

# Making the magic happen

## What Every Entrepreneur Can Learn From Actors

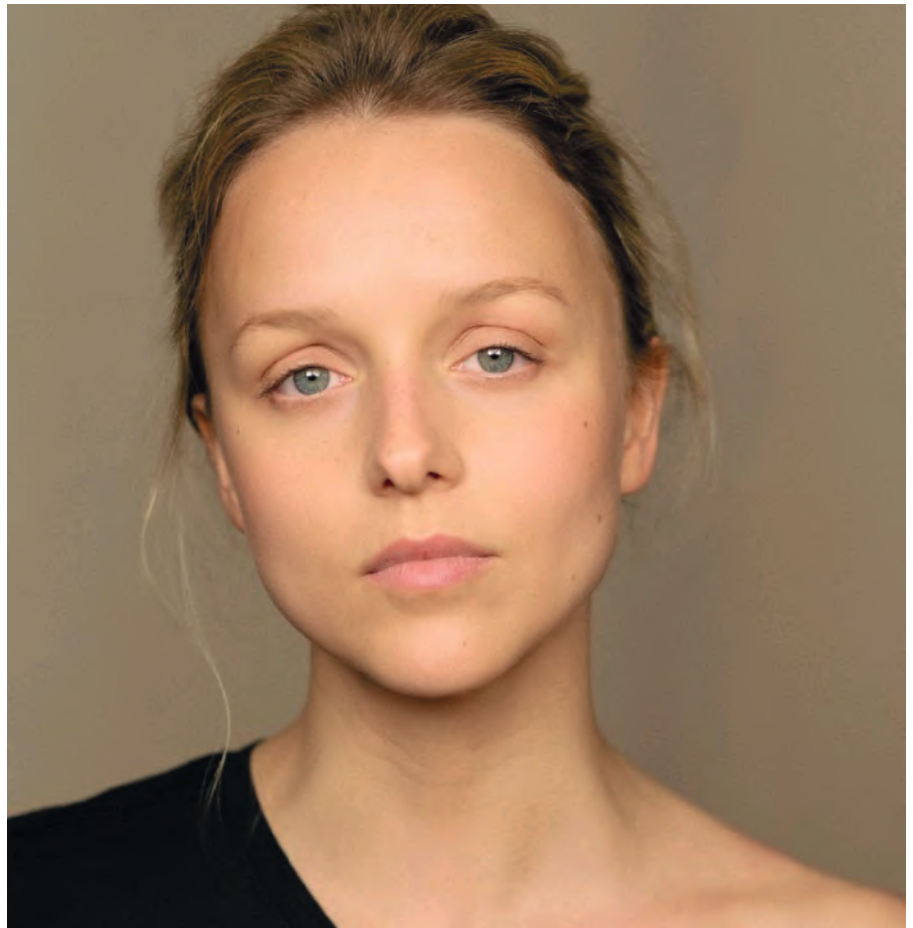
Being an actor is all about making the magic happen on stage or a movie set but beneath this façade of glamour and fantasy lies a brutal industry in which you must learn to survive and thrive.

I have been acting professionally for ten years now, including three years of training at a prestigious London Drama School, and I am still learning so much about my craft and what helps me to perform at my best in what can often be very pressurised environments. The parallels within the corporate world are abundant and there is lot we can learn from each other.

Perhaps a good place to start, is managing nerves. For me, nerves are something which never go away and to a large extent, I hope they never do. Before going on stage, my heart is pounding; sweaty palms, butterflies in my stomach – but without this I can't even begin to imagine what kind of performance I would give. Flat. Casual. Generic. A few adjectives which are far from desirable when it comes to storytelling, art, and expression. For me, this fight or flight sensation is electric energy which gives an intensity and presence which is so incredibly powerful in performance. Working with high profile actors of course gives way to a lot of pressure to 'get it right' and remember lines, let alone being natural, authentic and frankly just good. I know how important the role of breathing is for me to feel good. Accepting that I will be nervous, recognising what my breath is like and listening to my thoughts – catching any negative spirals are all things which have contributed greatly to my ability to deal with nerves.

One of the first things I noticed when I began doing some work in the corporate world was how great the need for storytelling is in pitching. In theatre and screen, we talk about storytelling in relation to how the events unfold and in what way they are communicated; drawing at heartstrings, creating conflict and making the audience laugh. It's through these elements listeners are engaged and empathetic with the characters and what is going on. Actors must convey authentically their emotions, their fears, their desires and threaded deep within that, their true intentions. Storytelling is at the very heart of our existence. We share stories in a way that no other species can. In the acting profession, rehearsal is a must and therein lies a fine balance between the detailed and unbridled exploration of the rehearsal, and the spontaneity in the moment which makes people lean in and listen. The fire and ice as my teacher used to say.

When filming or on stage, the role of the ensemble is huge. It is important that you are



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actively listening, connected, and supporting each other, so that if someone forgets a line, or something goes awry, the cast members with you are present and connected enough to pick you up. Live performance is always about keeping the ball in the air, never letting the energy drop - keeping the flame alive.

Behind the scenes, there is a lot going on beneath the surface. Many auditions don't go your way. Dealing with failure has become an essential mechanism which needs to be exercised on a regular basis. When you spend a long-time preparing scenes, and learning lines, finding out you have been unsuccessful yet again can be very brutal. I find that I need a grieving period when this happens, if it's something I have invested in with heart and soul then the last thing I am able to do is pretend that I don't care. I do care. And letting myself be a bit sad and disappointed and sometimes downright angry has become part of my process. Once I have done that I can recalibrate and begin the next phase which is

where I call upon my growth mindset. What did I do well? What could I improve? Through these questions I can be honest with myself and improve my process. Never taking anything personally but seeing each bump in the road as an opportunity for growth. This gears me up for the next audition or performance if I am in a show, or filming where all of the disappointment and feelings of having failed have been shed and I can go in all guns blazing. Because these failures, big and small are happening all the time so when you start to harness this mindset, it changes everything.

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