HOW TO WRITE, PRODUCE AND STAR IN YOUR OWN

WEB SERIES



THE PRODUCER'S PERSPECTIVE PRO

EXECUTION PLAN SERIES



INTRODUCTION

Writing, producing and starring in your own web series can be a lot of fun and provide you with a ton of exposure . . . if you do it right!

And you don't need a huge budget to produce a web series, so raising money is NOT part of this execution plan. Depending on what resources you have available at your disposal, you could create an entire web series for as little as a few hundred dollars! Of course, if you do have a sizable budget, it will only help!

In recent years we've seen digital media, like the web series, take off like crazy. You no longer have to produce a high-budget, high production value feature film to get attention from Producers, Directors, Agents and even Networks.

And since there are so many writers, producers and actors out there creating web series, it has created a ton of opportunity to have you work shown in festivals, and entered into contests with cash prizes and even network deals.

So, if you've been thinking about creating your own web series, I'm going to walk you through the steps toward web series success!

STEP 1: COME UP WITH AN IDEA



Seems like a logical place to start, right?

First things first, you have to come up with a solid idea for your series. You have to figure out what the driving force is behind your series. Is it character driven and filled with quirky or interesting characters who are always up to something? Is it plot driven where each episode leads into the next with cliffhangers at the end of each episode? Is it driven by a theme or idea you want your audience to work through as they join you on your journey?

Whatever the "driving force" is, make sure it hooks your audience and hooks 'em good, because you've only got a few minutes per episode to keep them engaged and wanting more.

Once you've come up with your idea you need to figure out if it's a good one. And this is where I've seen a lot of web series fail. If your core concept is a bore or convoluted, then your audience will easily get distracted and click on to the next Youtube video.

So, how do you know if your idea is any good? Try the "Producer Pitch" litmus test . . . can you describe what your series is about and pique someone's interest in under 15 seconds? If you can, then you're onto a good idea!

STEP 2: WRITE YOUR WEB SERIES

Now that you have your idea fully mapped out, you're ready to put pen to paper!

There are 4 essential parts of any web series (or script really).

1. **The Problem:** What is the problem or situation that your central character is facing? The problem should engage the audience by creating dramatic tension and get them rooting for your character to succeed.

2. **The Complication:** Once you have established your problem, you can't just have your character solve it right away. That would be a snooze fest. You need to introduce a complication that your character has to overcome in order to solve their problem.

3. **The Resolution**: After much entertaining effort, your character should finally resolve their problem or come to some kind of a resolution. This will give your audience a sense of relief and completion!

4. **The Cliffhanger**: At the end of any episodic work, like a web series, there needs to be a cliffhanger. This cliffhanger is essentially a new problem that's introduced and left unresolved, which will make

your audience want to watch the next episode to find out what happens!

There is no one way to write or structure a web series, nor are there rules on length or recommended number of episodes. I recommend watching several web series to discover your own preference!



PRO TIP: If you plan on submitting your series to festivals, it could be a good idea to explore submission guidelines to make sure your episodes are not significantly longer or shorter than required for most submissions.

STEP 3: ASSEMBLE YOUR TEAM

Now that you have your finished script(s), it's time to assemble your team to make your words jump to life!

There is no one way to "produce" a web series or any specific roles that absolutely MUST be filled, and this often depends on your budget, but here are a few roles typically involved in the process of creating a web series:

- Writer
- Director
- Producer
- Videographer
- Actors
- Sound Engineer
- Lighting Engineer
- Production Assistant
- Art Director or Production Designer
- Director of Photography
- Script Supervisor
- Assistant Director
- Hair and Makeup
- Editor
- Marketing/Press

If you're working with a limited budget, it's possible to get away with only a few of these roles. I recommend always having a Director, Videographer and Sound Engineer, as well as actors. If you've written a script, then it's possible to create a small crew that will get the job done!

Labor can be quite a large part of your budget, so consider reaching out to local film schools to work with early-career filmmakers who may be willing to work for free (or cheap) in exchange for the experience and footage for their reels. This also applies for actors if you're going non-union.

When casting your actors, I recommend starting with actors you know and have worked with. If you need to cast outside your network put up an audition notice on Actors Access, Playbill or Breakdown Services. You'll likely get a flood of submissions, so it's good to know exactly what you're looking for.



PRO TIP: Try to cast at least one person who has a strong reputation for press purposes, and/or a large social following for marketing purposes.

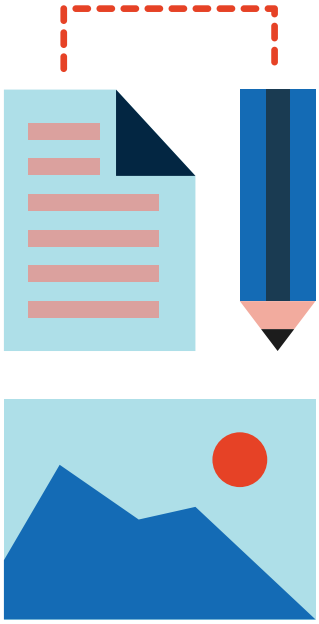
STEP 4: SOURCE LOCATIONS

Now that you have your team assembled it's time to do some leg work! If you have a producer, it's often their job to source locations, or you can also do this yourself.

Make a list of all the locations that appear in your script, and get creative! Can any of it be filmed in your own home or place of business? Are you friendly with the owner of the bar down the street that might let you film during the day when they're normally closed?

It can be challenging to find free space to film, but it's absolutely possible. You just have to ask!

STEP 5: CREATE YOUR SHOOTING SCHEDULE AND SHOT LIST



You're moving right along! Now you have your script, team, locations and you're ready to do some nitty gritty planning.

If you've hired a director and DP, then you may not be in charge of creating the shot list. If you're doing this thing on the down and dirty, then it might be up to you to quite literally call the shots.

Think about how you want your audience to experience your series. Do you want dramatic close ups for certain moments, wide angle shots, over the shoulder, etc.

I always recommend getting more shots than you think you'll need just in case. But, often shoots get behind on time, so be prepared with your top essential shots in case you start cutting it close.

STEP 6: ASSEMBLE COSTUMES AND PROPS

If you've hired an Art Director then you likely won't need to collect any props and costumes yourself. But, if you're flying solo then it's your job to make sure all your actors are clothed in a way that tells your story, and the props and set give a sense of time and place.



PRO TIP: See what's in your actors' closets! Often you can cut your costume budget just by asking your actors if they have any pieces that fit what you're looking for!

STEP 7: REHEARSE (IF YOU WANT)

In the web series world, rehearsal is optional. Often times you will send you actors their parts, they memorize and create their performance, then everyone shows up the day of filming and it all comes together like magic.

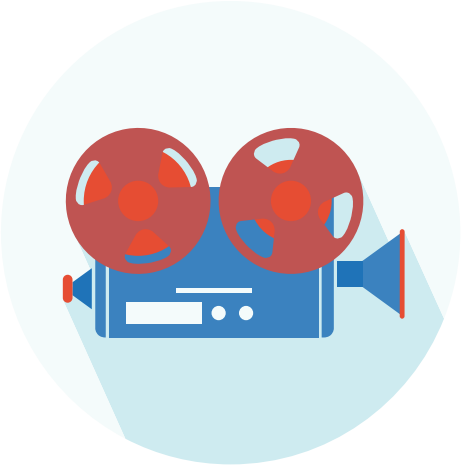
If you feel more comfortable rehearsing your scenes so you know everyone is on the same page (pun intended) then that's not a bad idea.

STEP 8: RENT YOUR EQUIPMENT

If you're working with a videographer, DP, sound engineer, etc., chances are they will have equipment, or can rent what they need with your approval. If you don't know what kind of equipment you need . . . ask!

Depending on your budget, you can shoot on a cheap HD camera or you can spend several grand to capture a higher quality image. Nowadays there are so many good affordable cameras, that you shouldn't need to spend too much on equipment if you're just looking to get the job done.

STEP 9: SHOOT THE SERIES



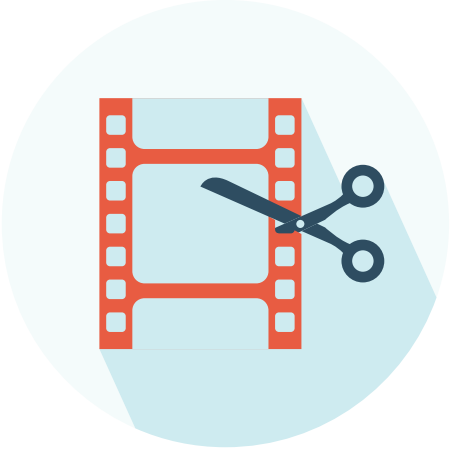
Once you have all your elements in place, it's time to shoot your series!

This is typically the directors time to work with the actors to tell the story. If you've assembled a team of professionals, even on the cheap, then your crew should be able to carry you through the shooting days and capture the footage you need to create your final series.

You'll want to get as much footage as possible in case something negatively affects your shot, like sound issues, an actor flubs, etc. Try to give your editor as much to work with as possible!

And always get room tone :-)

STEP 10: EDITING



You may have the skills to edit your series yourself, but if you're unfamiliar with programs like Final Cut or Premiere, I recommend working with a professional editor.

Editing can be quite a long process, which can mean it costs you a pretty penny, but ultimately it's the editor's job to tell your story. They will pull the best footage with the best sound, and craft the scenes so that timing and pacing are perfect.

It's true what they say . . . it's all in the editing.

STEP 11: MARKETING AND PRESS

While your series is being edited, consider how you plan to launch this puppy and get the word out to the world!

Create a website for your web series, so that it doesn't just live on Youtube or Vimeo. You want to be able to show off your awards (when you get them), your cast and crew, and allow people to contact you easily!

As you start to think about promoting your series, here are a few things to keep in mind:

1. **Show Art** - you'll need to have a logo and/or poster designed for promotional purposes. If you don't know a designer, try Upwork or Fiverr!
2. **Create your Social Media Channels** - Facebook, Twitter and Instagram will all be helpful when promoting your series! Try to create your profiles before filming so you can capture photos and video at the shoot!
3. **Create your Youtube Channel** - Make sure you have compelling channel art that is in line with the voice and tone of your series.
4. **Blogger Outreach** - Is your series about a specific topic or industry? Reach out to bloggers to see if they will post about it on their blog!
5. **Press** - If you don't hire a press rep, it's your job to write a press release and pitch your show to every news outlet and industry site out there!
6. **Activate your Cast and Crew** - Get your cast and crew excited about the project and encourage them to tell friends and share on social!
7. **Consider Throwing a Launch Party** - This is a great way to say thank you to your team, get them excited about your work, and show your series off to friends, family and fans!

STEP 12: LAUNCH YOUR SERIES

Decide how you want to launch your series. Do you want to release all episodes at once for your audience's binge viewing pleasure? Or, would you have something to gain by releasing one episode a week? There are pros and cons to both strategies, so weigh your options and choose the plan that's best for you!

STEP 13: SUBMIT TO FESTIVALS AND COMPETITIONS

As I mentioned earlier, there are tons of festivals and awards out there for web series! A simple Google search for "web series festival" will produce tons of results.

Here are just a few to consider submitting to:

- NYC Web Series Festival
- Brooklyn Web Fest
- LA Web Fest
- Miami Web Fest
- HollyWeb Festival
- Vancouver Web Fest
- Indie Series Awards
- IAWTV Awards
- TO WebFest
- DC Web Fest
- The Streamy Awards
- Raindance Web Fest
- ITVFest



Getting your series into a festival, and receiving a nomination, or award can add great credibility to your web series, and will also be a great credit for your personal resume!

What's next? That depends on your goals!

Creating a web series can be a great way to get your work seen by producers, agents, casting directors and fans. Follow these steps and you'll be well on your way to web series success!

If you're looking for more in depth "how to" guides for writers, producers and actors, join The Producer's Perspective PRO today!

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