

The OFFICIAL 65 Step MAKE YOUR MOVIE NOW! Checklist

by
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Filmmaking Success Mindset

What I think about becomes real.

I play to my strengths. I support my weak areas with talented collaborators.

I take advice from people who have actual experience.

I spend time with people who make me feel better about myself. I always work to make others feel good too.

Following dreams is easier with money in the bank. I save what I can.

I keep an idea book and write down movie ideas as they come my way.

My word is trust. I never break my word.

I deserve Hollywood success because I am creative and passionate.

I always bring my ideas to fruition.

- 1. Read and study everything you can about the filmmaking process. Also study internet marketing. A good place to start is www.filmakingstuff.com
- 2. Write or acquire a screenplay you want to produce.
- 3. Do an initial breakdown, schedule and budget of the project. How much does it cost?
- 4. Looking at the initial budget, is there anything you can get for a discount, or free, or barter?
- 5. Talk with a lawyer and figure out your best money strategy.
- 6. Following the law, go after the money. This will require strategy, persistence and enthusiasm.
- 7. This will be one of the tougher parts of the process, but it will make the movie possible.
- 8. Most people will want to know how the money is going to be spent, what they can expect in return and how will you eventually get their money back. Filmmaking is a risky business, full of unknowns and you should never sugar coat the potential risk involved in this business.
- 9. Have a plan for the movie when it is complete. Will you take the festival route? Will you market it to colleges and universities? Will you send it directly to sales agents and acquisition pros?

- 10. Were you able to get the money? If not, here are some (but not all) of your options.
 - A. Choose a new project.
 - B. Alter the screenplay to cut costs.
- 11. Get more favors and freebies.
- 12. Assuming you did get the money, pick a date for production.
- 13. Hire a lawyer to help you with contracts and releases. If you're short on cash, do a web search for lawyers for the arts in your state.
- 14. Since many of these folks will be working for free, expect a lot of "no's" before you find the right fit for your show.
- 15. You can make your jobs easier if you find someone with film production experience.
- 16. Finalize your script. Get it to a point where you aren't going to keep changing things. Once you get to this point, consider it a locked script.
- 17. Number your scenes. Then break down your script, grabbing each element, location and character. Create a schedule.
- 18. From your schedule and breakdown, create a final budget. You probably know how much money you have to work with. If you find you don't have enough you have two choices:
 - A. Get More Money!
 - B. Modify the script and schedule.

- 19. Get your crew. I suggest working with a seasoned Physical Producer / Line Producer / Production Manager to help you get organized. These folks will probably look at your schedule and tweak it.
- 20. Additionally, if you're going to direct and produce, having these folks around to help out will open the door to relationships with 1st ADs and crew. These folks will help you hire the right people. They may also know a thing or two about tax credits in your state. This could be invaluable!
- 21. I know. Money is tight. So instead of hiring a locations scout, you're going to have to scout and procure locations yourself. This means you'll knock on some doors and introduce yourself, your project and your goals.
- 22. It is at this point when I warn you – what can go wrong with a location probably will. So you will want to have a 2nd and 3rd location added to the mix. This way, should something happen, you'll have a fall-back plan.
- 23. Assuming you're directing this sucka yourself, you might find a director of photography who shares your sensibilities and has equal enthusiasm for the project.
- 24. Your DP will help you design a look and mood for your movie. Given your cost constraints, you'll most likely shoot in HD.

- 25. MARKETING: Create a website specific to your movie. Make sure you have a way to get site visitors on your mailing list. Have a place for press, so that they can download your press kit and materials.
- 26. Then as you get into production, you will be able to add a movie trailer. (Increase the size of your mailing list and establish a website you can later modify into a sales funnel.)
- 27. If you're lucky, you already know some talented actors interested in your project and working with you. You'll have to work out a deal with these folks. LA and NYC offer various websites that help producers find actors. But if you're in rural USA, you might have some difficulty with these options. I suggest partnering with local university drama departments and local theaters to fulfill your casting requirements.
- 28. Once you have all of your actors, you will want to find a location for a table read. Go through the script. If you wrote it, now is a time to take some notes for a final tweak. Just know – anything you change in the script also changes the budget and the schedule.
- 29. Seriously, don't skimp on food. You will want someone in charge of Craft Services. They should be good at going out and getting deals on food and catering. If you can not find anyone to do this for you, you'll have to do it yourself.

- 30. Make sure you have adequate food. If you're doing a union shoot, there are guidelines and rules you must follow. If you're doing a non-union indie, then some advice is: DON'T GET CHEAP! GET QUALITY!
- 31. Do you have all of your permits, releases, location agreements? Do you have production insurance? There are so many different types of insurance, it will make your head spin. Make sure you talk with some experienced professionals to make sure you have adequate insurance for your movie.
- 32. Meet with your Camera Department and find out how much tape stock you'll need (assuming you're shooting in HD). If you're shooting film, which might be costly for your first feature – you'll want to have an idea of these needs too.
- 33. Try to take as many naps as you can. This is a fun, but stressful time. So sleep. Exercise. Eat.
- 34. Once you have all the above stuff checked off the list, you'll want to meet with your department heads and make sure everyone's needs are being met. Assuming you've maintained limited locations, with a limited cast and crew, you will probably still be baffled by the amount of questions that come flying at you.
- 35. Seriously, you would think you're making a gazillion dollar movie. But this is indication people care about their work. They care about the movie. And they want to make it a success.

- 36. This goes without saying, but don't be a jerk. Seriously, you're making a movie. It's a real accomplishment and it's one of those great things you can do in life. In fact, it's quite awesome. So push forward. ENJOY!
- 37. Did I mention you need plenty of sleep?
- 38. Produce your movie. Do well. Don't loose your temper and have fun!
- 39. During production, try to constantly get press to profile your movie. It would be great to create buzz, get people to your website and get them to opt into your newsletter mailing list.
- 40. After the WRAP, have a wrap party. Don't sleep with anybody or get drunk or make a fool of yourself! You're a professional. Act like one.
- 41. After you recover from your hangover, you'll probably start editing the movie. I suggest sharing the edit suite with another set of eyes.
- 42. Your first cut will be rough. Screen it with a group of people who have never seen the movie. Get feedback.
- 43. Take the feedback and refine your edit. After that, take a week off – don't look at the movie or play around with it. Then, when you come back to the suite, refine and refine again.

- 44. Have another small screening with people who have never seen the movie. Take notes. Then take those notes back to your edit suite.
- 45. Add some sound FX to your movie. Clean up actor dialogue and rough areas. Remember, audio is often more important than visual.
- 46. Screen the movie again with a new, small set of people. Take notes. Go back and refine.
- 47. When you have a cut you're happy with, then you can begin to plan your next strategy. For example, will you go to film festivals? Then you should have a target list in mind.
- 48. You may have several opportunities for traditional distribution. With some qualified professionals, analyze the deal. Find out if the deal will fit your business objectives, if not, move on to the next deal.
- 49. What if there are no deals? Hopefully you have a strong mailing list, a marketable hook and a plan for reaching your target demographic.
- 50. As such, refine your website into a sales funnel hub. Upload your movie to one of the many VOD sites and refine your movie poster and artwork. (To sell your movie via VOD, check out www.MovieSalesTool.com)
- 51. Also, upload your trailer to YouTube and all the other video sites on the internet. I prefer to stream from YouTube because I don't have to pay the streaming bandwidth.

- 52. Write press releases related to the release of your movie. Have a blog component that details your movie and allows other people to comment.
- 53. Play around with your key words and Search Engine Optimization. (My next course?)
- 54. Create conversations on website forums related to your type of movie. DO NOT SPAM!!!
- 55. Create both a Facebook and MySpace page for your movie. The purpose of this page is to lead people back to your site.
- 56. Have a button on your website so people can tweet about your movie.
- 57. In addition to this, if you have the budget, purchase some offline advertising in publications related to your movie.
- 59. All of these methods are intended to get people back to your website. The purpose of your site is to get people to watch your movie trailer and click the BUY NOW button. Anything that distracts these visitors must go!
- 60. If they don't click, then at least try to get them to opt into your mailing list.
- 61. Out of all the people who click the BUY NOW button, some will actually buy.
- 62. Consider using that money to purchase more advertising and repeat the process.

- 63. Sooner or later, you'll figure out how to jump- start your next project. And you will realize that making movies and making money making movies is possible.
- 64. Tips from the trenches: On average it takes 7 meetings to make a relationship.
- 65. If you aren't getting rejected every day, you are not working hard enough for your goals.

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