



This is a FREE first chapter for Filmmaking Stuff

Thank you for checking out my latest book, Filmmaking Stuff. After reading this introductory chapter, you can find out more about the book by going here:

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“Engaging and enthusiastic, Jason Brubaker has written an excellent introduction to the new landscape of filmmaking - especially for those just starting out their careers.”

-Jon Reiss, author of “Think Outside The Box Office”

“There are lots of books that tell you the technical aspects of how to make a movie. This one answers the question you’ll face when it’s done: ‘Now what?’ If you care about having people actually pay to see your movie, get this book.”

-- Jurgen Wolff, author of “Your Writing Coach

“Jason Brubaker’s ‘Filmmaking Stuff’ gives the Independent Filmmaker a rare insight into how to make a feature film with a proven step-by-step formula from an indie filmmaker who has ‘been-there-done-that-and got the T-shirt.’ Not only does Jason Brubaker understand the business and creative side of filmmaking, he is also an expert in using the Internet and Social Media to finance and distribute any film today. This fact alone is reason enough to always have this book sitting beside your computer.”

--Peter D. Marshall, Filmmaker

“Jason personally guides you through the many important things you need to know to create a great film. This book has exceptional tips for saving money and marketing.”

-- Carole Dean, author of “Art of Funding Second Edition”

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-- Kim Callahan, Hollywood Talent Manager

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-- Gordon Firemark, Entertainment Attorney

“The process of script to distribution is now much more complicated and labor intensive. Producers must wear even more hats on the job and be much more knowledgeable about the business of film than they once were. Fortunately, Jason has written this book to help educate and inspire producers of this new century to take advantage of the wonderful tools the internet has given us all to reach audiences worldwide.”

-- Sheri Candler, Marketing and Publicity Specialist

“If you want to make movies, if you already make movies and want to sell them, if you already sell movies and want to make more money, you owe yourself a few hours with Jason’s newest book. It has the potential to change everything for you. I don’t know anyone who knows (and appreciates) indie DIY filmmaking better than Jason. ‘Filmmaking Stuff’ is packed with solid knowhow; it’s that one serious tool that indies have been needing.”

-- Norman C. Berns, Producer/Director

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Author's Note: This book is based heavily on the author's filmmaking experience. When possible, he has included personal examples. With that said, you may have a question or two, so feel free to email the author at: Jason@FilmmakingStuff.com

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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 with experience.

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

Following dreams is easier with money in the bank. I avoid debt.

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 filmmaking success because I am creative and passionate.

I always bring my ideas to fruition.

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Introduction

Long before I made a single penny making movies, I was stuck in my small town, living with my parents. To make ends meet, I took a job selling dishwashers and garbage disposals. Back then I was like a lot of people. I knew I wanted to make movies, but I really had no idea how to get started. In fact, I felt discouraged, depressed and lost.

Like most independent filmmakers, I was inspired by the news of Kevin Smith, Ed Burns and the other indie filmmakers who were finding innovative ways to get movies made, seen and sold. These guys inspired me to take action and gain experience. I remember reading everything I could get my hands on about the filmmaking process, hoping to find a step-by-step system that would show me how to make a movie and then sell it for a gazillion dollars. I had to take action!

After saving all summer to buy a used Arri BL 16mm camera and a few rolls of film, I spent an entire weekend producing my movie. After buying beer for the wrap party, I promptly ran out of money. So for the next six months, I worked to save enough money to process the film and transfer it to video. I remember coming home each night and gazing lovingly at three 400-foot rolls of exposed 16mm film collecting dust on my bedroom floor. My movie was called “Oh Baby.” It was a silly movie. But this was proof that I was indeed a filmmaker.

While I did eventually get the movie processed, transferred to video, and edited – I couldn’t help but feel a little disheartened. I mean, if it took me a year just to finish a short film, how long would it take to get a feature made? To answer this question, I moved to New York City, where I ended up working alongside a (then) 20-something year old entrepreneurial producer, Seth Carmichael. With Seth, I learned what it took to make features. But I also found out about the next major hurdle to filmmaking success: discriminatory distribution.

During that time, I remember sitting in on meetings with prospective investors. Most were experienced business professionals from other industries who immediately understood that even the best indie movie was worthless without distribution.

The fact that independent filmmakers could not access distribution meant that it would tough to reach an audience. And without an audience, there would be no sales. This fact alone made it very tough to raise money. But even with the odds stacked against us - like most filmmakers, we believed that if we could just make the movie, the money would come.

“I’m going to make my movie and sell it at Sundance!”

Back then, the Sundance Dream was so intoxicating that most filmmakers refused to acknowledge that that only a handful of independent movies actually got accepted into the festival. And most of those movies failed to garner a distribution deal that actually paid. Still, this did not stop filmmakers from trying.

Heck, even when a rejection letter from Sundance arrived in the mail, many of these feature filmmakers still blindly clung to the hope that things would turn out well. I mean, there was always the possibility of getting noticed at a secondary film festival. But after a few months on the regional festival circuit, with no sign of a distribution deal, many of these once enthusiastic filmmakers gave up hope and went back to their day jobs.

I am speaking from experience. After leaving New York I moved to Los Angeles. I decided it was time to test my luck at winning the Sundance Dream. I knew the odds of garnering a profitable distribution deal were against us. So to increase our chances of success, we decided to dump our limited resources into a niche audience focused, silly zombie movie. While the movie was not Oscar caliber, it did have a remarkable hook that promoted word of mouth buzz. As a result, we received quite a few calls from prospective distributors and sales agents.

We were excited! But instead of writing us a check, many of these guys simply expected us to relinquish our movie rights for the mere validation of seeing our zombie movie at local video stores. *“We won’t make money, but we can rent our movie.”*

I knew the odds of getting a gazillion-dollar check were improbable. And just like the filmmakers that came before us, we held out hope that someone would discover us and give us some money. But it never happened.

Luckily, we did have one last strategy: We decided to try selling our movie on the internet, through Amazon. Now I want to make something clear. This was a time when the idea of selling movies over the internet was new. And nobody liked the idea because the concept of self-distribution was considered derogatory. So you can imagine our surprise when we made over a few thousand dollars over a few short months!

This experience forever changed the way I viewed filmmaking.

Before we go further, you need to know something. If you are reading these words, looking for more information on three-point lighting or how to set up dolly track, you are in the wrong place. While all of that technical stuff is essential, you can find this information in just about every filmmaking book ever published. And you probably already have a bookshelf full of that stuff.

In this book, you will discover strategies on how to leverage popular movie marketplaces like iTunes, Amazon and Hulu for maximum profit. You will also learn how to run your filmmaking as a serious business.

Everything you're about to absorb represents insights I discovered only through trial, error, frustration and sleepless nights. The methods I reveal may seem at times unconventional. But if you keep an open mind, you might gain one tip (or a dozen) that will immediately improve the way you view filmmaking.

Also, since the average American lives for only 27,010 days, time is running out. Your life is too short to waste. What are you waiting for? NOW is time to make, market and sell your movie! If you are willing to roll the dice and make your movie, then you have an obligation to yourself, your cast and crew to make the best, most successful independent movie ever. And you do not need my permission. If you want to write, you write. If you want to direct, you direct. If you want to make your movie this year, do it!

But before you jump in, it helps to know what you want. Some filmmakers want recognition. Others want a pile of money. And other people simply want a nice title on a business card and a little respect. Regardless of your desired career outcome, you need to determine the price you're willing to pay to achieve your success. What are you willing

to sacrifice in terms of effort, time, money and frustration to make movies?

As you move toward the realization of your filmmaking goals, I would like to tell you there is no such thing as luck. But I can't. Some people always seem to be a little further ahead of the majority. These are the top 20 percenters. And to the outside world, these lucky go-getters seem unstoppable. But when asked to reveal their secrets for success, many of these lucky people would share stories of hard work and endless rejection.

I learned how to create luck when I was in college. To raise money to finance my student film, I took a job selling expensive hot tubs at a local carnival. I was given an incentive: Sell two hot tubs per carnival, and, in addition to my commission, I would also receive a \$500 bonus. Because I needed the money, I was driven to pitch hot tubs to every person who walked within 10 feet of me, including college kids, grandmothers, fathers, mothers and children with ice cream melting down their hands...It didn't matter. The only way to make money was to get the sales.

Most people rejected me outright. Other folks listened to my entire pitch before they rejected me. And the vast majority of folks asked to "think it over" and never returned. After running the numbers, I realized that out of every 100 people I got rejected 98 times. But I also made two sales. This taught me a simple lesson. I realized that if I wanted something in life, I just had to ask enough people. Years later, it dawned on me that raising money for movies was the same as selling hot tubs. The more people you pitch, the luckier you get.

While I am on the subject of luck, there are a lot of people who get into the movie business who have never experienced rejection. These are people with lots of enthusiasm, but no defined plans for success. As a result, most of these folks get shot down after a few attempts. They pack their bags and hop on the first bus back to wherever they came from. Your job is to become tougher than the majority. Recognize rejection as part of the process. And if you aren't getting rejected daily, you're not trying hard enough. Rejection is the universe asking you how badly you want success.

There has never been a better time to make, market, and sell movies. For \$2,000, filmmakers can grab a camera, shoot a feature, and compete for virtual “shelf space” in iTunes, Amazon, Hulu and most every other movie marketplace.

There is one thing you must remember: While all of this innovation is exciting, filmmakers must now plan their filmmaking business from inception to distribution. As a result, your success comes down to these focused questions:

1. Who is your target audience?
2. How large is your target audience?
3. How will you reach your target audience?
4. What is the marketing cost to achieve this?
5. How many unit sales will it take to break even?

These are questions you will answer in detail during the business-planning process for your movie. In the event you choose not to answer these questions, then you know from day one that your odds of success are decreased. Without a defined market or an established sales channel, it is difficult to justify financing. This makes it a challenge to pay cast and crew, which can derail your dreams of producing a movie.

Assuming you are willing to face this new world, you are in the right place. In the following pages, I am going to share some strategies on how to answer these questions.

If you are ready to push forward, take action, and make your movie now, then I only have one question for you:

Given the resources that you have right now, what is the movie that you can make this year?

Chapter One

Modern Movie Business

“If you want to be successful, find someone who has achieved the results you want and copy what they do and you’ll achieve the same results.”

—Tony Robbins

What is your definition of success?

Achieving success requires dedication, hard work and even some luck. And if you don’t establish a grounded perspective and plan, the pursuit of a movie career will most certainly make friends and family think you’re self-absorbed, egotistical and a little crazy. And if you don’t make time for these important people, they may be correct!

The movie industry is full of great opportunities. But if you don’t believe these opportunities exist, or if you don’t believe you deserve greatness, you’ll never experience coolness. So before you make your dreams real, you must first visualize the life you want. Once you have a clear image of what this looks like, your ideal life is yours if you are willing to pay the price.

If you want to write, you write. If you want to direct, you direct. If you want to make a movie, you do it. And if you want to waste your Hollywood years impressing phonies at parties, you can do that too. The successful people in the movie business know what they want. They put blinders on. They focus, and they go for it. Everything these people do is in line with their driving desire to succeed. Heavyweights don’t waste time with people or activities that distract them from their goals.

Set Your Goals

If you’re going to survive the sleepless nights of the movie world, you really need to understand who you are and what you want. I know this is cliché, but it’s true. Nobody will respect you until you respect yourself. If you come to Hollywood without having the confidence to be genuine, you’ll get swept into the mix, lose focus, and wonder why you failed.

If you haven't already done so, you need to write down a few goals. The process is very simple, and the results will be profound. Without clear and concise WRITTEN goals, it will take you much longer to achieve success. Talk to any Hollywood Heavyweight, and you will find that having clear goals is tantamount to accomplishment.

How tough is your skin? I say this because you'll need to assess your ability to overcome rejection. There are a lot of people who come to Hollywood with a vision, yet who have never experienced rejection. Do not become one of these people. Whenever you are faced with rejection, you must always remember everyone has a messed-up sense of reality. The person rejecting you could be stupid or perhaps they just are not interested in you at this time. Great. Fail fast and move on!

Seriously. There is nothing you can do about other people. In fact, some people are so stupid that they project their lack of originality and creativity onto the world. What they reject in you isn't you, it's them. It means nothing, really. Your job is to recognize rejection as a filter mechanism and as part of getting what you want. When you go after something BIG, if you aren't getting rejected daily, you're not playing hard enough.

While attempting to land my first production gig, I got rejected daily. People told me that without experience it would be hard for me to get a job. But that did not stop me. To gain experience, I started volunteering to work for free on some local productions. This enabled me to get the necessary experience to push forward towards my next goals. Remember, everybody starts somewhere. And the person willing to be told "no" many times also gets told "yes" many times as well.

Manage Time

Everything you do in life revolves around time. When you start planning your movie productions, your time will become the most valuable asset you have. Your ability to manage time could mean the difference between success and failure. According to Hollywood standards, failure is spending 10 years in this town with nothing to show for it. Don't be one of those people.

In your quest to move into the inner circle of Hollywood, you will encounter so many distractions that it will make your head spin. When you get out here, you'll quickly notice that this town offers some of finest nightlife in

the world. Be prepared to spend nights sampling the tasty beverages of the Sunset Strip.

There is nothing wrong with this, but between doing some sort of demanding job to pay rent and trying to go to the grocery store, you will soon realize time flies. Unless you become proficient at time management, you could go years without a movie. And if you are not in the habit yet, you will want to start using some kind of daily planner or a time management application on your phone. In my only business, I am pretty simple. I use the task manager in my Gmail, as well as my Google calendar. However, there are many options out there.

If you're serious about your success, you'll need to start planning your life in half-hour increments. For many, this might seem too rigid or too much of a pain in the ass. But if you can discipline yourself to do this, you'll soon realize that you'll accomplish much more in six months than other people will accomplish in two years. Resolve today to start planning your time right down to the half hour, and you'll quickly realize how much time you've been wasting.

You need to prioritize. What exactly does it mean to prioritize? It means breaking down your BIG goals into manageable chunks and then writing them down every morning. Once you have your goals written out, combine them with the more mundane tasks of living, such as doing laundry.

Once your goals are written down, prioritize with letters. For my list, I utilize the classic ABC method. I write an A next to everything that needs to be done first. Everything else gets a B or C. Most of the time, activities that get you closer to your ideal life are a priority. For example, if you are 20 days away from producing a film, and you don't have a location yet, getting a location is your priority.

However, sometimes paying rent is your priority. Without paying the rent, you don't have a place to live. And without that place to live, making a movie is secondary. Unless, of course, you don't mind sleeping in your car. In that case, who the heck cares about rent?

A typical list would look like this:

- √ Write for one hour.
- √ Call producer for meeting.

- √ Update Quicken Online.
- √ Laundry
- √ Go surfing.

Priority is determined by you. For today, “laundry” is my most important priority. I have a meeting with a producer tomorrow, and I need clean socks and underwear. Without clean socks and underwear, I would risk smelling like a pig, and nobody (aside from pig farmers) wants to work with a pig. On other days, updating my banking might be the priority. This is because money is essential. And if I’m taking a producer out to lunch, I’ll need to know how much money I have in my bank account to make sure I have enough to cover the meal and avoid any embarrassment.

Once you prioritize habitually, you will race ahead of the pack. The vast majority of people who want a career making movies waste their days. They live life thinking in terms of “someday.” Someday they will make a movie. Someday they will budget their time. Someday they will make a phone call.

Someday, life will end.

When you know your goals, and you make a habit of breaking your BIG goals into small, daily tasks based on priority, you become power player.

Every goal you attempt to achieve teaches you something new about yourself and helps you grow. There is really no such thing as failure. There is only experience. And every experience helps you refine a skill. During the course of your career, it’s possible you’ll start out with one goal in mind and end up somewhere entirely different. This is part of the process. With every skill you gain, you grow as a person.

Save FU Money

If you want to make movies, get out of debt and save up some FU money. What is FU money? It’s the money you’ve saved that allows you to eventually take a few months off from your day job so you can find investors and possibly put together a movie deal. In other words, with FU money in the bank, it is far easier to take calculated risks that may result in the successful realization of your movie dreams. But when you have a ton of debt, you may find yourself at a severe disadvantage.

My first credit card purchase was in college. I used plastic to pay rent for a semester. I also purchased a Star Wars poster from one of those late-night shopping channels. Then I bought a pizza and a case of beer. Next thing you know, a decade flies by, and I found myself carrying a revolving \$5,000 balance. Sometimes I got lucky and paid down my balance. Once, I even paid my credit card off in full. But like a failed diet, after a couple months, I found myself right smack back where I was before and sometimes I was worse off. Why?

Lucky for me, I had some friends who were credit card debt free. After talking with them, I soon realized people get into debt for the following reasons:

1. People spend more than they make.
2. People identify themselves as people in debt.

After giving my debt addiction considerable thought, I realized my external debt was actually a reflection of my internal beliefs about money. In other words, somewhere in my mind, I identified myself as someone in debt. This was reflected in my everyday conversations about money. I would say things like: “I have debt.” Or, “I’m in debt.” Or, “I have \$5,000 in debt.” Talking like this only served to reinforce my debt-burdened identity. As a result, I continued to swipe plastic over and over.

Your peer group will influence your success in life. Take a look at your closest friends and I bet they have the same amount of debt as you. Mine did. But after moving to Hollywood, I dated a woman who made a lot less money than me, yet she lived debt free. Hanging out with her changed my beliefs about money and debt. I started to think debt was unacceptable! I realized I too could live debt free. I stopped using my credit cards and began a recovery plan.

It may take you a week or 10 years, but if you want to make movies, you need to eradicate your credit card debt. To achieve this, you must first change your words, which will change your thoughts, which will change your beliefs, which will eventually change your actions, which will subsequently change your bank balance!

Here are my personal debt reduction tidbits:

1. Hang out with people who are debt free.

2. Freeze your credit card in a block of ice.
3. Pretend as if you already live debt free.

In addition to the above action steps, starting TODAY, even if it sounds like a lot of BS, repeat the following mantra every morning until you believe your words:

1. I have lots of money saved up.
2. Using credit cards kills my dreams.
3. I pay myself first!

Remember, the faster you break your credit card addiction, the faster you free yourself up to make movies. So if you forget everything else I mention remember the following words:

QUIT USING YOUR CREDIT CARD!

In this way, at least you won't continually make your debt worse. And once you break the cycle of using your credit card, you can start shifting your strategy toward debt repayment and, eventually, the accumulation of FU money. The best part is that you can get started today.

Stop Asking Permission

In the movie business, power is measured by your ability to get a movie made. That's it. Most people don't have the power to make movies. In fact, most people only have the power to say, "NO!" And if you're a filmmaker working to make your first feature, you've probably heard:

"NO! We don't accept unsolicited submissions."

"NO! We do not work with first-time filmmakers."

"NO! We don't think there is any upside to your project."

"NO! We will not fund your movie."

But you know what? I hate asking permission to make movies. Asking permission makes me feel like a little kid. Truly independent filmmakers make movies regardless of what anyone says. Most importantly, powerful people never ask for permission to create their world. It's true. When

powerful people want to accomplish something, they do it. So if you want to be powerful, you need to stop asking permission and just go after everything you want. Of course, this is easier said than done.

Let me put this into perspective. I'd like you to pretend you are similar to me and that you really love frozen yogurt. And let us also pretend that instead of becoming a successful filmmaker, you dream of opening up your own yogurt shop.

Would you wait around for someone to give you permission to open a frozen yogurt shop? I hope not.

Then why are you waiting for Hollywood to give you permission to make your movie? Powerful people never ask: "Will you read my screenplay?" They say: "I'm producing a feature next year and looking for collaborators." This is the secret to success. Your success is determined by your ability to ask for the things you want in life. If you don't ask, you don't get.

Get it?

When I worked for an independent producer in New York City, I participated in various movie pitch meetings with prospective investors. Those meetings usually went something like this: "We've got a great screenplay, and we would like you to invest." And invariably, the typical response was: "Great! How will you return my investment?" It was at this point that we would describe our Sundance Dream strategy. *"If we are lucky, we will get into Sundance and make a gazillion dollars."*

Back then, if you were fortunate enough to actually get a movie made, your next step involved getting into film festivals and crossing your fingers that an acquisitions executive would give you a paycheck. If you were super lucky, you would go on to make your three-picture deal. This was the era of the Sundance Dream. And as many filmmakers found out, there is a big difference between a dream and a solid business plan.

When you compare the independent film business to other businesses, there are quite a few similarities. Think about it. Factory owners establish brick-and-mortar companies to produce a product. As a filmmaker, you hire a cast and crew to produce your movie. But despite these differences, both the factory owner and the filmmaker manufacture products ready for the marketplace. And this is where things get a little wacky.

Unlike the factory owner who has access to his or her own marketing, sales and distribution channels, filmmakers have traditionally relied on the blessings of third-party movie distribution companies in order to access the movie marketplace. And for many filmmakers, taking a crappy deal offered by one of these discriminatory distributors was better than nothing.

Given the fact that most video stores are now on the demise, the idea of giving away your rights simply to get onto the shelves of a local video store seems silly. But back then, you could not access any marketplace without asking permission. Given these restraints, it is no wonder why most prospective investors balked at the idea of putting money into movies.

Luckily, over the past decade everything about filmmaking has gotten awesomely better. Equal access to popular Internet marketplaces now allows every filmmaker the freedom to make, market and sell their movies without the middleman. While this does not guarantee all filmmakers will produce great cinema, it does mean that filmmakers can finally create a mini-studio movie business with very little resistance.

The Backyard Indie

If you are a filmmaker with ambition and a dream, you should not hesitate. You should not wait for Hollywood to give you permission to make your movie - but rather, you should grab a camera and Make Your Movie Now!

Welcome to the world of Backyard Indies.

Backyard indie filmmakers are no longer prohibited by cash or creativity. Yet despite this reality, many of my high profile “professional” friends in Los Angeles have made a conscious effort to pretend that inexpensive HD/SLR filmmaking doesn’t count as real filmmaking! When referencing these movies, common questions asked by Hollywood hotshots are: Who signed the SAG agreements? Who contacted the unions? Who notified the MPAA so that movie will be rated? Who gave you permission to call this a “real” feature film?

Nobody.

Guess what? A prospective customer seeking a movie on iTunes does not care if your movie was an official union indie or a backyard indie made for pocket change. And thanks to the demise of traditional distribution and the

increased market domination of iTunes, Amazon and other VOD outlets, the big difference between a \$10,000 backyard indie and a \$2 million “real” indie is no longer determined by the budget. What determines the success of any movie is who gets the most clicks on his or her “BUY NOW” button.

But before you get too excited – know this: Getting movies seen and sold is very challenging. Simple math reveals that the filmmaker who needs to recoup \$2 million is going to need a lot of web traffic and a TON of sales!

In this example, to recoup \$2 million, the filmmaker will need to sell (roughly) 200,000 video on demand downloads at \$10 a pop. And because most marketplaces charge around 40 percent for the privilege of setting up shop, these first sales will cover the costs allocated to VOD service providers (the real winners here); after which, the filmmaker will still need to sell an additional 200,000 downloads to recoup the initial investment.

400,000 VOD downloads x \$10 = \$4,000,000
MINUS \$2,000,000 in VOD fees = The initial \$2,000,000

Meanwhile, the filmmaker with who opted to create a \$10K backyard indie only has to sell 2,000 VOD downloads to recover the initial costs. And if the backyard indie was crowdfunded (I will explain crowdfunding in a later chapter) and the movie gets buzz, and the stars align, the filmmaker may have an awesome release and potentially profit on day one. But this is not guaranteed. The only thing that is guaranteed is that the less money you spend on the movie equals the less money you need to recoup when it comes time to sell your movie.

While nobody wants to make movies for pocket change, many filmmakers still believe they can somehow continually produce unprofitable (movie) products and still expect the money and the subsequent production jobs supported by the investment of Other People’s Money (OPM) to keep rolling in. This is unsustainable and just bad business. Unlike in the old days, filmmakers can no longer approach prospective investors with the cliché pitch: *“Filmmaking is a risky investment if we are lucky, we might win Sundance and get a deal.”*

Now, with non-discriminatory distribution options available to all filmmakers, that line of give-me-money reasoning is reckless, no longer applicable, and, in my opinion, unethical.

Aside from the initial challenge of sales and marketing, the ripple effect reveals a greater conundrum: How will you raise enough money to pay your cast and crew, while at the same time keep your costs low enough so that you can sell the necessary units needed to recoup your initial investment?

To survive the volatility of indie filmmaking, you will need both a short-term game and a long-term game. Short term, you will obviously want to make a movie. Long term, because the market is saturated with many backyard indies, you will need to start thinking of yourself as a mini-studio, continually focused on building your brand and sourcing your own audience. To achieve this, you will need plan for creating multiple titles over time, resulting in a very genre-specific movie library.

While creating a mini-studio may seem beyond the scope and scale of what you think is possible, setting your sights high is much more proactive than ignoring the fact that Backyard Indies are now competing for the same virtual shelf space as mainstream Hollywood movies. We are in a time of change. This is the indie movie distribution equivalent of the automobile replacing the horse-drawn wagon. Seize this opportunity!

The time is quickly approaching when all entertainment will be on-demand and very inexpensive to consume. It comes down to this: Will you ignore this movement and continue to cross your fingers, hoping some middle-man will grant you a dream distribution deal? Or will you start sourcing your audience?

Create Your Company

Before you start pitching your project too heavily, and especially before you speak with any prospective investors regarding your movie project, you should first speak with a qualified professional on ways you can protect yourself from business liability. Now, I'm not a lawyer. And the rules of business vary depending on where you live. So you will need to speak with a qualified professional in your own state or country. But the basic rule is this: Divide your personal life from your business!

As a filmmaker, the moment you start planning your project, you are in business. It is at this point that many filmmakers create a business card and set up a website touting the wonders of their projects. It is also at this point when many costly mistakes are made. The ways in which you establish and

conduct your filmmaking business can have legal and tax ramifications. This should not to be taken lightly.

The moment you decide to start talking about your project is when you should also seek out the legal and tax advice of qualified professionals. After meeting with these professionals, you might find that operating your production company under the protection of a corporate entity, such as a corporation or the ever-popular Limited Liability Company (LLC), may provide liability safeguards of which you otherwise might not have been thinking about in your strategy.

The steps for setting up a business entity are pretty simple, but they could be costly depending on where you live. So again, as a general disclaimer, I am not qualified to offer legal or tax advice. So I can only talk about my own experience which may or may not be right for you.

Establish Your Movie Website

Given the ways in which independent movie distribution is changing, having a great website for both your mini-studio and your movie is one of the most important aspects of your eventual movie marketing campaign. If you are not technical, the following guide should help.

The first step in your Internet movie marketing campaign involves reserving a domain name and hosting. To reserve space for your movie website, stop reading this book and head over to my friends at MovieSiteHost.com and reserve your hosting and domain name. And as a friendly disclosure, BlueHost pays me to promote their services. But I wouldn't recommend them unless I used them myself. For the past three years, I have utilized BlueHost hosting on all of my websites. And in the few instances when I needed to reach someone, the customer service was great and my calls were always answered.

Reserve Your Domain

Your domain name is often referred to as your website address. And for your movie website, your domain name should have the name of your movie in it. While I will share some tips on how to market and sell individual movie titles later in this book in the event you want to reserve the domain names for your movies now I recommend creating a domain name that reflects the title of your movie with the word "movie" after it. For example, if you

created a movie called about a career courier I recommend reserving CareerCourierTheMovie.com

Having your movie title included in your domain name helps people find your website. This is necessary, especially if your movie garners buzz. In those situations, it is very common for people to simply type in the name of your movie and see what shows up. Having your movie title included as part of your domain can help your movie show up in search results whenever anybody is searching for your movie.

Sometimes you will find out that your domain name is already taken. Assuming the name is not trademarked, you will have to decide if you want to change your movie title or modify the domain name. But if you cannot get a .com, I would strongly suggest avoiding other extensions like .net or .org. Unless you are part of a large nonprofit, those extensions are silly when it comes to movie marketing.

Website Platform

People throw around a bunch of silly jargon like Web 1.0 or Web 2.0 to describe the Internet evolution. But for the sake of your Internet movie marketing mastery, just know that websites are usually described as dynamic or static. A static website was all the rage in 1999. There was a time when your kid sister made crappy-looking HTML sites to serve as an online brochure, complete with crappy content.

Over the years, static websites have been slowly replaced by dynamic sites that can be updated frequently. One example of a dynamic site is a blog. As you probably know, a blog allows you to update your website with the ease of sending an email. At first blogs were mostly web-based diaries where people could share personal crap that nobody cared about. And then later blogs evolved to allow people to hone in on their niche and provide enormous value to like-minded enthusiasts.

To add to all this nerdy confusion, the delineation between blogs and standard, static HTML websites has gotten a little muddy. On top of this, most web nerds currently avoid using the words blog or website to describe their real estate on the net. Instead they now use the popular term, Content Management System or CMS, to describe websites. This sounds impressive and expensive, but a CMS is essentially blog technology that has evolved to the point where anybody can easily have an awesome website, fast.

The most popular CMS is WordPress. Many people choose to utilize the WordPress CMS because it is free, it is easy to use, and it is easy to customize. And because of these factors, many filmmakers can modify their sites to include sales pages, movie trailers, opt-in forms and other cool stuff. When you set up your site, I suggest forgoing old school static HTML sites and just set up all of your sites on the WordPress CMS platform.

Your Company Website

As mentioned previously, my affiliate for BlueHost found at MovieSiteHost.com allows you to reserve a domain name and hosting at the same time. After you reserve your domain name, your next step is to log into your account and click on an icon called “WordPress.” From there, you will install WordPress on your server. After the three-minute installation, you will be issued with a username and a password. From there, you can log into the back office of your new website and begin your customization.

Easy, right?

If what I just said confuses the heck out of you, then you have two choices. You can go through a learning curve or you can hire someone to do the WordPress installation and website customization for you. I know some friends who outsource these tasks through sites like fiverr.com or you can hire my firm at MarketYourMovie.com to help you get your site up and running. In my humble and very biased opinion, it may be beneficial to figure out how to set up your own hosting and domain. This way, when you start building individual websites for each of your movies, having familiarity with this type of stuff will help you save time and money. And in case you’re wondering, MovieSiteHost.com will allow you to add-on additional domains under the same hosting account. This can save you a lot of money!

After you reserve your domain name and create an initial website, you will want to add some content to your site. This first version of your mini-movie studio website does not have to be complex, but should include the name of your company, your contact information for any press and traditional distributors. Then later, as you go into production on various movies, you will want to create a link from your company website to your individual movie websites, which we will cover later.

Movie Ideas

As a filmmaker, one of the reasons you make movies is to share your vision with the world. My suggestion is to determine if you would like to make money making movies. If so, do not make a movie unless you know your movie niche audience. If you do not care about making money with your movies, then you can simply say that you are doing it “for the love.”

A few years back, I got involved in a project “for the love” without considering who would actually buy the movie. Guess what? The movie died. The movie did not make money. And several of my friends are still paying off their credit cards. That was stupid. Avoid this. I can tell you from experience that making movies is a lot more fun when you can cash checks.

So how do you improve your chances for making money with your movie? While nothing in life and business is guaranteed, you can improve your chance of success by focusing on and then finding your niche target audience. This process begins by defining your unique selling proposition. In traditional business, your USP is the one aspect of your product that sets you apart from the competition. In the movie business your USP is usually referred to as your hook. What is your hook?

The reason I want you to think about your USP early on is because through the course of your filmmaking career you will undoubtedly need to create relationships with prospective investors who more than likely make their living selling conventional products. So if you know how to put your movie business within the context of producing a general product, you will speed up rapport and build trust faster. You will enter into conversations, knowing you can speak the language.

Answer these questions:

1. What is your movie about?
2. Is there an audience for your subject matter?

Many filmmakers believe their movie will appeal to just about everybody. While I encourage you to think big, very few filmmakers have the marketing budget to reach a global audience. Instead, I advise you to take a more cost-effective approach to finding your niche target audience.

If there are print magazines devoted to your subject matter, then those subscribers are part of your target audience. If you cannot find a print magazine targeted to your niche, then odds are good that your niche is too small or not profitable. In addition to exploring the magazine rack, you can also conduct internet keyword research. To do this, go online and utilize a free Google tool called the: *Google Keyword Traffic Estimator* and find out if anybody is actually searching for your topic.

1. Google: “Google Traffic Estimator External.”
2. Once you find the site, search keywords related to your niche topics. Make sure you put your keywords in quotes, like this: “Boxing Movie.”
3. Hit submit.
4. Once you get results, look for a box on the left-hand side that says “EXACT.” Click that box,
5. The search data will be displayed.

This information will let you know how many people are searching for terms related to your movie on a monthly basis. If there is a market for your movie, then your next step is to test your concept. One of the easiest ways to test your concept is through a crowdfunding campaign, which I will cover later.

Build Your Team

Once you have an idea of the types of movies you want to make, you need to create relationships with at least five to 10 collaborators who complement your skill set. At the very least, you’ll want to find a writer who understands budgets, a physical producer experienced in production management, a tech guru who understands cameras and modern production gadgets, an editor with Final Cut Pro, and a sales and marketing professional and Internet guru who can promote and sell your movies online. You will also need a lawyer who can provide you with the necessary legal advice, contracts and guidance on setting up your mini-movie studio business.

If you look at my movie credits, you’ll see that I’ve been working with the same crew on almost every project. This is not by accident. Making movies is challenging. And bringing unknown people into the process causes everything to become even more complicated. But you have to start somewhere.

So for those of you planning to crank out some movies, I recommend you start small. Find a few collaborators and assign jobs based on interest. Then grab a camera and complete some micro projects such as music videos, short films and funny sketches for YouTube.

A few months back, my buddy bought an HD SLR camera. Over a few afternoons, he tested the camera and edited the footage into two music videos that are now gaining popularity on YouTube. Creating manageable micro projects allowed him to make short movies that employ minimal locations, few actors and a lot of exteriors, which means he did not have to worry as much about the costs and time associated with interior lighting. The project was a lot of fun too.

On my website Filmmaking Stuff, people often ask me how to establish a team. If you are not in Los Angeles or New York, I suggest finding out if your state or country has a film commission. Often the film commission will have a film directory. I suggest getting a copy and then telephoning various people in the directory and asking to meet for lunch. For some filmmakers, picking up the phone and cold calling is challenging. So if you call and someone hangs up, it is a good indication that the prospect would not be good for your business anyway.

It continues to be my experience that most filmmakers are nice people and will respond favorably to like-minded creative folks. Assuming you make a few filmmaking friends, your next step is to complete some small projects together and, later, design a feature that can be explained in one high-concept logline. I personally favor original, genre-specific movies with a bit of controversy, geared toward a clearly defined target audience. But above all, your movie idea should be totally fun and captivating. (Otherwise, why make the movie?)

Test Your Team

Before you jump into BIG filmmaking projects, I recommend working with creative collaborators on weekend films and other smaller Backyard Indies. This helps you uncover everybody's idiosyncrasies early on. From this experience, you can determine whom you want to work with again on bigger projects. Utilizing test projects to uncover the bad apples is essential to your long-term filmmaking success.

A long time ago, I worked on a short movie with a guy. Long story short, I found out the guy was sleazy with money. He had hired one of my friends to build our movie website. But he failed to pay as agreed. When confronted, he shared an outlandish story about Western Union sending the money to the incorrect address. This was completely stupid and untruthful. Because he was a “friend,” I gave him the benefit of doubt and dropped the subject. Three years later, I found myself working with this guy again. And guess what? He stole thousands of dollars from the movie budget. When confronted, he left Los Angeles for Kentucky or some other place. He did email a few times, apologizing. He was an idiot. I should have known.

Sometimes you uncover facts early on that could save headaches later. You need to have a forward-thinking perspective. In small deals, when you have moments of friction, your collaborators will often say: “This is not a big deal.” But I now disagree. Frustrations on small projects will be amplified on BIG projects and may become really BIG problems.

Make Short Movies First

Before you make a feature, you should create a whole bunch of short movies. This advice is nothing new for the up-and-coming filmmaker. But what is new are the many options for distribution. In the past, most short films lived and died at film festivals. But these days, the Internet has changed everything.

With sites like YouTube, filmmakers are now able to find a global audience at the push of a button. In no previous time in history has it been so easy and inexpensive for filmmakers to get noticed. If you’ve never made a short film, the process is simple and fun. For your first few movies, don’t worry about lighting or special effects. The goal of these projects is simply to take action and start doing. These small projects will enable you to utilize limited resources for maximum production value.

When you plan your movie, focus on a story you can tell in three minutes or less. In my opinion, comedy works best. When I was course managing a film program, I noticed a lot of first-time filmmakers created stories that focused on suicide or some troubled girl shaving her head and reminiscing about spiders. I even know one guy who made his friend hump a statue while wearing a gimp mask. (Don’t ask.)

If you think you have a story like that, which you just HAVE to tell, by all means do so. But if you can be funny and get Internet viewers to share your movie with other people, who will then share your movie with other people, you will have achieved semi-famous greatness. All you need to get started is a camera, some friends and the ability to edit your footage.

To begin, write out a list of funny story ideas. Once you have a list, pick one that interests you the most. When you have it, call up some friends. Enlist them as actors and get to work. If most of your friends are preoccupied with marriage, a family and pregnancy, that's cool. Just start making movies starring you and your dog. (People love dogs.)

After a couple of these types of films, you may find yourself getting bored. This is actually a good sign, because it shows you're growing. When this happens, begin to create more complex stories and then write a well-crafted screenplay. Assuming you've been doing shorts with your friends, you will know who works well and who doesn't. Invite the best of your actor friends to your next movie.

Theoretically, if you make one or two three-minute movies like this every weekend for six months, you will have equivalent experience of making a feature. This short movie marathon will provide you with a fundamental understanding of how to shoot scenes for minimal cost and still make them interesting. This experience will help you save time and money when you create your feature, while providing you with endurance, experience and the confidence to make movies with efficiency.

When you upload your work for the world to watch, audience feedback will reveal areas needing improvement. Even though you're working with non-professional equipment and talent, if you can learn to make great movies with a small camera, you can make them with a big camera. When the feature filmmaker is ready, the feature will reveal itself. Short movies provide training. If you haven't made a short, get started!

Keep Your Day Job

If you have already made a couple of short films and know your way around a movie set, consider making survival money outside the industry. I know this sounds counterintuitive, but bearing in mind most filmmakers take crappy jobs or work as PAs, getting well paid may be a good thing. Based on what I've been telling you, developing an ability to sell yourself and your

talents is probably the most important aspect of your career. So before you wait tables or continue your career track toward Key Production Assistant, consider a job selling some sort of expensive product in a growing industry.

If you work for a good company, working a sales day job can pay really well. If you are lucky, you will mostly likely work from home, get to make friends, eat lunches for free, learn sales skills, and also have time in between legitimate client visits for motion picture meetings. Just make sure you save your money. Throughout the years, I have worked for various start-up companies in a sales capacity and some did not work out. Still, the upside to working outside the movie industry is the potential to make six figures a year. You can then dump that money into growing your movie business.

But know this. A good income can be the biggest downside of working outside of the movie industry. Many of your friends who struggle in entry-level positions within the industry will question your seriousness when you drive your brand-new BMW around town. While there is nothing wrong with being successful, your goal should be to free up your life so that you can make a comfortable living and then transition into a filmmaking role with the least amount of struggle. Additionally, if you find yourself working in a crappy day job for more than three years and you still haven't made a movie (and still want to) grow some balls and QUIT!

This is a FREE first chapter for Filmmaking Stuff

Thank you for reading my latest book, Filmmaking Stuff. You can find out more about the book by going here: <http://www.FilmmakingStuffBook.com>