

## &gt;&gt;Snapshot

**Alex Ranahan**

Actor

Equity



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**Can you tell us a bit about your career to date?**

I got into acting by accident. After following a classmate to what I thought was another class, it turned out to be an audition, and I got the lead role. From then on, I had the bug. I’m five years out of drama school and in that time have covered a lot of ground both in scope and geographically.

The stand-out experiences for me have been a presenting job in Spain, which I really enjoyed. I also did six months in China, where I created bespoke workshops on subjects such as singing, dancing, acting and communication skills for private schools.

Working in China was a bit of a crash course in life, training and myself. The work was very demanding as each school wanted something different. I found things really tough and started to read and implement a range of self-help books, which helped me develop strategies and more helpful attitudes to the challenges I was experiencing. I was delighted to end my time in China on a high point when I heard that one of the schools that I’d been working with had won two awards at a National Competition with a production I had written and produced with them. They won best actor and best production at The Hope Youth Education and Drama competition.

On finding jobs in short supply, I decided to create my own work and have created a comedy series, which I’m currently working on getting commissioned for. I think it is important for me as an actor to be able to create my own opportunities.

I always wanted to be an actor and thought it would be a linear path but in reality, the route has been much more meandering. In addition to acting I’ve enjoyed work as an acting coach. I’ve taught comedy writing as well as adapting and accumulating lots of other additional core skills. I did immersive Theatre at Boomtown and Glastonbury festivals, which I enjoyed

much more than I expected to.

My acting roles have been mainly in film. However, in 2016, I worked with Edward Bond, a director and writer who wrote *Saved*, a play which contributed to the abolition of censorship in UK theatres. The production I worked on actually failed but working with him was incredible. I think he is a genius and I learned so much from him. I grew stronger from the whole experience.

Over time, I’ve realised that I sometimes behave like an employee where you get work and then kind of expect to get more. Only it often doesn’t happen, so I’ve learned to be proactive and create more of my own opportunities. There was a time when I thought marketing and money were dirty words, but I’ve turned this around and now see it as a beautiful exchange.

**What do you like most about your work?**

I love being in creative environments where people bounce ideas off each other, where everyone is accepted for who they are, and where we all mesh together to create something bigger than any of us could have created individually. It’s a great joy working with other creatives with the skills to build something from scratch that’s beautiful, and that hopefully, will have an impact on others. For me, that is making a real contribution.

**What are the biggest challenges of maintaining a freelance career?**

My biggest challenge is knowing what to do next - how to make the optimum choice about where to put my focus. It’s easy to become a ‘jack of all trades, master of none’. Keeping the focus on one priority and not being distracted by other opportunities can be really challenging. It takes time to set up a business and, sometimes, you have to be patient and choose one path at a time to get things done properly.



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### Have you added new work/skills to your portfolio over time?

The main skills I've added have been around creating workshops as well as writing, directing and producing. I've also worked hard on developing my own resilience and self-belief. It's important to find ways to keep going in order to develop and maintain a sustainable business and to work smarter rather than just harder to make sure you are around for the long term.

### What is the biggest challenge of learning the skills that you need?

It's difficult to find the time to put everything into practice. I've learned lots on the workshops but I don't always have time to go through the notes again and use what I've learned. You need to identify where your business needs improvements, and which ones will make a significant difference. It can be difficult to choose what skills to upgrade.

### What FEU Training courses have you attended?

- Get motivated
- Face up to networking
- Speak up for yourself
- Overcoming career detours
- Grow your business through email marketing
- How not to be skint
- How to run a crowdfunding campaign

### What are the most important things that you've learned?

I got so much from the *How not to be skint* workshop. Why didn't someone teach me this five years ago?! It laid out ways of financial planning that are so straightforward and much more useful and professional than what I was doing.

On the *Get motivated* day I learned that changing the way you are describing something can make you much more motivated to get it done.

I've learned that there is always more to learn. The workshops have helped me develop and improve how I find the balance between my work and family.

Drama school teaches you how to do the job but not how to find the work, or cope with all the mental health aspects or how to run a business. FEU Training helps us develop all those very necessary support skills that are an essential foundation to what we do.

“FEU Training provides a safe happy environment, and you get to learn relevant information.”

### What has encouraged you to attend FEU Training sessions?

FEU Training events get me out of the house, and after setting off to London from Bristol at 6am, the coffee and biscuits are very welcome! I love meeting up with all the other people too. We are all in the same boat, even where our struggles are slightly different, they complement each other. We are all awesome, and I only realise that when we come together like this. It's great to give and accept advice and help each other flourish.

It's so useful to talk to people at different stages of their career. I've made friends and discussed possible future collaborative projects with fellow attendees. I've had work tip-off and suggested networking events, which I didn't expect. I also recently reconnected with a former colleague.

FEU Training provides a safe and happy environment, and you get to learn relevant information. Sometimes we get bogged down in what we are doing and forget why we got into it in the first place. These events get us together, and we can share what we have to offer and get the chance to have fun together. It's a wonderful benefit of my Equity membership.

