

Acting Career Quick Start Workbook Materials



Module 1.1

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So You Wanna Be A Famous Actor, Eh?

"You Wanna Be A Famous Actor?": Here are some lessons from my past

Some years ago when I played American football in college, we were on the practice field at the end of August right when the new school year started. It was hot and we sweated our butts off! To get to the practice field we had to walk across campus and our college mates were out playing Frisbee. The girls were laying out in the sun. The guys were drinking beer and laughing and having a good time. And what were we doing? We were going to put on our equipment in 95° heat and go out and practice for three hours. You can imagine that in that kind of heat, practice was hard. Sometimes we wanted to rest or get a drink of water, but we couldn't. Our coach saw that we were tired and wanted to rest and it was always at those moments in the middle of practice when he would call us all in, tell us to take our helmets off and "take a knee". He used to tell us a lot of things during those little speeches of his. One thing that he always used to tell us was, "Men, when it's too hot for the other teams, it will be just right for us." Something else that he used to tell us was, **"Men, if you're out here practicing in this menacing heat, you gotta love it."**

You Wanna Be A Famous Actor?: Ya Gotta Love It!

First and foremost you gotta love acting or singing or whatever you want to do. If the reason you are doing it is to become famous, then I would strongly advise you to seek out some other field. I know that this and the other answers you received might be difficult to digest, but it's all good advice. Your first priority as an actor, should be to learn the craft and try to be as good as you can be.

Another time, when I was in college in my sophomore year, I was trying to decide what to major in. What I really loved was languages, but I thought that I should really major in business administration, because that's where the money would be, but I didn't like it enough to make it my major. I talked to a professor in whom I could confide and told him that I was undecided. He told me to do first and foremost what I was most passionate about and be as good at it as I possibly can at it. He told me that if I did that, then the money would come and fame too, if that's what you want.. He said that one day I would be thankful that I chose to do something that I really love to do. And you know what? He was right. It's important to know what it really means to be a working actor. Maybe you already know. I don't have much information about you other than what you wrote.

So You Say You Wanna Be A Famous Actor, huh? Think about some of the issues that actors face before they even get close to working as an actor:

*New to show business and just seem to be wallowing around to find out what you should be doing to get started in the right way!

*Not being sent out on many auditions.

- *Rarely getting called back.
- *No agent and not sure how to get one.
- *Not many industry contacts and can't seem to meet that industry professional I would really like to meet.
- *Difficult to balance work and the demands of an acting career.
- *Able to book jobs, but not always able to keep them and don't know why.
- *Sending out materials—audition tapes, headshots, and résumés—but not getting the types of responses you would like or none at all!
- *Don't have the money to take classes, so just taking a workshop every now and again instead of going to a school or regular classes. It's been the situation for months. Maybe even years.
- *Having difficulty getting off work for auditions, because the boss doesn't support employees' acting careers!
- *Difficult to prepare well for auditions, because of work. Either too tired or just not enough time in the day to work on your acting career!
- *Have to work at a club or restaurant or in a job they don't like until the wee hours of the morning and end up going into auditions looking and feeling like a zombie.
- *Having to work at a job that robs them of valuable time they could be using to spend on developing their acting career, auditioning or something else. *Don't have the cash to make a show-reel or audition tape, get headshots.
- *Not sure how to choose a headshot photographer!
- *"Don't know how on earth it's possible to make a résumé, if I don't have anything to put on it! How on earth can I start an acting career!"

You Wanna Be A Famous Actor, But This Is The Reality

There are certainly more of these issues, but this my friend is the reality. I certainly don't want to rain on your parade, but rather to help you understand that you need in my opinion four things that will help you get started so that one day you will have a good chance of getting work as an actor and then MAYBE get to be famous. Knowing that many, many, many young actors and even older ones have the same issues and hearing about them over and over again, and knowing that I had the same issues not long ago, I decided to create a resource for this same group of people. It takes you through four critical and crucial steps that I consistently see actors overlook and skip, because they're too impatient and want to jump in right away instead of first creating the base. For actors who think they have their priorities in order, but believe that the real goal is something other than to be a brilliant actor, to be the best actor they can be. I say all this to let you know, something that you already know which is that there will be a lot of things to do before you get there. You will need clarity of what you really want and for you, why being famous is so important to you, motivation, determination, thick skin, a method of planning, business skills and you will need to see how these things can actually bring success when you interact and hear the stories of other actors, working actors. Click on this link below and take the actor quiz. It will help you to see some of the things you know or that you need to know about your upcoming acting career: [The Actor Quiz](#).

You Really Wanna Be A Famous Actor? Think About Going To Class First!

After all this, you need to study, study, study. I would advise you to get information about the different techniques that there are and then choose one. Here is some other information that can help you in choosing classes and schools and to learn more about the different techniques there are: [Choosing an acting school](#)

More Possibilities

One last thing. Don't disregard all the other types of acting possibilities there are: Film, television, theater are the obvious ones. There is also hosting, industrials, commercials, commercial print, student films, independent films, spokesperson. They can help you to get your feet wet and help you get started. Community theater, extra work, student films and commercial print work can all help you to get your feet wet, while you're studying.

I hope this gives you some insight and I hope to have made you think. Unless you get lucky, becoming famous can be several years out, if it ever happens at all. Statistics say that it probably won't. If you are an exceptional person, then you can make it happen, but will come with a price and sacrifice.

One Last Lesson For He Who Wants To Be A Famous Actor

One last little lesson I learned that I would like to share with you. When I first started acting, my teacher told me that it was probably my football and military training that taught me that I had to strive for the goal and that I achieve my goal, when I reach my objective. She told me that acting is not like that at all. She told me that it is not about "nailing" a scene, but rather about living each and every moment of the scene. That's what makes it more real. We have to be "in the moment". It's not about the final destination of becoming famous. It's about doing something you really love and enjoying your development and your experiences along the way.

Study, learn, be the best actor that you can be and enjoy it; each and every moment of it. If you become famous, I'll be happy for you. If you don't, be happy for yourself that you did something that you really loved and enjoyed. If you don't think you can do that, then you might want to think again about what it is you really want.

If you really [wanna be a famous actor, you need to do a lot of work first.](#)

3 Things You Can't Avoid

#1:

The facts:

When I knew I wanted to become an actor, I looked for some statistics in the field. I wanted to get a better idea of how many actors there are, how much actors make and so forth and how many actors there are out there with my profile. In other words, I wanted to see how many are like me; my competition. Among the places I went to for information was the Actors Equity Web site, where I looked at their annual report. This is a great site to find information by the way—to see who is working in theater and what kinds of roles are most sought after, and to see ethnic breakdowns, wages for different types of roles, average earnings, and so on.

The numbers I saw were initially startling, but once I thought about them, they really weren't. For example, I discovered that not long ago, of all the actors registered with the union, the average earnings of Equity members (those who got Equity jobs) were a little more than \$6,000 in 2004. I realize that many actors, especially those primarily interested in theater, don't earn all their yearly income from acting in Equity-sponsored projects. They need other sources of income, as it is impossible to sustain oneself on \$6,000 per year.

Since then, I found some new stats for the year 2007 for Actors Equity Association:

The median salary for the 2007 season was \$7,200 which was up 3,6% over the previous theatrical season.

The number of total members for that year was approximately 47,000.

The number of Equity actors classified as regularly working actors was 5,855,

Average weeks worked out of 39 total work weeks was 17.

The amount of principle work had increased by 11%.

To add to those statistics, here is a table you might find interesting:

It is reported that 17,833 Equity members actually worked on Equity projects in the year 2007. The table below shows a representation of earnings of that group. To be correct, we must also note that all Equity actors do not make all of their earnings from Equity projects only.

Earnings bracket	% of total group	Number of actors
> \$75,000	6%	1036
\$50,000 - \$74,999	4%	656
\$25,000 - \$49,999	11%	1920
\$15,000 - \$24,999	10%	1859
\$5,000 - \$14,999	29%	5130
\$1,000 - \$4,999	40%	7232

There are many other interesting stats on that website. If you haven't checked it out yet, please do so. It will help you to see what you are up against. It is

I also found an article on the official Web site of the Screen Actors Guild (SAG) about how reality programming has put the squeeze on union roles on episodic television. This led me to believe that the average SAG member probably doesn't make a living from only SAG projects. As a matter of fact, I know many actors who make a living through a mix of Equity, SAG, and AFTRA (Association for Film, Television and Radio Actors).

These excerpts, along with other articles and information I've read, got me thinking more and more about how actors *really* earn a living and just how difficult it can be to pursue this profession! There are many of us who are striving for that coveted role, whether it be in film, in theater, or in prime time or daytime television. So the question for me, and the discussion that emerged between me and my classmates was, "How can we work toward that?"

At any rate:

Most actors have to have either full-time or part-time jobs in order to make ends meet, because what they make from acting isn't enough.

Most actors have long lull periods in between acting jobs.

The vast majority of all acting work consists of background work and smaller roles. Only a small percentage of all acting work consists of principle and supporting roles.

It is estimated that actors, directors and producers held some 1.3 million jobs in 2006.

I researched this and more to let you know what we are up against.

#2:

The Basics Of Human Behavior, especially as it relates to achieving what we want in life.

This is what all actors should know in 2008!

Back in the 1970's two Englishmen, Richard Bandler and John Grinder were trying to decide what to write their Master's thesis on. In their research they found that there are really two kinds of people in the world; the achievers and the non-achievers.

There are some people who, no matter what they do, no matter what mission they embark on in life, they are always successful. Do you know anyone like that? You can give them any task and they will make it work.

On the other hand, there are some folks who you wouldn't trust to do even the simplest things, because you know their track record isn't very good. They can

never seem to get things right. They always need help, have trouble understanding simple instructions, are not very responsible or reliable. Or they are just plain not motivated enough to get things done. Do you know anyone like that?

The people who make up the first group—achievers—have something in common. People who consistently get things done and who achieve great results do things that other people don't do, they know things that other people don't know and they have a method and an attitude that assists them.

On the other hand, the people in the other group—the nonachievers—also have things in common that are usually the exact opposite of the characteristics shared by achievers.

I now ask you the first of many questions that I will ask you throughout this book: Which group do you belong to? Are you happy with the results you are currently getting in your career as an actor? If you are, then congratulations, but I suspect that the reason you have decided to buy this book is because you are not 100% satisfied with how many industry contacts you have, how much you are auditioning and how much you are actually getting acting work.

Bandler and Grinder wrote their thesis, which was based on the study of human behavior to achieve success. This went on to be called Neuro Linguistic Programming. In a nut shell, what they discovered is that some of the things that successful people do that other's don't has to do with their thought processes and the language they use. The pair of English grad students began to realize that it is possible to program oneself for success.

This is now a well-known fact. It is so well known that one of the most well-known speakers and seminar leaders on the subject is Anthony Robbins who has been personal coach/consultant to U.S. Presidents not to mention that he has helped millions of people around the world re-program themselves to start to lead the lives they really want.

#3:

What A Typical Day Can Look Like At The Beginning Of An Acting Career

I sometimes wonder how it's possible to dabble at acting. I mean, if one isn't fortunate enough to have her finances in order before starting to pursue acting and has to work at least part-time, how do you stay focused?

What I've learned so far in my young career is that this can be a full-time job itself, if you want it to be. When I'm hitting it hard day after day, my time is filled pretty much to the brim. It takes a lot of drive and a lot of discipline. A lot of stamina and a lot of energy.

My days usually start around 8:15am with a good breakfast of cereal, toast, yogurt, a big bowl of mixed fruit and green or white tea. While I'm enjoying my favorite meal of the day, the computer is connected to the internet and I'm

checking my email hoping that a casting director or someone has contacted me from one of my online submissions the day before and checking out the three casting websites I subscribed to, seeing if anything interesting in the way of roles for productions, films, tv shows or what have you, came through that I should submit myself for.

If it is a day designated for mailings, I usually use the time to write cover letters to new contacts, casting directors and agents, producers, etc. and make packets together with my headshot and résumé. Since my headshot is horizontal with space on one side, I downsized my cover letter and stapled it to the front of the headshot. This way, whoever receives my materials, will have everything at the grasp of one hand, because in addition to the headshot and cover letter, the résumé is always cut to the size of the headshot and stapled to the back of it. That's industry standard. Another reason why you should always staple them altogether is because if they get separated among all the mail that comes into those offices, they might not find their way back together again and you might lose out. Worse yet, you might not ever know it!

The downsizing of the cover letter was just one of the little tricks of the trade that I learned from Leslie Becker in my one on one consultation with her.

I also use this mailing time to write postcards to my existing contacts to keep in touch and report any jobs I've gotten recently or even close calls such as call-backs or on-holds since the last time I sent correspondence to them. On that note, in the many question and answer sessions I have participated in with casting directors and agents, one of the questions that frequently arises is, "How often should actors keep in touch with agents and casting directors?" Almost always, the answer is, whenever you have something to say. The best things to say, as far as I have learned are things about what you have done recently in the way of acting; shows you have been in, movies, tv programs, independent films, commercials, or whatever. I've been taught to make my communication count and not send cards or correspondence just to say hi! Keeping in touch this way is professional and has paid off in that even the close call reports have resulted in my being called personally by casting directors to come in and audition.

And *how* to keep in touch is something I learned from Brian O'Neil's seminar and book. I completely transformed the way I approached my business of being an actor, after having taken several forums, during which I met with casting directors and agents. Brian O'Neil's book *Acting As A Business* is full of tips and valuable info. It's easy to see why it's one of the most read books in the Drama Book Shop in New York. I read it twice!

After putting together my mail, it's shower time and off to the first commercial audition of the day, which usually isn't before 11 – 11:30am. The first could be an on-camera commercial audition at House Productions downtown. The next one is around 2pm, for an industrial at Don Case Casting and then another around

How Much Does Starting An Acting Career Cost?

How much *does* starting an acting career cost? Well, that depends on how you intend to start it. But I think we all agree, that it does cost something. To be able to come up with ways to make money that will keep actors focused on their acting careers, has always been a hot topic and it probably will continue to be. We've all heard the term, "struggling actor" before right? Well, unfortunately it is a harsh reality. Why? Because most actors, new actors especially, don't realize how much work goes into creating and building an acting career. Many, still think that if they can just get an agent, even though they might not have one ounce of training, that they will "make it". Nothing could be further from the truth. It takes time, perseverance and hard work to build an acting career and to do that, you need to be able to have a flexible time schedule.

Let's look at some facts.

- A couple of years ago, it has been reported that the average salary of an actor in the U.S. is \$6.000 per year!
- Most actors have a so-called 'day or night job' to make ends meet and pay the rent.
- Most actors have not the money to be able to take acting classes when they want. So they have to save up to be able to do that.
- Most actors don't have the money to be able to get their headshots taken when they want, so they have to often wait for months to get the money together.
- Many actors spend their money frivolously and don't know where their money really goes.

Now here is an approximation of your possible acting career cost at the start.

- Take at least one on-going acting technique class if you are interested creating a solid base and if you are serious about acting. The cost: approximately \$250 - \$375 per month
 - Take an improvisation class if you can afford to add to your skill. This type of class is especially important for on-camera commercial work. The cost: approximately \$200 per month
 - Props for an acting technique class, for scenes, acting books, notebooks, clothes, etc. The cost: average of \$10 - \$15 per month
 - Headshots: \$250 and up
- And then, to add to your acting career cost, there are specialty classes you could take, depending on where your interests lie:

- On-camera commercial
- On-camera film class
- On-camera day-time/prime-time television class
- Acting for film
- Audition technique
- Shakespeare and the classics
- Commercial print
- Acting for soap operas
- Theatre acting
- Acting business classes
- Career mentoring
- Voice reproduction
- Voice-over
- Monologue preparation
- Scene study
- Forums with casting directors and agents

And There Is More To Add To Your Acting Career Cost: · Industry trade shows

- There is rehearsal space at places like [Ripley Greer Studios in NY](#) for example, that provide places for you to practice with your scene partners.
- There's the travel to an audition. For example when in NY, sometimes I take the train and go to New Jersey to audition.
- You will want to get a reel done at some point to showcase the work that you have done
- You want to have a place to have your headshots, résumé, bio, reel, audio file, etc. A website will come in handy. It doesn't have to cost a lot, but then again, it depends on what kind of image you want to project. There are [free websites](#) if you have no money at all to invest.
- You'll want to stay fit, so a gym membership could be a good thing to have.
- If you live out of town, you might even incur excessive costs just to be able to get to class!
- And let's not forget about the cost of your mailings to casting directors and agents. Oh yes my friend! That costs money too!
- And lastly, when you are out all day, a stop by Starbucks, Jamba Juice or a local 7-Eleven is inevitable and sometimes irresistible.

Well, I think you get the idea. If you are just starting out and you keep things on the low end of the spending realm, then you are looking at spending an additional \$250 - \$350 on your acting career each month, which of course depends on your personal situation. That's a lot of money for someone who is just barely able to make ends meet and pay the rent!

So what does all this mean about your acting career cost at the beginning? It means that we actors need to understand what we are getting ourselves into, so that we don't end up "struggling!" That's why I always say, do your homework first, because it does not have to be that way.

I repeat, It Does Not Have To Be That Way!

Here are some additional links you might find helpful with regard to your acting career cost, money and budgeting:

[This will make you think about your money situation!](#)

[This should also be of help.](#) More specifically, if you are planning on going somewhere else to study for a while, you can see here a breakdown of what my costs were the first couple of times I went to NY.

So what can you do?

If you are really serious about acting, then you might want to consider some different and great ways to make money so that you will have greater flexibility of time and be able to focus more on your acting career. So how much will the start to [your acting career cost? Here are some ideas](#) you could implement, so that you don't have to worry about it!

The 3-4-7 Of It: Part II

The 4 Stages Of An Acting Career

When we make a change in our lives, in our behavior or in our way of being, there are usually four phases we go through before the change becomes so ingrained in our behavior, that it becomes second nature. In each of the four phases we can see how both our *desire to make a change (to break into acting!)* and our *ability to achieve the desired result (to actually be a successful working actor)* are affected.

2 Desire: Medium to Low Ability: Low	3 Desire: Medium Ability: Medium
1 Desire: High Ability: Low	4 Desire: High Ability: High

Phase 1

The things we say: "I Want To Be An Actor! It's My Dream!"

The diagram above shows that in the first phase as we think of embarking on our new mission to achieve what we want as we think about taking ourselves through a process of change, our desire is high, because we perceive a tangible advantage or benefit. We are motivated and can't wait to experience the positive change. By the same token though, our ability is low, because as of yet, we have done nothing to start the process. We are at the beginning and have not yet taken any action.

Phase 2

The things we say: “I Didn’t Know It Would Be So Much Work! Maybe For Me It Won’t Be Necessary To Go Through All That Stuff. After All Jeff And Teresa Didn’t And They Are Working Actors.”

In phase two, once we have learned what we have to do in order to achieve our goals, once we see the extra work it will take, the additional time we will have to put in, the extra effort, the sacrifices and so on, it is likely that, if the motivation isn’t high enough, that the desire begins to diminish. And since, still no significant steps have been taken towards achieving what we want, our ability still remains low.

Phase 3

The things we say: “This Acting Business Stuff Is Hard Work, But I Have To Do This! I Will Make Sacrifices, Work Hard, Follow Good Advice And Make This Happen!”

In phase three, the results start to come, I’m getting more auditions, I finally have an agent, I’m getting more auditions and starting to get some work! These first results give us an injection of motivation and help increase our level of desire to want to continue. At the same time, our ability is improving, because we have by now actually done something.

Phase 4

The things we say: “This Is My Work Ethic. It’s Second Nature. I Have A Set Routine, A Method And A Solid Plan That I Follow. I Just Need To Keep Doing This And I Know I Will Continue To Get Acting Work.”

We continue. We persevere and we don’t give up until this new way of thinking, this new way of behaving becomes normal. By this time, both our desire and motivation is very high, because we see that this new way of doing things actually works! And because we stuck to the course, now we have a new and improved ability to get done what we set out to do!

Where Most People Quit

Which phase do you think it is that many young actors never get past? You’re right. It’s phase II. I have found that this is the failure of many, many, many youngsters (and those who are not so young), who say they want to get into acting, but never make it very far down the road.

Knowing that can be very helpful, but the fact is that it is not enough to motivate most people to get done the things that will help make them successful. It's all about knowing how to get to phase IV. There are some secrets.

Those are the four stages that you will inevitably go through!