

SMFA Productivity and Show Bible Tools

Please see page 88 (the chapter on **Your Show Bible**) in the 4th edition of *Self-Management for Actors: Getting Down to (Show) Business* to get an overview of the importance of creating and maintaining a show bible.

Here are some really fantastic ways to manage **Your Show Bible**, ranging from old-school methods to the higher-tech goodies out there! 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 check out each of these solutions 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! Remember, YMMV, so play with each of these and just get a sense of what will work best for YOU and how you choose to manage your data. The important part is that you do it!

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 Trapper Keeper 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, watch the "Bullet Journal" demo vid you'll find simply by popping that term in at YouTube. Cool stuff that can easily be adapted to a show bible version of a notebook-based system. For those who love the Bullet Journal, check out the #bulletjournal hashtag at Instagram for loads of inspired ideas.

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 your **Show Targeting** resources, 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 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-AFTRA 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 more than 20,000 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 backstory of anyone he or she is actively targeting.

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 quite an established 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), 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 <https://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.

Airtable: Hot on the heels of Evernote for the winner of "most popular among ninjas for show bibling" is newcomer Airtable. It's great for team sharing of data, tasking (hey, content creators!! Talk about running your show like a badass, here), and of course tracking all sorts of linked information from highly customizable columns in a simple spreadsheet that magically becomes as sexy as a Pinterest board for those who prefer visual presentation of the same information. A rockstar on mobile, this is the current app to watch!

Notion: Not to be ignored is new kid Notion. It's got Airtable's intuitive linking structure and some really great (and customizable) templates for workspace so it's not just good for show bibling but also for task managing, relationship tracking, and more. Marie Poulin has some amazing Notion tutorials out there and also hosts regular (free) office hours for Q&A.

Asana: While this is more of a team task management and communication app and web-based (free) offering than a database structure, some ninjas have been using it to create "projects" that are shows and "tasks" that are people, basically bending to their needs the fields that exist in this robust and searchable (again, free) offering.

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 here 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! :)

Trello: This app 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.

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! Your enjoyment at the updating process could be directly linked to the method you choose to use for storing your data. Pair up with an accountability buddy so you're not going it alone, and if you get overwhelmed, just narrow your targets down to ONE show at a time so that you can build the visual representation of your **Web of Trust** without freaking out about 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.

Feel free to join us in the *SMFA* Facebook group to jam about how you're staying inspired in your show bible action! Offer support, get support, and stay ninja!

Psst! If you find this or any other of these free 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!