

FILM PRODUCTION MANAGEMENT 101
Management and Coordination in a Digital Age

Course Outline
by Deborah S. Patz

Course Title:
Production Management & Coordination 101

Course Description:
Learn essential skills of the business and logistics side of filmmaking in order to prepare for a film or television production and then manage its creation on-schedule and on-budget.

Course Goals/Objectives:
Through discussion and practical exercises, each student will grasp an overview of the production process from the end of development to post production, and develop management and coordination skills in: budgeting, scheduling, cost tracking, resume writing and evaluating, interviewing, managing people, legal clearances, managing essential production documentation, including script formatting and revisions. Each student will write a budget with top sheet and budgetary assumptions, accompanying cash flow, and identify budget and cash flow hot spots, and each student will write a targeted resume and cover letter for his/her current position on the career path.

Requirements:

- Text: "**Film Production Management 101, 2nd Edition: Management & Coordination in a Digital Age**" by Deborah S. Patz
- Movie Magic Budgeting software

Course Lessons/Topics:

1. Development vs Production & Post

Production Manager (PM) vs Production Coordinator (PC) vs Producer
The "package"
The vision
PM's & PC's role in development, preproduction, production & postproduction
Industry terminology, incl. ISAN

Chapters: 1-4, Glossary

Assignments, Exercises, Tests:

- Choose a script for workshopping through this course (15-20 min. short is best; low-budget feature is OK)
- Research online the Writer's Guild's rates for scripts (esp. for workshop script)
- Write a development budget

2. Hiring & Managing Crew

Structure of cast/crew departments
The role of the cover letter vs resume
Being interviewed, interviewing & active listening
Mentorships, internships & volunteering
Inspiring, managing & firing crew

Chapters: 5-7, 30

Assignments, Exercises, Tests:

- Conduct mock interviews
- From descriptive list of fictional people interviewed, choose Office PA and Craft positions and explain why
- Decide on size of crew to produce workshop script and describe roles chosen and why
- Explore union websites to identify which unions are applicable to which departments in the student's region

3. Preproduction Essentials

Scope of PM's vs PC's responsibilities in preproduction
Information & documentation distribution systems
Handling confidentiality
Negotiation & drafting letters of agreement
Music & research regarding legal clearances

Chapters: 8-12, 23, 25, 33

Assignments, Exercises, Tests:

- Write a prep schedule for the workshop script
- Identify research issues in the script and create an action plan for how to address the issue(s)
- Identify cross-over skills that can be brought to this role [notes]

4. Casting & Credits

Auditions
Talent agencies and casting agencies
Stars, Principals, Actors and Background Performers
Working with the Actor's union
Performer's work fees vs rights fees
Medicals
Credits for feature film vs television

Chapters: 7, 24, 29

Assignments, Exercises, Tests:

- Draft preliminary cast (role) list for workshop script
- Prepare audition sides, choosing a scene with an emotional turn in it
- Research online the Performers' rates for work day and for residuals/buyouts
- Watch a film & transcribe the credits (roles only); share credit formats with class (identify type of film & release format)

5. Location, Location, Location

Scouting vs managing locations
Considerations for the production and the owner(s)
Location surveys & safety
Burned locations

Chapters: 7, 16

Assignments, Exercises, Tests:

- Draft preliminary location list for workshop script
- Scout a location for workshop script and report on shoot considerations (p. 218-221)
- Create a location map for the call sheet

6. Script Format & Revisions for Production

Feature film vs comedy script format
Scene numbering
Script revisions & coloured pages
When a script is final

Chapters: 27

Assignments, Exercises, Tests:

- Format an unformatted short script (source an unproduced script or provide a demo script for formatting)

7. Script Breakdown & Scheduling for Budgeting

Production schedule; prep schedule; one-liner; shooting schedule
Scheduling for low-budget productions
AD vs PM script breakdowns
Expensive production elements ("hot spots") that affect budget vs schedule

Chapters: 3, 28

Assignments, Exercises, Tests:

- Breakdown workshop script for budgeting and discuss differences to preliminary cast & location lists (if any)
- Identify budgetary & scheduling hot spots in the workshop script and explain how to address them

8. Budgeting Basics

Basic budgeting principles (overall issues)
Above-The-Line (ATL) / Below-The-Line Budget structure, incl. "The Line"
Budget format: Top sheet, detail pages, and list of assumptions
Union scale rates vs non-union pattern budgeting
Fringes
Budgeting to a fixed maximum vs budgeting line-by-line
Amortization and pattern budgeting

Chapter: 3

Assignments, Exercises, Tests:

- Explore budget questions (p. 35 and 466-7) and answer as many as possible for the workshop

- script to start the list of assumptions
- Source & download rate sheets & fringe rates to use as reference during budgeting process

9. Movie Magic Basics

Budget format and "Line" differences of various studios and countries
 Navigation of Level 1, 2, 3 (4 is optional)
 Fringes, units, globals
 Printing options & access to header information
 Start budgeting Below-The-Line

Chapter: -

Assignments, Exercises, Tests:

- Set up 1 fringe in Movie Magic Budgeting (MMB) for non-union labor
- Set up globals in MMB for 3 crew rates (key, second, assistant) and for 5 time periods (prep, shoot, wrap, picture-post, sound-post)
- Start budgeting workshop script with BTL labor categories (budget money; can defer fees later)

10. More Budgeting & Reducing the Budget

Service/facility deals
 Deferrals
 Modify the budget using MMB globals
 Sub-groups & Libraries in MMB (advanced features, if time permits)

Chapter: 3

Assignments, Exercises, Tests:

- Continue budgeting workshop script with equipment categories, locations, unit expenses
- Manipulate globals (from last class) to modify the budget to explore the overall proportions of prep, shoot and post costs; report on observations

11. Cash Flow and the PM's Point of View of Financing

Producer closes the financing
 Financing agreement drawdown triggers
 Cash flow issue vs budget issue
 Cash flows for TV series, coproductions and micro-budget productions

Chapters: 20, 21

Assignments, Exercises, Tests:

- Write a cash flow for the workshop script (or for budget completed so far)
- Invent 2 fictional scenarios that are budgetary concerns, and 2 fictional scenarios that are cash flow concerns and explain why

12. Production Days & Special Departments

Blocking, Lighting, Rehearsal, Shooting
 Production Reports
 Call Sheets
 Production issues week-by-week during the shoot

Special departments: SPFX, CGI, motion control, animals, children, stunts
Customs issues

Chapters: 13-15, 26, 32

Assignments, Exercises, Tests:

- Prepare a call sheet for 1 day of workshop production schedule (with no times on it)
- Prepare a production report form for the workshop production (use samples in the appendix as a template)
- Pre-calculate the required estimated costs of: number of scenes to shoot per day; number of pages to shoot per day; and number of minutes to shoot per day (for workshop script)
- Pre-calculate estimated costs of 1-hour of overtime, and 1-day of overtime for 2 locations of the workshop production schedule

13. Spending, Tracking the Money... then the Audit

Purchase orders (P.O.) and P.O. log

Checks, cash and credit cards

Official vs PM-only cost reports

Managing cost spend at the start of production vs the end of production

Preparing for the audit in preproduction & in wrap

Audit vs Review engagement vs final costs report

Chapters: 19, 22, 36

Assignments, Exercises, Tests:

- Write 2 purchase orders for an items that the workshop production will need
- Invent 12 fictional receipts, write a petty cash report & code to line items in budget
- Choose 1 of the 4 PM-only cost report formats (p. 499-502) to use and explain why

14. Insurance, Bonds & Publicity

Production package, General Liability

E&O insurance

Insurance for micro-budget productions

Insurance claims

Completion bonds & alternatives

Copyright, public domain, creative commons, product placement

Chapters: 17-18, 31, 33

Assignments, Exercises, Tests:

- Write and schedule a publicity plan for the days of the shoot for the workshop production
- Watch a “Making-of” documentary and report on an insurance-related or budget-related challenge the production had to face & how it was solved

15. Wrap, Post Production & Freelance Life

Wrap activities for PM vs PC

Wrap party

Stages of postproduction

Handover memo from production to postproduction

Delivery, Vaults, Storage
Freelance life & career paths

Chapters: 34-35

Assignments, Exercises, Tests:

- Research a production company or union/guild and write a resume and cover letter targeted to them
- Describe 3 different potential career paths to or including production management or coordination
- Complete budget, top sheet & list of assumptions (if necessary)
- Organize & host wrap party for the course (*optional*)

Further Notes:

- It is recommended to regularly identify/discuss cross-over skills in most classes in order to create an effective resume at the end of the course.
- This course dovetails well with a practical production course that subsequently produces the short scripts prepared in this course.

Author:

Deborah S. Patz has been a filmmaker on award-winning productions since the mid-80s, primarily as a production manager and coordinator, and then as production executive with such companies as: Lucasfilm, IMAX, MCA/Universal, Alliance/Atlantis, Nelvana, BBC, CBC and the Disney Channel. She has shot on everything from 3D to 35mm to digital video, worked on international coproductions and shot in several countries around the world, even sending a camera into space. Based on her books, *Film Production Management 101* and *Surviving Production* - created out of her work experiences - she has designed and instructed numerous courses, seminars and workshops on production management skills and spoken on panels in Canada, the USA and UK. Via her website <http://www.debpatz.com>, she writes a F.I.L.M. Blog of educational, inspirational and entertaining posts as a companion to her books and to connect with readers.

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