

# How to Sell Your Screenplay, or: Who is Your Audience?

You want to write and sell a script in 28 days? You believe that success comes over night?

Forget it!

But still, there are some ways of rationally planning your screenwriting career. First of all, consider yourself as a company, not as an individual. You are the secretary, financial department, investigator, production, marketing department, and salesman in one person....

Even before it comes to searching for an agent or producer, you can work on your marketing plan. Consider the following anecdote: One of America's leading toilet paper producers was about to introduce a high quality paper into the German market. Test sales had shown no signs of success, so that the company searched for a reason for that. It turned out that Americans make a bowl out of the paper, whereas Germans fold it. Correspondingly, the company modified the product characteristics and introduced it successfully into the German market.

The selling process of your script can start even before the first word is written. You can easily investigate potential markets in order to find out their special needs and, at the same time, discover a niche for your work.

To facilitate the search, you can divide the 'film market' into three sectors. The first is the audience in the closest sense of the word. Read critics, hear what people talk and criticize about movies, read sales figures, and look for what is having success at the moment.

The second sector consists in producers, managers, and agencies. These people are heavily concerned with the first sector and, accordingly, know that, for instance, Wild West cannot be sold anymore. You can spot their gusto and kinds of specialization in many publications as well as on the Internet. On the latter you can also browse for screenwriting job offers, writing gigs, and contests. This way, at least you get a glimpse of what is asked for at the moment.

If you find a niche that, in the slightest sense, fits for your interests and competences, don't hesitate and write your script. Never leave the eye of the audience and write a 'product' that satisfies its market's needs. Speak to people and tell them about your work. That will help you to develop a marketing plan along their reactions. Get as much feedback as you can, and tell your story to others to see if it works and to gain self-confidence. Try to create informal connections to agents or producers; that makes it easier.

Generally, do the opposite of what the Bible prescribes: Do good and do not talk about that. Tell people that you are a screenwriter who is interested in projects instead. Think about an internship in a studio, agency, or production company. Spread the news on the Internet, searching for your first screen credit. Some websites have excellent classifieds to establish contacts within the movie scene.

Thereby, you can also get in touch with the third sector of our market scheme. Independent filmmakers and student projects share this field. This is also the first address for someone who wants to avoid the hassle of marketing his first script. If you are not a natural born seller, want to concentrate on your first script, or just gain a screen credit and some practice before risking your first and only chance in the big business, there is no better place to start from than the third sector.

If not, just write SOME scripts, build up an information network, and send your best logline, not script, with power selling personalized query letters to the appropriate agencies, managers, and producers at once. If you are a verbally skilled person, make phone calls to underline your query. Try to get in contact with someone who knows someone who knows someone who knows... Letting aside the way you want to take, write always for an audience. Find out its needs and preferences, and have them in mind while you are imagining, structuring, and writing your script. Give your project a clear and recognizable image as if it were a trademark.

It is a hard task to provoke interest through differentiation while sticking to the industry standards and needs. But if you don't want to end up writing for your hard disk only, there is no choice.

Get into the business!