



THE 6 KEYS TO RAPIDLY GROW YOUR FILMMAKING CAREER

Tom Malloy





KEY 1: DO **NOT** JUST JUMP IN!

This is a mistake you're going to have to avoid if you're looking to make a professional quality film.

There is a definitely a need sometimes to "jump in the pool," so to speak, and get it done, but in the case of making a film, planning and preparation are key.

Many directors will say things like, "Forget casting name talent, I just want great actors." And they will press the producer to just cast a non-sellable name.

The response to the director your should give is:

"What about casting name talent who are also great actors?"

The more planning you can do in regards to your film, the less heartache you'll have in the long run.

I know you want to make a film!

And that can be a great exercise if you just want to do a short film or a test shoot.

But for a sellable, professional feature, you've gotta take a step back. Instead of jumping right in and just shooting something, it's better to have a plan, and have an idea.



KEY 2: **DEVELOP** THE PROJECT!

What does this mean? It means taking time to **IMPROVE** the project. That is the key to obtaining financing, attracting talent, and making a sellable film.

Here are some steps:

- 1) Make sure the script is as **great** as it can be. This includes:
 - a) getting a good read.
 - b) obtaining coverage reports.
 - c) getting positive reviews from industry professionals.
- 2) Remove any **insanities** from the project.
 - a) If you think you're starring in it and directing it and producing it and you want to raise \$10 million, that's insane.
 - b) Anything that feels like it's a dream and will never happen, take it out.
 - c) Think rationally. In the case of you directing and starring and producing, why not think about making the same film for \$100k?
- 3) Develop your **business plan**!
 - a) This is the physical manifestation of the idea of your film.
 - b) Use MoviePlanPro.com if you need guidance. Been working for me for 15+ years.
 - c) No matter what, it has to be tight and effective.
- 4) Work on your **pitch** to investors.
 - a) First, you should have a budget created by a line producer so you know **WHAT** to pitch.
 - b) You need to have a tight pitch that highlights the value of your film.
 - c) Practice it over and over.

The development stage is truly the most important KEY to a filmmaking career!



KEY 3: THINK **BIGGER**. BUT NOT TOO BIG

Your thinking has to fall in the realm of right in the middle. Not too big, but definitely not too small.

Don't think too small: You're not going to make your no-name drama with your actor friends.

Don't think too big: At the same time, you're not going to go from not producing a feature to making a \$20 million film out of the gate.

Your thinking should be this:

You're going to make a professional quality film with recognizable talent, and it's going to be a sellable, marketable asset when it's finished.

If you have that mindset, you're in great shape.

That means you should be looking for the lowest budget you can make the film for, without losing production value. This means an amount of money where the "low budget" is not the talking or selling point of the film.

When you take a look at films that are independent but professional, a lot of times its tough to even guess what the budget was! That's what you have to achieve.

This is where a good line producer can be invaluable. He or she will be able to tell you what's the right amount you need to raise to pull it off.



KEY 4: RAISE MONEY (DON'T USE CREDIT CARDS)

The credit cards get pulled out a lot when you ignore Key #1 and just go ahead and shoot something.

Often times this leads to debt and potential bankruptcy.

But there's more to it than that. It's not about just putting someone else's money at risk so that you're protected financially.

Here's what it's about: if your project is good enough for you to be able to raise money from outside investors, you're on the right track to make a professional film.

If no investor will touch it, you may have to go back to step 2 and develop the project more.

Perhaps you need to try one of these approaches:

- 1) Consider hiring a sellable director (Instead of directing the film yourself).**
- 2) Partner with a Producer who has a track record and has connections.**
- 3) Or perhaps consider reworking or rewriting the script.**

There is no time limit in development! Sometimes it can take a couple of months, and sometimes it can take years. You might have different projects in various stages of development, which is fine.

But if you feel a project is "stuck" and not moving forward, the KEY is to improve the project even more, which leads back to more development.

Golden rule: When in doubt, always return to Key #2.



KEY 5: HIRE PROFESSIONALS

If you've made it to Production, meaning you're funded and shooting a film (or about to start shooting a film), here's a rule to live by:

"If you think it's expensive to hire a professional, try hiring an amateur."

I've done it. I've made this mistake in the past, and it cost me.

One film had an amateur sound guy. We saved maybe \$500/week not hiring a professional. The sound was almost unfixable in some scenes. Took months and months of sound mixing and ADR, which cost exponentially more than if we had hired the right guy in the first place.

Always, always try to get the best people. A movie is a strange monster.

If one aspect is out of whack, sometimes the whole movie goes down the drain. So be picky, and take your time with this.

Remember the great people. Hire them again, and tell friends about them.

Remember the bad people. Do NOT hire them again, but still tell friends about them so they don't make the same mistake.

This is a crucial step where you want to try to avoid hiding your friends. Remember this rule:

Do NOT hire friends unless the talent exceeds the friendship.

Filmmaking is a business. And, in any business, you don't want to put your future at risk just to seem like a nice person. You need to treat this film as an asset, and only try to contribute value to that asset that will strengthen it.



KEY 6: ATTEND **MARKETS**

This is the Ultimate Key to getting connections to producers, financiers, buyers, distributors, and sales agents. You need to consider spending the money, investing in yourself, to get to one of these markets during the year.

For the film markets, there are three majors:

- 1) Berlin (EFM)**
- 2) Cannes**
- 3) The American Film Market (AFM)**

Even if you don't have a film to sell, there's tremendous value in attending these markets. You'll make connections that will pay off for years to come.

But if you have a film ready to sell (or in Post), you can make deals directly with sales agents and distributors at these markets, and you'll be on your way to a professional career as a filmmaker.

It's commonplace at these markets to give and receive business cards and/or contact information. On a nice night on the front lawn of the Grand Hotel in Cannes, you might walk out with 75-100 business cards in your pocket.

Now here's your mission... you **MUST** follow up. Countless stories of success can be attributed to this one principle; following up.

It doesn't help you if you wine and dine and schmooze to get the contact, and then not take the extra effort to follow up.

On the flip side of the coin, if you **DO** follow up, you'll be making connections, forging relationships and partnerships that will help you get to the next level in your career.

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