

MANAGER Q & A

Courtesy of Denny Love and Manager Jim Weissenbach

1) What are some special skills that I can gain through training that are unique to have but are looked for often?

I'm a bit puzzled by the term "unique"...Unique to what? Isn't everyone unique and, thereby, whatever anyone does is thereby unique...

Let's focus on a special skill that most young acting students never focus, it is usually not part of their training but probably the most important skill an actor needs....the art of the audition. The hardest adjustment an acting student makes, once they graduate, is one from living and learning in the protected, womb-like environment called Acting School to "The Business". In Acting School, one auditions (if lucky, some parts are assigned, correct?) for a play; your "competition" are all the same age as you, yet the roles can be varied in age and character. In "the business", of course, one auditions for roles within your age, possibly within a certain "type" (at least at the beginning) and your competition is....HUGE. (or, if in Chicago, a bit larger...). In addition, you will immediately notice, if you are fortunate, that you will spend much more time searching and auditioning for a job than actually doing the job. Of course, one hopes that, as one's career progresses, the ratio will change but, for now...one must focus on how to audition. I'm guessing that one of the remnants of our Covid situation will be the "virtual audition". I'm hoping that we will get back to the day when actors walked into a room and met with casting/producers but there will still be more and more instances of "self tapes". In any case, the audition in front of a camera is a skill that few acting students have mastered. Take the time to learn how to be "still" in front of the camera; find out what works...there are classes available but one can also learn on their own or with fellow students. The better you are with auditions, the more jobs....

2) Are there specific dialects I should look to get trained in?

Kind of depends on your ethnicity, right? The odds are, if you are thinking about television or film, they will probably cast an actor with that background. Unless, of course, you are British and they will be more than happy to cast a Brit who can handle an American accent. The other way around...not so much. So, if it is appropriate to your background, learn a dialect. But don't dwell.

If you are referring to theater, learn a bunch.

3) When looking for a manager what should I be able to show if I haven't done much work but have been training?

This is my philosophy....don't "look" for a manager...look for opportunities to show your work that will attract representation. Managers, agents need a reason to represent you. the best reason is talent; the second best reason is...talent and good looks; the third best reason is...you have 1

million followers....(kind of kidding). Get into a play, find a talented writer and convince them to write a film and shoot it...get on the stage!!

I'm sure there are reps out there who will reach out because of a good headshot, etc. but the work is the thing.

4) Would my social media presence have influence on representation and potential opportunities?

It can't hurt. (see above). More and more, actors are encouraged to use social media to promote their work on series, films, etc. by the networks and studios. More publicity means more eyes on their project. If you have a following, there are people in the business who will notice (that is their job).

5) What are some things managers may tell me they can offer but are untrue that I should look out for?

Guaranteed employment. A good manager can offer opportunities to meet and audition for projects; it is your job to create a good impression with those casting directors that your reps introduce you to. It takes a while for a new actor to get their first job(s). If you are new to the industry, you will be met with a great deal of skepticism; after all, it is the casting director's job to know EVERY actor and well, if you walk in and give a great performance, well, that can be a bit disconcerting..(?). It is always easy for someone to say "NO". But, if you are a new actor and you just hit your role out of the park, casting may wonder..."was that a fluke?", "do I give them a callback with producers?", "what if they are terrible with my producers?"....believe me, this is normal. A good manager understands that it takes time to train the casting community that you are the real deal and, eventually, you get jobs...usually in bunches....

So we give opportunities and, hopefully, good advice....that's it. Until you are a star and then we get "Executive Producer" credits on all your projects....

6) Are there any particular names/ workshops that would be good to have on my resume whether NY,ATL, or LA?

No.

7) Do you recommend particular management for someone at my beginning stages?

With the caveat of what I said above, the most important thing is to have someone who you feel will guide you and be available to you along the way. That used to be agents but they don't usually have the time (too many clients); that's where managers come in. If you have an agent that you are comfortable with, go with that. If you feel you need more guidance, think about management...BUT....don't SEEK out representation. Do the work...let representation seek you.

One major exception: commercial agents....Commercials are a wonderful way to get experience with auditions and work in front of the camera...and they can pay. Commercial agents rep lots of clients and have less need for actors with long resumes...that is a good start.

Chicago agents, I'm told, also represent a great deal of actors and are willing to send out actors with less training with less commitment from either parties. but that is another story for another time...

8) What are some things you have experienced as a manager from actors that I should never do?

Contact a casting director about a role unsolicited (if represented). Come into an audition apologizing.. "sorry I'm late" (well, don't be late), Never be unprepared (a double negative); this is your shot! Not to put the pressure on but you have this opportunity to shine; make the most of it. Here's a major pet peeve; actor calls me "I really blew that one...." ...well, what am I supposed to do with that? Am I supposed to call the casting director and say "she/he really blew it" (basically saying you are unreliable and disrespect the casting directors time?) Reps work hard (especially when you are new) to get you the opportunity to get work...We don't get paid until you do...that can take YEARS. Most of us understand this. Your end of the bargain is to show up on time, and blow them away....simple as that.

9) Some people frown upon extra work. Do you recommend it? If so, is it something I should not put on my resume?

Some of the worst jobs (extra work) can be the best experiences. Just don't make it a career and don't put on resume (unless that is what you are looking to do)

10) On average how many clients does a manager work with at a time?

Enough. All over the map....if you work with a manager and he/she seems too busy for you and isn't getting you auditions, etc. then move on. Some managers can work with many; some with a smaller group. That is your personal choice. I've always worked in small/mid-sized companies. Yet, now that I'm a manager (for the last 25 years), I work with a small group of actors; some have agents at large firms, some have agents with smaller firms. some don't have agents...it works in all cases.

11) Typically a manager's job is to advise and guide actors for the betterment of their career, correct? With that do managers usually have relationships with agencies to connect their clients with?

At the risk of repeating myself, I work with my clients. some have agents, some don't. Agents rep my clients because they saw their work and contacted me. I don't "connect" them with agents...an agent should feel motivated to work with my client. Until an agent reaches out to me about a client, they are worthless. Most experienced managers know a slew of agents....the right agent for the client is one that shows a great deal of interest...

12) Do you know or have worked with unsigned actors who were struggling to get agency representation and/or booking jobs and transformed their career after getting help from management?

When I started out, most of my clients were "struggling" but were talented....talent wins.

13) What are some things I should look for in a manager prior to signing?

Trust. a Good reputation. good experience. good advice....trust.

14) What is the best way to connect to management?

Backstage...after your performance.