

## WORKING WHERE YOU LIVE AND THE REALITIES OF SEEKING PRINCIPAL REPRESENTATION IN VANCOUVER

Agents receive requests for out-of-town principal representation often, whether from Vancouver Island, Kelowna, Calgary, Toronto, USA, Australia or beyond.

Where the actor resides is an important factor that is taken into consideration when deciding whether or not to represent them and the accompanying logistical challenges that must be addressed if an actor lives elsewhere.

Many a Vancouver Island actor can and have landed quality representation with a reputable agent/agency in Vancouver and area. Some of the commonalities these actors possess are: the ability to come to Vancouver for auditions when needed, the necessary tools in place and a wonderful attitude.

Once you have landed an agent this is what you can expect to happen.

## AUDITIONS

More and more self taped auditions are being requested by Casting for many reasons, including; saving time and money for the initial go round of first auditions, followed up by either in-person auditions and/or callbacks. Again, self tapes are normally at Casting's request and not the actor's.

Of course there are always exceptions but the norm is to be seen/audition in person so Casting can experience wonderful you!

- If you show up early, prepared, dressed appropriately and with sides in hand.
- If you are pleasant and professional to their assistants (they are watching you :).
- How confident/nervous you are.
- How you conduct yourself in the waiting room.
- How you handle yourself in a live audition situation.
- Do you look/feel like your headshots?
- How you recover from a flubbed line.
- How well you take direction.
- Plus, the one-on-one connection where you start to build those precious/long term/ongoing relationships with Casting because they audition and productions hire who they know and like, plus those that are reliable and responsible. A true professional actor!

The frequency of auditions has their own ebb and flow for many reasons. Whether you are new to the business, or a well established actor with years and years of experience, there are no guarantees to how often you will receive auditions. The overall trajectory is for your auditions to generally increase as time goes by.

Audition frequency depends on many factors:

- What productions and roles are available at any given time?
- The more specific your type can either mean more or less auditions depending on what's currently casting.
- The time of year, with twice yearly pilot seasons (spring/fall), usually means an increase in auditions.
- A 'new' actor may receive fewer auditions until they build those credits, relationships & demo reels which are more manageable logistically.
- X numbers of auditions cannot be guaranteed, ever. The only thing that can be guaranteed is that audition requests will fluctuate with peaks and valleys throughout your career, sometimes you and your type are in demand, sometimes not and always, always depending on what is being currently being cast.
- Maximizing your audition potential translates to: being willing and able to attend in person, being prepared, having a positive and professional attitude, ongoing training, fantastic headshots, a great demo reel and an ever growing/evolving resume.
- Your audition frequency should NEVER be compared to any other actor's ever, unless you are twins, with the same life/experiences, same training, same personalities, same agent, submitted for the same productions, etc., etc., etc.
- If you feel you should be getting out to more auditions, first do some self evaluation.
  - Do you have the necessary tools in place? (Resume/Headshots/Demo)
  - Are you on the necessary sites with profiles filled out completely and accurately?
  - Are you involved in ongoing training and workshops?
  - Are you listening to and taking the advice of your agent?
  - Are you actively seeking indie productions to build your base?
  - Are you willing and able, with the ways and means to attend auditions?

If you've answered yes to all these, then send your agent a short email and if you've been with them for at least 6 months they should be able to send you a list of your submissions so you can see with your own eyes what they have been submitting you for and most likely it will just take some time for Casting to bring you in more. Remember there are no quick fixes in this industry and paying your dues is the norm.

## **THE FLOW OF THE AUDITION PROCESS**

**SUBMISSIONS** - When your agent submits you for roles in productions via 3 main Casting Sites: Actors Access, Casting Workbook and Casting Networks. You can also, and SHOULD be, submitting yourself for roles in independent productions (INDIES) off of those sites.

Vancouver Actors Guide, Craigslist, Facebook Actor/Film Pages, Acting Schools, etc. are some of the places to look.

**AUDITION REQUESTS** - Are sent to your agent 24/7 from Casting, usually during the day (10-6) and can be also sent in the evening or night time and require a QUICK (within an hour max) CONFIRMATION that you can attend the audition. Auditions are often the next day or in a couple of

days and sometimes the same day. Make sure to set up audio notifications on your phones for emails/texts from your agent and check your phone often.

**FEEDBACK** - For auditions/callbacks/holds feedback is NEVER really given. There is just simply no time for that in the world of casting. Signs that Casting likes you: redirects in an audition (the more the better), receiving a callback/hold, and if you receive more auditions from that Casting Director for different productions in the future, that is also a very good sign!

**CALLBACK(S)** - When Casting has narrowed down (culled) who they want to see from the first go round of auditions. Callbacks are usually scheduled a couple of days after the initial audition but can sometimes be the same day as the audition and there can also be multiple callbacks.

**HOLDS/PINS/FIRST REFUSUALS/IN THE MIX** - This means Casting is still *considering* you and there can be many factors involved but you are NOT yet booked. You may or may not officially book the role and **may** be informed sooner or right up till the night before the shoot date. Casting will request that certain dates be kept free and clear if they decide to book you.

**BOOKINGS** - Yaaaay! When you have been hired for a job. You need to confirm quickly with your agent that you are available 100% for all dates required (no turning back after this) and your agent will confirm with Casting that you are indeed available for all dates and super excited! Your agent will send your STATS to Casting/Production (Your direct contact information, SIN, full legal name, DOB, etc.) and production will be contacting you directly there on in. Contracts will be sent to your agent, signed and returned. Make sure to request copies of all contracts for your own files, including copies of cheques/stubs.

**WARDROBE/FITTING DATE** - Usually required and normally the day or two before the shoot begins. You will go to a location/studio where the wardrobe people will measure/fit/style you. Can take one hour, or many hours (keep track of the beginning and end time).

**SHOOT DATES** - The days you will be required for shooting. Usually a range of dates are given to be kept free and clear with 1 or 2 dates needed for sure and these dates are subject to change, not often but can happen. Keep a log book or diary of all your auditions/callbacks/bookings: wardrobe/shoot dates/ADR dates, times signed in and out, breaks taken in and out and names of people, for double checking against pay cheques and for your general ongoing career info/log

**ADR** - ADR is done post production and they may require you to come in and redo a scene's audio for many reasons.

**RESHOOTS** - Doesn't happen often and when it does you must attend and be available.

Flexibility is key whether you live locally or out-of-town and the following are some factors that you will most likely deal with while living on an Island. Being prepared with the knowledge of what is necessary and how to navigate it will make everything flow much more smoothly and you will arrive at your auditions early, calm and relaxed. This information is valuable to all actors no matter where they live :)

1. Having work/school/family/pets/children/daycare/etc. that are flexible and supportive.
2. Having reliable transportation with enough funds for: gas, parking and ferries.
3. Being able to drive/travel despite weather conditions year round.
4. Being able to hop on a ferry the night before, time permitting, or the first ferry in the morning so you can arrive at your audition early. (Make sure to always check your emails hourly and before going to bed for those quick turnaround auditions and respond quickly to your agent).
5. Allowing extra time for unexpected delays such as: cancelled sailings, road closures, extreme weather, vehicle breakdowns, holiday transit/ferry schedules/personal issues, etc.
6. Having the ways/means to take alternate transportation if needed by bus, plane, helicopter, etc.
7. Find and pay for accommodations, meals, make your way, driving or transiting to the audition, paying for parking to spend up to an hour or longer waiting, 5-15 minutes in the room to turn around and head back home and often in rush hour traffic.
8. If you have a next day callback, you will repeat this whole process again and sometimes there will be 2 or more callbacks necessary.
9. When you book a role you will have to be in Vancouver again for: wardrobe session, the shoot dates and possibly follow up ADR work which will require all of the above again, plus incurring subsequent out of pocket expenses and all of these events are subject to change and can be with little or no notice.
10. If you are experiencing delays or might be expecting a delay, fire off a quick text to your agent to keep them in the loop. If for some unexpected reason you are going to be late, despite building in that extra hour or two of bumper time, it is better that your agent can give casting a heads-up because the alternative of keeping everyone in the dark, panicking and/or fibbing doesn't work for you, the agency that represents you, your collective reputations, nor casting's time.

NOTE: The above can be modified to any budget and all is tax deductible so keep those receipts.

Driving/flying over, staying in hotels, eating at restaurants, paying for taxis and parking is quicker, more convenient, more comfortable and definitely more expensive, whereas, taking transit, staying with a friend or in a hostel, packing your own meals and snacks, can be done at a fraction of the cost and will take a bit more time and effort. Either way it is doable.

Most actors are super excited and onboard with the process initially and often find that the reality can become more time consuming and expensive than originally anticipated. Especially when understanding that the average audition to booking ratio is quite low, requiring frequent trips, the costs and time incurred to actually book a role can be challenging for sure. If you are anything but single without a lot of responsibilities, this will involve and affect your family/work/school.

As a result of the realities and costs for out of town auditions/bookings, some actors will start picking and choosing which auditions they will go to based on how much they will end up being paid (if booked) and this just doesn't work.

Regretting auditions on a regular basis is not acceptable. Your agent has to provide a reason to casting as to why you are not attending the audition(s) and eventually casting will stop bringing you in and your agent will most likely drop you. Of course 'life' happens with regrets but it should not be the norm, so make sure to discuss what is going on in your life with your agent and perhaps they can offer some suggestions to help alleviate the situation.

Remember your logistical challenges are yours, neither your agent's nor casting's and there will always be traffic challenges, parking issues regardless of where you live. Expect and prepare for these challenges (which are the norm rather than the exception) and you will be ahead of the game plus, more relaxed and calm = bookings!

Another tip is not advertising (on your resume/profiles/in person/social media) that you are from out of town and rather keeping that information between you and your agent unless it is to your advantage with a production needing local talent.

It is perfectly acceptable for actors to retain separate representation in different major cities as those agents are more familiar with local casting directors and have built relationships with them, studios, the lay of the land, auditioning locations, etc. but not necessary and for the most part being that all agents submit on the same breakdowns. When you are starting out, land representation as close to where you live as possible.

Depending on your own particular situation, you will be either submitted for any/all productions regardless of the location, or for only productions close to where you live. This is something you will discuss with your agent and can be changed down the road as your situation may change.

Prior to requesting representation actors must have the following in place, especially if they are from another country:

- The necessary legal documents in place including a work visa which is typically granted for 2 years and again most agents will not put the time and effort into an actor that will be leaving within 2 years and usually just when they are getting started.
- US standard accent whether from Montreal, Newfoundland, Paris or Australia and the willingness to work on it.

The majority of productions that film in Canada are from the US and require a US standard accent which can be quite the undertaking for someone with a strong regional accent.

- Actors saying they will MOVE to Vancouver ONCE they land representation doesn't work and for the most part they will have to move FIRST and then seek representation which translates into being committed and available.
- Vancouver Island actors are fortunately able to commute and at some point in time, may decide to move to make the process easier.

Currently there are several Vancouver talent agencies that have principal rosters on Vancouver Island, Kelowna, Toronto and elsewhere. Island actors should expect more physical agencies to be popping up in the future with locations in Victoria/Nanaimo, to accommodate the growing industry on the Island.

All agents submit on the same productions across Canada for the most part regardless of where their physical office is located and usually concentrating on the local productions for all the obvious reasons. (That's where their actors are located and they are established within the local TV/Film industry).

## BACKGROUND/EXTRA REPRESENTATION

With background/extra representation, regardless of where your agent is located, you will usually only be working background on productions that are filmed in the city/town where you live.

All background agents submit their talent on all of the same productions.

The ONLY exception is BCF CASTING which is a background casting office located in Vancouver.

<http://bcfcasting.com/extras/home.html>

It is owned and operated by 3 Background CASTING DIRECTORS and they keep their own data base of actors to submit on their own productions while background agents/agencies DO NOT HAVE ACCESS TO THEIR PRODUCTIONS.

Being that they are NOT agents BCF does NOT and CANNOT charge 15% commission on any work they book you for. They are already being paid very well by the productions that have hired them to cast their shows.

It is FREE to add your information and create a profile on their data base.

As a background actor you can be represented by ONE background agent AND by BCF Casting at the same time as there are no conflicts. Some background agents will not represent you if you are on BCF's data base and this is unreasonable, so find a background agency that is ok with this normal/frequent occurrence.

The TV/Film industry is growing by leaps and bounds on Vancouver Island, Kelowna and Calgary with many opportunities for actors now and in the future.

Studios are being built, workshops/classes are available aplenty, great headshot photographers are sprouting up and overall there are many ways to grow your career locally where you live.

Another advantage is your local film community is much smaller and closer where you can grow your relationships with local industry professionals quicker and easier rather than in a large city.

When you are a big fish in a small pond you have much less competition and more chances at success and when you audition/move to Vancouver you are now a smaller fish in a much larger pond and your competition will be much fiercer. What this means is that the grass isn't necessarily always greener on the other side of the ferry, the Coquihalla or the Malahat. You should be definitely working on all sorts of productions (including your own) big and small on both sides of the pond and keeping your fingers in as many varied and delicious pies as possible. There is MUCH value in all!

So take advantage/support your local productions and resources to grow your career.

Regardless if you live in Vancouver or elsewhere, it is not necessary in the first year or two of your acting career to retain an agent and in fact until you have certain tools/relationships/experiences in place, an agent can't represent you effectively.

If you don't have these items in place and an agent sees some POTENTIAL in you they very well may add you to their roster. Usually a large roster and you most likely will have few if any auditions for up to 2 years. The agent is waiting for you to get your materials up-to-speed so they can push you to casting and after a year if your ducks aren't in a row they will let you go.

### **A VERY IMPORTANT NOTE: WHAT DOES AN AGENT DO?**

- An agent's job is to submit you for work and negotiate on your behalf, **FULL STOP**.
- Being an effective and successful agent is a **HUSTLE** job and time is precious.
- Do not expect to see your agent in person more than once or twice a year (if you are lucky).
- Expect your emails to them (which should be short and sweet) will rarely be responded to.
- If you phone them, a message will be taken or it will go to voice mail.
- Remember an agent **WANTS** you to book and **ARE** submitting you!
- Agent's are not there to school/instruct/enforce/babysit/or be your best friend.
- Headshots, resumes, profiles, workshops, classes, etc. are your responsibility.
- You should be doing 85% **PLUS** work on your career because it is just that, your career.
- Your agent works for free and actually incurs monthly debt in order to represent you and that is why if you are not booking, you are costing them money and that doesn't work financially.
- Your agent most likely has a large roster of hundreds of actors so you are not the only one.
- There are 3-5 'boutique' agencies in Vancouver with very small rosters who not only agent you but manage you as well, where you will receive a lot of guidance and communication.
- Be nice to your agent, don't complain and they are doing their very best to get you work.
- If you do land an agent that gives you their time, takes your calls, meets with you in person, provides guidance and support, you have HIT THE JACKPOT and that doesn't necessarily translate into more auditions or subsequent bookings.

Here are the BASIC requirements to be represented by an agent and even with these in place will not guarantee representation:

1. A properly formatted actors resume full of credits, ongoing training, special skills, etc.
2. Up-to-date, professional headshots that not only look like you, but also feel like you.
3. A professional demo reel showing your most recent and best work, edited correctly.
4. Most of all - a sense of urgency, having the ways and means to make it to auditions in person, being a YES person, positive and focused on your career with no excuses, professional, and quick to respond to all communication.

Being 'successful' is different for everyone. Whether appearing on Broadway, a lead in a block buster feature film, starring on a long running sitcom, or being the go-to actor for local productions is whatever works for you and the commonality is these successes come with being in love with this crazy business, making it work for you and understanding that turning dreams into realities takes dedication, ongoing training, work and taking lots of chances.

## **FUN FACTS**

I love statistics and averages and they are just that, AVERAGES which apply to most but not ALL. 10-15 years is the average amount of time for an actor to 'MAKE IT' and what that means is, some actors will be successful sooner and some later. That the journey is not all or nothing. To rejoice in all of the little successes along the way. Acting is like any other industry/career and probably more challenging and FUN than most.

When you graduate as an accountant/lawyer/doctor after many years in post secondary you most likely are not going to land your first job as the CEO of your firm and more likely you will start in the mail room and take years to move up, growing relationships along the way. There will always be one or two people that shoot to the top immediately but that is not the norm. Hard work, dedication and commitment to your craft/career will take you far. Acting is the same.

Same goes for the audition to booking ration of 70/1. That is an average. Again, not all or nothing. Out of those 70 auditions you may have 32 callbacks, 15 holds/first refusals, etc. and hopefully some bookings!

What the ratio illustrates is just because you look like Brad Pitt, have extensive training, the ways and the means; this business of 'SHOW' has many quirks and many reasons why you may or may not book a gig and a lot of it is out of your control. So being prepared, doing your best, going for it with a positive attitude is your job and you will eventually be successful, just keep at it. 😊

**ISLAND ACTORS ROCK! YOU'VE GOT THIS!**

Author/Agent/Coach - Julie Kay has been a successful agent located in Vancouver, BC Canada, for over 10 years now with the past 4 years owning her own boutique agency [www.juliekaytalent.com](http://www.juliekaytalent.com). She loves this crazy/exciting industry of show business and all of the wonderful actors that make it tick helping them navigate the waters with sage advice and passion.

MAY 1, 2018