

Women of VO - Alaina Wis

SAV: [00:00:00] Welcome to the first day of Women's History Month. Over the next seven days, we're interviewing some amazing women in the voice over industry and leading up to International Women's Day on March 8th, we are not only celebrating women in voiceover, but we have a big announcement that we're quite excited for, but focusing on today, I would love to introduce you, our listeners, to the Disney princess of voiceover, Elena Weiss. Elena has a big career. You've heard her in Starfield as Robin Locke Juyuan in zealous zone zero as a bard in Skyrim, and her commercial clients are nothing to scoff at either. She's been the voice for Victoria's Secret, Google, Petco, United Airlines and dozens more, not to mention an award nomination or 2 or 16. She's kind of the Leonardo DiCaprio of voiceover awards. Today. We're talking about her career, her milestones, and how she's still a real person and not just a voice behind the mic. So, Alaina, thank you so much for joining us and letting us celebrate you.

Alaina: [00:01:13] Thank you so much for having me, Skye. I'm so happy to be here.

SAV: [00:01:16] Oh, yeah. This is I'm excited for not just this project, but to be able to highlight women in voiceover. So obviously, time to start highlighting. Can you give us a quick introduction of yourself and how long you've been in Vo, your specialty? And of course, the fun one. Something interesting.

Alaina: [00:01:34] Yeah, sure. Yeah. So hi, my name is Elena Weiss. This is actually going to be my 10th year of voiceover coming up in August, so I can't believe that it's been that long. But yeah. So kind of a big year 2025. So my background is actually in theater. I've been doing theater my whole life, and that's what I have my degree in is musical theater. I went to school at the University of the Arts in Philadelphia, which sadly no longer exists as of last summer. Oh, wow. I know it shut really abruptly and it was a shock to the whole community, but that's neither here nor there. So that was my background. And after graduating, I, you know, my my intention at that time was to be doing full time musical theater. And so I moved back to Chicago, which is where I'm from. It's where I'm based and started working in regional theater and also started dabbling in voiceover, but really did not. I didn't have any education in voiceover. I didn't understand that it was a whole industry. It was not covered in my program. So I really didn't know the rules, and I was just kind of fumbling around and, you know, just

somebody had brought up to me, one of my best friends had said, have you ever thought about, you know, getting on these freelance websites and doing voice acting? And I was like, what is that? So I was not very serious about it in the beginning and didn't have any training and was doing it simultaneously with a bunch of other jobs, including theatre. Then I actually ended up taking. I guess this could be something interesting. I ended up taking two years away from the US and from voiceover to go and do my dream job, which was being a vocalist for the Walt Disney Company in Hong Kong.

SAV: [00:03:19] And where?

Alaina: [00:03:20] Hong Kong.

SAV: [00:03:21] Wow. That's that's super cool. And so and that was singing.

Alaina: [00:03:26] Yeah.

SAV: [00:03:26] Wow. I didn't know that you sang as well.

Alaina: [00:03:29] Yeah. So my my BFA is in musical theatre.

SAV: [00:03:32] Very cool. And so you were there for two years? Yeah.

Alaina: [00:03:35] I was supposed to be there for six months. And then I kept extending and extending because I loved it. And there were more things that I wanted to train in and learn and perform and, and I just I loved it there. And I got to travel a lot. I got to go to I think I took 14 trips in two years. So it's a very centralized hub for other countries in Asia, and I also made it to Australia. So yeah, so it was a really cool chapter. You know, it was a dream job and just a lot of great memories. And then when I ended up deciding to leave and just, you know, saying to myself, I've kind of done everything that I wanted to do here, apart from ironically voiceover, I never got to do voiceover in the park. Still working on that. I decided to move back to Chicago and start making some headway towards some other theater goals and try to, you know, tackle some more dream roles and just do something different. But this time it was different. And I had just come off of two years as being a, you know, full time, salaried performer.

Alaina: [00:04:38] And after knowing what that's like, I kind of didn't want to go back to having 4 or 5 other side jobs and just kind of acting in my free time or whenever, you know, just in the evenings or whatever. I wanted to be full time. And so voiceover over came back into the picture because I had started that journey and I knew that this was, you know, potentially a way that I could become and supplement my career as a full time performer while also still pursuing theater. And so I got back into that, and I started to take it really seriously and spend a lot more time doing that and get coaching and get demos and get more plugged in to the community. And after about a year and a half, I was able to drop all of my other jobs and just be doing voiceover and then do theater when I had a contract. So I guess that's kind of the picture of how it came into my life. Yeah.

SAV: [00:05:37] Oh, and I bet it because you hear a lot of people that, you know, I feel like the average age for someone entering voiceover to go full time is anywhere from 2 to 4, maybe even sometimes seven years. But a year and a half is pretty quick. Do you attribute that to your acting prowess?

Alaina: [00:05:53] I definitely think that that is important. And especially in the age of AI, it's becoming more important than ever to have strong acting abilities, but also really clear authenticity and humanness. So I definitely think that's part of it. I also think I've just always had a really strong work ethic. So in those early days, I was doing 30, 40 auditions a day because I just needed the practice and I needed the shots on goal, and I needed client experience, customer service experience and experience. Being a single person business owner. So I was just really dedicated to building my resume in that first year and a half. And then after that point, I started to be able to get more choosy with the projects that I was taking on. But that journey to full time was a hustle. It was a lot of grind. Yeah.

SAV: [00:06:46] And that's such an important aspect. I think just in terms of, you know, our students at such a voice, but also anyone entering the voiceover industry, it's not just popping behind a mic and, you know, speaking some words and reading off of a page. It's its hustle and grind for the first few years.

Alaina: [00:07:04] Yeah. And it's hustle and grind. Now it's just in a different way. Right? Yeah.

SAV: [00:07:08] Yeah. You're not as like, nose to the grindstone as a beginner. You're not making any mistakes. I hope you know anymore. I mean.

Alaina: [00:07:15] I definitely still make mistakes, but it's just I think. Yeah, I can be more particular now. I can afford to walk away from things that don't align for whatever reason. I can I'm not intimidated by, you know, standing firm in my boundaries for whatever that means, whether that's financial or just morally. I don't want to narrate this or whatever it is in the beginning. Like when you're new, it feels like sometimes you can't say no to a lot of things because you don't have a lot of offers coming in. And so now I feel like the difference is I'm still hustling. I'm still doing probably 20 opportunities a day. Of auditions a day and probably at least one session, at least one gig a day, if not more. But at the same time, it's like I'm not afraid to let people go if it's something that just doesn't work out because I trust that something better will come.

SAV: [00:08:09] Yeah, yeah. And I think that that's also good, you know, not just if it doesn't jive, you know, morally or with your brand as a voice actress, but also if they, you know, pay negotiation or a negotiation, you know, you have to be able to walk away. And I think that was a perfect way to say it is trust that something else will come.

Alaina: [00:08:28] It always does.

SAV: [00:08:30] Oh, I love that. And so, you know, your specialty niche is you're more stratified, right? Or are you are you mostly commercial at this point in animation?

Alaina: [00:08:39] I mean, I kind of do a lot of things. And I think that is one reason why my business is so stable. I, you know, I do I for simplicity's sake, like on LinkedIn, I do say I specialize in commercial corporate narration and video gaming, but I do a lot of other things too. Like I do political work, I do animation, I do promo, you know, I do e-learning, I do medical, I do a lot of stuff. And I think that that's important because if there's a strike in one leg of your business or if the AI is taking over a certain sector, then you're not sunk. You have other arms that you can fall back on. Yeah.

SAV: [00:09:23] Stratifying your work is I really think is so important. It's kind of like you hear those people. I want to be the next Disney princess. Like, oh, you should get a commercial demo, too. Yeah, yeah. Just really, that keeps you. It keeps you safe. It keeps you working. And it helps that that point of something else will come.

Alaina: [00:09:40] Yeah.

SAV: [00:09:41] Do you have a favorite piece of work that you've done so far. Obviously the Disney was a dream job but for voiceover do you have a piece that's just like, you know, near and dear to your heart over the last ten years.

Alaina: [00:09:52] Yeah. Last summer I got to work on a DLC for Starfield through the Creators Program. Yeah. And it was about, I think I spent close to 18 or 20 hours in the booth on it. When all told, with sessions and editing, because I did, I self-directed most of it. And that was really a challenge, and I didn't read any of the script ahead of time. I could read it because I knew I knew I had read a synopsis of where the character is going, and kind of like the beats that happen for her in her character arc, and she's sort of this disgraced Navy pilot and she's, you know, drowning her sorrows at the bar. But there's a lot of backstory and a lot of reasoning as to how she got to that point. She deals with a lot of survivor's guilt. And did I do the right thing? And so I had those broad strokes, but I didn't read the script ahead of time because I really wanted it to be in the moment. And so I, you know, what you hear in the game is me reading it for the first time and going through that journey with her, and I felt that was like one of those projects where you really feel like you're an actor because you're feeling all the emotions. And, you know, let's be honest, doing explainer videos for a tech company just doesn't give that same, you know, ooey gooey actor feeling. So it was yeah, it was personally fulfilling for me. And I've gotten good reception on it. And so I'm glad that it's, you know, it's reaching people as well.

SAV: [00:11:27] I mean, the fact that you just get to do that and that you had this experience, but also that you took a different approach to it of actually doing it cold. And I loved your the way you said, exploring these emotions and feeling them with the character. Yeah. I think embodying that is really good.

Alaina: [00:11:44] Thank you. Yeah. Was that was that difficult?

SAV: [00:11:47] It being. Yeah. Yeah. Because the way you describe the character, it sounds like there was some hard knocks and emotional stuff.

Alaina: [00:11:54] Yeah. So last spring, you know, the creator of this DLC reached out to me and offered me the role and told me how long the script was going to be. And so I already knew from the beginning I was going to need to pace it out and not try to take it all on in one day, and that ended up being true emotionally. It ended up being true vocally because she sits really low in my range and it's really close up on the mic. So I was getting fatigued and so I would try to set aside time to do maybe like, I think I was doing maybe 6000 words a day and no more because it was just too demanding. So I would wait till the end of my work day and then let the emotions flow and let the voice sit where it needs to sit. And yeah, we got through it.

SAV: [00:12:37] So yeah. Wow. And 6000 words a day. That's gosh, that's almost, you know, audiobook level.

Alaina: [00:12:43] Yeah. It was. Yeah. And that's funny because I say I won't do audiobooks. And this was basically an audiobook, but it was just like one character, you know, no narration, but it was a lot of monologues. I think we recorded probably 8 or 9 hours of dialogue, so it was a lot. But yeah, you really have to pace yourself and props to people doing audiobooks for sure.

SAV: [00:13:07] You don't want to sit in the booth for 12 hours a day. Is that not your jive? No.

Alaina: [00:13:12] And also, I would need to read the book first, and I'm a really slow reader, so it just I would need to like, factor in time to read the book, you know?

SAV: [00:13:20] Yeah, yeah, yeah. Well, so, you know, something like this, you said this was last year or the year before.

Alaina: [00:13:27] This was last we we worked on this last May.

SAV: [00:13:30] Last May. Okay. So you know, you've had you know, you've had a very fabulous rising career. And this in your ninth year is, you know, kind of your favorite nearest and dearest piece to, to you. What's it like to, you know, ten years is is a while, but it's also not. You get a lot of people in this industry that are 15, 20 years in. So you're kind of at, at the middle. Do you have things that you're looking forward to? Do you still feel like you're on the rise? What's that like being in your 10th year?

Alaina: [00:14:00] Yeah, I think I'm really starting to two things. I feel like I'm starting to specialize, like I'm starting to figure out what I really bring. That's unique. And I didn't used to think that I had anything that was unique because I sort of felt like, well, everyone can do the commercial voice and, you know, there's nothing like special about me. But I'm starting to recognize, like when I get auditions, like, oh, yeah, like this one is bookable for me because the character is me in some way. And also the second thing is I'm starting to figure out what conscious competence looks like for me. Like, in other words, I'm starting to figure out why I'm successful when I audition for certain things and why I don't book other things. And I actually started keeping a folder on my computer of all of the auditions that I did last year that booked, or that got a check avail so that I could start to find the common threads and get to know myself better. And you know, who am I when I'm at my best? What am I bringing to the audition that is, you know, standing out to them and then also like, seeking that feedback when I do get on the session, like, what was it that that made you choose me? And sometimes I don't have to ask. They just say, and then that's good feedback for me too. So I feel like, you know, going into my 10th year, it's about conscious competence. It's about understanding what's working and how I can repeat that and reach for those end game goals like network animation and, you know, motion capture and video games and things like that. There's definitely so much more to be done. I don't feel anywhere close to being finished yet.

SAV: [00:15:41] Oh, I love to hear that. Well, and, you know, you in your 10th year, you're still growing. You still have goals. And, you know, not to put a dampener on on the conversation, but I feel like there's definitely having the realization of goals and being able to look back and see where you're coming from and being able to drive forward like it's it's not always easy. So when things get difficult, you know, say that you go a couple days, you didn't book the thing that you want to book or, you know, you're

just having, you know, because we're alone in the booth a lot. It's not all sunshine and rainbows. So how do you persevere through the difficult times?

Alaina: [00:16:18] Yeah, it's it's funny that you mention we're alone in the booth a lot, because I think the answer is community. I think having those couple of people that are trusted that you can say, hey, it's been a really long time since I got a check avail. It's been a really long time since I booked through my agents, and I'm feeling inadequate because it seems like everybody else is sharing all these wins. And, you know, I'm going through a rough patch or whatever. It's important to have those people that pick you up, and it's really important to be able to be vulnerable and to be able to share what you need in that moment and to say like, hey, like, is it okay if I have the space to be vulnerable right now? And what I could use back is if it's available to you. You know, some encouragement, some words of affirmation, whatever it is. And I think that that makes a huge difference. And then you give that back to when it's when it's their turn to be down, then you give that back and say, you know, hey, like everybody has ebbs and flows, you know, like nobody is constantly booking, especially the really high profile stuff. It looks like everyone is because social media is designed to make us think that we are less than. But like, we're only sharing our wins and our highlights. We're not sharing the days when it's really dead. So I think community is really, really important.

SAV: [00:17:37] Oh, and we really do exist in an industry where community is a easily accessible, but also it's just it's thriving. Everybody. Everybody in the voiceover industry is so warm and welcoming. And so I think it can surprise newcomers to know that they they can reach out to people. Yeah, absolutely. And that they find you need to.

Alaina: [00:18:00] Yeah. You have.

SAV: [00:18:01] To. Yeah. And you know, I think the social media aspect because, you know, if you if somebody said to to, to me sky like, hey, you know, do you know Elena. Oh my God. She is a sparkle unicorn of joy and booking, you know. And so someone might be surprised that, you know, you even say like, oh, I'm having to set goals and I do have those downtimes, and I have to reach out to community. And I think that that's an important conversation to have is that no matter how it looks from the outside, it can. You are working hard, it's not easy and it's up to you.

Alaina: [00:18:37] Oh, absolutely. There is not one person in this industry that I know who who isn't susceptible to down days and feeling inadequate and and doubt and wondering if they're on the right path or if their dreams are even possible. It happens to every single person, even like the three people at the top of my head that I'm thinking of right now, who are. It seems like they're constantly booked multiple sessions a day, doing great, doing things through the agent, through the manager all the time. And, you know, whatever else, even they have days where they're like, man, I didn't get that thing. And I really was close and I, I really wanted it. Like, there's always more that you can reach for. You never get to a stage in your career. Hopefully. At least not in my experience so far, where you're like, yeah, I'm done. I don't need anything else. Like, it's like once you get the carrot on the stick, then there's another carrot ten feet ahead of you that you're running towards. So.

SAV: [00:19:32] Yeah. Yeah. Well, and I think that's a, you know, in terms of community and in terms of, you know, I'm sure that there's people that look at you and they may not, you know, you may not know them, but they look at you and they look up to you and the career choices that you're making and who you are in the industry. And so are there any women that when you were initially coming up or even now, you know, because mentors mentorship isn't something that stops. Was there anybody that really helped you put things in focus then or now?

Alaina: [00:20:04] Yeah, I will say like the single biggest thing that I feel like changed my mental game and also correlated was correlated with the exponential rise in like goals and income. And all of that stuff was getting plugged in with trusted community in I think it was 2022. So it was not that long ago. I was really doing this alone for a long time because by the nature of our job, like we don't ever have to interact with anyone else other than clients on live sessions every once in a while if we don't want to, you know? And so I was doing everything alone because I didn't know really where to turn. And in 2022, I became a really good friends with Morgan Taylor and Jenna Pinchbeck. And they are two of my closest friends and they are badass women, so successful, driven. And when I met them, I was like, oh my God, it's two more of me, but with different personalities. And I was like, it's so great to know that there are other, you know, sole proprietorships, single business owners out here hustling, and we don't let each other settle for anything. Like we help each other on days when we're feeling down, we help each other with negotiation. If we're feeling like, I don't know about this

job, we talk each other through it, and we also talk about things that are completely unrelated to work because it's a genuine friendship. It's not just coworkers standing around the water cooler. And that's also a big part of it is like to trust somebody with that personal stuff. Then you feel like you can trust them with, you know, the negotiation stuff as well. So I think that's super important. I love them both to death and they're both people to watch that are also incredibly successful.

SAV: [00:21:51] Oh, I love that. And they probably can speak just as equally about you about how amazing you are.

Alaina: [00:21:57] I think I think it's a mutual I know it's a mutual feeling for sure.

SAV: [00:22:03] Oh. That's awesome. And because we need those people, you know, not just in, in our professional community, but we need them in our personal life as well.

Alaina: [00:22:10] Yeah, absolutely. Yeah.

SAV: [00:22:12] Yeah, yeah. And and, you know, with, with that community, why why have you stuck it out in voiceover and, you know, why have you not returned to say, the stage or singing? I'm sure that you occasionally do things on, on the side like, like most of us because it's, you know, it's a creative field. But why is voiceover your career and career of choice and what makes it special to you. Especially because, you know, being a woman in voiceover that can also be part of the conversation, as is being a woman in this industry is different than being a man in the industry.

Alaina: [00:22:43] Yeah for sure. Well, I'll start by saying, like, I still do other things, I still am doing screen acting and I still do, you know, live performance occasionally. But really, the the big accidental tipping point for all of this was Covid. I was working on an equity show, doing eight shows a week, and our show got shut down on March 12th, 2020, and I was already funding, you know, paying the bills, doing voiceover. And, you know, theater has never been for me the except for when I was working at Disney. It has never been like the sole provider of, you know, paying the bills. So I was already set up, I was already doing Vo, but I was working it in around a full time theater schedule, so it was much different than it is now. I was fortunate that, like, I was set up to pivot, and then I was in a position where I had no choice but to pivot because there was no theater

then for 18 months. So that's like sort of the that's like the practical answer. But then I tell people that I accidentally on purpose, pivoted away from theater and more into voiceover because having been forced to pivot made me realize, you know, I got like a taste of what normal working hours looks like and being able to have work life balance.

Alaina: [00:24:07] And all of a sudden now I have time for dating and I have time for family, and I have time to just like do other things, because all of a sudden my working hours are the same as pretty much everybody else's working hours. Whereas before I was basically free during the day and just doing my voiceover auditions and live sessions during the day, and then my big obligation was doing shows at night and on weekends, and that's usually when most people are free. So so voiceover provided better financial stability. It provided better flexibility, better allowance for mental and emotional health. Just better, better work life balance. You know, I can go to my friends weddings now. I can go on vacation and not have to like, choose between doing a three month contract or going on a vacation. I can do. I can do work and vacation. You know, like I don't have to miss out on things as much. So that's like really the reason why when there have been opportunities to go back to a full time theatre schedule, I've said, you know what? Unless it's like a dream role, unless it's a really, really big passion project that I'm getting something out of emotionally, this is actually too much sacrifice for me to, to, to give. So that's that's why.

SAV: [00:25:23] Oh man. And I guess that kind of boils down to freedom. Yeah. Yeah. Which is, gosh, because it's not just working from home. I think you highlighted it's the ability to the autonomy to to control your schedule and work when and how you want. And because you could you could go to the, you know, the Caribbean or something. You could have that vacation and then you could extend it and take your work with you.

Alaina: [00:25:47] Yeah. And that's not possible in theater and nothing against theater, because I will say the the ongoing internal struggle of my life is that nothing fuels me and gives me those butterflies in my stomach like live theater does. It's my first love, and nothing has come close to like that feeling. There's no way to replace it. And that's that's the one reason to go back and to do it right. But there are infinite reasons why this lifestyle just works better for me long term. And you mentioned one of them, which is that, like, I have been at Disney World on vacation and then got in a major audition. And now, because I've been able to learn how to set up a really good travel booth thanks to

my friend Jenna Pinchbeck, who travels full time. I feel confident auditioning on the road, and if I had to, I could probably do a live session on the road, you know? So it's like you don't have to choose. And that's what I love so much about Vo.

SAV: [00:26:44] Yeah, it truly does give, give freedom. Has there been any standout feel good moment for you so far in voiceover? Like is there anything that really, you know, you're like recently this happened or maybe X or Y because you are you are an award winning voice actress.

Alaina: [00:27:03] I actually haven't won an award yet. No, I think I've been nominated like 12 times and haven't won yet, but it's coming. It's good to have goals.

SAV: [00:27:12] Of voice actors.

Alaina: [00:27:14] And the Leo of voice actors.

SAV: [00:27:17] I could have sworn up and down if someone had asked me like, oh, she's like, yeah, I don't know which one it is, but I know she's won.

Alaina: [00:27:22] No, but I, you know, again, like, there's always a carrot on a, on a stick to reach for, and I'm grateful to have things to reach for. So it's about the journey, because once you get the accomplishment, it it feels good. But then you're like, okay, I need to chase something else now, you know? Yeah.

SAV: [00:27:39] And what what else? After the awards. Right. Well, I will say for anybody listening that hasn't been to any of the awards shows or anything Miss Elena has the ball gowns of ball gowns every time you look. You are such a red carpet queen.

Alaina: [00:27:57] I, I am, I will own that because I think this is where all of my, like, theater love is now being poured into. Because I'm not doing full time theater anymore. That, like, I don't get to wear costumes and dress up and stuff like that. So now and also I just, I'm in my booth all day, like, I don't leave my house a lot.

SAV: [00:28:16] So dramas.

Alaina: [00:28:17] So it's either pajamas or it's evening gown. There is no in-between.

SAV: [00:28:21] Oh, I love it. And you knock it. I think that's that's how we first met, was we were passing each other. Yes.

Alaina: [00:28:26] We passed each other like 40 times.

SAV: [00:28:29] How do you look? So good. Oh my God. Yes, you are the Disney princess of Ballgowns. I absolutely love it and I'm so glad that you own it. You're not like, oh, I just, you know. No, this is my showmanship, and I'm.

Alaina: [00:28:40] I love it, I love it.

SAV: [00:28:43] Are so out of those, you know. Sorry. Just to reel it back to the question, what's the what's the big feel good moment for you?

Alaina: [00:28:50] Yeah. Oh, my gosh, can I pick two? I feel like I have two in the last year. Okay, so you mentioned the awards. I was up for Female VoiceOver Artist of the year last year, and that was, like shocking. I was like, wait a minute, because you look at the other women who are up there and you're like, wow, like, oh my gosh, you know, like, these are the women that I'm standing beside. And that was really amazing because I looked I do still look up to a lot of those women, especially earlier on. And now it's like we're all killing it. And that's really cool. So that was a huge accomplishment. And it doesn't matter that I didn't win because just that nomination, that recognition was like, oh my gosh. You know, it was just really, really cool. So that's one. And then the other one is like, yeah, in 2022, 2023, I realized that, like, I really want to be doing high level triple A gaming. And I kind of told myself this limiting story that because I live in Chicago, which is where I want to be, it's my home base. It's where my family is, you know, it's where my partner is. He has a real person job here, like like a, you know, not a remote job, but like a, like physically goes into work here. I love the seasons. I love the cost of living. Like this is where I want to be. I love it here. I told myself that, like, some things are just not going to be possible because I've chosen that that like it's going to be too much hassle.

Alaina: [00:30:17] People won't want to work with a remote talent. They won't want me to travel out there because it's just too much risk or whatever. And I sort of quieted that dream and kind of brushed it under the rug and told myself, like, it's probably not going to happen, but like, I'll do my best, which was not a great attitude to have. And then I ended up getting top representation in Los Angeles, and that kind of shook up everything. And then at the beginning of last year, it was like boom, boom, boom, triple A, booking, booking, booking and things really started to change. And so just having that negative story that I told myself flipped on its head, and having the universe be like, yeah, like, bet, you know, hold my beer. Like, yes, you can do this. Like, you can have it all. You can be based where you want to be based. You know, it might be a bigger hurdle and you might have to do some convincing, and you might have to make sure that your studio is top of the line and there's no concerns. But like, that's nothing new for you. You were going to do that anyway. So, you know, like having that be proven wrong in the best way, and getting to work on some really cool projects and bucket list projects has been like, I'm going into this year with such a different energy than last year, and just trusting that like, the right thing is coming because it has come.

SAV: [00:31:35] I love that. That is it's so amazing to be able to look back and and be able to look at yourself and say, why was I telling myself that? Why was I being so negative, why was I? And we all we all tell ourselves stories, you know, it's it's.

Alaina: [00:31:52] Usually to protect yourself, I think. Right. Because it's like, well, if I don't let myself dream, then I can't get disappointed.

SAV: [00:31:57] Yeah, yeah. No one will reject me. I, you know, I won't feel hurt when it doesn't happen, right? So yeah, but it's a limiting belief. And I'm so glad that you actually went for it.

Alaina: [00:32:08] Yeah, yeah.

SAV: [00:32:10] Me too. And who's your representation out in LA?

Alaina: [00:32:12] I'm with Dean Pinero. Love him.

SAV: [00:32:14] He's great. Oh, wow. Yeah. Very cool. Congrats.

Alaina: [00:32:17] Thank you. Yeah, I'm really lucky. I'm really blessed. Those those guys are. And gals are awesome awesome out there. And I'm very, very happy. Yeah, they're very supportive.

SAV: [00:32:26] Well, and this is actually a good transition into questions from our students. Since you're with Dean Panaro. Talent. Can you share where most of your work comes from, whether it's pay to play direct marketing and then contrast that now with maybe two years ago and in the beginning.

Alaina: [00:32:43] Yeah. For most of my career and I'll say I've been with various agents since 2020 and I work with multiple agents most years, about 95% of my income has been self sourced. 5% has come from agents. Wow. And that was almost true last year. And then I had a big commercial that paid a lot of royalties or residuals. Sorry, that changed that a little bit. And so I think last year was something like agents made up 11% or something, but the rest is self sourced.

SAV: [00:33:20] And and when you say self sourced just for our students, do you mean self sourced on the pay to plays or do you mean direct marketing?

Alaina: [00:33:27] Everything. I'm still on certain pay to play sites. I have a lot of return business, direct business. Production company rosters. Yeah. Social media marketing or, like, word of mouth through friends. Like somebody will say like, hey, I hope it's okay. I recommended you to my colleague. They're working on this thing. So just building that network and, you know, of course, trying to have healthy limits with social media, but unfortunately, like social media also can be a great tool. So trying to navigate, you know, who am I trying to reach when I'm on LinkedIn? Who am I trying to reach when I'm on Twitter, like that kind of thing? And being strategic about that has been another way in too. Very cool, very cool.

SAV: [00:34:06] And so it's, you know, at its baseline, it sounds like it's about getting yourself out there.

Alaina: [00:34:10] It's about diversifying. Right. Because like we talked about earlier, if one leg of your business goes out, you need to have other legs to stand on. So if you're

on Voices.com and it shuts down tomorrow. And that's 90% of your income like you're cooked. You know, so like, where else are you finding work? Like, don't put all your eggs in one basket is my advice. Yeah. Oh that's.

SAV: [00:34:31] Great. And in terms of just kind of everything within voiceover we know it's not all sunshine, sunshine and unicorns. Is there any part of voiceover that you dislike or even that you, you know, you farm out.

Alaina: [00:34:49] Farm out? Do you mean like like a genre of work that I don't do?

SAV: [00:34:54] No. Just in terms of, you know as a top down business, you know, I know some people, they don't do any of their own edits. Other people, they use people for social media because it's the way you're describing it. It sounds like you kind of do it all.

Alaina: [00:35:08] Yeah, I kind of do it all. I yeah, and I, I recognize the value in hiring an assistant, and I know people who are very happy having done that and that, like a friend of mine has hired an assistant, and she tells me that she wakes up in the morning and the assistant has compiled like, here's everything that you have today and here's everything that's come in while you were asleep. And and like, that's amazing. And I definitely recognize the value in that. And I'm like such a control freak that like, I just feel like maybe this is like my Capricorn Rising, like, star chart thing, but I feel like it. It won't get done right if I don't do it myself. So I do wear all the hats. In terms of, I guess, any part I don't like. I haven't been super disciplined about direct marketing, cold emailing. I know that works for some people, and some people are super diligent about, like the CRM and keeping track and following up and all that. And like that, I, I did give it like a month where I was like, I'm gonna sit down for an hour a day and do this. And it just like, wasn't really it wasn't really my thing. I wasn't getting back enough responses that I could tangibly tie to that behavior to feel like it was worth it for me. That doesn't mean I wasn't. It doesn't mean it wasn't working. A lot of times you apply to something and you don't hear anything back, and then six months later you get an audition and you're like, oh, that did work. So, you know, not to poo poo on that at all, because I know some people like that's like the, the, that's their bread and.

SAV: [00:36:38] Butter core.

Alaina: [00:36:39] Of their business. But like for me, I really I'm such like a sprinter and not a marathon runner that I'm like, give me the auditions and let me just like burn through them and let's go. So I try to like, get myself in as many ponds as I can where there's as many different fish, and I can just like dedicate time to fishing and then like, move on to whatever's due that day and then, like, have relaxation time.

SAV: [00:37:04] Toes in the sand, time as I like to call it. Well and so what is, what's something that you wished people knew or asked you about. People that people knew about you or asked about you more.

Alaina: [00:37:19] Yeah. Okay. So you want the honest answer. Gosh.

SAV: [00:37:23] Yes please.

Alaina: [00:37:25] So and I know that a lot of your audience is newcomers and beginners and folks who are like, you know hungry to get started. But I will say that like I do get overwhelmed by the amount of strangers reaching out to me, saying something like, how do I get started in voiceover? And that gets really exhausting, especially when I've compiled resources specifically for that that are pretty easy to find on my website and pinned to my LinkedIn. And if not, something that I've compiled, something that my colleagues have compiled, it's a Google search away. I wish that when people reached out to me that I don't know that it was about like genuine connection. Like I would love to form more genuine working relationships with people that are about like, what's going on in your life, like what's going well for you. And like if you have a specific question. We can troubleshoot that together. But like it makes it really hard for me to not see it as like a one sided conversation when I'm getting bombarded with kind of those baseline level questions that show me that, like, you haven't done any research on your own before approaching me specifically, like, what is it about specifically approaching me that, like, you want my insight on, you know, so that's what makes it feel disingenuous. I would love to. Like I love meeting new people. I love expanding my network, but it really makes the most impact when you know, somebody reaches out and says, like, hey, like I loved what you said specifically about yada yada yada yada, what do you think about this follow up question? And then that's an interesting conversation, you know, and then that shows that, like, that person, you know, is reaching out to me specifically, as

opposed to reaching out to Google because of something that. Yeah, or any voice actor. Right. So yeah, I just I guess I wish that more of more of the outreach that was coming in was more thoughtful and genuine, I think.

SAV: [00:39:14] Yeah. Okay. And and I reckon there's actually many people in positions like yours who are either on the up and up, they've done something popular recently or even are just even keel successful as a voice actor or voice actress. And yeah, people, they're not doing their homework. They're just reaching out to reach out. And it's a take, take, take situation instead of, hey, we're both in this industry, this is what I'm doing. How is your work coming along? I heard you in X and Y. Like, that was awesome. What else are you doing? Like genuine interest.

Alaina: [00:39:45] Yeah. It's like it's kind of like dating apps, right? Like you can't just be like, hey, you know, like, you have to be like, hey, I thought this thing on your profile was really interesting. Like, what was that like? You know, it's like, make an effort to, like, really, if you're networking the network, you know, like, show that you've researched that person. And like, same thing with not just newcomers, with people who, like you mentioned, are really seasoned. A lot of times I'll get a connect request on LinkedIn and it's a very clearly copied and pasted like marketing outreach thing where it's like, hi, I'm this person. Here's a link to my portfolio on my website. And I'm like, I'm not hiring. Like, I don't know why you're sending this to me.

SAV: [00:40:20] Leave me alone.

Alaina: [00:40:21] Yeah. Like and it's very clear, like, that person doesn't really want to connect. They want something else. So yeah. Like I'm interested in genuine connection is what I'm saying.

SAV: [00:40:29] Fair. Okay, okay. And and I'm sure that you are able to provide that so well because I know I know that you and I have had a couple of interactions and they feel really nice. Yeah.

Alaina: [00:40:40] No. Same to you. Absolutely. Like, and there's, there's a genuine, like kindness and warmth that comes from interacting with you that you know, is absolutely noticed.

SAV: [00:40:51] Yeah. And likewise there is there is a sparkle of engagement no matter, you know, whether it's just voice or if it's in person or, you know, online, you you definitely have it too. And I, I hope that people moving forward, I hope that, you know, if anybody hears this, give the sparkle back.

Alaina: [00:41:08] I think people just don't know, like, why would they know? You know, it's again, I don't nobody posts about anything except for their highlight reel or like things that are completely processed and it's a teaching moment or whatever. So why would they know that? I'm getting inundated with, you know, it's like they probably don't realize that, like probably five people a week send those kinds of messages to me, right? So wow. That many? It's just it's just an unawareness, like I don't attribute it to maliciousness at all. I just think that people just don't. And that's not just me. That's like probably a lot of my colleagues. Right? So yeah, it's just like it's probably just a lack of awareness. It's an interest. People are genuinely interested. They're trying to like get an expert opinion. I totally get that. And I'm still navigating kind of like how to empathize with that and understand that because I'm sure, you know, I know I was there ten years ago and also like gently pointing them towards like resource guides. And here's where you can do some more research. And then if you have a specific question, let's talk about it, you know.

SAV: [00:42:01] Yeah. Yeah. And then you know, somebody moving forward. You know them. It's not just oh yeah. One time I talked to so-and-so. Totally.

Alaina: [00:42:09] Yeah, absolutely.

SAV: [00:42:11] Oh, that's a that's actually a really good one. I think that, you know, that's something that we can we can also propagate moving forward. Hey guys.

Alaina: [00:42:18] Maybe utilize community two is what I tell people. I help administrate a discord run by again, my friend Jenna Pinchbeck. And we always try to we admins always try to tell our members to like, fall back on the community, pull the group like we can all work through things together, rather than like going to one person and expecting like personal business coaching from one of the admins. But like rather, you know, going to the whole group, hey, has anyone dealt with this situation and like what's your

experience there? And then you get a lot of different opinions and a lot of different ideas, and you can maybe identify which one works best for you. But again, community is so important for so many reasons. That never goes away at any stage in your career, but especially when you're new and you have a lot of questions because everything's new to you. Yeah, yeah. To you.

SAV: [00:43:06] And you don't know what you don't know.

Alaina: [00:43:07] Right? And that's totally fine. That's that is everybody has to be there at some point and everyone needs support. But I think like striving towards like ethical support is a great goal to have.

SAV: [00:43:18] Yeah. Well. And are you are you an a mentor for anybody or. And I don't mean that in like a oh yeah I coach or anything like that. But do you feel that you're kind of putting the ladder down behind you as well? As much as possible?

Alaina: [00:43:31] Yeah, definitely. Yeah, I definitely I definitely think that I do and I think that I one of my goals for this year is to like continue doing that, but also like make sure that I'm still taking care of myself in that process because I think I have a big heart for for folks who are coming up against things that I've already dealt with and that I can help with, and I genuinely want to help. But I find that on top of my own obligations and then with, you know, trying to help people, on top of that, I will often choose answering those questions and helping people through negotiations and through first time career situations Over taking care of my own needs and myself. And then that leads to like, burnout. So I'm trying to. It's a lifelong journey, I'm finding, but I'm trying to strike a balance between making sure I am putting the ladder down, but also like, okay, I need I need a break from climbing. Like, I need to sit for a second, you know?

SAV: [00:44:25] Yeah, sometimes we need a little bit of even keel.

Alaina: [00:44:28] Yeah, absolutely.

SAV: [00:44:29] Yeah, yeah. And and in terms of, you know, you've talked about mentors that you've had people that have helped you and you, you do the best to do the same while still keeping yourself, you know, at the forefront, which is a very important.

But if you if you could go back in time and tell baby voice actor Elena anything at all, what would it be?

Alaina: [00:44:52] I think that you can have it all like we talked about before, that like you don't have to compromise on your vision for your life, and you can make it work where we're in, like kind of a weird timeline right now where there's a lot of. There's a lot of things happening that are scary, but there's also a lot of things that were never possible a hundred years ago for actors. And so, you know, it's a both and there is an immense opportunity to be a remote voice actor in 2025 that didn't exist in 2000. Right. And so I would just go back and tell myself, like, you have no idea what's coming. And also that, like by you choosing this path, you're not failing yourself for not doing full time theater like you thought you were going to do. You know, just kind of having to, like, parent an earlier version of myself and being like, yes, you're not doing the exact goal that you set out to do. That doesn't mean that you're not successful and that you're not pursuing your dreams and that you're not still a full time actor, even though it doesn't feel the same way to perform voiceover that it does to perform on stage and like it's it's okay to make a change. If it's changed for the better.

SAV: [00:46:03] Yeah, yeah. And and to be gentle on yourself.

Alaina: [00:46:06] Yeah.

SAV: [00:46:08] I think that's, that's that's very good advice. And it's something that everybody listening should, you know, no matter where you are, not just the beginners, but everybody has to be gentle on themselves, has to keep that that end goal and that dream in mind, you know, whether that's you want to live somewhere new, you want to travel all the time or just stay home and be able to put your your kids through college as as a voice actor, voice actress, it's it's important to keep your goals in mind and be gentle on yourself.

Alaina: [00:46:34] Yeah, it's important, I think, to form your career goals around your life goals and kind of not vice versa. And I think in my early 20s I would have said the opposite, that like, I'll go where the work is, like I'll go wherever I need to go, I'll be sent across the world, I'll be sent across the country, whatever it is. And now it's sort of like after six years of living away from my support system, away from my family, and

knowing that like, it can work. But when it's tough, it's really tough. My priorities shifted and it was like, well, okay, then how can I find a way to be a full time actor Right where I am and like, grow where I'm planted. And make sure that like the things that matter more than work are taken care of. You know, like, I had a mentor, I had a professor in college who encouraged all of us to think about, like, what are the things you need to be regulated as a human being? Do you need proximity to nature? Do you need proximity to family? Like, do you need X amount of hours a day to not be working and to be doing your hobbies? What is your side hustle that you're going to do that that you enjoy, you lose track of time doing that's going to fund your acting dreams. You know, all of that kind of stuff. All that big picture stuff then helps inform, like where you do need to live and what career you do pursue. And for me, VoiceOver was compatible with all of those needs and it might not be compatible for everybody. It was recently pointed out to me that, like, I might be so successful at this because I'm very introverted, so I can withstand being in the booth alone for hours a day, and I'm great. But for people who are extroverted, that can be a real challenge. So it's just finding ways to make it work with like what your needs as a human are as well. Wow.

SAV: [00:48:11] Yeah. Yeah. Gosh, that is such that's such great advice. What do you need to make it work? I think that's and I think even breaking it down into what just what you said is do you need to be near, you know, surfing every day because you love it so much? Do you need to be able to go garden, that sort of thing that that can help you build your dream. And so you need to make it compatible.

Alaina: [00:48:33] Yeah. You can't pour from an empty cup. So if you're getting into the booth every day because you're like, okay, you know, this is what I'm going to do. But I picked somewhere to live that, you know, for me, like, I could never live in, you know, Portland because it's always like a lot of the year it's cold and rainy and cloudy, and that really saps my energy. And if for some reason there was a career opportunity in Portland, I wouldn't be very good at that career opportunity because I would be in a bad mood all the time because of the weather. So that wouldn't have been a strategic decision, right? So yeah, you have to think about, you know, who are you as a person? And then how does you know? How does that inform your work decisions? I think.

SAV: [00:49:11] Absolutely. Oh, such great words and such an enjoyable interview, Elena.

Alaina: [00:49:17] Yeah. It was. Thank you so much. This was so much fun. Yeah.

SAV: [00:49:20] Is there anything that I. You know, maybe I didn't ask that you want to make sure is on the record about you or about your career. You know, and it doesn't have to be voiceover. Is there anything at all?

Alaina: [00:49:31] I mean, I guess just where you can find me, you can add me on LinkedIn. I'm just my name. First and last name, Elena Weiss on LinkedIn. I'm also I don't really use Twitter much, but I'm also at Elena Weiss on Twitter, and I'm on Instagram at believe it's spelled b e l l e e v e. So yeah, that's where people can follow and connect with me if they'd like to.

SAV: [00:49:54] Oh, perfect. And oh, will you be at Veo Atlanta?

Alaina: [00:49:57] I will not, but I hope you have an excellent time.

SAV: [00:50:01] Thank you. Thank you. I was gonna say we'll have to get the girls together.

Alaina: [00:50:04] Yeah, absolutely. Definitely.

SAV: [00:50:06] Well, thank you so much for your time, Elena. And you can see all of her links at the bottom. And. Yeah, if you reach out to her, remember, make it personal.

Alaina: [00:50:17] I don't want people to think I'm, like, the scary person that doesn't want outreach. I just, like, I want to get to know, who are you? I want to you know who? You know all of that. Like, let's be genuine. So let's be friends. Is there anything on.

SAV: [00:50:28] The horizon for you? Any changes? Anything big?

SAV: [00:50:33] That's not under NDA, of course.

Alaina: [00:50:35] No. Oh, like work wise. I have some exciting things coming up that I can't, you know, go into detail on, but, yeah, I think it's going to be a great year. I think

there's there's definitely some projects brewing that like you will know when I'm allowed to talk about them because I'm excited for it. So shouting it.

SAV: [00:50:50] From the rooftops.

Alaina: [00:50:51] Right. Exactly.

SAV: [00:50:53] Yes. All right. Well thank you again. And celebrating women and VoiceOver heck yeah.

Alaina: [00:50:59] Happy International women's month.