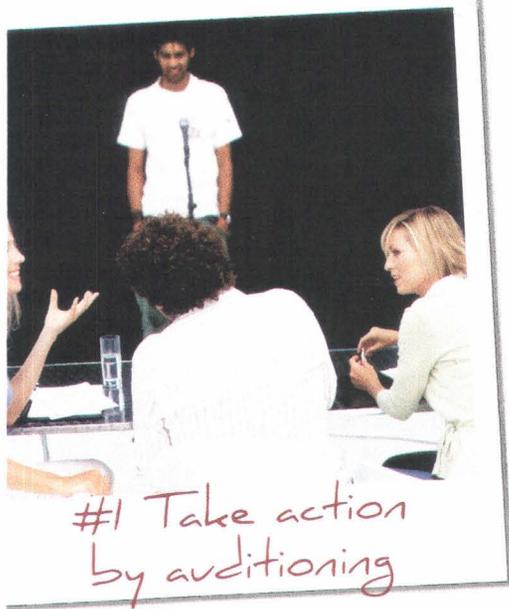


# 10 WAYS TO TURN A PRODUCTION UNION



Every actor at some point has probably had the same thought: I'd love to act in that production, but it's not SAG-signatory. I'd be breaking Rule One.

The biggest problem with this scenario is actors perceive the situation as a problem. In actuality, it's a tremendous opportunity.

"It's important for Guild members to remember that you and your professionalism are the best organizing tools that the union has," said Nayla Wren, Screen Actors Guild's director of organizing. "Whenever you hear that a project is non-union, you should feel empowered to ask yourself, 'What can I do to change that?'"

One such member who does that on a regular basis is Diane Matson of the Seattle Branch, who has gotten work in her home state and across the country simply by identifying projects and finding out if she can audition.

Matson said her policy is to tell the producer up front that she is a SAG member, because she feels it gives her an edge, but others may wish to wait until after they've been offered the role.

No matter what happens with the audition, "I always offer to introduce them to my SAG rep," she said. "That way, they can hear reasonableness instead of

rumors. Half the time the filmmakers are not sure, or they say, 'If we hire you, we'll go SAG.'"

Matson said prospecting for new employers is something everyone can do.

"I'm very persuasive! I'm trying to get the job, right?" she said. "I sell myself, and part of me is SAG."

Here's a breakdown of how you can make the process work as well as Matson does:

- Audition. Although **Rule One requires that you do not accept non-union work**, nothing prohibits you from auditioning for this work and seeking the opportunity to turn non-union work union.
- Get the part. You're likely to stand out in a non-professional, non-union crowd. Do your best audition, develop a friendly relationship with the producer, and once you're offered the role...
- Explain, in a kind and professional manner, that you can't do the role unless it's union. Let the producer know that going union is not nearly as complicated or expensive as they might imagine.
- Get your SAG staff involved. At every Regional Branch office and in the New York and Los Angeles offices, there are staff members waiting to help you. These staff members can find the right agreement for a production at any budget level. They also can reach out to the producer and address any concerns.
- Keep the dialogue going—among SAG staff, the producer and you. Almost every producer prefers working with professional talent, but many producers don't realize how easy it is to work with SAG contracts. The more open you and the producer are about mutual plans and concerns, the easier it is for SAG to find the right contract for the job.

## #2 Make dollars and sense arguments

Another SAG member who's dedicated to making every production union is Justin

Kreinbrink, an Arizona Branch alternate council member. He said some indie producers get turned off if an actor uses the words "professionalism" and "union" because of the misconception that these words translate to "expensive." You have to approach the conversation carefully and with tact.

Producers basically just need to know that actors like you will save them takes, which will save them time (and all the production costs associated with it). In the end, they're going to want a quality product they can sell—not to mention a clean chain of paperwork.

"Remind the producer that without a SAG contract, it is nearly impossible to get the completed film placed with a reputable distributor," Kreinbrink said. "This is due to the legal protection distributors feel a union provides. With non-union productions, there's no double check to make sure the proper releases and paperwork for each actor are in place. However, if the project was done under a SAG contract, SAG verifies that all paperwork was properly submitted. As a result, distributors feel it is safer for them to take on the responsibilities of distributing the film."

Which brings us to our third thing you can do to help us turn a production...

## #3 Hand them a contract digest

You've probably seen the small red pamphlet that summarizes each of Screen Actors Guild's low budget agreements. They are available upon request, and are meant for your use, but they are also available to producers who you think might be willing to use you. Just send an e-mail to your Branch executive or [nayla.wren@sag.org](mailto:nayla.wren@sag.org) and copies will be sent to you.

"One of the best lines you may ever say is, 'I am a member of Screen Actors Guild, and would you like to know how easy it is to hire me?'" Arizona and Utah Branch Executive Don Livesay wrote in a recent Branch newsletter. "Have a digest on hand,