

## **Reflective Essay**

The pre-production phase is of utmost significance for a successful film, irrespective of the fact whether it is a low-budget independent film or the one shot by a large production company that can afford a huge budget. Therefore, pre-production should be planned in detail and in advance with account for peculiarities of the film script and shooting. Current paper concerns importance of a shooting schedule and a call sheet during pre-production phase, as well as film budget decision, since such three elements may be considered as the key factors for any film-making project.

Shooting of a film is not an easy task and it is full of unpredictable events and unforeseen complications that could be adequately forecast regardless of how experienced the cast crew and the director are. Some shooting incidents may be connected with actors being sometimes late to the film set. Schedules of people may be busy if they are successful in their job, unless they are rising stars who have only one project at a time. Moreover, I suppose that most actors are not always punctual, especially if they are successful and sincerely believe that they are a center of the shooting crew. Therefore, directors have to be patient and good at giving explanations in an efficient and timely manner. The shooting schedule is, thus, extremely significant and is considered to be a basis that unites all actors and crew staff together in a positive way without any serious misunderstandings. Therefore, the director and other respective specialists on the filming crew have to prepare shooting schedules in advance and with a considerate degree of attention to details and unexpected occurrences.

I guess everyone understands that there may occur situations explained by the excuses such as “things go wrong”, “that the production team can’t plan for everything” and “that sometimes things take longer than originally thought”, but such eventualities and complications have to be taken into consideration when making an effective shooting schedule. I have found that many professional production managers resort to using

specialized software for scheduling, which is entitled Movie Magic Scheduling. However, the problem with such software and its analogies is that they are very expensive and many beginning producers or producers of low-budget independent movies cannot afford employing them, hence being obliged to do everything on their own. Unfortunately, I am not sure how such software works in terms of minute detail of determining the shooting schedule. Anyway, it must be really helpful for uploading all required materials and appropriate information into a computer and waiting for the final outcome without a need of doing all the hard work of time managing on one's own.

Scheduling of a shooting process entails breaking of a script into chosen locations and then considering how many and what scenes have to be shot at every peculiar location. In addition, the indicating of length of every scene and actors involved in it should be done, as well as choosing the cast crew that would be required at the location. All of the above decisions have to indicate peculiar time and durations so that the production team would know how long each scene is going to take and plan the shooting of other scenes accordingly. The scheduling may be an extremely complicated and time-consuming process, but it has to be done accurately. There are some useful tips relating to making shooting schedules provided by people who have been in the business for a long time and have first-time experiences with each phase of the filming process. Consequently, they are able to share their success stories and warn of potential threats and failures so that starting directors and producers would not repeat their mistakes to the detriment of a picture they are shooting.

I consider such personal tips based on real-life experiences extremely valuable. First of all, the production team and especially the director have to be prepared for anything “as you can possibly be before you show up for every day of shooting”. They have to know what, where and how they are going to shoot, as well as pay attention to the technical details like cameras and lighting and make sure that actors know their lines and are ready for a shooting

day. Second, it seems to be a valuable piece of advice to manage time wisely. People may have conflicting and busy schedules and the shooting schedule have to be flexible and accommodating, yet not too lenient. Not all actors and crew staff are needed at the same time. Hence, some of them should arrive earlier and some of them can arrive later to participate only in scenes where they are involved, instead of staying at the shooting the whole day. Third, shooting schedules have to allocate more time for each scene than expected in case something unpredictable occurs. Anyway, finishing the shooting earlier is much better than delaying the entire process and leaving called actors and staff idle and annoyed. Fourth, I deem it essential to call the crew earlier than actors who should arrive once cameras, decorations, lighting, etc. have already been prepared and installed. Five, makeup and dressing should be included into the schedule and time should be dedicated to them with account for how long makeup for each scene should take. Six, I consider a recommendation that urges to “know your people” to be the most essential. The director should know peculiarities and characters of everyone on the team in order to be able to make a truly efficient shooting schedule. As Henderson encourages, “know who you’re working with and adjust your daily schedules accordingly”. Finally, food is significant and shorts breaks has to be included into the schedule as people require eating and want to know that they are going to be fed, which can make them happier and productive.

Therefore, call sheets become instrumental in making the shooting schedule work as they offer “the only way that you can prevent potential shoot day meltdowns”. Most production specialists agree that making a call sheet is an art that has to be mastered through experience by answering “who, when, what, and where questions that come up about every five minutes on a shoot day”. One of the primary requirements to a call sheet is to make it customized and individual so that everyone would receive information that is needed on a specific day. Call sheets have to contain contact information for key members and the

director. Time of each scene and meals, as well as makeup, if necessary, have to be included to the sheet. It is also beneficial to “put shuffle information on the call sheet” as not all people use to drive to locations. Call sheets should have maps on how to reach locations. Links are useful as well, but not all people can access them from their mobile phones. Invoicing information should also be on the call sheet just in case someone would need it. I suppose that call sheets should be informative and useful, but not chaotic and messy. Everything has to be clear and easily visible so that the team would not waste time on looking for essential information. Thus, one of the important features of call sheet is not “to put all crew members’ phone numbers and email addresses on the call sheet” and not to “add too many images and cutesy icons”. Information should not look crammed and be written in a small font. Instead, it should be arranged with account for its importance. Another key element of the call sheet is weather and break of the shooting plan, including location, scene and its peculiarities. I guess weather is truly important as it helps people decide how to dress and what to expect.

Budget decisions are vital for any filming project, as well. Every project has a specific budget allocated for the entire filming process and directors have to plan it carefully. I guess significance of proper budgeting increases productivity proportionally to the budget amount. The less money directors have at their disposal, the more careful they should be in spending any extra amounts. Thus, a special fund set aside for unexpected expenses could be useful. Some specialized software may be of great assistance as the likelihood of errors decreases. Directors have to plan budgeting with extreme care at the pre-production phase and then implement their plans with little deviations to have sufficient funds for the entire filming process.

Withal, the pre-production phase of the filming process is extremely essential in order to be able to produce a successful movie in the most efficient and the least stressful way. Filming is associated with stress and unexpected occurrences that can never be accurately

predicted. Shooting schedule and call sheets, as well as diligent budget decisions are aimed at minimizing unpleasant unexpected situations and making the filming process run smoothly. They may be time-consuming and require much attention during the pre-production phase. Moreover, such efforts are worth the time spent, since they can make further stages less problematic and chaotic for all parties involved.