

Studio Class Workbook

Producing

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Introduction

Anyone living in the service area can sign up to produce a show of one or more episodes at the Media Center. The formal rules, agreements to sign, and much more advice is available on the Media Center website at www.midpenmedia.org; click on the ‘Make TV’ menu and choose items with ‘Produce’ in them. This document discusses a little of what is involved in producing a show; more is on the website.

Terminology

Here are a few pieces of jargon you’ll need to know:

Talent—Anyone who appears on camera

Crew—Anyone who helps operate the equipment when a show is being recorded.

Lower Third—The text label that appears below someone on camera given his or her name and affiliation: “Fred Flintstone, Cartoon Character”

Live Recording—A counterintuitive term for a television show that is *not* live but that will be recorded as though it were: nonstop and editing afterwards is not planned. Most of the Media Center shows are done this way.

Before The First Episode

There are a number of tasks before the first episode of any show, tasks that need be done only once, even if the show has multiple episodes.

Determine Your Show's General Content

What's the show about? We have or have had shows about national political issues, local artists, cooking, men's health, women's issues, religion, fitness, technology, local live theatre, music, help for veterans, and many more. (See the list by going to www.midpenmedia.org and clicking on 'Local TV/Current Programs.')

What's yours going to be about? What's its angle?

Meet with Media Center Staff

The Media Center's Executive Director and its Production Manager will meet with you to discuss the rest of the steps. The Production Manager will help you with the steps you are getting your show launched.

Fill in the Producer's Agreement and Program Proposal

This simple paperwork formalizes the simple rules with which community producers must comply. You can download it from the Media Center's website or get a copy at the Media Center.

Determine Your Show's Format

How is your show organized? Does a host interview one or more guests (typical for issue-oriented shows)? Are there demonstrations or exhibits (typical for art shows or cooking shows, for example)? Panel discussion? Audience participation? Live call-ins? Field-shot videos? Media Center staff is available to advise you about these things.

A note about having an audience. Having a live audience can energize a show considerably, but it also considerably complicates the production, because you have to recruit the audience, and the studio has to be set up for them. Count on needing to recruit one extra crew member, or, if you plan to have audience ask questions or otherwise interact during the show, two extra crew members.

A note about live shows. Live shows are also an adrenaline hit for everyone involved...in both the good sense (it's exciting) and the bad (it's stressful). Before committing to a live show, think carefully about whether the excitement is worth the stress, the loss of the ability to edit out bloopers later, etc., etc.

Determine Your Show's Look

How do you want your show to look? The Media Center has lots of furniture, backgrounds, and props to dress a set with, and you are welcome to bring in your own (within reason). Some shows want a very austere look, perhaps just a black background and stools or chairs for talent to sit on. Others want a look that's more cluttered, colorful, or bright: tables, bouquets, art objects, carpets, colorful backdrops, etc. The range is endless. Typically, you'll work ahead of time with someone at the studio to figure this out.

Once you have created a set in the studio, it is a good idea to take a couple of photographs. That'll help your studio crew to set it up again the way you designed it when it's time to record your show.

Design Graphics Format

After you've decided on your look, you'll want to design the graphics (titles at the start of the show, credits at the end, lower thirds, etc.) so that they look good with your set and promote the style of your show. Someone can work with you at the Media Center to design these in LiveText, our graphics software. Once someone has created sample graphics in LiveText, it's pretty easy to put in actual names of your talent and crew just before each show.

Determine Show Open

Almost every television show ever made starts with an 'open,' which can be something as simple as a camera shot of the studio set with the show title superimposed over it; or something as complex as a thirty-second animated video. Decide what suits your show (and your budget or talent for creating such things).

Select Music

Most shows use background music to open the show and again while the credits are running. (It might be the same music.) Occasionally, a show will use music during transitions from one section to another. An exercise show might want almost continuous background music. Find music that suits the style of your show, and make sure that you have *more than enough* music—if you think you need 30 seconds of music, get a minute of music.

Make sure it's OK to use the music you select; copyright law for music is complex. For example, Beethoven finished writing his famous 5th symphony in 1808, so his copyright (if he ever really had one) is expired. If you want to perform it yourself, you're in the clear. However, the Berlin Philharmonic (or maybe their record producer) still has a valid copyright on the 1982 recording, so that's not available to you without their permission.

Note that the Media Center has extensive music library of music you can use.

Before Every Episode

The steps in the previous section need to be done just once, before your first episode. The steps below need to be done every time.

Reserve a Studio Time

Our studio tends to be busy. We typically tape two shows an evening from Monday to Friday, one from 5:30 to 8:00, and one from 8:00 to 10:30, and we occasionally tape shows on weekends as well.

Every six months, we give our producers a chance to reserve dates during the next six months, and a big chunk of the available studio time is reserved then on a seniority basis. After that, studio time is scheduled on a first-come, first-served basis. If you have some flexibility, you can usually get squeezed in if you are planning a month in advance; occasionally we can get you in faster. The studio calendar can be found at www.midpenmedia.org by clicking on ‘Make TV/Studio Calendar.’

Recruit Talent

You need your host and your guests to show up at the time that you’ve reserved the studio.

Publicize the Program

Particularly if your show is live or if you want a studio audience, you’ll need to publicize your show. Even if not, promotion will increase viewership both on the cable and on the web.

Recruit Crew

You’ll need to recruit the following volunteers to staff the studio when your show is recorded. (The Media Center provides one paid technician to help out as part of the studio rental fee.)

*EMAIL PROTOCOL: It’s common for producers to recruit crew through email. If you send a mass email, please do **not** “cc” the various crew members. Use “bcc” instead. That way we aren’t spreading volunteers’ emails all over the place, and if someone hits ‘reply all,’ it comes back only to you.*

Director. The director will help you organize the rest of your crew to realize your vision for your show.

Graphics Operator. You’ll need someone to enter the actual names of your guests on lower thirds and the names of your crew in the credits and to operate the LiveText graphics workstation during the show.

Switcher. You'll need someone to operate the video switching equipment. Some directors are willing to double as switchers. (Some actually prefer that.) Ask your director if you should recruit a switcher.

Audio. You need an audio board operator.

Two to four camera operators. Most shows use three cameras. You can get away with two operators if the show is a simple talk show, but it limits the visual interest of your show. A fourth camera is useful for music shows, cooking shows, or other shows that call for a lot of visual interest.

Floor Director. The floor director helps on the studio floor. A camera operator may double as floor director if show is simple: no audience, no talent moving on and off the set, etc.

Teleprompter Operator (if needed). The audio person may be able to double in this position if audio is simple.

Phone operator (if needed). This is needed only for call-in shows.

Microphone wrangler (if needed). This is needed only if you are planning to have an audience and give them a chance to ask questions.

Prepare Show Content

First, you need to develop the material that will interest viewers. If the format of your show is that your host asks the guests questions, then the host must have a list of questions, either memorized or written out. Have more questions than you think you need. If you think you need a dozen, develop three dozen. Some guests will run with the first question you ask and fill up the show; others will need a lot of prompting.

If the host is going to read a long introduction from the teleprompter, write the teleprompter script (it's a good idea to have the host practice it before finalizing it), and bring it to the studio on the day of the show, preferably in electronic form.

Prepare a Rundown Sheet

The "rundown sheet" outlines the sequence of events during the show. A sample is below in the section "Rundown" on page 7.

Compile the List of Graphics

You'll have designed the look of your graphics before your first show, but you'll need to fill in the names and titles of your guests (for lower thirds) and crew (for credits) before each show. Information you should consider bringing:

For each guest: Name, title, organization name, organization URL, and email

Credits: Names (spelled correctly!) for the producer(s), director, technical director (switcher), audio, graphics, floor director, cameras, and production manager (tech); and, if you have any of these: assistant director, makeup, sponsors, and roll-in and music credits.

Special lower thirds (if you need any): Things such as dates of events, names of organizations and their contact information, etc.

Bring the list in legible form for your graphics operator. See an example in the section "Graphics" on page 8.

Prepare "Roll-In" Material and Still Images

If you have video that you shot in the field that you wish to include in your show (a "roll-in") or photos you want to show, bring those to the studio on the day of your show. The Tricaster Cheat Sheets have information about the acceptable formats for these. If your material is not in one of the listed formats, then arrange to work with someone at the Media Center to bring them in a few days ahead of the show and work out any wrinkles.

Obtain a Meal for the Crew

Our volunteer crewmembers get only two forms of payment: the psychic satisfaction of a job well done, and a meal provided by you. Don't overlook the latter. Your budget and taste can guide your choice here: crews have been happy with everything from sandwiches and soda to lavish spreads to health-food munchies.

Material for the Studio at the Taping

The producer should bring various things to the studio on the day of the show:

- Rundown sheet (see the section below)
- List of graphics (see the section below)
- Photos of your set
- Teleprompter script (preferably in electronic form)
- Videos or photos to be incorporated into the show (in electronic form)

Rundown Sheet

The rundown sheet describes the events during the show. A sample is below. The first column is the time remaining in the show when that particular part of the show starts. The second column tells how long that part of the show will last.

A rundown sheet for a show that has complicated graphics or music requirements should have columns to describe those.

Start	Duration	Content
28:30	0:40	Leader tape sequence
27:50	1:50	Host introduces the show and guests.
26:00	11:00	Interview guests. Introduce demonstration
15:00 (approx.)	8:00	Demonstration
7:00	5:30	Host continues the interview with the guests
1:30	0:30	Host prompts guests to summarize their messages.
1:00	0:30	Host closes the show
0:30	0:30	Credits.

Graphics

Here's a sample of a list of graphics you should bring with you to the studio at the time your show is recorded.

Lower Thirds

Jenny Gumdrop
Host

Chris Froth
Chef, *The Marshmallow Maker*

Cory Stickyshoe
Janitor, *The Marshmallow Maker*

The MarshmallowMaker
www.wemakegoo.com

Credits

The Candy Show

Producer	Jenny Gumdrop
Director	Harry Hyperglycemic
Graphics	Sketchy Herman
Audio	Barbara “Bon Bon” Buttery
Floor Director	Larry Licorice
Camera	Harold “The Heavy” Howell
	Barry Brittle
	Freddy Fudge
Production Manager	Mary Marmelade

Producer Checklist

See the sections above about each of these tasks.

<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Task	Due Date
Before the first episode of a show		
	Determine general show content	N/A
	Meet with Media Center staff	N/A
	Fill in producer's agreement and program proposal	N/A
	Determine show format	N/A
	Design show's look; put together a set	1 month before first show
	Design graphics format	1 month before first show
	Determine show open	1 month before first show
	Select music	1 month before first show
Before every episode		
	Reserve a studio time	1 to 6 months ahead
	Recruit talent	1 to 6 months ahead
	Publicize the program	weeks before the show
	Recruit crew	1 month to 1 week ahead
	Director	
	Graphics	
	Switcher (ask the director if you need one)	
	Audio	
	2 to 4 Cameras	
	Floor Director (if needed)	
	Teleprompter (if needed)	
	Phone operator (if needed)	
	Microphone wrangler (if needed)	
	Prepare show content	1 day before the show
	Prepare rundown sheet	1 day before the show
	Compile list of graphics	1 day before the show
	Provide roll-in material and still images	bring to the studio
	Food for the crew	bring to the studio