

SMFA Your Crew List

Please see page 257 (the chapter on **Content Creation**) in the 4th edition of *Self-Management for Actors: Getting Down to (Show) Business* for an overview of crewing up your project. What follows is a minimal list of jobs for a small, indie production. Each duty is a crucial element of success, so no matter how many people you have on your team, get all of these jobs covered! Thank you, **Keith Johnson**, for contributing the following descriptions.

Writer: He wrote the story. He may be involved, to varied degrees, with creative aspects of production. If someone (like the director) is confused about motivation in any particular place in the story, the writer can clarify. He's usually not on set at all.

Producer: This is the head honcho, the driving force behind the project. He is responsible for hiring and firing anyone and everyone on the project (except the executive producer). He makes sure everyone is doing the job they're supposed to be doing and makes sure that the timing of everyone's jobs lines up with the timeline for getting the project started, shot, finished, and finished (yes I put finished in there twice because the producer stays with the project through post-production, which involves a different level of "finished"). A good producer is a pessimist who is constantly asking, "What could go wrong?" and finding ways to mitigate all the potential problems.

Line Producer: The chief logistician for the project, this person writes up and controls the budget and the shooting schedule, and works with the UPM and the shot list (created by the director and the DP) to create the shooting schedule (AKA, the **Day Out of Days** or **DOoD**). A good line producer enjoys accounting, spreadsheets, puzzles, and also seems to know several voodoo rituals.

Associate Producer: A title given to people who help the project in myriad, but mostly minor, ways.

Executive Producer (AKA, the EP or Exec Producer): This person is the direct line to the money. This is the person who represents the investors of the film. A good EP is someone who listened to the producer and line producer when they were discussing the project, understands the risks involved in the project, writes a check, and lets the producer produce. Industry Joke: *How many EPs does it take to screw in a lightbulb? EPs don't screw in lightbulbs; they screw in hot tubs.*

Unit Production Manager (AKA, the UPM): This is the guy who scouts and secures locations (or coordinates with the actual location scouts if such exist), processes permits, deals with catering, and coordinates with police and fire officials. He manages the strategic logistics on set and works with the production designer, hair and makeup people, and craft services. He runs all the behind-the-scenes stuff on set. A good UPM knows the area in which the project is shot, knows lots of people and potential locations, understands the local filmmaking bureaucracy, and

has a little bit of the wheeler-dealer inside to save the production money by offering stuff to locations other than money (product placement and advertising and such).

1st Assistant Director (AKA, 1st AD): This is NOT an assistant to the director, but instead, the set general, responsible for maintaining order and discipline on the set. He's responsible for keeping the production adhering to the shooting schedule. This is the guy responsible for getting the camera crew and the sound crew coordinated for each take. He manages time on set (calling meals and breaks) and operates like an orchestral conductor. A good 1st AD is very comfortable being absolutely no one's friend on a set. He's going to upset absolutely everyone at some point during the project. It is his job to push the director and the DP into getting a shot up in a given amount of time. He's part diplomat, part dictator. If he doesn't do his job well, the shoot invariably falls behind schedule. Ultimately, he's responsible for maintaining a working environment in which the director, actors, and crew can be focused on their work.

Director: He is the creative force behind the project. He knows the story that we're telling. He knows where, in their emotional and story arcs, the actors need to be in each scene. He works with the DP to create a shot list for the project.

Script Supervisor (AKA Scriptie, Continuity): This is the lady (usually) whose main function is to track every single take, what happened during it, whether it was good or bad, when it started, and when it ended. This is the primary person responsible for continuity (like who was carrying what prop in which hand during each take, and matching that; whether the actor behaved as if there were actually hot coffee in the cup). It is a mind-boggling job. A good scriptie has an awesome memory and eye for details and is a top-notch clerical worker who is not afraid to speak up if things are "wrong."

DP (AKA Director of Photography, Cinematographer, Camera Operator): This is the lead photographer. He works the camera. He knows the camera, lighting, framing, shot composition, and how all that relates to mood and storytelling. DPs have brands like actors do. TIP: Find a DP whose shooting style lends itself to the particular project for your brand. This person works with the director creating the shot list for the project and sometimes works with a storyboard (and storyboard artist, on bigger-budget shoots) to better describe each scene. The DP may have one or more assistants (ACs, AKA Assistant Camera, AC1 and AC2) to help set up the camera, focus the camera, or move the camera if the shot calls for motion. A good DP may have his own camera and lenses, but is certainly intimately familiar with whatever equipment he recommends. Industry Joke: *Why don't cameramen smoke cigarettes? Because it takes them two hours to light one properly.*

Grips and Gaffers: These are the set electricians and lighting guys. They work with the DP to light the set and move the camera on a dolly or crane, dealing with thousands of volts, lots and lots of amps, and death. Don't try to help them. Also, lights are hot. If one of these guys is wearing thick gloves and handling something, it's probably really hot. Good grips and gaffers are members of IATSE.

Sound Mixer (AKA Sound Guy, Audio Engineer): You know this guy. The gear alone on a "decent" setup can cost over \$30K. A good setup can cost \$50K. A sound guy with equipment gets paid. Everyone else could be working for free, but quality sound is the key to a passable project, so this guy deserves the check. He knows what level of extraneous, ambient sound will impact any given take. Also, he gets to touch all the actors in the weirdest places and no one seems to care. A good sound guy is worth his weight in gold. Industry Joke: *How tall is the average sound guy? No one knows because they never stand up.*

Boom Operator: This is the guy who holds the microphone on a big, long stick and points it at the actors who are talking. He is usually tied to the sound guy via radio system. A good boom operator has endurance in his shoulder muscles and a high tolerance for cramping and pain.

Production Designer (AKA Set Dresser, Set Designer, Set Decorator, Prop Master, Creative Director, Art Director): This person is responsible for the look and feel of the set. The production designer works with scriptie on continuity. He takes pictures of the set/location before any work is done so the set/location can be put back the way it was found. He takes pictures of the set when the first shot is ready for continuity checks. He provides and cares for all the props used by all the actors. A good production designer is an artist/interior designer who can convey appropriate emotions with furniture and stuff, and on low-budget projects, he's also doing all of the AKA jobs listed above.

Costume Designer (AKA Wardrobe): This person researches and/or designs costuming and accessories. This person acquires and manages the clothing for all the actors and is responsible for keeping track of what each actor is wearing in any given scene of the project. She works with scriptie on continuity with respect to actor clothing. Also cleans and presses actors' clothes. A good costume designer is a person who wished, when she was eight years old, to have life-sized Barbie dolls. This is a person who loves clothes and telling stories with clothes, and a person who has the administrative wherewithal to keep track of who wore what when.

Hair and Makeup: This person (or these people if hair is separate from makeup) manages hair and hair accessories for, and makeup for, all the actors. This person is on set to provide "last looks" touch-ups to actors before a shot.

2nd AD (AKA 2nd Assistant Director): This person also is NOT an assistant to the director. Also, this person has no real relation to the 1st AD except that the 1st AD will coordinate with the 2nd AD about the shooting schedule. This is the chief administrator on set, who handles all paperwork (the daily paperwork, call sheets, production reports, union contracts, etc.). She is responsible for getting tomorrow's call sheet to everyone before the end of today. She's responsible for coordinating with the actors who are working tomorrow so that they know call times and directions to the location/set. A good 2nd AD is the perfect secretary.

2nd 2nd AD: That's not a misprint. The 2nd 2nd Assistant Director is still NOT an assistant to the director. This person is responsible for wrangling talent from where they're in holding to set and back. He'll often orchestrate background action during takes.

PA (AKA Production Assistant): This person is the grease that makes a set function as smoothly as it can possibly function. There's no real job description, because this person exists to do whatever needs doing whenever it needs doing wherever it needs to be done. He or she is extra manpower to tackle unforeseen issues. Often thought of as the lowest on the totem pole, this person is invaluable to any project. A good PA has no ego but lots of self-esteem and is completely comfortable being the unsung hero of the project because they will be unsung and they are frickin' heroes.

Casting Director (AKA CD): She brings actors to the director and producer to populate a project. While your budget may not allow for a CD starting out, her job is to know far more actors than you'll ever want to meet, and then bring the right ones to you. The casting director has existing relationships with talent representatives that you don't have, which can make hiring actors at a higher tier possible, even on a low budget. Her ability to negotiate contracts while staying within your budget and helping you bring the right creative flavors to your project make her worth the money, when you have a little to spare.

Editor: This person cuts raw footage into what will eventually be the finished product. A good editor is a well-rounded filmmaker and an amazing storyteller who can digest the hours and hours of raw footage from set, sift through the flotsam and dreck, and pull out the brilliance of all the creators of the project.

Sound Editor (AKA Foley Editor): This person adds sound effects and background noise to a picture to fill out and complete the world in which the story happens. Often on a small production the editor will do this, but it's enough of a proper specialization that you may need to spend money on it.

Composer: This person watches the locked picture from the editor and retells the story with music, emphasizing and punctuating the scenes to add the emotion and gravity (or levity) that can only come from music.

Craft Services (AKA Craftie, Food, Lunch): This person (or team) is responsible for providing meals during formal meal breaks and snacks at all other times. Do not underestimate the importance of fueling the production! Bad craftie will ruin the mood on set. Everyone will complain about EVERYTHING. Good craftie will make your crew work miracles. Everyone will talk about how wonderful the food was (and not notice what could've been better, on set).

Again, no matter how big or small your crew is, these jobs must be covered, so have a plan for success and just get going! Join us at the *Self-Management for Actors* forums to get support as you move forward with creating content of your very own for the world to enjoy! Yeah!