

Caitlin Pyle: Well, hey, everybody. Welcome back to another episode of the Work-At-Home Heroes podcast. I'm here with Julie Eickhoff, and she is a work-from-home voice artist. She narrates audiobooks, commercials, web videos, telephone surveys, and she's been working from home since 2011 very part time, typically less than four hours a day. She's encountered all kinds of people who are interested in working at home, so you are in the perfect spot to talk about working at home, Julie. Welcome to the show.

Julie Eickhoff: Thank you so much for having me, Caitlin. I'm really excited to be here.

Caitlin Pyle: Where are you joining us from today?

Julie Eickhoff: I'm in Minneapolis.

Caitlin Pyle: Excellent, and I could already tell just from the few moments that I spoke with you that you have an excellent voice on video and on – or on audio.

Julie Eickhoff: Well, thank you.

Caitlin Pyle: Yes, it's always something that – I think a lot of people think that they don't have a very good voice when they're recorded, and so I give major props to people who can do it for a living. It's just crazy. I mean technically I'm doing this for a living.

Julie Eickhoff: You know what, Caitlin? It's so funny you say that because I don't really feel like I have a voice that's out of the ordinary. I run into people all the time who have amazing voices, like you just love hearing from them, but what's interesting about the voice-over world right now is that there's so many opportunities out there that we need all kinds of voices. I mean we need perky, young voices. We need mature voices. We need character voices. So in a

lot of ways, the door is wide open. As long as you're comfortable speaking and you're articulate—people can understand you—there's projects out there for almost any kind of voice.

Caitlin Pyle: Wow, so let's talk a little bit more about that. Let's talk about your life before you got into doing this. How did you get started?

Julie Eickhoff: Okay, well, I have had a very crazy career path from being an English teacher to a human resource manager at a bank. I was the chief meteorologist at a television station. I was a realtor, and all of those things have – they make no sense when you hear about them one after the other, but really it was the broadcasting background that made me – I understood what voice-overs were. I had done voice-overs before, but it was the life of a realtor, working 24/7, and my husband in a corporate job. You have a kid, and then all of a sudden, there is not enough time in the day to take care of everybody and take care of everything.

And at some point, you just kind of lose your mind, and you're like, I need a change, and I've got to find a way to be able to manage my household and still earn an income. And that's when I went back to – gosh, I remember way back when, when I was in TV when they made local commercials, they would just grab whoever was walking down the hallway and say, Hey, read this commercial spot. That's kind of how it was done, honestly. And then, more recently with computers and everything, most voice artists work from home, and I thought, you know what? I just need to learn a little bit more about this, and I think this is something that I can do.

Caitlin Pyle: Very cool, and since then, you've narrated how many books?

Julie Eickhoff: You know, I've kind of lost count, but I know it's over 80 audiobooks, but I've also done a lot of textbooks. Today, kids in school, at least where my child goes to high school, there aren't any real textbooks. Everything is on the iPad, and almost all textbooks have an audio component, not only just reading the

text, but they also have a lot of extra features where maybe it's a special video explaining how a volcano erupts or something like that. But there's lots of extra content in the textbooks, so there's lots of opportunities there, too.

Caitlin Pyle:

Well, that's really, really cool. I mean that's just something that I'm sure a lot of people listening at home right now just had no idea existed, and it was like that with proofreadanywhere.com where people are like, What? I didn't even know this was a thing, and so here you are. You've broken into this thing. Tell us about what it was like when you were first getting started, when you realized, okay, a lot of these voice artists work from home. What did you do when you wanted to get further into that?

Julie Eickhoff:

Well, I was lucky enough to have a friend. When I was in TV, he was in radio, and he actually is a full-time voice artist as well, and he is much bigger and much more successful than I am. So I called him up and I said, All right, I want to get into this, so can you give me some direction? And he did. The main thing at that point was research. I needed to know what kind of setup I needed to have at home, what kind of equipment, and then also learning where I could go to get work. And so it was a matter of figuring out where you can go to audition and best practices for auditioning and making a demo. And for me, it was self-taught. It was hours upon hours upon hours of reading and watching videos and learning, not feeling very confident until you had some success and then you kind of build on that, but it was self-taught and time-wasting in a lot of ways I guess. But you can learn anything you want online if you really want to, but I'm also a firm believer there's faster ways to come up to speed, too.

Caitlin Pyle:

Yes, and you bring up a very good point in that you didn't have a lot of confidence until you started getting some results, and I think that – we talk about this a lot on the podcast and my ebooks and on the website and in emails and stuff that we can't have traction without action. We can't have that motivation, we can't have momentum without movement, and so you've got to actually do the thing to become confident in the thing. And so I think a lot of people are sitting there waiting to have the confidence that they can only get when they actually do what

they want to do, and so if you're sitting there at home right now listening to this, listening to Julie and me talk about her work-at-home journey and you're like, Oh, I just need the confidence to get started. No, you don't. You've got to do it without the confidence because it's not until you do the action that you're going to get the traction.

Julie Eickhoff:

Oh, that's so true. You know, the very first job I was hired for was an enormous project. It was from a company that was actually turning a textbook into an audiobook, and that is like a marathon of voice-over work. And they were the first ones to offer me a project, and I took it, and I tell you, I was nearly shaking in my shoes because it was enormous. But you learn so much by going through that, and you know what? That's a company I still work with today. They were the very first ones to hire me, but do a good job for them. Work hard for them. Always produce the best you can, and the key from working from home, at least in my case, is having those repeat clients. And so be honest with them. Be upfront. Work hard. And then, hopefully, you can continue to work with them for years to come.

Caitlin Pyle:

Yeah, I think making that investment with your initial one to two clients can really, really pay off because then your business starts to grow itself, and you can get referrals. You can get great testimonials and things like that. And I love talking about the big mistakes that newbies make because this is a podcast specifically geared toward newbies, and a major mistake that we see a lot of people make in the work-at-home newbie world, and the Work-At-Home Heroes Facebook group is not excluded from that, is that they think, Oh, to make the most money possible, I've got to get the most clients, and I've got to appeal to everybody, and I've got to do all the things. And that is not the way it works, and so let's talk about that a little bit. You had your first client, and then you really invested in them, and has your business grown from there? What kind of money are you making at home right now?

Julie Eickhoff:

Yeah, so the way I'm set up right now is I really don't do much auditioning at all. I have, oh, maybe eight clients I work with repetitively, and they really provide me enough work that I'm not making a ton of money. I mean right now I'd say about \$1500 a

month, but you have to understand that I'll go – sometimes I can go three or four days without really doing any work. I did a project yesterday where I probably spent forty-five minutes, fifty minutes working on a project, and when I invoiced that one out, it will be a little over \$200. It's project-based. It's not per hour. It's per project, so an audiobook, if you're going to be paid per finished hour, the rates range from maybe \$50 per finished hour to a little over \$200 per finished hour. So you narrate a five-hour book, and you may get \$1,000, a web video maybe one to three minutes long, \$100 to \$3-\$500. It varies per project. It varies on the audience. The most important thing, and this is something you touched on just a few minutes ago, is learning your skills, and in this case, this is something you can learn on the side.

So I got my equipment. I started auditioning, learning how everything worked, and I did that before I quit my full-time job. And so I spent maybe two or three months in the evenings, on weekends learning my skills and really knowing what I was doing. And then when I got hired, I knew, okay, this is going to work. I'm doing things right. Now is the time to take the leap. But for a lot of people, the voice-over business is something that you can learn to do at home. You can learn to do it on the side, and then at some point when you're ready to blossom, you can do that, or you can continue to do it just as earning some extra money or doing it for fun. There's a lot of people who dream of doing this because they really want to narrate audiobooks. They love to do character voices and things like that. So there's just such a broad range of ways that you can get involved in this world.

Caitlin Pyle:

Yeah, and I mean the \$1500 a month, that is not – I mean for a lot of people, that's a life-changing amount of money, and that's all they want to make, and I mean I get emails everyday. People are like, I just want to make an extra \$500 a month so I can take my kids to the movies, so I can start paying off this credit card or whatever. And so \$1500 a month for one to four hours of work a day and sometimes days where you don't do any work, that sounds like an amazing – that's an amazing gig, and it's something that you enjoy as well. I want to talk a little bit more about your life, especially as a realtor, because you told us before you got on this call that you were working 24/7. Tell us a little bit more about that.

Julie Eickhoff:

Oh gosh. You know, realtors – they have a lot of flexibility but also no flexibility because they really need to be there for their clients. It's the most important thing their client is going through probably in their life, and if that client needs to see a house at 7 o'clock that night, you've got to drop everything else in your life and make sure that you can be there for them. And so that's what I was doing. I was working seven days a week. My husband, like I said, was working in the corporate world and started traveling a lot, and it got to the point where I'd get home from work, and I'd need to find a babysitter so I could go show a house, or I'd be sitting in the driveway, waiting with my daughter in my hands for my husband to come home so I could hand her off to him and go show a house.

And at some point, you're just like, This is ridiculous. My house is never clean. I'm never cooking. You're just so tired and stressed, and being able to work from home has given me so much more control over managing the household. Everybody is just more relaxed and happy. My daughter is actually home from school sick today. She came home with a fever, and it's just like – it's not even stressful. It's like I know I'm here. If I need to take you to the doctor, I can. So this work-from-home thing is life changing. No matter what you're doing as your job, the flexibility is – it's, like I said, life changing.

Caitlin Pyle:

Yep, and I 100% agree, and that's the question that we ask everybody who joins the Work-At-Home Heroes Facebook group. We ask them why do you want to work from home, and probably a good 80% of people who respond to those questions, they say it's freedom. A lot of people – they think it's money, but it's always – we see the word, freedom and flexibility come up again and again and again, and that's just something that money can't buy. It's not what the money – it's not the money itself. It's not holding a fistful of greenbacks in your hands or whatever color the currency is where you're tuning in right now, folks at home.

It's not the money in your hands that is going to make you happy. It's the freedom and flexibility that you get because of that

money. And so it's going deeper into the why that's going to really propel you forward. So you wanted to, obviously, work from home so you could have some more freedom. And what is your family life like now? I mean you mentioned your daughter is home sick today, and it's just not stressful at all. What about the relationship that you have with your husband, for example? How has that improved since your stress level has gone down so much?

Julie Eickhoff:

Oh, you know what? It has helped him so much also and partially because he travels a lot. He doesn't have to check in with me and make sure it's okay that he schedules this trip for whatever days. He knows I'm here. I can take care of the snow removal. I can take care of the yard. I can get my daughter where she needs to go. It takes so much stress off his shoulders, too, just knowing that I'm here to take care of things. You know, we moved a couple of years ago, and knowing that I didn't have to quit one job and then go find a job in a new city was also fantastic. We just – we knew that I'd just pick up my booth and my microphone, and I plug it in, and I'm off, going again just like it was before. So it's just so much – life is just so much easier.

Caitlin Pyle:

Yeah, it's really about that flexibility, and you've got it down pat. I think that's amazing, and you can take your work with you anywhere. It's very flexible like that, and a big misconception about starting to work at home, especially as regards to newbies, they're like, Well, I live in a small town with 200 people. I guess I can't work from home. And I'm like, How are you listening to me right now? How are you tuning into this video? How are we communicating right now? The internet, and this just ever-expanding universe that I think is expanding faster than the actual universe. Here we are. You and I are talking. You don't live in Orlando, Florida.

Julie Eickhoff:

Right now I wish I did.

Caitlin Pyle:

Yeah, it's a warm day. It's a little cloudy, but we're out of the cold weather, well, what we consider to be cold anyway.

Julie Eickhoff: Yeah, that's a whole different ballgame than what we have up here in Minnesota.

Caitlin Pyle: Yeah. So you mentioned that your husband's life is a lot easier. What was it like for him when you were like, Okay, I want to work from home? Was he nervous? Was he skeptical? A lot of people's husbands or spouses in general are skeptical when it's kind of like a, hey, I want to do this, and they're like, Uh, okay. It's kind of out in left field for them. What was it like for your husband when you wanted to make that leap?

Julie Eickhoff: Sure. You know, I'm probably very lucky here, but he's very open about these things. Partly, he's seen me do some really weird career shifts, and so he's always known that I can dig in. I'm perfectly happy learning a whole brand new career. I work hard, so I don't think he ever doubted that. He has a real entrepreneurial spirit. He always supports that, so I think I'm really lucky in that way. And he's the main breadwinner, and that helps, too. My income is just a little extra on the side, and not everybody is lucky in that situation.

In fact, I was in your Facebook group one day. I'd asked a question about what is it that holds people back from being able to work from home? And what I learned there was that there was such a spectrum. There's people like me who can sort of do this on the side, make a little extra money, but there's also people who need to replace a current, full-time income, and that's a whole different shift, making that shift to work from home when you need insurance benefits and you need to replace your income. You know what? That's not as easy as what I did, and I understand that. And so those people are going through a really different transition, but if you're someone who has some flexibility, this may be an opportunity you never thought of before.

Caitlin Pyle: Yeah, for sure. People think that they have to quit their jobs to start something new, and it sounds like what you did is you started doing things on the side. You mentioned two or three

hours on the weekends, things like that, learning, and then you're ready to just take it to the next level. And at that point is when you quit your job, and so we've seen that happen sometimes where there's like, Okay, I'm quitting my job. I'm going to do this. I'm like, Nobody told you to do that! It's not a good idea. So you definitely did things the right way. I remember that thread where you were asking people what was stopping you from working at home, and that was an interesting thread. I think I may have turned off comments because it was –

Julie Eickhoff: We did.

Caitlin Pyle: It was turning into a complaint thing. People were like, Oh, I can't do this. I can't do this. And I'm like, No, you can! This is – go through and read this.

Julie Eickhoff: Yeah, and – but I learned so much from that because people are sort of in different baskets, and their approach does have to be different.

Caitlin Pyle: Yeah, exactly.

Julie Eickhoff: And there's all kinds of opportunities out there. There are opportunities for people who need to work full time at home with benefits. There are opportunities, but you and I both know that in some cases you have to learn new skills, too. And so being open to learning new skills and then acquiring those skills is important to being able to make the jump.

Caitlin Pyle: Yes, and I can tell just from the conversation we've had so far that you have that growth mindset. You're not afraid of trying new things, and we talk about the growth versus fixed mindset a lot and that – I think we just get it – I had it in my head for years, and I was like, Well, I went to school for this, and I just spent this much money on personal training school. I have to do personal training. And we have it in our minds that once we are done with

school or we have a certain degree or maybe we haven't had work in ten years that we're stuck, and so part of our message is you are not stuck. You can put new things in your brain, and when you do that, things change, and so getting people to change their mindset in the way that you have is kind of my life's mission, and it is exhausting, but I wouldn't trade it for anything.

Julie Eickhoff:

And you know what? It's easier now than ever I think to learn new skills because you don't have to go to a brick-and-mortar college to learn new skills. You can learn things online. You can read books. There's just a million ways to learn new skills and make yourself marketable in ways that you never thought of before.

Caitlin Pyle:

Yeah, exactly, learning either through an online course or reading books, and the way I did it and the way you did it, figuring out how to do freelance business on your own. If there aren't resources out there, you can create your own resources. So what about other people in your sphere of influence? Your husband was cool with it, but were there other people that were in your community, your friends or whatever, that were skeptical about you starting? Did they have negative feedback or were they jealous, things like that?

Julie Eickhoff:

Well, that's interesting. This goes back to – I lived in the same town. I went to college there, and so everybody knew me. Everybody had known I had weird career shifts. I went from being a human resource manager at a bank to doing the weather on TV, 6 and 10 newscasts. I will say I did go back to school to get the meteorology part of it, but people have seen me do crazy shifts. I mean no mass com degree, no on-air experience, and all of a sudden I was hired to do 6 and 10 news. So people are not surprised when I make shifts and make changes.

I'd say the biggest hurdle is that most people right now don't know what a voice artist is, and that's pretty easy to explain when you say have you ever listened to an audiobook or e-learning projects or radio ads. There's just voices absolutely everywhere, so the biggest hurdle right now is just explaining what I do, but

then once I do, people are so interested and especially that population of people who want to work from home because it's an avenue that perhaps they had never thought of before. And if you're thinking I don't know what skills I have to work from home, well, can you talk? This is something you may be able to explore. More people have the potential I think in this business. You can self-select. If you're the kind of person who's comfortable talking, comfortable presenting, those are all natural tendencies that would lead you to say, You know what? I think I could be successful as a voice artist.

Caitlin Pyle: Yeah, absolutely. I mean if you can read you don't even have to be on camera. You could literally do this in your pajamas.

Julie Eickhoff: And these skills are transferrable, too, into audio production like I know you have someone who, after we record this podcast, is going to go through and do some tweaking to it. Well, those are skills that you learn when you become a voice artist also, and so you can use the skills in more ways than one.

Caitlin Pyle: Yeah, absolutely, and I don't know where I would be. My producer tells me when to show up, and I show up. I record it, and then it becomes a podcast. It's amazing.

Julie Eickhoff: It's perfect.

Caitlin Pyle: It's an in-demand skill. Well, Julie, I want to switch gears a little bit, so I don't want to – I want to make sure I get through all my questions and we answer everything for the audience. Let's talk about how you keep yourself on track all day. Let's start talking about your morning routine. What do you do when you first wake up in the morning?

Julie Eickhoff: Okay, well, my morning routine is really all about getting my husband and my daughter out the door and making sure the dog is fed. I usually have the dishwasher going. The house is tidy. I

have a load of laundry in, and then I sit down and I get to work. And I have scripts that come in sort of haphazardly. They may come in while I'm sleeping because I work with people all over the world, or they may have come in yesterday and they say I just need these done by tomorrow afternoon.

But recording always is my top priority, so whatever scripts I have, I need to get those out. If I'm doing a big project like an audiobook, that takes a lot of planning. There are certain times of the day when your voice is a little more ready to do long-form narration, so I take that into account as well. And then I'm not doing much marketing of my voice-over business right now just because I'm really happy with the clients that I have. I'm not reaching out for a ton more, but another part of what I do is I actually developed an online course to teach people how to do voice-overs.

And so that's consumed most of my time for the past probably four months or so where I've been creating the content, shooting the content, and so forth, and now trying to find an audience for it. And that was when I came across your Facebook group actually, and I was so impressed with the people in your group because they are people who actually want to work to earn an income. There's a lot of Facebook groups out there where people just want to sit and stare at their phone, and they think they're going to make money doing it. So I've been out there looking for people who I can help with this, and that's been a big part of what I've been doing over the last few months.

Caitlin Pyle:

Cool, yeah. Having been in the same boat and learning how to create a course, I can definitely relate to that. I knew that I had a skill people were interested in learning and said, Okay, I started with how do I get it out there, and thinking back, it just has grown a lot, but when I was first getting started, I was in the same boat as you. It was like four months nonstop trying to figure it out, and it was fun, getting the content out there.

Julie Eickhoff:

Yeah.

Caitlin Pyle: And finding the audience is the fun part. Well, we'll talk more about that after here. In terms of keeping yourself on track, we ask you before you came on the show, and you said that you're not the best at this.

Julie Eickhoff: I didn't even answer the question very good. Yeah, I am not because I – so here's what I do. I take care of my clients, so the minute a script comes in, I usually have it to them a day before they even expect it, and that is my number-one top priority is I get my stuff back to my clients right when they need it or sooner. And then, from there, I'm free to go do whatever else needs to be done, taking care of the house, running errands, whatever. I come and I go. I just – I get emails when scripts come in. When they come in, I drop what I'm doing and I go record, and that's really about all there is to it.

So yes, I should probably be doing more marketing and yes, I should probably be doing more auditioning, and if I really wanted to work more, I would do that. I don't plan my whole day partially because I don't know when the scripts are going to come in. I might get a really long script in today. I might get none in today, either way. So I am flexible in my day I guess, but clients are always my top priority. I always make sure they're happy with what they get from me.

Caitlin Pyle: You know, Julie, you sound a lot like me in that I don't really have a schedule. People ask me all the time, How do you keep yourself on track? How do you keep yourself motivated? What's your morning routine? I don't have one.

Julie Eickhoff: Easier that way, isn't it? [Laughs]

Caitlin Pyle: Yeah, I mean even when I was a proofreader I did the exact same thing. When I got work in, I dropped what I was doing, and I'd put that first on my list because you just don't know when you're

going to have a ton of work. You just don't know when something crazy is going to come up with family and you have to drop everything and go do that. And so it just feels better to get those things that are making you money out the door as quickly as possible.

Julie Eickhoff: Exactly.

Caitlin Pyle: And it comes back to reward you because your clients are happy, and you're – they're – you're continually impressing them with your service.

Julie Eickhoff: That's exactly – it's the same wording I even use. I need to get this out the door. I've got to record this. I've got to get it out the door, and that's exactly it because once I've done that, then it's like, all right, if I want to spend two hours cleaning, I'm perfectly happy doing that.

Caitlin Pyle: Yeah, and I mean that's a good way to decompress I find, too, is just getting your environment in a happy, good place for you to get your work done. It just makes such a big difference. Well, Julie, I have one final question. It's a question I ask all of guests at the very end because there's people listening to this right now that are like, Oh, I really want to start working at home. Maybe I want to try this voice-over thing. Maybe I want to do proofreading or writing or virtual assisting or whatever it might, but I am just scared to get started. What advice would you give to someone who wants to work at home but is just shaking in their boots and just scared to start?

Julie Eickhoff: Okay, my advice is to get going on a small scale. Learn your skills. Practice your skills. Get it started before you drop whatever big job you have right now. If you start on the side, you learn your skills, you learn what you're doing, you start to see some success, you'll gain confidence, and then you'll just know if that's the right path to go.

Caitlin Pyle: Excellent advice and pretty much the exact same thing I would say that I say on a daily basis. So glad that we had you on the show. Where can people reach you if they have more questions for you?

Julie Eickhoff: You bet. My website is workfromhomedoingvoiceovers.com. On there, you can learn more about the online course that I've put together. If you need to reach out to me, you want to ask questions. I'm also in your Facebook group. You can find me there and ask questions. So I guess that's probably the best. If you have any questions at all about what it's like to work from home or want to save some time and kind of learn in a more expedited route than learning on your own, I'm happy to help.

Caitlin Pyle: Awesome. Thanks for being on the show, Julie.

Julie Eickhoff: Thank you, Caitlin. I loved it, and I wish you all the success in the world.