

Planning Your Attack To Break Out Of The Pack

Promises To Yourself and Bargains With Your Reps

By Michael J. Wallach

© 2007 Michael J. Wallach

But, what's in your plans? What are you doing that's different from those in the pack?

What is necessary to make you special so that agents, managers, casting directors and studio executives want you? The answers to those questions determine your success.

It all boils down to holding up your part of the bargain. But, not only your bargain with your agent or manager but also to *yourself*. Remember that the bargain you make with yourself precedes anything you bring to the table for your agent or manager to work with.

So, let's explore the bargain or rather, *the promises you have to make to yourself*.

First of all, there is nothing more important than **talent**. If you don't bring talent to the table then you're kidding yourself. And if you feel that there are many well-known working actors doing so without talent, you are wrong. While looks enter into the equation, there are roles for all looks (for example, Christina Applegate and Ricki Lake, Brad Pitt and James Gandolfini) thereby allowing you to work in one of many categories. When you are up for a role there are many competing actors in your category so your *promise* to yourself is to be brilliantly talented. If you want the role, be talented. (And when talent meets opportunity, you're gold.)

Secondly, your appearance. While there are many aspects to your appearance, one is paramount. In last week's article (11-16-05, part II of the series) I excerpted thoughts from my book *How To Get Arrested*TM about this necessity. It's importance requires repeating (particularly if you missed it).

Here it is: [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 getting 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.]

Thirdly, your attitude. Get yourself up to par when you're around people in the business especially when you are auditioning. You have no time to waste opportunities. Your job is to act optimistic and confident (with humility). Sulking and not believing it's going to happen will sink you. Your reps and others in the industry want actors who appear to be comfortable with themselves.

Now for your *bargain with your agent and manager*:

Firstly, everything above.

Second, your pictures have to be current. If you cut your hair or shaved your beard off, get into the studio. You don't want your agent embarrassed by submitting a picture that no longer resembles you nor will you escape an annoyed casting director when you walk in the room as a skinhead. Also, a strong dramatic headshot and another for sitcoms and commercials is appropriate. For both shots, think your "eyes".

Third, prepare a resume that is clear, to the point, accurately spelled, not fictitious, lists your most important credits first (in spite of when they were produced), and a thought-out Miscellaneous or Special Abilities section. I often find that when an actor is not established, he or she fails to include abilities that may be actually relevant to a particular role (from wrestling in school to playing musical instruments, to languages and dialects, to nursing to a reserve soldier). Also, having a special ability or hobby may engender a friendly conversation between you and the casting director or potential representative. Believe it or not, if you are a diehard collector of stamps, it could lead to a great conversation with a casting director that happens to do the same. (When they like you, they tend to hire you.)

Fourth, when you go to an audition, don't only be completely prepared but be punctual with your appointments (try to use traffic constructively).

Fifth, wear appropriate attire. Have a wardrobe that covers the spectrum (from upscale to downscale) so that you've got what you need for an audition or for meeting a potential agent or manager.

Sixth, be *passionate* in your quest. (Passion can coverup nervousness and be very attractive to the person you're meeting.) And, as *How To Get Arrested*TM explains, *Fake It Till You Make It!*

You can do it. Don't stop. Fight for what you want. And during your journey, remember this: **THERE ARE NO RULES!**