

Director-Actors RoundTable (DART) - Summary of Points

Casting		
	Director	Actor
Dealing with Rejection	Send a mass BCC to the actors regarding whether they're casted not.	To not leave the actors hanging, have the production team let the actors know whether they are rejected or not.
Feedback	Feedback should be from experienced directors & casting agents who know what they're talking about which will be valuable for the actors.	Feedback on the audition would be helpful for the actor.
		Actors appreciate more precise feedback regarding their acting & audition. Provide them with verb choices such as, "Can you flirt more?", instead of giving generic, vague choices like, "Can you give that character more layers?".
Casting Calls	Casting calls that are publicised should only contain the necessary information & not be over-taken by graphic design.	Make sure to request information regarding the project before taking it on such as knowing about rates, when payment is to be made, the loading territories, rates for over time etc.
	The casting & audition process should be a colour-blind one. Unless race is a requirement, actors should be seen for their talent and what they bring to the audition, not their race.	Actors should audition for characters that they can relate to.
	Be open to how an actor portrays a character differently from what you had in mind. It might bring something more exciting and interesting to the production.	
	Be specific in what kind of actors you want answering to your casting call. Actors may respond to a casting call but then find out you're looking for another kind of actor. E.g. Using the term 'Caucasian' to mean 'White' in a casting call, and then rejecting someone who is Caucasian because they look 'Middle Eastern'.	

	If there is a specific race that needs to be casted, provide a brief description explaining the choice or provide a brief synopsis of the plot.	
	Be transparent with all the business aspects related to the project. Let actors know the loading platforms of the project (e.g. social media, TV, print) and rates provided.	
	Specify in your casting call whether the project is low-paid/unpaid. Transparency is a sign of professionalism.	
	Student films: Negotiate with your teachers to get more time to cast for greater quality in the end-product.	
Casting Process	Be open to casting a diverse group of ethnicities. A diverse cast also opens the door to a larger audience. E.g. A family in a film can be an interracial one and there doesn't need to be a mono-racial cast, especially in Singapore.	
	Casting a minority for the sake of diversity will result in tokenism. Write parts that have depth and a great character arc for minority groups, instead of relying on them for small, token roles.	
Resumés, Headshots & Showreels	Actors should have a standardised formats of their resumés and headshots.	Having an array of photos (full body shots, pictures in other costumes) is helpful for a director in seeing how the actor can fit as the character.
		An actor having a showreel and/or website is an advantage in the casting process.

Audition preparations	Send the actors a brief synopsis of the story and snippets of the script so that they are able to give stronger auditions.	To ensure a more prepared audition, ask questions about the film/character to gain a better understanding of what you're auditioning for. Directors want actors to have done prior work for the characters.
		Make questions asked straightforward and precise as the production team has no time to cater to actors auditioning. Actors should only ask questions they cannot make educated guesses on.
		Be friendly and open to the directors, casting directors etc. outside of the audition room. Directors are also looking for people who they can work well with during film and who works well with the other actors.
In the Audition Room	Be open to an actor's different interpretation of the character. Their portrayal may be more interesting than the initial vision.	Actors should come dressed with some semblance/idea of the character that they're auditioning for.
	Chat with the actors to gauge whether they are easy to work with on-set. Bad auditions result in bad chemistry with a bad end-product. Choose someone with a good working attitude over someone with acting talent but a terrible attitude.	Be flexible in accommodating to new directions given during the audition.
	To test their improvisational skills, consider asking actors to come up with different lines that still suit the scene.	Directors look for actors that fit the emotional range and energy level of their characters, as well as the actors' sincerity in getting the role.
Video Auditions	Video auditions open up a pool of casting choices as actors who cannot make it for auditions are now able to.	If unable to make it for an in-person casting, requesting for video auditions are possible.
	Directors prefer live auditions as they can interact with the actor, gauge their attitudes, personalities, energy levels and build rapport with them. However, video auditions allow directors to gauge the actors and their emotional ranges on-screen.	Fancy equipment is not necessary. As long as you can be seen and heard clearly with basic lighting and decent quality camera, the video is fine. Investment in good sound equipment may help to enhance the quality of the audition video and indicate the actor's professionalism.

	Directors may use video auditions to gauge the actors' creativity in recording the scene and script interpretation.	Dress presentably and professionally. Consider dressing neutrally so that the director can easily imagine casting you in a different role with minor tweaks.
		Screen presence: Directors are looking out for how you emote, how comfortable you are (stiffness of movement, body language). Will be useful to have upper body or full body videos.
		Use props to make it more interesting for the directors watching the video.
Preparing for Auditions	Be mindful of word choice when giving directions. Be concise and specific.	Understand your character's motivations. Avoid overly dramatic performances.
	Avoid pushing the actor to do what you want; instead, keep an open mind and see what the actor can do.	Directors are looking for your ability to respond to different directions on-the-spot and to emote.
Budgets	Be realistic: make sure it's within your budget and skill level to ensure the work produced will be of good quality.	Be aware of your skill level when asking for a commensurate pay.
	Consider negotiating with actors on pay, but in return for the compromise that actors are making, maintain a pleasant relationship.	
Post-Audition	Share photos, notify the actors on when the film will be ready and give them the reel. Be responsive after the production.	

Rehearsals		
	For Directors	For Actors
Tackling the Script	Respect the integrity of the story. Changes can be made but meeting up with the scriptwriter to discuss is the respectable thing to do.	
Preparation for Scenes	In film, have more scene rehearsals with the actors so that filming on set will be a more prepared & smoother process.	Rehearsals as well as acting & technical notes are helpful in actor's preparation for the shoot.
	Rehearse scenes especially complicated ones (e.g. fight scenes, choreographed scenes) a few days before the actual filming. This gives time to experiment, practice & ensure a smooth filming day.	No matter how prepared you think you are, always make sure to rehearse scenes beforehand as it lessens mistakes made during shoot, saves time & creates a better performance.
	When finding difficult to rehearse, find ways to lure an actor into rehearsing by disguising rehearsals with everyday activity. E.g. Bringing actors to the fair to practice shooting when working on a film about the army.	Don't let ego get in the way of taking direction from your director. Rehearsals and feedback are there to give the best performances possible for a production.
	Table reads are very beneficial to the quality of the production. It gives the actors opportunities to understand the story as a whole, decide on choices for their character & suggest new ideas with the director. It also gets the cast all on the same page when starting production.	If given the script beforehand, map out a character arc and make decisions & notes to share with the director during the table read.
	Rehearse with the actor the blocking and camera shots intended for the scene beforehand.	Be quick & receptive to the director's notes to achieve the director's vision and also to have a smoother filming process.
Communication	Communicate the vision and style of film with the actor before production begins. Let them prepare for the style of acting (e.g. dramatic, subdued) in the rehearsal process.	Always ask questions about anything that isn't understood.

	Communicate the vision and style of film with the crew before production begins. Discuss the aesthetics & cinematography with the director of photography. This is so everyone begins production on the same page and that all scenes remain consistent.	Communicate with the director the boundaries and comfort levels early on in the process. This also prevents/minimises any troubles the actor may cause to the production.
	The director should share with the actors how and why they connect with the script. This is so the actors can adjust themselves to what the directors want.	Develop a positive relationship with the production team by treating them with respect and friendliness. This will create a positive environment to work in during the filming process.
	Be transparent with what is expected from the actor. Let them know early on whether there are intimate scenes/fight scenes etc. to ensure that they are on board and comfortable.	Commit to the choices you've made for the characters. Maintain them during the actual shoot.
	Directors should be sensitive with the actors. Be aware if the actors are tired or uncomfortable. Give them breaks.	Be professional even if it's your personal friends who are acting with you. Treat rehearsals seriously; avoid fooling around just because you've landed the role.
	Empower actors to come up with choices. Avoid using "you should..." "you must..." "this is the way it should be..." Consider using "you can try..." "I suggest..." etc.	
	Suggest different actions that the actors can take, instead of using adverbs, for more authentic reactions. (e.g. "Try biting your lip" instead of "Can you do it sexy?")	
	Give the actors time to connect with each other so they can have better chemistry, especially for couple or best friend roles.	
Shooting Schedule	Shooting schedule should be fixed & determined before filming begins so that the actors know what they're signing up for.	Commit to rehearsal schedules. If you make a scheduling error, offer to find another actor who can replace you.

	<p>Come up with a pre-production timetable to plan for rehearsals. Once the cast is confirmed, you can easily ask if they are available for those dates.</p>	
	<p>Communication: explain why you require actors to come earlier (e.g. to familiarise with the set) to foster greater commitment to rehearsals.</p>	

Production/On Set		
	For Directors	For Actors
Before Filming	<p>Make sure to accommodate for the actors who have a different look from the majority (e.g. curly hair, darker skin). The production should make the effort to make these actors look as good as their majority counterparts on screen.</p> <p>E.g. Communicate with your actors as to how to style their hair, or what foundation shade fits them.</p>	<p>It is good to bring along your own set of beauty products (e.g. foundation in your colour, hair spray) especially when working on a low budget production. Production may not always have the tools you need to look good on camera.</p>
	<p>Focus more on your cast than your crew. Give the cast something to do during the holding room waiting time. Engage them in teambuilding exercises. Ask them to get to know each other so that their chemistry will show on-set. Check in with the cast regularly.</p>	
	<p>Explain to actors what is causing the delay (if any).</p>	
Call Times and End Times	<p>Inform the actors early (e.g. at least 2 days before) on call times.</p>	<p>If you are truly unable to end late, inform the crew before filming begins.</p>
	<p>Consider asking for longer shooting times than you need so you have buffer time in case of unforeseeable blunders on the day. If you end early, you'll also boost morale.</p>	
	<p>Consider providing transport for the actors, especially if you overrun.</p>	
	<p>Margin of error: 45 minutes past stated end time. Make a professional promise to the actors to let them walk out after that.</p>	
Minimising Risks and Errors	<p>Consider creating Best Practices for your cast (e.g. after AV shouts, "Action!", wait for around 2 seconds before acting.)</p>	

	Have a first aid kit with diarrhea/stomach problem pills (e.g. po chai pills), vitamin c, dettol, panadol, panadol for menstrual cramps, toilet paper, sweets, bandages, mineral water, coke)	
	Obtain the emergency contact information of your cast.	
	Have back-up plans in the event of equipment failure or bad weather.	
	Inform actors on what to prepare for the shoot, especially if it's outdoors (e.g. at the beach: bring water bottle, sunblock, umbrellas etc)	
In Between Scenes	Give actors a private or quiet space where they will be unbothered for them to prepare for a scene.	When there are shot changes, actors should use their downtime to prepare for the next shot or scene.
	Craft services should always be provided for actors (e.g. snacks, fruits, water). Actors should never buy their own food as they need to use their time to work on their preparation & acting.	Actors must always maintain their professionalism. Lines should already be memorised and actors should already be in character once filming for a scene begins.
Low Budget Productions	If actors have to bring in their own clothes, ask them nicely. Provide them with money to buy clothes for the production. The laundry of the actors personal clothes used for production should be paid for.	If an actor signs onto do a low budget production, the actor should understand the limited resources & should not expect too much from the production crew e.g. high pay, a trailer, make-up crew.
During Filming	Never be silent when filming. Let the actor know whether they are making the right choices or not. Actors are part of the creative project and thus, should always be included.	Always ask the director what the shot size or framing is so that the acting can be adjusted to the shot (e.g. smaller shot sizes mean that the acting has to be more subdued).
	When filming intimate scenes, make sure it's a closed set with only the necessary people in the room. Ensure that the actors are comfortable in such situations.	If certain issues arise when filming a scene, voice out these issues as early as possible so that the production team is able to find a solution.

	Always let the actor know whether they are needed on set & how much time it will take in between shots & scenes. If not, actors will be left feeling very lost & will also waste energy reserves which can be channeled into a scene.	Ask the crew what scenes you are needed for in the day ahead of filming so that you will know what you are getting into for the day as well as give yourself time to prepare.
	Provide the actors with breaks when they're tired and also, enough time to prepare.	If unprepared for a scene or shot, let the director know that you need a moment or two to prepare
	Ensure that the set is safe for the actors and crew. Mark out dangerous areas and communicate with the actors and crew directly.	Actors should listen at all times on set, even if it might not be immediately relevant. An actor that maintains awareness means that they are always ready for sudden changes. It is also a sign of professionalism.
	Allow the actor to make choices instead of over-directing them. If there is something you don't agree with, communicate with the actor clearly and respectfully	Directors have different approaches to their work. The actor must adapt to the director e.g. follow instructions. Know when to back down and not allow your ego to get in the way.
After Filming	If an actor requests to look at the shot or scene filmed, tell the actor to watch the dailies at the end of the day. Most, if not all, actors would not stay on set at the end of the day.	Looking through the shot that was filmed can leave the actor wanting to nitpick their appearance or performance of that scene. Put your trust in the director that the scene filmed is good and move on to the next scene.

Outstanding issues:

1. How to shorten the casting process, especially if it's taking months?
2. How to have more roles for women?
3. How to ensure that the good acting seen during auditions translates to good acting on-camera during productions?
4. How to find good chemistry between actors?
5. How can directors help actors to understand their directions (especially with limited vocabulary)?
6. How to cast when the roles are very specific (e.g. require a specific ethnicity)?
7. There's a repetition of actors playing the same roles (e.g. the elderly). How to access a greater pool of actors?
8. With a script that has little details, are actors allowed to make their own choices?
9. How actors do make adjustments?
10. How different is the experience of casting through a video audition versus a live audition?
11. Can actors assume some of the requirements for casting if they are not explicitly stated?

General Notes

1. Actors and directors should demonstrate empathy for each other in film sets and productions. On the day of productions, nobody wants to see it fail!