

CHOP  SHOP

Lights, Camera, Action!

A Behind-the-Scenes Look at
Staging a Successful Video Production



Hey there, fellow content creators! If you're reading this, you probably share our passion for bringing stories to life through video. Whether you're a seasoned pro or just starting out, one thing remains true: successful video production doesn't happen by chance. It requires careful planning, a well-defined process, and a commitment to following the right protocols.

As a professional media and content production company, we've learned a thing or two about what it takes to stage a successful video production. So, grab your director's chair and get ready for a behind-the-scenes look at the proper preparation, process, and protocol that can make your next project a blockbuster!

- The ChopShop Team



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Step 1: Pre-Production - Laying the Foundation

1. Define Your Objectives

Every video project should have a clear purpose. Whether it's to entertain, inform, or inspire, defining your objectives is the first crucial step. What message are you trying to convey? Who is your target audience? Understanding these key elements will guide your entire production.

2. Develop a Solid Script, Storyboard, and Shot List

The script is the backbone of your video, but it's not the only key document you need. In addition to a well-written script, you should also create a storyboard and a shot list.

Script: Start by creating a detailed script that outlines the dialogue, scenes, and the overall narrative. A well-written script will save you time and headaches during production.

Storyboard: A storyboard is a visual representation of your script, providing a scene-by-scene breakdown with rough sketches or images. It helps you plan the visual composition and sequence of shots, ensuring that your vision translates effectively onto the screen.

Shot List: A shot list is a detailed inventory of every shot you plan to capture during filming. It specifies the type of shot (e.g., close-up, wide shot, tracking shot), camera angles, and any specific details about the shot (e.g., location, props, actors). Having a comprehensive shot list helps you stay organized during the shoot and ensures that you capture all the necessary footage.

3. Assemble Your Dream Team

Creating a successful video production is a collaborative effort, and having the right people in key roles is crucial. Here are some of the key roles to consider hiring:

Director: The creative visionary behind the project. They oversee the entire production, making decisions about the artistic direction, performances, and overall storytelling. The director's role is to bring the script to life, ensuring that the final product aligns with the intended vision.

Director of Photography (DP): Also known as the cinematographer, is responsible for the visual aspects of the film. They work closely with the director to determine the camera angles, framing, lighting, and overall visual style. The DP's expertise in camera operation and composition is essential for achieving the desired look and mood of the video.

Camera Operators: Are responsible for operating the cameras during filming. They work closely with the DP to execute the planned shots, ensuring the camera movements and framing align with the creative vision. Multiple camera operators may be needed for complex scenes or multi-camera setups.

Camera Assistants: Often called ACs (Assistant Camera), provide essential support to the camera department. They help with camera setup, lens changes, and maintaining the camera equipment. ACs also play a crucial role in ensuring focus accuracy during filming.

Focus Puller: Or first AC, is responsible for maintaining precise focus during camera movements and scene changes. They use specialized tools to adjust the focus as needed to keep subjects sharp and in focus.

Key Grip: Is in charge of the grip department, which handles all the equipment related to camera support and movement. They oversee the setup of camera rigs, dollies, cranes, and other equipment necessary for achieving specific shots.

Lighting Crew: Consists of various roles, including gaffers, electricians, and grips. They work together to set up and control the lighting for each scene. Proper lighting is critical for achieving the desired mood and aesthetics in your video.

Production Designer and Art Department: Is responsible for the overall visual design of the film, including sets, props, and costumes. They collaborate with the art department to create the physical elements that contribute to the visual storytelling.

Sound Department: Includes sound recordists, boom operators, and audio engineers. They ensure that the audio recorded on set is of high quality and free from unwanted noise or disruptions. Clear and crisp audio is essential for a successful video.

Editor: The editor is responsible for assembling the footage, audio, and visual effects into the final video. They work closely with the director to shape the narrative, pacing, and overall flow of the production.

Post-Production Team: In addition to the editor, your post-production team may include colorists, visual effects artists, and sound designers. They put the finishing touches on the video, enhancing its visual and auditory elements.

As you plan your video production, consider the complexity of your project and the specific roles required to bring your vision to life. Each member of your dream team plays a crucial part in creating a successful video production.



4. Plan Your Budget

Don't let financial surprises derail your project. Determine a realistic budget early on and stick to it. Factor in equipment costs, talent fees, location expenses, and post-production costs.

A well-planned budget ensures a smoother journey to the final cut.

Budget planning for each step of a video production can vary widely based on factors such as project complexity, location, crew size, equipment needs, and the level of post-production required. Below, I'll provide you with rough budget ranges for each stage, but keep in mind that these are general estimates, and your actual costs may differ:

Step 1: Pre-Production - Laying the Foundation

Scriptwriting and Development: \$500 - \$5,000 (cost can vary greatly based on script complexity and writer fees).

Storyboard and Shot List: \$200 - \$1,000 (if you hire a professional storyboard artist).

Casting: \$1,000 - \$5,000 (for actors, depending on the number of roles and talent level).

Location Scouting and Permits: \$500 - \$2,000 (location fees, permits, and insurance).

Crew Pre-Production Fees: \$2,000 - \$10,000 (for key creative roles such as the director, producer, and DP).

Step 2: Production - Lights, Camera, Action!

Camera Equipment: \$1,000 - \$20,000 (cost depends on camera type and accessories).

Lighting and Grip Equipment: \$500 - \$5,000 (based on lighting complexity).

Sound Equipment: \$500 - \$5,000 (microphones, recorders, and accessories).

Crew Costs: \$2,000 - \$20,000 (varying crew size and expertise levels).

Location Expenses: \$500 - \$5,000 (transportation, accommodations, and meals if shooting on location).

Step 3: Post-Production - Weaving the Magic

Editing: \$1,000 - \$10,000 (editor fees, editing software, and workstation costs).

Sound Design and Mixing: \$500 - \$5,000 (audio editing, sound effects, music licensing).

Color Correction/Visual Effects: \$500 - \$5,000 (software and professionals if needed).

Post-Production Crew: \$1,000 - \$10,000 (if you have specialized post-production roles like colorists or VFX artists).

Step 4: Distribution - Sharing Your Creation

Marketing and Promotion: \$500 - \$5,000 (for advertising, social media marketing, and promotional materials).

Distribution Costs: Varies widely. For online distribution, it could be minimal, but for film festivals or theatrical releases, it can be significant.

Film Festival Submissions: \$50 - \$500 per submission (if applicable).

Website and Hosting: \$100 - \$1,000 (for creating a website to showcase your video).

Travel/ Accommodation: \$500 - \$5,000 (if attending film festivals/promotional events)

PR and Publicity: \$500 - \$5,000 (for public relations services or press outreach).

Remember that these budget ranges are approximate and can vary significantly based on project specifics. It's crucial to create a detailed budget tailored to your project's unique requirements. Additionally, consider contingency funds of 10-20% of your overall budget to account for unexpected expenses that may arise during production. Careful financial planning is key to ensuring a successful video production within your means.

5. Scout Locations and Secure Permits

Location can make or break a video. Visit potential shooting locations and ensure they align with your script. Don't forget to obtain the necessary permits and permissions, especially for public spaces.

Step 2: Production Lights, Camera, Action!

6. Equipment Check

Before the first take, ensure all your equipment is in working order. Test cameras, lights, microphones, and any other gear. Having a backup plan for equipment malfunctions is a must. Here's a comprehensive list of essential equipment to consider:

Camera Equipment:

Cameras: Select cameras that match your project's needs, such as DSLRs, mirrorless cameras, or professional cinema cameras.

Lenses: A variety of lenses for different shots (wide-angle, prime, zoom) to achieve desired framing and depth of field.

Tripods and Stabilizers: Tripods for static shots and stabilizers like gimbals or steadicams for smooth, dynamic camera movements.

Camera Support: This includes sliders, jibs, and dollies for specialized shots.

Camera Accessories: Extra batteries, memory cards, lens filters, and lens cleaning kits.



Lighting and Grip Equipment:

Lights: A variety of lighting sources, including key lights, fill lights, and backlighting, as well as light modifiers like softboxes, reflectors, and diffusers.

Lighting Stands and C-stands: For securely positioning lights and modifiers.

Grip Equipment: Sandbags, clamps, and grip heads for stabilizing equipment and securing cables.

Audio Equipment:

Microphones: Shotgun microphones for capturing dialogue and lavalier microphones for individual subjects.

Boom Poles and Shock Mounts: Essential for recording clear and professional audio on set.

Audio Recorders: High-quality audio recorders to capture sound separately from the camera.

Headphones: For monitoring audio quality during filming.

Support and Rigging:

Camera Rigs: Shoulder rigs or cage systems for mounting additional equipment like monitors and follow focus.

Follow Focus: To maintain precise focus during shots.

Matte Boxes and Filters: Used for controlling light, managing reflections, and adding creative effects.

Monitoring and Playback:

Field Monitors: High-resolution monitors for monitoring framing, exposure, and focus.

Video Playback Devices: For reviewing footage on set.

Power and Accessories:

Batteries and Chargers: Sufficient batteries for all equipment, along with chargers and power banks.

Extension Cords and Power Strips: To ensure you have adequate power sources on location.

Memory Card Readers: To transfer and backup footage.

Production Tools:

Slate or Clapperboard: For syncing audio and video in post-production.

Script Supervisor Tools: To help ensure continuity in scenes.

Safety Gear:

First Aid Kit: For minor injuries and on-set accidents.

Fire Extinguishers: Especially important if you're working with lighting equipment.

Camera Cases and Bags:

Protective Cases: To transport and protect your valuable equipment.

Remember that the specific equipment you need may vary depending on your project's scope and requirements. Additionally, consider renting equipment if you don't own all the necessary gear, especially for larger or more specialized productions. Proper equipment planning and organization are essential to ensure a successful video production.

7. Create a Production Schedule

Time is money in the world of video production. Create a detailed shooting schedule that outlines what happens when. Stick to it as closely as possible to avoid unnecessary delays.

8. Maintain Effective Communication

Clear communication on set is essential. Designate a point person (often the director or producer) to coordinate and relay information. This keeps everyone on the same page and prevents misunderstandings.

9. Capture Quality Footage

The heart of your video production lies in the footage you capture. Pay attention to framing, lighting, and sound quality. Be patient and take multiple shots if needed to ensure you have the best material to work with during editing.

Step 3: Post-Production - Weaving the Magic

10. Edit with Precision

Editing is where your story truly comes to life. Cut, trim, and arrange your footage with precision. Use editing software that suits your project's needs, and consider hiring a professional editor for complex projects.

11. Add Sound and Music

Sound design and music play a vital role in setting the mood and enhancing the viewer's experience. Use appropriate music, sound effects, and voiceovers to create a cohesive audiovisual masterpiece.

12. Color Correction and Visual Effects

For a polished look, apply color correction and any necessary visual effects. These final touches can elevate your video from good to outstanding.



Step 4: Distribution - Sharing Your Creation

13. Format for Different Platforms

Prepare your video for different platforms and devices. Ensure it looks and sounds great on mobile, desktop, and television screens. When creating video content for social media, it's important to optimize your video sizes and formats to ensure they perform well on each platform. Below are the recommended video dimensions and guidelines for engagement on some popular social media platforms as of my last knowledge update in September 2021. Keep in mind that these guidelines may have changed since then, so it's essential to stay updated with the latest platform specifications.

Facebook:

Video Dimensions:

Recommended: 1280 x 720 pixels (16:9)

Minimum width: 600 pixels

Minimum aspect ratio: 9:16 to 16:9

Maximum file size: 4 GB

Video Length:

For the feed: 60 seconds or less

For stories: 20 seconds or less

Video Formats: MP4 or MOV

X (Formerly Twitter):

Video Dimensions:

Recommended: 1280 x 720 pixels (16:9 aspect ratio)

Minimum width: 32 pixels

Maximum file size: 512 MB (for most accounts)

Video Length:

For most videos: Up to 2 mins and 20 sec.

For some accounts (verified or longer content): Up to 10 minutes

Video Formats: MP4 or MOV

Instagram:

Instagram Feed:

Video Dimensions: 1080 x 1080 pixels (square) or 1080 x 1350 pixels (vertical)

Video Length: Up to 60 seconds

Video Formats: MP4 or MOV

Instagram Reels:

Video Dimensions: 1080 x 1920 pixels (vertical)

Video Length: Up to 15 seconds

Video Formats: MP4 or MOV

YouTube:

Video Dimensions:

Recommended: 1920 x 1080 pixels (16:9 aspect ratio)

Minimum resolution: 640 x 360 pixels

Maximum file size: 128 GB

Video Length:

Recommended: Unlimited (though shorter videos often perform better)

Video Formats: MP4, MOV, AVI, or other common video formats

LinkedIn:

Video Dimensions:

Recommended: 1920 x 1080 pixels
(16:9 aspect ratio)
Minimum width: 256 pixels
Maximum file size: 5 GB

Video Length:

Recommended: Up to 10 minutes
Video Formats: MP4

Facebook:

Video Dimensions:

Recommended: 1080 x 1920 pixels
(vertical)
Maximum file size: 287.6 MB (iOS),
72 MB (Android)

Video Length:

Up to 3 minutes (as of September 2021)
Note that TikTok video lengths can
change frequently, so always check the
latest guidelines.
Video Formats: MP4 or MOV

Optimizing video content for social media also involves creating attention-grabbing thumbnails, using captions or subtitles for accessibility, and experimenting with different video lengths and content types to see what resonates best with your audience. Additionally, keep in mind that video formats, lengths, and specifications may evolve on social media platforms, so it's essential to stay updated with their latest guidelines for optimal engagement.

14. Create Engaging Thumbnails and Titles

First impressions matter. Craft eye-catching thumbnails and compelling titles to entice viewers to click and watch your video.



15. Promote Your Video

Don't let your video gather digital dust. Promote it through your website, social media, and any relevant online communities. Engage with your audience and encourage them to share your content.

Remember, video production is a journey, not a destination. Each project is a learning experience, and the more you follow these steps, the smoother your production process will become. So, grab your camera, rally your crew, and let's bring your next video production to life!

In the end, the success of your video production lies in your dedication, creativity, and attention to detail. Stay true to your vision, adapt to challenges, and enjoy the ride as you create memorable content that resonates with your audience. Happy filming!



Bonus! Developing Your Budget and Budget Calculator

Rates for video production roles can vary significantly depending on factors such as location, experience, and the specific project. Keep in mind that these rates are estimations, and actual rates can be higher or lower. Here's a general estimated range for each role:

Pre-Production

Director: \$150 - \$500 per hour

Director of Photography (DP): \$200 - \$600 per hour

Camera Operators: \$100 - \$300 per hour

Camera Assistants: \$50 - \$150 per hour

Focus Puller: \$75 - \$250 per hour

Key Grip: \$75 - \$250 per hour

Lighting Crew: \$50 - \$200 per hour

Production Designer and Art Department: \$100 - \$300 per hour

Sound Department: \$100 - \$300 per hour

Scriptwriting and Development: \$50 - \$150 per hour

Storyboard and Shot List: \$25 - \$100 per hour

Casting: \$50 - \$150 per hour

Location Scouting and Permits: \$50 - \$150 per hour

Crew Pre-Production Fees: Varies based on position, but typically within the ranges mentioned above.

Production:

Camera Equipment: Costs can vary greatly depending on the equipment used, and this is usually a flat daily or weekly rate. Rates can range from \$500 - \$2,000 per day or more for high-end cinema cameras.

Lighting and Grip Equipment: Similar to camera equipment, rates depend on the gear and duration. Rates can range from \$500 - \$2,000 per day.

Sound Equipment: Sound equipment rentals typically cost between \$100 - \$500 per day.

Crew Costs: Rates for the crew will be as mentioned in the pre-production section. Crew members are often paid a day rate rather than an hourly rate during the production phase.

Location Expense: This can vary widely based on location and project needs. It includes costs for securing and using a location, and costs can range from hundreds to thousands of dollars per day.

Post-Production:

Editing: Editors often charge by the project or a flat day rate, ranging from \$50 - \$150 per hour.

Sound Design and Mixing: Sound designers and mixers typically charge \$100 - \$300 per hour.

Color Correction and Visual Effects: Colorists and VFX artists often charge \$100 - \$300 per hour.

Post-Production Crew: Rates for post-production crew members are typically within the ranges mentioned above.

Marketing and Promotion: Marketing and promotion costs vary greatly depending on the scale of the project, but marketing professionals may charge \$50 - \$150 per hour.

Distribution Costs: Distribution costs can vary widely and are project-specific. This includes costs associated with marketing materials, film prints, digital distribution, etc.

Film Festival Submissions: Costs vary by festival, ranging from \$25 to \$100 or more per submission.

Website and Hosting: Costs vary based on the complexity of the project and hosting needs.

Travel and Accommodation: These expenses depend on the project's requirements and the destination.

PR and Publicity: Public relations and publicity services are typically charged at \$50 - \$200 per hour.



Please note that these are general estimates and that rates can be influenced by various factors, including the geographic location of the project, the experience of the professionals, the project's scope and budget, and the specific equipment and resources required. It's advisable to obtain detailed quotes and negotiate rates with the professionals you plan to hire for your specific project.

Here are estimated day rates for various video production roles and expenses:

Pre-Production:

Director: \$1,500 - \$5,000 per day

Director of Photography (DP): \$2,000 - \$6,000 per day

Camera Operators: \$800 - \$3,000 per day

Camera Assistants: \$400 - \$1,500 per day

Focus Puller: \$750 - \$2,500 per day

Key Grip: \$750 - \$2,500 per day

Lighting Crew: \$500 - \$2,000 per day

Production Designer and Art Department: \$1,000 - \$3,000 per day

Sound Department: \$1,000 - \$3,000 per day

Scriptwriting and Development: \$500 - \$1,500 per day

Storyboard and Shot List: \$250 - \$1,000 per day

Casting: \$500 - \$1,500 per day

Location Scouting and Permits: \$500 - \$1,500 per day

Crew Pre-Production Fees: Varies based on position, but typically within the day rate ranges mentioned above.

Production:

Camera Equipment: Costs can vary greatly depending on the equipment used, but rental rates typically range from \$1,000 - \$4,000 per day or more.

Lighting and Grip Equipment: Similar to camera equipment, rates depend on the gear and duration, with daily rates ranging from \$1,000 - \$4,000.

Sound Equipment: Sound equipment rentals often cost between \$200 - \$1,000 per day.

Crew Costs: Rates for the crew will be based on day rates as mentioned in the pre-production section.

Location Expense: This can vary widely based on location and project needs, typically ranging from hundreds to thousands of dollars per day.

Post-Production:

Editing: Editors often charge by the project or a flat day rate, with rates ranging from \$500 - \$1,500 per day.

Sound Design and Mixing: Sound designers and mixers typically charge \$1,000 - \$3,000 per day.

Color Correction and Visual Effects: Colorists and VFX artists often charge \$1,000 - \$3,000 per day.

Post-Production Crew: Rates for post-production crew members are typically within the day rate ranges mentioned above.

Marketing and Promotion: Marketing and promotion costs vary greatly depending on the scale of the project, but marketing professionals may charge \$500 - \$2,000 per day.

Distribution Costs: Distribution costs can vary widely and are project-specific, including marketing materials, film prints, digital distribution, etc.

Film Festival Submissions: Costs vary by festival, ranging from \$100 to \$500 or more per submission.

Website and Hosting: Costs vary based on the complexity of the project and hosting needs.

Travel and Accommodation: These expenses depend on the project's requirements and the destination.

PR and Publicity: Public relations and publicity services are typically charged at \$500 - \$2,000 per day.

These are general estimates, and actual rates can vary based on the project's specifics and the professionals' experience and location. Be sure to obtain detailed quotes and negotiate day rates with the professionals you plan to hire for your specific project.

To help you in this process we created [this easy to use calculator](#) to line item all your costs and enter in a low, medium and high estimate.