

# OH, THOSE MANAGERS AND AGENTS....CAN'T LIVE WITH THEM, CAN'T LIVE WITHOUT THEM.....

By Michael J. Wallach

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Are we ever satisfied with our representation? Sometimes but not always. Do we appreciate them? Do they deserve to be appreciated? To answer these questions it is necessary to explore what managers and agents do. Or, to be more to the point, what they are supposed to be doing. And, to round things out, what are you, the actor, doing to hold up your part of the bargain?

Agents and managers come from various backgrounds. They may have wanted to be actors themselves at one time but didn't quite make it (a good reason not to be intimidated by them). They may have seen "Jerry Maguire" and felt that representing someone was intriguing and exciting. They may have been a car salesman, a lawyer, a child's mother or father, someone's wife, husband or friend (think "Entourage"). Maybe someone else in their family was an agent or manager and following in their footsteps was the comfortable way to go. Regardless, the important thing is how the agent and manager fit into *your* needs.

Let's start simply. An agent is licensed to "procure" employment. That means an agent or agency is in the business of finding you auditions and jobs. So, you get "submitted" for roles. An agent is good for you when there are results which can be seen by the quantity and quality of auditions (the life blood of an actor's business). On the other hand, a manager is there to "advise and guide" but that well-known phrase is too general to adequately explain what a manager does.

Before I go into specifics, let's also look at the conceptual difference between an agent and a manager. Consider that while an agent/agency may have scores of clients, a manager ordinarily has but a handful. So, presumably, the manager must be engaged in many activities on behalf of the client, activities that the agent does not ordinarily have time for. One more thing: both are important in the process of making you a working actor and results are best when the agent and manager work hand-in-hand.

In my new book for actors called *How To Get Arrested*<sup>TM</sup>, the character 'Jane' considers what a manager does in order to decide if she should have one or even needs one. In so doing, she also realizes how the agent's important efforts coincide. The following is an excerpt from the book:

[Jane learns that knowledgeable managers do a lot of things. They put you with an agent who is right for you. They make sure that the agent gets appointments for you in the first place, remind the agent of your existence and of your many attributes and credits. He might say, "Don't forget, she sings and that's what the role calls for," "He's tall and previously played the role of a basketball player in a TV episode so why not in that movie," or "The film is being directed by the same director he worked for in a project last season." Sometimes the manager will tell the agent of a new project being cast. If a manager had been involved in Jane's last audition situation he would have been the person who received the audition information from the assistant directly and then, because he probably has only a handful of clients, he would have had the time to fully discuss with Jane not only the vital data of an audition but also the ins and outs of how to get the job. Sometimes, a manager "plays agent" and gets you auditions on his own, something that is not only beneficial to you but helps your agent too. Presumably, a manager knows many casting directors and producers. What else from a manager? He

supervises the deal making process assuring the best deal under the circumstances occasionally employing the technique known as “good cop/bad cop.” During the process, he tries to keep egos of representatives and others in check so as to prevent deals from going south thereby preventing the loss of a job and opportunity for growth. Also, he or she often speaks with producers, executives, directors and others connected with a production that you are working on in order to keep things running smoothly. A manager may play psychologist to you. He or she is aware of publicity and promotion needs, and might be aware of tax breaks and of the law. What about the essential every day tools that an actor uses? A manager gives advice concerning your pictures, resume, bio, and composite tape (the “reel.”) These items change regularly and must be attended to with the help of the manager. What about considerations concerning your physical appearance? A manager will likely discuss appropriate audition attire, hair, makeup, and many other items related to your “look.” And what about your body? Ah, your body. Unless you are a character actor, did you ever notice how the industry is casting women and men these days? Invariably, they are in good shape. So, it is your job to be in good shape. It is not good enough for the actor or actress to say “if I get the job, I’ll lose the weight before filming begins.” A producer or director wants to see what he’s going on the spot. He or she doesn’t want to guess what you will look like when shooting begins or on the day they are taping the show. Think of it this way: putting off caring for your body is similar to the person who says, “If I get a date, I’ll lose the extra pounds.” As an actor you’re in front of the camera so act accordingly. As Jane learns of the manager’s many duties she begins to understand how a manager could be valuable to her career. The difference between an agent and manager starts becoming clear. Besides the various functions of each, she realizes it even more fully when she considers the following: since an agency represents scores of clients and a manager only represents a handful of clients, it is logical to assume that a

manager must do something other than just hand-holding (which is also in the job description). She is right, of course. The manager does do a whole lot more. He or she is on top of the pyramid, so to speak, supervising all of the activities of an actor's career.] (end of excerpt)

Becoming a working actor can be tough to achieve. There is not only tremendous competition but also, an actor needs a burning desire to succeed. Can you do it? Will you take the steps to make it? I know this: You can make it! You can do it! Work at it, don't stop for anything. And in your fantastic journey, remember this basic rule: **THERE ARE NO RULES!**