

Part 3

Let 'em Know You're Coming

(Marketing and Advertising)

Well, you've finally arrived at the theme park. You have completed all the preliminaries concerning business organization and other technicalities. It is now time to start selling yourself to the world. On this leg of the trip, you're not only going to learn the basics of marketing and advertising for your services, you're also going to learn how to evaluate further marketing opportunities to see if they're right for you. There are many different ways to promote yourself, all of which are good in the proper context. The trick is to know if the context applies in your case.

Part 3 is divided into eight chapters:

- Chapter Nine—(Travel) Agents 63
In this chapter, we'll evaluate different types of agents and learn how they can help you sell your services.
- Chapter Ten—Signage 68
This chapter deals with creating the proper **marketing materials** to help sell your services. This is all the neat stuff like business cards and brochures.
- Chapter Eleven—Making Your Business
a Recognized Highway Stop 78
In contrast to the previous chapter, Chapter Eleven doesn't deal with items designed to help sell your services but rather with materials designed to **promote your business name**. Here we focus on the promotional “toys” such as key chains, T-shirts, ball caps and pens—items that are fun to give out and fun to receive.

- Chapter Twelve—How Did You Hear About Us? 82
This chapter explores the different ways you can **advertise**. We'll evaluate some of the more basic forms, such as the Yellow Pages and newspaper listings, as well as help you determine which of the more advanced forms of advertising can help you.
- Chapter Thirteen—Bright Lights 101 96
This chapter jumps into creating a buzz over you and your services in ways well beyond the scope of regular marketing and advertising. This is where you learn how to generate leads, maintain your clientele and even have articles written about you in magazines or newspapers.
- Chapter Fourteen—The Price Is Right. Or Is It? 107
This chapter examines the difficult issues of pricing. How much do you charge? What's the standard rate? What about taxes? It's all in here.
- Chapter Fifteen—Advanced Bright Lights 111
Now we've graduated to promoting entertainment events. Tips in this chapter are aimed at planning and marketing your own event, and selling tickets to the general public.
- Chapter Sixteen—Roadside Assistance 121
This chapter continues where Chapter Fifteen drops you off. Here we deal with financing your events through **sponsorship**. This means getting other people to pay for your public performances through the use of advertising sales.

Good luck, and if you've done these things right, maybe we'll hear about you someday.

Chapter Nine (Travel) Agents

Agents can be wonderful...or they can be a waste of time. There are many different types of agents representing varied interests in the entertainment industry. What's important for you to decide, first and foremost, is whether you actually need an agent. If you think an agent can help your entertainment career, then it is important to find the right agent for you.

Just what exactly is an agent and what does he do? An agent is an individual or a company that represents your interests to another party. They sell your shows for you. They negotiate your contracts for you. Essentially, they're the middleman between you and the client, so you don't have to take care of the details.

Being Your Own Agent vs. Retaining a Professional Talent Agent

The degree of necessity for having an agent can vary based on the type of entertainment you provide. For example, an actor wishing to break through in Hollywood may require a professional agent. A professional juggler may find it more useful to represent himself. It is our opinion that, in most instances, being your own agent and planner is far superior to relying on an outside agent. Obviously, it involves more work for you, but consider these advantages:

Although an agent represents you, his interest in you is limited to the time he can devote or is willing to devote to you, as only one of his clients. You, on the other hand, only have yourself to look out for.



From a legal point of view, your agent represents you in the eyes of the public. That means that they may bind you to certain agreements you are not aware of, simply because they have the authority to act in your name. If you allow your agent to have such power, remain involved with them on all your business dealings, so they don't get you on the hook for something you don't want to do.

You also have a greater stake in your own interests and are, therefore, more motivated to succeed. Some agents claim that they share your interests since *they* don't get paid if you don't. Although this is true, the agent deals with many clients and will tend to focus on those clients he can book readily.

The agent's use for you depends on requests for your services. Agents are generally passive creatures, *meeting* a demand rather than *creating* a demand. An agent won't generally sell your product unless someone has shown some interest. You, on the other hand, can spend your time creating a demand for your shows and then meeting that demand.

Using an agent means depending on the marketing skills of someone else. Although it may be true that some agents are more informed about marketing than you are, it doesn't necessarily mean that they use those skills adequately. It is difficult to properly market different types of products in the same fashion. You wouldn't promote a rock band the same way you promote a mime. Each industry has its own specific nuances. Although you may not be a marketing expert at first, you do understand your industry's specific needs better than the agent who likely doesn't have time for anything more than a general approach.

Financially speaking, not having an agent means one less person to pay.

Bottom line: Nobody represents you better than you, because nobody understands your talents and what you can offer better than you do.

Types of Agents

You will find that certain types of agents are more useful than others. As a general rule, if you use an agent, you shouldn't rely on them to be your only booking source unless you're already a superstar (and if that's the case, you don't need this book). Doing this is a guaranteed way to lose. You have to continue to sell yourself. Think of your agent as a little bonus booking from time to time. You are still your own best bet.

Below are different types of agents and what they can offer you:

The professional agent or talent agency: These agents do nothing but represent people. That is the sole purpose of their business. They rely on large companies to call them and ask them if they have anyone who fits their needs. If you fit the bill, then your agent calls you and informs you of a job he's booked for you. Although these types of agents can be effective for certain breakthrough

gigs with large companies, you can't really rely on them to provide you with paying performances on a regular basis. Most people who sign up with these agencies hear from their agent maybe once a year.

Event planners: These are people who organize complete events for their clients. They plan everything from booking the hall to the catering, from décor to entertainment. Event planners can be quite useful. Based on the functions they need to plan, they will often recommend entertainers to enhance the event. Of course, they will only contact you if your act suits their particular needs at that moment.

Hotels: Food and beverage managers can play a role similar to event planners except that they are limited to the events being held on their own premises. Still, they will often offer the same services of organizing additional details of an event, including the entertainment.

Banquet halls: Just as above, managers here plan events within their own halls. Like hotels, these places are actually a good start since most people plan their own events, and the first thing they always do is find a location.

DJs: Disc jockeys are in a unique category because, like yourself, they provide entertainment rather than plan it. However, DJs are often asked to provide Master of Ceremony services along with their regular tasks. As such, they can occasionally take on the limited role of an event planner for their client. In that capacity, they may be called upon to provide additional forms of entertainment beyond playing music.

Caterers: Although rare, caterers have been known to coordinate events beyond food services. Entertainers are then frequently required.

Value-Added Service

From the event planner to the DJ, these types of agents can be quite useful at times because they also have a vested interest in your business—but for different reasons than you or the professional agent does. These people will act for you if there is something in it for them, such as the ability to offer a value-added service to their client, in short saving their client time, money and effort. Imagine the following scenarios:

Scenario A: You are planning a huge party. You rent the hall. You then have to get your own caterers for the party. You run around from store to store buying all sorts of balloons and other decorations to make the hall look like party central. You call six different DJ companies before finding one that is available

that night for a price you can live with. You also need to hire additional entertainers for the cocktail hour prior to the dinner, so you flip through the Yellow Pages, making call after call trying to find a harpist, a magician, a caricaturist, a balloon artist, or anyone else who might help you. You have quotes from twenty different people offering a range of services. You lose track of your budgeting and wind up paying a lot more than you care to. The party is a great success, but you're too tired to enjoy it because you've been running around for weeks trying to organize it.

Scenario B: You are planning the same party. The hall you approach says they have all the required services from which you can choose. They present you with a menu selection and several entertainment packages based on your various needs. They also decorate the hall for you, as per your specifications. They quote you an amount for the whole party ahead of time so that you may budget and plan accordingly. Come party time, you've got your dancing shoes on. Everyone congratulates you on a job well done.

Although the party is a success either way, the advantages of scenario B are quite obvious for the client. That's what the agents are trying to sell, and that's why they should be more eager to know you than you are to know them. You provide them with the potential of a value-added service they can offer their clients.

Inflated Fees

One concern many entertainers have is the price tag attached to the value-added service. Many agents will call you and ask for your fee. They will then charge their client a higher fee for your services than you would if the client booked you directly. Although some people may object to such practice, there is nothing wrong with it, provided it is done properly.

When you work out arrangements with an agent of this type, charge them your normal fee. Let them sell your show at whatever price they see fit. If the agent sells your \$200 show for \$600, that's his business, not yours. Provided you get the fee you want, there is no problem. You are hired by the agent for a certain price and that is that. You are not the one charging the client an inflated fee. If the client finds out what your regular fees are, that's okay because you didn't charge more, the agent did. If confronted with it, it's the agent's responsibility to defend the inflated fee, not yours. Of course, such a situation rarely happens, since clients are usually given a general billing fee rather than a complete breakdown of all the services. In this case, they can't really know what was charged for your particular services.

On occasion, the agent will ask you to contact the client directly in order to better sell your show or simply to work out technical details. If the issue of fees comes up at this kind of meeting, do not discuss it with the client. Simply tell the client that a proper quote will be presented by the agent once all details are resolved. If the client keeps pushing (that rarely ever happens), simply tell them that your relationship with the agent does not permit you to discuss these matters but that the agent would gladly take up the issue with them.

If this fee issue still bothers you, you can work out arrangements with the agent by giving them a small discount and telling them what you normally charge for your act and that you wish for them to limit their fee to that amount. In this case, if a client shops around for prices later, he will find that he was charged what you normally charge. Nobody feels overcharged. Of course, you do have to offer a discount since the agent will want a certain compensation for booking you. Although you may feel happy that the client hasn't overpaid, remember that you will have been underpaid.

Dealing with the Agent

Whether you're dealing with a professional agent or a value-added agent, you should always use a contract. It is important to outline exactly what the fees are as well as the liabilities. It may also be important to you to restrict the agent's powers in representing you.

If an agent or agency wants to represent you, check them out first. Make sure that you want to have your name associated with them. We've had experiences where disreputable individuals wanted to represent us for certain bookings. We refused, knowing that their damaged reputation would, in turn, damage us by association. On the flip side, we've often dealt with reputable organizations who offered us as part of their value-added service. Not only did this provide the additional occasional booking, it also helped spread the word about the quality of our services, leading to more bookings.