

Getting started in the Film/TV/video production in the UK.

During a normal working week here at Butchers Hook Video, I've come to expect at least a dozen CV's of young people interested in breaking into the film business in the UK.

Now it is widely known that getting a break in the business is difficult, so in this article I'll attempt to address this and offer some tips I've picked up along my career from lowly runner to corporate video producer working with Fortune 500 companies.

The reason the film business is based on the "who you know" principle is simple – people senior to you (technicians/producers etc) need to be sure they know and can trust people in their employ – because mistakes can reflect badly on them.

In extreme cases – it can have a seriously detrimental effect on a career – as the business is relatively small and bad news travels fast. But equally – building a good reputation means your good name travels fast.

One of the most common pitfalls I see when I receive CVs of young people is a total lack of experience in the business. Now, this may not seem too unreasonable – as the CV comes from a person who has just left school or University with a newly minted academic qualification.

Now having the qualification is a big plus – but it will need to be supplemented with some real world experience. Thus the chicken and the egg scenario, fortunately there are some relatively straight forward ways to gain the necessary experience.

The very first step on the journey into the industry is to decide what specialism you want to take. If you want to break into a technical specialism (i.e. camera, sound, make up etc) the first essential is to have a good deal of experience with the equipment. For the auteur and post production people, the best method is to get creating and make a decent show reel as an absolute priority. For people interested in the production side of the business, a solid grasp of figures and the ability to network and schmooze is ideal!

After this – the next step is to get involved with as many free projects as possible in your local area. This can help people who haven't decided what area they want to specialise in and give vital experience to everyone else. Aside from experience, the other major benefit of freebies is networking. The importance of networking to those in the industry (from producer down) can't be too emphatically emphasised. If you happen to be working as camera assistant (for example) for a DoP on a free shoot and do a great job – the chances are you will be remembered when the DoP is working on a paid job next time.

A great resource for finding jobs on low budget films in your local area is Shooting People

www.shootingpeople.co.uk

After a number of freebies – you'll have a great deal more experience and your CV will look like the kind of CV that producers want to see!

When you progress to paid shoots – here are a few minimum expectations I have for people in my employ. You need to have boundless energy and enthusiasm and stay 100% positive! A strong grasp

of the technical aspects of your specialism sounds like a total given but again, need to be emphasised.

One of main ways people get into production is through the time honoured route of being a runner. Now this isn't a pretty route - they are also the most put upon and badly paid people in the business - I found it akin to slave labour! However runners are the work horses of the industry and are vital – and pay your dues (and work bloody hard!) and it pays off.

To conclude – entry to the film and video industry is tough – but very rewarding if you work hard and know how to play the game properly!

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www.haveabutchers.co.uk