

THE FOUR FACTORS FOR BOOKING COMMERCIALS

You get a commercial callback, and 10-25 actors are up for the same role as you. You either do a great job and don't get booked, or you do a "so-so" job and you get the commercial. Rather confusing, right? You have to ask yourself what is going on in the minds of those making the decisions. How are they judging the actors and their auditions? Who gets booked-is it luck? Wonder what the factors are that lead to that casting choice?

Based on all my experience as an actor, casting director, and teacher, I do believe there is a casting formula utilized when booking actors for commercials. It is only my educated opinion, but I really believe that this is the formula and value percentages.

It's 30 percent what you look like. Since there is some agreement between the ad execs and the director on the aspirational and/or inspirational looks of those being called back, your physicality is still important, but now since it is still subjective, it is about 30 percent. What's also relevant in the looks area-especially at the callback-is when it is necessary to match actors with spouses, friends, colleagues, or family-do you look like you belong together. And often in commercials featuring several actors, it is important to have a variety of physical and ethnic types, as well as different ages of people.

Then, 40 percent is talent and creativity. What you do in your audition, how you take direction, your creativity, and talent now become the prominent factor.

About 20 percent is your attitude, personality, and essence. Those behind the table at callbacks are watching everything you do from when you walk in the room until you walk out. How you take direction, what questions you might ask, and how you relate to the director and others actors you might be auditioning with. Those decision makers are checking to see if your personality and essence is right for the role, and if there are any reasons why you would be difficult to work with.

The last 10 percent is wildcard factors. These could be anything from your wardrobe (which one of the decision-makers really likes for the spot) to any of the execs or director having subjective preferences or dislikes. I've heard so many wildcard reasons, i.e. one of the clients, not choosing an actress that everyone else wanted because she reminded him of his ex-wife. It could be the smallest thing like shaking hands with the director whose hands are sweaty which makes the director uncomfortable. There are too many subjective wildcard factors to cover here, but I am sure you can imagine others.

These considerations are just parts of the casting equation and are all considered. Know that if you are a great physical type for a particular spot and do a great audition, but come off arrogant or too silly then you probably won't get the job. Also, if you have a really great personality and essence and are the perfect type, but don't do a good job with the material or scenario then again, you probably will not get booked.

This information should help you to not take it personally or think you did a bad job when you don't get a booking, and it should help you have the insight you need to put the odds in your favor for booking commercials. And by the way a lot of this is also