

Get Cast

What They Didn't Teach You In Acting School

Forty Excellent Actor Self-Promotion Strategies

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Introduction

What are your biggest dreams? Do you want to act in feature film blockbusters and take your career to new heights? Do you want to have the ability to choose which films or theater productions you are in instead of having to take anything that pays something?

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 odds of you becoming successful from simply being "discovered" are probably as slim as winning a huge lottery.

Don't wait anymore. Get cast and take the steps needed to get what you want.

Get Cast 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 the many different ways you can promote yourself as an actor, to start building a fan base and working your way up from nothing. You have to proactively engage in building your brand and making yourself memorable.

Remember, success 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 and success. Shall we begin?

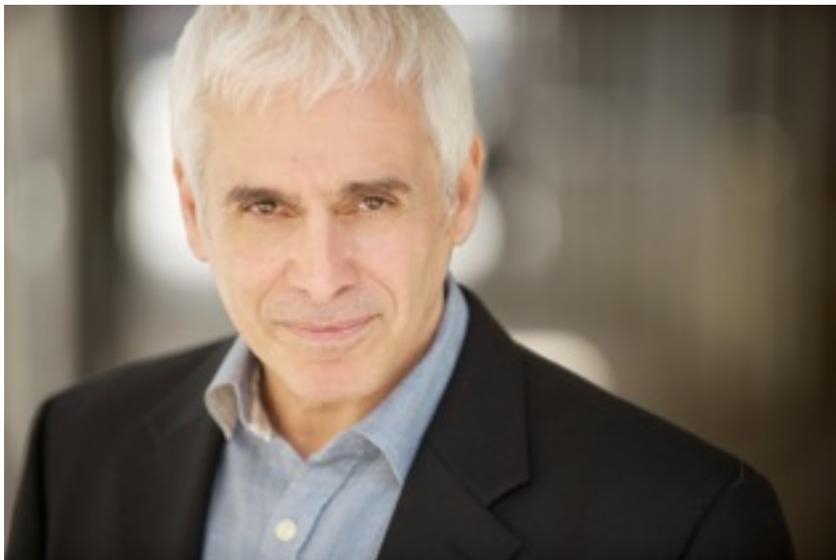


Table of Contents

- Step 1: Five Quick Intro Tips (p. 6)
- Step 2: Get a Great Headshot by Using the Right Photographer (p. 7)
- Step 3: Think About Advertising (p. 8)
- Step 4: Keep Your Cool (p. 9)
- Step 5: Make Your Own Projects and Then Finish What You Start (p. 10)
- Step 6: Create a Website (p. 11)
- Step 7: Get a Great Demo Reel (p. 12)
- Step 8: Act for Free (p. 15)
- Step 9: Put Reviews and Links on Your website (p. 17)
- Step 10: Scour Craigslist (p. 18)
- Step 11: Start a Mailing List (p. 19)
- Step 12: Cut Deadbeats Loose (p. 21)
- Step 13: Master One Thing and Brand Yourself (p. 22)
- Step 14: Give People What They Want (p. 24)
- Step 15: Go the Extra Mile (p. 25)
- Step 16: Build Big Bridges and Never Burn Them (p. 26)
- Step 17: Create Instant Word of Mouth (p. 27)
- Step 18: Think About What You Want to Be Known For. Then Use SEO (p. 28)
- Step 19: Take Down Bad Samples (p. 29)
- Step 20: Use Social Media Sites to Categorize Your Contacts (p. 30)
- Step 21: Build a Following (p. 31)
- Step 22: Start a Blog (p. 32)
- Step 23: Start a Twitter Page (p. 33)
- Step 24: Be Professional (p. 34)
- Step 25: Read Every Contract Before You Sign (p. 37)
- Step 26: Make Contacts and Keep a Personal List (p. 38)
- Step 27: Use Your Headshots More Effectively (p. 39)
- Step 28: Take Branding to a Deeper Level (p. 40)
- Step 29: Use Your Money Intelligently (p. 42)
- Step 30: Apply the 20/30/50 Rule for Easy Money Management (p. 43)
- Step 31: Learn Another Skill in the Industry (p. 44)
- Step 32: Harshly Criticize Your Current Headshots (p. 45)
- Step 33: Act in Commercials for Money (p. 48)
- Step 34: Find an Agent or Manager (p. 52)
- Step 35: Gather SAG Waivers (p. 53)
- Step 36: Network Every Single Day (p. 54)
- Step 37: Get Confident (p. 55)
- Step 38: Release Your Emotions (p. 56)
- Step 39: Start Craving Criticism! (p. 57)
- Step 40: Believe in Yourself (p. 58)

Step 1: Five Quick Intro Tips

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

1. Buy a URL (domain name) with your name in it... Like www.martinbentsen.com.
2. Create business cards with your headshot, name, website, and email address. I like to use [VistaPrint](#).
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 free [YouTube](#) account and upload anything decent you have of yourself performing.
5. Get a great [Demo Reel](#) made and upload it. Don't have any footage yet? No worries. Skip this step for now or visit www.actorscreenershoot.com if you need awesome footage immediately.

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

Step 2: Get a Great Headshot by Using the Right 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, especially if you can't tell their personality from their website. 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.

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 business 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 check them against [this checklist](#) to ensure they offer exactly what you'll need as an actor. If you can set up a consultation with them, that's great, 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 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 shot, because it will happen if you give the photographer enough time and you two get along well.

Be sure to ask the 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 \$1,000, it's because you are probably shooting with the best of the best. 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 account, check out the headshots I offer at www.cityheadshots.com. I'd love to work with you!

Step 3: Think About Advertising

Did you know that most aspects of self-promotion are very similar to marketing for business? Becoming an actor self-promotion expert will really help you out in the entertainment business.

I highly recommend you look up some basics of marketing online. There is a ton of free information and it can all be tweaked for actor self-promotion. Just Google it.

Learn how to self-promote because no one ever learns these things in acting classes. Learning how to promote yourself is JUST as important as the craft of acting itself. Why do you think most of the famous people in the world became famous? The reason is that many of them worked extremely hard at it and made sure to self-promote every day. Many of them did not have connections or great luck.

Knowing how to self-promote will give you a huge competitive edge over other actors. I explain all the basic strategies in this book, but you have to Google things to learn in detail the exact steps to take for each one of the steps in this book. For instance, I don't explain in this book how to use Weebly to create a website, or how to use SEO to raise your google ranking. I just explain the concepts so you get ideas. To find the specifics, you have to search online. There is a ton of free information out there, but you have to take the time and to actually learn and apply the specifics.

Step 4: Keep Your Cool

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

Don't do it because people will remember it and you won't get rehired in the future. You have to keep your cool with clients and people you're working with (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 sensible 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 or 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 (I was 19 at the time). It just made me so angry and I felt like telling them off. Obviously, doing that would have lost 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 hard but better 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? Because 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 being there? What is the risk of leaving? Once you know the risks, decide whether to leave or not. 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 5: Make Your Own Projects and Then Finish What You Start

Making your own films and projects can be a fun and exciting experience. If all you do is act in other people's projects, you won't have as much control. But imagine that you wrote, directed, and starred in your own short film or play. And it was done professionally! How would that look to a casting director?

Seeing that you have such an interest in film and acting will impress a lot of people, and they will likely give your resume a second look and you might get called in.

Another note: If and whenever you act in theater, see if you can get those projects recorded. It's impossible to put samples of your work online if you have never recorded them, right? So invest a few hundred dollars in a video camera, and then have a friend start recording all of your performances. Or set a camera up on a tripod to film it. You can use them in your reel too.

But here is the thing... way too many people start to make their own recording or film, then realize how much work it is to edit it and put it together, and wind up never finishing. Don't let that be you because if it is, know that you won't have anything over the rest of the competition.

There are literally millions of actors competing for only a few roles. If you have something like a completed, professional short film, or a great theater piece that you wrote, directed, recorded, and uploaded to the Internet, you'll be ahead of so many other actors.

Step 6: Create a Website

Do you know how to make a website? There are many tools I'd like to recommend, and a few simple things you should definitely put on your site.

The tool I recommend for website creation is www.weebly.com.

I would recommend creating a page for each of the following:

1. A welcome page. This should be the first page people land on when visiting your site, and should welcome them there and give a brief description of what you do and who you are. Make sure there is a call to action as well, saying you are available for acting. Include your favorite headshot.
2. A page for your bio, headshot, and resume. These are crucial.
3. A contact page. Make sure you have one to give people the opportunity to contact you. Don't be afraid to list your phone number and email address online, it is safe. Just don't list your home address.
4. A blog with samples of your work on it.

These four aspects are absolutely essential to every actor's website. If you don't have them, get them up as soon as possible.

Step 7: Get a Great Demo Reel

Actors need a “Demo Reel” if they want to succeed. Do you know how important it is to have a demo reel? It shows your range, look, and acting ability all at once, something that casting directors almost always need to see. A demo reel is basically a short reel showcasing your best performances.

In this day and age of the Internet, most casting directors and people looking to hire actors are going to simply search the Internet to find out any information they can on the actor before they decide to call them in. Did you know that 92% of people in the hiring and casting process use social media to research applicants? What will they use in their research? They will look to see the following:

- 1 . Whether an actor has a headshot and an online presence.
- 2 . Whether an actor has his/her own website.
- 3 . Whether an actor has a resume posted.
- 4 . Whether an actor has a demo reel.
- 5 . Whether there is anything posted online that gives them reason not to call the actor in (such as stupid Facebook postings or images - so watch out).

Casting directors care whether you have a demo reel because it shows them the different projects you've acted in and lets them get a sense of how good of an actor you actually are. A demo reel is the only way for a casting director to actually see a moving sample of your work. Looking at a headshot is good but it doesn't show your range. A demo reel will give them that information.

So... How can you create an effective demo reel?

It really boils down to two things: good samples and good editing. Hire an editor who can cut together a great reel for you, but be sure that you choose the best moments of your performances. The better the moment you choose, the better your reel will be. Show a range... Don't just show the parts where you yell; show other stuff too, like where you cry. Show those moments where you really listen to the other actor, and you respond genuinely.

I can't tell you how important it is that YOU choose the clips for your reel. If you dump hours of footage on an editor, they might be lazy and just choose stuff to finish it fast. It won't come out as good.

With all that being said, what makes a demo reel great?

A demo reel is only as great as the emotions and thoughts it imparts onto its viewer. This means that even if you think your reel is awesome, a casting director might not.

Here are a few things to note about demo reels:

1. Keep it short! As a filmmaker who's been involved with the casting process many times, nothing bothers me more than when an actor sends me a reel that's more than two minutes. No matter who you are, even if your reel is entertaining, it should never ever be longer than two minutes. Ideally keep it to a minute and forty seconds. Put yourself in the casting director or agent's shoes. As busy as they are, would they care to spend more than a minute or two watching footage of someone they've never met before? If they wish the reel was longer, that means you'll get called in. But if it's too long, they'll get sick of you and you won't get the call.
2. Put your best footage first. Most casting directors won't watch more than twenty seconds of a reel if it's not good, so you want to be sure that they see your best scene right away so they'll stay to watch the rest. Or you can put your most noteworthy scene, as in something from a well-known film or TV show.
3. Skip the montage! Unless your montage shows some amazing filming quality and makes it look like you've been in huge budget productions, there's no point to having one. And if you really must have one, don't let it be more than five or six seconds and put it at the end.
4. Add a quick slate. Make sure your name and contact info, along with a headshot if possible, appears at the the beginning and end of your reel. It should be there just in case someone comes across your reel without your contact information.
5. Cut scenes short. Cut out segments of scenes that don't show you as much. You can remove portions of other actors talking, or shorten it to keep the focus on you. Essentially, you can re-edit scenes a bit to really make the scene more about you than about the other actor.
6. Show that you can act for film. Casting directors hate seeing theatrical acting on film. If you don't know how to act for film, learn how before making a reel. Also, ask your friends to be honest with you about your acting in the scenes you plan to use. Ask them for negative feedback, like what they didn't like about your acting technique. If they say anything negative that makes sense to you, rethink using that footage in your reel. Also, make sure whoever you hire to edit your reel tells you the truth too. You'll thank them later when the casting directors call you in.
7. Have at least one high-end professional scene in your reel so it looks like you've been a part of a bigger or more professional production. Even if you haven't been a part of any high-end projects, we offer the option of doing a "Screener Shoot," where you can get a super high-end looking scene for a low price that features you as the main star, and the scene is completely original, written for you specifically (see www.actorscreenershoot.com for more information). A high-end scene also tells casting directors you have experience working on professional sets.
8. Edit reels for different types of work. You should use a commercial reel for commercial submissions, a funny reel for comedy submissions, and a serious reel for dramatic submissions. But remember: you should really focus on one type of acting, being honest with yourself about what you can and cannot do (what your type or brand is), and then develop a reel that supports that brand fully.

If you're interested in having a demo reel made professionally, and one that follows all these rules and will be finished in less than a week, visit www.demoreelsnyc.com.

Step 8: 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.

In order to break into any new industry as a freelancer (which is what actors basically do), you almost always have to do some 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, www.mandy.com, 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 act in a number of projects. The only unfortunate thing is that the production value of unpaid jobs is usually low, meaning they won't look very professional. And sometimes it can take a year or more to get your footage because of delays in post-production and directors not wanting to send out footage before their film has screened in a film festival. But as long as you have shots that really show your acting ability you should be fine.

An alternative to acting for free is to spend some money doing an Actor Screener Shoot (www.actorscreenershoot.com). The benefit to this is that you'll get ultra high-end footage that looks like it's out of a feature film, and you'll get it usually within a week or two. The downside of course is that it costs you money. But to propel your career forward so quickly, the cost is worth it if it results in you finding even just one paid job.

If you are going to act in student films and other unpaid projects for the experience and free footage, be sure to constantly follow up with the director or producer after a project has been completed to make sure you get your scenes. A lot of directors forget to give out the footage to actors because they have so many other things going on. Try using an online tool at www.followupthen.com. It's amazing because it reminds you to follow up with people so easily.

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 get closeups of you (be sure to wear a microphone so we can hear you). Your samples need to show your acting ability, so you want to be sure that the footage is close enough to see your face clearly.

Step 9: Put Reviews and Links on Your Website

It's so important that you write down anything that people say that really compliments your work, especially if someone famous or well-known said it. Put these quotes on your site and people who visit will instantly trust you more than the next actor, giving you a competitive advantage.

A cool way to do this is by buying a cheap audio recorder and asking people for a quick audio review while you're on set. It's easier for the person saying it because they don't have to type it up, and it makes the review much more believable to people because they are actually hearing a voice if you post the clip online.

Also, be sure to link to public places where you appear. For instance, if you are on a TV webisode, link to it from your site and make sure other people can click the link and watch it. Any time you say you were in something popular on your bio in your website, link to it through the text. This gets people really seeing your talent and trusting that you aren't making things up.

Finally, be sure to always look for places where work or write-ups featuring you are posted online. If you see something written about you, contact the website owner and request that they link back to your site. If you see that the director of the film you worked on has posted the video online, contact him/her and ask if they will link to your website. Link building like this increases your ranking in Google and will increase the amount of people who can find and contact you in the future for jobs. The easiest way to find things posted about you is to both search your name in Google and search the websites of directors you have worked with in the past. Just remember, it takes many months after you have finished working on a project for it to be posted online (sometimes even years), so you may want to wait awhile before expecting to see something posted.

Be sure to also create and link to your "Internet Movie DataBase" (IMDB) page. IMDB is an extremely important solution for you to build credibility and get more exposure. I also recommend paying for "IMDB Pro". It's not very expensive and gives you a lot more control of your profile so that you can spread your name easily and update your photos and resume.

Step 10: Scour Craigslist

Did you know that [Craigslist](#) is like the rubble of a diamond shop that was recently bombed?

I don't know if that was an appropriate metaphor to use, but I do know that the idea of it makes sense. Craigslist is filled with junk, but every once in a while, you'll find a diamond. There are often deals on there that can make a huge difference in your life.

I know people who have made hundreds of thousands of dollars on Craigslist. Just learn how to sort through all the garbage and scams. Look for paid jobs and post your own availability. If you constantly post things on Craigslist and search it each day, eventually after about three or four weeks you're bound to hit something decent.

You seriously have to be on it about fifteen minutes every day for a month for it to work out. But if you don't search it, you'll miss the opportunity.

Remember that if you have established yourself as an expert in a certain area (like an awesome comedian), and you post ads on Craigslist, you will get calls. The word will start spreading.

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

Also, please like the City Headshots Facebook Page. Actors on there receive great self-promotion tips and motivational messages, and they are the first to know about exclusive deals, and free shoot opportunities. You are also welcome to post your work or promotional tools on there for community critique!