

## PRODUCTION PROJECT GUIDELINES

When considering a video or multimedia production, there are many elements you should think about. Whether you are planning to spend \$10,000 or \$100,000, the same considerations should be looked at. The thoughts that follow can be applied to video, film and multimedia productions.

Any responsible production company will do one important thing when beginning their relationship with you. - they will ask a lot of questions. When you think about it, you're bringing in a person or group that may know nothing about your company, your industry, your products, or your services. How can they adequately develop a promotional tool while not understanding those elements? By asking a lot of questions they will better serve you in providing their services.

We have written this short document to give you the highlights of what's involved in producing a project for you. While it was written drawing on our 36+ years of experience, there are many points that will change over the course of any individual production. Flexibility is as important as planning in a project.

1) Every project is different. Each has its own direction, subtleties, budget and goals. It is the experience of the production company that will aid in determining your true need - offering suggestions and making your experience easy, efficient and successful, while also saving your time and money.

2) **There is NO substitute for advance planning.** As with any situation that involves many people, places and budgets, TIME IS MONEY. And while there are many times that a producer may not charge for small individual efforts, it takes a lot of people and expensive equipment to professionally produce a quality production. We may shoot your scenes on our \$80,000 Sony camera or new digital cameras and post produce it on modern digital equipment costing hundreds of thousands of dollars. Our core team of professionals represent nearly 300 years of broadcast and multimedia experience

3) How many different people or job descriptions does it take to produce a project?

a) You'll have a producer. - That one directing force to keep your project on time, on target and within budget. He will coordinate all the people and elements to make sure things run smoothly. He is the one main liaison between you and the many people it will take to accomplish your goals.

b) A director will take charge of your video and photographic needs. He will draw on years of experience to make sure your pictures show what you want using quality and creativity to keep the show interesting to the viewer.

c) Lighting is important in many situations. In certain situations, a lighting director will be brought in to make sure that the mood or the setting is adequately lit. It is important to enhance the product, people or setting to achieve your goals of selling a product or communicating a point.

d) A segment producer (or production assistant) is important. There are times when little details need to be addressed or accounted for. It's a quality PA who makes sure everyone else is up to speed with

changes, additions or deletions to the project. That one person whose focus is to keep the rest of the crew on track and efficient in their own particular areas of responsibility.

e) There is one cardinal rule for video and multimedia projects. **THE SCRIPT IS THE BLUEPRINT FOR PRODUCTION**. Writing your project is most important. Start off with a script that doesn't meet your goals and your project is doomed for failure. In many cases, your assigned producer may also be the writer on your project. This is because of his commitment to your project and the personal involvement he or she needs to ensure your success. Writing will entail researching you, your company, your products and services, your industry, your competition and exploring the options at his disposal to add a creative twist to your project. Research may involve on site inspections of facilities and various locations, interviews with staff and management. And review of your sales or training materials to fully understand your goals. Again, asking a lot of question is most important.

f) Audio is a most important part of every production. Think about watching a major motion picture in a theater and not having any music or sound effects. Pretty dull! It is the same with an industrial production. Each project at PS/A involves hours of music searching through many libraries from the US and abroad to find the right music to match your project's mood. In those cases where it is deemed necessary and the budget allows, we will provide original music. One of our music writers has some of the most extensive credentials in the industry. Having written the theme and episode music for "Gunsmoke", "Chips", all music for "Dallas", the theme for "Trapper John" and more, John Parker has a unique quality for finding the right music button to push with an audience. Add in sound effects, smooth music editing and transitions, and your project just "fits" with the listening audience. Our sound engineer has won as many awards as anyone in the industry with his musical background. Tim makes sure it all works in concert to achieve an emotion, not just a vehicle for transmission of information.

g) In most cases, a designer is used to make sure the show is coordinated in its appearance. This can involve the use of particular graphics, animation, set design, special effects, use of colors, and more to make sure that we show you in the best light possible. For this he may need your company's logo, and other materials used by your company. He will make backgrounds and special elements for your production. And he will work with our animation staff to insure that every visual element is coordinated as needed.

h) In most productions, be they simple or complex, the use of animation will enhance the effect of the piece. For this, one of our animators is brought in to create the right element to support a particular idea. It may be just the correct treatment on your logo to add some sparkle or the development of longer sequences to show technical operations, time lapse events, or special effects for sizzle. The cost of animation has come down in recent years and it can be a most effect part of any production when used right.

i) When all the location and studio shooting has been completed. When the animation is done and the sound track finished. When the design work and graphics are completed, it is time for the staff to assemble a rough cut. They will put together a very rough version of your final show to allow you to see your project's basic elements. (more later on this)

j) Your postproduction editor is the final link in the production chain. He or she will use modern editing equipment to combine all of your elements into a final product. Here, the use of special effects, audio, raw materials, animation, and some "on-the-spot" creativity will polish off your project.

Working on this part of your project will be the producer, the editor, a production assistant and technical engineer. The outcome of this will be a product which reflects your goals and needs.

As you can see, there are, and should be, many people involved in your project. These are the main people responsible for getting things done. On any project you may directly work with only a few but behind them stand another group of technicians and staff to help them in their work.

At PS/A, we've worked on projects that helped foundations raise millions of dollars for charity. We've assisted a startup company to present their corporate image in order to obtain \$800M for a new facility, and another international company to secure multimillion dollar contracts. You achieve the goals of the client by doing things a certain way, a professional way, and the people a production company works with reflect their commitment to that standard.

## WHAT GOES INTO A PRODUCTION?

What are the elements you pay for when doing a video production? Some, most, or all of the following may be in used in a particular production but they are all important steps. These are the steps (in shortened form) we at PS/A use to achieve the clients' objectives.

- 1) Research the project - get to know the client and the goals
- 2) Write the script, submit for approval or changes and resubmit. An important step and involves the client heavily.
- 3) After script approval, develop a shot list showing every shot to be collected to match the script. - inspect locations, spec equipment and personnel needs. Start to develop the creative process and outline needed services. Develop story boards as needed and if required.
- 4) Start the design process with animators, graphics and sound engineer.
- 5) Pick the narrator or on-camera talent and prepare for sound track production.
- 6) Select music, record and edit the voice talent/s, produce the sound track.
- 7) If animation is part of the project, coordinate animation with needed music or sound EFX and pre-produce using script and outlines from producer and/or designer.
- 8) Schedule personnel and equipment and procure all raw footage. Review material as collected to insure usability and prepare for rough-cut.
- 9) Transfer materials, catalog all shots and chose final materials. Edit into rough-cut form for client review utilizing video material, animation and added graphics available. Edit to sound track.
- 10) Submit for client approval or changes before final editing.
- 11) Post produce the final material into final format, create the master and submit for duplication or use as required.

## COST FACTORS IN A PRODUCTION

When figuring the budget for any project, the following are standard elements to be included in your planning. Rates vary from project to project and from region to region but it is PS/A's goal to meet the client's needs without wasting their money on items that won't add directly to the success of the project. Always keep in mind a production company's commitment to financial stability and professional personnel and equipment when considering why things cost what they do. In buying production, as in buying a car, you can get a Volkswagen, a Chevy, a Mercedes or a "Rolls."

Just make sure you buy what you need - not more and not less. Spend too little and you may have wasted everything you spent and might as well not have done the project at all for the little or no benefit you'll receive.

We want our clients to know where their money is going. It's only fair and it establishes a standard for any changes made later on. Beware a production company that will not break down your budget and gives only a total dollar amount for your project. Our budgets are broken down into the following:

- 1) Producer/Director fees - allotment for personnel, research and directing activities throughout the course of the project
- 2) Script writing - allotment for time and research activities
- 3) Staff production fees - time allotted for meetings, travel, research, expenses
- 4) Location shooting - hourly or daily fees for basic equipment and personnel
- 5) Production extras - fees for added equipment/services beyond the normal hourly/daily rates for such extras as cameras, booms, dollies, dolly track, lighting packages, additional audio and communications, teleprompter, translations, NTSC/PAL/SECAM conversions, closed captioning, satellite setup, transmission fees, set costs, studio fees, travel costs etc.
- 6) Production personnel extras - fees for additional personnel such as cameramen, lighting director, grips, assistants, etc.
- 7) Talent fees - on or off camera talent used in your production, can be hourly, daily or by the project costs depending on the particular talent used. Remember that changes after the initial recording of any "client approved" material will result in additional studio and talent fees for re-dos. In some cases, a talent may be represented by an agent where additional agent's fees may be required. There may be additional union fees. These will always be disclosed in advance for your approval.
- 8) Audio fees - costs associated with audio studio usage for narration recording, time needed for music search and editing, and final editing and mixing of your sound track.
- 9) Music license fees - all music used by PS/A is licensed for your one time use on the project being worked on. These fees are generally based on the length of the production and split between the owner of the music, the studio and others as required. PS/A will not use any unlicensed, copyrighted music for your production so you can always be assured you are in compliance with copyright laws.
- 10) Rough cut - allotment for transferring raw materials, cataloging shots, shot selection and rough editing into simple version for client review before final postproduction.
- 11) Materials - allotment for raw video tape (or film) stock, transfer stock for rough cuts, digital tape and disks for post production, masters, audio tape or archive disks, animation disks, client review and PS/A work copies.
- 12) Expendables - materials used in the course of your project which may include items such as bulbs, batteries, gels, scrim, reflector boards, cables, and the like. This is usually figured as a small percentage of your overall materials cost.
- 13) Post production - the final editing of your project, includes studio time, editor, producer, assistant, and all standard equipment for special effects and text graphics.
- 14) Animation - allotment for creative design time, client meetings, trial concepts, and final renderings of computer animation - generally quoted as one fee for a project.
- 15) Travel insurance - special insurance for out of town travel to cover expanded insurance requirements to cover airline damage, theft and on location repairs as needed. This is usually broken down as a small daily rate for each day on location or one total itemized on your final billing.

16) Travel surcharge - small fee to cover required additional activities associated with travel out of town. These include additional packing or crating time and materials, special travel cases, additional airline charges for extra and heavy cases. This is usually quoted as a small rate for location work.

17) CD/DVD authoring - when appropriate to the project, fees associated with programming your CD ROM or DVD material into a final multimedia format. This is quoted hourly for programming, testing, research, renderings and submissions to client.

18) Duplications - quoted as an extra. Basic project material costs cover only raw materials and masters as listed. Duplications are quoted separately. Also, additionally needed graphics will be quoted for packaging as required.

19) Additional services - our budgets outline any additional items discussed so you can account for the costs in your planning process. There will never be any changes to our original submitted budget unless you make and authorize changes to the original project. Taxes are charged where required and any additional travel, mail, delivery or freight charges are outlined in your final billing as are all items as listed above. All information regarding billing items is outlined in your original Agreement.

Again, every project is different and costs, activities and personnel will vary. These are offered as guidelines for your thinking process only. We at PS/A have been serving clients for nearly 37 years and our methods are based on industry standards and our own sense of professionalism gained through countless projects, locations and clients. When dealing with a production company you have the right to know how your money is being spent and the right to ask a lot of questions about your project. Let the professionals do their job for they should be acting in your best interest. But keep informed as to the progress and timing of your project in order to meet those goals you have outlined for yourself.

Also See our Production Budget download file



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