

INTERDEPENDENT FILMMAKERS GUIDE
FOR PRE-PRODUCING A MICRO-BUDGET INDIE FEATURE FILM
(UNDER THE SAG ULTRA-LOW BUDGET CONTRACT)

This Phase List is an effort to answer a lot of indie filmmakers' questions about what goes into planning a motion picture in the pre-production phase. Here's part of an evolving list of what went into producing one of our early low budget films.

THIS IS ONLY A SAMPLE. EACH FILM REQUIRES IT'S OWN SPECIAL HANDLING DURING PRE-PRODUCTION.

The philosophy is to charge ahead and to support each other like a family. As soon as you've assembled a core team committed to making the project, you are ready to begin. A suggestion is to create a list like this together.

Phase 1 & Phase 2:

- **LOCK SCRIPT**
- **Send script out to Library of Congress for official copyright, with treatments, character descriptions and supporting documents attached to script.**
- **Send script package to WGA to register.**
- **Have one final night of sleep.**
- **FIND Co-Producers & an A.D. that will commit.**
- **PRODUCER / DIRECTOR ANALYZES SCRIPT FOR THE FOLLOWING**
 - **Master Prop List (and secondary props)**
 - **Master Set Design List (and secondary set decorations)**
 - **Master Costume Design list (and continuity chart)**
 - **Master Lighting/Grip List for all gear outside camera & sound.**
 - **BUDGET**
 - **ONE-LINE SCHEDULE (location changes, 6 day weeks, extras, etc.)**
 - **Lock A.D. – AD & 2nd AD for One line & Shoot Schedule.**

Phase 3:

- Open all Necessary Accounts.
- Talk to Owners of restaurants. Get menu's of places that cater.
- Investigate locations that want credit (throughout).
- Finalize Re-Writes on Script (throughout pre-pro)
- Finalize tentative Schedule and Tentative budget.
- Begin SAG - Ultra Low (below \$200K). (budget, schedule, SAG estimate, script - send to SAG, call each time for anything - get rep involved.)
- Send out Casting Notices if haven't already.
- Finalize Equipment, solve any gear problems.
- Begin vendor relationships. Send Insurance for their file, open accounts.
- Finalize Cast Selects. Find a casting space.
- Get Casting Director involved or start calling down the list.
- Create Donation Letter.
- Send out Crew Notice.

Phase 4:

- Weed out Crew - make phone calls, have your team look over.
- Test Shoot & Test Post.
- Inquire about Payroll.
- MORE Location Scouting.
- Create and update ALWAYS a contact list
- Files for every vendor, crew, cast, number, email, emergency, etc.
- Distant Location scout - Finalized.
- Refine donation pitch.
- Make tons of copies of pertinent documents.
- Create Production Master File.
- Think about needed artwork, look for artists.
- Start locking Casting!

Phase 5:

- **Increase Cell Phone Minutes.**
- **Get Rental Cars if necessary. Be ready to go everywhere and anywhere.**
- **Start Multi-Tasking and making a priority list every-day. (good habit)**
- **Meet additional Above the Line Crew & have additional Casting Calls.**
- **Lock CAST.**
- **Distant Location Scouting & Lock. Pay deposits.**
- **Begin Prop scouting. Make a Prop Wish List.**
- **Create storyboards, work with DP.**
- **Begin Set-Dressing – got to rental shops & take pictures of items to rent.**
- **Begin All Artwork that will be needed for the picture.**
- **Begin finding research consultants.**
- **Hire an Intern (s) – Negotiate deals, give back to Interns.**
- **Begin locking catering food and crafty.**
- **Work with Local Film Commission for Locations**
- **Create ON-SET paperwork and Deal Memos.**
- **Create Time Cards for Cast and Crew and make many copies**
- **Create Mileage sheets**
- **Create a Cost Tracking Spreadsheet.**
- **Send out Crew Notice again if necessary – begin interviews on phone.**
- **Shooting Script – create shooting schedule.**

Phase 6 (FINAL PHASE):

- Lock Locations, Find Back-Ups for major locations.
- Open Self-Storage for all Film Equipment & Film related props/wardrobe Etc.
- Open Permits for locations, begin getting releases signed.
- Interview Crew.
- Finalize and Sign up Crew.
- Second Test Shoot / Pre-shoot with D.P.
- Start and refine rehearsals.
- Begin second or final casting call.
- Lock down Equipment/D.P.
- Acquire all Key Props.
- Lock down all Sound vendors.
- FINALIZE SAG – Initial Agreement, plus Deposit for Actors. Finish SAG Packet and mail into office. Finish Payroll set-up (ADP)
- Lock all Locations, pay deposits. Reconfirm.
- Book final Travel requirements.
- Hunt down Permits & Signatures.
- 8 weeks out: POST SAG BOND. Make sure all Actors are on board.
- Go over ALL set responsibilities with A.D.
- A.D. & 2nd A.D. should know how to make a call sheet, revise one-line and
- MAKE A WRAP REPORT with exact times (updating the Call sheet for the day with pertinent info).
- Pay any Agents asking for 10%
- Lock all crafty and catering
- Make Sure Actors clear Station 12 SAG.
- Send SAG final cast list.
- Start Payroll, submit weekly!!!
- See if our friends and parents are available to help us. Parents like it.

- Final Scheduling, Final One-Line.
- Final casting call. Final casting sessions.
- Final Permits & SAG Payroll. Pay Permits
- Final contracts - all signed.
- Lock Costume – begin acquiring outfits, work with actors to take photos of their clothes.
- Tax forms signed, Sabi contract signed, including Waivers.
- Initial deposits paid.
- Begin getting all the equipment.
- TEST ALL GEAR, take inventory (for returns at the end).
- Lock all Necessary Sound requirements.
- Go over Safety with Crew and on-set.
- Get everyone's emergency contact info.
- Finalize Costume chart.
- Reserve UHAUL.
- Get all gear on expensive rental.
- Test all gear and inventory.
- Move into first location early if possible.
- Test Post Production.
- Have someone on emergency call every-day. Call every local friend you know to help with your film.
- Get final free stuff you can get. Call all day-players through AD, and have AD confirm with all cast and crew dates, times, everything.
- Think of what you want your first day to go like.
- Plan a full cast and crew rehearsal if necessary (with lights, sound and shooting).
- Final Cast meetings in Private with the Director.

PROBLEM Solving & Creative

- **PRODUCER / CO-PRODUCER HANDLES ALL PROBLEMS FIRST**
 - **SO DIRECTOR CAN CONCENTRATE.**
 - **Director and Producer(s) should meet daily.**
 - **Crew Meetings, D.P. should also have meetings built into contract.**
 - **Meetings should last 2 hours tops.**
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- **Oh yeah... and don't forget the creative...**

