

Dear Jill

I'm thinking about attending a model scouting event...

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I'm thinking about attending a model scouting event. Can you tell me more about how these work and if they're legitimate?

—Sara T., Dallas, TX

Dear Sara,

Some model scouting companies are legit and place numerous new faces with prominent agencies across the United States. Others are mainly interested in placing numerous dollar bills in their sleazy pockets.

Fortunately, weeding out the money grubbers from the star makers isn't too tough. First, find out which agencies will be attending the event. Most conventions invite (and often pay the expenses of) scouts from agencies in the major markets (New York, Miami, L.A.) and from the smaller markets close to the convention site. If scouts from the big-name agencies (e.g. Elite, IMG, Ford, Next, Wilhelmina, or T) are attending, it's a good sign. Legit agencies won't endorse a scam or attend an event which isn't a viable source of talent.

Check with the agencies which the convention claims to have on the roster (all contact information can be found in our modeling agency directory, *First Option*; order one if you haven't already!). Also, ask where past convention attendees have been placed. Again, call these agencies; someone should be able to back up the story or tell you to back out before you give up the big bucks.

Unfortunately, regardless of whether the company is on the up and up, big bucks are often involved. But, then again, your \$400+ fee may be less than what you would spend to make a trip to New York. This way the agents come to you (you should be able to find an event nearby—a couple of companies host twenty a year, scattered across the U.S.), plus your money should also buy you a weekend of learning about the business and meeting many people who have been

where you are and many people who are where you are. Events attract anywhere from 100 aspiring models to 1000+. Usually there is some kind of pre-screening process, which weeds out the most unlikely-to-succeed modeling candidates. Beware: An invitation to the event does not necessarily mean you have what it takes; it just means you might have what it takes. These companies aren't going to parade a bunch of dogs in front of the agency scouts, but they're also not going to make any money if they only invite people who look like they walked straight out of a Ralph Lauren ad.

I can tell you that you, your mom, your boyfriend/girlfriend are not the best judges of your modeling potential. If you want some feedback before considering one of these events, I would suggest sending photos to some agencies first. Sometimes unsolicited pics get lost in a pile of junk mail and sometimes a pretty face catches a second look. But, whether you mail in photos or go for the face-to-face, keep a few tips in mind. You don't need professional photos, but don't take polaroids at the gas station on your way to the event or take fuzzy snapshots in your prom dress or have your bathtub in the background (I saw all of these

at a scouting event recently). Find some natural light, keep the makeup and hair-spray to a minimum, steer clear of K-Mart catalog poses, and have someone who can hold a camera steady shoot some face shots and body shots. For more advice on this topic, see "Keep It Real: New York Agents on Unsolicited Pics," in the Holiday 2000 issue.

One of the large, reputable scouting companies which hosts events across the nation is Model Search America (212-343-0100). A company out of Iowa, Genesis, focuses on grooming and developing a select group of aspiring models and holds events several times a year (877-201-9144). Feel free to contact *Tear Sheet* for our feedback on these events and any others you are researching.

We'll be watching for you in our new "Scout About" section!

—Jill

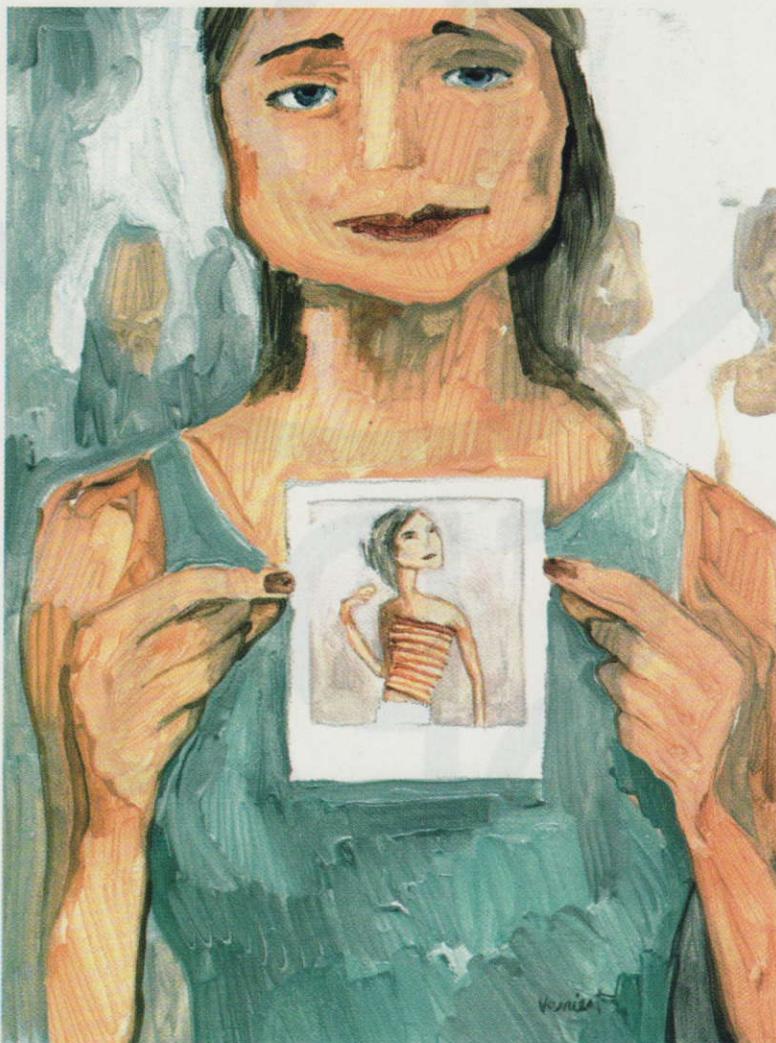


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