

WORKING WITH YOUR PRODUCTION TEAM

Information for Your Business

Welcome to the world of Production. It can be exciting, confusing, interesting and yet is an important part of a variety of projects from training, marketing, point of sale, internal and external communications.



Why do I need a production company – what's the advantage?

It used to be that if you needed a video company, you'd find a video company. If you needed a brochure or packaging, you'd find a graphic designer. If you needed a website you'd find a web designer and then a hosting company and maybe a photographer and multimedia programmer and and..... well, you see.

Today, most of these "production" activities are all interrelated. A web site can be composed of product or staff photography, quality graphics, video or other multimedia elements and more.

Few companies exist like PS/A. It was our goal over 30 years ago to provide a variety of these services in one efficient company and the reasons are simple.

- One source for a wide, yet connected variety of services
- One point of control and contact
- One point for accounting and billing
- More efficient use of personnel and resources
- Cost savings due to reduced multi-company involvement
- Shorter project time frame due to reduced staff requirements
- Better proofing and approval system through the timeline
- Better team communication and understanding of the overall project



What is my part in all of this?

As a client for any company, you have responsibilities to yourself and your producers to ensure that your project is on track and running smoothly.

- First, understand your need – your project – your direction. Before starting the process with a production company, know what it is you want to do. (See our download dealing with Planning A Production) NO production company should come in and tell you how to run your business. It is their job to execute your project's needs based on your need and understanding of your business, your industry and your product or service. A quality production group will help you with certain aspects related to your project but BE AWARE of production people that want to get too much into your actual business plan and marketing plan.

- Assign one person to oversee the project – to be responsible – and can be the “go to person” for the production group. Committees may work well for the annual report and budget process but for productions it can get confusing for the production company. Too many ideas, too much input, possible conflicting opinions puts the production group in the middle and only delays things. One thing is clear – like many areas of business, costs come down to **TIME** and **MONEY**. Anything that wastes time, wastes money. Make your relationship with the production group efficient, easy and therefore less expensive.
- Be prepared. Production can get involved. In some projects where there are a variety of elements, there can be scheduling of dozens of technical and creative people, equipment, travel arrangements, the purchase of materials and sometimes outside sources and facilities. An efficient and organized production company will give you a timeline and calendar so you know where / when / who / what and why. Meeting these outlines are important to keep your project on track. If there is shooting at your facility, it should be readied – clean and looking good, your people dressed right and any product information or materials ready for use. Not having that one piece of equipment ready to go can have a dozen camera, lighting, audio and production people standing around costing you money.
- Provide timely approvals. Many times we’ve done our job, completed certain parts of our assignments, and then we wait and wait while the client sits on approvals either waiting for committee input or Divine inspiration to confirm their decision. Keep up with getting your changes or approvals back in a timely manner. This keeps the process flowing, keeps everything fresh in the mind of the producer and keeps costs down. A word about changes. Make sure that once you’ve started your project, you know what you want (see point #1) and keep up with the process (see point #3). Making a small change here or there will delay things and will cost you money. A client once decided far into the project that a sign that was “mocked up” for a shot should be changed to different verbiage. That meant remaking the sign, reshooting the scene, redoing the audio track that referenced the sign, reediting the project and when it was all done.... thousands of dollars spent for a few words that had been provided and approved by the client weeks before.
- Thank your producer. It may seem funny but let’s face it. A quality production company is an actual part of your company for a period of time. They are your best employee and are participating in a very important part of your company’s future. You’re paying them thousands or tens of thousands of dollars to make you look good to employees, the community or your customers. A quality producer and production company cares about you and your project. They take pride in their work and will generally always put in a lot more time, effort and creativity that you’ll ever be billed for. They work nights, weekends, get to the project early and stay late just to ensure the success of your project. A well placed word of thanks is always appreciated and shows they are a part of the team and

- accomplishing their goals for you. And make sure you keep your producer involved. Ask him/her questions. Ask their suggestions and ideas and offer your own. Again, it's a team effort and they want you to win.
- Pay your bills. Weird concept? Not really. Let's talk about money: A quality production company is a business. And as such has to run by business principals. If they have been in business for any reasonable period at all, they learned a long time ago, you can't pay your bills with promises and hopes. Just like the small supermarket on the corner or the large electronics company across town, there are ongoing expenses for a production company. General overhead, personnel who need to make a living wage, office and cell phones, internet services, insurances, vehicles, equipment and expenses specific to your project. Please keep in mind that your production company is NOT YOUR BANK. They are not in the business of loaning your company money so you can do a project with them. PS/A has a business model that saves clients' money and runs very efficiently with low overhead but when PS/A starts a project, we start spending time and money immediately in order to meet your needs. We know that you have a need for your video, printed material or website. Therefore... "Let's get to making it happen" and doing so takes people and resources. For us and in general, a production company will put together a comprehensive budget. It's our feeling that it's your money and you need to know where it's going. We ask for a deposit on projects. Again, we're spending time and money right from the beginning for you. We may ask for interim payments to cover ongoing expenses or special outsourced elements such as extra labor, special equipment or production elements that are scheduled along the timeline. And we ask for a final payment usually COD or within a week of completion. It's been said for years: "In God We Trust – all others pay cash". Some companies say that they'd be able to pay next week instead of a deposit in advance. Many times if a company can't afford a project now – a week won't make any difference. Also, many times a project is very long term. We've worked on various video and web projects that have run 6 – 18 months. It is of course unreasonable to expect one payment at the end after months of ongoing expenditures and expenses. So... be a good production client/partner, ask questions of your group, understand your contract, and make timely payments so everyone is happy.
 - Follow up. Some projects are best served when you can "recap" and look back at the project. We have clients who have sat down afterward, reviewed the project, its goals, the process, and the outcome. It helps them on the next one and makes sure that we met our goals in providing the service. If you were satisfied with the product and the service you obtained, a letter of thank you or reference is always nice. It tells others that you got what you wanted, you got it on time, on budget and the results were what you needed.



To recap the process....

- **Understand your need, your project** – be specific and spend some time.
- **Assign one person** – make sure there is one point of contact and accountability for the project.
- **Be prepared** – get the people, materials, and other elements prepared for the production process. This can save your time and money.
- **Approve on time** – keep up with any requests for approval to make sure your project is running on time.
- **Thank your team** – and they are part of your company for a period of time so let them know when they're doing a great job for you.
- **Pay your bills** – every company runs on cash flow and keeping up with current billings keeps people happy and working. It's just good business.
- **Follow up** – take some time to reflect and review. Look back for the sake of future projects to make sure things went as planned and find areas that might be improved the next time.



Finally how much did I spend, save, or waste?

Every project, every element has different ways of performing the same tasks. Some ways are worth the extra money, some aren't. Look at the project and the need. If you kept in touch with your production team and planned well then your project probably ran smoothly and didn't waste time or money.

Budgets are an important part of any project and we certainly understand that. Every production company has a different way of looking at a project. Our thought is that "we never like wasting money whether it's ours or our client's." We want you to be covered but not smothered with production value. So if we can save you money – we will. After all, we want you to come back next time.

Again, keep in mind – Time & Materials. The more time it takes to perform the required tasks, correct a client's input or mistakes, deal with changes and add-ons, the more a budget can change in the upward direction.

Look for a professional production company: One that's been around a while, and one that really cares about your project. One that uses the right equipment and only the best professionals in the industry – not cheaper labor from high school or college looking to get "into the business", and look for a production group that is efficient and organized.



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