

Putting Your Best Face Forward



You've heard about iActor. You know it's free, easy to use and contains exclusively Screen Actors Guild members. **But have you heard the latest news?**

Casting directors around the country now have full access to iActor and are searching your online profile. That is—if you have uploaded your resumes and headshots...

IActor is the only online casting database that lists only Screen Actors Guild professionals. In addition to being able to search for Guild talent through iActor, casting directors get the added benefit of online "Station 12" cast clearance. Speeding up the process that gets actors on set, it's a service only Screen Actors Guild can provide.

"Every actor who's a member of SAG would be crazy not to do it," said New York Casting Director Elsie Stark.

Los Angeles casting director and author Bonnie Gillespie agrees.

"The biggest online casting site mistake is not realizing the potential this online profile holds for you," she says.

So how do you know if your online resumes and headshots will get their attention?

WHAT CASTING DIRECTORS WANT

When asked what actors can do to make their online profiles shine, every casting director had a similar response: treat your iActor profile as professionally as you would a paper profile.

"Your online resume is as important as your hard copy resume. Proofread it!" says casting director Michael Donovan. "I want the same details. I would like to know height, weight, eye color, as well as career details: Who did you train with? Where was the play you were in? And who directed it?"

"Treat your profession professionally," says Gillespie. "Avoid headshots that aren't really headshots. They're snapshots? They're school pictures? They're MySpace avatars?"

She adds, "I've seen so many profiles in

which actors have their headshots up, but have entered no resume data. The nice thing about iActor is you tell the system when your profile is ready for public consumption."

PICTURE THIS

All right, you understand the online profile shouldn't be made public until it's as pristine as your traditional one—but what about the areas where they differ?

Unlike traditional mailings, an iActor online image needs a little extra attention.

"It's crucial that your picture be correct for the size that it's going to be—a thumbnail," says Donovan. "People are still submitting ¾ shots, and once you're down to the postage stamp-sized thumbnail, your face is a tiny thumbnail."

To avoid this, Gillespie suggests keeping your face prominent.

"Have your headshot cropped to maximize your on-screen real estate," she says. "We need to want to click on it so we can learn more about you and your fit to the role we're casting."

Most importantly, whatever picture you choose, make sure it's an accurate representation of your look.

"Don't choose a picture that does not represent what you're going to look like when you walk through the door," Donovan says. "When you send an inaccurate picture, you're going out for things you're not right for—and missing the things you are right for."

FILL 'ER UP

Casting directors like Stark love iActor for its one-stop shopping approach.

"Make sure your iActor profile contains everything it can contain. Max out all of the modules the site allows," says Stark.

“Just because you’re signed, doesn’t mean you shouldn’t be on iActor.”

—ELSIE STARK, NEW YORK CASTING DIRECTOR

“If you have two pictures—maybe a legit shot and a smile shot—put them both up.”

And it doesn’t have to stop at résumés and photos. The “about me” section is useful to casting directors, too.

“Make use of the bio section iActor provides,” says Stark. “When you come in to a casting director’s office, part of it is an audition and part of it is



an interview. Using this bio section helps me see if I’m going to like you, if I’ll enjoy auditioning you.”

“If there’s some experience that’s really pertinent—if you were an equestrian, if you have military service, if you’re a board certified nurse—let us know,” says Vice President of Feature Casting for 20th Century Fox Nancy Foy. “Any information should be geared towards making a casting director understand what makes you useful to us.”

But beware of exaggerating your skills.

“Don’t lie about your skills—we’re actually paying attention to them!” says Donovan. “Are you a black diamond skier or a bunny slope skier? Do you speak French fluently or just some French?”

BE SEEN & HEARD

Your online profile can include more than what you’d put in a traditional mailing.

“If you have online video, that’s very important to put up,” says Foy. “We can use it to make decisions about auditions for you without even having to get you in the door.”

“Put up your voice reel!” says Stark. “You never know what will happen. Even if you make your livelihood

from voiceover, you’re still an actor. You still need a picture and resume online.”

KEEP IT CURRENT

Now that you’ve spent all this time setting up your profile with photos, resumes, audio and video, don’t forget to give your iActor audience every opportunity to find you.

“The most important thing is the contact number,” says Foy. “Being able to get you for a next-day session could be the difference between you getting a part and not getting a part.”

“Actors 40-and 50-plus think that everyone knows them, and sometimes they don’t get updated pictures and resumes,” says Stark. “The industry changes all the time. The new kids don’t know you—give them the tools to get you a job!”

HELP YOUR AGENT HELP YOU

“Just because you’re signed, doesn’t mean you shouldn’t be on iActor,” says Stark. “Whether you’re a signed client or a freelancer, you must be on. Then it becomes a true representation of the union and its members.” ■

To create your iActor profile, visit www.sag.org, login as a member, then click on the iActor icon. For technical assistance, contact SAG Web Help at (800) SAG-0767 or webhelp@sag.org.



WHAT IS STATION 12?

“Station 12” is the unit of SAG’s Membership Services Department that is responsible for letting casting directors know if an actor is cleared for work.

Station 12 is an essential service that SAG provides to casting directors—and thanks to iActor, it is now a convenient, online tool.

BUT WHY IS IT CALLED “STATION 12”?

Station 12 got its name from the original telephone switchboard extension number for the department which furnished members’ work clearances. While other “stations” are now called by their department name, for some reason work clearance is still known as “Station 12” in the entertainment industry.

STATION 12 HAS COME A LONG WAY

In the past, staff members used to search through thousands of physical records to clear a SAG member for work. Recently, prior to iActor, the process has consisted of a phone call and a staff member placing a casting director on hold while searching the Guild’s computer database. This can often be a very time consuming process due to the volume of the calls.

CLICK. CAST. CLEAR.

Today, Station 12 will now be just a click away for casting directors using iActor.

ABOVE: SHARAL KERNODLE and BARBARA PLACHNER operated Station 12 in 1968. Names of 50,000 actors were on the wheels.

BELOW: A typical section of the Guild’s “index,” circa 1968, which enabled the operators to speedily tell the whereabouts of members.

