

YOUR SMFA BUSINESS PLAN

The background image shows a desk cluttered with various items. In the foreground, there's a calendar for January 2016. Behind it, several sheets of paper are scattered, some with handwritten notes and others with printed text. A laptop is partially visible on the right side of the desk. The overall scene suggests a workspace for planning and organization.

*A Self-
Management for
Actors bonus for
all your daily
practices!*

BY BONNIE GILLESPIE

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YOUR SMFA BUSINESS PLAN

A SELF-MANAGEMENT FOR ACTORS BONUS

Hi! And thanks for grabbing your very own copy of the **SMFA Business Plan**! I bet you're feeling more supported in running your creative business already. Yay!

Head over to page 102 of the 4th edition of **Self-Management for Actors** for a deeper dive on the goodies in this workbook. (Don't have the book? Hit smfa4.com to remedy that!) If you're more of a vid type, Google "Bonnie Gillespie Business Plan" for a tour through this process that I've put out there on the YouTubes. :)

What follows is a list broken down into five major categories, plus "The Biggies." **Choose one item from each category for a single day each week.** That covers five days. The sixth day should always be one of "The Biggies," irrespective of others that are similar to them, on a categorized list.

That seventh day — you guessed it — is one in which you relax, take time off from managing your showbiz career so intensely, and catch up if you fell short on one or two of the days earlier in the week (and that's totally okay).

Many times, people say "do something for your acting career every day," as if you have to be reminded to treat your career like a business. I say: **You know your career is a business**, and you know how seriously you need to treat it if you plan to "make it" at this. Being reminded that taking a day off, giving yourself a day to catch up, knowing you're building a muscle and muscles need recovery time — that's what that seventh day is for. Enjoy it!

Be sure to let me know how this is going for you. Use the #SMFAninjas hashtag out there on social media (it's like the Bat Signal, but cooler) so we can celebrate your tier jumps along the way!

You've got this! And... we've got YOU! :)



BONNIE GILLESPIE
Self-Management for Actors

CRAFT AND YOUR INSTRUMENT



DO ONE OF THESE EVERY WEEK!

- ☐ Change up your rhythm, whether in your acting life or in your non-acting life, by playing with your words and your thoughts as if you're conducting a symphony, expressing nuances via crescendo or a change in pacing.
- ☐ Break down a character: objectives, intention, backstory, status.
- ☐ Break down a scene: structure, subtext, dialogue, story arc.
- ☐ Audit a craft class via YouTube or free previews of Zoom workshops.
- ☐ Read a play out loud, voicing every character.
- ☐ Attend a virtual open mic night.
- ☐ Sign up for — or even participate in — an online improv jam.
- ☐ Sing loudly.
- ☐ Experience a table read of a work-in-progress (participate if you can).

RESEARCH AND PREP

DO ONE OF THESE EVERY WEEK!

- ☐ Read a play you've never read before.
- ☐ Read a chapter in a biography or autobiography of an actor whose career trajectory is similar to your true north path.
- ☐ Read a script written by someone who is a key player in your true north vision for yourself.
- ☐ Read three pages in a trade publication — every word — and mark names of players about whom you want to know more someday.
- ☐ Watch a great movie or episode of a TV series with the director commentary turned on. Take notes for your show bible!
- ☐ Explore a new podcast about the entertainment industry and listen to a few archived episodes.
- ☐ Spend an hour tracking the career moves of your pace car; that person who is just one tier ahead of you — look at what roles they were taking on a few years ago and where they were planting seeds to get where they are now.
- ☐ Update your show bible using Google Alerts that have been flowing into your inbox about your pace cars and target buyers.



RESEARCH AND PREP

DO ONE OF THESE EVERY WEEK!

- ☐ Do a lap at Actors Access and Casting Networks to be sure you've self-submitted on projects that line up with your bullseye.
- ☐ Check your Actors Access and Casting Networks messages for any new requests for self-taped auditions.
- ☐ Study your targets and pace cars: Spend time watching the content they are putting out there via blogs, vlogs, printed interviews, podcast interviews, and their own social networking profiles.
- ☐ Watch an archived livestream from the SAG-AFTRA Foundation library (even if you're not yet a SAG-AFTRA member).
- ☐ Watch an episode of a TV show from which you previously downloaded sides to track how the finished product looks (which lines are thrown away, what type of actor booked the role, any relationships you can track on IMDb-Pro) and consider choices you can make in future reads that may make you **feel** more like a booker.
- ☐ Watch an episode of each new series that "makes it" in order to track trends and keep tabs on what your showrunner targets are up to (and update your show bible accordingly).

MINDSET

DO ONE OF THESE EVERY WEEK!

- ☐ Build your brain in ways that social media doom-scrolling cannot by doing a half-hour of Lumosity, Words With Friends, Sudoku, 2048, or a pen-and-paper logic puzzle.
- ☐ Face your fears by writing down three things that terrify you about pursuing a creative career (save conquering those fears for another day; for now, just get 'em out of the head and dissect 'em a bit).
- ☐ Do something "little" differently, y'know, like brushing your teeth with your non-dominant hand or driving a different route than you always do between two points.
- ☐ Write a list of those to whom you will always be grateful, as you continue to succeed in your creative career; especially note those who will be thanked in those "holding up something gold and shiny" moments to come.



MINDSET

DO ONE OF THESE EVERY WEEK!

- ☐ Do some non-acting enrichment using a site like Skillshare, Coursera, Udemy, or Creative Live; then watch a TED Talk on something you imagine might be boring.
- ☐ Journal, write freely, do the "morning pages" à la ***The Artist's Way*** by Julia Cameron.
- ☐ Set goals for the week, the month, the next 100 days, the year, 5 years, 10 years — leave yourself lots of dreaming room here, and don't get so rigidly locked into anything that sticking to it becomes torture.
- ☐ Mentor a newbie — and if you have no access to young, up-and-coming actors who could benefit from your expertise, contribute to the collective knowledge base that exists at free online message boards and in Facebook groups, where simple words of authentic encouragement or reminders that actors are never to pay up-front for representation can be hugely helpful.

TOOLS OF THE TRADE

DO ONE OF THESE EVERY WEEK!

- ☐ Test various pieces of your auditioning wardrobe on camera using your self-taping set-up; discover what each color and neckline and pattern does to your skintone and overall vibe.
- ☐ Test your self-taping set-up at different times of day to see what the changes in natural light do to your artificial lighting.
- ☐ Style your hair and makeup different ways as you self-tape to track the impact of a curlier style or a little shine-reducing powder.
- ☐ Make sure your receipts are organized and categorized so it's not a bear of a task, come tax time.
- ☐ Accounting analysis: tally up your union dues, photos, acting classes, membership on submission sites, and marketing materials.
- ☐ Revisit your recent paystubs to be sure your agency commissions are being properly calculated and reported.
- ☐ Tighten up your footage to be sure it shows your next-tier readiness.



TOOLS OF THE TRADE

DO ONE OF THESE EVERY WEEK!

- ☐ Contact a producer from whose project you've not yet received your footage; be polite and professional, yet firm in declaring an expected date by which you will receive your scenes for your reel, even if the team is not yet finished with final edits on the project.
- ☐ Perform some resume feng shui.
- ☐ Update your bio.
- ☐ Refresh your cover letter.
- ☐ Update your social networking presence — spruce up that "about me" logline, brand-check your photos, verify your Googleability.
- ☐ Reach out to your fans — shoot an email, write a new blog post, put together some postcards for an upcoming targeted mailing.
- ☐ Do that targeted mailing of postcards, do some general submissions, or send out career updates — again, this is a *targeted* mailing.
- ☐ Update your website's news section.

MASTERING THE GAME

DO ONE OF THESE EVERY WEEK!

- ☐ Watch a half-hour of junket footage from a recent movie's press tour using the "related videos" feature at YouTube; learn which interviewers employ what style, observe which actors handle curveballs best using **Brandprov**, note when answers are crafted by publicists or improvised by the actors — think about what your style will be; rehearse along with the vids.
- ☐ Visit WireImage or Getty Images' editorial-entertainment galleries and search out the fashion choices of actors of your type and vibe to see what they wear to red carpet events, charity appearances, upfronts, luncheons, or any other time they're photographed.
- ☐ Search out discount versions of key items you'd like to add to your networking wardrobe — get smart with the best colors for you and add one great piece to your closet (while purging the items that simply don't work for on-brand you).
- ☐ Drill yourself on your monologues — yes, even if you are never asked to perform them; don't let 'em get rusty.

MASTERING THE GAME



DO ONE OF THESE EVERY WEEK!

- ☐ Drill yourself on your 16 bars — yes, even if you don't really audition for musical theatre any more; you may need 'em someday.
- ☐ Drill yourself on your pitch, your logline, your answer to, "So, tell me about yourself," and all other **Brandprov** prompts in the **SMFA Hot Sheets** at dojo.bonniegillespie.com, so you're ready for every possible networking scenario.
- ☐ Write a scene for yourself and two friends.
- ☐ Shoot a scene — do it for your reel, do it for the practice, do it for relationship-building, just do it.
- ☐ Transcribe and practice like a ninja; that means, if you're targeting a show written by Aaron Sorkin, you transcribe a lesser-known Sorkin scene and practice its pacing, its rhythm, its style (always avoiding iconic characters). Bonus points: Shoot that scene!
- ☐ Watch actors on everything from *Inside the Actors Studio* to *Watch What Happens Live* to study the art of **Brandprov**.
- ☐ Watch a "dumb reality show" that you otherwise would never care about, and pay particular attention to the music, and how producers are branding good guys and bad guys with their choices in sound editing — master producer-end branding by deconstructing it and considering what your theme music might be.
- ☐ Attend a virtual film festival, panel discussion, theatre company fundraiser, or student film showcase for some low-stakes networking experiences and show bible recon.
- ☐ Engage in a DIY power group — find other #SMFAninjas who want to jam about what's happening in the industry, your community, your personal and professional lives and then do so, regularly; split up targets and share the research load, thereby creating a beautiful mastermind experience and expansive show bible.
- ☐ Do something from your "things I love to do for my acting career" list that's not otherwise represented on this list. (Create that list, if you don't already have it.)
- ☐ Do something from your "things I hate to do for my acting career" list that's not otherwise represented on this list.

"THE BIGGIES"



DO ONE OF THESE EVERY WEEK!

- ☐ Assess your training. Craft classes, auditioning workouts, business coaching, etc., and consider recalibrating to be certain you're not stagnating but instead always moving up your true north path. Take care with this task, as it requires a level of self-awareness that may be confronting. We get comfy. Inertia is real. Always be sure GROWTH is a part of your regular workout, even if you remain with the same team.

- ☐ Write, shoot, or edit a scene with your fellow ninjas, at a level that is more ambitious than the versions of this task that appear elsewhere in this business plan. If you are not a writer but you have a great idea, collaborate with someone who loves to churn out scripts off others' ideas. Reference ***Self-Management for Actors*** for details on how to get your footage on IMDb, into festivals, and winning awards. This will not only improve your demo reel, it'll move you closer to the next tier!

- ☐ Do a show bible alignment check. This means sitting with your true north vision, looking at the targets you're tracking for your next-tier opportunities, and determining whether there are new players to start tracking or outdated targets you can spend less energy keeping up with for now. Be honest about your true north vision!

- ☐ Wrangle a thing that currently feels unconquerable by doing a little more of it than when it pops up on a categorized list in this business plan. You can *feel* the tasks that are "sticky" and know they still need to be done. That tug that makes you NOT want to do them? That's your inner critic, happily slowing down your growth toward success. Call it an upper-limit problem; call it resistance; the fix is the same: stare down that task and **JFDI**.

- ☐ Do another full-scale true north vision using my video guidance out on the YouTubes (or with my personal support in the dojo as a part of the **Get in Gear for the Next Tier** curriculum). Your true north is *not* a stagnant point; it is a feeling of alignment and that's something you can access RIGHT NOW. That's how you know when a project is a next-tier fit, where you previously would've struggled to decide whether or not to do any particular task. No more overwhelm. You've got this! :)

SMFA BUSINESS PLAN

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ACK! NOW WHAT?!?

Okay, so grab your calendar and map in some activities for the next few days. Make sure you include enough variety to make a difference and notice which types of things you tend to avoid doing.

Now that you see things starting to take shape for doing more impact-filled activities every day, are you feeling good? Yay! Or maybe you're feeling overwhelmed? Also yay! **Yes, really.** It's all YAY because now you have a starting point. You have a recipe for where to restart when you falter. It's okay. You're building a muscle and that takes time, consistency, and grace with yourself when it's challenging.

An actor who fails at even 2/3 of the things mapped out on a year's calendar of the above items is still advancing more, controlling more, tier-jumping more than most actors out there! Promise me you'll give yourself room for success to happen. I want you to have many **ideal actor days** in your life. And that happens when we show up for ourselves!

Come jam with us in the **Get in Gear for the Next Tier** membership to experience 100 straight days of unprecedented support as you build the muscles for a LIFETIME of success. And remember to use your #SMFAninjas Bat Signal out on social media. We always celebrate getting to cheer you on as you dig in on these daily practices!

Oh, and if you find this or any other of our free **Self-Management for Actors** resources of exceptional value, we'd love a tweet, a photo of you with your copy of **SMFA** for our awesome gallery, or even a nice review at Amazon! Thanks! You rock!



ABOUT BON...

SELF-MANAGEMENT FOR ACTORS

Bonnie Gillespie is living her dreams by helping others figure out how to live theirs. As a weekly columnist, she began demystifying the casting process for actors in 1999. Her most popular book is *Self-Management for Actors*, the curriculum upon which her teaching is based.

As a producer and Emmy-honored casting director, Bonnie specializes in indie darlings. Whether casting, coaching, or exploring the woo as **The Astrologer's Daughter**, she is passionate about leaving the entertainment industry (and the world) better than she found it.

Bonnie uses she/her pronouns and lives by the beach (on the unceded ancestral land of the Tongva peoples) with her partner Keith Johnson... the luckiest man in the world.

Enoughness is an inside job... and sometimes you need a guide to find your way there.



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**IT'S NOT
THE ONE THING
YOU DO;
IT'S ALL
THE THINGS
YOU DO.**

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