

The Producer in Preproduction

One morning you wake up with an idea for a documentary that will surely blow away the one you saw the night before. You grab your camera and start shooting. After a week of collecting miles of footage, you store it in the “to-do” file on your computer and, as your friend suggested, also on your external backup drive until you have time for editing. When you finally revisit it, the shots don’t look so good anymore, and the whole idea has somehow lost its punch. You eventually scrap the whole project.

Of course, this is a fictitious scenario, but it is used to illustrate the importance of carefully thinking about and preparing the whole production process before ever getting into the actual production. This step is the all-important preproduction phase.

You will notice that when studying this text you cannot simply remain a passive reader. You will be required to wear several hats and assume a variety of production roles. Sometimes you will act as producer and then, a few chapters later, function as director or as a specific member of the technical crew.

In this chapter you are the producer—a person who not only comes up with a great idea but, contrary to the introductory scenario, also carries it successfully to and through the actual production phase. In section 2.1, What Producing Is All About, you are responsible for the first step of preproduction planning—to move from idea to script—and how to move from there to the production phase. Section 2.2, Information Resources, Unions, and Ratings, covers research aids, personnel unions and other legalities, as well as audience and ratings—just in case you want to be an actual producer.

KEY TERMS

demographics Audience research factors concerned with such data as age, gender, marital status, and income.

production schedule The calendar that shows the preproduction, production, and postproduction dates and who is doing what when and where.

program proposal Written document that outlines the program objective and the major aspects of a television presentation.

psychographics Audience research factors concerned with such data as consumer buying habits, values, and lifestyles.

rating Percentage of television households tuned to a specific station in relation to the total number of television households.

share Percentage of television households tuned to a specific station in relation to all households using television (HUT); that is, all households with their sets turned on.

target audience The audience selected or desired to receive a specific message.

time line A breakdown of time blocks for various activities on the actual production day, such as crew call, setup, and camera rehearsal.

treatment A brief narrative description of a television program.

What Producing Is All About

Producing means seeing that a worthwhile idea gets to be a worthwhile television presentation. You are chiefly responsible for all preproduction activities and for completing the various tasks on time and within budget. You are responsible for the concept, financing, hiring, and overall coordination of production activities—not an easy job by any means! But even if you happen to take on the creation of a show all by yourself, you still have to act as your own producer.

As a producer you may have to act as a psychologist and a businessperson to persuade management to buy your idea, argue as a technical expert for a certain piece of equipment, or search as a sociologist to identify the needs and the desires of a particular social group. After some sweeping creative excursions, you may have to become pedantic and double- and triple-check details, such as whether there is enough coffee for the guests who appear on your show.

Considering the painstaking work you have to do before ever getting into the production stage, you may not want to become a producer. But as a professional in television and digital cinema production, you cannot escape the all-important planning details of the preproduction phase. Even as a video journalist, you will have to make preproduction decisions while on the run.

► PREPRODUCTION PLANNING: FROM IDEA TO SCRIPT

Generating program ideas, evaluating ideas, devising a program proposal, preparing a budget, and writing the script

► PREPRODUCTION PLANNING: COORDINATION

People and communication, facilities request, production schedule, permits and clearances, and publicity and promotion

► ETHICS

Observing the prevailing ethical standards of society

PREPRODUCTION PLANNING: FROM IDEA TO SCRIPT

Although each production has its own creative and organizational requirements, there are nevertheless techniques, or at least approaches, that you can apply to television and digital cinema production in general. Once you know the producer's basic preproduction activities, you can transfer those skills to whatever position you hold on the production team. To help you become maximally efficient and effective in your preproduction activities, we focus here on program ideas, program proposal, budget, and script.

Generating Program Ideas

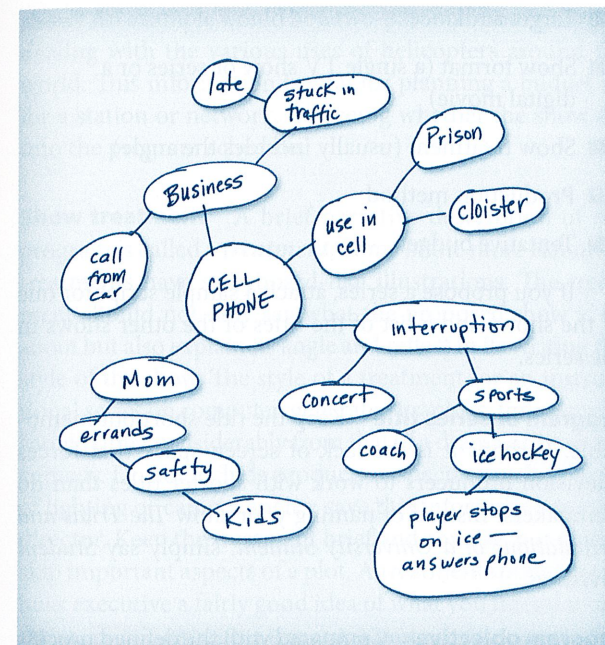
Everything you see and hear on television or in the movie theater started with an idea. As simple as this may sound, developing good and especially workable show ideas on a regular basis is not easy. As a professional television producer, you cannot wait for the occasional divine inspiration but must generate worthwhile ideas on demand.

Despite the volumes of studies written on the creative process, exactly how ideas are generated remains a mystery. Sometimes you will find that you have one great idea after another; at other times you cannot think of anything exciting regardless of how hard you try. You can break through this idea drought by engaging several people to do brainstorming or clustering.

You certainly know what group brainstorming is all about: everybody tosses out wild ideas in the hope that someone may break through the conceptual blocks and bring an end to the idea drought. The key to successful brainstorming is to not pass judgment on any comments, however far-fetched they may be. Anything goes. When playing back the audio-recorded comments, you may find that the totally unrelated comment may just trigger a new approach.

Another, more personalized and structured idea generator is clustering. This technique is a type of brainstorming wherein you write down your ideas rather than say them aloud. To begin you write a single keyword, such as *cell phone*, and circle it. You then spin off idea clusters that somehow relate to the initial keyword. **SEE 2.1**

As you can see, clustering is a more organized means of brainstorming, but it is also more restrictive. Because clustering shows patterns better than brainstorming does, it serves well as a structuring technique. Although clustering is usually done by individuals, you can easily have a group of people engage in clustering and then collect the results for closer scrutiny. **ZVL1** PROCESS → Ideas



2.1 PARTIAL IDEA CLUSTER

Clustering is a form of written brainstorming. You start with a central idea and branch out to whatever associations come to mind.

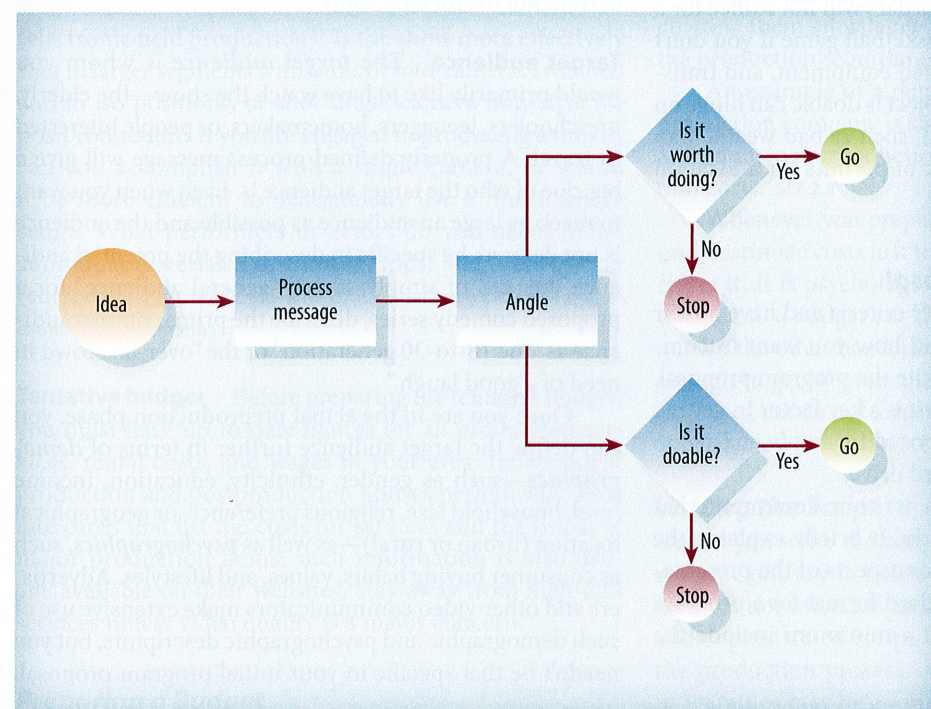
Evaluating Ideas

Evaluation of the ideas is probably the most important step in the preproduction process. The two key questions you need to ask are: *Is the idea worth doing?* and *Is the idea doable?* If you can answer both with an honest yes, proceed to the formulation of a process message.

If your answer to either or both questions is *maybe* or *no*, stop right there and find a better idea. **SEE 2.2**

Is the idea worth doing? Whatever you do should make a difference. This means that regardless of whether you produce a brief news package, a longer feature, or a major motion picture, it should have a positive influence on somebody's life (ideally on all people watching your program).¹

1. Stuart W. Hyde has lectured and written about significant vision for more than half a century. See his *Idea to Script: Storytelling for Today's Media* (Boston: Allyn and Bacon, 2003), pp. 58–64. Nancy Graham Holm, an Emmy award-winning journalist and former head of the TV Journalism Department at the Danish School of Journalism, says, "Any story worth telling has significant vision" [her emphasis]. She defines significant vision as "a problem to be solved, a challenge to be met, an obstacle to be overcome, a threat to be handled, a decision or choice to be made, a pressure to be relieved, a tension to be eased, a victory to be celebrated, a kindness to be acknowledged." See her *Fascination: Viewer Friendly TV Journalism* (Århus, Denmark: Ajour Danish Media Books, 2007), p. 51.



2.2 IDEA EVALUATION

Once you have translated the idea into a process message and found a useful angle, you need to ask two crucial evaluation questions: *Is the idea worth doing?* and *Is the idea doable?*

Fortunately, your idea passed the evaluation test, which means that you can progress to the formulation of the process message and the angle. Recall from chapter 1 that the defined process message is the basic program objective—what you would ideally like the viewers of your target audience to learn, do, and feel when watching your program. The angle is the specific focus or twist you give the story to get and keep the viewers' attention and have the actual process message—what the viewer actually perceives—come as close as possible to the defined one. The clearer you are about what your program should be and achieve, the easier it will be to write the program proposal, prepare the budget, develop the script, and decide on the remaining preproduction steps—but there remains one more question to ask.

Is the idea doable? This is determined by whether you have the necessary budget, time, and facilities available to get the production accomplished. You may have a relevant idea that has significant vision, but if you don't have the money to pay for the necessary production people, equipment, facilities, and especially the necessary time, you had better abandon the project at this point. If you have only one week to produce a story, you can't do a documentary that depicts the hard life of a Sherpa in the Himalayas. The availability of three small camcorders will not suffice for a live telecast of a high-school basketball game if you don't also have a switcher, its associated equipment, and transmission facilities. Whether a project is doable can hinge on less obvious deficiencies as well, such as bad weather, an inexperienced crew, or the lack of permits for a location or union affiliation of the talent.

Devising a Program Proposal

Once you pass the two feasibility criteria and have a clear idea of the process message and how you want to communicate it, you are ready to write the program proposal. Don't take this proposal lightly; it is a key factor in getting your program on the air as opposed to simply ending up in a "good idea" file on your hard drive.

A **program proposal** is a written document that stipulates what you intend to do. It briefly explains the program objective and the major aspects of the presentation. Although there is no standard format for a program or series proposal, it should at a minimum include the following information:

- Program or series title
- Program objective (defined process message)

- Target audience
- Show format (a single TV show or series or a digital movie)
- Show treatment (usually includes the angle)
- Production method
- Tentative budget

If you propose a series, attach a sample script for one of the shows and a list of the titles of the other shows in the series.

Program or series title Keep the title short but memorable. Perhaps it is the lack of screen space that forces television producers to work with shorter titles than do filmmakers. Instead of naming your show *The Trials and Tribulations of a University Student*, simply say *Student Pressures*.

Program objective Compared with the defined process message, this is a less academic description of what you want to do. For example, rather than say, "The defined process message is to have high-school students exposed to at least five major consequences of running a stop sign," you may write that the program's objective is "to warn teenage drivers not to run stop signs."

Target audience The **target audience** is whom you would primarily like to have watch the show—the elderly, preschoolers, teenagers, homemakers, or people interested in travel. A properly defined process message will give a big clue of who the target audience is. Even when you want to reach as large an audience as possible and the audience is not defined, be specific in describing the potential audience. Instead of simply saying "general audience" for a proposed comedy series, describe the primary target audience as "the 18-to-30 generation" or the "over-60 crowd in need of a good laugh."

Once you are in the actual preproduction phase, you can define the target audience further in terms of **demographics**—such as gender, ethnicity, education, income level, household size, religious preference, or geographical location (urban or rural)—as well as **psychographics**, such as consumer buying habits, values, and lifestyles. Advertisers and other video communicators make extensive use of such demographic and psychographic descriptors, but you needn't be that specific in your initial program proposal.

Show format Do you propose a single show, a new series, or part of an existing series? How long is the intended

show? An example would be a two-part one-hour program dealing with the various uses of helicopters around the world. This information is vital for planning a budget or, for a station or network, for seeing whether the show fits into the program schedule.

Show treatment A brief narrative description of the program is called a **treatment**. Some of the more elaborate treatments have storyboard-like illustrations. The treatment should not only say what the proposed show is all about but also explain its angle and reflect in its writing the style of the show. The style of a treatment for an instructional series on computer-generated graphics, for example, should differ considerably from that of a drama or situation comedy. Do not include production specifics such as types of lighting or camera angles; save this information for the director. Keep the treatment brief and concise, but do not skip important aspects of a plot. A treatment should give a busy executive a fairly good idea of what you intend to do.

SEE 2.3 ZVL2 PROCESS → Proposals → treatment

Production method A well-defined process message indicates where the production should take place and how you can do it most efficiently. Should you do a studio production or a location shoot? Is it a multiple- or single-camera studio production or a single-camera EFP (electronic field production)? Is the show more effectively shot in larger segments with three or four cameras switched and in iso positions, or shot single-camera film-style for postproduction? If you are engaged in producing a movie, can you accomplish it with a single camera, or would it be more efficient to occasionally use a multicamera setup? What performers or actors do you need? What additional materials (costumes, props, and scenery) are required? ZVL3 PROCESS → Methods → location | studio | single-camera | multicamera

Tentative budget Before preparing the tentative budget, you must have up-to-date figures for all production services, rental costs, and wages in your area. Independent production and postproduction houses periodically issue rate cards that list the costs for services and the rental of major production items; such information is also usually available on their websites. Stay away from high-end services unless video quality is a major concern.

Preparing a Budget

When working for a client, you need to prepare a budget for all preproduction, production, and postproduction costs

regardless of whether the cost is, at least partially, absorbed by the salaries of regularly employed personnel or the normal operating budget. You need to figure the costs not only for obvious items—script, talent, production personnel, studio and equipment rental, and postproduction editing—but also for items that may not be so apparent, such as recording media (memory cards can be quite expensive), props, food, lodging, entertainment, transportation of talent and production personnel, parking, insurance, and clearances or user fees for location shooting.

There are many ways to present a budget, but the usual way is to divide it into preproduction (for example, script, travel to locations and meetings, location scouting, and storyboard), production (talent, production personnel, and equipment or studio rental), and postproduction (editing and sound design). Most production companies show their overall charges in this tripartite division so that the client can more easily compare your charges with those of the other bidders.

When you first present your proposal, the client may be interested not so much in how you broke down the expenses but more in the bottom-line figure. It is therefore critical that you include all the probable expenses regardless of whether they occur in preproduction, production, or postproduction. Computer software can be of great assistance, helping you detail the various costs and recalculating them effortlessly if you need to cut expenses or if the production requirements change.

An example of a detailed budget of an independent production company is shown on page 32. It is structured according to preproduction, production, and postproduction costs. SEE 2.4

Whenever you prepare a budget, be realistic. Do not underestimate costs just to win the bid—you will probably regret it. It is psychologically as well as financially easier to agree to a budget cut than to ask for more money later on. On the other hand, do not inflate the budget to ensure enough to get by even after severe cuts. Be sensible about expenses, but do not forget to add at least a 15 to 20 percent contingency. ZVL4 PROCESS → Proposals → budget | try it

Writing the Script

Unless you write the script yourself, you'll need to hire a writer. Contrary to books and magazine articles, a media script is not intended as literature. Even the most literate and sophisticated script is only an intermediate step in the production process. Analyzing scripts in the context of literature may be an interesting academic exercise, but it says as little about the actual television show or film as does a city map about the way the city looks and sounds.

TREATMENT FOR A ONE-HOUR SPECIAL ON THE HOMELESS

Title: HOMELESS

Proposed Actual Program Length: 45 min.

This program is intended to make the audience feel rather than watch the plight of being homeless. It will not show the customary degrading living conditions of the homeless, such as a homeless woman pushing a shopping cart past elegant shopping windows or seeking shelter in an abandoned box next to a garbage container. In fact, it will not show any footage of homeless people. Instead, it will trace a young college professor's ill-fated trip from Boston to a convention on the West Coast.

When he arrives in San Francisco, his suitcase does not show up on the baggage carousel. Only one suitcase keeps circling--and it's not his. When he gets to the baggage claims office, it is crowded. He is nervous because all the conference information and his presentation material is in the suitcase. He finally gets to the claims desk, and the stressed official asks him for the tags and the hotel. Yes, his bags will be delivered to the hotel. Yes, he has the claim tags. He finds them in his wallet. Which hotel? He can't remember the exact name. It's in the folder, and the folder is in the suitcase. An impatient, not-so-friendly man behind him curses and jostles him, trying to get him out of the queue.

The downtown airport bus does not go to his hotel. He takes a taxi. The cabbie circles a block, takes out his map, and finally drops off the professor in a neighborhood that doesn't seem to be an appropriate convention venue. Was he taken for a ride? When he tries to pay the expensive fare, his wallet is

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2.3 TREATMENT

The treatment tells the reader in narrative form what a program is all about.

missing: cash, driver's license, credit cards, everything--gone. The cab driver radios his boss: call the cops or let him go. He lets him go.

The lobby smells. His cell phone doesn't work. Yeah, he can use the phone. But it will cost him. No money, no phone. He again interrupts the woman behind the counter with his story. "Yeah, sure! Can't you think of a better one? There is a phone outside." The graffiti-sprayed booth has only wires hanging out where the phone is supposed to be. The phone book is missing, replaced by an empty liquor bottle. Urine smell. It gets dark and starts to rain. He walks and walks and finally finds a working phone. But he has no money. The few people he approaches on the street walk faster or ask him for money. Finally, a friendly woman with a skirt that is much too tight and much too short listens to his story and gives him a dollar bill. Laughing: "I am usually the one who gets paid." He changes the bill in a bar, is allowed to use the public phone, and calls his friend on the East Coast. He reaches the answering machine.

He is outside again, in the rain, in a place he doesn't know. Hungry. Tired. He is homeless.

He finally flags down a police car and is taken to the station. No, they don't have any information about his convention. But, eventually, a police officer does a computer search and finds the name of the convention hotel. The officer, off-duty now, takes him there. Thanks! Very much! On the way in, he encounters a man, begging for coffee money. "I don't have any money." "Oh yeah?" He gets to the lobby and finds one of his colleagues with a drink in his hand and a slightly crooked nametag on his jacket. Home! Safe!

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2.3 TREATMENT (continued)

2.4 DETAILED PRODUCTION BUDGET

These detailed budget categories are structured according to preproduction, production, and postproduction costs. Ignore the categories that are not applicable.

PRODUCTION BUDGET

CLIENT:
PROJECT TITLE:
DATE OF THIS BUDGET:
SPECIFICATIONS:

NOTE: This estimate is subject to the producer's review of the final shooting script.

SUMMARY OF COSTS	ESTIMATE	ACTUAL
PREPRODUCTION		
Personnel		
Equipment and facilities		
Script		
PRODUCTION		
Personnel		
Equipment and facilities		
Talent		
Art (set and graphics)		
Makeup		
Music		
Miscellaneous (transportation, fees)		
POSTPRODUCTION		
Personnel		
Facilities		
Recording media		
INSURANCE AND MISCELLANEOUS		
CONTINGENCY (20%)		
TAX		
GRAND TOTAL		

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Nevertheless a script represents an essential production element of any film and of all but the most routine television presentations.

Besides telling the talent what to say, a script indicates how a scene should be played and where and when it takes

place; it also contains important preproduction, production, and postproduction information. The script is such a critical production component that if a show does not need a script, a scriptlike notice is sometimes distributed, indicating the name of the show, the date, the director, and

2.4 DETAILED PRODUCTION BUDGET (continued)

BUDGET DETAIL	ESTIMATE	ACTUAL
PREPRODUCTION		
Personnel		
Writer (script)		
Director (day)		
Art director (day)		
PA (day)		
SUBTOTAL		
PRODUCTION		
Personnel		
Director		
Associate director		
PA		
Floor (unit) manager		
Camera (DP)		
Sound		
Lighting		
Video recording		
CG		
Grips (assistants)		
Technical supervisor		
Prompter		
Makeup and wardrobe		
Talent		
Equipment and facilities		
Studio/location		
Camera		
Sound		
Lighting		
Sets		
CG/graphics		
Video recorder		
Prompting		
Remote van		
Intercom		
Transportation, meals, and housing		
Copyrights		
SUBTOTAL		

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the remark "No script." (The basic structural ingredients of a television and film script and the various types of scripts are covered in chapter 3.)

When hiring a writer, make sure that he or she understands the program objective and, more specifically, the

defined process message. If a writer disagrees with your approach and does not suggest a better one, find another writer. Agree on a fee in advance—some writers charge enough to swallow up your whole budget. **ZVL5** PROCESS → Ideas → scripts

2.4 DETAILED
PRODUCTION BUDGET
(continued)

POST PRODUCTION	ESTIMATE	ACTUAL
Personnel		
Director	_____	_____
Editor	_____	_____
Sound editor	_____	_____
Facilities		
Dubbing	_____	_____
Window dubs	_____	_____
Editing suite	_____	_____
DVE	_____	_____
Audio sweetening	_____	_____
ADR/Foley	_____	_____
Recording media	_____	_____
SUBTOTAL	_____	_____
MISCELLANEOUS		
Insurance	_____	_____
Public transportation	_____	_____
Parking	_____	_____
Shipping/courier	_____	_____
Wrap expenses	_____	_____
Security	_____	_____
Catering	_____	_____
SUBTOTAL	_____	_____
GRAND TOTAL	=====	=====

PREPRODUCTION PLANNING:
COORDINATION

Before you begin coordinating the production elements— assembling a production team, procuring studios, or decid- ing on location sites and equipment—ask yourself once

again whether the planned production is possible within the given time and budget and, if so, whether the method (medium translation of the defined process message) is indeed the most efficient.

For example, if you are doing a documentary on the conditions of residence hotels in your city, it is certainly

easier and more cost-effective to go there and video-record an actual hotel room than to re-create one in the studio. On the other hand, if you are doing a series of interviews on what makes an effective teacher, the studio—even a small one—will serve you best. Keep in mind that the studio affords optimal control but that EFP or location shooting (digital cinema) offers a limitless variety of scenery and locations at little additional cost.

Once you have made a firm decision about the most effective production approach, you must deliver what you promised to do in the proposal. You begin this coordina- tion phase by establishing clear communication channels among all the people involved in the production, and you take care of the facilities request, the production schedule, permits and clearances, and publicity and promotion. Again, it is not your occasional flashes of inspiration that make you a good producer but your meticulous attention to detail. Preproduction is not the most exciting part of creating a show, but, from a producer's standpoint, it is the most important one.

People and Communication

Whom to involve in the post-script planning stages depends, again, on your basic objective, the defined process message, and whether you are an independent producer who has to hire additional personnel or whether you are

working for a station or production company that has most essential creative and crew people already on its payroll and available at all times.

As a producer you are the chief coordinator among the production people. You must be able to contact every team member quickly and reliably. Your most important task is to establish a database with such essential information as names, positions, e-mail addresses, home addresses, busi- ness addresses, and various phone and fax numbers. SEE 2.5

Don't forget to let everyone know how to contact you as well. Don't rely on secondhand information. Your communication is not complete until you hear back from the party you were trying to reach. A good producer triple- checks everything.

Facilities Request

The facilities request lists all pieces of production equip- ment and often all properties and costumes needed for a production. The person responsible for filling out such a request varies. In small-station operations and independent production companies, it is often the producer or director; in larger operations it is the production manager or director of broadcast operations.

The facilities request usually contains information concerning date and time of rehearsal, recording sessions, and on-the-air transmission; title of production; names

Production Personnel Contact Information Sight Sound Motion Instructional Video Program 4					
Name E-mail	Position	Home address Work address	Home phone Work phone	Home fax Work fax	Mobile phone
Herbert Zettl hzettl@best.com	Producer	873 Carmenita, Forest Knolls SFSU, 1600 Holloway, SF	(415) 555-3874 (415) 555-8837	(415) 555-8743 (415) 555-1199	(415) 555-1141
Gary Palmatier bigcheese@ideas-to-images.com	Director	5343 Sunnybrook, Windsor 5256 Aero #3, Santa Rosa	(707) 555-4242 (707) 555-8743	(707) 555-2341 (707) 555-7777	(707) 555-9873
Robaire Ream robaire@mac.com	AD	783 Ginny, Healdsburg Lightsaber, 44 Tesconi, Novato	(707) 555-8372 (415) 555-8000	(415) 555-8080	(800) 555-8888
Eliz von Radics eliz66@gmail.com	Editor	88 Seacrest, Marin EvR Assoc, 505 Main, Sausalito	(415) 555-9211 (415) 555-0932	(415) 555-9873 (415) 555-8383	(415) 555-0033
Renee Wong rn_wong22@outlook.com	TD	9992 Treeview, San Rafael P.O. Box 3764, San Rafael	(415) 555-3498		(415) 555-3498

2.5 DATABASE: PRODUCTION PERSONNEL

To be able to quickly contact each production team member, the producer needs reliable contact information.

of producer and director (and sometimes talent); and all technical elements, such as cameras, microphones, lights, sets, graphics, costumes, makeup, video recorders, video and audio postproduction facilities, and other specific production requirements. It also lists the studio and the control room needed or the remote location. If you do EFP or on-location movie work, you need to add the desired mode of transportation for yourself and the crew and the exact on-site location. If the production involves an overnight stay, communicate the name and the location of the accommodations, including the customary details, such as phone numbers, when and where to assemble the next morning, and so forth.

Like the script, the facilities request is an essential communication device; be as accurate as possible when preparing it. Late changes will invite costly errors. If you have a fairly accurate floor plan and light plot, attach them to the facilities request. Such attachments will give the crew a fairly good idea of potential production problems they may face. Facilities requests are usually distributed as “soft copy” via the internal computer system as well as on hard copy. **SEE 2.6**

Regardless of which type of production you do, always try to get by with as little equipment as possible. The more you use, the more people you need to operate it and the more that can go wrong. Do not use equipment just because

it is available. Review your defined process message and verify that the chosen equipment is indeed the most efficient and that the necessary equipment is actually available and within the scope of the budget. On the use of specific equipment and similar technical production items, consult the director of your show or someone on the technical staff, which may include your favorite DP or TD (director of photography or technical director, respectively).

Production Schedule

The **production schedule** should tell everybody involved in the production who is doing what when and where over the course of the three production phases. It is different from a **time line**, which is a breakdown of time blocks for a specific production day. Create a realistic production schedule and stick to it. Assigning too little time will result not in a higher level of activity but usually in a higher level of anxiety and frustration. It is almost always counterproductive. On the other hand, allowing too much time for a production activity will not necessarily improve the production. Besides being costly, wasting time can make people apathetic and, surprisingly enough, results in missed deadlines.

One of the producer’s most important responsibilities is to monitor the progress of each activity and know where everyone stands relative to the stipulated deadlines. If you don’t care whether deadlines are met, you might as

2.6 COMPUTER-BASED FACILITIES REQUEST

This facilities request lists all equipment needed for the production. Usually, the equipment permanently installed in a studio need not be listed again, but it must be scheduled.

Check-out...

Client: Herbert Zettl,111112345
 Class: Aesthetics of BECA 340.1

Check-out date: Mon, Apr 22 ...time: 12:04 PM
 Check-in date: Mon, Apr 22 ...time: 5:00 PM

Qty.	Item	ID
1	Gyx2 camcorder	--
1	Omni Dynamic Mic	--
1	Xlr (M-F)	0000000087
*	No Batteries!! Just Camera!!	*
*	Hamid may pick up	*

Add: Group video Lavaliers
 Show: Conflicts Thu, Apr 18 2:26 PM

Broadcast and Electronic Communication Arts Department at San Francisco State University

well do away with them. If schedules aren’t kept, find out why. Again, do not rely on secondhand information. Call the people who are behind schedule and find out what the problem is. It is your job to help solve the problem and get everyone back on track or to change the schedule if necessary. Always inform all production people of all changes—even if the changes seem irrelevant or insignificant.

Permits and Clearances

Most productions involve people and facilities that ordinarily have no connection with your station or production company. These production elements need extra attention. Get the necessary permits for your crew to gain admission to a convention or sporting event, as well as a parking permit close to the venue. You may also need a permit from city hall (the mayor’s media coordinator and the police department) or an insurance policy to shoot downtown. Do not ignore such requirements! “Better safe than sorry” applies to all field productions—not just to actual production activities but also to protecting yourself from legal action if a production assistant stumbles over a cable or a bystander slips on a banana peel while watching your shoot. (Copyright and union clearances are discussed in section 2.2.)

Publicity and Promotion

The best show is worthless if no one knows about it. Meet with the publicity and promotions departments (usually combined in one office or even a single person) and inform them of the upcoming production. Even if the target audience is highly specific, you must aim to reach as many viewers as possible. The job of the publicity people is to narrow the gap between the potential and actual audience.

Regardless of your specific producing job—managing ideas and production schedules or coordinating nontechnical and technical production facilities and teams—don’t leave anything to chance.

Finally, you should remember and act on the following brief sermon.

ETHICS

Whatever you do as a producer, realize that your decisions, however trivial they might seem at the time, always affect a very large number of people—your audience.

Always respect and have compassion for your audience. Do not believe critics or cynics who proclaim that

all television audiences have an average intelligence of a five-year-old. In fact, you and I are part of the television audience, and neither of us would appreciate having our intellect downgraded in this way by a disgruntled producer.

Never breach the prevailing ethical standards of society and the trust the audience has—and inevitably must—put in you. This doesn’t mean that you should play censor to a writer who occasionally breaks the mold with frank ideas and a bold vision. It means that you and your production team should not lie to your audience. Do not fake a news story to rev up a slow news day; do not edit a speech to favor your political candidate.

While realizing that producing is always connected with compromise, ask yourself if—and, if so, to what extent—your show will contribute to the quality of life of your audience. Even if you do a relatively simple production that you plan to show on YouTube, you should realize that you have a potential worldwide audience. Be aware of, and respect as much as possible, their different customs and values.

You probably noticed that such a code of conduct concerns not just the producer but everyone working in television.

MAIN POINTS

- ▶ Producing means seeing to it that a worthwhile idea becomes a worthwhile television show. The producer manages a great number of people and coordinates an even greater number of production activities and details.
- ▶ Generating program ideas on schedule is facilitated by brainstorming and clustering.
- ▶ Preproduction includes planning how to move from the idea to the script.
- ▶ Important preproduction items are the program proposal, the treatment, the budget, and the script.
- ▶ The coordination tasks in preproduction are establishing communication among all personnel involved, filing a facilities request, creating a realistic production schedule, securing permits and clearances, and taking care of publicity and promotion.
- ▶ A good producer triple-checks everything.
- ▶ All your actions must live up to the prevailing ethical standards. As much as possible, respect the different customs and values of your worldwide audience.