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# Actor Self-Promotion

DO IT YOURSELF.

FORTY EXCELLENT ACTOR SELF-PROMOTION STRATEGIES

BY MARTIN BENTSEN

FILM DIRECTOR AT MJB HOME ENTERTAINMENT

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**Do it yourself.**

**Forty Excellent Actor Self-Promotion Strategies**

**by Martin Bentsen  
Film Director at MJB Home Entertainment**

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# Introduction

What are your biggest dreams? Do you want to become famous, rich, and live a lifestyle that will make everyone around you drool? Do you want to act in feature film blockbusters and take your career to new heights?

What have you been doing to get there? Have you been taking proactive steps to move your career forward? Or are you waiting to be discovered?

I hope that you aren't waiting. The chance of you becoming famous from simply being "discovered" is probably smaller than winning the lottery.

Don't wait anymore. Make your own fame.

*Actor Self-Promotion* was written directly for people like you: actors struggling to make it, but who aren't taking advantage of the many other avenues for promoting their work. This book is designed to teach you many different ways you can promote yourself as an actor, to start building a following and working your way up from nothing. You have to proactively engage in building your brand and making yourself memorable.

Remember, fame is all in the buzz. If you can start building and spreading the word, you know you're on the right track.



In this book, you will find forty different steps to take, and each one will push you farther along the road towards fame. Shall we begin?

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# Step 1: Five Quick Intro Tips

Here are five short tips introductory tips. Do these first or else you won't have a chance at competing in the industry:

1. Create business cards with your headshot, name, website, and email address. I like to use [VistaPrint](#).
2. Buy a domain with your name in it... Like [www.martinbentsen.com](http://www.martinbentsen.com).
3. Go through your emails from a long time ago and make a list in Excel with all the people in your industry you've worked with. Include their name, phone number, and email.
4. Create a [YouTube](#) account and upload anything decent you have of yourself performing.
5. Get a great [Demo Reel](#) made, and upload it also. Don't have any footage yet? No worries. Skip this step for now.

Good. Once you complete those, come back and the read the rest of the book.

## Step 2: Keep Your Cool

Oftentimes in professional situations things start getting out of control and it seems like nothing you can do will make people understand. Sometimes you might just feel like exploding with anger and yelling at everyone!

Don't do it. You cannot do this because people will remember it and you won't get rehired in the future. You have to keep your cool with your clients and people working with you (no matter who they are) because they judge you based on your attitude. If you are angry because people around you keep messing things up, yelling and freaking out about it won't fix the situation.

Look at it in a sane way. Most people do things that they are going to regret when they are angry or emotionally unstable at that moment. This is something you absolutely must keep in mind because it can mean the difference between making it to the top and not.

Sometimes, you may feel like you are being treated unfairly, or like things aren't going your way. For example, oftentimes during meetings when I was just starting out in my business, clients would look at me skeptically and ask why I was so young. It just made me so angry that I felt like telling them off. Obviously, doing that would lose me the job.

Remember, yelling or losing your cool is the easy way out of a situation. But keeping your calm and working to make things right is the right way. Work to build trust and you'll be memorable in the future.

Good word of mouth travels slowly in the entertainment industry. Bad word of mouth travels insanely fast, so you have to keep it to a minimum.

Do you know why bad word of mouth travels so quickly? People love drama. Bad word of mouth equals drama; good word of mouth equals boring.

So next time you find yourself in a situation that is freaking you out and you don't know what to do, try to think about the facts... Is it worth it to stay in this situation or will you be better off not there? What is the risk of leaving? Once you know the risks, decide whether to leave. If you choose to leave the situation, do it professionally and don't yell and freak out. Just kindly say that you can't be involved anymore, and then you can leave and forfeit being paid.

But be sure that you're not violating your contract by leaving. You don't want to be sued!

## Step 3: Master One Thing

If you can get really good at one aspect of any craft, the rewards will follow.

Half of becoming successful is promotion and the other half is craft. There are many other factors, such as your personality and the people you know, but those are much harder to change, so I won't discuss them in this section. Instead I will focus on craft.

Remember, anything you do will only make you better at doing it, and will make it easier to do in the future.

This is something that is extremely important to remember both in life and in your acting career. Because humans are psychologically wired to become better at tasks as they practice more often, no amount of practice will hurt you. The question is:

How much practice should you do on one technique before moving onto another?

Practice makes perfect, so after perfection comes, should you move onto something else? First, know that nothing can ever truly be perfected. Therefore, you should practice as often as possible at one skill that you enjoy the most. Of course you must be proficient in all areas of acting if you want to stay competitive, but if you can focus on one specific type of character, or one specific type of dance, and you become so good at it that you have branded yourself, you will likely become much more successful.

Remember that those actors who have become typecast typically find lots of jobs because their name starts floating around the industry. Casting directors want them in their film because of the name recognition and because they know they will be the best at that role. Then, once you're getting called all the time and the money is flowing in, then you can feel comfortable trying new roles.

Practice as often as you can, and master something specific. Keep other skills in case you need them, but if you get typecast into a specific role you will get your name known, and people will start searching you out for jobs because you'll be recommended often. But until your name is known, actively search out the roles you want so that you build up the name recognition and the samples you have. After that, it'll start building itself.

Just make sure that you focus on one aspect of a specific genre. That is how specific you want to get. Rather than being known as "just a comedian," it's better to be known as, "the comedian who always makes fun of 'jobs at the office'" or something like that. Being known for something specific greatly increases your chances of being memorable.

Don't be a jack-of-all-trades, master-of-none. It won't help you. Master one, and success will follow in all others.



## Step 4: Take Down Bad Samples

No one is going to do self-promotion for you, so you need to do it yourself. Even an acting manager or agent won't do as much for you as you can do for yourself, because agents and managers are really out to help themselves, not you.

Make sure you are constantly putting your latest works online for people to see. Get rid of the bad acting reels and just keep the good ones. The truth is, no one really cares to see the bad/old films and projects you acted in unless they are your really close friends or they were in the project themselves. And those people probably already have access to those projects, either by having their own copy or through you.

I highly recommend you remove old works from your website and samples page. If you have put them on YouTube, of course you can leave them there, but you should take the links down from your website because you only want your potential employers (i.e. Casting Directors) to see your best stuff.

Just think: what if you had a not-so-good work on your website and a casting director saw that one first? They won't say, "Well maybe that was just one bad performance." Nope, instead you go bye-bye. That's a wasted headshot and resume right there, as it's now about to be thrown out!

And one other quick side note: Make sure all the links on your website are working properly. Always check them every few months because you never know if you accidentally deleted a page or something happened. If your links aren't working, you won't get calls. Look at [Step 18](#) if you'd like to learn how to create a website.

## Step 5: Act for Free

No amount of skill will continuously get you paid jobs if you don't have at least one sample of your acting work online. The funny thing about the acting world is that there is a [Catch 22](#): You need footage of yourself performing to get footage of yourself performing.

What you have to realize is that in order to break into any new industry as someone who runs their own business in a sense (which is what actors basically do), you almost always have to do work for free.

I typically recommend acting in at least five to ten unpaid jobs that look professional and feature you in the forefront before moving onto paid gigs.

For instance, when I first started shooting headshots, I had to shoot about five to ten people for free just to build my portfolio because no one was going to hire me for headshots if they couldn't see the work I'd done.

"Okay," you say, "But how can I find these unpaid jobs?"

Lots of places. There are many ways to get footage of yourself performing. Visit websites such as [www.castingnetworks.com](http://www.castingnetworks.com), [www.mandy.com](http://www.mandy.com), [www.actorsaccess.com](http://www.actorsaccess.com), and others. You can easily google "casting calls" and find tons of companies that host online casting calls. Just make sure they are in your city and you are able to make it to the auditions.

Fortunately, unpaid jobs are easier to land than paid jobs, so when you start out, it should only take a couple months to build up a decent portfolio of work. The only unfortunate thing is that the production value of unpaid jobs is usually low, meaning they won't look very professional. But as long as you have shots that really show your acting ability, you should be fine.

Be sure to constantly follow up with the director or producer after a project has been completed to make sure you get your footage. A lot of directors neglect to give out the footage to actors because they have so many other things going on.

In general, the key to getting great samples is to make sure you're acting in something that is going to be recorded. Theater won't do, unless you have someone specifically film it and make sure to get closeups on you. Your samples need to show your acting ability, so you want to be sure that the footage is close enough in that you can see your face clearly.

## Step 6: How to Choose the Right Headshot Photographer

Remember, money is not always skill. Sometimes someone who is a natural at headshot photography and is just getting started in the business can give you great headshots for a low price! But always look at their sample headshots first, because you don't want to spend even \$20 if the headshots you get back are absolutely useless.

After looking at a photographer's headshot samples, give them a call (assuming they are in your price range). You can email them but it's a much better idea to call because you want to get an idea of what kind of person they are by talking to them over the phone. Do they have time for you? Do they even care? Don't work with them if they don't seem to be interested in talking to you, or seem too busy to want to deal with you. They probably won't end up giving you as good of headshots as someone who really does care about giving you the most for your money.

Email to set up a time, and be sure they are responsive. This goes for any professional you might be working with: if they take more than two days to respond, that's not a good sign. You need to always feel comfortable knowing that your headshot photographer is prepared and ready to serve you. You're paying them, so why should you be worried that they might not show up?

After you feel comfortable that your headshot photographer is responsible and easy to work with, it's a good idea to see if you can meet with him or her before the session as well. But many headshot photographers are very busy and can't offer their time like that, so if that is not an option, you needn't to worry too much. If it is an option, however, it can be good to get to know them better and see if you get along well. The headshot photographer should be able to make you laugh and you should feel comfortable around him/her, as it is the only way you will get good pictures.

On the day of the shoot, the best thing to do is to take things lightly and not be worried about trying to get the perfect headshot, because it will come if you give the photographer enough time and you two get along well.

Be sure to ask the headshot photographer for references if they don't have many samples. Don't get scammed by someone asking exorbitant sums of money or weird payment plans. You should never pay more than \$1,400 for a headshot, and if you are ever paying more than \$800, it's because you are probably shooting with someone famous. Remember, if something sounds suspicious, it's probably a scam.

If you want a safe place to go and don't want to break your bank, check out the headshots I offer at [www.cityheadshots.com](http://www.cityheadshots.com). I'd love to work with you!

## Step 7: Use Your Money Intelligently

Instead of spending all your money on fun things like buying new clothes and partying, you should dedicate a portion of your budget towards bettering yourself as an actor. This means save a certain money each year for headshots, promotional materials, advertising, web development, and any other costs you may have.

I don't know all of the necessary expenses an actor has, but if you save your money over time for things like headshots, it will hurt much less when you dig out hundreds or even thousands of dollars for your headshot because you will have put this money away ahead of time for it.

Think about whether you want people to find your website on search engines for certain words like "comedian" or a certain type of acting or skill you have. You may decide to invest a little money into a PPC (pay per click) campaign on a site like Google or Facebook. This will easily bring your site to the top of Google for whatever keyword or key phrase you want, though you have to pay a certain amount of money every time someone clicks on your ad (usually around a dollar or so). But this money can add up quickly if you get a lot of clicks.

Another thing you will need money for is if you start an email marketing campaign, which I will explain later. As you start to gain followers, you need to pay the company who hosts your email campaign.

For all of these reasons, it's a good idea to dedicate a certain amount of your income to acting. Plus, if acting is your career and job, you can certainly write off many of these expenses from your taxes.

## Step 8: Cut Deadbeats Loose

Throughout your career, you will wind up in situations where you are going crazy and want to scream. Keep your cool. I spoke about this in Step 2, but need to explain it in more detail: Keeping your cool does NOT mean letting people walk all over you. Remember, if there is something that you feel is not right, you have to tell the person you are working with flat out that you cannot continue to work with them.

Sometimes, it's better to stop working with people completely, even if they are paying you.

"Sometimes you have to pay to clean the shit off your shoes."

This was something my father's friend would tell him. It means sometimes you have to make a sacrifice before things can get better.

I have had to cut clients loose and never work with them again because of all the grief I've had to put up with. It's the same with acting: you just have to quit some projects when you can't deal with them even if they are paying fairly well.

I think one of the best examples I ever read had to do with the red velvet rope policy, an idea introduced by Michael Port in his best-selling book, "[Book Yourself Solid](#)," one that I highly recommend. He says you have to cut the bad clients (projects, for you as an actor) loose, and raise the bar for future clients. Don't let certain people past your red velvet rope. The amount of money and the amount of good clients you have if you do this will rise dramatically.

He outlines these benefits:

1. You will be happier, and will seem more appealing to future employers and clients.
2. You won't have relationships that make you mutually unhappy, which will lead to less people badmouthing you in the future.

Getting rid of the bad jobs and sticking with the good will make it not seem like work. Everyone will be happy and you'll get paid more and get more jobs in the long run.

So do yourself a favor and stop letting people walk all over you. But keep your cool when you cut them loose.

## Step 9: Give People What They Want

In this world you won't get anywhere without giving people what they want. You have to find people who want something, make what they want, and give it to them.

But...

You can find people who want what you already do, and then give it to them.

Now the question becomes, how do I find these people? Well, this is where social media comes in. There are over 750 million users on [Facebook](#), right? Think about if you could find just .01 percent of those who want what you do... That is still an enormous amount of people! About 75,000!

Start searching different sites and finding people who are interested in what you do. Send emails or requests to them and ask them if they are interested in watching some of your work. If they like the type of projects you act in and do, chances are they will want to see more of it.

Remember, the information is out there. All you have to do is find it. If you can find the people who want what you offer and you market your stuff to them, they will jump on it.

But don't charge them money. Give people stuff for free for now. At this point in your acting career, getting your name out there is more important than making a buck.

Put your work out there and make it really easy for people to spread the word.

## Step 10: Learn Another Skill in the Industry

Think about what it would be like if you bought yourself a [cheap digital SLR camera](#) and learned how to shoot photos for actors? If you could become a headshot photographer, all of your contacts could easily become clients, which would give you a lot more money to work on your own projects and build your dream career of becoming an A-list actor.

Think about a separate skill that you can use for profit, and then figure out how to market it. Having a secondary skill that brings you money and stops you from having to wait on tables in a restaurant is very helpful. It will give you more time to master your craft, and will give you more time to act in films that you otherwise wouldn't be able to make if you had to be at work that day.

Working for yourself is so important when you're an actor, and it can also lead people to perceive you differently. For instance, I know of an actor who edits films and cuts demo reels as well. He invested in the program [Final Cut Express](#) and taught himself basic editing skills. He makes a decent amount of money with that while giving himself enough time and freedom to do what he loves, which is acting.

If you would like to read the last thirty steps of the book, you may [purchase a copy online!](#)

Also, please sign up to my Actor Self-Promotion tips free newsletter. Actor's on their receive great self-promotion tips and motivational emails, and they are the first to know about exclusive deals, and free shoot opportunities.

Plus, ever month there is a free headshot winner!

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