

**The Marketing and Distribution  
Roadmap for Independent Filmmakers  
Fundamental Course Guide**



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# The Marketing and Distribution Roadmap for Independent Filmmakers

## Fundamental Course Guide

**Congratulations!** You have just taken a giant leap toward getting your film in front of the audience you made it for. Along with the videos, this Course Guide will walk you through your journey; give you toolboxes for the situations you'll encounter; provide a glossary of common and uncommon marketing & distribution terms; and suggest some additional resources.

As you go, remember that you can also post your questions in the Message Board. A MediaU marketing and distribution expert will usually be able to respond within 24 hours.

You have registered for the Fundamental Version of the Marketing and Distribution Roadmap. The **Premium Version** includes everything in this Fundamental Version, **PLUS:**

- **Two live Zoom sessions** with marketing & distribution experts, during which you can discuss your film's specific needs.
- You and your film team will create a **custom Marketing & Distribution Roadmap for your film**. Once you upload it, MediaU's marketing & distribution experts will give you feedback, coaching, mentoring, and guidance!

If you would like to **upgrade** to the Premium Version, you can do so for \$397 – which will provide access for you and two other members of your filmmaking team – all for the same tuition, email us at [action@mediau.com](mailto:action@mediau.com) and we will get you set up!

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## The Episodes

### Introduction:

- Watch the video.

### Ask yourself these **Reflection Questions**:

- List the top three objectives you hope to get out of this course.
  - \_\_\_\_\_
  - \_\_\_\_\_
  - \_\_\_\_\_
- At this point, do you feel you understand how marketing and distribution function and how they relate to the success of your project?
  - \_\_\_\_\_
- What areas in marketing are you most interested in?
  - \_\_\_\_\_
  - \_\_\_\_\_
  - \_\_\_\_\_

### 1) **Welcome to the World**

- Watch the video.
- ★ In preparation for this course, what are the two most important markers of success for you and your project?
  - \_\_\_\_\_
  - \_\_\_\_\_

### **360 DEGREE ECOSYSTEM**

#### Brainstorming Session

- Since this course is about developing a 360-degree ecosystem for your project, what are the most original and intriguing elements of your film that would serve as focal points?

- ★ Create a circle; along the border, write down what these elements may be. They can be as many as you feel are right.
- ★ Be aware if these original choices change in importance as the course unfolds.

### GENRE

- ★ Define your genre and write down why this genre is the best definition of your film.
- What other films in the genre are comparable to yours? What scenes or elements inside your film testify to your choice? This is the beginning of building your pitch to secure distribution.
- ★ If, after analysis, you think you have ended up with a Feathered Fish; to make sure that you do not have one, come up with a version of your storyline that could be misinterpreted by an audience. *For example*, a story about a midlife crisis aimed at teenagers.
- ★ *It is equally important to understand what you are not, as it is to know what you are.*

### AUDIENCE

- We will continue with this in the next episode, but for now, who do you think is your audience?
- How did the genesis of your project point you in the direction where you could define your audience? Or did you not think about this until later? Did you learn any lessons from that short bit of self-analysis?

### FUNDING

- Review your funding experience. How did it go and what would you have done differently?

### BACKGROUND TOPICS

As a documentary filmmaker, Chelsea went in-depth about the research she did. If you are a fiction filmmaker, how much did you put into understanding the background and motivations of your characters? For each main character, list their identifying characteristics:

Lead A

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Lead B

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Supporting

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## What does this have to do with this course and marketing?

You will see in the next chapters, how understanding your characters, will reveal hidden audience touchpoints that will help you identify groups that you didn't think would relate to your subject or story.

### WEBSITE

- ★ There is a lot you can do with a limited budget. Start looking at several indie movies that are out there and notice how they are presented online.
- What are the common threads of a website? What kinds of people would you try to draw to your website?
- ★ Most times it's more productive to take your assets, create specific content, and place that content on platforms where the audience already exists, i.e., an entertainment website, a genre-based website, etc. rather than trying to bring them over to your website. This can be done organically or through paid media.

## 2) Your Film Just Wrapped

- Watch the video

### FRIENDS AND FAMILY SCREENING

- ★ The people you are inviting must be honest in their responses, so maybe not Moms and Dads!
- ★ There is a lot to learn here, and you must be equally honest with your own responses to the criticisms.

### AUDIENCE DEMOGRAPHICS: Primary and Secondary

- What is the difference between primary and secondary audiences?
- ★ Audiences for indie films are always a subset of a larger group. Write down who you think your primary audience is and who your secondary audience is. These are essential building blocks for developing your marketing plan.
- Why do you think the marketing campaigns for *Crazy Rich Asians* and *Parasite* were so successful? Was it because of their demographic or their psychographic appeal?

- For research purposes, demographic profiles are based on age and a generalized version of male/female. Normally broken up into four quadrants: Males under/over 25, Females under/over 25. Inside these generic norms are numerous subsets of families, tweens, seniors, etc.

### PSYCHOGRAPHICS

- In the broad sense, demographics embrace a large audience. However, psychographics help you to better understand and identify an audience subset that does not rely on age, income, or where they live. This is the pure version of your audience, and while smaller, is also the one most responsive.
- Look at a few films that could be similar to yours. Go on their website, Facebook and other social media pages and try to understand who the people are that have joined or viewed. Next, see how many of these very distinct audience groups would relate to your movie and storyline itself. If you can find folks who have interest in a film that is like yours, there is a good chance you can get them interested in your film as well.

### THE THREE ABILITIES

#### Think about these questions:

- Do you think your film has **Playability**? If so, what are the factors that will “play” beyond the first day the film is in a movie theater or on a streaming platform?
- Does your film inherently have **Marketability**? What are the important factors in determining this so you can make a case to spend advertising and marketing dollars on it?
- The toughest question to answer is the **Word-of-Mouth Ability**, which of course is driven by Playability. The only people that can answer this is your audience and, again, this takes us back full circle to your friends and family screening followed by a critics screening. Eventually, if you have the resources, you will want to rent or hire a company to do a proper research screening (in a movie theater) in front of an audience recruited from your demographic and psychographic profile.
- Think about what the magic sauce is for independent films. Do they need all three of these **Abilities** to be successful?

### 3) Building Your Ecosystem

- Watch the video

### BUILDING YOUR ECOSYSTEM: CREATIVE ADVERTISING

In the Creative Advertising section, there is a lot to take in, and we will have more to say about this area in future mini courses!

→ **Your Title** – Does your title really establish a relationship with your audience? If you think it does, then why?

★ Try the **text test** – text your friends and ask them what they think your title means with no setup.

★ **Positioning** – it is very important to look at different viewpoints in order to tell your story. For a marketing team, understanding how to appeal to different audiences starts with an understanding of what the touchpoints are for each segment. In the course we talk about the movie, **'The Tunnels'**. The film has mystery, horror, and supernatural elements. These can all be laser-focused on specific audience segments. And coupling this with different ways to tell the story through a specific character's point of view, creates identities for audiences to relate to as well.

→ **What are the three ideas for a great poster?**

- For your poster, think about how you would apply these to your idea.
- Don't forget the copy line – at its best, this is an intriguing line that captures either a key plot moment or genre moment.
- Jot down two **copy lines** that you think could work. Remember this is not a synopsis.

- \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_

- Go to [impaawards.com](http://impaawards.com) to see examples of almost every poster made over the past 20 years and study their look and how the copy line ties in.
- Have you ever walked by a big billboard in Manhattan and gotten an alert on your phone about the product it is advertising? Scary huh?
- Remember – the best ideas are usually the early ones.
- What are the main beats in most film trailers?
- Alert – if possible, don't let your director cut the trailer. They tend to keep all the good stuff out. Marketing needs that stuff *in* to create interest.
- After you do have a cut of your trailer, put it against the structure below.
- While the beats follow a three-act structure, it is not exactly like a long-form version. You should stop at some point to leave audiences wanting more.
- **Length** – for indies, two minutes max, 90 seconds preferred.
- The structure does not follow the storyline. You must use the best parts to craft the trailer regardless of where those scenes appear in the film.
- Music, Sound Design, and Graphics are extremely important.
- Find a trailer that you really like, and break it down to its main elements:

- Establish genre

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- Set up story and introduce characters

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- Central conflict

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- Escalate the conflict

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- Thematic question – what’s at stake?

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- Turning Point

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- Plot tease – something’s going to happen

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- Cliffhanger moment

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- Montage

---

- Title enters

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- Button

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#### **4) The Social Network**

- Watch the video.

#### **SOCIAL MEDIA - Initially a subset of traditional media, is now the driver for Indie films.**

- ★ You are a brand, no longer a filmmaker, but an influencer of sorts in your own right with thoughts, attitudes, agendas, and beliefs. You can attract people to yourself and the content you create.
- ★ Promote both yourself and your movie, so people not only follow your movie, but follow you as you continue your journey beyond one specific project.
- ★ Facebook, TikTok, Instagram, LinkedIn, and Twitter are all essential. Remember that each platform has a specific look and audience that you must adapt to creatively (subtitles on Instagram posts)
- ★ **Comps** – these are comparative films that you can research for films that may be similar to yours. Do as deep a dive as you can to best understand who the audiences are and look for nuggets that you can bring to your own campaign efforts.

## In regard to social media, what are the **key strategies** to create and grow your audience?

- What are Jordan Ancel's **five key practices** for posting content on social media? (Hint: E-E-E-E-I)
- Do you understand what Co-Opting an audience means?
- How many times a week should you post content?
- What should you do with the behind-the-scenes content you have shot?
- Don't be afraid to be a copycat – take the best of what you find and use it yourself!
- Be positive.

## 5) **SWOT**

### **STRENGTHS, WEAKNESSES, OPPORTUNITIES, THREATS**

- Watch the video

### **Now is the time to look at your film in the mirror and ask yourself, "What have I created?"**

#### ★ **STRENGTHS**

What are some of the stronger aspects of your film – good festival response, known talent, great reviews, the content is relevant/culturally relevant, etc.

#### ★ **WEAKNESSES**

Mixed/Negative reviews, talent won't support the film, it is a bit of a feathered fish, the content feels familiar and done before, etc.

#### ★ **OPPORTUNITIES**

These usually reveal themselves over time as you get closer to release. For example, the subject matter of your film suddenly becomes a topic that the press is talking about, a competitive movie drops out, a promotional partner steps in at the last moment, or your marketing team finally cracks the code of the campaign!

#### ★ **THREATS**

- Current events get in the way, you miss a key release date tied to a holiday.
- A competitive film suddenly lands on your release date, the competition on the small screen is as much as what's playing on the big one.

Now think about how you take a weakness and make it a strength, or how you take a threat and turn it into an opportunity. For example, there is a big studio film about a newspaper expose and your film, which is, unfortunately, coming out around the same time, deals with similar journalistic themes but in a much more indie style. Do you run and change the date? NO, you use the press to make sure they know the existence of your much smaller film and come up with theme pieces.

that would include both films. The studio won't care as they will probably get the lion's share of the coverage, but you will now be aligned with a big movie.

Normally a difficult title will initiate a conversation as to whether it should be changed. But is that really the best case? Maybe the title is so unique and can be surrounded by some marketing hooks and it turns from a weakness to a strength.

We worked on a movie called *CHAPPAQUIDDICK* which was the story of Senator Ted Kennedy's tragic mistake when he drove off a small island bridge killing an associate of his who was in the car.

The people who made the film thought they made a compelling study of a man in shock who made the wrong decisions by not telling anyone for ten hours. Kennedy, played by Jason Clarke, was remarkably sympathetic. The liberal Kennedy loving audience, however, wanted no part of the film which was entirely why it was made. So, who ultimately came? Everyone on the right side of the aisle as they wanted to see, in their minds, a movie that glorified the fact that Ted Kennedy was responsible for the death of a woman and how the power brokers in Washington covered up the story. It was one of the earliest examples of Fake News and turned a Threat into an Opportunity, much to the pain of the filmmakers.

- ★ The point here is that not every characteristic is what it seems. It is possible to reverse engineer some SWOT aspects of your film, but you can't do any of this until you fully understand what you have, and a basic SWOT analysis will begin to tell you this.

### SWOT EXAMPLE:

I TONYA – The story was about Tonya Harding, an Olympic figure skater in the early 1990s, who was never fully embraced into the elite figure skating community due to her blue-collar upbringing. Her husband intervened and prompted one of the most infamous scandals in sports history.

### STRENGTHS

- Star quotient – Margo Robbie, Allison Janney
- Talent willing to work and support film
- Strong Toronto festival response
- Tonya Harding story - very editorial-worthy - can get off the entertainment pages
- Nancy Kerrigan, not part of the movie
- Director Craig Gillespie has indie credibility
- First 24-hour news cycle story pre web
- Ice skating key element, but it shows the not very pretty side
- Real Tonya will support the film
- Academy nomination worthy
- Story creates terrific sympathy for Harding, something we were not aware of
- Biopics are always topical

### WEAKNESSES

- Story happened in 1994, so there is scant awareness below 50-year-olds
- Will ice skating teens and parents accept the story as relevant to them?
- Harding relationship with ex-husband quite brutal. Turn off?
- Film financing to distribution deal had a long path, which could make film seem troubled

- International sales very dependent on US result
- Title was not sticky
- Will audiences accept Robbie's look as Harding?

### **OPPORTUNITIES**

- Potential tie-ins with 2018 Winter Olympics
- Potential brand tie-ins
- Television doc re-airing
- Was Tonya part of the plan? Let audiences weigh in on social media
- Conquest online ice-skating sites
- Relive story with people who were there

### **THREATS**

- This is Robbie's first non-studio film – Will she be accepted as an "indie" actor
- Film opening in Q4 2017 needs strong critical support to survive
- Slow city by city platform release into January
- Kerrigan's husband whisper campaign against movie with possible legal threats
- If Academy nominations don't work out, film will disappear very quickly
- Q4 is very competitive for specialized film. Will film rise above the others?
- Is distributor willing to spend significantly on an Awards campaign?
- Is film theatrical or best on a streamer?

### **NOW TRY IT YOURSELF WITH YOUR FILM**

1. What are all your film's **S**trengths?
  2. What are the **W**eaknesses?
  3. What are the **O**pportunities?
  4. What are the **T**hreats?
- Which of your **Strengths** could turn into or be seen as a **Weakness**?
- How could you leverage one or more of the **Threats**?
- What **Weaknesses** could be positioned differently and turned into a **Strength**?

## **6) Your Assets are Your Greatest Strengths**

- Watch the video

What are the key pieces of content that should be included in your:

- Pre-production toolkit
  - \_\_\_\_\_
  - \_\_\_\_\_
  - \_\_\_\_\_
  - \_\_\_\_\_
  - \_\_\_\_\_
- Production toolkit
  - \_\_\_\_\_
  - \_\_\_\_\_
  - \_\_\_\_\_
  - \_\_\_\_\_
  - \_\_\_\_\_
- ★ Film festival toolkit
  - \_\_\_\_\_
  - \_\_\_\_\_
  - \_\_\_\_\_
  - \_\_\_\_\_
  - \_\_\_\_\_

→ Why must you get your talent to cooperate during production as opposed to waiting for the film to finish and having to bring them back later for a photo shoot?

→ **PRESS KIT** – extremely important as it reflects the penultimate vision of your film. There are many elements to a press kit besides the traditional biographies, press release, stills, and “making-of.” Search through your production and look for what stands out as unique and those elements will gain the most traction. Go online and look at sample websites that incorporate press material into them. See how they are laid out, where the focus is, how the trailer and poster are placed.

## 7) Film Festivals

➤ Watch the video

### THE FILM FESTIVAL CIRCUIT IS YEAR-ROUND AND EVERYWHERE IN THE WORLD

- We guarantee there will be festivals that want your film
- There are hundreds of festivals in the US. While they may not all have the prestige of a Slamdance, Sundance, or Toronto, the local festivals are terrific venues for exposure.
- A lot of festivals are covered by distributor acquisitions managers, and even for those festivals that aren’t covered by them – there is a “Badge of Honor” to have your film selected somewhere; even smaller venues can reap dividends when it comes time to talk deals.

- Even if you have no money, you still **can't** do a festival alone. You need a team of some sort – legal representation, press person, marketing consultant, a circle of friends to support your screenings, and of course a budget.
- Understand the festival DNA that you are going to present in. Pick a festival you want to get into and answer these questions:

Why does the festival exist?

- Cultural event
- Tourist attraction
- Sales market
- Auteur magnet

Do the research beforehand:

- What distributors/streamers are coming?
- Which local press is coming that can be targeted for interviews?
- How relevant is your film to the geographical or political landscape of the festival?
- What types of films have been chosen? How can your film stand out?
- What are the best venues and days to have your film shown? (For example, all the “hot” titles at Sundance are shown the first weekend to generate as much buzz as possible.)

- ★ If possible, get to know the festival team – there is always a favor you need.

### **Film Festivals (Continued...)**

- Watch the video

#### **Ask yourself these Reflection Questions:**

- Do you need a theatrical release?
- Do you want the largest audience possible?
- Do you want full control of the marketing of your film or at least a solid right to consult?
- Would you rather take an advance for your film and give up all your rights?
- Do you know how long a standard distribution deal is?
- Are you willing to give up all the rights to your film for perpetuity?
- ★ Understand the personalities of the distributors you want to/will meet.
- ★ Look at their production and release slate
- ★ Talk to other filmmakers who have done business with them
- ★ How unique are their marketing ideas?
- ★ Are the types of films they release like yours – this is a good thing for once!

- ★ This one is difficult, but not impossible: Find out how much money they normally spend on the marketing. Historical data and conversations with previous filmmakers should help.
- ★ Know the proper questions to ask them (see attached Distributor toolbox.pdf)

**Assuming everyone wants to distribute your film, name three theatrical distributors and three streamers who would do the best job for you and why**

- Theatrical
  - \_\_\_\_\_
  - \_\_\_\_\_
  - \_\_\_\_\_
- Streamer
  - \_\_\_\_\_
  - \_\_\_\_\_
  - \_\_\_\_\_
  - \_\_\_\_\_

**Rehearse a conversation with your team prior to the festival, as if you are talking to a distributor, like we do in the course. It's a good exercise and you will be surprised at what you may discover as you talk it through.**

### **9) Time to Take Control (“We love your movie, but it’s just not for us”)**

- Watch the video
- So, you don't have a distributor, what are your options?
- Are you ready to devote another whole year to the marketing and distribution?
- Can you raise another round of funding for marketing?
- Who is the most important group you must satisfy?
  - Backers?
  - Talent?
  - Filmmakers?
- What useful new information did you discover about fundraising for independent films?
- Can you build a team for this whole new and different endeavor?
- Self-Distribution may be your best roadmap

### **10) Your Streaming Roadmap**

- Watch the video

Information to Consider:

- ★ Tubi and Giant Interactive represent two avenues of distribution that either can happen in conjunction with a theatrical release or as premiere platforms on their own.
- ★ Listen carefully both to Nick and Rachel as they explain why they could be a logical choice for your distribution efforts.
- ★ Most importantly, here is a simple and direct way to understand the sometimes confusing and hard to follow window sequencing as a film goes through its lifespan.

Questions to Ask Yourself:

- How can you best position yourself to succeed in a rapidly changing media landscape?
- Think about the types of films provided by each streaming service. Which streaming services best align with the kinds of films you'd like to make?

### WHAT DID NICK AT GIANT SAY?

If you have been around distribution people a lot, you know already that they can talk fast and talk in what seems like a secret language. We are here to reveal the code!

In this episode, Russell talks with Nick Savva at Giant Interactive. Here is an outline of the conversation, plus a useful glossary, so you can follow along like a pro:

#### Section One: Windowing Sequence

- Distributors tend to look for **TVOD** potential (“Will it be bought?”)
  - **Transactional VOD and EST**: Electronic Sell Through (Online purchase of a movie)
  - **Pay 1 Window**: After TVOD becomes available, it brings the first opportunity for consumers to watch a film without paying that one-time fee of a rental/purchase
- ⇓ Under this window are services like:
- **SVOD**: Netflix, Hulu, HBO Max, etc.
  - **AVOD**: Ad-supported VOD (Free with ads) (Roku, Tubi, Crackle)

#### Section Two: What Digital Distributors Are Looking For

- The documentary marketplace has become congested with content.
- Amazon became selective, resulting in a ripple effect.
- In the content they are wanting to represent, distributors look for festival pedigree.
- When distributors are looking at films, laurels signal quality, and a good track record.
- Certain genres will always perform: Horror, Thriller, Independent comedies.
- Live event window vs. theatrical window.
- When talking about launching, Live event windows allow filmmakers to broaden the scope of their launch (doesn't always have to be theatrical).

- Anything within festivals, events, theatrical, virtual, or stunts all help to launch the film into the culture.
- Traditionally, distributors want to be in control of setting up the release conditions of a film.
- Existing film audiences have grown thanks to social media marketing of films during production (i.e., influencers, A-List talent, etc.).
- It's a team effort between filmmaker and distributor to make the marketing and distribution successful.
- When it comes to marketing, films with more hands-on filmmakers have a higher chance of successfully marketing their projects.
- In-house deals with other countries (Netflix) are often desirable.
- International distribution is still upcoming, however, there are various issues - one of them being the localization of content and audience.
- Subtitles and dubs can be expensive and potentially not recoup the costs.
- Countries where the native language (US, Canada, Australia, UK) do better with TVOD. Non-English countries (Spain, France, etc.) will tend to lean towards broadcast television over TVOD.
- Filmmakers can benefit from theatrical and digital releases simultaneously when the market permits.
- The digital market is evolving rapidly thanks to streaming services (partly due to the pandemic).
- "Fast" channels have taken people by surprise.
- The digital space is complicated due to the sheer number of technical requirements from certain services along with the multitude of growing possibilities.

### Section Three: About Giant Interactive and its subsidiary, Giant Pictures

- Giant Pictures does everything in House.
- To differentiate from other aggregators and distributors, Giant tries to be a boutique, curated label.
- Because of its smaller size, Giant can focus on quality and building strong relationships with important platforms like Apple.
- Giant concentrates on titles that have that "barrier to entry."
- No in-house marketing campaign office at Giant Pictures, more of a lean and mean digital distributor that works **WITH** and not **FOR** the filmmaker.
- Giant lends their "mouse-trap" to Independent Filmmakers.

### Glossary of Terms

#### **AVOD – Advertising-Based Video on Demand**

AVOD businesses make money by selling ads on their videos, such as video commercials, display banners, sponsored content, and more.

#### **EST – Electronic Sell-Through**

How well a movie is doing based on how many digital copies are bought or rented through online media.

#### **FAST – Free Add-Supported Streaming TV**

This is streaming live TV without a subscription. FAST channels extend the service of traditional linear TV channels (like cable satellite) to internet-connected devices, like CTV.

### **Pay 1 Window**

The first exclusive release window from carriers following a film's theatrical release and transactional purchase sell-through period. (Netflix, Hulu, etc.)

### **SVOD – Subscription Video on Demand**

SVOD services charge users a monthly or yearly subscription fee for unlimited access to an entire library of series, movies, TV shows, and even live channels and podcasts. (Netflix, Disney+, HBO Max, etc.)

### **TVOD – Transactional Video on Demand**

Also known as Pay-Per-View, the TVOD model sells or rents individual videos to customers, just like video stores used to do.

## **CHELSEA CHRISTER RECAPS HER JOURNEY AND LANDS A DISTRIBUTION DEAL!**

- Listen to Chelsea as she finally comes full circle with a distribution deal and is about to launch:
  - Hold firm
  - Don't lose your vision
  - Understand expectations vs. reality
  - Participate in the decision
  - Own your decision
  - Push as far as you can but don't lose sight of your own endgame.

### **Recap**

- Watch the video

### **Ask yourself these Reflection Questions:**

- What is one piece of advice you learned from this course that you will apply to your future career?
- How has this course affected your understanding of entertainment marketing and distribution?

Here is a **Recap Summary** – a checklist for the big ideas you have just explored!

- ✓ Your film just wrapped. Is your picture locked? Have you validated that through family and friends screenings?
- ✓ Have you determined your target audience?
- ✓ Now it's time to put together your Marketing Bible and Marketing toolbox.
- ✓ How's your creative going? Poster, trailer, content.

- ✓ Have you properly set up your social media campaign for your target audience?
- ✓ Are you ready for the - To Festival or Not To Festival dance?
- ✓ Distribution options and how to talk the talk.
- ✓ Self-Distribution, the Road Less Travelled may be the best.
- ✓ Decide on how much control you want to give up vs. your commitment to another year of work.
- ✓ Raise money - Can you raise another round of financing? What's the argument?
- ✓ What are the challenges and pitfalls?
- ✓ Build your team.
- ✓ Legal rep, Licensing consultant. Gotta represent up!
- ✓ Meet the rent-a-system distributors, companies who can book the theaters, and collect for a fee, or companies who can do it all.
- ✓ Understand media buying and how to work social.
- ✓ Meet and decide on who handles publicity, social media, and media buying – companies, individuals, etc.
- ✓ Decide on how you want to handle ancillary sales, including streamers.
- ✓ Don't forget international sales if you can find interest.
- ✓ Create an active transactional website (if you haven't already) for content, exhibition dates, direct sales, and community building.

## Toolboxes

### PRE-PRODUCTION TOOLBOX

Marketing starts during pre-production. Make sure you document:

- Location scout
- Shooting schedule for publicity planning
- Set sketches and building
- Table reads
- Crew interviews
- Production Art and storyboards
- Costume renderings

### PRODUCTION TOOLBOX

Once you are up and shooting, regardless of budget or how many days you are scheduled for, make sure you cover and get video, still photography, audio, and text coverage for:

- Set Visits from local community bloggers, special interest groups, even local exhibitors
- Product placement is rare for an indie, but important on any level. However, *cause related marketing is vital now so if you can tie in with an NGO, corporate responsibility, or community org. It all helps!*
- Creative Content (BTS, Interviews, Publicity ops)
- Creative Advertising starts here – arrange special photo shoots for building your poster, make sure all props and sets are photographed as well
- Social Media team/Digital initiatives – careful with the social however, exclusives
- Unit Publicist – if you don't have money to hire one, then the Producer becomes one!
- Make sure you get bios on each key cast and crew members

- Document the shooting of unique or complex scenes
- Publicity notes on the making of the production from inception through production
- VR/AR executions – now is the time to get them done – the sets are still up, costumes, and talent if needed. You can do a ton with green screen!

Everything you prep and everything you shoot is an asset to be used. Make sure to store all assets in one location, such as a google drive, to maintain organization throughout production. Label each asset with a clear file name that will be searchable!

### **FILM FESTIVAL TOOLBOX**

- Landing page – website, crowdfunding page
- Vision statement – look book, director statement
- Poster
- Trailer and/or selected scenes
- BTS content, interviews as discussed in Module Two
- Marketing plan, thoughts, ideas,
- Press kit including bios, stills, script
- Your accrued community (think casting)
- WHO IS IN YOUR CORNER?
- Lawyer, Publicist, Agent, Producer’s Rep
- As long as you are not alone!

### **HOW TO TALK TO A DISTRIBUTOR TOOLBOX**

- What is their overall marketing vision for the film – how will they position it?
- Social and digital media strength – both as a company and with their past successes
- Release strategy – both theatrical and post
- Competition inside their own slate?
- Awards / Festival plan?
- P&A commitment
- Filmmaker Input/Consultation/Approvals
- What’s Innovative or will raise the excitement level

Before you talk to a distributor, know: What’s the difference between Fox Searchlight and A24? Sony Classics and Neon? Focus Features and Alamo? Gravitas and Giant Interactive? Tubi and Amazon? Netflix and everyone else? Be prepared!

### **ELEMENTS IN A DISTRIBUTION AGREEMENT**

Distribution agreements vary by distributor and this list is by no means definitive. But here are some basic elements.

**Term:** How long will this agreement last? After the term is over, you will get the rights back.

**Rights:** What rights are you granting? Are they for all forms of distribution? Only for theatrical? Only for streaming? Are you able to keep some rights for yourself, such as educational sales, or selling your film yourself from your website?

**Territory:** What is the geographic area covered by this agreement? The world? Some countries? One country?

**Distribution fee:** What fee will the distributor take? Will it be a percent of revenue? Will you have to pay some upfront money to the distributor for them to take your film?

**Distribution expenses:** Distributors will deduct their expenses, which are usually marketing expenses. Will there be a specific amount? Will there be a limit to what they can deduct? Will there be no limit?

**Delivery schedule:** You will have to deliver the film to the distributor so they can distribute it. Delivery means you must provide both Legal Delivery – proof that you own the rights to your film, including all the agreements and contracts with the people who worked on it; and Physical Delivery – the film on a hard drive, or cloud server, with all the technical requirements the distributor has. This is a big deal! Some delivery schedules are 50 pages long, and often indie filmmakers are shocked by how much will be needed. Pro tip: Some items on the delivery schedule can often be negotiated down or removed entirely.

**Jurisdiction:** Under what law will this agreement be interpreted? This may seem like arcane legalistic stuff, but it matters to you. Because if you ever get into a dispute with the distributor, you will be bound by the legal jurisdiction of the agreement. Not only that, if you ever have to arbitrate or go to court (we hope not!) you will have to go to the place of jurisdiction. For example, if you live in Oklahoma and the distribution agreement is under the jurisdiction of New York law, you'd have to travel to New York if you ever need to pursue a legal action. You won't be able to change this element in the agreement, but you should be aware of it.

## **GLOSSARY OF TERMS**

### **Audience Awareness**

One of the two pillars of a successful marketing campaign that is generated through media, publicity, and distribution. Indicates potential moviegoers who have become aware of the movie.

### **Audience Interest**

One of the two pillars of a successful marketing campaign that is generated through creative advertising, social media, and word of mouth. Indicates potential moviegoers that have become interested in seeing the movie in a theatre.

### **Avids**

An audience segment who will definitely see a movie and also talk about it online through social media - to their followers.

### **Banner Advertising (Display Advertising)**

A type of digital advertising where image-based ads are embedded into web pages, usually in large rectangles along the borders of a screen.

### **Behind The Scenes (BTS)**

Short form pieces that highlight the filmmaking process. BTS is usually a compendium of interviews with the talent and filmmakers with video footage of the production process.

### **Brand**

A piece of IP has already established itself in popular culture and when mentioned, it elicits a response of familiarity.

### **Brand Manager**

The point person between marketing and production who maintains an open dialog between departments and resolves any conflicts that arise during production.

### **Brand Study**

Researching the effect an established brand has on different audiences to gauge awareness, appeal, and interest.

### **Branded Content**

A type of sponsored content that is engaging and entertaining while thematically weaving in elements you are trying to sell. These elements could be a specific subject, story points, characters, or setting.

### **Buzzability**

How well a film's awareness and interest will spread through word-of-mouth or social media activity.

### **Capability**

A film's potential for success based on its screenplay and other categories prior to it going into production.

**Cell Phone Polling**

Sending marketing questions to people's cell phones in the form of messages and offering a reward for answering.

**Central Conflict**

The seemingly insurmountable obstacles in the way of what the hero wants.

**CG Animation**

Animated movies that are created with Computer Graphics, as opposed to being hand-drawn.

**Cliffhanger Moment**

Usually, a trailer will end with a suspenseful scene that will leave the audience wondering what will happen in the movie.

**Closers**

Advertising spots usually lasting from 10 to 15 seconds that are released during the 10 days leading up to a movie being released.

**Code and Rating Administration (CARA)**

The branch of the MPAA that addresses content and gives your movie both its rating and decides whether the advertising materials can be shown to all audiences or more specific ones.

**Color Palette**

A series of complementing colors that are used in a marketing campaign to represent the genre and tone of a film.

**Comedic Button**

A joke at the end of the trailer, that comes after the title of the movie. It's usually the strongest takeaway and is very important with comedy.

**Community Management**

Promoting two-way engagement on social media platforms between creators and fans.

**Comps (Comparisons)**

Films that are like each other in terms of budget, potential box office, genre, and time of year they were released.

**Concept Test**

Presenting different ways of looking at the story in order to cement the genre and find the most interesting elements of the story to attract the desired audiences.

**Consultation Rights**

Contractually, certain stars and directors get to review and approve all marketing using their likeness.

**Consumer Products and Licensing**

The department that creates financial opportunities for films through product placement, special promotional content, and licensed materials (toys, pajamas, calendars, posters, shot glasses, etc.). In essence, this department turns movies into things you can sell in stores.

**Contextual Advertising**

When the content of the ad is in direct correlation to the content of the web page you are viewing.

**Copy Line**

A slogan or brief quote about a film.

**Creative Advertising**

Creating unique and original content, such as trailers and posters, to promote a movie.

**Creative Review Privileges**

When a high-profile cast or crew member has the right to view the advertising materials before they are finalized and okay them.

**Crowdfunding**

Raising small amounts of money from a large number of individuals using an online platform.

**Dailies**

The raw footage of everything shot in a day.

**Day-And-Date Release**

Releasing a movie in a theater and through streaming on the same day.

**Deferred Fees**

Fees that are not paid up front but are paid after the film is released and has some income. For example, a director might have \$15,000 in the budget, and \$10,000 in deferred fees that will be paid if the movie has enough revenue. Deferred fees are usually paid before net profits in the Waterfall (see Waterfall).

**Definite Interest**

The percentage of people aware of a movie that are also expressing definite interest in seeing said film in a theater.

**Demographics**

The findings and characteristics of certain segments of the population, defined by criteria such as age, gender, ethnicity, location, and education.

**Development Executive**

They decide if a project is worth pursuing for the studio or they decide if it's worth recommending to the studio to pursue.

**Diaspora**

Population pockets throughout the world which are very targetable for certain ethnic films.

**Digital Advertising**

Utilizing the Internet to deliver promotional advertisements often through email, social media websites, search engines, banner ads, and pop-ups.

**Digital Creative**

The artwork designed and programmed for the online space.

**Digital Immigrants**

People over the age of 30 in 2017. They are typically less familiar with digital media than younger people.

**Digital Media**

Advertising is purchased to run in the digital space, inclusive of both desktop and mobile inventory.

**Digital Natives**

People under the age of 35 in 2022. They are typically more familiar with digital media than older people.

**Digital Out-Of-Home (DOOH) Advertising**

Advertisements that reach people outside of their homes in a digital format such as screens on kiosks in the mall or televisions rotating through different ads in cafes.

**Digital Promotions**

Extended programs that connect potential audiences with your brand messages beyond a basic ad.

**Digital Publicity**

Editorial and earned media placed in the digital space.

**Distribution**

The process of selecting a platform to make the film available to the public either through movie theaters, television, or streaming.

**Earned Media**

Generated when owned or paid media is talked about online or through traditional communication methods such as television, word of mouth, and print.

**Electronic Press Kit (EPK)**

A collection of photos, videos, trailers, and interviews promoting a movie.

**Elevator Pitch**

A synopsis and hook of a movie that can be said in roughly 20 seconds. The "elevator" part references having only a short amount of time to get the story across as if you are riding between floors.

**Escalation**

The stakes are raised to increase suspense and add obstacles to the hero's mission, so a happy ending seems almost impossible.

**Exhibition**

The release of a film in theater chains, film festivals, and/or streaming portals.

**Exhibitor Relations**

The department within a studio that coordinates with theatre owners and oversees in-theatre marketing.

**Exit Polls**

Surveying people as they leave a theater to determine their demographics and opinion of the movie.

**Flight**

The duration of media unfolding in a campaign.

**Focus Group**

A small group of everyday people, specifically chosen based on demographics, to discuss a film or marketing campaign for research purposes.

**Foreign Sales Companies**

These companies try to pre-sell films internationally to each territory individually until enough money is raised to finance the film. If the film is already completed, then they try to sell the film to distributors on behalf of the producers.

**Four-Quadrant System**

The division of moviegoers into four groups, or “quadrants”: Males over 25 years old, males under 25, females over 25 and females under 25.

**Frequency**

The number of times people will be exposed to a campaign.

**Friendly Critics**

Critics who are willing to give a response to a film without making their responses final and writing them up.

**General Audiences**

Teens and adults without kids.

**Geotargeting**

Analyzing moviegoers and categorizing audiences by regions of the country.

**Greenlight**

When a production company or studio decides a particular movie idea will be smart and profitable, so they begin to make plans for production.

**In-House**

When something is created by a team that exists within a company, as opposed to an outside vendor.

**In-Kind Marketing**

Marketing that is not paid for with money. The person or company marketing the content is usually getting publicity or some other benefit besides money.

**Industry Trades**

Publications such as Deadline, Variety, and The Hollywood Reporter that report entertainment industry news.

**Influencers**

An individual who has the power to affect purchase decisions because of their popularity. Usually, influencers gain their audience and followers through social media or some sort of online presence.

**Intellectual Property (IP) (entertainment definition)**

A term that means a property has built-in awareness and fanship.

**Intellectual Property (IP) (legal definition)**

Anything created that can be trademarked, copyrighted, patented or registered in some official capacity.

**Jump Scare**

When tension builds in a scene or trailer and a quick scare happens to startle the viewer.

**Key Image**

An image that visually represents the logline and hook of a film and is used heavily in marketing.

**Logline**

One sentence that lays out the protagonist, the obstacles, the conflict, and the world of the film.

**Look Book**

A compendium of images, words, and even designs, that speak to the mood, place, relationships, and tone of their project and are usually put together by the director to best express the vision and tone of the movie.

**Low-Concept**

A type of film that normally has a smaller budget, fewer and more practical locations, a character-driven plot, and relies on the quality of the script for success instead of a flashy action.

**Lower Thirds**

Advertisements often utilized for animated films, where the characters run along the bottom of the screen during network or cable television. The characters usually do something funny, interact with the network logo, or pop up and give a quick message before the commercial break.

**Marketing Consultant**

Hired to make sure that all potential marketing materials are secured during production and usually communicate with the distributor to ensure the film is properly released.

**Marketing Executive**

The leader of the marketing department who solves problems, communicates with all other departments, and ultimately takes responsibility for the success, or failure, of the entire campaign.

**Marketing Outlets**

The different platforms of a marketing campaign such as digital, publicity, outdoor, in theater, and social.

**Marketing Pivot**

When an audience's reaction to a film in test screenings isn't aligned with the marketing plan so the plan is quickly changed.

**Marketing Research**

The quantitative (numbers) and qualitative (feelings) study a movie's potential at different points in its life cycle.

**Marketing Vision**

The overall marketing vision about how the film will be positioned in the marketplace.

**Materials Testing**

Researching marketing materials, such as trailers and tv spots, to see how well they connect with audiences.

**Media**

A means of mass communication that helps create awareness often through television, the Internet, outdoor billboards, radio, and stunts.

**Media Agency**

Agencies that partner with studios to negotiate the best rates for advertisement placement, leverage relationships with advertising buyers, and handle trafficking of the spots.

**Media Flight**

The entire media planning, buying, and implementation part of a marketing campaign.

**Media Planning and Buying**

Where and how the media budget is to be allocated between traditional and digital programming.

**MPAA Rating**

Motion Picture Association of America issues a rating for each film which lets audiences know what to expect from the content. The ratings are R (restricted), PG-13 (parental guidance under 13), PG (parental guidance), and G (general audiences).

**Nag vs. Drag**

Used when determining if a family movie is one that children will enthusiastically nag their parents to see or one that parents might drag their kids to because they think their kids should see it.

**National Press Junket**

One or two days at a well-known hotel either in New York or Los Angeles where press from all over the country come to interview the cast. This usually includes television, radio, promotional partners, and web folks.

**National Release**

A country-by-country release that is mostly reserved for independent films and distributors who have their own schedule and a tailored campaign for local audiences.

**National Research Group (NRG)**

The creators of theatrical tracking in 1986 are still the most respected service used by the studios today for all types of research.

**Net Profits**

The amount of money left after all fees and expenses have been paid. In most cases, there are not a lot of net profits. There may even be zero. But in some cases, if you have kept expenses down, negotiated good deals for distribution, and been clever about how you put your financing together, net profits can be lovely. They are at the bottom of the Waterfall (see "Waterfall").

**Norms**

The average score a movie could receive, based on research screening questionnaire results.

**Original Content**

Something created based on an original idea that hasn't been published in the past.

**Out-Of-Home (OOH) Advertising**

Advertisements that reach people outside of their homes such as billboards and bus shelters.

**Over The Top (OTT)**

The delivery of content through the Internet instead of through a broadcast or cable network.

**Owned Media**

Content is created to promote a film that is "owned" because you have complete control over it. Some examples are behind-the-scenes footage or a website.

**P&A Budget**

P&A meaning "print and advertising," is marketing's approximate cost to sell the movie domestically and internationally.

**Passive (Social) Research**

Observing how moviegoers are reacting to a film and campaign, but not engaging with them or asking them questions directly.

**Per Screen Average**

The total weekend gross divided by the number of screens the movie is playing on. This number tells us how much each screen averaged.

**Pitch**

When a writer, director or producer comes in to present the basic idea and structure of a story to the studio with the intention of getting them to develop and commit to making the movie.

**Platform Release**

Putting the film in a few cities, usually New York and Los Angeles, for opening weekend and then slowly rolling it out to other theaters over the following weeks.

**Play Patterns**

A term used in Consumer Products that refers to how children will play with the toys created to promote the film.

**Playability**

The analysis of how well a film plays to an audience.

**Plot Tease**

A moment in a trailer that hints at a big plot point.

**Positioning Statement**

A few sentences that define the central idea of the film including the genre, the audience, and the allure of the film.

**Post-Mortem Meeting**

A meeting held with studio executives and filmmakers the day after a research screening to discuss what people loved in a film and what needs to be addressed.

**POW model**

When movies Pay their Own Way to be played in each theater.

**Pre-emptive Messaging**

Making sure the information you want to get out to the public is generated internally rather than waiting to respond to a situation that may rise in the public forum.

**Pre-Roll**

A promotional video message that plays directly before an online video.

**Pre-Sales**

Selling the right to distribute the film in different territories before the film starts production in order to raise enough money to produce the project.

**Press Tour**

A press tour is when the talent travel to local and international locations to do publicity and help promote the film.

**Primary Audience (Target Audience)**

The subgroup is believed to have the strongest interest in the movie and must be initially attracted in order to ignite the box office and create word-of-mouth buzz.

**Product Placement**

When companies pay for their brand or product to be integrated into a film.

**Programmatic Advertising**

The use of data and technology to purchase and deliver ads targeted to certain demographic groups.

**Promo Reel**

An edited piece that will be used to sell a film or the idea of a film. It may include footage, interview shots of the locations, or other ancillary material to give the viewer an idea of the movie.

**Proof of Concept**

A teaser trailer or scene from a script that is filmed to give a flavor of the film and help generate interest with investors.

**Proprietary Reporting**

Analyzing the demographics of people who are searching for your film and engaging with your marketing materials online.

**Psychographics**

Defining the moviegoing interest of a group of people based on their lifestyle, income, political inclination, religion, interests, attitudes, and values.

**Publicity (the concept)**

Generating public awareness through talent appearances, subject interest, promotions, influencers, print, and editorial.

**Publicity (the department)**

The department that handles all public pronouncements about a film, as well as manages any issues that may evolve into negative press during production.

**Rating**

The percent of the target audience that is tuned into a TV program or radio show. Ratings refer to a minute on TV and a quarter-hour on local TV and Radio. Also could be a movie rating from the MPAA – NC-17, R, PG-13, PG, G.

**Reach**

The percentage of people who will see a campaign.

**Recruit Ratio**

The ratio of people who were offered an invitation to attend a free screening of a film versus the number of people who accepted. This is an informative measure of a movie's ability to attract an audience based on a short synopsis and a mention of who is in the cast.

**Regional Release**

Where a movie is released in a particular region first, for example, Europe, before it is released elsewhere.

**Release Strategy**

The decision to release the film through a platform scenario, wide release, or somewhere in between. It also includes what season or date would be best to release the film.

**Research Screening**

A special screening where regular, non-film industry moviegoers are invited to watch a movie before it's finished to get their feedback on how the story plays, are there any issues with pacing, etc.

**Review Copy**

A few words or a phrase taken from a film review and used on promotional materials.

**Rewards Deck**

A document that details the many different ways an investor may recoup his money.

**Rip-o-matic**

Cutting together a trailer using images and scenes from released films in order to show the storyline or mood of a script in development.

**Rotten Tomatoes**

A website that compiles the film reviews of both critics and regular moviegoers and presents two separate percentages of how many people enjoyed a movie.

**Satellite Tours**

When the cast does live interviews with press people across the country in one day via a television studio satellite feed.

**Secondary Audience**

The group that may have interest in certain elements of the movie or would likely accompany a member of the primary audience to the theater. They are generally considered achievable if the marketing can connect but will pose some challenge to convince.

**Set Visits**

When a studio arranges for press, partners, or internal execs to visit a set in the middle of filming.

**Sizzle Piece**

A few minutes of footage edited together from the movie that is being shot to raise interest from investors or distributors.

**Social First Content**

Content that is designed and edited specifically for people to view when scrolling through their social media feeds.

**Social Listening**

Using digital tools to gather comments from multiple social media sites to assess how people feel about a film and used to help shape a marketing campaign.

**Special Photographer**

They come to set for a day or two and shoot the key cast members in a number of different poses, looks and groupings, all to provide the creative advertising team as many choices as possible.

**Special Screening**

A screening of a film before it is released to the general public. Normally these screenings are for a targeted audience to generate word of mouth awareness.

**Special Shoot**

When the cast of a film is featured in additional material to help market the film such as a cross-promotional music video or a personalized intro that will be played before select screenings. These shoots are often done by a "celebrity" photographer whose work is known by the magazines.

**Steal A Weekend**

When a movie used to be able to spend so much money on advertising that no matter how lacking in quality a movie was, it would have a profitable opening weekend because of the constant media exposure.

**Strategic Positioning**

Considering the strengths, weaknesses, target audience, and main competitors of a film in order to create an effective marketing plan.

**Stunt PR**

An event designed to attract the public's attention and go viral in order to promote a film.

**Style Guide**

A guide that includes all of the information that a toy or licensing partner will need to create merchandise that fits in with the branding such as: stills of the characters, the color palette, the costumes, typefaces, icons, and graphics.

**SWOT analysis**

The Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats a movie has in relation to its marketing potential.

**Table Read**

A rehearsal where the key cast performs the screenplay start-to-finish at a table with the filmmakers, writers, and producers.

**Talent Agency**

Find jobs, make deals, and finalize contracts for directors, writers, producers, and actors

**Talking Heads**

When one person is talking on screen, and they are addressing the camera directly.

**Talking Points**

A summary of things the cast and crew should say about a movie to the press in order to best fit the movie's positioning. It also includes things they should avoid mentioning so audiences aren't confused, and spoilers aren't released.

**Target Marketing**

A campaign directed at an audience with a specific interest in the film.

**Teaser Poster**

Posters released very early in a marketing campaign meant to tease the tone of the film and announce the title without giving much of the story away.

**Teaser Trailer**

A short trailer that hints at the concept or tone of a film but doesn't give away much of the plot.

**Tentpoles**

Very expensive movies, usually made by a studio, that try to appeal to the widest audience possible in order to recoup their investment. These movies are usually made based on existing IP.

**Tertiary Audience**

The larger, initially uncommitted audience, who eventually watches the movie after it breaks out and becomes a commercial hit.

**Theatrical Tracking**

A report delivered to film studios three times a week that tracks which films moviegoers are aware of and how interested they are in buying a ticket.

**Theatricality**

The level of which a person has a desire to see a particular movie in a theater as opposed to watching it at home.

**Theme**

The underlying central idea or message that the film is trying to convey.

**Tie-Ins**

Brand and film partnerships where the film and the brand are being promoted in the same advertisements.

**Title Treatment**

The specific size, font, and design of the film title on advertisements.

**Toolkit**

A set of little vignettes and shorts with the characters that are created outside of an animated movie and are used across the marketing campaign.

**Total Awareness**

The percentage of moviegoers that are aware of your movie either unprompted or prompted when they select it from a list of possible titles.

**Traditional Research**

Asking people questions and engaging in a dialogue about a film and its marketing. This can happen both on and offline.

**Trailer Cutdown**

Separate television spots will focus on different themed audience segments: a trailer cutdown is a television spot that is a shortened version of the trailer. It will follow the same structure but will only be :60 or :30 seconds.

**Trailer Moments**

Moments in the film that can be quickly and easily identified as perfect for the trailer. These are often memorable one-liners, triumphant hero moments, epic action or great physical comedy beats.

**Turning Point**

A moment in a story when the hero does something unexpected or something surprising happens to the characters.

**Two Level Comedy**

A film with comedy that appeals to kids and contains more sophisticated jokes for parents that sail over the kids' heads.

**Unaided Awareness**

A measurement of how many people are aware of your movie without any promoting.

**Unit Photographer**

Someone hired to take behind-the-scenes shots and cast photos during production without intruding on the filmmaking process.

**Unit Publicist**

Coordinates all press interviews, deals with any on-set crises that the media might hear about, secures and writes press notes, and arranges on-set visits.

**Upfront**

An event that occurs every year where the TV networks roll out their show slate and try to woo advertisers into pre-paying for a set amount of advertising.

**User-Generated Content**

Content organically created by fans such as posters, trailers, art, reviews, or online comments.

**Video On Demand (VOD) or Streaming**

Content that can be instantly viewed on a television or portable electronic device.

**Waterfall**

There is no more imagistic word in in moviedom's vocabulary – nor a concept that can be more mystifying. Let's break it down.

Start with the image of a river – a mighty flowing river. The Mississippi, the Amazon, the Nile. That river represents all the money that is coming to your movie, from all sources: theatrical, digital, free TV, pay TV, direct sales and downloads... everything. That's why the river is mighty and flowing.

But wait. The river is coming to a cliff, and it's going to go over. Now the river becomes a Waterfall. At the top of the Waterfall, there are rocks, they spray water to the side. As the waterfall continues down, there is a little less water in it. Further down, more rocks, more spray, less water continuing down. Once again, further down, more rocks, more spray. By the time the waterfall reaches the bottom, it is a fraction of what it was at the top.

This image explains how various entities receive their money from your film. For example, if you are working with a traditional distribution company, they will take their distribution fee and marketing expenses at the top of the waterfall. Guild and union residuals need to be paid. Equity investors need to be paid back. If there are some "deferred fees," perhaps for some actors or other key creatives, they might come next. At the very bottom of the waterfall come "net profits."

The order of who takes how much money at which place in the waterfall is heavily negotiated based on many different factors; it is not one size fits all. You can see that you would rather take your percentage closer to the top, when there is more water, than at the bottom, when there is less. Hence, you may hear people say, "I want my money at the top of the waterfall."

### **Wide Release**

Putting the film in the maximum number of theaters on the first weekend which is usually between 2000 and 4000 screens.

### **Upgrade Your Movie**

You have registered for the Fundamental Version of the Marketing and Distribution Roadmap. The Premium Version includes everything in this Fundamental Version, **PLUS:**

- ★ Two live Zoom sessions with marketing & distribution experts, during which you can discuss your film's specific needs.
- ★ You and your film team will create a custom Marketing & Distribution Roadmap for your film. Once you upload it, MediaU's marketing & distribution experts will give you feedback, coaching, mentoring, and guidance.

If you would like to **upgrade** to the **Premium Version**, you can do so for \$397 – which will provide access for you and two other members of your filmmaking team – all for the same tuition, email us at [action@mediau.com](mailto:action@mediau.com) and we will get you set up!

### **ADDITIONAL RESOURCES**

**For more information, check out the following resources:**

To remain updated on current news in the entertainment industry, subscribe to the key trades: Indiewire, The Hollywood Reporter, Variety, and Deadline. All the trades have free versions.

Indiewire: <https://www.indiewire.com>

The Hollywood Reporter: <https://www.hollywoodreporter.com>

Variety: <https://variety.com>

Deadline: <https://deadline.com>

To learn more about the entertainment industry, these books are excellent for deeper dives:

Edwards, Rona, and Monika Skerbelis. *The Complete Filmmaker's Guide to Film Festivals: Your All Access Pass to Launching Your Film on the Festival Circuit*. Michael Wiese Productions, 2012.

Erickson, Gunnar, et al. *Independent Film Producer's Survival Guide: A Business and Legal Sourcebook*. OVERLOOK, 2017.

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