



Shane Jacobson.

writers, directors), producers, and screen executives whom they consider to be credible.

"Take a look at their current client list and see what types of artists they represent – do you fit into the niche? If you are interested in eventually working overseas, see what relationships they have in those markets."

Few actors in the Australian industry need a manager, although the role is more common in the larger US market. A manager, such as Harry M. Miller, can charge commissions of more than 10 per cent and takes a far more personal and supportive role in an actor's life and career.

Actor and celebrity Shane Jacobson is represented by Shanahan in Australia and ICM Talent overseas, however, manager Deb Fryers also oversees his career. They first began working together on surprise hit *Kenny* in 2006 and, since then, she says they've developed a brother-sister relationship. She even recently bought a house for him while he was overseas. "We say that I'm like the CEO of his life," she says.

A good agent not only has contacts with casting directors and other key people across the industry, but they can sometimes successfully push an unlikely candidate to be considered for a role. Recently, Davidson says Nicky Gluyas successfully convinced a reluctant producer to audition a certain actor for a theatrical production – he got the lead role and the show was a success.

"Sometimes you have to do the lateral thinking for the producers – and then a lot of hard work pushing, pushing, pushing and cajoling, cajoling, cajoling and trying to get your people into the room," Davidson says. "And then it's the actor's job to display their talent."

It is not an easy job. Woodburn says that in the US market, artists have a better understanding of the industry's business side.

"They understand the importance of their agent/manager and treat them with respect. I find that agent/managers in Australia are seen as the bottom of the food chain by some and are not treated with the respect that they deserve. It's a very difficult job that doesn't get the recognition and appreciation that it should."

Nonetheless, there is no easy path to success, according to Davidson.

"If you'd be happy doing something else you should do that – you should only take on this vocation if it's something you have to do – there's nothing else which will fulfil your heart and soul because the road is so difficult." **f**

Agent provocateur

Talent runs thick in the Australian screen industry but without appropriate representation, it doesn't count for much. Brendan Swift looks at what a good talent agent can bring to the table.

AN ACTOR'S LIFE is a difficult one. Fame can be more fleeting than work and is dependent on do-or-die auditions. Rejection is a constant bedfellow. A good agent can help an actor (or literary talent) find new opportunities as well as navigate the industry.

"A good agent should be trying to shape their clients career rather than putting them into anything that's going to make money this week," Nicky Gluyas Mangement manager Ric Davidson says.

"Even if they're not getting auditions the agent is almost certainly putting them forward for briefs but it's just that the calls for the auditions aren't coming in. That sometimes is difficult for an actor – they don't seem to be getting anything when in fact the agent is putting them up for everything that they're suitable for."

The laws which govern the behaviour of agents varies state by state. In New South Wales, agents are required to hold an entertainment industry representative's license, enabling them

to act as an agent or manager. An agent is typically also restricted to charging commissions of no more than 10 per cent (upfront fees have been associated with various scams). Commissions ensure that if an agent doesn't help an actor find work, then they aren't getting paid. (The Media Entertainment and Arts Alliance has a record of registered agents available on its website.)

Rob Woodburn, who began his career in the US where he was trained as an agent, runs local agency Rise Media Group, which represents artists such as Luke Jacobz.

"As an artist, you need to train, show up on time, know your lines and treat your agent/manager with respect as they are your lifeline," Woodburn says. "Look at yourself as a brand and consider your career as a business while keeping your creativity at the forefront."

The largest two agencies in Australia are Shanahan Management and RGM Artist Group. Both have gone through a certain level of recent upheaval: in late-2011 Shanahan lost agents Lee-Anne Higgins and Natasha Harrison who started United Management with

former RGM and Alchemy Artists agent, Trish McAskill, taking a number of clients with them.

RGM meanwhile, is in a rebuilding phase – it posted a pre-tax profit of \$623,000 over the year ended June 30, 2009, just prior to a failed public listing. Former Southern Star Group boss Hugh Marks bought the business earlier this year with former Channel Ten chief executive Grant Blackley and recently said that the agency would become more pro-active in finding opportunities for talent, while founder Robyn Gardiner would be taking a more hands-on role.

Whether an actor prefers to go with a large or small agency can come down to the nature of the individual. The agent-to-client ratio is an important one to consider.

"Artists are sometimes very sensitive creatures – the nature of the business means you have to cope with a lot of rejection so some people's personalities really need support," Davidson says.

Woodburn advises actors to do their research before contacting an agent: ask casting directors, other artists (actors,