

## Why North Americans Hire British Voice Talents

When you think of Britain and the British, images of pomp, chivalry, royalty, tradition, authenticity, and power come to mind. To some, the UK musters romance, dignity and prestige, reminiscent of Jane Austen novels or the strength, bluntness and grit of a book by Charles Dickens. For others, perhaps it's fashion, cosmopolitan airs, trend setting ways, stoicism, and dry wit. Whatever their reasons, thousands of companies in Canada and the US are strategically hiring voices from across the pond to represent their corporate images.

Why is that? Let's look at some of the reasons why some companies find British voice talent more attractive to sell their product or service. British voices are in the mainstream and in most cases are respected for their perceived intelligence and vocal eloquence.

North Americans have always had a love affair with the British. Starting in the early days of settlement in the New World and confederation of both the United States of America and Canada, the British have played a major role in the development of the land and establishment of policy, culture, government and education.

The British, among other nations, principally the French, gave us a heritage and shared connections with trading partners. Tens of thousands of these brave people opted to stay in this new found land to nurture, protect, and establish their own communities.

All loyalties aside, another aspect that influences people to hire a British voice talent is that many high profile celebrities in Hollywood are from England, Ireland, Scotland and Wales. If you stopped to think, you could likely name at least 20 people who hail from the UK in the movies.

To illustrate, Scotland has given us Russell Waters, Sean Connery, Ewan McGregor, and Dee Hepburn. Ireland has yielded Peter O'Toole, Pierce Brosnan, Liam Neeson, and Colin Farrell. Wales has given us Catherine Zeta-Jones, Ioan Gruffudd, Richard Burton, Sir Anthony Hopkins, and Christian Bale. England, perhaps the most generous of them all for celebrities, produced greats over the decades like Sir Laurence Olivier, Dame Julie Andrews, Dame Judi Dench, John Cleese, Helena Bonham-Carter, Orlando Bloom, Keira Knightley and more.

A statistic published on January 27th, 2007 in a British newspaper states that there are currently 678,000 landed immigrants from Britain living in the United States today. This is merely a conservative estimate.

In the most recent US Census (2000), there were 824,000 citizens of British birth living in the United States, the majority of which prefer to live outside of large cities scattered throughout the country.

The article also reported that a fifth of all British people who live in the United States are living in the state of California with only a slight margin living in metropolitan Los Angeles and the surrounding area. Additionally, most British people living in America have American spouses. That's quite a number, which makes even more of a case for British talent in the Americas. People hear their lilting, distinguished accents and find them comforting and pleasing not to mention sophisticated.

Surely if there are that many people living in the US and Canada, some of them are personalities who are in the media or use their voice to make a living. Those individuals are seeking work opportunities and promoting their British voices as an asset and differentiator, offering refinement and exotic appeal.

To sum up, here are the key reasons why people opt to hire British voices in North America:

- Elevate their company status
- Help connect with people on an intellectual level
- Give perceived refinement to a product or service
- Tap into the sentimentality of people of British heritage
- Differentiate themselves from standard North American branding
- Present listeners with subtle yet persuasive marketing

British voice-overs and what they embody are very powerful without seeming salesy. They establish and engage. British voice-overs can be elegant, heroic, strong, graceful, jovial, quaint, condescending, posh, school masterly, didactic, forceful, and influential among other adjectives.

The dialects in Britain are numerous with each nook and cranny possessing their own twist on the Queen's English. If you went from one end of the

nations capital to the other, you will be exposed to several completely different dialects; such is life in the bustling city of London.

While it is true that other accents embody those attributes, somehow (likely due to shared heritage and the entertainment industry), the British manage to pull them off with a more universal style, making them citizens of the world as well as the lands from which they came.

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