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How a Professional Voiceover Actress Grew Her Passion Into a Full-Time Microbusiness

This professional voice-over actress grew her career by building relationships--one package at a time.



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In 2010, Kelley Buttrick was faced with one of those happy entrepreneurial challenges: Her new business was growing almost too quickly.

When she started KB Voiceovers, she thought she'd put her voice-over talent to work part-time so she could have more flexibility for her family. But right out of the gate, Kelley had herself a full-fledged, full-time microbusiness.

"It was more than I bargained for at first," she recalls. "When I started, my booth was in a walk-in closet, which is pretty common, but the fact that it was not soundproofed began to have a negative effect on the family. I would be texting my husband, 'I hear your fork on your plate,' or telling my daughters I could hear them when they come home from school," she explains.

By year two, the Buttricks were moving--to a new home in the same neighborhood in Athens, Georgia, specifically built to accommodate a soundproofed, professionally-equipped studio. Kelley attributes her quick success to hard work and talent--she has perfected the "real person voice that makes statements like '0 percent APR financing' sound like something you can chat about over the water cooler." But that isn't the whole story. Her unique approach to building client relationships plays a pivotal role in her business's growth.

The art of business gift giving

Since Kelley records the majority of her spots from home, she doesn't get much face-to-face time. Instead, she has to foster relationships remotely. To strengthen these partnerships, she sends personalized gifts--thoughtful presents based on comments clients make in the course of their regular interactions, (e.g., "this place makes the best coffee") and clever purchases that reinforce her own brand image. Kelley sends these items with help from her local The UPS Store.

"There are a lot of voice-over talents in the Atlanta area. Part of my brand is that I am not from here, so I will send gifts that are made in Michigan, where I am from, as a way to personalize that communication and to let clients know I'm not a Southern-accented VO talent," she explains.

When she is out of town and working remotely, she uses The UPS Store to ship gifts from her hometown to her hotel so she can give them as a thank-you to the local studio hosting the session.

Marketing efforts like these are crucial to success in the "gig" economy, in which professionals move from one short-term project to the next."My clients often become friends, and if I find something perfect for one of them, it is The UPS Store I trust to pack it up and send it," she says.

Kelley also invests in a yearly promotional push. "Last summer, The UPS Store helped me with a fun marketing campaign where I sent logo beach balls and a fun vintage-looking postcard to more than 150 clients," she says. "For a Halloween promotion two years ago, The UPS Store helped with shipping boxes of chattering monster teeth that still sit on some of my clients' desks today."

Solo, but not alone

Kelley is still a solopreneur, but she has learned to outsource things like accounting and graphic design so she can focus on what she is best at--relationship building and voice-over work. She also hires an intern to help her run her office more smoothly.

As her business has grown, so has her partnership with The UPS Store. She started out with a mailbox solution from her local store. Today, she also uses them for all of her shipping needs and to print marketing materials. "Every staff member is friendly and extremely helpful. They know my business, and it shows," she says.

Kelley's voice-over work is the culmination of her theatrical talents, PR and journalism background, and radio experience. She has worked with dozens of big name brands, including Country Crock, JCPenney, Michelin Tires, Nature Valley, McDonald's, Simon Malls, Pampers, Coke, and The UPS Store. She loves helping businesses tell their stories, but she realizes that her ability to help them learn hers is just as important.

"My local The UPS Store plays a major role in giving my voice-over business a professional look and personality," says Kelley. She works hard to project professionalism and earn her clients' continued trust. She also needs to be remembered, to stand out in a competitive space. As simple as it sounds, shipping a thoughtful gift helps her do just that.