fury.

Her career began as a voiceover agent at WME and ICM, where she developed her instinct for recognizing talent. Over her 30-year career, she has established herself as a renowned voice coach, award-winning demo producer, and the nation's leading voicecasting director. Her MFA in Acting from the prestigious Mason Gross School of the Arts at Rutgers University serves as the foundation for her multifaceted approach to casting and directing.

Tina's comprehensive understanding of the industry—from both sides of the microphone—enables her to identify the right talent for each project and guide them into exceptional performances. She is passionate about leveraging her 360-degree experience to bridge the gap between an actor's unique perspective and a client's tangible needs.

If her voice sounds familiar, it's because Tina has been the iconic narrator of the HGTV hit series Love It Or List It since its US debut 17 years ago.

ART & SCIENCE OF VOICECASTING

Your Casting Toolkit:
Think Beyond Your
Backyard

Budget Hacks:
Smart Money Moves

Your Casting Director
is Your Secret Weapon

Clientproof Your Cast:
Callbacks &
Contingencies

YOUR CASTING TOOLKIT: THINK BEYOND YOUR BACKYARD

- **Ways to Cast:** There are multiple pathways to finding talent. Casting directors remain your most comprehensive option. You can also call talent agents directly. Online platforms have revolutionized accessibility, but come with both pros and cons. And don't overlook building your own in-house database of local talent.
- **Geographic Advantages:** Home studios now let you cast anywhere, with talent who can be directed remotely from their broadcast-quality home studios, sometimes allowing time zones to work in your favor. This gives you access to whatever your brief requires: genuine regional accents, rural perspectives, diverse communities, native speakers, and less polished voices. The key is knowing that distance is no longer a barrier—it's an opportunity to find exactly what your creative demands.
- **Essential Resource:** The VO Resource Guide (voiceoverresourceguide.com) comprehensively lists every talent agent in NYC, LA, Chicago and several regional markets, along with local recording studios with their capabilities and rates, and talent rate guidelines.
- **Online Platforms:** Voices.com, Voice123.com, Bodalgo.com, VOPlanet.com, CastVoices.com give you instant access to national and international talent. Each platform has its strengths, and understanding them can help you cast efficiently.
- **DIY Talent Roster:** Talent is everywhere. Build your own talent roster with talent from local theatre companies, improv groups, comedy clubs, talent & modeling agencies, performing arts schools, college theatre departments, magic clubs, and through social media outreach on Facebook and Instagram.

BUDGET HACKS: SMART MONEY MOVES

- **Casting Director Paradox:** A challenged budget doesn't automatically exclude professional casting help. Experienced casting directors know how to restructure your spending to maximize value. The investment in casting expertise often pays for itself through strategic negotiations.
- **The Bucket Strategy:** This is where efficiency meets creativity. Bundle auditions for characters that are the same gender and age range. Actors will read multiple scripts when framed correctly. Consider shortening the copy for this process. This approach offers multiple advantages: One casting fee covers multiple characters instead of paying per role, allows discovery of range and versatility within a single audition, and helps identify who can handle multiple spots in a campaign.
- **Rethink Your Terms:** When possible, ditch the boilerplate. Are your rates appropriate for this project? Double-check the intended usage, market, and term. Be as specific as possible. Often, the broadcast and streaming terms aren't the same, so don't lump them together. Can you convert per-spot fees to a project buyout? Overprotective contract language can often scare away the best talent. Sometimes a small wording change opens doors to significantly better talent.
- **Low Budget, High Value Tactics:** When budgets are tight, transparency and creativity win. Highlight limited markets, short usage time, and potential for recurring work to attract top talent at lower fees. Agents and actors value steady opportunities and will often negotiate for ongoing relationships. Goodwill gets you farther with referral agreements, offer to be a reference or provide LinkedIn recommendations, provide the final spot for their reel, and quick payment terms.

YOUR CASTING DIRECTOR IS YOUR **SECRET WEAPON**

- **The Creative Partnership:** Your casting director occupies a unique creative vantage point—they're the bridge between your vision and the talent landscape. When you bring them into the creative process early, they shift from service provider to strategic partner, unlocking what's possible rather than just executing what's requested. The creative call is where this shift happens—it's the difference between getting what you asked for and getting what you actually need.
- **Setting the Scene:** Share the full brief — context, objective, audience, and key message. Is it a new launch or a continuation? Past work helps show what to avoid or what to evolve. If it's a recast, share those auditions and explain what missed the mark so your CD knows exactly what to do differently.
- **Music as Direction:** Sometimes songs speak louder than specs. Share music that captures your desired tone, pace, and emotional territory. Your casting director can translate these references into direction that talent can understand.
- **The Scale Advantage:** Casting directors routinely review hundreds, sometimes thousands, of auditions, identifying subtle differences that elevate one read above another. The result: meticulously curated links that match your exact specs—all pre-cleared for union status, age restrictions, brand conflicts, rate, and your recording scheduled. Plus, they often have second-tier backups ready to present if needed.
- **Specialized Talent Access:** Need someone who can improvise brilliantly? Sing in character? Auction authentically? Match an existing voice? Casting directors know where to find these unicorns. They track hidden talent, maintain deep databases, and can quickly vet performers to meet your wildest creative demands.

CLIENTPROOF YOUR CAST: CALLBACKS & CONTINGENCIES

- **The Power of the Callback:** Free callback sessions are underutilized strategic tools. They're not just second auditions—they're creative laboratories and vibe checks. Explore how well talent takes direction and gauge their range. Build creative consensus by sharing adjusted reads with your team and clients. Some actors nail auditions through luck or good coaching, but can't adjust on the fly—callbacks reveal true collaboration potential.
- **Creative Synthesis:** Auditions reveal possibilities you didn't know existed—surprising interpretations, brilliant improv lines, natural phrasing that beats what's on the page. Callbacks let you synthesize these discoveries and weave them into a revised callback script that incorporates the best of everything you've heard.
- **Bridging Client-Creative Gaps:** When you and your client have different favorites, callbacks become negotiation tools. Rather than arguing why your choice is better, demonstrate it. Have your preferred talent adjust toward what the client likes while maintaining what you value. This show-don't-tell approach is far more effective than verbal persuasion.
- **Test Drive the Copy One More Time:** The same show-don't-tell approach works for copy changes too. Resurrect lines that didn't make the final script. Build in improvements from auditions. Cover alt lines for client review. Verify the timings before you're in the studio.
- **The Backup Imperative:** No matter how locked in your cast is, always shortlist backup options and put them on avail to ensure a smooth, easy booking process. Even the most professional talent faces unexpected circumstances - illness, family emergencies, and travel delays. The difference between smooth productions and disasters is often just having backups approved and ready.

FROM SPECS TO SPECTACULAR

Your Character DNA:
Crack the Code

Specs That Sing:
Write for Performance

The Glow-Up:
Basic Briefs, Brilliant
Characters

CASTING CHECKLIST: YOUR CHARACTER DNA

DEMOGRAPHICS & IDENTITY

- Gender – specify if essential to the role
- Age range – define parameters
- Environmental cues – forces that shaped them
- Cultural cues – inform their perspective

CHARACTER FOUNDATION

- Backstory – who are they?
- Campaign context – what story are they in service to?
- Active intention – what do they want right now?
- Emotional beats – key moments to convey

VOICE & DELIVERY

- Regionalisms – authentic vs. performed
- Vocal expressions – tone, rhythm, energy
- Comedy approach – style preferences, improv flexibility
- Celebrity touchstone – voice, personality, delivery + rationale

PRODUCTION DETAILS

- Client brief – why we are recording this spot
- Client sensitivities – pronunciations
- Audio & visual references
- Client approval & recording schedules

CASE STUDY: OPERATION SMILE **FROM BARE BONES TO BULLETPROOF**

Crafting VO Specs That Inspire Clarity and Creativity

Client Specs: AVO Female. 30's. Standard American accent. Warm, empathetic, and compassionate. Not overly dramatic. Conversational tone.

CASE STUDY: OPERATION SMILE FROM BARE BONES TO BULLETPROOF

Sound & Fury Rewrite

Campaign Background: The client's mission is to bring safe surgery to the world's most vulnerable children, ensuring every child has access to this basic human right, and therefore a chance to live a life filled with hope for the future.

Female. 30-40. All ethnicities. No regionalisms. We welcome non-binary, trans, gender-fluid, and any talent to submit as long as their voiceprint matches the specs.

We're looking for a voice that embodies warmth, compassion, and genuine care — someone who speaks with purpose and presence, as if sharing something deeply meaningful. Their delivery conveys depth, confidence, and hope, creating an authentic emotional connection that makes us feel the importance of the message. The tone is gentle, yet self-assured, with a natural, conversational rhythm that balances intellectual clarity and emotional resonance.

Above all, they must feel approachable and sincere — emotionally intelligent, not sentimental or performative. Their goal is to educate and inspire, conveying the urgency and humanity of the cause through truthful connection, not vocal affectation. We should walk away feeling as though we've been moved by a dear friend's genuine commitment — not by a performance.

Celebrity Touchstone: EMMA STONE for her effortless sincerity and emotional nuance. She conveys warmth and depth without ever sounding actor-y. (included YouTube link)

CASE STUDY: OPERATION SMILE

FROM BARE BONES TO BULLETPROOF DNA EXPANSION POINTS

Demographics & Identity

- Expanded “Female, 30s” → All ethnicities to ensure inclusivity without compromising vocal quality—casting for essence rather than type.
- Changed "standard American" → No regionalisms for neutral, universal, unforced delivery.
- Inclusive language welcomes all identities, reflecting modern representative casting practices.

Voice & Delivery

- From "warm and empathetic" → Complete emotional architecture: gentle yet self-assured, conversational rhythm, intellectual clarity balanced with emotional resonance.
- Added campaign context for emotional purpose and the brand’s why.
- Built character DNA beyond adjectives to avoid one-dimensional reads.

Active Intention & Touchstone

- Clear motivation: Educate, inspire, and motivate, guiding the audience toward trust and understanding.
- Added celebrity touchstone: Emma Stone for effortless sincerity, depth, and emotional nuance.
- Audio reference: Link cued to interview moment where she embodies this energy with grounded authenticity and natural warmth.

Result: We took a basic spec and expanded it into a fully fleshed-out, actor-friendly creative brief — inclusive, emotionally layered, and actionable that gives the talent a clear, human-centered blueprint for the performance we’re seeking.

CASE STUDY: ELI LILLY

FROM DIRECTION TO DIMENSION

Eliciting a Deep, Nuanced Performance Through Written Specs

Client Specs: Female. Sounds like someone in their 30s, 40s, 50s even. The voice shouldn't feel childlike – she's reflecting a sense of wisdom and experience about life. Ideally this would be someone who has an American accent. Regional accents are perfectly fine, but nobody should pretend they have an accent.

The read should be reflective, calm, and secure. Like they've learned something about life and want to share their perspective with someone who needs to understand where they're coming from. Avoid sounding like advertising. Must be conversational as if they were in a room having a late night talk with a good friend.

CASE STUDY: ELI LILLY

FROM DIRECTION TO DIMENSION

Sound & Fury Rewrite

Female. 30-50. Open to all ethnicities and authentic US regionalisms. We welcome non-binary, trans, gender-fluid, and any talent to submit as long as their voiceprint matches the specs.

We're looking for an actor with emotional depth and subtlety to voice Brenda—a woman who has personally experienced obesity and has reached a place of peace and self-acceptance. Her voice carries both the weight of her history and the lightness of release. There's no trace of self-pity, only honesty, reflection, and quiet strength. She speaks with the kind of clarity that comes from lived, breathed experience, not performance.

Brenda's tone is intimate and natural, like a late-night conversation with a close friend who makes her feel safe enough to share her truth. Every word should feel grounded in authenticity. We should hear her vulnerability and her resolve — the gentle power of someone who's no longer defined by how others see her. Confidence embodied. Above all, Brenda is comfortable in her own skin. She reminds us that health isn't measured by what weight we lose, but by all the things a body can gain.

Celebrity Prototype: MICHELLE WILLIAMS for her raw intimacy and emotional nuance. (included YouTube link)

Delivery direction: We should feel as if we're being let into Brenda's innermost thoughts; private, unfiltered, and honest. Allow the moments to unfold naturally and spontaneously, without pushing for emotion. Let the moments breathe. Each thought should feel discovered in real time, as if you're remembering/reliving each experience. Trust the stillness — there's power in the silence.

CASE STUDY: ELI LILLY

FROM DIRECTION TO DIMENSION DNA EXPANSION POINTS

Demographics & Identity

- Included environmental & cultural cues: rooted in Brenda's lived experience of body bias and societal judgment, which informs every emotional beat.

Voice & Delivery

- From “reflective, calm, secure” → We should feel as if we're being let into Brenda's innermost thoughts; private, unfiltered, and honest, allowing the moments to unfold naturally and spontaneously, without pushing for emotion. Each thought should feel discovered in real time, as if reliving each experience. Trust the stillness — there's power in the silence.
- Reinforced approach: Anchoring in that we're looking for raw authenticity and vulnerability that's grounded in experience. No polish, no performance. Just truth.
- Added celebrity touchstone: Michelle Williams for her intimate, understated, emotionally layered style. Her energy exemplifies the quiet, experiential authenticity we needed Brenda to embody.

Character Foundation & Performance

- Added backstory: Brenda has lived through judgment and arrived at self-acceptance. Her perspective is earned — that's her emotional center.
- Campaign context: Eli Lilly's “Shame” reframes health as something gained through acceptance and compassion, not weight loss.
- Active intention: to share her truth, inspire others to release shame, and remind us that self-worth isn't defined by external validation.
- Suggested emotional beats: reflection, acceptance, empowerment; each beat must be felt, not performed.
- Guided pacing: contemplative, allowing silence to carry meaning and the performance to unfold through discovery, not structure.

Result: We took a basic spec and expanded it into a fully fleshed-out, actor-friendly creative brief — inclusive, emotionally layered, and actionable that gives the talent a clear, human-centered blueprint for the performance we're seeking.

CASE STUDY: TOMCAT FROM CLEVER TO KILLER

How Precision Casting & Direction Transformed an Already Strong Client Specs Into Comedy Gold

Male. 25–40. All ethnicities. We welcome non-binary, trans, gender-fluid, and any talent to submit as long as their voiceprint matches the specs.

We're looking for an actor who's excellent with comedy and improv to bring our hero character to life. Despite being a mouse, everything about this character is that of a typical YouTube unboxing influencer. He's a normal sounding guy. But a bit more animated. He dials up his personality by 10–30% when he's on webcam. He's confident, very comfortable, a little corny and dials it up for his fans. It's hard to tell whether his excitement is manufactured or genuine, and that makes it a bit off putting. But the more time you spend with him, the more likable he becomes. He's kind of a douche. But a nice one.

There's an arc to the story here. He starts confident, energetic, douchey, excited to do his unboxing thing. But then he learns exactly what Tomcat Bait does. It's like Oppenheimer has just unboxed the atomic bomb. In his hands he holds the very thing that could destroy him and everything he loves. Faced with his own mortality, the influencer facade disappears. He's quieter, more introspective...then he can't resist and decides to take a bite.

We'd love to hear you improv a bit, add a sniff or a cough here and there, read imaginary user comments and interact with your viewers, go on-and-off-mic as needed to play the full reality of the scene, making it your own, as long as it feels authentic and real. We're not looking for anything cartoon-y or hammy at all. We must believe we are listening to an actual YouTuber and not a parody of one. Celebrity Prototype: AZIZ ANSARI (include YouTube link)

CASE STUDY: TOMCAT FROM CLEVER TO KILLER

Character Foundation & Casting Approach

- Casting strategy: targeted actors with improv and comedy training who could create in-the-moment authenticity. We reviewed over 1,000 auditions, sourcing talent through agents, comedy clubs, improv companies like The UCB and The Groundlings, and other unconventional channels to find the perfect voice.
- Audition process: Invited improv in each take, allowing actors to discover humor and humanity organically. When we found the audition that ultimately booked the job, the sound quality was subpar, so our team of editors enhanced the audio, ensuring it could be client approved.
- Campaign context: Tomcat's tone thrives on irony and dark humor. Our casting instincts, paired with editorial problem-solving, ensured the performance hit both comedic and tonal marks while remaining grounded in reality.
- Celebrity prototype: adding Aziz Ansari gave the actors a touchstone for the unique blend of charm, comedic timing, awkward confidence, and endearing "douchey but likable" energy and comedic style we were going for.

Result: We took an already clever, well-written brief and elevated it through our casting expertise and attention to detail — ultimately finding an improv artist who brought the perfect mix of comedy, nuance, and spontaneity, turning a client's strong concept into a fully realized standout performance.

CASE STUDY: TOMCAT

UNBOXING INFLUENCER MOUSE :30

Hey fam! I've got a fun unboxing vid for ya today from Tomcat.

I've actually never heard of this brand. So...thanks amigos!

So this is what they sent. There's a cat on the package.

Don't love that...

And here it says, "Mouse Killer."

What...is...this...?

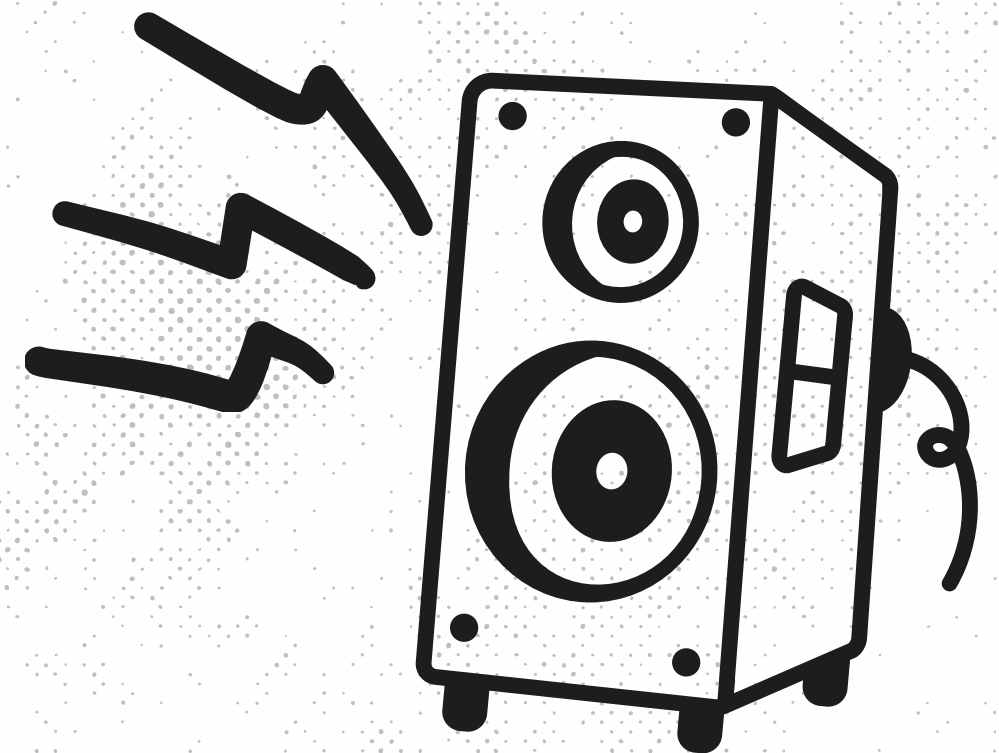
Each block kills up to 12 mice!?!

"Mouse eats the bait and dies within a few days." Bro.

It does look yummy though guys...

Maybe just a taste.

Oops.



DIRECTOR'S PLAYBOOK

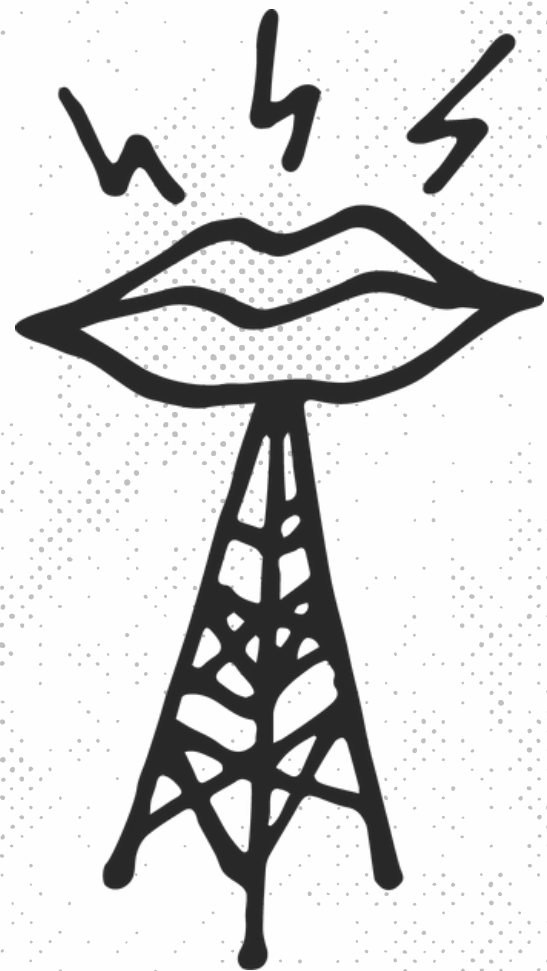
PRO MOVES FOR BETTER TAKES



THE FINE ART OF GETTING TO **‘THAT’S IT!’**

- Before the Mike: Prep Your Talent
- Frame the Performance: Context is King
- Be a Unified Voice in Their Ear
- Line-Reading: When to Show, When to Guide
- Unstick the Stuck by Going Deeper into the Story
- Your Energy Affects Theirs: Mirror the Energy You Want
- Use Physical Adjustments to Change Emotional States
- The Power of "What If?" Instead of Directing, Pose Questions
- Success Breeds Success: Getting Wins on Easier Sections Builds Confidence
- Trust the Talent’s Instincts: Invite Collaboration
- When All Else Fails, Take a Literal Beat: Get Out of the Booth

The right voice changes everything. Let's find yours.



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