

How To Be A 110% Professional Actor

You may have noticed in my writings that I refer to my looks every so often. I do this for two reasons. First, a lot of talented actors give up because they believe it's all about the looks and second, a lot of beautiful actors get hurt because they believe it's all about the looks. I'd like to stop both types of actors from believing this somewhat loony idea. A cursory inspection of film, television, or any theatre will prove that people who look like ... well, ordinary ... are successfully practicing a professional acting career. Also, sitting outside a big office building at lunch time will prove that the world is filled with beautiful secretaries, attorneys, CPA's and sanitation workers. And as I've said, for a guy who's made millions in show biz, I'm not much to look at. Okay, what does this 'looks' business have to do with being talented? Well, simply this; I'm now going to tell you something else about myself that I want you to believe. I am not a very good actor. Fortunately, I didn't discover this lack of skill until I had been a successful actor for more than a dozen years. What happened was this: I got a part in a movie. I figured I was on my way. I was going to be a star. Then I saw myself on film for the first time. I was devastated. I thought I was a great actor (Laurence Olivier was going to have some competition) but the truth was that I was just average. Not embarrassing or anything ... just not very good. That guy I saw up on the screen was nowhere near greatness. Then I was struck by the horrible thought - why had I gotten cast in so many shows? Why had other people encouraged me? Why was I getting hired when it was clear (at least to me) that I wasn't very good? As I considered the situation, it began to dawn on me why I was not very good. I was generally too busy with other stuff to concentrate on my own performance. I wrote stuff. I directed stuff. I painted the scenery, I looked for props, I helped with tech run-through, I cleaned the lobby ... see, I was not a very good actor because my concentration was on other things. I didn't care what job needed doing - if I could do it, I did. Sometimes I wasn't able to do the job very well, but I was willing to learn - or help the person who could do the job well. I always worked as hard as I could to make sure it was a good show. That's the part that got me excited - what the audience thought of the show ... the whole show. I then realized - THAT was probably the reason I'd been successful. I got jobs because I gave more than was asked of me. I'm sure the producers who'd hired me as an actor were willing to put up with the fact that I was no Olivier, because I brought other skills to the table. Mainly I was willing to do more than just 'be in the show.' I did all that because I believed it was just good business sense ... and, let's face it, in the final analysis this IS a business. One of my favorite book titles is ... Show Business is Two Words. The way I've always thought of a good businessperson is this: Be willing to go the extra mile for the project. Give more than you promise. Work hard for every nickel you get paid. Be nice to the people you work with. Encourage other people to work hard by working hard yourself. Keep the customers (the audience) at the forefront of your concerns. Stay calm. Help. Be nice. That's a rough definition of 110%. And that's why this short, bald, not very good actor continued to get work and achieve success. Eventually (after another 10 years) I got a little bit better. Still no Olivier, but a tick above 'he cannot act at all.' My advice? Give 110% and don't worry about how good you are. I got better and you will too.

About the Author

Bob is an actor, writer, director, producer and show-runner of such TV hits as Full House, Benson, The Love Boat and others. He is also a published author, screenwriter, and theatre producer. You can learn more about him at his website - <http://www.youmustact.com>

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