The Actor's Web Checklist

Hello, beautiful people, and welcome to The Actor's Web Checklist PDF from *SMFA* Essentials. We're so glad you're here!

Remember, throughout this topic: Everything that exists about you online should be in service of your brand. Everything on sites you control should be 100% on-brand, since you choose the fonts, colors, photos, and content of all kind. If you choose to use a template-based website to get started, at least customize the template to get some of your brand flowing through it. There is no WRONG way to have an online presence. There are only more on-brand and less on-brand ways to present yourself in the web-based arena.

Snatch your domain name even if you have no website at this time. This should cost $8 - $13/yr. for domain registration and around $100/yr. for hosting. Grab (ideally) YourName.com if you can. If you can't score your best possible URL, try YourNameTheActor.com or CastYourName.com or something in the brand zone of CreepyBadGuy.com or TheWackyNeighbor.com before you go to a .tv or .net or .info choice.

If you use a service like Dreamhost, they offer free website hosting if you register your URL with them. They also offer one-click WordPress installation, which is great if you choose to use a WordPress-based website. WordPress is easy to keep updated and there are thousands of templates from which to choose, when coming up with the starting point for your website. Customizing your template will ensure that your site doesn't look like everyone else's. And, again, since you're communicating Brand You with your site, it *shouldn't* look like anyone else's, right?

Even if you aren't ready to launch a website of your own, you can redirect your URL to your IMDb page, your Actors Access profile, or some other page at which your info exists, 'til you can get your well-branded site up and running.

As we get into design elements, remember to treat every page on your website as if it's the only one anyone will see. Does it do the job, where brand management is concerned? Does it *feel* like you? Does it provide links to the most important facets of who you are? Does it compel visitors to stick around, rather than to click away?

Have you chosen colors that *feel* like you? Using a site like Kuler.Adobe.com, check your colors (no more than a five-color palette is standard, but even a single color with an accent or two is delightful) and be sure the colors you've chosen sell Brand You and that they also work well together. If you want to start with your headshot as the basis for the first color you select for your website, use a site like Pictaculous to upload your photo and learn which colors create the best palette for it.

If you want to include photos on your website with text overlays (like, your name or the title of the project from which a still was captured, for example), a site like PicMonkey will be your best friend.

When it comes to font choice for your website, don't get too funky! There's a *reason* the most frequently-used fonts are straightforward. There are many browsers out there that will turn your very cool, very bizarre font into good ol' Times New Roman if the font isn't something those browsers can interpret. One of the best sources for finding fonts that work on almost all browsers, all platforms, with consistency is Google Web Fonts. That's a fun site to play with, anyway! Always run your potential font choices through the brand filter, to be sure the choices you make line up with how YOU feel when you enter the room for any audition or meeting (this concept—and the fonts you choose—should extend to your printed marketing materials as well: resumé, business card, postcards, etc.) and to be sure everything is easy to read. If you really wanna geek out about the psychology of typeface, check out this free resource.
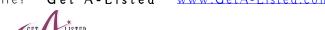
Absolute Musts on Your Website

⇒ Your contact information (your phone number, a Google Voice number, a way to reach YOU).
⇒ An HTML and PDF version of your resumé.
⇒ An embedded demo reel or selection of clips, meticulously labeled.
⇒ Headshots (but not too many).
⇒ Your bio.

Only If It's On-Brand, on Your Website

⇒ A blog or news section (consistently updated).
⇒ A photo gallery with stills from the set, or photos of you in non-acting situations.
⇒ A feed of your tweets or Facebook posts or Instagram photos.
⇒ Fantastic reviews of your work.

Be Cautious With These, on Your Website

⇒ Racy photos that aren't on-brand.
⇒ Too-personal *anything* (blog entries, photos, tweets feeding into the sidebar, anything that makes you appear higher-risk to the buyers than you may wish to be perceived).
⇒ Links that take buyers away from your site to see something that you could embed instead (video content, voiceover audio files, photo galleries, your resumé), especially if you send visitors to a place like YouTube or Facebook, where they can easily get distracted and bump into other potential candidates for the role that made them check out your site in the first place.

⇒ Having too many of ANYTHING (photos, tabs labeled similarly, vid clips). Remember, a confused mind says NO. Focus visitors' attention exactly where you want them to look... at whatever it is that makes you most castable.

Never Ever, on Your Website

⇒ A landing page with a "click to enter" button. They meant to come to your site. Don't make them confirm AGAIN.
⇒ Flash. Adobe no longer even supports the platform they created. Many gadgets won't play Flash. And more and more people are visiting sites via handheld device, daily.
⇒ Auto-playing media files. This is one place where we *do* want to click to start the experience!
⇒ Ads, survival job-related moneymakers in the sidebar, things that erode our perception of you as a professional actor.
⇒ Pages that say "under construction." It's okay to have things in development, but go with "coming soon" or "check back by [DATE]" since *all* of the web is constantly "under construction" by definition.

Always Do This!

⇒ Test your site on all browsers from both Mac and Windows-based platforms, on mobile devices and gadgets of all types, and with various browser window size settings—which you can do from your own computer, using a tool like [Resize My Browser]().
⇒ Check for extended load time on long, text-heavy pages or on any page with images. Check from someone else's computer, since the images maybe cached at your computer, making load time much faster than what a first-time visitor would experience. Resize those images and store old stories on archive pages, to have a lean, fast site. Think about how often you abandon a visit to a website, if it's too slow to load. This is important!
⇒ Remember your site is all about **brand first**, the **buyers second**. Check everything from that perspective and be sure you're good to go, then drive traffic to your site and ENJOY having that brand manager out there working for you, 24/7.
⇒ Give your URL out every chance you get. Put it in your signature file for your outgoing emails. Put it in your cover letters. Put it in your "about me" area of all other websites at which you have memberships. Print it on your business card. Print it on the hard copy of your resumé. When submitting on projects with "notes" open, if you can do so include your URL along with any notes about how you're right for the project. Get folks to your site!

Now, About the Web Presence Outside of Your Own Website

Google yourself! Are you findable? If you're not showing up on the first page of results (even when you use quotation marks around your first and last name and then add the word ACTOR), get to

blogging or vlogging so that your brand starts entering the first page of results, due to your active and consistent presence in places Google loves to index. Same, if your first results are not acting related (like, your Facebook page or Twitter feed or crafting hobby blog comes up first). Those actor-focused efforts should start taking center stage. But they should be the *right* actor-focused efforts, on-brand creations that help the buyers get excited to cast you, clear on exactly what it is you bring to any project.

But... do you have too many actor profiles out there? If you came from a minor market in which you needed something like a profile at 800 Casting or Casting Workbook or any of the many other legitimate [companies listed here](#) but you've moved to Los Angeles and are trying to up your perception as a professional actor at the next tier, it may be time to close off those old profiles and streamline. Remember, you're trying to focus the buyers' attention on the ONE place you want them to go, not "be everywhere" hoping they'll bump into you.

On your Actors Access profile (and any other casting submission profile you determine is beneficial for you to maintain, at any point in your creative career), don't have too many photos or too many clips. Again, you're focusing our attention with your choices. How do you WANT us to cast you? Don't try to be everything; be your most castable self. Label everything meticulously—especially if you're offering up multiple clips featuring the various types of roles you can nail.

Are you using the IMDb BIO section masterfully? It's more powerful to steer visitors to your website, where you control the brand experience, than it is to use the IMDb-Resumé page to add credits. Of course, it's fine to do both, but you control context, formatting, font, flavor, and overall experience when you get buyers over to your own website. Be sure your URL is listed at IMDb (in your bio and in the official website area of your profile), as well as in your Twitter, Facebook, Instagram, Flickr, Pinterest, YouTube, Google+ and all the other "about me" sections out there. Don't make people hunt for your URL.

Do you *have to* have a presence in the world of social networking? Of course not. Run everything through the brand filter, be sure your entire online presence helps focus the buyers' attention on you **as you wish to be perceived**. Be consistent. Be unapologetic about your decision to NOT be on any particular social networking site. And on those sites you choose to use, be consistent and on-brand, always. That's gonna be defined differently for every actor, of course. Just because you see someone else posting photos from set doesn't mean it's on-brand for you to do so. ALWAYS run your social sharing choices through the brand filter!

Now, check out [this incredibly cool slideshow](#) created by *SMFA* rockstar Lon Fiala.

Lon researched his buyers in the process of targeting agents, learned which ones were open to less-traditional means of submitting, and sent them to this slideshow, featuring his overall online presence as well as his branded through-line as an actor. Is this something every actor should do? Of course not. It worked for Lon's brand and for specific targets based on his extensive research. Only after doing your branding homework and researching your targets should you decide whether an out-of-the-box presentation like this variation on The Agent WOW Kit is worth an attempt.

Remember, your web presence—your personal website, your social networking accounts, your profiles at casting submission sites, your IMDb page—is your 24/7 brand ambassador. Your web presence is out there working for you ALL THE TIME. Please take care to make sure it's doing the job you *want* it to do. Your site doesn't have to be the most technologically-advanced website ever created! It just needs to be on-brand. Professional. Simple. Effective at making buyers feel as though they're hanging out with you. This is *alllll* within your control. Have at it!

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 your web presence and how best to master it. Send your email to: ninjaassistant@cricketfeet.com with the subject line: **Web Presence 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. Yay!

I hope you're loving the process of getting your web presence as ninja as it possibly can be! Falling in love with what you're putting up on the web for all to see feels delicious, doesn't it? Next month's interactive module is **The Ultimate Guide To Self-Taping**, and it's filled with awesome. From the equipment you need to what it is buyers are expecting to see in your footage, and from accepted file formats to how to look like a booker, we cover it all in this super-fun module. Woo!

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, folks, 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** in 2012. 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 regularly 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*. To hop on Bonnie's mailing list, visit [BonnieGillespie.com](#).