

Show Bible Mastery

So, we spent some time in the MP3 for this month's module talking about the origins of the term "show bible," how I've adapted it to mean the map for all my career relationships, and that the strongest and most reliable version of your show bible lives in your brain. I hope you've been doing some work in the past week to sharpen your mental tools for keeping up with your industry relationships.

Please don't feel overwhelmed by how many options there are, out there. There are many more than I've even covered here. But these are the biggies these days, and I want to encourage you to get in there and try something out. Launch at 85%. That means, do your research, watch tutorials, ask some questions of us for the Q&A MP3, and then start. Don't let perfectionism paralyze you!

What to Put in Your Show Bible

Here's the basic goodness to log, on each person within your files: name, job title, company, address, phone number, email address, website, any social media presence, type of casting the casting director does or the type of representation the agent or manager does (commercial, theatrical, episodic, pilots, features, web, print, industrial, voiceover, etc.; this also goes for the type of projects the showrunner puts together, type of projects the director gravitates toward, etc.), history of contact (where you first met, subsequent contact you've had, where the person has been interviewed, any industry connections to this person, alumni group tie-ins, professional memberships you share, etc.), disposition of contact (was cold at first, then warmed up when I mentioned our mutual friend; remembered me at the third workshop; gave great feedback at the most recent audition), and any other nitty-gritty info you can map out.

When I maintained a show bible as an actor, I would include what I wore when I auditioned, which headshots I submitted on which projects, any comments that were made during casting sessions or Q&A or workshop encounters, even notes on what the office was like (lots of kitschy stuff? Minimalist decorations? Pop art? Ikea showroom? Homey?), tips on parking at the office, and anything else that would help me get ramped up to speed upon subsequent meetings.

You'll figure out what's important to note. I'm an info junkie and pretty much a hoarder of anything I can learn about someone else—especially if they're someone who could potentially lead to collaboration down the line. I'm often complimented on my ability to remember people with whom I've met briefly, years later, and that's a credit to my early reliance on a show bible and a consistent practice of visiting it to make updates and work out my brain's muscle for being good with names and information about people.

Now, let's get into some of the many ways you can manage data outside your brain. This is not to let your brain off the hook for staying engaged and focused on your Web of Trust, but to create a backup

Ready for the tier-jump of your life? * **Get A-Listed** * www.GetA-Listed.com



for when you need to access the more detailed information about someone or when it's been a long time since you've connected with a particular contact.

Before I get into the specific options that exist and what I like/dislike about each of 'em, I'd like to remind you that not every person's brain is wired the same way (and thank goodness for that, right). So, while I may say, "Ooh, I love this particular system because it allows for intuitive searching of the database," you may say, "I don't value that at all. I just want to be able to sort by field." And another person may say, "All of this sounds like Greek to me. Can I just use a notebook?" Of course, the answer is yes. I want you to use a system you'll actually USE. So, try each thing that looks semi-interesting out, give it a minute to see if it clicks for you, then try something else if you're not feeling it. Don't decide you've failed at show bibling and just give up. Okay? Promise me that.

The Old-School Methods

Note cards: If you're the type who loves to write it all out longhand, rewrite cards when they get too cluttered, keep it all in a card-sized file box, and flip through your cards for reference because tactility triggers learning for you, this is the management system for you. What you lose is the ability to use a search function to find something quickly, and cards could get filled up quickly if you're cross-listing relationships and chronicling every meeting.

A notebook: Similar to the note cards, this is great for writing it all out or even printing it out from files on your computer, then placing into a three-ring binder or other notebook that allows you to have all your data in one place, celebrating the hard copy experience of it all. The tough part about any hard copy system is you're either schlepping it around everywhere you go or only looking things up when you're at the location where you store your data. If you want to check out a very cool system for upping your notebook game, organizationally, Google the term "Bullet Journal" and watch the demo vid. Cool stuff that can easily be adapted to a show bible version of a notebook-based system.

A wall chart: Using note cards or Post-It Notes, you can basically map out a Web of Trust on your wall, if you want to. I find this to be effective for short term targeting. You know you want to be on a particular show, so using the resources in the **Show Targeting** module, you map out the creative team, the casting crew, the agents and managers whose clients are booking roles on that target show, and you plot all of these folks out visually to show yourself a map of relationships that lead to your primary target. You start asking everyone in your circle if they have connections to any of these folks. Your wall chart gets more ninja. Great for visual learners! Not so portable. Tip: Using your smart phone, take a photo of your wall chart so that you have a version with you on the go. Email the photo to yourself so you can access it from your email account on any computer.

Your calendar: I like this because you're able to pop everyone's info into the exact dates you intersected with them, providing a history of encounters over time. This becomes very powerful after a few years of consistent use, and I find myself able to do a search of my iCal for the last name of

Ready for the tier-jump of your life? * **Get A-Listed** * www.GetA-Listed.com



someone and pull up every lunch, every meeting, every festival, every networking event, etc., at which we connected, quickly. It's not that I'm ever quizzed on that information, but it's pretty ninja to be able to say, "Oh sure. We met after my talk at SAG Foundation a few years back," and have that person reply, "Wow. That's right. I didn't think you'd remember." People feel valued when you show them you remember your points of contact.

Your contacts file: This is where most of my show bible lives, actually. It's simple. It's straightforward. All the fields already exist and I can customize to add more fields as needed. It's just the plain ol' Mac Contacts program that lives on my computer and syncs with my iPhone and iPad. I have it with me wherever I go, it's searchable, and it's stable. Even with nearly 18,000 industry contacts in it, I don't suffer data loss. *knocks wood* I don't map out a history of our encounters in this format, but it is where I'll note "used to be an agent at such-and-such company" or "former casting director" on someone's contact card. Over the (many) years of data mining, this has become really helpful for tracking people's history in the industry and is hugely valuable when a coaching client asks about the history of anyone he or she is actively targeting.

Higher Tech Options

Keep in mind that some of these options will be free, others will cost something (either a one-time charge for the software download or a monthly fee for web-based platforms). Also, some solutions just *stop* receiving support of their designers after a time, some goodies that were free go behind a paywall, you name it! Please Google each of these solutions I'm mentioning so that you can decide for yourself whether they're a good fit for you. Also keep in mind that almost every platform has a tutorial for its use up at YouTube. So handy!

Gmail contacts: You probably already have a Gmail account, and it's probably already in the habit of squirrelling away every email address it senses in your emails, so take it up a notch and add in the people whose email addresses you don't yet have, making a category for each type of contact, so there will be a home for that person's email address once you do get it. Label everything meticulously and take advantage of the fabulous built-in Google searchability for this solution.

Google docs: Take the above one step further by exporting your Gmail contacts into a Google doc and creating a spreadsheet of data that's sortable and exportable to your offline drive. Of course, I get nervous when relying entirely on a free, online solution for something as important as all of my contacts and all of my history with them, because, let's face it, sometimes online worlds go away, change their TOS, monetize what was once free, or suffer data loss that affects its users. It happens. But as brands go, Google is certainly one of the most stable, historically, and has more than a decade of a track record for very little downtime or data being compromised.

Microsoft Office software: I'm lumping together here stuff like Word (for straightforward word processing), Excel (for table-based sorting), Access (for a full-on sortable and customizable database),

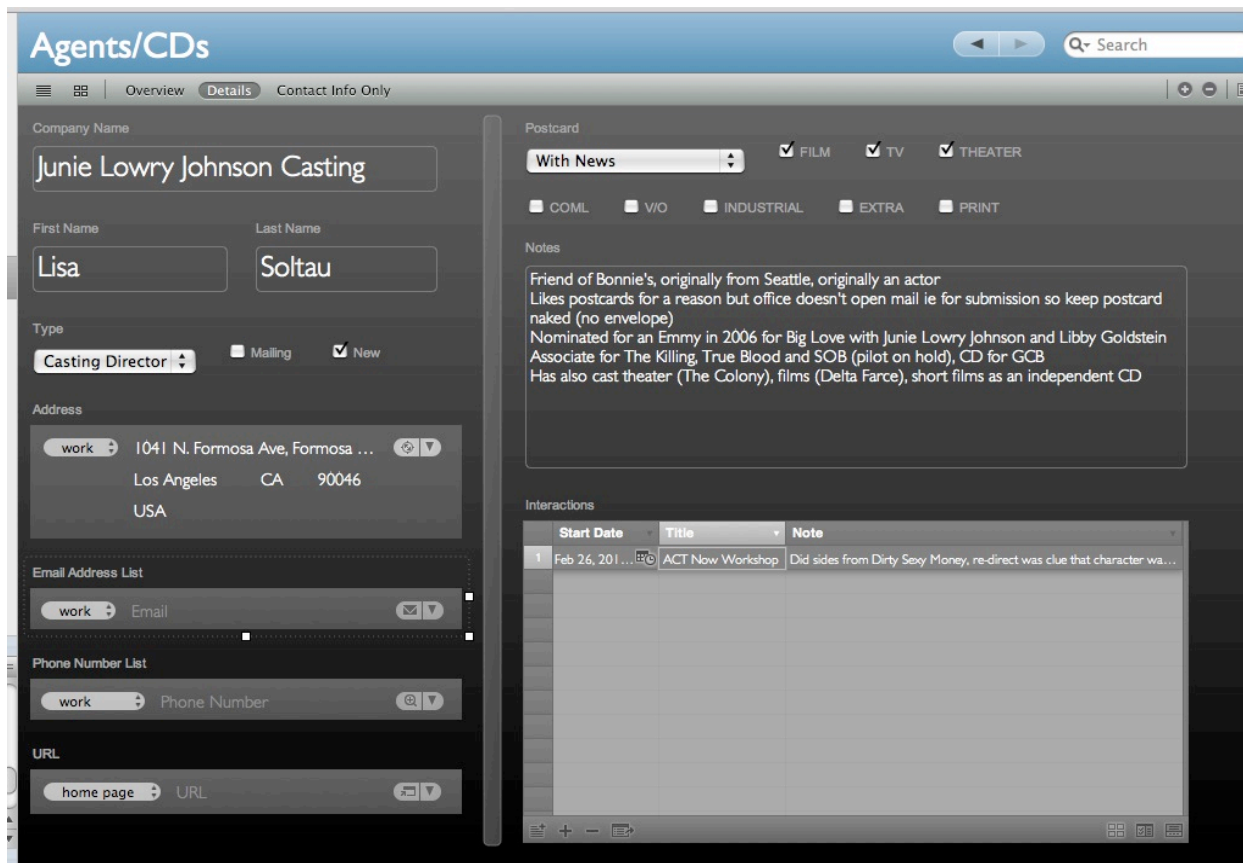
Ready for the tier-jump of your life? * **Get A-Listed** * www.GetA-Listed.com



and Outlook (for using your email account's contacts management and calendar features to cross-link everything). Labeling and linking and sorting is pretty intuitive for all of these platforms. For Apple purists, the Mac iWork suite (Pages, Numbers, and Keynote) is the alternative to these Microsoft products.

Evernote: My experience shows that this web-based and app-linked system is a favorite among actors. It's highly visual, customizable, allows for "clipping" data you find on websites to store data to your lists using your smart phone or web browser. There's a great enhancement site at thesecretweapon.org for getting way ninja with your Evernote experience. Again, always examine "the price of free" for these goodies, because you want to be sure you can export, back up, and retain your data, even if there are changes to the platform.

Bento: Unfortunately, Filemaker is no longer supporting Bento, which used to be another big favorite among creatives, for its ability to create customized fields for labeling show bible data. Even if Bento is no longer being supported and updated, we can learn from its options and "yes, and..." that action for whatever system we decide to try out. Below, a screen grab from a ninja's show bible I'd like you to study. Note: The data is outdated, as it was from when Lisa Soltau was working under another casting director; she's out on her own now. Still, notice the customized fields and ninja detail, here!



Ready for the tier-jump of your life? * **Get A-Listed** * www.GetA-Listed.com



Nimble: If you find your contacts are very "social media heavy" in their interactions with you, you may want to try this CRM (customer relationship management) software. Check out the vid tutorial at their website.

WorkFlowy: If you want to link action items and tasks to your show bible, this is the way to go. Again, there's a tutorial on this company's website and everything I'm suggesting in this PDF is currently Googleable.

Podio: For a tutorial on this one, you'll need to Google "Podio Tutorial" because the Podio website doesn't offer one on its main page, but this is a good solution especially for show bible related information that leads to projects (like content creation, wherein you'll need to connect with your team for every step of the production process). It's like a private Facebook for your own short film.

Gingko: I'm mentioning this one because if you are working on your own project—even though Gingko doesn't manage show bible data outright—this is a wonderful app for mapping out story ideas and for organizing scripts, novels, you name it! Bonus tip! :)

Springpad: This one combines Evernote, Pinterest, Amazon recommendations, and Podio to allow you to share entire notebooks of lifehacks with other users. You can also handle group tasking for your self-produced projects. Again, it's not that this one is as straightforward as what you'd use to start a show bible, but it's an example of where you can take your data, once you've mastered the basics.

Trello: I think this may be the next app we try out at Team Cricket Feet. It definitely involves some of the show bible data, but also allows you to create (and share) tasks like staying on top of your show bible data, which is hugely important. You can set up tasks like checking your Google alerts for updates to your key targets, adding workshops dates to your calendar, and doing postcard mailings. I think there's great potential to this app. I'm installing it on my gadgets right after I upload this PDF. :)

Wiki-based solutions: My massive "official" show bible lives on the private Cricket Feet server in a wiki that was adapted from some lovely shareware/open source wiki software. Just like Wikipedia, our site is editable by multiple people, commentable, linkable within pages using wiki naming protocol (LikeThis), and always accessible via the web. We can categorize, create tables, sort and search, etc., but I think it's most valuable simply because we've been using it to store our data for many, many years.

That's the key, really, with any of this. Pick something you love using, make a schedule to keep it updated regularly, and stick to it! Over time, your show bible will become filled with incredibly powerful information and you'll be amazed at how clear the points of intersection that are out there between you and your targets become! It's a beautiful thing.

Ready for the tier-jump of your life? * **Get A-Listed** * www.GetA-Listed.com



Populating Your Show Bible

Start by going through whatever your contacts file currently is: your Google contacts, your smart phone's contact system, your little black book. Add everyone. Starting with the people you know will make the task more fun and less tedious. Next, go to your own resumé and list out everyone you've worked with, for every credit. If you have your old callsheets or playbills, pull 'em out and get all those folks logged, even if you've lost (or never had) their contact information. They still go into your show bible because they're a part of your work history. Use IMDb-Pro to assist with this, if you need to.

Pop in your coaches, your mentors, your classmates, your demo reel editor, your headshot photographer, everyone! You never know who will lead to your next gig, so don't overthink this. Just get these people you already know into your show bible. After you've taken care of the people who are "easy," it's time to shift gears to the tougher folks (only because there's usually emotion attached to folks from whom you're hoping to get work someday). Who are your targets? Who works with them? Get 'em all in the show bible even before you have their contact information.

Using your IMDb-Pro and CastingAbout memberships (remember, on the latter, you get a free week if you go to <http://castingabout.com/smfa> [for *Self-Management for Actors*, of course]), pull out all the contact info and team member info you can and get it all into your show bible. If you've ever used a system like Performer Track to keep up with your auditions and the people with whom you've met over the years, get this data merged into the ONE space where you're going to keep all that good stuff. Your show bible is most powerful if it's all in one place—backed up of course—and accessible anywhere, so you'll be more apt to use it regularly!

Ninja Tips for Show Bible Mastery

There's this cool app called Refresh and it goes through your calendar, sees that you have an appointment or meeting with one of your contacts, and finds relevant information about them via social media and your history to be sure you're informed with up-to-the-minute data on what's going on with them before your meeting. I haven't tried this one, but it definitely looks pretty cool—especially if you find it overwhelming to keep up with everyone "by hand."

If you're at a networking event, screening, festival event, panel discussion, Q&A, etc., and you meet someone or hear someone say something that you know would be great in your show bible—but you're not at a place where you can access your actual show bible to update the exact file with the information—text yourself a quick note and then merge the information into your show bible when you're back at it.

When texting isn't appropriate, create a voice memo and email it to yourself. When that's not appropriate, make notes on the back of someone's business card and take a photo of each side. Do

Ready for the tier-jump of your life? * **Get A-Listed** * www.GetA-Listed.com



whatever it takes to get the information into your system, even if you have to do the "real" updating after the event.

Create an email address called myshowbible@gmail.com (or whatever) and have your Google alerts and other updates sent to that address. Subscribe to newsletters you're not actually crazy about (y'know, the ones all the CD workshop facilities and busy acting studios put out, bragging about their upcoming calendar and bookings) not so you can stay plugged in but so you can scrape the information about the people in your show bible, using these updates the marketers are using.

Subscribe to newsletters from sources like Nikki Finke and Studio System News, visit Twitter feeds of CastingAbout and Kabookit, get updates from The Futon Critic and CHUD (Cinematic Happenings Under Development) and even ispot.tv for commercial targets, check out targets on LinkedIn and in the trades, use the Firefox plugin [toread.cc] to cache and email any page on the Internet to yourself if it's a data source that may change or go behind a paywall, do regular Google image searches to include the photos of your targets in your show bible—because that visual information will serve you down the line!

See the module called **An Actor's Business Plan** for ninja tips on keeping your show bible updated through regular tasks that you add to your monthly productivity calendar, so you're always on top of it rather than feeling overwhelmed by the task of managing your contacts. We want this to be fun and do-able! That means you have to keep it bite-sized rather than nightmarishly huge.

Always back up everything (I know, I've said that a lot, but it's important) and email yourself PDF and/or CSV versions of your most essential databases (yes, these files could be huge and crazy looking) just so you have them saved away from their permanent home, in case everything goes wrong. Add to your calendar a monthly task of updating the backup.

Buddy up. Share resources. Rely on your community at smfa4.com, where we're always talking about what's going on in our world, getting info about targets, sharing info about others' targets, and "yes, and..."-ing the whole process. Compare notes but don't ever decide someone's inaccessible because someone else struck out. Your experience will be your own, your relationships are unique, and you'll share your process with others with the same qualifier. YMMV (your mileage may vary).

As always, please submit your questions for our follow-up MP3 immediately, so we can get you covered before we wrap up this month's interactive module! We're excited to hear what questions you may have about mastering your show bible. Send your email to: ninjaassistant@cricketfeet.com with the subject line: **Show Bible Mastery Question**, so we can easily get you in the queue to help out with your questions, before we head into next month's awesome interactive **SMFA Essentials** module. Hooray!

Ready for the tier-jump of your life? * **Get A-Listed** * www.GetA-Listed.com



I really hope you're feeling more excited and inspired by your creative career every day, beautiful people! Next month's interactive module is called **Chemistry**. Whether it's generating chemistry in a scene, being charming in a meeting, connecting meaningfully at a networking function, or bringing heat to an audition opposite a tennis ball on a stick, chemistry is a major factor in the working actor's life. Let's demystify the magic that makes some actors more charismatic than others and bring a little romance into the creative pursuit!

We are ridiculously lucky to have a life in which we get to live our dreams, every day. Being blissed out, confident, and capable of achieving your every goal along the way is totally do-able. Unless you're SURE it's impossible, every little dream you hear whispering to you is absolutely, totally attainable. The *Self-Management for Actors* principles **work**. **Bonnie Gillespie is living her dreams by helping others figure out how to live theirs.** She casts SAG-AFTRA indie projects such as the zombie smash hit *BITE ME*, which made the leap from web to TV with **Lionsgate**. Bonnie's weekly column, **The Actors Voice**, runs at Actors Access and her podcast, **The Work**, is available on iTunes. Her books include *Casting Qs: A Collection of Casting Director Interviews*, *Acting Qs: Conversations with Working Actors*, *SMFA: The Ninja Within*, and *Self-Management for Actors: Getting Down to (Show) Business*, which has been named one of **The Top Ten Best Books on Acting Ever Written** and featured at the Tom Cruise actor resource blog. Bonnie coaches and facilitates seminars based on this top-selling book and has traveled internationally—to demystify the casting process and the business side of pursuing an artistic career—as a guest instructor at colleges, universities, actors' unions, and private acting studios. Bonnie has been featured on *Good Morning America*, *BBC Breakfast*, UTV-Ireland, ARD-1 Germany, *Sunrise* Australia, CBC Radio One, BBC Radio 5, E! Online, and in the *LA Times* and the *Wall Street Journal*. Stay plugged in with a visit to [BonnieGillespie.com](#).



Ready for the tier-jump of your life? * **Get A-Listed** * www.GetA-Listed.com

