

November 5, 2001

Greetings Patrons of the Arts,

GREETING:

Thank you for all the support and positive feedback on HWI#3. In fact, some readers commiserated that they too had, at some point in their lives, worn make up (although that gentleman put a positive spin on it noting that he liked the attention paid to him by the make-up girl) and/or dressed up in whimsical (read: humiliating) costumes for some event or another. Thanks to you all, that made me feel much better about myself.

Others of you inquired as to what I do with all the free time in my day now that I am not "working". Hmmm...I ruminated on that for a moment, and came to the conclusion that I really don't have that much free time in my day. Now, not all of what I do is directly related to being an actor, but I am busy nonetheless. I thought it might be interesting to give a sense of how an actor (or more precisely an aspiring actor) spends his day.

WHAT THE HECK I DO ALL DAY:

Well, I get up at 7am every weekday morning for a self-imposed reading and writing hour (that's two hours total). The writing can be some piece of fiction or my novel, or sometimes the HWI. The reading is 1/2 hour of whatever "classic" I am involved in and 1/2 hour of an acting book (currently Eta Hagen's "A Challenge For the Actor").

Then I usually do some of my acting technique exercises, work on my scenes for classes or work on my audition monologues. Depending on the day I will have auditions, meetings (print agents, networking contacts, etc.) industry seminars and the like. Since I no longer take taxis, I typically walk everywhere I need to go (most of this stuff takes place between 15th and 47th streets on the west side so much of the travel is east-west). Therefore, a total of about three hours of a day is spent ambling from one place to the next. Of course, none of this time is wasted - I have perfected reading while walking, or sometimes I will practice my scenes out loud as I walk - freaks people out big time!) In addition, I spend an hour or so each day looking in various resources for casting calls and when I find one that I think is a good fit for me, I send off my headshots & resume accompanied by a cover letter. All this stuff has to be logged in excel so I know exactly who I sent my headshot to and with whom I need to follow up. This is time consuming and tedious, but important. I could use a personal assistant.....think GS would give me a loaner?

Then there are acting classes that take place in the evenings with the exception of one Monday morning class. I currently have classes Monday, Wednesday and Thursday from 6pm to 10:30pm (and most of them run over til at least 11pm - sometimes later). Friday nights I try to take in something at the theater (usually Off-Broadway or a film - leisure for you all, work/study for me).

I hit the gym five days per week. 3 days of weight lifting, 2 days of cardio - unlike the investment banker, an actor's body is his most important instrument and must be taken care of. Not that you will be

ogling me in nuthin' but my Calvins on a Times Square billboard any time soon, but the need to stay in shape is greater now.

I also play soccer every Tuesday evening (indoor) and Sunday morning (outdoor). Not that y'all care, but I thought I would throw that in there. Not that any of you are better people for knowing this, but since some of you asked, well, I listen to my readers.

MY SO-CALLED LIFE...AS AN ENTREPRENEUR:

All of you who read the first Insider know that it was inspired by fellow Whartonite, John Lusk's Mouse Driver Insider - a newsletter for his start-up Platinum Concepts that sells the MouseDriver - a computer mouse in the shape of a golf club driver head. What you may not know is that John and his partner Kyle (business partner, that is) wrote a book about their experience, which is due at a bookstore near you in early 2002 ("The MouseDriver Chronicles: True Life Adventures of an Entrepreneur" Pegasus Books). Well, I had the chance to check out the advanced reading copy of the book and, aside from being a very humorous read, it made me think how similar what I am doing now is to what John and Kyle are doing. The more I thought about it, the more similarities I discovered between being an actor and starting up a business - in fact, they are really the same thing. Here's what I mean:

First, the actor is an entrepreneur. He (and by He I mean She as well) is working for himself and no one else. Every second he spends on his career is time spent for himself, not some stodgy, tabacky-smokin', three-piece suit wearin', head-choppin' executive.

Okay, so you have a one-product company. The product, obviously, is you. After deciding that you, in fact, want to sell your product you must determine if there is a market. Do you have "the look" that agents, casting directors and producers want to know better? Do you have any talent? Okay, yes, you have those to a certain degree, but there must be some product development. Product development takes the form of classes in scene study, improvisation, voice and on-camera work that improve on the existing product. Many actors are hesitant to bring their product to market before it is fully developed, but one thing I learned from John's book is that sometimes it is better to get the product out there, start selling and getting feedback, while simultaneously refining and improving the product. This is the path that I am taking - auditioning while concentrating on developing my craft.

Next comes marketing. Actors MUST market themselves. This is very obvious for those in the business world, but sadly, many (most?) actors do not get this, or they get it, but simply abhor it. On a basic level, marketing is the headshot and resume (which all actors have) and yes, these are the basic marketing tools. But there are other, more subtle ways to market oneself. The most important probably is just getting out there and telling your story.....doing the "N" thing - that's right, NETWORKING!

Actors seem to be deathly afraid of it, but it is the key to getting ahead in this business, as it is with any business. A casting director recently told me that he didn't think that Ashley Judd was such a great actress, but admitted that she charms the pants off of every director, producer and CD that she meets. She is intelligent, well-spoken (they

don't always go hand in hand) and has no aversion to schmoozing). Of course, being drop-dead gorgeous doesn't hurt.

Then you have your sales force. Of course your top salesperson should be you, but you also have a few other important sales channels. Your agent (if you have one) is obviously key. Then, as you get further along in the business you have casting directors who like your work and recommend you to directors (I'm not quite there yet). Then there is your network of contacts, people that you have talked to, friends of friends, fellow actors - basically anyone who knows your story and is keeping an ear or eye out for any opportunities. Of course this also includes, most righteously, one's mother - who is hopefully one's biggest fan out there. Momma Jahns has come through with some clutch contacts and industry related opportunities.

Okay. So you have done market research, developed a product and conceived a marketing and advertising plan. Next you have to tackle business development. Which market segment or sub-segments will you go after? Film? TV? (soap, episodic), Theater? (drama, musical), Commercials? Print?, etc. What geographical areas? NYC? LA? both? What about International? (There is a market in Japan for western men - especially if they can speak the language). Of course, it is not usually a matter of personal preference. Height and looks play a significant role in what markets an actor is right for (ie. "you are too short for print modeling" or "you have that perfect soap opera look").

So you can see, I am an entrepreneur in the truest sense of the word....or at least it helps me believe that I'm not wasting my MBA. Hmmm....maybe I should contact investors and sell equity in AROL to raise money (is that ticker symbol taken?). A highly speculative investment to be sure, but one that I, for one, am confident will pay dividends in the future.

One caveat to what was said about the 'business' of show business. I make a distinction between being an 'artist' and being in 'show-business'. There are purists out there who think that doing film, TV or even Broadway is selling out to the non-artist establishment. They believe that unless one has taken a vow of poverty and is purely focusing on the creative process of theater acting for themselves alone and not for some non-actor producer, they are not really actors. Well, I am fine with those definitions in which case I am not an artist or an actor, but rather a show-businessman. Fine with me....show me the money!

That said, the business of acting is a difficult one. I was lunching with a relatively successful LA-based actor friend of mine in Union Square last week and he was grousing about the life of a classically trained actor saying that if one has an MBA or JD or MD from a top school one is fairly certain of getting a steady, good paying job (I imagine he was referring to pre-2001) whereas if one has an MFA (Masters of Fine Arts) from, say, NYU's Tisch School (which is what my friend has) it doesn't mean you will get work. You go to an audition the same way that someone who just left the investment banking profession and is now acting does and that person is equally likely (or unlikely) to get the role. This is not a stable or predictable business.

Well this is sad news for my friend, but this is good news as far as I am concerned - given that I do not have an MFA or classical training.

THIS ISSUE'S STATISTICS:

Days since becoming an "actor": 155

Number of Films: 2

Number of TV shows: 0

Number of Theater shows: 1

Number of Subscribers to the Insider: 123

Website Hits: 0 (www.aroljahns.com). Many of you offered names of web designers...thank you. I may have to look into that since I clearly am not making time myself to do it, despite purchasing software for this purpose.

Mood Meter: Mixed. I am somewhat disappointed that I am not going out on auditions every day given that the entertainment industry is as depressed as the rest of the economy, but I am excited about some of the projects and prospects that I do have going. More on those as they progress.

LAST ISSUE'S STATISTICS:

Days since becoming an "actor": 130

Number of Films: 2

Number of TV shows: 0

Number of Theater shows: 1

Number of Subscribers to the Insider: 119

Website Hits: 0 (www.aroljahns.com is shabby, but just about ready to put up. I just need to get a host. It should be viewable online by the next issue. To be honest though there are other aspects of my career to prioritize before a cyber shrine to myself).

Mood Meter: Despite the depressing stories of the struggling, out-of-work actor and the realization that this acting thing is not all looks and personality, my mood remains very positive. I love what I am doing and there are so many avenues to express my creativity that I am just having fun exploring them all at the moment.