

# Freelancing

## Developing a Freelance Career in the Media

by Amanda Harman

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### Introduction

*How to start and maintain a company or a freelance career in the media industries.*

This resource aims to equip you with the information and the skills that will enable you to make a successful start and develop a flourishing career as a media professional. It will guide you through the art and the business of managing a creative career in the media industries, by providing relevant information based on interviews with successful media professionals, links to the most useful web sites, diagnostic tasks and research projects and assignments.

The interview material, the tasks and research projects are intended to contribute to the Business Planning process, and to develop in the student an awareness of the importance of planning and self development as key to sustaining a career in the media.

As you work through the interviews it is important to note information and ideas that will be of use to you in the development of your own career plan/business plan. Contained within the material are diagnostic tasks and three research projects that aim to get you to consider and analyse your skills, training, talents and experience. This will provide you with a personalised research resource from which to plan a strategy and develop a business plan to enable you to launch your career. The research projects will involve you in researching your ideas and communicating them effectively and appropriately to potential employers, clients, funders and financiers. This will involve you in researching possible contacts, communicating your ideas to others in written form and seeking appropriate help and advice.

Once you have worked through the material and completed the tasks and assignments you should have:

- An understanding of the jobs and roles available to media graduates contemplating setting up a business or pursuing a freelance career.
- An understanding of the personal qualities needed to sustain a career in the media industries.
- An understanding of planning and self-development as a key to a sustainable and successful career.
- An awareness of funding and training schemes

And you should be able to:

- Plan and prepare basic proposals, applications and budgets.
- Analyse the process of how media work is commissioned.
- Understand the notion of career planning and business planning as key to success.
- Locate the jobs and roles available to media graduates contemplating freelance work.
- Show the importance of developing networks and contacts.

- Prepare a draft Business Plan.

## Study Hours – A Guide.

22 hours of study time and 40 research hours as follows:

- The interview material equates to 4 hours of content-based material.
  - The 3 diagnostic tasks require approximately 3 hours of study time and 10 hours of research.
  - The 3 Research Projects will require at least 15 hours of study time and 30 hours of research.
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### 1. Getting Started

*Why start your own business? Why work as a freelance? Routes in, education, training, gaining experience, seeking opportunities, developing new skills.*

Anyone who tries to find work in the Media Industries soon becomes aware that the industry is dominated by people who work freelance. This is particularly true for jobs in production areas such as directors, producers, researchers, camera and sound people, animators, and designers. If you are planning to work in any of these areas you will certainly need to work as a freelance for part of your career. Working as a freelance broadly describes a one-person entity or partnership who finds work from job to job, working for lots of different employers. For tax purposes you will probably be self-employed and meet all your tax obligations under that designation.

Moving from short-term job to short-term job without any guarantees or security can be a great challenge and many people really enjoy the unpredictable lifestyle and the chance to apply their skills on a variety of projects and work with a range of different people. If you are good at what you do, reliable and self motivated, you may get all kinds of interesting and sometimes well-paid work. You'll often get the opportunity to travel and get the tax benefits of being self-employed. But it is a risk: getting work depends not just on talent, but on your ability to sell yourself, to develop a network of contacts, to negotiate a fair rate of pay and to organise the business side of your work effectively.

For most people, the desire to earn a living doing the thing you love to do provides the motivation for setting up in business as a media professional. The process of planning and managing a career as a media producer means understanding how the media is managed and organised in order to exploit creative opportunities. It is an industry that is notorious for short-term contracts and instability. If you decide to establish a freelance career in the industry you are going to need drive, passion and ambition as well as good contacts, strong interpersonal skills and sound business awareness.

Six media professionals, working in different areas and at different stages of their careers, have contributed to this resource. They have shared their experiences with regard to a range of topics. It is hoped that you will gain insight and inspiration from their experiences.

### Victoria Noble

My name's Victoria Noble and I currently am working as a Series Producer for a Company in Scotland and I'm producing religious programming. I'm producing seventy-four programmes,

solely for Scotland, on ITV. I'm doing twenty-four one hour studio discussions and fifteen one-on-one interviews, which is certainly a challenge, and that's why I took the job up.

### **Vin Arthey**

My name's Vin Arthey. I'm a Senior Lecturer here at the Bournemouth Media School. I began my working life in teaching in higher education in the 1970s. My specialist area in higher education was Popular Culture and that gave me lots of links with broadcasters and I started to work initially freelance in radio and television and then full time in television. I had a small business where I did consultancy and bits of journalism as well and part of that consultancy and writing gradually brought me back into education.

### **Christine Molloy – desperate optimists**

Our company is called 'desperate optimists' and we're actually a partnership, it's a collaboration between myself, Christine Molloy and Joe Lawlor, who's the other member of 'desperate optimists', and we've been making work together since about 1992. We initially spent the best part of seven or eight years making performance work which we toured both nationally around Britain and then internationally to Europe and America, before having a complete detour a couple of years ago, where we stopped making performance work and concentrated more on digital technology, working more or less full time with computers, and taking on a whole variety of work, mainly around the camera, the video camera.

### **Mike Fox**

I'm Mike Fox; I'm a Cinematographer. I'm working mainly in television, documentary/factual television, but also when possible for cinema, which is actually a first love.

### **Kate Broome**

My name's Kate Broome and I am a producer at the BBC. In the BBC we also direct, so we do two jobs, produce and direct, which means you manage the money and run the budgets and we also make the programmes, and editorially see those programmes through from start to finish.

### **Sarah Beecham and Graham Howard – Art of Memory**

I'm Sarah Beecham and I have run a company jointly with my husband for the last ten years, dealing with multimedia. We specialise in museum kiosks. We generally like working with Fine Art collections, museum collections, and not only kiosks but websites and any other sort of interactive media. My role in the company has been interface and screen designer, but also largely project management and liaison with the curators and other clients that we've worked with.

I'm Graham Howard and I set up a company called Art Of Memory in the late 1980s at the start of what became the multimedia industry and we've been working in that area on educational, cultural projects ever since. Initially it was very much in terms of active things on screens for people, so installation type activity, CD-ROMS and then on into websites and we're now more recently involved with a larger company, 'Business Simulation', and I'm the Design Director.

Most media freelancers chose freelancing because it is the only work available to them in the area in which they want to work. There are various routes in but a qualification in media production or other relevant area, then gaining experience, seeking out opportunities, developing your skills and a network of friends and contacts in the industry will all help you to achieve success as a

freelance.

## Victoria

I did a Media degree at Luton University and at that point I had two interests, one was photography and one was documentaries. Documentaries because I enjoyed watching them really, and I thought it would be very interesting to make them, to actually meet these people and to find out for myself, more about the world. And so after I took my degree, my first job really was doing a bit of photography work, but I found it quite difficult to get work, so I was looking for TV work as well and I saw a job in The Guardian. I worked as a runner for free, I just worked for about four months for free and they covered my expenses but it was valuable. You do see lots of runners' jobs offered up, where the pay is very low, but it's definitely worth doing because the salaries leap once you've finished your work as a runner, so it's worth doing, and it is the way in. I had some skills when I left university, but they were fairly basic and I think basically nothing compares to learning on the job. You just learn so much, so it is worth working for free, because it is like doing a training course basically, all working for a low fee. You learn so much and you meet people and you make contacts, and that's what it's all about, and it's invaluable really.

Then I saw another place in The Guardian, it was for a satellite channel and they were taking on a lot of young graduates...low pay, it was for Granada Television, and I went along. I wasn't really sure what the job was going to be, but I went there anyway, got through the interview and got accepted, and I still wasn't sure exactly what the job was going to be. When I arrived, to my horror, I was on the technical staff and I thought "hang on a minute, I want to make documentaries, what am I doing here?" I ended up working studio cameras, working as a lighting camera person, working with sound and still all the time though, thinking of documentary ideas and keeping my ideas up. Then myself and my flat mate wrote a factual programme. It was a cooking programme, it was quite a fun thing though, taking the piss really out of the cooking genre, and we went to the Channel we were working with and said "we've got this show" and they said "oh you can make it in your spare time", so we did! And I think that really stood me in good stead and showed me that you can do it, if you've got the initiative.

Then I saw another job in The Guardian, a job in London, working as a Development Researcher for a company called Optimum Television, which make factuials, and so I applied and went for an interview. I had to write a proposal for a programme idea, and I got the job, and really that was it for me. I really started in the field I wanted to be in there and I stayed at Optimum for three years and that was brilliant. I was a junior in the development department, writing ideas, coming up with programme ideas really, and doing a bit of research and it was fantastic, but ultimately I wanted to get into the real nitty gritty of programme making. And then a job came up on Police, Camera, Action! as a researcher, and I showed how keen I was to do that and I got given the job. And basically I knuckled down and I worked extremely hard and I seemed to be quite good at it and I got on. I got to work on a number of projects, and because I was there for three years, I got to learn so much and work my way up. And because I was about, I got asked to do lots of different things, and by the time I left Optimum, I was a director and producer.

It's about proving yourself and it's about putting in the hours and it's about dedication and using your initiative, and I think it's about doing what's asked of you and a little bit more, and certainly once you're in with a company, if you really work hard, you can move through, that's how it worked for me. The media is difficult to get into and that is predominantly because people employ their friends and people they know, more than any other industry I've certainly known of. The way to get in I think really is, there's lots of low paid runner work offered, that's the way to do it. Get in there or send CVs off to companies and offer your services. My first job was for free, but it stood me in good stead, so if you're working within a company then you can start moving, but working for free, yeah...It happens.

Freelance work is the way the television industry works, especially on the production side. I think I would take a staff job for a year or two now, having sort of worked within the media for four or five years, but they're just not out there, and the contracts are getting shorter and shorter as budgets get smaller and smaller, and people are trying to cram more work into a shorter amount of time, so, I work as a freelance because I've got no choice, basically. No choice at all.

## **Kate**

I got into film and TV by doing a degree at West Surrey College of Art and Design and did a three-year course in Film and Video, and got a First Class Honours Degree. And then was really, really lucky in that just before I graduated, one of my tutors got me a job for a month's trial in the cutting rooms at BBC Bristol in the Film Unit. So I'd only been out of college about three weeks and then went straight to Bristol to do that. I was a dubbing assistant on a big drama series called *Hideaway*, that ran into a three-month contract and I managed to pay off all my debts from being a student by the Christmas, and then got my contract extended, various extensions, as a trainee assistant film editor. And then after about eighteen months, applied for a staff trainee assistant film editor job, and didn't get that, and then about a year after that I actually went for an assistant film editor's job and got a staff job and spent about three and a half years in the cutting room assisting film editors on various programmes. And then a scheme called *Ten x Ten* came along, which the BBC ran for new filmmakers. They were ten-minute programmes, which they funded and supported, and I got one of those and that's how I started directing,

I did the *Ten x Ten* film and then got an attachment into regional TV to make a couple of documentaries for them, their opt-out programmes, and then got offered a job on a series called *Small Objects of Desire*. That was because I had a couple of my own ideas and they wanted to make a film about the tampon and the cigarette, which was included in the series. That was a big break for me and from then on I just ended up making documentary after documentary, gave up my staff job as assistant film editor, so I could actually stay in programme making. That was the deal, and I think I'm about thirty films in now and I've been working in broadcast TV for seventeen years, I think.

## **Graham**

I got started in this whole area really, a long time ago in that my background is as a fine artist and I was involved in the late 1960s, early 1970s, with a group called *Art and Language*. We started looking at the way in which you might use technology at that point and in fact endeavoured to put some things on computers at that stage in proceedings, which was a nightmare because it was all card processing etc. I then ended up teaching Fine Art, teaching people to use video, photography etc, so involved in those media areas. When the first Apple computers came along it occurred to me that there were real possibilities, things you could start to do with them, so I managed to get one of those into the institution I was then working at, which was the *Coventry Polytechnic*, now *Coventry University*. And that enabled the possibility of thinking about things in different ways and as that technology developed I ended up running a post-graduate course in *Electronic Graphics* at *Coventry*, which was the first European course in computer graphics, at post-graduate level. We were then pushing at the edge of the technologies, especially around the idea of doing 2-d images and 3-d images, so into the relationship between vector graphics and pixel graphics etc. And then in the late '80s, Apple produced *HyperCard* and that in effect opened the door to the possibility of interactive multimedia and because I was then in the fortunate position of actually running a post-graduate course, I was actually able to introduce that directly onto the course. And because I did that it gradually got known by people outside that there were these things going on at *Coventry* and I ended up talking at various gatherings, whether at conferences or whatever, about what we were doing. People like Apple got interested, I got asked

to do things outside of the polytechnic in order to be able to make things happen, lots of interesting stuff. And so in the late '80s we ended up setting up a company in order to be able to cope with some of that activity. It was a situation where people were just amazed that we were able to do things and that they wanted things done, and I suppose partly I was going out being fairly vocal about "look, there's real possibilities here". I mean partly because I saw that there was a bad metaphor being used in those hypertext type of media type things, and actually trying to get people to think outside of that, and trying to expand it, that it then got people interested. So we got work like that initially, but it's never been a smooth procedure, getting work. But initially it was totally to do with the fact that we were asked to do things, some of them great fun, like launching Apple's first portable computer, which was more like a suitcase, but was great fun. It was just very, very enjoyable to do, where you're really pushing at the edge of the technology, but working with really interesting people and that's been great over the time and it's one of the things that I suspect there will be a further revival of over the next few years, as the technology gets to the point where you really can do a lot of these things.

## **Sarah**

At the point when Graham was teaching and getting involved in his very early days of Apple's technology, I was working as a canvas work designer and my children were young. At the point when Graham set up Art of Memory, I gradually got involved to begin with on almost a casual basis and that casual basis was I suppose, increasingly in demand. For some while I ran both interests in tandem, carrying on the canvas work business and working with Art of Memory. But it became clear in terms of the canvas work business, that it wasn't viable if I didn't give it a hundred per cent at the time, so at that point I decided to move and to actually concentrate on the multimedia side of things. That was my way in, which was a rather quieter route and a probably less structured route. What is interesting in terms of my involvement and my background, is that I have always worked in some ways in visual arts, but in fact my A Levels to begin with included maths, and I think that understanding of maths makes a big difference in this area. You're not just looking at things visually, you're understanding fundamentally the mechanics behind it and how the technology works, and that seemed to me an important skill set in being able to work in this area. My main areas of interest in the work are the look and feel of the products, but also working out the information structure and actually working out ways in which the users are going to find their way through the information. So not using the technology to obscure, but as ways to actually almost be transparent, to allow the information and the content to come through.

## **Christine**

Well the work we've undertaken in the last, let's say two years, maybe two and a half years, has come about through a total change in our working practice, and this is a decision that we made in 1998. But the show that we made in 1998, the performance show, which was called Play-boy, we knew even as we started to make that show, that it was going to be our very last show. Over all the years that we were making performance work we worked with a lot of technology, right from our very first show when we collaborated with a midi-violinist, to a show that we did in 1995 where we collaborated with a digital photographer, to work where we collaborated with video makers and DJs. Having been on the touring circuit for the best part of eight years, we knew that to make an absolutely clean break and burn all our bridges would be an absolute disaster for us because we'd not only developed our reputation as a touring performance company, but we also really understood the whole funding system, the circuit, what it means to go about making work, promoting it, touring it, managing it etc. So that was a huge amount of experience to just turn your back on and to try and start afresh, with I suppose no real context or network or experience or skills. Well, we had a certain amount of skills but our skills weren't really focused and refined and they certainly didn't translate into works that stood up by themselves. So fortunately for us, we applied for a bursary, which gave us a certain amount of time to focus on developing our skills in

digital technology and it gave us the money to pay for the time to begin to research how we could begin to earn a living as artists working in this new field, as opposed to the field of performance.

## Mike

My own route into it was by means of what I could only describe in hindsight as a ramshackle apprenticeship. Now, that's partly a question of history. There were at the time, only a couple of film and television schools in Britain, so most of the people I knew, went through one of the back doors. In my case that was Denham Laboratories, Rank Film Laboratories.

I started life helping out in a cinema before I left school, believing that projectionist to film director was a matter of course, which is not the case and never was going to be the case. I then, after a succession of those jobs I applied to join Rank Film Laboratories, and to my surprise was offered a ticket. I stayed at Rank Laboratories for two years usually working in the dark, with a torch between my teeth and with the constant stink of the most appalling chemicals, and then decided at the end of two years, I actually had to move at all costs, I actually had to go out there and get a job. I volunteered to deliver a can one evening, a can of film to Merton Park Studios to a man called Brian Loftus, who ran an optical printing company. I got in the car and I drove forty odd miles across London, got to the reception and asked the guy on reception, the Security Guard, "Can I please hang on and make sure he gets this can", and when this rather flyblown character appeared, and I said, "Look", I said, "I've hung on to see you, is there any chance of a job, any job, you know, I don't mind what I do...?" and he said "When can you start?" and he offered me in two weeks time as his assistant

I turned up on the first day, no Brian. So I cleaned things, swept up, made coffee, went home. Four or five days went past and I still didn't see him. Various people wandered through and said, "Who are you?" and I said "Oh well I'm here as Brian's assistant". Anyway, he finally showed up on the fifth day and he said, "Oh hello, how are you?", and I said, "I'm fine", and he said, "Listen now," he said, "I'm awfully sorry old man" he said, "But I shouldn't have offered that job, it wasn't my place to", and he said, "Basically the bottom line is that I can't pay you. " But he said, "I have talked to my parent company", who made commercials in the West End, "...and they've agreed to take you on as a trainee/runner/this and that", so you know, I came out of it in the end, smelling of roses, went trotting up to London where I loaded, cleaned cameras, worked on a string of German soap powder commercials and did various things, and sort of cut my teeth, learned about procedure, all on 35mm. I think many of us of the generation went through the usual back doors. In my case, it was a film laboratory where you got a ticket and after a two years probationary period were able to make choices. The significant thing is that each choice was a) not guaranteed and b) was almost like starting again. Each opportunity or each direction you took, required you to convince somebody that if you couldn't do the job, you soon would be able to, you yearned for a track record, and you yearned for opportunities and each opportunity you took, each door that opened, you had to quickly prove yourself, do the job and then make the decision as to what you were going to do next.

My own interest has always been in the language of film, in other words filmmaking *per se* in the broadest sense, so I had no clear idea at the outset that I wanted to do any one thing. It's said of film schools today that everybody wants to be a director, well yes, that is the ultimate job, that is authorship in filmmaking, whether it's for cinema or television. There's enormous pressure on people for them to decide, at an earlier stage than is often ideal for them, to decide whether they're going into editing, into sound, into camera work, into research, into any of the specified fields. If I think back in hindsight at my own passage, through ducking and diving, a lot of disappointments, a lot of set backs, a lot of good things, I look back and realise that almost everything I did was formative and I suppose that, as that was over a number of years, I consider that to be very valuable in the way I view film and programme making now. You know, as a

cameraman I know enough about the language from the cutting rooms to know that when I'm shooting something, when I'm shooting documentaries, I'm constantly thinking, that somebody somewhere is going to want to make a hole in this very, very long piece, so therefore I must get this, this and this to make it possible in editing terms.

I spent four years in the cutting rooms as an assistant editor, now... what I learnt almost by osmosis, in an environment where decisions were being made by, let me say older and wiser people, more experienced people, I now consider to be invaluable. At the time I thought my goodness am I ever going to do this myself? But, I watched programmes being made. I handed the next shot, I removed the shot they'd taken out, I even got to lay soundtracks and so I got a sense of what worked about transitions, about structure, shape, etc. Now I don't think that experience, can be replaced by a six-week course working on Avid. I think primarily that film editing, programme structure, punctuation, has to be something that you acquire, almost by osmosis, you have to be in the environment, and watch, and then gradually work out whether you, if given the chance, would make the same decisions. I went onto film research on World At War, which most people have seen in their life. I found that the experience I'd had in the labs meant that I could go along and view a piece of archive film and take a fairly inspired guess as to its origins, so I found again that in that particular post, what I felt at the time was redundant knowledge in the laboratories, suddenly provided the means by which I knew what I was doing.

But the person going into the profession now, I would suggest finds a little niche somewhere. It's the back door again for other reasons. I work through a company in Bristol, which is effectively a post-production company, and what I would say is that they have at most times, about a dozen people, who turn up in the dubbing theatres and bring coffee and ask questions and deliver cans and they do various jobs, and eventually, depending on their character and their enthusiasm and their wherewithal, will leave because they're in an environment where they are aware of opportunities popping up somewhere else or indeed within the framework of that company. So for example, over the last couple of years I know at least two or three people, who have suddenly disappeared from that environment and who are working on a feature film in London or have got a job in television in Birmingham, or are getting work experience for BBC Manchester or doing a short film. The point about it is, we all know everybody has to live, but in terms of somebody following this career path, I think if you can find yourself a niche, and people respond to enthusiasm, they do, so for example go to one of London's, or any city's dozens of film production companies and say " I'd like to be considered, this is my experience and do you have anything, is there anything I can do?" that more than one company would take you on as a runner or as a trainee, and that time enables them to get to know you, you to get to know the professional working environment and all sorts of things happen. You get a sense of your ability to work with other people, you observe the processes, you take on board the processes, and at the same time you're formulating your own attitudes and future style, and the thing is whenever I've done that I've always come out of the experience knowing things that I've seen and heard, observed, that I want to use in my future, and knowing perhaps the things that I would choose to do differently.

Why do I work as a freelance? Because to me, there's the natural means by which I could maintain a number of things, which I, and many like me find important. One is the ability to respond to your own needs, your own wishes in so much as, I've personally found it important to make career choices and subject choices as and when they're appropriate to me, rather than be enmeshed in a system where your career is mapped out in other ways. And there's another thing too, and that is that I think for all of us, dignity and self-respect are important, and I think it's much easier if you're governing your own affairs, to maintain those principles.

This section has aimed to provide you with an overview of routes into the industry for freelance media professionals based on the personal experience of people actually doing the jobs. You should have gathered an understanding of the transferable skills required, and have an indication



of the kind of tenacity, spirit and level of commitment required to achieve success and to sustain a small business or a freelance career. You clearly need to have a true commitment to what you are doing, and you will need to be working to your strengths and talents. You will need to have the courage to take risks and the ability to recognise the opportunities that come your way. The following task is designed to help you achieve an insight into what is important to you and what motivates you to achieve your very best, and assist you in researching the jobs and roles in which you would flourish.

## **Task 1**

### **Objective**

To identify your key skills, your transferable skills and the factors which will provide motivation in your working life. This will enable you to identify and establish a job or role that complements your particular skill-set and your personal qualities. You will evaluate your own achievements and develop an awareness of the skills and qualities that you possess in order to present them to possible clients and employers.

### **Aims**

On completing these tasks you will have:

- An understanding of the personal qualities needed to sustain a small business or a career as a freelance in the media industries.
- An understanding of planning and self-development as a key to a sustainable and successful career.
- A basic understanding of the jobs and roles available to media graduates contemplating freelance work.

### **Instructions**

List specific times in your life (working or personal) when you've really felt "at your best" i.e. the kind of occasions when you have felt inspired, energised, excited and proud of your achievements, perhaps 4 or 5 specific occasions. Then note in the corresponding column the factors that contributed to your feeling of success and achievement.

For example.

- Were you utilising particular skills or talents?
- Did it have something to do with the environment or the people you were working with?
- Did you learn a new skill or develop an existing one?
- Was it finding a solution to a tricky problem?

Detail the core factors that contributed to your sense of achievement. Below is an example:

<p><b>Examples of when I've been at my best.</b></p>	<p><b>Key factors that contributed to a sense of success and achievement.</b></p>
<p>Managing Regional Bursary Scheme for Cambridge Darkroom.</p>	<p>Supporting group of recipients, discussing work in progress &amp; bringing my perspective. Achievement of seeing final exhibition and resulting publicity.</p>
<p>Collaborating with 'desperate optimists' on Showroom Residency.</p>	<p>Working as part of a close team. Being fully absorbed in a project. A sense of belonging. Practical application of old and new skills &amp; developing them as part of process. Pride in product. It was fun.</p>
<p>Producing touring exhibition for Impressions Gallery.</p>	<p>Sense of achievement in securing commission. Building a body of work. Developing existing printing skills. Working with gallery director on presentation of finished work. Achievement of seeing final exhibition and resulting publicity.</p>
<p>Renovating House.</p>	<p>Visible results, organising work and contractors, making design decisions, researching best/best value products. Sense of achievement in seeing it all come together.</p>

**Finally** – Review your answers and aim to summarise as succinctly as possible your key qualities and motivating factors. You may find it useful to show your answers to someone and get them to help you pick out the key factors. Below is a summary of the example outlined above.

**Summary**

- Visual
- Achievement
- Complete 'product'
- People
- Teamwork
- Personal contributions

Now formulate a short sentence or paragraph that sums up your key motivations/strengths. You might try a number of different versions until you find the one that feel the most accurate for you.

E.g. " I'm at my best when I am contributing to a team of people working

together to achieve a visible finished product"

This process will enable you to recognise your strengths and your favourite skills; it could also alert you to possible difficulties you could face if you choose to work outside or against some of your clear motivating factors. For example this summary suggests that this person is at their best working together with other people towards a visible product. To provide the best possible chance of success in a freelance career this person will need to seek opportunities where these skills are utilised. Hours working alone at a desk (e.g. as a writer) would not suit this particular skill set. Think about the gap between what you do well and what the qualities are for the role you seek.

Having completed this task go to the following websites to see how your skills match the job descriptions.

**[www.skillsformedia.com/gettingin/resources/thebusiness/gettinginbusinessjobs2desc.htm](http://www.skillsformedia.com/gettingin/resources/thebusiness/gettinginbusinessjobs2desc.htm)**

For full details of jobs, roles and training within the BBC go to

**[www.bbc.co.uk/gettoknowus.shtml](http://www.bbc.co.uk/gettoknowus.shtml)**

**[www.bbc.co.uk/jobs/newmediatraineescheme2000.shtml](http://www.bbc.co.uk/jobs/newmediatraineescheme2000.shtml)**

**[www.bbc.co.uk/jobs/catprogrammaming.shtml](http://www.bbc.co.uk/jobs/catprogrammaming.shtml)**

**[www.bbc.co.uk/jobs/e54493.shtml](http://www.bbc.co.uk/jobs/e54493.shtml)**

Make a list of the jobs and roles that interest you and relate your skills and experience to the requirements of the job. E.g.

Production Assistant.

An essential part of the production team, P.A.s provide vital administrative support. A wealth of material is created by a production office such as scripts, call sheets and daily reports. The Production Assistant will be involved in producing these as well as booking hotels, hiring equipment and sorting travel arrangements.

My skills

I'm well organised and can manage my time effectively. Give example...

I enjoy working under pressure. Give example...

I am confident about talking to people and using the telephone. Give example...

I have good team skills. Give example...

You should have

- A list of your key motivations and strengths
- A summary of when you work at your best
- A selection of roles where you could utilise your skills and talents
- A short report which maps your skills and strengths directly onto a job or role.

This process will assist you in addressing the Personnel section of the Business Plan.

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## 2. Personal Qualities

*What personal qualities are important if you are going to sustain a small business or a freelance career? What implications does the way you work have for the other areas of your life i.e. family/friends /free time etc.*

Having identified a role, you need to consider whether you can achieve it as a freelance. Before starting a business or launching yourself into a freelance career it would be wise to consider the pros and cons of such a career choice and to examine carefully whether you are the right kind of person, with the necessary skills and personal qualities. Jobs and contracts vary widely and it is important to understand the implications of each for your life in general. Most jobs, especially in production, demand long and frequently unsociable hours, do not provide a regular income and require stamina, fitness and an understanding family, friends and partner. It is estimated that 60% of people working in film and TV production are freelance and of these, about a quarter are highly sought after and have too much work. But the majority of people simply get by and will not always be in employment, a significant proportion will hardly get any work at all. Could you cope with this?

To improve your chances of sustaining a career as a freelance you will need to demonstrate a range of skills, competencies and personal qualities. It is a very competitive industry, and freelance work demands that you possess a number of key skills as well as the personal qualities that will see you through the insecurity the demands and the erratic nature of the work. You need to be able to make a contribution from day one, and present evidence of what you do well. You will need confidence and optimism. You will need to be able to manage the business side, to go out and get your own work and manage your time and your diary effectively. You may need to travel or move around for work and may be away for weeks or months at a time. You will need to consider your overall objectives and other commitments.

### Victoria

Well I think if you're going to start a career working in the media, you've got to be optimistic generally. It is difficult, because there isn't financial security when you're working on contract, you're never sure when you're going to get the next job or when the next money will be in. I've been currently thinking, I'd like to buy a house, but actually that seems such a difficult thing to do at the moment because I can't judge what my income's going to be. I think I'm going to have to wait until I get a year's contract, and then try, so that is difficult. I think you have to be optimistic, but also you have to be confident that you are good at your job and that you can find work. It is out there, you just need to go out and find it, and it does help, the more people you know, the more likely you are to find a job basically, that's how it works.

I currently have a flat in London, which I was able to rent out when I went to Aberdeen to work.

Because I had to rent a house in Aberdeen and I couldn't afford two homes, and as I was going to be in Aberdeen for six months, I had to take some fairly drastic action, but fortunately because I don't really have a mortgage or any ties like that, I could just move, up and move...the move was absolutely fine.

Because the work is unpredictable, one has to move around. It is difficult. I'm never quite sure where I'm supposed to be living. I wanted to do a part time Masters course but I'm not sure whether I'll be in one place long enough to do that, so I've spent three years thinking about it and not done it yet. You can't take evening classes, it's very hard to commit to things, whether it's a six-month rent on a property, taking up a course, or relationships with friends. I've been in Scotland for six months and I've been home for a total of six days within that six months, so the telephone is very valuable.

Because I'm working freelance, I can never tell what my workload's going to be like, or when I'm going to be free. Mostly when I take on jobs the workload is very heavy and you're very short of time and it's certainly not nine to five. It's working into the evening, it's shooting at weekends, there's no rest really until you've finished the contract.

When one's working on contracts, obviously there's no paid holidays, but it does mean between the contracts you can decide, actually I'm going to take some time off. You're not stuck for four weeks' paid leave, you know, you can take as much time off as you can afford really, which is great, and I think usually after one of those sort of contracts, you work so hard you need a bit of time off. So, I think that's quite nice actually, that you can do that. There's some freedom there, some real freedom. And also you can move around, you can choose to work in Scotland or Cornwall or Spain or America, that's a great aspect to it, the freedom. It does allow you a lot of freedom, which I think is important.

## **Kate**

Well for the first bit of my career I was on short-term contracts in the cutting rooms, and then got a staff job and then when I had to give that up, I've been on contracts for months, or the longest contracts being a year or two years since then, and I've only just got a permanent job, and for me, that suits me really well. Some people don't actually want to be tied down like that, but I think the older you get, a bit of stability, if it's important to you, helps. So I've always found it's a real tussle and it's like a love-hate relationship between the insecurity and also, you never know what you're going to be doing next. I mean you can try and plan for it, and you can have your own ideas and try and get to work on those, but I've found it really difficult and I think it's to do with my own personality. I'm a Taurean and I like to plan things out and know what I'm doing, and I think that the down side is that it takes its toll, you can't predict when you're going to be around. It helps if you have a really understanding family and friends and a wife or a husband because you have to be very flexible and they have to be very flexible as well, and I suppose it goes with the territory. You have a really exciting, creative, privileged job, but there are going to be sides of it which aren't so good really. It's constantly at the back of your mind, knowing that you're going to spend however many weeks, or months a year away, and knowing that you're always going to miss some crucial family event or, something that you want to be at, or should be at, so it's trying to balance that. And also, I still think it's like a glass ceiling for women actually, it's really, really hard for women to balance a family in this job, in lots of different roles in TV, I think it's not just being a director or producer, I think it's hard throughout really.

## **Christine**

As a company, 'desperate optimists', myself and Joe have been making work together and trying to survive as artists since about 1990, and that has real bigger implications for you and the way

that you live your life. There's absolutely no doubts about that, although over the past few years things have gotten easier for us. We spent quite a few years trying to juggle jobs, like proper real paid jobs, with trying to make work and manage, produce and tour work, just because we couldn't afford to survive on the small amount of money that we were receiving to make our art. And we then began to find work that was very much related to the artwork that we were trying to make, so for example, working in educational institutions, running education/arts based projects, so there was a real kind of parallel to the way we were making work and the way we were trying to supplement the fees we were receiving for the work that we made, with proper paid work. However, it can be really, really difficult to manage your time, when you've got a big project in an educational institution that you're having to put a huge amount of time and energy into, and you're also trying to manage your own artwork. And so we've worked very, very hard over the past few years, to try and take that kind of pressure off ourselves and to earn most of our money through the art that we make, and again, that's also difficult. There's never an easy way, so you sometimes ask yourself, you know, what it's all about and why the hell you're doing it, 'cause it... it never really gets easy, or any easier, it's always a series of compromises. We find it really difficult for example, at different times of the year, to allow ourselves to take time off, and you have to really learn to do that, to have weekends off, not to always work in the evenings, to give yourself a kind of structure to your day, because also we work from home now. Over the past say two and a half years, we worked very much in a studio kind of set up, but the studio just happens to be in our spare bedroom, so you know, there's no escape from the computers, there's no escaping the phone, there's no escaping the fax, there's no escaping all the e-mailing, and it's very easy to just, let seven days go by without taking any time off. You have to be very disciplined, because at the end of the day, you need to give yourself another life. We spent three years basically living out of bags, because we didn't feel that we could live anywhere because our work was bringing us to Germany or bringing us to America or bringing us to Manchester or Bristol and to Ireland. We were doing so much travelling that we didn't feel that we could live anywhere, we lived out of bags and just slept on people's floors and we had the best part of three years of doing that. You can do it for a certain amount of time, you can actually really go with it, and go with the flow. I would say you'd have the best part of three or four years when you can really just throw yourself into that completely chaotic and precarious life and actually that can be brilliant for your work. But after three years, we personally were totally exhausted and knew that we'd have to, change and rein our life in, and give ourselves a base to work from. And actually we're now in a phase where we are a lot more disciplined and maybe ultimately a lot more focused about our work. Studio based practice is one that suits us a lot. It might take you eight years before you realise that, but we certainly have, at last...

## **Mike**

What implication does the way you work have for the other areas of your life? Well, a career in film and television, rightly or wrongly, is a completely obsessive business. Very few people get it right actually. It is a vocation, it's necessarily obsessive. To give a metaphor, people are often surprised that actors for example, behave badly in the line at Tesco's. It comes as no surprise to me because an actor that's required to walk onto a cold set at 6 o'clock in the morning and cry, because the script says they must, in front of thirty strangers, requires a leap of character, a channelling of certain obsessions, to be able to do it well. So it comes as no surprise to me that, that when they're in an everyday situation, those same mechanisms are in place and they, to the outside world perhaps, behave rather badly. The same goes for anybody who will sit on the computer until three in the morning, getting a script right, and then tear it up the following morning, that constantly has to go for meetings that cut across personal arrangements, that is nervous about taking holidays just in case something comes up. It's incredibly disruptive and in my own case, I've had the best part of thirty years of making a lot of wrong moves in that sense. You know, I always dread making an arrangement to go and see people at a weekend, or turning up for somebody's wedding, because as sure as eggs is eggs, I'll get a phone call saying can I

please come up to London to have a meeting about a commercial and no, there's no other day possible. And you brace yourself and you tell your partner or family, whose confidence in you diminishes by the day, that this is really, really important. I don't know how you get it right, now I'm married to a producer/director who at least understands the pattern and the need. The sad thing is that in many, many cases you're making films about other lives, and professionally you have so much understanding for those other lives, whilst neglecting your own. I have my children staying with me at the moment and I decided that that was actually more important than attending a meeting in Leeds, and what I've risked is that while I was asked to attend, could have led to a film, I just think well, I've just done this too many times in my life, I can't continually say I'm sorry children, I'm afraid Dad's got to go to Leeds for the day, you know, and...there's little enough time,

Personal qualities, there are two things; well just for starters, the first is that it is necessary to exude confidence. In every job I've applied for, you know, I've had to convince somebody that there can be no choice for them but to hire me. That's an essential quality, that confidence, but ultimately, you've got to be damn sure that you're going to be able to achieve what will be the final criteria.

As we have seen many careers in the media will require you to work as a freelance. You may be extremely talented at your trade. i.e. the skills and talents you have that allow you to do a good job. However even the most talented and creative people will not succeed at the business of being freelance unless they have an understanding of the skills required for working in that way.

## **Task 2.**

### **Have you got what it takes?**

#### **Objective**

To evaluate and audit your capabilities and allow you to identify the areas where you will need to seek further advice or training. The purpose of this task is to stimulate your thoughts about your own areas of competence, your motives and values. It is designed to activate your thinking and prepare you for further research.

#### **Aims**

On completing these tasks you will have:

- A further understanding of the personal qualities needed to sustain a career as a freelance in the media industries.
- An understanding of planning and self-development as a key to a sustainable and successful career.
- An awareness of funding and training schemes

#### **Instructions**

Work through the checklist below and underline the answers that equate to your understanding of your own preferences. Think carefully about your response and if you feel you possess the skill or quality, or can see a solution, include an example of when you used it, or what it was.

Finding an example will enable you to judge how you actually perform, rather than how you would like to see yourself. The example could be positive or negative, either when you have enjoyed

working on your own, or when you have found it difficult. It will be better to confront and improve any areas of difficulty now, than once you are depending on your own resources and abilities to provide your income. Being realistic now will help you build something you can sustain.

Check the box that equates most closely to your experience:

Do you like working on your own?	Always	Sometimes	Occasionally	Never
Example				
Can you work long hours?	Always	When required	Occasionally	Does not appeal
Example				
Do you put career fulfilment and the demands of your work above security, family commitments, and holidays etc?	Without question	More important	As important	Less important
Example				
Do you have stamina and persistence? Can you work rapidly at a fast pace?	Always	Most of the time	Occasionally	Never
Example				
If the business struggled financially for 5 years, would you be able to keep going?	Yes, easily	Yes, fairly easily	Yes, with difficulty	No
Example				
Is financial success your main guide to what you have achieved?	Completely	Mainly	Partly	Not at all
Example				
Do you like a work routine that is fairly predictable?	Feel constrained by routine	Enjoy some variety and unpredictability	Enjoy occasional diversion	Happy and comfortable with a routine



Example				
Are you thought of as a survivor?	Always	Usually	Sometimes	Never
Example				
If you are in a tight corner are you able to come up with an original solution?	Enjoy solving difficult problems	Usually find a solution	Occasionally	Don't have my best ideas under pressure
Example				
Do you keep going until a task is complete?	Always	Usually	Sometimes	Occasionally
Example				
Are problems a challenge? Do you like being stretched and given new problems?	Always	Usually	Sometimes	Never
Example				
Can you live with insecurity about job and income? Or is it important to know that your work will always be there?	Yes, easily	Yes, fairly easily	Yes, with difficulty	No
Example				
Are you self-confident?	Yes, very	Yes, usually	Sometimes lack confidence	No
Example				
How do you view failure?	Opportunity to learn	A disappointment	A setback	Disaster
Example				

Do you ask for comments on your performance so that you can do something better next time?	Always	Usually	Sometimes	Never
Example				
Do you believe your success will be dependent on outside factors?	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Agree sometimes	Always agree
Example				
Do you like being the leader in situations where you can be assessed?	Very much	Quite a lot	Not really	Not at all
Example				
Are you good at finding the right person or source to help you achieve what you want?	Very good	Quite good	Not very good	Poor
Example				
Do you recognise when you need help?	Always	Usually	Sometimes	No
Example				
Do you set your own high standards to compete against?	Always	Usually	Sometimes	Rarely
Example				
What sort of risks do you prefer taking?	Calculated risks	High risks	Low risks	Seldom take risks
Example				

Can you identify which decisions are important and which are not? Do you enjoy the process?	Yes, always	Yes, usually	Yes, sometimes	No
Example				
Can you prioritise effectively?	Always	Usually	Sometimes	Rarely
Example				
Can you delegate to others?	Yes, when appropriate	Yes, sometimes	With difficulty	No
Example				
Can you organise your time effectively and hit deadlines?	Always	Sometimes, struggle but always hit the deadline	Occasionally miss due to lack of organisation	Poor record of being organised
Example				

## Evaluation

When your answers have been evaluated, you should have:

- An idea of your competencies, abilities and qualities
- An indication of areas for further development
- A notion of your suitability to run a business or sustain a freelance career.

Now you need to develop a career plan and a strategy for managing your career. In the next section you can learn from the experience of media professionals who have succeeded in building a career or company. Take note and start to develop ideas of a path or a route that will form a part of your business proposal. For example, seeking opportunities, taking risks, showing what you can do, building a track record.

## 3. Teamwork

*Working with or employing other people on projects.*

The creative industries are built on effective, multi-skilled teamwork, so the ability to get on with colleagues from a variety of backgrounds, fit in quickly and get on with the job almost instantly are important features of a successful practitioner. Make yourself indispensable, develop a positive reputation, be flexible and reliable and establish and maintain good working relationships. Offer a

portfolio of sought-after transferable skills, consider how to fill the gaps and don't promise anything you can't deliver as ultimately this will not impress.

## **Victoria**

Most productions work within teams, and that can be fantastic. It can also be extremely frustrating. If you get someone within your team who doesn't give a hundred per cent then it can make life very difficult and very frustrating, especially for me. I've been in the fortunate position that now I can actually start employing friends, who have a sense of responsibility to the project as well as to me as an individual, and I think they will work as hard as they possibly can to make that project come to fruition. I think when you're working in television production it's very important to have a good team and a team you can rely on, and that's why I like to work with friends.

I did a job last year on the Isle of Skye, for the Satellite channel UK Style, and it was about people who had given up their jobs as a financial advisor in Swindon and moved to the Isle of Skye to be crofters, and it was a very tight budget, we had a twenty-day shoot and basically it was so important for me to get on with my crew, because we worked from 8 o'clock in the morning to 9 o'clock at night for twenty days. The director was a great friend of mine. He'd employed a cameraman who was a friend of his, and so there was a feeling of responsibility and everyone wanted the project to work for each other as well as themselves. Had I employed someone I don't know, I may not have been able to push them that far, so it's so important to have a good energy going with your team, basically, and to have great communication, and, and that helps, if you know them.

## **Kate**

I remember very early on, even in the cutting rooms it's a small team, it's you and your Editor and then the Producer or the Director coming in. But when you work in TV or films it's about teams, and the moment you forget that, even if you're a director, and just think it's about you and you're the most important thing 'cause you're the director, then forget it, because you're never ever going to build a good team spirit, a good film is about lots of different people putting their professional best into it, whether that's the production secretary, through to the cameraman and the director having their vision. I've been very lucky and worked with some really brilliant teams from top to bottom, which have taught me, I hope, to develop happy and creative, but also effective teams, because at the end of the day you have to come in on budget and meet all those managerial stipulations as well. When you're a team you have to gel, you have to try and gel and work together, and if you get somebody in that team for whatever reason, it might be something personal, it might be the fact they're not experienced enough, who actually can't participate in that environment, then that can cause a lot of very negative things, and I've seen that happen, and it's been handled really well. I think you have to support somebody, you have to help them. The worst thing to do is just say "you're crap, goodbye", because that doesn't help you and it doesn't help them. You're going to feel guilty for a long time, probably, and it's somebody's career. And then on the opposite side you get somebody who comes in who might not be great to start with, but everybody tries to help them and encourage them, and give them responsibility and they just blossom, amazingly, and it's the most wonderful thing to see. I've just been really lucky. I've worked with really good teams most of the times.

## **Graham**

I mean it's an interesting one I suppose in that there are a lot of

variations on it, and...in that initially it was set up based around some of the projects that have been started at the Polytechnic in Coventry. There was no sense in which there was going to be

any publishing activity or whatever, and in that sense it was also very project-based, so it basically meant that we hired people for the length of a project, but we really couldn't employ people on a permanent basis because we just didn't see any permanence in it. So it was like a project-by-project basis, and we carried that on for some time. It wasn't until I suppose something like '93, when we were involved with a couple of projects, which clearly required a lot of software development, a person who we'd been working with separately as a freelance was looking for a job and wanting to do things, who then ended up joining us and gradually on that basis we built up a team. It was at the time when CD technology was starting to actually get into the publishing marketplace so that there were initially quite a lot of bullish publishers around, suddenly saying "Oh, we're going to do this, we're going to do that" etc. etc. And we built up a team at that point and I think we did that against our better judgement. We'd always said that it was better to keep it very small and use sub-contractors, freelances or whatever, to pull the things together. And it was also partly to do with the fact that we were here, because we set that up in Chipping Camden, in the Cotswolds, not in central London. There's a very real difference in terms of the sort of people that you would expect to attract, to work permanently for you. Who's going to be available? What the catchment area is, how easy it is for people to do those things, etc. So we set a team up eventually and it did become problematic, as the publishers suddenly lurched from being very bullish about things to suddenly thinking, "Oh my God, we're not going to make as much money as we thought we were going to" and cutting back dramatically. We found ourselves caught in that, really quite nastily. I mean just simply because we had one major project that we were running at the time with the possibility of two or three other major projects, all hanging off one another, all lined up neatly. It looked like we had a whole load of work running on into the future and when publishers started to get cold feet, suddenly, there was an instant backing off and so what looked like four major projects in front of us disappeared to nil. Suddenly there was a sort of big cavern, so then effectively the end of that form of the company and that was a lesson which I don't think we could have really foreseen, simply because nobody was predicting at that stage in proceedings, what was going to happen to the CD-ROM marketplace. So from our point of view, we then did revert back to the model of it essentially just being the two of us and we freelanced out the work, so that if there was bits of software work to be developed then we worked with the software engineers. If there were bits of television work to be done, video, we worked with a TV producer, and that way we carried on that business.

## **Sarah**

One thing I was thinking about which was about employing people, because I think it might be relevant. This is about the decision as an employer, how you employ people and we have had lots of manifestations or ways in which we've done this. To begin with, when we got to the stage of employing people full-time, and the ups and downs of a small business were always such that sometimes you're very flush with money and work and other times you can actually hit a very low point. So there were lots of internal discussions about how to deal with employees. I had always been very reluctant to get rid of people and to take people on, on a job contract basis. I thought this was actually unfair on the people working, it was better to provide a solid body of work or a full time work programme. What we found when we were in a position where we had to do this, and employed people on a contract basis, in lots of ways the people who we employed it preferred it and there is, generally within this industry, a need to have quite a lot of experience, especially when you're first starting, so that it suited people to work for us for a time, either on a full-time or part-time basis, and then move on. It actually builds up a portfolio that can be more useful than staying full-time with one employer. And also once you sort of graduate, leave college or university, there is also not the expectation that you should find a job that then is a job for life. There is very much an idea, six months, twelve months and then move on. So that there are advantages both ways from both the employee's and the employer's point of view of actually thinking you don't have to have people that are there all the time. Certainly it suits us better to be flexible, especially in the area of software engineering. Because the projects we take on can

require different skills in different styles of programming, programming the different software applications. To not have one person you employ full time as a programmer who might have a specialist area, but to actually be able to call on about five or six different people who have got different skill-sets has been a much better situation. What we found when we were in a situation where we had one or two programmers working full-time is that it was defining the way we were looking for work. We were actually looking for work that could be done by those programmers, rather than it being far more on a broad scale. And that then suited what we wanted to do best.

## **Graham**

The other interesting thing about that is that the model of having a small company with a number of people freelancing is one that's reasonably common in the industry. So that often we would work with other small companies in that same role, like a core with some satellites going round it, and sometimes you might be a satellite as well as being a core, and that actually was very important in terms of how we did things and has been very important. In lots of ways great because you end up doing work that you don't expect to do, so you end up doing things that you've never had to think about before, and forcing your way through some of those things is sometimes really a very good thing to do.

## **Sarah**

And the important thing, the way we used to describe it to clients, was like putting together a group of people to produce a film, but you actually don't have all those people working together all of the time. The film crew are put together to match the style of the film, and that worked as a very good analogy to explain what were doing and how we were doing it, to clients.

## **Christine**

We've always, as a company, worked with other people in the projects that we've done. We've collaborated with other artists, but we've also begun more and more to employ people on a project-by-project basis to do very specific jobs for us, whether it's about marketing and publicity or employing a production manager to help us with more complicated projects. And I suppose for us that is one of the real pleasurable aspects of the work. The opportunities that you have to work with other people and how that feeds into you as a maker. So I suppose the kind of collaborations that we had are about bringing in people who have skills that we don't have, so we still have very clearly defined roles and you never really have a situation where there'd be confusion about who's the maker of the work. However, we bring people in to contribute something to the work that we're making.

## **Mike**

Personal qualities I believe are important if you're going to sustain a freelance career: one is that, that it doesn't matter what you say about yourself and your abilities, ultimately you'll be judged on what you're seen to do and what you're seen to be capable of. The other important point is that you have to be able to fit in. Film and television requires in most cases, a number of people with a common objective. You have to have the ability to get on with people, the humility to be able to listen to others, to fit in, and more importantly, to realise that actually those two things are ultimately going to be important as and when you move on to making your own decisions.

You know, it is always possible to become islands, to guard your own bit of things, and I sort of come back to the question about the qualities, particularly of being a freelance, is that you have to be able to get on with people. You have to realise that it's a delicate mix of people/ personalities.

The most important thing is to fit in, to not be too arrogant, to have an important humility. On that score I think that the one problem with the number of film and television colleges at the moment is that many of the people, not all, but a few of the people, and in fact I worked with one quite recently, make a promise to graduates that they are now qualified to go out and go leaping to the top. What they have to realise, and in the end it's important just for the business of immersing yourself in the environment, is that you are entering an industry where people have come via other routes to what they do, and often as a result of long years, and serious commitment, to the extent that their relationships have suffered that they've suffered many career disappointments and that mix of good things and bad things. But the person who walks in having had a six-month course or if they're lucky a two-or-three-year course, who says, "Move over, I'm here", is the person who will have a seriously hard time. I've seen it happen.

Again, it's all mixed up. Sometimes the response will be "OK, well you say you do this, you say you can do that, you tell me the Messiah's arrived, so let's wait and see what happens", and I'm not just going on, this is actually a reality and a very, very important thing to realise. There is no harm in biding time, enmeshing, learning the choreography of the way others work, learning how to work with people and spending more time observing life, even the life within a film unit, within a television unit, within whatever. That ultimately you're going to have to work in that environment, get on in that environment, depend on people, ask people to make sacrifices on your behalf for your programme, your film, so it's important to understand and not only understand in theory but in practice, how the profession works.

I'm as enriched by people who turn up, with a head full of ideas and perhaps six minutes' experience in the broadest sense in this industry, as I am by the traditions and abilities of people who are twenty years older than me. But that's just me, that's my own feeling, that none of us will re-invent sliced bread. We're dealing with a language, the language is about real people, and the people I work with will be real people, with frailties, with sensitivities, with concerns etc, and touch wood, I've been very lucky and continue to be very, very lucky. I have my down times, nobody can be guaranteed a constant life of no disappointments, it doesn't happen that way, and the older I get the more I realise that that's important too. There are all sorts of theories about climbing the next hill and how important it is to have that hill to climb. I wish anybody doing this, the kind of luck and the kind of enrichment that it's personally given me and continues to give me. I'm lucky to be doing what I've always wanted to do, to have worked with the people I have, to have got angry about things, to be saddened by things, to laugh at things and for the most part, I've had a happy life, working life, which isn't over yet...

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#### **4. Planning and Developing your Career**

*How to you plan your career, taking critical decisions and risks, setting goals and objectives, looking to the future, developing new skills.*

It is unlikely that you will leave university and move straight into your dream job. When you leave you will be in a position where you will have to build a career out of the skills, qualities and talents that you have identified so far. And you will have to carry on learning and developing if you are to have any chance of success. Developing a strategy, and having a plan, may help you to make key decisions. If you know what your core business is, and what you are aiming to achieve in the long term, you will be able to identify the opportunities and the further training that are relevant to you, and to see what it is important to invest in or aim for in the future. This section aims to get you to consider a longer-term plan that you will incorporate into the Business Plan that you are required to produce as part of the research for this unit.

## Victoria

From the start of my career in television, I knew what I wanted to do, which helped. I knew I wanted to make factual programming. I wasn't really interested in any other type of programming, so I had a goal and I knew where I wanted to go. So having learned technical skills on a satellite channel, I then was able to apply for a job at a factual company and got that job and stayed there, and stuck to it. I knew that I wanted to produce and direct and so I worked my way up. I knew the route I needed to take and that was from a junior researcher, to a researcher, to an assistant producer, to a producer/director, and that's what I did and I stuck with the same company to do that, and they saw that I was loyal...loyal to them, and so they encouraged me and helped me through. When I worked at Optimum, I worked on Police, Camera, Action! for a couple of years, but I also did another series for Channel 4 called 'Anatomy of Disgust', and that was the type of material I really wanted to be making.

I got offered to do Police, Camera, Action! again, and basically I took a risk and I decided that I'd try and get out there and see what else was going on, because what happens is if you're very good at a job, they'll ask you again and again to make the same series if it's still running. I wanted to do something where the content was more engaging for me, and I was quite interested in religion and I knew a friend of mine was working for a company in Scotland and the Managing Director of that company made programmes like Songs of Praise and religious programmes came his way. I spoke to a friend of mine about my interest in religion and I did a job for him on the Isle of Skye about people who moved there and changed their lives around, which was fantastic and very tough. But on the basis of that the company had seen how I worked and when they got this large contract in to make all this religious programming, they knew that I could probably take on that challenge, so I proved myself, and when it came up they offered me the job, straight away. I was quite surprised. I moved up there, to Aberdeen from the South of England, so it was very quick and very lucky and that's about who you know, and that's very much how this industry, the television industry, works, I'm afraid. I was afraid of getting stuck and so I moved, and it was a risk, and it's paid off, but it's much harder, it's much harder to find work now.

As far as risks go, the risk which I've taken in the last year was actually turning jobs down and that's 'cause I believe that I can do the best job possible if I'm very interested in the subject, and it is a risk to turn jobs down because my concern is that the companies won't ask me again because I've turned them down once, but I think it's got to be worthwhile, because you spend so much time in your life working, you might as well put your energies into projects that you really can get excited about.

The last couple of jobs I've done I've worked my way to a series producer which is fantastic, but I would like to do more directing now because the way the industry is going, with budgets being so small, they want producer/directors. They don't want to employ two people, a producer and a director. And that's something I need to improve, get more experience really on my directing skills, so that I can apply for more jobs, and normally some of the smaller projects are the most interesting, and you can become totally immersed in them, because you're taking on two of the essential roles.

My long-term goal, in five years' time, I'd like to set up a production company myself with some friends of mine, who also work within the industry and make some of our own programmes. I've got about five core friends who work within the industry, who I started with on a satellite channel four or five years ago, and we all spent a year there and went off in our different directions, and now we've learned our skills and we're coming back together, and the last few projects we've worked together which is fantastic, and that's really what I'm aiming for, so that we can all work together. That would be my production company ultimately, and so we've got directors, producers, cameramen and we can all work together. And it's much more fun, I think work's got to



be about fun. Work is so hard, you've got to enjoy it, and there's no better way really than working with friends, I think.

## Vin

If you're beginning your career, you can't base your whole career on one idea. You know, if someone pinches it, or if someone does it some other time, you've got to come up with another one and your career might move in a different way. Now for instance, I won't mention names or the idea here, but in the last twelve months I've taught a student who came up with a very good idea, and that student took the idea to another production company. But associated with the idea were all of the kind of contact points he'd got, it was a football idea, so he'd got contacts, very close to the centre of the Football Association. Now he knew, because of his research, that this company was interested in ideas of this type. When he got to the company, the company said, "We're working on an idea not dissimilar to this". Now sometimes they'll do that, and they'll say that and they're not, they say what a great idea and then pinch it. But what they did was offer him a week's work in their company, and in that week, he developed the idea more and at the end of that week they then gave him three months' work, and he's now got a twelve-month contract which is going to be renewed. The idea got very, very close to production. It didn't get to production, but at that stage in his career, that was absolutely the right thing to happen for him, and that was super. For me, you know, if someone says "We'll give you a contract of five days", it's not worth my while taking that, I couldn't do that, so you do need to read the market very carefully, skills at espionage as well as research are quite important, and always think, what do you want out of it? Now what you might want out of it is a job. What you might want out of it is the next job. What you might want out of it is enough money to keep you surviving for a year, or to pay the mortgage, or to feed the kids, and if you haven't got a mortgage and you haven't got kids, that's not your objective, so you do need to be absolutely clear about what it is you want from the project. Commissioning editors are looking for ways not to commission, or reasons not to commission, rather than reasons to commission, so you've got to hit them hard and clear.

## Kate

A few of us realised that realistically we weren't going to go straight from college and direct our first feature film or documentary, so I wanted to learn a craft. And so for me the cutting rooms seemed like a really good place to be and I thought I'd be a film editor, I mean I really enjoyed it, and wondered if that's what I'd end up doing. But I knew deep down I wanted to direct and tell stories, and make films, very much so. So when an opportunity came along, I pushed really hard for that, and I suppose, obviously you have to work much harder to get the breaks early on and it is about being in the right place at the right time and just keeping your ears open.

I mean creatively planning, I've just always thought, "change the spots", it's very easy to get marked as one particular type of person or filmmaker or cameraman or whatever, pigeon-holed. So I've always tried to look for new challenges within my work, and it's only recently that having reached nearly the age of forty, and having been on the road a lot and travelled a lot, and had quite a disruptive life, that I feel like it's probably time to put something back, as in all the experience I've had over the years. I should be able to be a series producer and step back from that, and creatively run teams and programmes, but not actually have to make so many films now.

As far as the future goes, I know what I'm doing until next Spring, as in what films I'm making, and I'm also trying to make a move to get a series producer's job on something that I'd like to make, so I can slightly change my lifestyle and I don't know whether that will work. I might not like it, because I love making films and you have to step aside from that and then encourage other people to do that, so that's my next challenge. But also, I have been trying to develop work outside, some drama work and writing, just because when you write, you only rely on one person,

you don't have to rely on lots of other people, and that's quite liberating. So it's a balance really of trying to do a professional job and also develop your own interests at the same time.

## Graham

I suppose what's difficult is that, I think the industry itself is if you like, very immature, so you're not in a situation where you can simply say that there is a framework within which we're going to work over the next three to five years. Essentially we're in a situation where we know roughly how the technology is developing, but we don't know how that technology will get taken up, and so it gets very difficult to predict, how certain things will work. The example of something like the telecommunications industry is a fairly good example of how those things work. I mean nobody, so far as I know, predicted texting happening. It was one of those little add-ons that somebody decided to put in there and it's formed a whole way of doing things that people hadn't recognised were going to be a real possibility. This is fairly typical of what's going on at the present moment, and of course people get totally over-extended in the other sort of way where telecom's fair game, this is that people have paid enormous amounts for the 3G licenses etc. and they're now struggling desperately to work out what they're going to do with it, and that's very typical. Now, we're in a situation where we could say ok, we could go for doing 3G things because actually we know what you could do with some of those things, and especially with some of the clients we have, you could see its relevance for cultural tourism. Lots of things in there that you could start to put together, but we also know that's a very fragile and unpredictable world. How much do you keep diving off into those unpredictable things? How much do you retract and try and deal with the safer things? You can plan if you deal with the safer things. It's very difficult to cut out if you do it with those things that are right on the edge, however those things that are right on the edge are often the really exciting things to deal with. So typically, our business has been one where we fluctuate between those two things. You fluctuate between doing some safe things that are basically within what have gradually become understood ways of doing things over the last few years, and then into doing some things which are really out on the edge and could be something that you'll never do another one of, or might turn out to be the next set of things that go on. So it's because the whole business is shifting around that it makes it very hard to plan. So you can have this great long teleology like that, saying "well out there we'd really like that to happen", in the meanwhile you've got to survive and survival in the industry means being adaptable. You're continuously having to react to what's around you and just getting on and doing it. So I think it's very difficult to plan. For instance if you take something like the broadcast industry, which OK is fluctuating and it's changing because of what's going on in terms of digital and satellite and cable and all the rest of it, but actually we know what a TV producer is and there's a model there, so it all can work. If you're a TV producer you know what you're going to be doing is making TV programmes, they might be slightly different sorts of TV programmes, but you're going to be making TV programmes.

And in fact just more recently, what's effectively happened is that we decided, I suppose about two years ago, that given how old we are, well how old I am anyway, the situation where the possibility of carrying on running a business with really just two of you, is not going to sustain you forever. And the possibility of working with groups of people seemed really important, so we started to look around at who possible partners were, and have ended up with a new partnership with essentially a software company, run by somebody that I've known for eighteen years, based in central London. And because he'd been doing very similar sorts of work, we are now part of that team. There still are enormous changes going on in the industry, and nobody knows where anybody's going to be in three to five years' time, however much you make plans. So it's a very ever-changing field, and in that sense I think actually the area we're operating is, by its very nature, dangerous. It's just not comfortable and I think in terms of thinking about how people are, and how people react to things, you've got to be prepared to be uncomfortable.

## Christine

In order to gain the skills that we needed to make this switch in our practice, we did a couple of things. Firstly we invested some money from the bursary that I got in equipment; in some new hardware and software. And secondly we paid for one-to-one training, so we paid somebody to come work intensively with us on Dreamweaver, Fireworks and Flash, and that allowed us then to crack on ourselves. However the one-to-one training really set us up for that, particularly because Simon, the guy we employed to do this training with us, really taught us how to think about troubleshooting first and foremost, to think through things that might be wrong if you're having problems. The other strategy that we used was to actually set some projects up because we've always believed in learning on the job. That there's no better way to actually really focus your mind and begin to understand, or acquire new skills than having a deadline for a piece of work that's going to have a public airing. We were lucky enough to get a commission that was quite open ended in terms of what we could do, and we decided to use that commission to build a website, and you do learn skills very, very quickly that way.

## Mike

These days, because roughly three or four years ago, I decided for a variety of reasons, that I wanted to return to a first love, which is cinema, which at this time, touch wood, is enjoying something of a renaissance. That meant effectively I had to go back to the drawing board, in that the industry tends to compartmentalise people, it does this for reasons of its own neurosis. So for example, even after a number of years shooting documentaries, getting to do your first drama either for television or cinema is a quantum leap; it's like going back to the drawing board again. You've got to convince a whole new set of people that no, you haven't been doing something different all your life, that the documentary experience for you has led to a natural desire to photograph drama or direct or write or whatever you choose to be doing, So what do you do? The first thing is, in my case, I started compiling showreels. At one time it was a question of going into a video edit suite, borrowing the masters, sitting there with the clock ticking away and your bill running up, compiling a show reel that you hoped was going to convince people that you are capable of more than the work that was readily available on television... Now, in a sea of people who didn't see me as a drama cinematographer, out of the blue came somebody who did, and my style has changed and my perceptions have changed, and maybe his have as well. Certainly we enjoy a good working relationship, and certainly since that side of things has naturally grown, because having crossed that bridge, then obviously the short films, the feature films, the commercials that have resulted, have in the usual way been seen by others. So once again the process has repeated itself, you know. There's stuff out there that people are seeing and so I'm getting phone calls from people who, where I'm being put to the first time test with them will say "Well have you done much of this? Have you done much of that?" And then if things get desperate, I'll go out and do it myself, you know, to force the pace. In a way it's understanding it, working out the reasons why prejudices or mindsets are in place and finding a way through it. Tenacity. Humility and tenacity are most important.

Think about where you would like to be in five years' time and start considering how you are going to get there.

The following sites offer further information and career guidance.

**[www.skillset.org/in\\_bus/features](http://www.skillset.org/in_bus/features)**

Career advice and guidance for freelancers

**[www.skillsformedia.com](http://www.skillsformedia.com)**

Careers and training advice for the media industries, helping you get the career you want. It provides information and a telephone advice line, CV and marketing workshops and individual advice sessions with professional media careers advisers. It is open to anyone who wants to get in or get on in the media.

## Research Project 1

Identify the role that you have in your sights. The previous tasks should have assisted you with this. Be as specific as possible – the type of role and the area in which you would like to carry it out – e.g. a producer in Factual Programming.

Once identified, research a programme, product or a company that produces the type of work you aim to be involved in, and then analyse that programme, company or product by focusing on the job or role that you have identified. For example, if you wanted to be a researcher, and the programme you would like to work on was Louis Theroux Meets... then analyse that programme from the point of view of the researcher's job. What is their role? How is it evident in the product? What skills are demonstrated? What experience is required? And finally research the routes through which it is possible to achieve it. Use the web-links for your research and consult the reading list. Compile your research into a 2000 word report that should include:

- Your research into the role
- Your research into a relevant company or product
- An analysis of a programme, company or product and how the role is achieved
- A plan or strategy for achieving your goal.

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## 5. Funding and Training Schemes

*What kind of funding and training schemes are available? What is it for? How will it help you? How to apply?*

There is a surprising amount of public money and funding around to support people at the start of their careers. This can assist you in a number of ways. It can enable you to produce a piece of work outside an educational environment. It forces you to present your work and ideas in a professional and businesslike manner. If a public body invests in you and your ideas it gives you credibility in the eyes of the professional world and for many it opens the door into the industry. The key to success is in doing the research, making contacts, knowing what the organisation is looking for and reading all the published literature. Talk to people to get the emphasis right, be professional, write a proper proposal, don't use the same words and phrases on every application form, follow instructions carefully and find out what drives the funders. Poor research and preparation is often what causes applications to fail. Early funding is often easier outside London where there is less competition. Remember, wanting to make the work is not enough, think about the market, think about the audience.

### Christine

As a company, 'desperate optimists' have been hanging around the public funding scene for quite a long time now. 'desperate optimists' began with a piece of work that actually put us in a position where somebody wanted to offer us a commission, so I suppose in some ways we were really fortunate because we got our first break without really having to look for it. On the strength

of the first piece we made, somebody commissioned our second and once that process starts, you realise you can get your head around the funding circuit really, really quickly. It's a combination between the Arts Council, which is a more central organisation, and then your Regional Arts Board. And the way you tap into funding is directly by finding out what funds are available and applying for them, it's as simple as that, or else indirectly, which is often much more desirable. In other words, somebody else does all the hard work of applying for the money and securing the money and then they use that money to commission you to make work. I suppose over the twelve years that we've been looking for public funding and been successful with it or not successful with it, it has always been a combination of either directly receiving money or indirectly receiving commissions. Maybe I could give a recent example?

One of the first projects we did once we'd made the move from art performance work to the digital technology work that we've been doing over the past three years was a project called Map 50. We applied to the Arts Council's New Media Project Fund to secure funding to make a website, a website that we both curated and contributed work to, and we also commissioned other artists to make work for the website. That project, once it went live in February of last year, attracted a lot of interest, but it also attracted the interest of the LFVDA, which is the London Film and Video Development Agency, and then they approached us to set up another project which they secured the funding for. So you know on the one hand we got public funding to make Map 50, but on the back of that we received funding that somebody else secured to run a project which we devised ourselves, a project called Minute By Minute, which is fantastic when it happens, I mean it doesn't even happen that often, but it's great when somebody says "here's some money, what do you want to do with this?"

**[www.map50.com](http://www.map50.com)**

**[www.minutebyminute.co.uk](http://www.minutebyminute.co.uk)**

Normally you have to be very strategic in thinking how will the funds that are out there and on offer, enable me to make the work that I want to make? And that's the question you are always asking yourself. And if you read the guidelines of a particular fund, and you just can't see how it's going to enable you to do the kind of work that you want to do, I'd say it's best to just leave it, and use your energy to actually find the funds that will enable you to do that work, 'cause it takes a lot of energy to actually put in an application form. Normally they're quite involved and complicated and you really need to feel that the amount of time and energy that you're going to give over to it is ultimately going to be worth it.

## **Graham**

Most of our projects have been directly for clients, so that's museums, corporates, etc. So those have literally been straight jobs, but other than that we have been involved with a number of European-funded projects. These are mostly research and development projects, so looking at the way in which new bits of technology can be developed. Typically most, though not all, European-funded projects are on a 50/50 basis, so that is basically that you can claim back 50 per cent of your effort, and the accounting on those over the years has got tighter and tighter. In the early days it was a situation where those things were fairly vague, now they're much closer and more tightly controlled so they're down to literally what is a person's salary for that day that you've put them down on that project and you get half of it. So they are really quite tightly controlled things, but they are things that allow you the possibility of doing some research and development work, that otherwise you probably couldn't get clients to pay for, but which can enable you to therefore move a piece of technology or an approach forward which you can then use in future projects for other clients etc, So they can be used to develop your abilities in those sorts of ways.

But basically the way those things work is that what you have to do is you have to become part of a consortium that applies for the funding, so you have to be part of a large group of people across Europe, who know one another and know the sort of skill sets that are involved in doing those things. Who will then try to pull together teams for these various things, and these things have got more sophisticated and more complicated as time goes on. There is a possibility that the only projects that will get funded will have over a hundred partners. Now if you think about trying to manage projects of over a hundred partners across Europe, it suddenly restricts the possibility of who could be the managing party in those things. It really means it's got to be one of the very large corporations that are going to be able to sit on the top of those sorts of consortia. But typically what happens is that you pull together a consortium and you write the documents, and writing the documents of course is an art in itself because it has to be done in Euro-speak, and if you don't get it right there's no way you're going to get a project to happen. It helps if the people that you're putting together with the partnership already have a track-record in Europe. A good track-record of actually completing projects, doing good work etc. The more you can pull together people like that, the greater likelihood that the project is going to have success, and very careful reading of what the Commission is currently looking for is really what's required, and then you can get reasonable funding for things.

They are very difficult things to be involved with because they do involve working with people from other cultures and those cultures can have very different attitudes to the way in which certain things are going to happen. Often you can end up with bits of misunderstanding, which then can jeopardise the project and put a project into very difficult situations which then have to be rescued, so they take up an awful lot of management time as opposed to the research and development time that you really wanted to put into them. If the project starts to go astray, the management time just absorbs the budget really, which is kind of frightening, because it then means they've lost their purpose.

## **Kate**

I mean the BBC, things have changed slightly now, but they are really good trainers and I had a fantastic training, very thorough training in the cutting rooms, which was a very technical training, to do with how film works and how to manage film and look after it, as well as learning the creative process, and also in sound editing, so I felt like I was very trained and supported in that area. And then I suppose moving into filmmaking and documentary, it's much more organic and nobody ever tells you what to do, you learn as you go, and I completely skipped research. I didn't learn how to be a researcher, I just went straight into assistant producing and making films, and I never went on a director's course, which is encouraged within the BBC still if you've never made a film they send you on a week's course. I guess there was a huge gap I haven't had much training as such for quite a few years until recently, when I've been on a few scriptwriting/storytelling courses and also series producing, how to be a series producer, which is the next logical step for me to take, particularly if you want to start doing a more team-based leadership role.

If you're working full-time, which I always have done apart from four months when I gave up my staff editing job and had to have a cooling-off period with the BBC to come back, it's a battle, it's a constant battle to develop your own projects, if you want to develop stuff outside of your own workspace, whether it's a film you really want to do just on your own, or a drama or something, and so trying to get the energy and funding, trying to work out how to get funding for that is quite difficult, but there obviously are ways and means of doing it. I don't know...I can't say much more than that because that's not my experience unfortunately.

**For advice and information about relevant funding schemes go to**

**[www.filmcouncil.org.uk/funding](http://www.filmcouncil.org.uk/funding)**

The Film Council now has responsibility for National Lottery Funding. Most public funding for film now flows through this organisation which will incorporate and oversee the activities of the BFI Production Fund, British Screen Finance, Arts Council of England and the British Film Commission – Funding of up to 50% (or 2 million: whichever is lower) towards the cost of making feature films.

**[www.lfvda.demon.co.uk](http://www.lfvda.demon.co.uk)**

The London Film and Video Development Agency provides funding, information, advice and professional support to makers of independent film, video and television in London. Funds include The London Production Fund, East London Film Fund and London Artists Film and Video Awards.

**[www.artscouncil.org.uk/funding](http://www.artscouncil.org.uk/funding)**

The Arts Council is the national body for the arts in England, and distributes public money from Government and the National Lottery to artists and arts organisations, both directly and through the Regional Arts Boards.

**[www.bbc.co.uk/talent](http://www.bbc.co.uk/talent)**

The BBC's scheme for encouraging and supporting new talent in a variety of areas. Check the site to see which schemes are relevant to you.

**[www.bbc.co.uk/arts/shootinglive/whatis](http://www.bbc.co.uk/arts/shootinglive/whatis)**

Shooting Live Artists consists of six artworks commissioned by the BBC and the Arts Council of England. Each of the artworks centres on the use of new digital media alongside live performance.

**[www.ccc-acw.org.uk](http://www.ccc-acw.org.uk)**

The Arts Council of Wales

**[www.sac.org.uk](http://www.sac.org.uk)**

The Scottish Arts Council

**[www.arts.org.uk/directory/regions](http://www.arts.org.uk/directory/regions)**

The site to link you to all the Regional Arts Boards, with information about funding schemes, training and other initiatives in the region in which you are based.

**[www.bfi.org.uk](http://www.bfi.org.uk)**

The BFI Handbook lists all the projects that have received National Lottery Funding as a proportion of their total budget. Reading this can give considerable insight into the type of film that is likely to attract National Lottery Funding

**[www.nesta.org.uk](http://www.nesta.org.uk)**

The National Endowment for Science, Technology and the Arts is the UK's only National Endowment. Its task is to support and encourage brilliant people and their ideas and help them fulfil their potential. They aim to force a crossing of the old boundaries between science, technology and the arts, and they focus on individuals and ideas rather than organisations.

**For advice and information about relevant training schemes go to**

**[www.skillset.org/funding/features](http://www.skillset.org/funding/features)**

The Skills Investment Fund nurtures new talent and supports the strategic development of existing practitioners, to provide essential support to freelancers, encouraging individuals to gain professional qualifications.

**[www.skillset.org.uk](http://www.skillset.org.uk)**

Skillset is the National Training organisation for broadcast, film, video, and multimedia and exists to encourage the delivery of informed training and education. The site includes lots of useful information on conferences, training days and job fairs. Seeks and channels investment to the UK's best training providers to support affordable quality training for freelancers.

**[www.ft2.org.uk](http://www.ft2.org.uk)**

FT2 Film and Television training is the leading training provider for people who wish to become freelance assistants in the construction, production and technical areas of the UK's film and television industry.

**[www.black-coral.com/courses2.html](http://www.black-coral.com/courses2.html)**

Blaze the Trail offers a wide variety programmes aimed at people wanting to break into the film and TV industry, industry professionals wanting to upgrade their skills and young people who want to gain practical knowledge and experience.

Investing in further training will develop your skills and will also allow you to meet other people who are working in the industry.

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## **6. Commissioning**

*Channels to go through, how to present your ideas.*

If you are aiming to be a film or programme maker or a producer, you will be wanting the opportunity to get your programme ideas away, and also to be employed as the producer or director on the project. There are various channels to go through, and if you have good ideas and can express them clearly and effectively in an appropriate manner, then you will stand a better chance of seeing your idea come to fruition. Most TV channels will only accept ideas that come through a production company, so you will need to build relationships and contacts (even if you have your own company, relationships and contacts are vital). You will need to build a track-record. And ideally your idea will be one that nobody else can offer, for example because you have access to people or situations that are unique and that only you can provide. This section gives examples of ways to approach the commissioning process. At the end of the section you will find an assignment that will require you to produce a proposal in the appropriate format for



submission to a broadcaster, or an application to a funding body.

## Victoria

All the time I'm working and looking for work, I'm thinking of ideas for programmes, and when I get the time, which isn't very often at the moment, I write my own programme ideas, and I try and put those ideas in to the companies I'm working for because it shows commitment to that company as well, and they like it. It's very hard to get an idea commissioned by yourself. Channels really don't want ideas that have been knocked up in someone's front room. They like the ideas to come through established production companies, and so I do put ideas in and they do go through for commissioning. It is however a very difficult process and so few programmes really get commissioned, so I do work at that as well, and that's something I'd like to spend more time on.

## Sarah

It's difficult. I mean how we deal with clients and with describing a job so therefore what they want from us, what we're going to deliver. We usually have, based on sort of discussions with them, we have almost like an A4 page that describes what we're going to do and what they're going to get and how it's going to be delivered and if it is at all a complicated job, a contract is drawn up based on that.

## Kate

Well working for a major broadcaster, who's actually had to sharpen up its own act over the years really, to be competitive, although it is still a public service broadcaster, you have to know what the controllers want and how they're viewing their market. Because it is a market, there's a lot of different stations out there now and a lot of viewers, and so they're constantly looking at the sort of programmes they think they want. They're not always right, but it's a combination of knowing your market and what the people, the commissioning editors, want, whether it's inside or outside, you know, it's Channel 4, whatever. And also trying to push creatively, the things that you feel passionate about and care about and think you'd like to make films about and tell people about. And the two don't always marry up, but if you have a cracking idea, you should just pursue it, and I suppose it's taken me a long time to realise, and it's a kind of big mistake, that actually a really good idea can be written on the back of an envelope and sold. And if you can't sum up a programme in a line, if you don't know what it's about, and you can't enthuse somebody in one or two lines, then forget it, move on and do something else, because that's how it is.

I think particularly in the independent sector, they put a huge amount of time and effort into developing proposals fully and properly, whereas because we're actually inside a corporation, a side of paper will sometimes do, because you've got somebody who can go to the controllers direct and sell it. It's a little bit more short-circuited, but you still have to pitch, and pitching's a really big part of people's jobs, the higher you go up, selling programmes really, I mean that's what executive producers do, series producers into executive producers. I mean it literally is like a sales pitch really, selling programmes. Some people are very good at it and others aren't, but the germ of the idea comes, obviously comes from an individual at the time.

I think find a sympathetic ear or person that you admire, or filmmaker or company that you would feel happy to take your ideas to - and that you would trust, because a lot of ideas are still pilfered, or copied - and pursue them. The whole TV and film industry runs on ideas, so if you've got good ideas you're half way there, you just need to try and find an avenue by which to make them happen.

## Vin

I was a freelance. In fact, it was a partnership, myself and my wife. And my wife basically ran the admin, extra to her other part time job, and I did the consultancy and the freelance researching and producing. But for programme ideas I would go through other companies. If you're a freelance and you've got programme ideas, you want to get them away, you want them to be made into programmes, and of course it's how you earn your living. It's about earning a living, it's about making money, and it is difficult if you're freelance to get your ideas away and I think if you interviewed any freelance, anyone in the business really, they'd all have slightly different approaches, different perspectives.

The first idea that came about for me as a freelance, was a half-hour documentary for regional television, regional BBC in the North East of England. The BBC is required to put a proportion of its programmes out to independents and that includes the regions as well as network. And the way that the BBC operated in the North East of England in the mid `90s, I can't speak for it now, was to put a circular around to local freelances and local independent companies, and they were looking for ideas for Close Up North, their regional documentary spot. I had an idea, which was the Christian Channel Europe; a new satellite Christian broadcasting company had come to use some derelict premises in Gateshead, in the region. I had got some contacts with the people there, and felt I could get a documentary away. But being a freelance I was too small, my business was too small, so I went through another production company, and the companies I've tended to go through were Light Years Films, and on this particular case, a company called Studio Arts Television.

I'm on good personal terms with Trevor Hearing, who's the Managing Director of Studio Arts, I worked with him when I was working full-time for a broadcaster, we stayed in touch, so I was able to pick up the phone and say "Trevor, look, I've got this idea, I think it's worth putting in" so the pitch, if you like, to the production company, was done over the phone. Then we met together to work on the pitch to the BBC, using the sort of language that they would have wanted, and well what were the selling points? The selling points were, it was here, we'd got an 'in', we could deliver it to them, and they knew they couldn't get it themselves and they tried to get it and they couldn't get spoken to directly, so we got in.

They put the proposal into the BBC, with my name attached to it. I'd done a deal with them that if it was commissioned, I would work on it and get paid for my work, but I would also get a proportion of the production fee, so we agreed that before we went on. It was commissioned, and Studio Arts made the programme. I produced it and I got a proportion of the production fee. One of the difficulties in that particular commission was the BBC has a very strong editorial control. They couldn't have got the documentary without our 'in' to the Christian Channel Europe. The Christian Channel Europe would not have dealt directly with the BBC, so the BBC needed us to get in to make the programme, but the BBC insisted that we conformed to their editorial structure and their programming structure, so we had to use their presenter, who was effectively monitoring us and putting pressure on us to get certain questions asked for their news agenda. Now, we coped with that and did that. So it wasn't easy but we got it away, and I earned part of my income for that year out of that particular proposal.

Ultimately when you're pitching, you're selling an idea and you're selling it in a particular market. I've talked a little bit about the Christian Channel Europe. We'd got the 'in' and the BBC couldn't get it. So we'd got something that they wanted. An example I use elsewhere is if you've got an interview with Lord Lucan, that's your selling point, you don't need anything else. If you've got it and you can deliver it, that's it, you're made. But it might be that it's not such a dramatic or sensational idea as that, but if you're with a production company, or are a production company that's got a good track record, the broadcaster knows that you deliver on time, on budget, saying

on the screen what you've said in words and on paper, right at the beginning. If you can do that, then that's your selling point, you're reliable, you'll deliver, so I'd say those are the two main things. Have you got a track record? Or have you got an idea that only you can provide them with, that they want so much they're going to have to take it from you. Mind you, there are grey areas around that, and in fact I could move on with... with another example.

The three examples are all with Studio Arts Television, and the reason for those three is they're the most recent. There are other companies that I've worked with in the '90s, but they were earlier in the '90s, and I would also have to say that things do change. I'm talking about a regional broadcasting culture, which has changed, since I left the region in the late '90s and is changing again now, particularly in ITV, where regional companies are not required to provide as much regional documentary and cultural programming, there is a time of change. Another idea I want to talk about, again with Studio Arts Television, and probably the most recent of the ideas was, through an academic contact I had, I came up with the idea of a Nostradamus Night for Channel 4. An academic acquaintance who works in areas of popular culture and popular medicine, he'd done some work on Nostradamus and Nostradamus predicted that the world was going to come to an end on the night of July 3<sup>rd</sup>, 1999. I talked again to Studio Arts and said why don't we put forward, to Channel 4 the idea of a Nostradamus Night, and the idea in discussion, over a cup of coffee was the night would begin with looking in documentary at Nostradamus, perhaps a feature film, there are a couple of feature films about Nostradamus, and looking through factual programming at Nostradamus and his predictions, and then at midnight when the world didn't end, because we were pretty sure it wouldn't end at midnight on July 3<sup>rd</sup>, we would then go in to a late night comedy programme, rubbishing everything about Nostradamus. We pulled that together and put it to Channel 4, so the idea came from my academic contact, who was happy for us to develop the idea in this particular way, and he was on board. His name was attached to the proposal, me and Studio Arts Television, headed up by Trevor Hearing, who's the Managing Director and would direct and manage the project. So we were all there. It went to Channel 4 and Channel 4 were very interested, very excited. The problem was that Studio Arts Television is a very small regional company and had no track record with Channel 4. What happened then was, Channel 4 took the idea, allowed other companies, big companies like Roger Bolton Productions, to make some of the big stuff and let Studio Arts Television do some of the smaller stuff. Now, you then get into a very difficult area. Now Studio Arts and I would say it was right for me and it was right for Studio Arts Television, because they'd got the idea, they built up the track record, they hadn't got the track record previously with Channel 4, so Channel 4 couldn't rely on them providing an entire night with a six figure budget. But Studio Arts got a good five figure sum out of Channel 4, so it was compromise, a great deal of compromise, but that was another perspective on getting an idea away.

The third example, I'm going back regional again, and again, how did this idea come up? In the early '90s I'd done an interview with John Nichol, with another company, for another production, for another business, this is in the early '90s. John Nichol was the Navigator on the RAF Tornado that was shot down during the Gulf War and John Nichol was taken prisoner and was featured on television as a hostage. When he came back and was interviewed, he interviewed well, he looked good on television, he sounded good. A few years later he took retirement from the RAF and was looking to develop his career as a writer and in the media, he came up with an idea of he, John Nichol, as interviewer/presenter, having a series of programmes called Survivors, in which he, John Nichol, as a survivor of this crash and imprisonment by the Saddam Hussain regime, interviewed other survivors, and I obviously knew him professionally. He talked to me about the idea. I thought it was an idea that would appeal to Tyne Tees Television, the regional commercial licence holder. Again, I went through Studio Arts Television, because they were bigger than I was, so you can see that my freelance career was about brokering ideas very much, and we put that idea to Tyne Tees Television. Very, very, very simple format, studio interview, one plus one, a little introduction on archive and library film to give the background of the story of the interviewee,

and then half hour interview shot as for live, or recorded as for live. We did do two, three, four programmes in a day, and it was very cost-effective production and Tyne Tees Television liked it. The idea came to me and went into the company I was working with and then we presented it to, to Tyne Tees Television and it was commissioned. Obviously production companies get ideas away in different ways, like for instance, Studio Arts gets its ideas from other sources, not just me and so there are other people playing that game, and that's fine. If you're asking for advice on this, my background is researcher/producer, not director so I'm looking to broker my ideas in that way, push them forward in that way. That works for me. It may not work for others. Hard, tight association with a production company, directing the programmes, on location for instance, may be another way forward for other individuals.

The way in which broadcasters and commissioning editors and channels accept ideas changes all the time and I think it's becoming more formalised. Go to the websites for Channel 4, for the BBC, for regional television for ideas. They need ideas, they want ideas, and they get ideas. The first requirement is to come up with the ideas. The next requirement is to present them in the way that the company wants, so for instance, if you come up with an idea that's going to be very appropriate on the adult channel, you don't put it to the children's channel, you have to research those things first and you don't put up an idea for a programme the type of which they're already putting on, because that shows your ignorance of what they're doing. What you're wanting to do is to look carefully at what they're doing, work out what they want, find out what they want and then give them examples of what you think they want from the research that you've got. So channels probably, but do check this, will be looking for a side of A4 which begins with a sentence of what the idea is. If they're not grabbed by the first sentence, then they're very often not going to read beyond that. So it's got to be an idea they want and that you can present well, simply and crisply. That's your 'in'. You then need to obviously have got behind that, some more development, and probably behind that some idea of the budget, how much it's going to cost, because there will come a point when they'll ask that. But if you haven't grabbed them in the first five minutes, you're not going to get them at all, and things are going to develop from that. But I would say if people are beginning to do this, you mustn't become too protective of your ideas and you mustn't be too prescriptive. It's a buyer's market. There's over-capacity in the industry so it's not a seller's market, so if you get things wrong in any way, you pitch something to the wrong company, you pitch the idea, if it's in the wrong way, it's simply not going to get commissioned.

**The following links provide detailed information and guidelines for writing and submitting proposals. Use them to complete the assignment**

**[www.4producers.co.uk](http://www.4producers.co.uk)**

Channel Four's extremely useful and thorough guidelines to the Proposal Process and their requirements for commissioning.

**[www.bbc.co.uk/commissioning](http://www.bbc.co.uk/commissioning)**

The BBC's guide for programme makers, encompassing structure, strategy, programming needs, pitching an idea and who to contact.

**[www.pact.co.uk](http://www.pact.co.uk)**

The PACT Directory of Independent Producers is available from the website.

**The rest ...**

[www.angliatv.co.uk](http://www.angliatv.co.uk)

[www.border-tv.com](http://www.border-tv.com)

[www.carlton.com](http://www.carlton.com)

[www.centra1tv.co.uk](http://www.centra1tv.co.uk)

[www.discovery.com](http://www.discovery.com)

[www.htv.co.uk](http://www.htv.co.uk)

[www.itn.co.uk](http://www.itn.co.uk)

[www.itv.co.uk](http://www.itv.co.uk)

[www.meridian1tv.co.uk](http://www.meridian1tv.co.uk)

[www.s4c.co.uk](http://www.s4c.co.uk)

[www.scottishtv.co.uk](http://www.scottishtv.co.uk)

[www.sky.com](http://www.sky.com)

## Research Project 2

Research and develop an idea for either

- a) A proposal and application for funding, or
- b) A proposal for presentation to a production company.

Using the links available in the Funding and Commissioning sections of the learning materials, research the organisation that best suits the requirements of your final project. When you have identified an appropriate funding body and scheme or the most relevant Television Channel and department, research the application process and the company or organisation's requirements and guidelines for submissions. Following their guidelines, go through the process of writing and presenting your ideas to their requirements. Compile your research into a 2000 word report that will include.

- A short paragraph outlining your initial idea.
- Documentation of your research into appropriate funders, schemes, companies, channels etc.
- A rationale for your final choice of funding scheme/production company/TV channel.
- A completed application or proposal submitted in the appropriate format.

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## 7. Developing Contacts and Networks

*Where and how do you get your work? All about getting known and finding work.*

The most common method used by freelancers and small companies to obtain work is through contacts with colleagues, friends and previous employers/customers. Almost half say that they heard about their current or most recent job via someone with whom they had previously worked and over one third say that they got the job directly from the employer or customer. To be a successful freelance or to run a successful small business, you will need to be well organised and keep records and lists of contacts. It is a contacts business; if nobody knows you and/or your company exist you will not be offered work. Once people know about the skills, knowledge and experience you have to offer, they are more likely to consider you seriously for a job or commission. The media, the arts and related activities are almost invariably a collaborative process, and teams tend to be made up of people that already know each other. Keep in touch with other people you have worked and/or studied with, take work experience or unpaid or low-paid runner-type jobs: you will gain experience and build up contacts. Investing in further training will develop your skills and you will meet other people who are working in the industry.

## Victoria

There's a number of ways that I find work. The most successful way that I find work is through friends who work within the industry, who know me, who know my skills, who know my interests, and they approach me for work, or I'll ring them and say "have you got anything going?" I've got friends as well that I look out for work for, and who I employ as well. So that's the best way, as far as I'm concerned, that's what works for me at the moment. There are other ways, I also look in The Guardian for work, there's the BBC website where I look for work, there's also the trade magazine Broadcast where I look for work, and there's a website which also has production jobs on, and there's a production database as well which you have to pay and they put your CV on and companies dip into it, which I haven't had to do yet, but I think I might have to do fairly soon.

## Kate

Trying to develop your contacts, your networks. When I was in the cutting rooms, there was a guy who I just really admired as a filmmaker, documentary maker and I was, you know, just a trainee assistant film editor and I sort of watched him and listened to him. And then when 10 x 10 came up, I thought right, I'm going to give him an idea, 'cause he was actually partly responsible for running that, and very kindly, just kind of recognised that I could make a film and just kept me in tow really, so when a couple of films that he thought I would be suitable for he gave me a break. I sort of did it very logically. I made a ten-minute film and then I was allowed to make a twenty-minute film, and then a thirty-minute film and then a fifty-minute film, which at the time, probably seemed a bit plonky, but actually it was brilliant because you don't run before you can walk. There's been a few people like that, you just really admire them and just think I'd really like to take my ideas to them, and if they're worth their salt, and you've got good ideas, you know, that combination should bear some kind of fruit, hopefully.

Well there's a saying, I remember thinking I wonder if that's true, and it is, it really is. "You're only as good as your last job", and you constantly have to keep that in the back of your mind, because although you might be on a six-month or year contract, if you cock up, people really remember it, and I've always worked on the premise that you just obviously do the best to your ability and that's what gets you into the next slot really. So the way that I've always got jobs is by slowly building up a reputation and either being asked to do things, or selling my own ideas through the BBC, which obviously the ideas belong to them, but you then get to work on them. So, within that you build up the way you're perceived, people look at you and think well you're good at this, you're good at that. And a couple of examples; eighteen months ago I worked for Comic Relief, who actually, it's like having a client, it's a very unique relationship. They work with the BBC or the BBC makes their documentaries for Red Nose Day, for fundraising and awareness-raising. I got

asked to make a film about Rwanda and the Widows of the Genocide. I got asked to do that because I suppose I've been put into quite sensitive situations with presenters before, and so they just thought she'd be really good at that, and so you get asked to do things specifically for your skills. Also looking for very different projects, I heard about a really big environmental project a few years ago, which was going to be about the future of the planet, but working with the Natural History Unit. So I just pursued that, found out who was going to be doing it, went to see them, sowed the seed that I'd really like to do that, and could probably give them some new skills, because a lot of it was going to be sync directing. Trying to work in a slightly different way, it wasn't all Natural History and it was presented by David Attenborough, who I'd always wanted to work with. So you just have to look forward the whole time and look what's coming up, where you can fit into, the sort of work that might be wanted or demanded really.

## **Graham**

Well mostly, over the time when we were running Art of Memory, it was almost always by word of mouth in some sort of way. And we recognised that certainly in the early days it was a lot to do with me doing things like speaking at conferences for instance, and just getting reasonably well known on that sort of circuit. A lot of our connections in the museum world came through personal contacts, but ending up in a situation where we did something called The Story of Glass for the Victoria and Albert Museum. And once you've got a piece of work in a major international museum, then the possibility of other people seeing it and it being referenced etc. you suddenly discover that this is a recommended thing for people to go and look at and use as a reference for the way that you should approach these things. That inevitably gives you a sort of credibility, and the other thing that I think is really quite important is personal reputation. One of the things I think we pride ourselves on is actually you have to talk to people. I know it sounds daft, but it's really, really important. So for most people whose main area of operation is not the technology, but who are actually involved with a particular topic area or whatever, they don't want to know what the technology is about etc. They just want to know how they're going to be able to articulate their area of operation in this new way. So to actually be able to talk to people about this, and to enable that to happen, is one of the key things. Having a reputation for being able to talk about it is one of the things that enables you to get further pieces of work. And certainly in the museum world, the small museum world, our reputation has tended to be very much on that sort of basis. We're the sort of people that people in museums can talk to. We won't sit there and talk technology at them and have them confused with the number of acronyms that we'll use. They actually know that we're concerned about the sort of stuff they have, and making this exciting and interesting and available to more members of the public. Once you get to that point, it's a different sort of game, and certainly from my point of view, I've personally been a lecturer for years, it comes out very much about basics of, how can one tease interesting things out of some circumstances to enable somebody else to understand something more, and grow with it.

## **Christine**

You make a piece of work that people really like, and you make sure at that stage that you get as many people to see the work as possible. You specifically make sure that people who can help you in future get to see the work, whether it's people who can be real supporters of your work, like a curator or a programmer, or also your peers, like other artists who might really be able to help you in the future. You also make sure the people who could possibly fund you in the future get to see the work. In a way you should never miss the opportunity to try and exploit your work so that it can lay foundations for being able to make more work in the future. That's all you ever have, all you have is the work that you make, is what I'm trying to say I suppose.

I think ultimately the way the funding systems work, it forces people, artists, to have a relationship to geography. However, ultimately you need to build relationships with the institutions, and if

you're going to survive on money that you've secured through public funding, you absolutely have to set up those relationships. And they're worth setting up and they're worth nurturing, so you have to commit yourself to a place and that's a totally personal decision. It could also be a decision that you make because of pragmatics, you might go to a particular region because they support New Media work more than other regions. But for working with digital technology I think that London is also quite an obvious place to end up living in, because you know, the scene is quite developed, particularly in the commercial sector and that spills over into the kind of art work that's generated as well.

The other thing is that this is partly how this whole area works, if we commission somebody to make a piece of work for us, we're giving them work and it's all swings and roundabouts, people will throw work your way and there is a real kind of informal network which is I suppose how most people survive in this as artists. Through the relationships that they have with fellow artists and the way that people can actually help each other to get work. I mean we still do that as much as we can and a lot of the work that we've been doing over the past few years has always had a curatorial aspect to it as well, or we've really taken on the role not only as artists, but also producers and curators of pieces of work that involve opportunities to give other people the chance to make work.

## **Mike**

How do I get my work? Primarily, I get my work for television on the basis of things that people have seen that I've done. But these days I probably do, for lots of reasons, less documentary work than I might have been doing, or I was doing five or ten years ago. There are reasons for that, but certainly when I was in the thick of all that, I for example, would be recommended for three or four programmes within the Cutting Edge strand. And I then at one stage got to shoot a Secret History, so another producer seeing that Secret History decided that there was something they liked about my style, my approach, content etc., very often indefinable things, intangible things.

I think on this question about how you get work, you know, I've been a cinematographer for about twenty seven years now, so of course when I was turned down, despite the Director wanting me for a first film drama, I found myself having to prove that I was capable of it. In the end I didn't get the job, and I didn't get the next job, the next time it happened. In my case I met a Producer/Director who joy of joys, didn't see things that I'd done and the way I shot documentaries as a retrograde thing at all. He saw it as something that he wanted to encapsulate, and wanted to use and mould for his purposes.

You know, the person starting out, who, after six months, may be doing fairly routine/mundane things, says "Well look, I've written a piece and you know, I'd really like to try and make this", everybody in the room, in the environment will pay them immediate attention because what they will read is that this person has enthusiasm, has drive and probably even a very good idea, and that person will find that the response to that in most cases will be absolutely positive, that they will be able to loan pieces of equipment, the people will volunteer to do things, that the company they're with will grant facilities and what have you, so it goes back to this thing about drive, enthusiasm, commitment. You are as a freelance, even if you're doing something mundane or treading water, you are ultimately in control of your own destiny and how you are to people, and how you're seen to be, and your enthusiasm and your invention are all in your control.

When just starting out there are a number of ways you can go about developing your network of contacts. Make contact with people already established, attend talks and conferences, ask advice and build up a picture of what the work really entails. There are numerous organisations that can provide you with the opportunity to meet people working in the media and the arts. Also, if you are



a full-time student, enter student competitions and awards: many successful entrants to the film and commercials sectors have been cherry-picked at student festivals.

And don't be over-ambitious when approaching potential employers for a first job. Many smaller companies prefer people to prove themselves in a junior capacity, involving long hours and low pay, for say 6 months to allow time for the company to decide if they want you to join their team. One of the biggest complaints is that media graduates believe they are qualified as film or programme makers just by doing the course.

Organisations and resources that can provide you with networking opportunities:

**[www.m4media.net](http://www.m4media.net)**

An on-line network agency, m4media provides a regular information service on all that is happening within the film and television industries, as well as providing a support network for freelancers and production companies, big and small.

**[www.exposure.co.uk/contacts](http://www.exposure.co.uk/contacts)**

Provides comprehensive listings, information and contacts for UK festivals and competitions, as well as information about funding and development schemes plus some international festivals too.

**[www.britfilm.com/festivals/browse/](http://www.britfilm.com/festivals/browse/)**

A directory of International Film and Video Festivals

**[www.geit.co.uk](http://www.geit.co.uk)**

The Guardian Edinburgh International Television Festival, includes debating sessions, master-classes and social events.

**[www.rlff.com](http://www.rlff.com)**

The Regus London Film Festival actively welcomes filmmakers to submit their work for consideration; this site contains all the information about the festival, and how to enter.

**[www.pact.co.uk](http://www.pact.co.uk)**

The Producers Alliance for Cinema and Television is the trade association representing independent television, feature films, animation and new media production companies, and it aims to encourage the development of new production companies and producers. The PACT Directory of Independent Producers is available from the website.

**[www.npa.org.uk](http://www.npa.org.uk)**

The New Producers Alliance is a membership organisation for new independent producers. It provides access to contacts, information and advice regarding film production, and a forum and focus for over 800 members, ranging from film students and first-timers to experienced feature film makers and major production companies. The site also includes a series of web-casts, including one about the Film Council's Development Fund.

### **[www.firstfilm.co.uk](http://www.firstfilm.co.uk)**

The First Film Foundation is a charity that exists to help British writers, producers and directors to make their first feature film. By providing a range of high-quality educational and promotional programmes, the Foundation aims to give filmmakers the contacts, knowledge and experience they need to achieve their goal. It also has 3 funding schemes and a prize.

### **[www.mediadesk.co.uk](http://www.mediadesk.co.uk)**

MEDIA is a 5 year programme of the European Union to strengthen the competitiveness of the European film, TV and New Media industries. MEDIA Plus supports professional training in screenwriting, business and new technologies, project development and the distribution and promotion of European work. Individuals may also benefit from subsidised places on training courses and international marketing.

### **[www.bima.co.uk](http://www.bima.co.uk)**

The British Interactive Multimedia Association is the trade association representing the interactive media industries and aims to provide networking opportunities, guidance and information through its activities and initiatives, including awards, meetings, seminars, conferences and publications.

### **[www.bksts.com](http://www.bksts.com)**

The Moving Image Society. As well as meetings, presentations, seminars and international exhibitions and conferences the society also organises a programme of training courses, lectures and workshops, special events and evening meetings.

### **[www.bafta.org](http://www.bafta.org)**

The British Academy of Film and Television Arts. Famous for its high-profile awards, BAFTA is a membership organisation running events etc.

### **[www.rts.org.uk](http://www.rts.org.uk)**

The Royal Television Society is dedicated to bringing together individuals from all parts of the industry to exchange ideas, debate topical issues and to provide a forum for networking. The RTS organises lectures, workshops and award ceremonies.

### **[www.jobs.guardian.co.uk/media](http://www.jobs.guardian.co.uk/media)**

Jobs Unlimited, the Guardian's media recruitment pages.

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## **8. Promoting your Work**

*Making people aware of what you do, marketing, publicity etc.*

No one will give you work if they don't know what you do or that you exist. This means making direct approaches and proving and showing what you can do, rather than just saying that you can do it. Building a track-record, producing a showreel, contacting people, sending out CV's, finding

out about opportunities and being ready to take them. Many people find this difficult and off-putting; you will have to accept responsibility for generating your own work.

### **Graham**

It is a very interesting problem because obviously over the years we've had quite a number of people approach us in various sorts of ways, and trying to work out how you actually react to some people and you don't react to others is quite difficult. I must say that I think in the end, personal contact is by far the best way of doing these things. It's fine somebody sending you a letter or phoning you up and saying please look at the website or do whatever. If you're very busy and mostly you tend to be if you're doing this sort of work, you just don't have time. You just end up not seeing the things, not following it through, feeling bad you didn't follow it through, etc. Whereas if somebody can in some way, meet you and talk about what they're doing, or you come across their work in some sort of way, then it's much more likely that you're going to respond. In the very early days when we did start taking people on, they were people that we'd worked with in other circumstances as freelancers. Or they've been part of something else and we've worked with them.

### **Sarah**

The very important way that you've always kept in contact with people and then have employed people on whatever basis has been your educational roots, and I think that's actually an important one, because any educational institute that works in this area is bound to have contacts into the industry. And certainly from our point of employing people, that has always been the best route, and I suspect the other way round of people actually looking for work, to actually use all the contacts you've got in an educational environment, and get their contacts through to the industry, to go to the shows, talk to people.

### **Graham**

I think that is important, and you always forget the obvious in lots of ways. Because I ran the postgraduate course in Coventry and the course at the Royal College, you have a lot of contact with postgraduate students anyway, and then I've been external examiner on a lot of courses so that I've got a fairly good picture of what courses there are out there, what sort of graduate students there are coming out, and you know that if you phone up somebody who runs one of those courses and say "Hey, have you got some graduates coming out now who are into this sort of work?", that would be a good way to get to them, and the reverse of that is true. That if somebody comes to me and says well I completed the MA in Digital Interactive Media at Middlesex, two years ago, and since then I've been working freelance doing so and so, my immediate reaction would be "probably kind of interesting" because I know that course well enough, the same thing would certainly be true. There's a number of places that you would immediately react in those sorts of ways so that, and it's the awful thing, but it's absolutely true, that the best courses are the places where you're put in touch with the most people. The reason why somewhere like the RCA does so well is because it actually puts people in touch with lots of other people, and it gives that contact, and that resource is enormous from my point of view. Certainly visiting shows and things, it's difficult because you don't always have time to get to the shows, but actually to go and see work at shows, if you see something that's outstanding you tend to remember it. I think students often don't realise quite how important getting a show of some sort is.

### **Sarah**

But a lot of universities are doing combined shows in London and that actually, for us as

employers, is a very good way to see work. Because if you can go to a show where you would actually see the work from about five or six colleges together, it's a very useful way to get an idea of what's going on and what university's producing what work.

## **Graham**

And it is the thing then about very simple stuff. If students have actually produced business cards, postcards or whatever that you can take away with you so that you don't forget what that person's name was, and just sit there thinking "Oh it's great that piece of work, I just can't remember who it was". It's those sorts of things that make an enormous difference. Very basic stuff, but really, really important.

## **Victoria**

I guess the way my work is promoted is the fact that it's on the television and if you work on a high profile series like Police, Camera, Action! or a flagship series for Channel 4, like Anatomy of Disgust, basically you just need to put it on your CV, because people will have seen it, so they'll know your work. However, I'm in an interesting situation at the moment because the work that I'm doing is only for a Scottish audience: if I want to find a job in London no-one will have seen the work that I've done in the last six months, so that's going to be quite difficult actually. My work isn't getting the exposure, and it's the first time I've really done a regional series as well, so I'm used to people knowing the programmes I'm working on and next time I go to find a job, they won't. So that could be difficult.

I mean there are other ways of promoting your work. Lots of people have a showreel, so a director would have a show reel, a cameraman would have a show reel, and I probably should have a show reel, however I don't at the moment...I mean I've worked in offices and so many showreels come in and actually very few of them are ever watched, so I don't think it's that valuable for me as a producer. If however, I was solely directing or I was a cameraman, then a showreel would be important, very important.

One of the skills which I think is very important is to be able to use a DV-Cam, and to be able to put together short films or short packages, because...you know, from junior jobs in the television world, the researchers are expected to go out with a little camera and make their own films and I think it's very valuable, for a number of reasons. One, for content, two for...seeing how pictures work, and it stands you in good stead really, you've got a skill there which you can carry on through, and I think it's invaluable, if people think they can trust you with a camera and send you out to make a small package, you'll be well on your way, you really will. You know, a small factual film about something, a story, with a narrative, and to edit it, you could use that, you could send that to a potential employer with your CV as well, just to show what you can do really, and how you think.

## **Kate**

Trying to promote yourself, I've seen it in a very divided way. I've always thought there are those who are great salesmen really and just very outward-going and just very good at blowing their own trumpet really, which does help, but I'm not one of those people. I'm amazed I've ever got where I am because I'm quite quiet and I'm not very good at pushing myself in front of others, so...I guess I've done it on reputation really, quiet reputation and one of the most exciting things about working for somebody like the BBC, is that millions of people see your work, so there's also a lot of people in a big corporation that see your work, and also outside, you get people outside asking you to do things because they've seen a film that you do, so that's my only understanding

of it really. Other people operate in different ways.

## Mike

How do you get your work? A number of different ways. One of the ways really is in line with the notion that it's not what you say you can do, but what you're seen to do. Many people, including myself, take time out to make their own programme, their own film. These are instant calling cards along the way and an idea well executed, can be three hours long, or it can be thirty seconds long.

## Christine

Well you know it's impossible to avoid in the work, the requirement of marketing, publicising the work because, you make the work for people to engage with the work, and you've got to let people know that the work is happening and that becomes more and more important. It's not even about people seeing your work, it's really about people knowing that you're making work, because you'll have an audience for the work, absolutely, but there also needs to be a much bigger group of people who know that it's happening, even if they never get to see the work, because how do you build a company? You build a company; you build a body of work as well, through the process of publicising the work. It changes depending on the kind of work that you make, but there are some really clear things that you do. You produce publicity leaflets, you have a mailing list that you build up over the years, and you get much more specific about the mailing list in terms of the categories, so that, you don't just send a whole load of stuff off to everyone on your mailing list, it depends on what the work is, and the kind of work that it is, so you use a mailing list in that way. But also you send out press releases, you try and build up a good list of contacts of journalists. You find out who's written about your work before and make sure that they know about new work. One of the things that's completely changed the way we publicise our work is the Internet, and using e-mails, sending out stuff to mailing lists, to various groups as well, so you think about the audience, as an international audience and most of the projects that we've done over the past few years, even if they haven't been web-based projects, have been accompanied by a website, so you know, that's how you let a much bigger group of people know that the work exists, so it has an on-line element to it, so even if people can't see the work, they will at least see an archive or a document of the work.

And we have a website. I mean it's so easy in some ways to put a very basic website together which is like an on-line CV, and you can also use that website to direct people to other work and have an updateable CV that people can access really easily. It's completely made the whole area for us an awful lot more efficient so you have to use it, you really should be using it, it's an amazing resource and it does make life an awful lot easier, so it's there to be taken advantage of.

[www.desperateoptimists.com](http://www.desperateoptimists.com)

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## 9. Business Skills

*What kind of business? How to organise the day-to-day business of being self-employed or running a small business: tax, bookkeeping, cashflow, VAT, and financial planning.*

Being a freelance, being self-employed, setting up a small business, what does this all mean to you, embarking on a creative career in the creative industries? There are three broad categories of employment contract in the creative industries.

**Staff jobs** – these are permanent jobs, with an annual salary, sick pay, pension, holidays.

**Fixed-term contracts** - these are of several kinds: for the anticipated duration of a particular project; for covering permanent staff members' holiday, sickness, maternity leave, etc, without reference to any specific project; to cover a "bulge" in the employing company's activities; and so on. Contracts of this kind may carry all the benefits of staff employment, for a short-term engagement, or they may carry few or none. They may contain provisions for renewal, or they may not. People with the skills and experience that allow them to work on a variety of projects, perhaps several at a time, are the most likely to be on renewable contracts - e.g. presenters, producers, researchers.

**Freelance** – You are probably self-employed and responsible for your own tax, National Insurance and pension. There is no security, you will need to find your own work and negotiate your daily, weekly or monthly rate that could be very high or very low depending on reputation and experience.

The majority of people working in production areas will be working on fixed-term contracts or as freelancers, which for tax and legal purposes means that they may be classed as self-employed – equivalent to a small business. Many creative people tend to find it difficult to manage this aspect of their work. You need to develop skills in administration, including record keeping, effective time-management and managing a diary. You will need to ensure you make the relevant tax, National Insurance and VAT contributions. You will be negotiating fees, invoicing, paying bills, chasing unpaid invoices, managing cashflow and balancing costs against payment delays. Developing a good relationship with your bank, getting the right advice early on and developing a well-structured Business Plan, however small your business, will all enable you to manage this area successfully.

Much of the last paragraph applies equally to a fourth type of contract: the commission from a funder (a broadcaster, perhaps) to a small company to produce a piece of work for it (a programme, perhaps). If you are earning most of your living as a freelance or through your own company, you will need professional advisors; for example:

- **Accountant** – book-keeping, setting up accounting systems, managing cash, helping to raise finance, preparing tax returns & VAT, preparing business plans, budgets, forecasts, whether you should be a Sole Trader, a Partnership or form a Limited Company.
- **Bank** - will have specialist services and advisers, a range of financial facilities including loans. Keep your personal and business accounts separate.
- **Solicitor** – preferably a specialist in your type of business, to give advice on whether to set up your business as a Sole Trader, a Partnership or a Limited Company, to check out the contracts that you obtain for work and/or commissions, and to advise you generally on employment law, intellectual property (copyright) law, such matters as forming companies and drawing up partnership agreements and many other things.

## **Victoria**

I've been self-employed, sorting out my own tax for a year now, and it is a bit daunting actually, I've got a lot of receipts and I'm not quite sure how it all works yet. I have however employed an accountant to help me with that, but I thought it would be a good idea because I travel so much, that it would be helpful and that I would benefit financially from it in the end, but I think one has to wait and see, see what happens with that. I'm completely freelance, and my contracts range from six months to three months to one week, that's development work, so, it can be quite scary at times, actually.

When I was at Optimum I was on contract but they were quite long contracts, so if you were working on a series like Police, Camera, Action! your contract will be for a year. On Anatomy of Disgust the contract was for four months, but basically they renewed the contract with a new project, when it ran out, whereas I don't have that luxury now, I'm working for a number of different companies, so it doesn't work like that.

## Christine

'Desperate Optimists' is set up as a partnership, which is a really, really informal arrangement, where you have a minimum of two people and it's really a profit sharing scenario, where you have income, which is all the money that comes into the partnership, and you have expenditure. And at the end of the day you calculate your tax, whatever kind of tax you have to pay, based on the net profit or loss or whatever, and so it's an incredibly informal and simple arrangement for people to have if there's more than one person involved in a company, and in our case there's two of us. However, we've always taken that end of things incredibly seriously. In other words, how we actually organise and manage the company. Although we're a small company and we don't have a huge turnover, there's a lot of accountability to do with public funding, so you just have to have systems in place that make sense to you and that you understand and that allow you to work effectively and efficiently, because there is actually a lot of work involved in managing a project, so just keeping an eye on the budget, keeping on top of the budget, making sure that you have enough money in your bank account to allow you to actually work.

I would say that one of the best things that we ever did in terms of helping us to make work and to manage money properly and to manage cashflow and all that kind of stuff, was get a credit card and whenever we can, try and increase the limit on the credit card, but, not use the credit card to amass a debt, but to use it as a way of dealing with, with cashflow problems and also as a way of, buying the things that you need to get as part of your budget, without having to pay for them immediately. However, as soon as we get our credit card bill in we pay it, so it's almost holding on to the money for a little bit longer. That's what we use it for and that's how we use it, but it's totally been the best thing in terms of us managing our money. And the reason you have to manage your money, well you have to manage it for lots of reasons, because number one, you don't get paid regularly, so how do you live, i.e. pay rent, buy food, buy clothes, have a holiday if you're lucky or whatever, how do you do that and try and work with all these irregular sums of money that come into your life. So one of the things that we do is run our personal budget very, very closely with our budgets for the work that we do and we split our year into six month blocks, so we'll manage an amount of money for six months, and account for our personal budget and budgets to do with our company in these six-month blocks. What we try to do is always have enough money to survive for the next six months, so rather than a whole year, break it up into six months, which means how much money do we need to pay our rent for the next six months, to pay our Council Tax, to pay our gas bills, electricity bills. And then you plan the kind of funding that you're going to go for and the number of projects that you need to do and the number of commissions or workshops you need to take on, based on a very particular set figure. "We need to earn this much money for the next six months to survive."

But of course it's not that easy 'cause you have to plan in advance, so I'm thinking about the next six months in 2003 now. What do we have to put in place to know that, 2003 for the first six months, we'll have enough money to survive? And of course as freelance people we have to pay tax on all of our profits that we earn so the partnership, and myself and Joe, personally are liable for tax on any profits. So you keep your books really, really carefully so that you can reduce your tax liability to the absolute minimum. So one of the things that we would absolutely advise is from as an early stage as possible, from as soon as you can afford one, get an accountant. . And the first accountant we got was when we were living in Cambridge and we're now living in London,

we've held on to our accountant in Cambridge, because she's so much cheaper than somebody that we might get in London and you just build up a relationship with someone. So when you build up a relationship with somebody, they're on your side and you want people around you who can really help you and make sure that you don't get into trouble. A few years ago we realised that one thing that we had failed ultimately to address was the whole issue of National Insurance contributions, and for quite a while we'd been exempt from them because we weren't earning enough money. But about three years went by when our income had changed and we still had never gotten on top of the National Insurance contribution thing, although our accountant had reminded me on several occasions that it was something I should have been dealing with and never did, and eventually we ended up with a really big bill. I had to fight really hard to get that reduced, but still ended up with three years of debts for both myself and Joe. Those kind of things, if you're not careful and if you're not very informed right from the beginning, of what your responsibilities are and how you're meant to be dealing with your money, you could find yourself in trouble a few years down the road. So our advice is try and get a system that works for you, right from the beginning.

So, two people and a partnership...the most informal, easiest way to constitute a company, or to constitute a business, if that's what you want to call it, but also has the most minimum of requirements in terms of what's expected of you, so we don't even need our accountant.

However, we went for Lottery Funding, and in order to apply for Lottery Funding you have to be a company limited by guarantee. So even if you're not successful with your bid, you'll have to have made the switch in order that you can apply in the first place. And what that means is that rather than this informal arrangement where you're just a partnership and you don't even have to inform anyone that you're a partnership, once you become a company limited by guarantee, you then have to inform Companies House and go through the whole procedure of legally setting up a company. And it's a legally binding arrangement, so myself and Joe, at the moment, are the directors of the company, although we're going to change that in the near future, but for convenience' sake we started off as the directors of the company and you have responsibility. So we used to have no responsibilities except for getting our accounts to the accountant and making sure that we were on top of our tax, whereas now, there's a whole other level of responsibilities that you have.

However, I'm still trying to figure out what the benefits are. I think that ultimately for us, there aren't a huge amount of benefits, it is more work, but without this legally binding constitution we wouldn't be able to apply for funding like Lottery funding. You might reach a stage in your career where that's exactly what you need, ' cause what the Lottery can do is give you a whole injection of capital to buy equipment that you absolutely would not be able to afford otherwise. So you have to kind of weigh up the balance.

So the limit of our liability for example is a pound, so we aren't personally liable to anybody for debts over and above the pound that's agreed in our Memorandum and Articles of Association. However, in order to earn money from our work as we're still freelance, things become much more complicated, so what we're actually doing is keeping both the partnership and the limited liability company going in tandem with each other. I mean we earn money in a very irregular way, on a project-to-project basis, so we don't earn a salary, we don't earn a wage. So it is a bit more complicated to be able to pay yourself and to continue paying yourself the way you've always been paid in the past as a freelance, and so as I said you have to really weigh up the plusses or minuses.

## **Sarah**

What we have always had even though we haven't known exactly what the work will encompass,



we have always had financial plans and targets. And that was an important part of running the business, that you knew how much you had to make in a year to keep things basically running, what you would like to earn above that in order to make a nice profit, but that was always broken down into monthly targets as well, and that was an important part of keeping the business going, especially in such a fragile area. Because you always knew that there has to be a mixture of projects in order to give you that financial income. So that was always a very important part of it, and the jobs that we did vary, but you've made sure that you always had a number of websites going on, because that just absolutely gave you the rock bottom money. And you can do the more exciting things on top of that, but you've got the basic websites to produce for people and there is an increasing market for them, people are increasingly spending more money on them over the last three years, it was a good way to have that steady part of the income coming in.

## **Mike**

You need a good accountant, preferably you need to get somebody to do your VAT. It's worth considering certainly the accountant if you're Schedule D. You'll get in a terrible mess because people will pay you late. There are worst-case scenarios with the bigger companies where you have to chase for weeks and weeks and weeks for a one-day job that you've done. You do need professional guidance, registering with an accountant at an early stage and it's preferable to get somebody who's familiar with the industry. The fees charged will be appropriate to your progress through the industry, so when you first start out your accountancy bills will probably be quite small. I personally am of the belief that having somebody, perhaps a part time person to do your VAT, and who can lean on you to keep your receipts or stick them in an envelope, it's very important not to let that side of your career run away with itself. You can get in a terrible mess, and in an industry where in one month you can earn a fortune, and in three earn nothing, you need some guidance. The tendency is to feel a sense of tremendous wealth because you've done well in March, and then wonder what happened April, May, June. So you do need help. An accountant first, and preferably somebody to do your VAT once a week, once a month, whatever.

An unusual aspect of self-employment or starting your own business is that you make the decision yourself that you have the necessary qualities and abilities to make a success of it. You do not go through a sifting or selection process. You need to analyse what you expect and hope to achieve from self-employment or setting up your own business. Do not under-estimate the problems and difficulties which can and do emerge.

The answer to the question of your suitability comes through self-

analysis and self-awareness. You may be extremely talented in your area of skill and training but may not possess the skills or personality type that will thrive in a freelance environment, or if you set up a company. Are you the right person? Have you got the necessary skills? You will have addressed some of these questions by completing the tasks set earlier. But will you be able to earn enough to live on? In the end you need to earn a living, and this is as an important an indication of success as producing a stunning and creative project, which leaves you in debt or bankrupt!

## **Task 3**

### **Business Skills**

#### **Objective**

To identify your skills gaps and to develop a strategy for addressing them.

You may have many of the personal qualities and competencies that will allow you to deal effectively with the rigours of earning your living in the freelance environment, you may be well trained in your chosen trade, but how good are your business skills and knowledge?

The task requires you to:

- Address your business competencies
- Plan your development requirements
- Understand where to seek help and advice.

Checklist the skills

- Do you have experience of keeping accounts and cashbooks?
- Have you ever had to negotiate a fee or rate of pay?
- Do you understand your responsibilities for Income Tax, National Insurance, VAT and (if you plan to set up a company) Corporation Tax?
- Do you have an initial idea of overheads?
- Do you know how much you need to live on?
- Do you know how to organise cashflow?
- Do you have experience of project management?
- Do you know how to put a business plan together?

The links below will provide information on business matters and will direct you to sources of further help. Some of the information that you require will be available on the sites, some of which are highly informative. By going to the sites you will also learn about training schemes, seminars, funding and grants and where to go to get information.

### **[www.businesslink.org](http://www.businesslink.org)**

A national network of agencies which aim to provide a one-stop resource for business start-ups, training, counselling, advice and contacts.

### **[www.tec.co.uk](http://www.tec.co.uk)**

The Training and Enterprise Council, TEC's can provide information on other business-support agencies, plus consultancy and training for small businesses.

### **[www.totaljobs.com/editorialinsidersguide/startingbusiness.shtml](http://www.totaljobs.com/editorialinsidersguide/startingbusiness.shtml)**

General advice on starting in business, raising cash, the legal side, marketing, taxation etc.

### **[www.inlandrevenue.gov.uk](http://www.inlandrevenue.gov.uk)**

Includes an 80 page guide to download which aims to start you on the right track when self-employed so you can avoid the pitfalls. The guide covers the main areas, registering with the Inland Revenue, tax, National Insurance, structure etc.

### **[www.channel4.com/life/microsites/R/realdeal/home.html](http://www.channel4.com/life/microsites/R/realdeal/home.html)**

The site for setting you on the road to taking your business forward, with step-by-step advice on planning and examples and templates for the Business Plan, cashflows, profit-and-loss forecasts

etc.

## Task 4

### Charging for your services

#### Objective

This task enables you to calculate exactly what a service costs to run and allows you to calculate a rate of pay, or estimate how many weeks a year, or days a month, you need to work to earn a living.

A professional attitude to charging is essential if you are to earn enough to live on. To find out the costs of running your business, calculate your expenditure.

Add together the annual costs of:

#### Overheads

- General Expenses – rent, rates, gas, electricity, repairs or if working at home, a percentage of these bills;
- Business expenses – telephone, postage, stationery, travel, car expenses, advertising, publicity, insurance, accountant, training, etc;
- Equipment Depreciation – i.e. a contribution to replacement cost of equipment should be allocated annually;
- Stock – other than items directly attributable to a piece of work, consumable tools and other material;
- Contingency to cover unexpected costs.

This provides an annual cost for expenses. Note, however, that it excludes essential things like holidays!

Then calculate:

- Annual salary you need to have;
- Number of days a year you want to work;
- Percentage of profit you want to make.

To arrive at a daily and hourly charging rate related to your income and expenditure needs:

- Divide annual overheads by the number of days you estimate you will work a year;
- Divide annual salary by the same number of days;
- Add these together to give total daily needs;
- Multiply that figure by the % profit you want to make;
- Total these two figures to gain a monthly/weekly/daily rate for charging;
- For an hourly rate, divide by the number of hours you expect to work a day.

Alternatively if there is a minimum or standard rate for the job you aim to do you could check the BECTU site [www.bectu.co.uk](http://www.bectu.co.uk) for the union rates, in order to estimate the number of days you would need to work a year.

- Combine the figures for your annual expenditure and annual required income.

- Divide the day rate into this figure to give you the number of days you need to work to provide the desired level of income.

This calculation will give you an indication and a starting-point. It doesn't take into account tax, National Insurance and VAT. What you pay here will depend on your turnover and the profit you make.

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## 10. Project Management

*Organising your workload, managing budgets. What about the times you have too much work? What about the times when you have little or no work?*

### Sarah

What is always difficult in a working relationship, especially if it was a fairly large project, is both the client's enthusiasm and ours, tends to run away with you, and you'll find yourself doing more than you originally thought or said. We've discovered over the years, and this comes with realising that you're not doing this sharply enough, and therefore a job can actually cost you money rather than bring you in profit, because you can do far more than you're being paid to. We've actually realised that as soon as the client is asking for more or we are suggesting more than was arranged in the job, we say "well this would be lovely, it'd be really nice to make it like this, but this is going to cost either, or both, time and money", and there's got to be a realistic discussion of saying well yes, if you'd like this, it will cost you X amount more or it will take an extra month, an extra two months. That produces one or two results and others say "Oh my golly. No" or they will actually say, "Now we would like that". But it does involve, and this is where it comes to the project management of a project, constant vigilance of actually recognising when expectations are going above what was laid out, and it's where you do have to lay things out fairly clearly to begin with. It is a difficult area, because it's not easy to say you will get so many screens, you will get so many thousand words, you know in different ways. It's a difficult area to quantify.

### Graham

It's partly difficult because it's a collaborative process, that we both simply don't see ourselves fulfilling a well-articulated need of a client, because on the whole, most clients' needs are not well-articulated. Mostly when we're working on things it's collaborating with a client in order to be able to devise whatever is the most appropriate thing, and we bring our different expertise to those things. One of the things that then inevitably happens in order for us to get this to work properly, is that we try and get some sort of prototype built very early, just on the grounds that if you have something which is there as a prototype, you're actually able then to be able to start working out what's needed and what isn't needed. But there's always dangers with prototypes and especially dangerous from a design point of view. We often find things that we put in, as almost throwaway things in a piece of design for the prototype, where the client decides they love it and you think "No, no, no, it wasn't meant to be there", They're much easier if you're dealing with something, where somebody is saying "Well actually what I want is a content, management-driven website, I want to be able to put up news articles regularly at this basis, I've got other articles coming in like this, I'm going to get my photographs from here etc". Those things you can structure much more carefully and you can tie down much faster and then have designs that you sign off. You can have stages of the things that say, this has to be working at this point, this has to be working at that point, and those all have to be signed off. Some of the things that are getting more standard and gradually more rigid in terms of their structure, but the ones that are more open ended are the

most difficult and therefore the most dangerous again.

## **Sarah**

The other important thing to say about prototypes is that it is important to get the design right on them, because as you say, the client will actually fix on it. So we have virtually got to the point of suggesting that a prototype will be between ten and twenty per cent of a project's budget and that the client might just commission that to begin with. It is mostly the job of the design part of the team, because we can actually put together a prototype in software like Director or Dreamweaver that doesn't involve a programmer's input. So that it can be very much the design budget, and it is very much design-based because it's how the look and the feel of it is going to work for the client, so that's been something we've gradually evolved I suppose over the years of producing them.

## **Kate**

Well trying to manage your workload within any profession is obviously always going to be a challenge if you're in a busy job and I think it's a really difficult thing to do, which only gets better with experience. I mean years ago I had completely overwhelming times when I just thought I was going to completely sink because of what I was expected to do in the time, and you end up working some very long hours, trying to get jobs done because you've been given a ridiculously small budget and all those things really, but I think as you get a bit older you just prioritise a bit better, 'cause you've got more experience. If you're starting out, you always think you're trying your best and doing your best, but actually to try and stand back and look at how you're spending your time, how you're utilising your time, and again I think it's something that women when they have families, become particularly aware of, because you have to sometimes leave at a certain time to go and pick the children up or the kids are ill, that actually you get an awful lot more done than you did when you didn't have kids, because suddenly you can't spend twenty minutes having a cup of tea with somebody in the canteen, you've got to really make your day as effective as you can. And that goes for when you're filming, when you're editing, you've got so many hours in a day and you have to get so many things done, and you can't always do it, and I think you just have to recognise that, and otherwise it's going to lead to an early grave really. Sorry...but it is such a stressful job...

## **Christine**

I'd say we would have a tendency to have a lot of work on the go and so what you have to try and do is to make sure that you leave enough room to be able to do each project properly, because you over-compensate. You're constantly worried about not having enough work and there'll be different times of the year where you're applying for a lot of funding or applying for a lot of projects or chasing up projects and trying to set things up, always not sure how many of them will come through, so sometimes, when everything comes through that you applied for, or nearly everything, you end up having to really manage your time, because you know, it's possible that you could really squeeze out some of the work, so we've been much more likely to be in that situation where we've probably got a little too much on our plate, so what we've tried to do over the past few years, is get less projects, but bigger projects, so that they really sustain you and you can earn the amount of money that you need to earn, but also have enough time to do the work, so you're not doing lots and lots of small, little projects, which always are big projects. We have never done a small project that's just small, and that's what it is. They always take up a huge amount of time, so although that can be fantastic because you're doing lots of different things, I would say what we're still heading towards is to try and do less and less projects but make them bigger, more involved projects, and we've had loads of times over the years, where we've had no money, and nothing in the pipeline, and that feeling of anxiety, I mean it's partly what makes this whole way of living your life very attractive, but also, it's what makes it really scary at times. I mean when you

feel you've got absolutely nothing in the pipeline, do you run scared and just get a proper job and give yourself an easy time for a while, or do you hang on in there? And I suppose we'd always say that it's worth hanging on in there, and you know, almost with your fingernails over the edge of a cliff, just hang on and, see what happens!

## Victoria

I think within big productions it gets to the point where you think, "How are we going to do this?" But you always do. It's very odd, you know you're going to produce something, you know you will make the programme at whatever cost, and you do, you always do. Once you know the production you were filming, you're on a roll and one becomes so focused that it seems that nothing else matters actually, life sort of passes you by, you're completely absorbed in what you're doing. And the work is very tough, and it's been very interesting working in Aberdeen in a smaller company where you've got more regional employees who are not used to big productions, who are very used to nine-to-five work, and they found it absolutely exhausting, the religion project that we've just been on, to my surprise.

I've invested in computers and things like that, so I have laid out some cash so that I can work at home. I've got e-mail, printer so I'm able to do that, so I can work evenings at home or weekends, so that I don't have to spend all my time in the office, which I don't enjoy so much.

In the producer's role, one is responsible for budgets, for making sure the production runs on time, for ensuring the content, for basically overseeing and working as a series producer. And with money you have to be very creative, you have to know what's important to you. Someone once said, money isn't well spent unless it hits the screen, and I would agree with that, that money needs to be spent so you can see it on the screen. You know, whether that's a set, whether that's the director you choose, whether that's the format you shoot on, one needs to be able to see the money there, and cut costs elsewhere. And you do have to be creative and I think that's why it's such a multi-skilled environment now, and people are required to work such long hours, to make the most of limited budgets really.

I've currently got a budget of £250,000, which hopefully I've spent wisely. I chose to spend money on how the programme looked, the style of the programme because I think that's very important, and so I employed a good director, and a good cameraman, and I took one of the programmes out of the studio where I thought it looked rather dull and took it on location, and spent money there, so that it looked good as well as sounded good.

Currently, the project that I'm working on, the religion project with the budget of £250,000, is the biggest budget I've ever had to manage by myself, so it was quite a daunting prospect and I think I've been rather protective of it, so I probably need to learn to relax a little bit about it. And I have worried about it, constantly, and I haven't got the final figures yet, but I'm hoping that we're not too far over, but it is very difficult to hit the targets, very difficult indeed, because costs come up all the time, unexpected costs. But generally one needs to hit the target else you shouldn't be making the programmes, basically, because you can't afford to do it.

I'd like to learn a lot more about budgets, and spending and how that works. It should stand one in good stead, when you're running your own company. But every production is run by what moneys are available, so it's so important to learn how to manage it and to find out what's important in the production you're making.

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## 11. Writing a Business Plan

A Business Plan is a tool that helps you take a structured approach to the development of your business or self-employment. It provides you with a way of measuring your achievements within clear time-scales, enables you to make sure that what you have planned is financially viable, and plays a vital role in raising money from funders, sponsors, banks and trusts. Your plan should normally cover at least a 2 - 3 year period. There is no definitive approach but there are three broad areas to think about:

- Setting the context in which your business operates;
- Laying out your plan;
- Giving detailed information about you and your business idea.

This will entail a concise summary of the current aims and objectives of your business, highlights of your history, progress and achievements to date, and a clear outline of your current professional and financial state. It should also include describe principal opportunities to grasp, trends affecting your business, the strategy to be adopted and resources needed for the future.

You will also need to present the legal structure of your organisation. Will your business be a Sole Trader, Partnership or Limited Company? If you plan to have premises, where will they be? Media professionals often work "out of" home i.e. they are based there but do much of their work at the premises of employers - production companies, facilities or on location.

Keep it all under review. Besides helping to keep your business off the rocks and in good standing with funders and potential sponsors, your Business Plan will give you a sense of control over your future. But you should not be tied down by it: update the plan as time passes and it will become more accurate through your collection of information and growing expertise. The process is prepare, monitor, refine, and re-work. Your Business Plan is a working tool. If you see it as a document written for someone else then it will be shut away in a drawer and forgotten – so make it work for you by using it.

### Research Project 3

#### Writing the Business Plan

By now you will have:

- Built a picture of your personal skills, transferable skills and other talents and abilities;
- Identified skills gaps, and researched avenues by which you can fill those gaps;
- Identified a career route and a strategy for achieving it;
- Completed a proposal for a funding application or a programme proposal;
- Researched and analysed the output and career path of a media professional;
- Developed an understanding of where to seek further help and advice on business planning and responsibilities.

Using all your research, you are required to draw together all the material and present it in the form of a Business Plan. A Business Plan can take a variety of forms; you need to design yours so that it presents you and your proposed idea in the best possible light.

In broad terms your Business Plan will need to address most if not all of the following subjects:

- **Description of the Business:** A general explanation and overview of how the business will

function, which briefly touches upon each of the aspects mentioned below but not in as much detail;

- **Evidence of the Market:** The size and location of the market, buying patterns and competition;
- **Sales and Marketing:** Who your clients are, how your product/ service meets their needs, how you intend to promote and sell to them, targets you've set yourself, what your competitors are doing and how you compare with them;
- **The Product or Service:** Its advantages and disadvantages;
- **Personnel:** The key people, their range of skills, strengths and abilities and background;
- **The Operation Itself:** The location, facilities, equipment, employees, suppliers;
- **Legal Composition on the Company:** Sole trader, Partnership, Limited Company etc;
- **Financial Forecasts:** A spread-sheet setting out your best estimate of cashflow in and out, month by month over the period of the plan;
- **Financial Requirements:** If you are intending to put your Business Plan to a bank or other source of venture capital in order to raise loans or equity capital, you must specify what you are asking for;
- **Assessment of the Risks Involved:** As dispassionate as possible – in your own interests. If in doubt, err on the side of pessimism.

Your plan should be tailored to meet the requirements of your particular business idea. In some cases this may mean less detail, in others, more. There is quite a lot of reading material available on Business Plans. You may wish to visit a library (business/commercial reference section), to view a selection before choosing the most appropriate for you. The websites below also provide samples, templates and guidelines for producing a Business Plan.

**[www.channel4.com/life/microsites/R/realdeal/home.html](http://www.channel4.com/life/microsites/R/realdeal/home.html)**

Includes a guide to writing a plan, templates and cashflow and other spreadsheets.

**[www.bplans.com/samples](http://www.bplans.com/samples)**

Access to 200 sample Business Plans.

**[www.allbusiness.com](http://www.allbusiness.com)**

**[www.arts.org.uk/directory/database/infosheets/business.html](http://www.arts.org.uk/directory/database/infosheets/business.html)**

**[www.bectu.co.uk](http://www.bectu.co.uk)**

Includes information on film, television and theatre industry standard daily and weekly rates. Will help you with financial planning.

**[www.ukbusiness.hsbc.com](http://www.ukbusiness.hsbc.com)**

**[www.businesslink.org](http://www.businesslink.org)**

It is also worth visiting the High Street banks, all of whom offer small business services and advice, much of it free of charge.

Remember that some organisations offering grants may have a particular format they wish you to follow and will provide details.



You will need to find a template that suits you and your ideas and then adapt it to your own needs.

Contact your local **Business Link** if you need help with putting a final financial plan together. You can get further help from the Bournemouth University Innovation Centre; contact Jayne Askew on Ext. 3994 or e- mail [Jaskew@bournemouth.ac.uk](mailto:Jaskew@bournemouth.ac.uk)

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