

Make a Movie by Doing 11 Things – A Unique Tutorial

TL;DR: This is the complete process to understand how to make a film. The inspiration for this has been the first season on Narcos.

Any * next to a person identifies that person to play an important role in film-making.

Background

I've been watching the 1st season of Narcos & I can't help but write a post on how to make a movie. So, Narcos is my inspiration for this post. To watch Narcos, sign up with [Netflix](#). I've bought a 1-year subscription with Netflix India.

After years of studying films, I've come to a realization that we're thinking of film-making the wrong way. Film-making is not what we think it is.

To prove it, I've made this 11-step process that starts from the Idea to the Revenue Collection.

First Step: Get An Idea

If you think actors play the biggest role in film-making, you're in for a surprise. **Actors JUST sell tickets and maintain a film's quality, period. Bulk of the work is done in the background in film-making.** Who does the most work in the background? We'll go over that as we go along in this post. (I'll put an asterisk and bold the important roles in film-making).

Let's start with the first & most important category in film-making- **The Visionary***.

You may wonder who that is in film-making, There are no courses that cover Visionary in USC or NYU. I must be kidding. You are right, partially. **A Visionary is not a sole job, a visionary can be a producer, a director, an actor, a scriptwriter or heck, even a costumer designer!**

You need a visionary to give you THE IDEA. You can be a visionary by tracking current trends in the world.



Every Government, Nation and Culture has a plan to improve its people. Movies are 1 way to do it. To get the Best Idea, track the current trends in the news -& of the country the film is based upon- and then build the Idea.

To know about different countries, go to the most popular news websites for a country – [India](#), [USA](#), [Brazil](#), [China](#), [Mexico](#), [Japan](#). Track the National, Political and -most important- the Financial News in the country.

Seeing how the US Government is cracking down on the Drug Trade, Narcos was a good way to spread the message- that aspiring to be a drug lord like Pablo Escobar can spell trouble for an American from the DEA. Also In Narcos, you have the story of Pablo Escobar in Colombia. Pablo Escobar has been known and heard of by most people in the world. But very few TV Shows have captured him in complete essence. So, Narcos fulfills the aspirations of the media and captures an IDEA not explored before on a large scale.

Second: Find a Production House (Before Writing the Screenplay?)

So, what happens when you get the Idea? Who makes a film? How does a film get made? let's understand how your film can even come into fruition.

Most film courses will tell you that you need a script. They're right. But what do you expect after writing the screenplay? No one knows you. You need contacts. It's fruitless to submit your screenplay to Screenwriting competitions in Nicholls, Austin or Page if no one knows you. Sorry to put it that way. But it's the truth.

Before you write the script, you HAVE to get a production house onboard. Maybe you know someone who works in HBO or Marvel. Find a way to pitch your idea to – your friend and then senior management.

If you're good, most studios will get you onboard. & then you can write the script.

You can get paid to write the script or you're proposed for an [Option](#). Either way, you're progressing.

Third: Write the Screenplay

PAGE NO.	7.25" TO 7.5"	0.5"
SLUGLINE	1.5" TO 7.5"	
ACTION DESCRIPTION	1.5" TO 7.5"	
CHARACTER NAME	3.5"	
DIALOGUE	2.5" TO 5.5"	
PARENTHETICAL	3.0" TO 5.5"	
TRANSITION	6.0"	

RIGHT MARGIN (MAX)

EXT. FAMOUS MOVIE STUDIO - DAY

Hustle and bustle everywhere. EXTRAS in costume coming and going. CARS line up at the studio gate, awaiting entrance.

JASON SPENCER, 22 year old star-struck Hoonier bounds up to the SECURITY GUARD, 50s, stuffy and humorless.

JASON

I made it! Can you believe it?

SECURITY GUARD

I don't believe anything. I'm a professional skeptic.

JASON

(nonplussed)

Gosh, I guess they need everything in Hollywood, don't they?

DISSOLVE TO:

If you're chosen to write the script, first get on [Scriptshadow](#) and master the structure. Write the script. Preferably over the weekend. Write it when the idea is fresh & your excited by the producers' choosing you.

Your script will be revised by the producers EVEN after you submit your script. No producer makes the script as it is. There are changes. Always. So, you

don't have to be perfect. Just write it.

At times, the production house talks to a director first. Then if the director likes the project, he chooses one of his regular screenwriters to write the screenplay. In that case, you'll get a chance to work with an industry scriptwriter. Which is great news.

4: Build a Production team

Be the director of the script & you get to choose your team – a cinematographer, set & costume design and editing. If you are just a screenwriter, your inputs on the production team will be limited. Insist on being the director.

If you write the script but do not direct, your inputs on production will be heard and not necessarily acted upon. Become the director of the script. Insist on it.

You can focus on starting your team with a cinematographer. You will be given recommendations by every one you meet in the industry. Choose some one you are comfortable with, the personality is more important than the skill.

Choose a cinematographer you get along with well as you both spend the most time together in shooting.

Cinematographers create the look of the film. You both need to see the same vision.

You then get to choose the costumes and set designers. Look at their previous work and make your decision. After you select them, pick the editor as you both will need to prepare the final cut of the film.

Once you select your production team, the producers will start the process for hiring your team. Other members like supporting cast and extras will be finalised by production.

5: Preparing for Production

So, what happens once we reach a stage where we have a script, a production house, director, cinematographer and cast? -we get into pre- production

This time, the production house uses its production team to figure out an outline of the film-with the locations of the film. A team is prepared by the production house to scout for locations

Also, the set design team & lighting team is sent with the location scouting team to prepare for changes to the set that are required i.e. creating false rain, changing the lighting as required in scenes and making space for a huge number of extras. In such times, the set design team travels to the locations and understand permissions from local government to make those changes (this is important in foreign countries). All this is done before the actual shooting begins to avoid any delays during the shoot.

Quite a few times, the cast is required to perform certain stunts or learn a language or learn a dance. At such time, before the production is started, the cast is trained in such things via workshops-so the cast is proficient and no time is spent on learning during the shoot (as that could cause delays and cost more \$\$\$).

By this time, the accounting team in the production house gets the details on cost of fees to actors, extras and cinematographer and prepares a budget. Also, costume designers and make-up/hairstylists are brought in the picture. A production design is also created to add certain props to the set. A complete cost on salaries, prop cost, travel cos, visa cost, permission cost and logistics cost (equipment and people) is calculated. A complete schedule with the budget is finalized and then the shooting begins.

>In India, as films have many songs, the songs are shot after the film is shown to the singers who then compose songs understanding the feel of the film. Once the songs are composed, the shooting begins again only for the song sequences.



EDITING

If the editor approves the final cut, the film can be released in the US. **In India, it goes to the censor board that will advise certain changes to be made.** The editing team then goes back to the drawing board and the director and producer work with the editors to edit film as per requirement of censor board.

Now, once the film is shot, the sound team is brought in to add the film score and soundtracks (songs) to the film. Also, at times during the shoot or after the shoot, a composer is hired to sing if certain special songs are required for the film. After the film is created, the soundtrack and film score is added to the film. Also, the actors are brought in again to do certain dubbings of their dialogues as required. Many times, on shoot, the actors dub their dialogues in a room right after their shoot. At times, if dubbing still needs change, actors are asked to come in once the production moves back home. Also, many times, a film may go back in production if the film isn't satisfactory or if the director/cast is changed. So, the cast are advised to keep their look, physique and hairstyle as long as the film is complete. Also visual effects and graphics are added to the film.

Nine: Promoting the film

MARKETING/PROMOTIONS

The film then can be released in film festivals or in theatres. Certain films, specially thrillers or drams that are not sequels, are released in film festivals to build an audience. In India, many times, only independent films and smaller art films are showcased in foreign film festivals. All the film festival promotion is done by a promotion and marketing team in the production house (or a third-party is hired). This involves media, social network and advertising (billboard) marketing and promotion (<including trailers are created and distributed over the internet/tv all over globe>). Following this, promotions are done on TV shows, malls, public events and news channels to create a buzz. **During the public events, the release date of the film is mentioned.**

A preview of the film is held where certain celebrities and journalists/movie critics are invited in particular to watch the film. The next day, reviews of the film are seen all over the news and media in critique columns advising the audience about the film. The film then releases to the public.

One more to Go:Releasing the film

FILM IS RELEASED.

Everyone's talking about you. You are nervous. Exciting times to savour.

Last Step: Collecting the Revenues \$\$\$

COLLECTING REVENUES



After this, the film releases and the accounting/revenue department of the production house gets back to work. Promotions and marketing campaigns may also continue post-release. It calculates the revenues received. The production house has agreements with distributors in certain regions and countries. A percentage is decided on the money given to distributor and the money kept by producers. After the film releases, the collections are received and then the producers receive their cut of the film.

If certain actors have been promised percentage points, they are given their share if film is a success. The pending payments to costumes, set designers, cinematographers, singers/lyricists/composers and other freelancers are paid. Most of the in-house production team gets paid on salary and not project basis.

The numbers then come out and show if film was a success or not. After the film, based on reviews, interviews are given explaining success/failures. Also future plans of sequel or related films are mentioned and success after-parties are held if film is a success. And then the cycle begins all over.

Starting Over Again

Hope you liked this article!