

Careers

Making it Robert Galinsky

TimeOut
New York

A school for reality TV hopefuls? Meet the man who cooked up a million-dollar idea. By Mike Olson

Like so many good stories, this one starts on Craigslist. Last March, acting coach Robert Galinsky got a call from a desperate dog groomer who had seen one of his acting-lesson ads. "He said, 'I want to be on TV, but I have no idea how to do it,'" Galinsky explains. Six weeks of training later, and Jorge Bendersky was the breakout star of the reality series *Groomer Has It*. "That's when it hit me," says Galinsky. "I googled 'reality TV school' and nothing came up. I got goose bumps and registered about 25 different URLs." New York Reality TV School (newyorkrealitytvschool.com) was born.

Whether or not you're a die-hard fan of unscripted programming, you might find the idea of people learning how to be themselves pretty damn ridiculous. But there's a method to this madness, and Galinsky (who also produces live events like the Manhattan Monologue Slam) saw parallels between what he teaches would-be actors and what makes for good TV. "It's all about confidence, being clear in communication and being authentic," he says.

Galinsky brought in casting directors Robert Russell (*The Apprentice*) and Risa Tanania (*Cash Cab*), as well as his brother, fellow acting teacher Philip Galinsky, to help spread the word. Each student at the three-hour, \$139 seminar—containing about a dozen pupils when *TONY* sat in—learns tips on how to stand out from the riffraff, ranging from the simple (maintain eye contact) to the more ethereal (use your body as an instrument).

The hopefuls are taught to identify what makes their stories compelling, and for good reason. "It's beyond reality at this point," Galinsky explains. "It's personality TV. And you don't even have to come in first place to be noticed." So when attendees



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are given 20 seconds to introduce themselves and reveal a juicy secret—all to a room full of strangers—you can almost picture the confessional cameras rolling.

The seminar ends with a panel of reality TV sages—a *Survivor* here, a *Next Top Model* there—imparting

their wisdom. And while getting life lessons from Trends of *I Love New York* "fame" is a little surreal, it's no laughing matter in a world where 12,000 people audition for *American Idol*. It's why Galinsky's school has the makings of a legitimate brand—one that will only get stronger as its alumni

Get the part!

A very small taste of what students learn at New York Reality TV School.

- 1 Do your homework.** You have seen the show you're trying out for, right? Right?! Find one that makes sense for you. Just because *What Not to Wear* is casting doesn't mean you need to apply.
- 2 Don't act like an actor.** Be sincere. If the producers wanted to hire a professional, they would have.
- 3 Practice your story.** Know what makes you the right fit and be armed with examples why. Don't just say you're "interesting"—share specific experiences that prove you are.
- 4 Keep sensitive material on the surface.** Was Dad a drunk? Did you just cheat on your wife? The people who get the part are the ones who bare their souls.
- 5 Stay open-minded.** Be willing to take chances and be uncomfortable, and you'll stand out.

conquer the world. (Exhibit A: The graduate who won 10 grand on *Hole in the Wall*!) Maybe that's why Galinsky plans to open satellite schools in L.A., London and Australia and is about to sign his own TV deal. A reality show about a reality TV school? It doesn't get any realer than that.

CLASS PICTURES



(From left to right) The group channels their inner-improv performer as they stroll down the Reality Perp Walk and yell their reactions to make-believe scenarios; Billy Garcia from *Survivor: Cook Island* stops by to share his expertise; Galinsky's even getting noticed by the Finnish media

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