

Marketing & Buzz

Getting Your Film Seen

“For every two dollars spent making a film, studios spend another dollar on marketing”

“Though marketing is, as Forbes contributor Alan McGlade called, “a critical part of the filmmaking ecosystem,” it has, ironically, become an increasingly lazy practice. While studios spend billions marketing to the audiences that are shrinking — a lament that has, quite frankly, been going on for at least twenty years — the output appears like a DIY project made with mediocre scraps, thrown together by someone whose ambition stretches way beyond their abilities.”

- [Monika Bartyzel](#), [Movie Marketing: The Great Mess Hollywood Can't Quit](#)

Fun Fact: Film audiences are shrinking. Shrinking audiences means there are more filmmakers, creative image makers, and content creators of all kinds competing for the same eyeballs, the same buzz, the same festivals, and the same distribution opportunities. The ONLY way to set yourself and your film apart is to market the hell out of projects you believe in. Being an independent filmmaker means being a jack of all trades and no trade is more important in the current media landscape than the ability to get your film seen.

Social Media



Creating content is extremely important for getting your name and your film into the public's mind. Get your friends and family on board, then classmates, colleagues, professors, community members, business owners, critics, movie fans and kids. Reach out to people as much as you can, provide them with new content on a regular basis, give small perks that let your fans know they are appreciated, and when you do find success, share it with them generously. Social media is a filmmaker's best friend, and when used correctly it can make the difference between your film getting passed over or picked up. A large, (and non-sarcastic) social media presence shows commitment, and engagement with the process and respect to your fans.

Online Presence

Beyond social media, having a traditional website is one of the best ways to make your production look official and professional. It is 'homebase' for your production team, your marketing team, your fans and the public. It should be clean, easy to read, and not cluttered with an abundance of content (that's what social media is for). This website is not 'your' website, it is the film's website. While you may have filmmaker bios for yourself and your crew, this is not the place to be posting vacation pictures and spouting off opinions on unrelated matters. This is where the director of submissions at the Toronto Film Festival will go to learn more about your film. This is where a financial backer will learn if you are worth investing in. Keep it simple, keep it focused, and choose a domain name that is easy to remember (preferably: *titleofyourfilm.com*)

- [Children of the Arctic](#)
- [Whale Valley](#)

Visual Content

Visual content is a very diverse term. It refers to movie posters, postcards, production stills, trailers, clips, filmmaker/actor interviews etc. These tend to be the more traditional forms of marketing - used in the pre-social media era. While they may seem somewhat old fashioned, they are highly effective at drawing in diverse audiences.

Movie Posters



A good movie poster can make a huge difference in how audiences respond to your film. While the style of movie posters can vary, often the best ones are those that use simplicity, great design, and speak to the theme of the film without giving too much of the plot away.

Movie posters are not after thoughts. They are an integral part of how you communicate about your film. Always take the time to create the best poster you can because for many people it will be the only thing that determines whether they see your film or not.

Production Stills



Production stills are something that you should be collecting while on set. Images of your team, of the sets, and behind the scenes content is important for giving audiences opportunities to connect on a more personal level with your production. On your biggest production days it is helpful to have a set photographer. The photographs they produce may end up as a huge part of your marketing campaign.

[The Rest Are Missing](#)

Merchandise

People. Love. Merch.

Even if you don't have the cash flow to work with Matel to create an action figure based on your main character, there are still lots of other ways to create items to sell or give away to the public. Even simple, low budget, and homemade items can make a huge impact on audiences. T-shirts, hats, sunglasses, rubber bracelets, seed paper, stickers, decals, concept drawings, prop, set and costume reproductions, cell phone cases, and anything else you can think of can serve as merchandise that can not only bring in a little extra cash for your production, but also broaden your reach. When a fan of yours buys a t-shirt with a still image of your film on it, chances are they are going to tell their friends about it. *Be wary though! Don't buy a buy a ton of merchandise!* Choose 1 (one) thing you are going to sell and whatever that item is should be related to your film in some capacity. Is yours a spring break film being released in late May? Sell sunglasses. Is your film about cars? Sell decals. Does your film have a particularly iconic prop? Sell reproductions of it. Keep it simple. If you have built up a fanbase, merchandise can be a powerful tool that can spread the word in a more physical, less digital, format.



Trailers

[Inherent Vice](#)

[Dear White People](#)

[Whiplash](#)

[Aya](#)

[Boyhood](#)

[Blow](#)

[Boogie Nights](#)

[Mulholland Drive](#)

[Iron Man 3](#)

The Actors Role



Your biggest asset when beginning a marketing campaign is your actor(s). Their job doesn't end after wrap. Your actors are the public face of your film. They are the people who your audiences will be most familiar with. Do a sit down interview with your actors to post on your website, take photos of them in costume, have them hit the pavement and help generate buzz for the film. Especially in the indie film business, make sure your actor is an integral part of your production.

Crowdfunding



Crowdfunding is just about the only way for indie and student filmmakers to get the budgets they need to go into production. There is even a trend towards larger films, with big name actors and directors moving towards crowd and fan funded campaigns.

When creating a crowdfunding campaign make sure it is complete. Have lots of content, communicate DAILY with your contributors, send weekly or bi-weekly updates, have great gifts to give, write thank you letters. Most importantly, set a reasonable goal. Too high and you'll never reach it, too low and it won't make a difference in your budget.

Film Festivals



FESTIVAL DE CANNES



raindance
WRITE•PRODUCE•DIRECT•FILM

Submit to festivals! As many as you can, with every film you make. Don't let your film die after its first screening. Almost all festivals have a student or amateur program. Festivals often have a fee associated with submission, but students tend to get heavily discounted or even free opportunities to submit.

Look around for festivals that are specific to your production. Do you identify as or does your film focus on a particular subject, race, ethnicity, nationality, religion, gender, or sexual orientation? Look for festivals that cater to that specificity. Also, look for student specific film festivals.

Starting small is smart because it will help you leverage bigger opportunities. But don't be afraid to go big. If you have a film that you are proud of, go ahead and submit to Sundance, Tribeca, Toronto, and Cannes. You never know!

Press & PR

Getting press can be a hard task. There are lots of people competing for what you want. However, the biggest mistake people make is simply not asking! Go to your local radio station and ask that they interview you or your actor about your film. Find online movie blogs that may be willing to write about your film. Go to festivals and push your film among other film professionals. Go to comic cons, film conventions, participate and network! Have an event, have a screening, have a party. You can't expect press to come to you just because you have a great product. In the business, you'll hear people talk about 'the hustle' - it's real. You have to bring press to you and the only way to do that is to talk to **EVERYONE** and not stop (even after you've heard 'no' a thousand times). Wear a name tag, carry business cards, carry promotional material and merch with you at all times. You never know who you will meet while you're on the war-path.



Premiere



Don't wait to have your premiere. Luckily you are at a school where you can showcase your films fairly easily. So use it! If your film is going to be playing, send out formal invitations to the screening, and even if you're living in a dorm, have an after party, buy pizza, and dance! Never squander an opportunity to share your film, generate buzz, and show people a good time.

It's the movie business - have fun.