How I Met My Manager

In addition to performing, I also teach a lot of aspiring actors and musicians.  One of the most common questions I get is “How do I get a manager or agent?”

There’s a common misconception that getting an agent or manager will catapult your career.  First of all, legitimate agents aren’t usually interested in you unless you are at least mid-career.  They want to see you already making money in your field, so they know you are worth investing time in.  An exception to this is if you are a type that is hard to find and in high demand, but that is rare.  Second, even when you do sign with someone, a large amount of work is still going to come from your efforts.  Building and maintaining a team, be it a manager, agent, record label or distributor can seem an arduous task.

So what can you do about this?  My best advice is to forget about it.  Focus on your craft.  Perform as much as possible.  Record great albums and promote yourself.  Trust that every creative thing you do will lead to another opportunity.

How I met my manager is a perfect example of this.  I decided, as a young adult, that I would perform as much as possible, and teach acting, music and songwriting to support myself.  I wanted to teach as my “day job”, so that everything I did would be in the creative arts.

One of the teaching gigs I got was to teach songwriting at a week-long workshop in the Catskills.  A surprising perk to this job was being able to network with the casting directors, actors, agents and managers who taught along side me.

I was devoted to my students and we worked hard to write great songs that week.  We performed the songs in front of the entire workshop.  One of the acting coaches took notice.  She came up to me and told me she had never seen someone connect with kids in such a beautiful way and she was amazed at the songs I was able to get the kids to write.

We stayed in touch and I learned that she taught an acting class.  I also heard a rumor that she was a manager but she never brought it up so I never brought it up.  I took her acting class for 3 years, secretly hoping she would sign me.  I took all her advice and enjoyed being her student.  Finally, she told me she was a manager and said she would like to represent me as an actress.  I was thrilled.

I still went to open call auditions but if I booked an acting job myself, she negotiated the contract, and was often able to get more money than originally offered.  In addition, she sent me to auditions that I would never have had access to on my own.

A few years later, we were in L.A., promoting a film we were both involved in.  Every time I travel, I like to book a music show, so I get a chance to perform in a new city and connect with new fans.  I invited her to the show.  She was so blown away by my performance that she decided right then and there to open a music department in her office to rep me as a singer/songwriter as well.  I taught her everything I knew about the music industry, and she utilized her TV and theater resources to strengthen the department.  She now has other artists signed to the music wing and we continue to work and grow together.

You just never know where or how you will meet the members of your team.  I wasn’t out looking for a manager when I was teaching that workshop.  I was just trying to do a good job, and make friends with those around me.  Networking works in strange ways.  You never know when a colleague, friend, or fan will become a major player in your career.