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# Logging in to Hollywood

## Would-be stars look for work on line

By Bruce Haring  
USA TODAY

Actress Veronica Farber always wanted to see her name in lights. And she's using the glow of the computer screen to achieve her dream.

Farber is one of a growing number of hopefuls using the Internet to get their faces in front of talent buyers. By taking advantage of the Net's unique reach, they hope to eliminate the tedious and expensive routine of mailing photos and résumés to talent agents, who then forward the pictures to casting directors and producers for TV, film, advertising and stage.

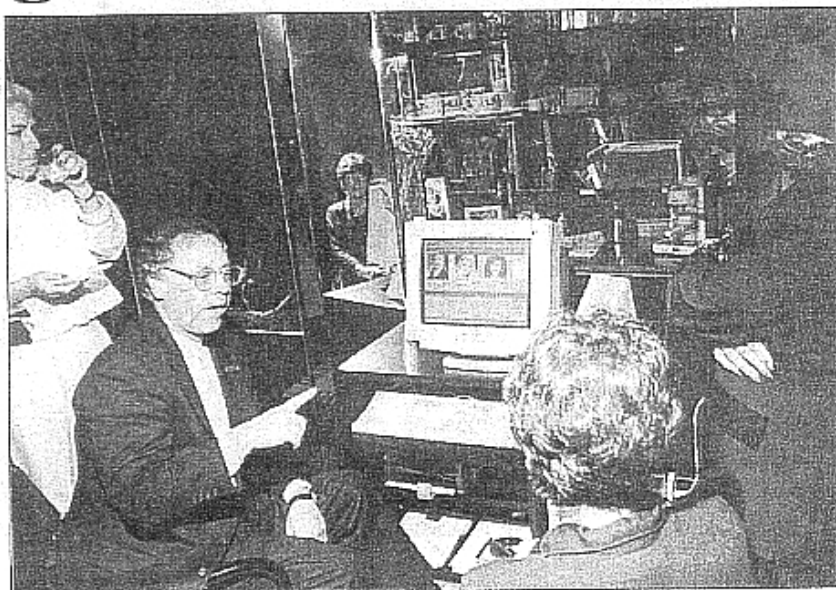
Farber, of Long Island, N.Y., has taken a do-it-yourself approach with her own Web page (<http://www.dfarber.com/veronica>). But many new cyberspace casting agencies are also using the Net, and other companies are attempting to create private computerized systems as a way to expedite the discovery of talent.

So far, all Farber's site has yielded is several registration solicitations from cyberspace talent agencies. But putting her résumé and picture on America Online led to work as an extra in the film *One Fine Day* with George Clooney and Michelle Pfeiffer.

Farber's results may typify prospects on the Net, judging from fellow actors. "No one told me they really had work because of the Web," she says.

There are pitfalls to seeking fame and fortune on line. The Screen Actors Guild (SAG) is monitoring the growth in on-line casting and urges potential customers to do their homework, spokeswoman Katherine Moore says. "Our principal concern is that the performer is not exploited. A lot of (these services) are charging money, and we're getting letters and calls from members saying, 'I paid for three of these and nothing happened.'"

Moore says SAG has specifically endorsed only the Non-



By Chris Uno, AP

**Making the pitch:** Steve Brauner of the fledgling Star Caster Network says the private casting service, which works with 25 casting directors and 25 agencies, is more reliable than Internet-based services.



**Getting exposure:** Actress Veronica Farber keeps headshots on her Web site but admits she hasn't gotten much work that way.

**Traditional Casting Project:** Artists Online, a database of minority and disabled performers and other professionals. But other services have contacted SAG and are considered legitimate, she adds.

One service SAG has heard from is World Wide Stars, a new Net-based casting agency (<http://www.worldstars.com>). President Mark Baker says it has just landed its first assignment, an auto commercial cast from its pool of 250 aspirants.

World Wide Stars makes money by charging actors \$99 a year. "Casting directors get

5,000 pictures a day, so there's no need for them to pay," Baker says. World Wide Stars gives talent buyers a greater range of actors than they might get from an agent, Baker says, and they're "broken down simply by age group. They log in and up come the head shots."

But the Internet is not the answer, says Steve Brauner, one of the founders of the private Star Caster Network. "It's not sufficiently secure, and prone to performance breakdowns," he says. "We find a private network built for the industry obviates those issues."

The system, one of several networks competing for Hollywood's attention, is being tested. Brauner hopes to go on line by month's end. To date, 25 casting directors and 25 agencies are working with Star Caster, which hopes to eventually charge for its services.

His goal: to win the race to wire Hollywood. "Virtually everyone in the business feels there will be one (private network) to emerge victorious," Michael Hirshenson, partner in The Casting Co., a top Hollywood agency, says he's eager for Hollywood to choose such a system: "It will enhance the communication between agents and casting directors. In an industry where time is money, it will save time."

Not everyone thinks posting pictures and résumés is the solution. Nancy Rainford, who has cast films and TV, says it's easier to pick up what agents consider their bible, *The Academy Players Directory*, which lists most of the talent in Hollywood, including superstars.

"The perception is that on-line actors are all less experienced," she says. "Most casting people rely on who they've seen in the past and whose work they're familiar with."