

Film industry roles: Producer

What Is a Film Producer and What Does a Film Producer Do?

A film producer is the person responsible for finding and launching a film project. This can mean anything and everything from arranging financing, hiring writers, hiring a director, hiring key members of the creative team, and overseeing all elements of pre-production, production and post-production, right up to release.

It is not uncommon for a film production to have several producers. Some producers hold the title in name only, in exchange for ceding rights to the story, for example, or contributing financing to the film. But most producers actively work on set, overseeing production logistics from start to finish, in close collaboration with the director.

The Producers Guild of America is the principal professional organization of producers in Hollywood.

7 Different Types of Producers

Movie credits often list a number of different producers, but rarely is it clear what exactly each contributed to the film. Producing encompasses a range of roles, and in some cases, one person wears all the hats.

In most cases, however, the roles are divided and shared amongst different people, each with a different title. Among the most common types of producers on a motion picture, film, or TV show are:

1. **Executive producers** typically contribute a considerable sum of their own money to a project, and thus earn a top credit in the film. They may also secure additional financing and handle accounting and legal issues.
2. **Producers** actively work on set, overseeing production logistics from start to finish, in close collaboration with the director.
3. **Line producers** are the task-masters of a film, making sure it stays on time and budget. They are responsible for breaking down the script to create line items in a budget, planning a production timeline, coordinating the schedules and activities of various departments, and handling human resources.
4. **Creative producers** partner closely with the director on artistic matters. They facilitate the hiring of talent, supervise script revisions, communicate director notes, and coordinate a unified style and approach between departments.
5. **Showrunners** are television producers who have an overall creative vision for a series, and who have authority and management responsibility over the various directors who have been hired for specific episodes.
6. **Co-producers** and associate producers often help with fundraising, oversee a specific area of production, or share duties with a lead producer.
7. **Impact producers**, also known as engagement strategists, are producers of marketing and distribution (PMDs). They focus on getting the word out, attracting press

and media coverage, and finding a distributor to get a film in front of as many people as possible.

How Do You Find a Producer For Your Independent Film?

There are a number of steps you need to follow in order to secure a producer for your project. Read each step carefully, and remember that finding the right producer will greatly impact the success of your project.

Step 1: Prepare a Film Presentation Package

Have a realistic and clear sense of your project's size, scope, and target budget, as well as its genre, audience, and tone. Producers need information with which to make a decision about whether your project matches their own skills and interests. Prepare the following materials in advance of meeting with a potential collaborator:

- 1. A completed screenplay in the best shape possible. For guidance on how a script should be properly formatted, consult the helpful reference book, *The Hollywood Standard: The Complete and Authoritative Guide to Script Format and Style, 2nd Edition* by Christopher Riley (2009).
- 2. A strong logline, which is a one or two line description of what your film is about. The best elevator pitches convey a film's tone while concisely outlining the situation faced by the main protagonist, as well as the central conflict with the film's primary antagonist. [Learn more about writing loglines here.](#)
- 3. A two-page treatment describing the narrative of your proposed film, written almost like a short story.
- 4. A director's statement detailing, in one page or less, your vision, approach, and personal interest in the project.
- 5. A lookbook or mood reel, which is a collection of photographs and images that communicates your intended aesthetic for your film.
- 6. Any production stills or promotional shots you may already have.
- 7. Social media links to your film's web presence.
- 8. Your contact info, reel, and resume.

Have all of these materials handy, but supply this full package only when requested. Most of the time—especially in early communication—you will only need a strong elevator pitch to get the conversation started.

Step 2: Reach Out With a Pithy Email

When inquiring about a producer's interest, keep your initial email message short and sweet. Long messages tend to get ignored simply because movie producers—like everyone else—are stretched for time and overwhelmed by their inbox. Brief and courteous sentences work best, with a short paragraph about the film, and a second paragraph explaining why you thought this particular producer might be a good match in connection with your project.

Refrain from sending a full script in your first query. At minimum, attach a succinct lookbook or a two-page treatment, or simply offer to supply additional materials upon request.

Remember, when you email a producer you're essentially asking them to give their time for free. Be professional and respectful, and do your best to pique their interest.

Step 3: Follow Up

If you don't get an immediate reply, reach out courteously for a second time, perhaps a week or two later. Provide a suggested timeline for replying, for instance by informing the producer that you'll be attending their presentation at a filmmaker forum next month and would love to meet with them if they're interested. In this way, a certain urgency is conveyed without sounding too pushy.

Express gratitude and appreciation if a producer actually does take the time to reply, and efficiently coordinate a meeting or phone call at their earliest convenience. Once a connection is arranged, resist the temptation to pepper them with follow-up questions or clarifications. Wait until the scheduled discussion, and use the intervening time to prepare.

Step 4: Find a Personal Connection

If you're not having much luck with the cold approach, try attracting potential producers through a personal connection. The film industry is fairly small and interconnected, and according to the six degrees of separation, anyone in the industry can gain an introduction to someone else through a short chain of connections.

Ask around in your network of friends and colleagues until you identify someone who is both familiar with and trusted by the producer you are targeting, and also able to personally vouch for you.

The chances of your project rising to the top of their inbox queue improve considerably if it comes from a trusted source rather than a complete stranger.

Step 5: Attend Festivals and Markets

Market events such as IFP's Project Forum, Independent Film Week, Tribeca All Access, and more are fantastic places to network and meet with producers who are attending specifically to hunt for projects.

Step 6: Adjust Course as Needed

If all your efforts fail to attract a collaborator who believes in your project and is eager to support you, then consider re-evaluating your movie idea. Are there improvements that you can make, based on the feedback you've gathered along the way?

Figure out what's not working about your pitch or your vision for the project, adjust course, and try again.