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Is your screenplay ready to go out to market? How many drafts have you done? 10- 20 is the norm. It really has to be the best it can be. It also has to be meticulously presented. Standard industry format, with no typos whatsoever. No scene numbers. Before even considering sending out your script, practise writing loglines and synopses for it. A logline is a one-sentence description of your story. A synopsis is a description of the story and characters that's about one page in length. This offers you a final sense (reassurance?) that the whole storyline flows effortlessly, but they are also a necessary marketing step when trying to sell a movie script. However many drafts you've done, I urge to take one more look and ask yourself some questions. Imagine you are an industry reader late on a Friday evening, desperate to get home, or a producer who's spent all weekend awaiting her slush pile and now it's Sunday night and she's tired out. Page One: Will they bother to turn the page? It has to be absolutely compelling. Keep on reading and until you're satisfied that it is bold, original, with the words leaping off the page, don't send it out. Wherever you send it, you get just one shot. And if in doubt, get feedback. It's a new career you want to establish. Why wouldn't you invest a little in getting proper, tough advice before you get going for real and try to sell your screenplay? Read the trades - Screen and Variety - invaluable info on who's looking for what. Go online to find film companies' websites for contact details of Heads of Acquisitions and Development. Check out the kind of films they produce. If you want to try getting an agent (very tough now) look up online, research the writers on their lists to make sure there's a chance they'd be interested in your type of script. If you want to try sending a script to a particular actor, call Equity in UK or Screen Actors Guild in New York or Los Angeles to get their agent's contact details. Go to film festivals and screenwriters' festivals. Network like mad. Join screenwriters' forums - lots of useful info about festivals and contests - and moral support. Do not send a script. The letter is to persuade them to ask to read it. Your query letter should be 7-8 lines maximum. No meandering, dull prose story of your life! Grab the reader in first 3 lines. Who you are, what your job is. Next 3 lines, a sizzling description of your script in 25 words or less. Make sure it's original and intriguing. You need to spend time on getting this right. End the letter with: I would like to send you my project for consideration. I look forward to hearing from you. There are two probable alternatives when it comes to selling your script. First is an 'option', for a certain amount of money the producer or production company will have, for a specific time, the exclusive right to try to get funding and attach names to the screenplay. In effect, it's a temporary contract. At the end of the option period, the producer can buy the script if it looks like the project can be produced, renew the option, or simply forget the whole thing - where the writer keeps control and copyright of the script. The second alternative is an ' outright purchase'. After you sign this contract, you will not own the rights to your script anymore. New writers are often brought in and the screenplay dramatically changed. Winning a contest or becoming a finalist or shortlisted can give your script some kudos and encourage industry professionals who monitor these contests to contact you. There are many to choose from with different criteria and entry fees. Of the most respected: Nicholls, Blue Cat, Red Planet, Zoetrope, and Page. While you wait, get onto the next piece of work immediately! If this script doesn't sell, it could get you commissioned to write a different script. Good luck! Do try writing some shorts. Production companies now go to short film festivals that have mushroomed in the last few years. Join film-making groups, get involved, write a great short, get a director on board. The film could win or get shortlisted at a festival and that will mean your full length script will get taken more seriously. Several writers of shorts have gone on to be commissioned to write feature-length Hollywood screenplays. Why not you? Let's discuss how to write a movie script and sell it. After writing a script and hearing it come out of my mouth as a screenplay, I found that it can be hard to sell it, as I had to learn the tricks to sell my own script and others that I would write in the future. 1. Be 100% in your current market I know there is a huge market of sales agents and filmmakers out there, but that doesn't mean it is the best route for you to go. Don't become the first who is constantly trying to branch out and write different things, you won't succeed. When I wrote Iron Man 3, it was easy for me to not look at it as a "theme park" type film. 2. Stop stealing ideas from all your celebrity friends! I mean, how many all the time, I know that you're a "big name" actor has read every screenplay. How is that possible? When you write for a living, it's hard to completely isolate yourself from a few hundred thousands of other screenwriters and remember when you're writing a screenplay is. Let's say I'm writing a screenplay for Tom and I put a David Ayer/Sivester Stone and send it to all my celebrity friends. Who ends reading it and saying "Hey, let's go for this!" First of all, they're going to wind up with something that, but it won't be perfect. Your friends will tell you what's wrong, but they won't tell you what's good, or what's right. Before you have to write another screenplay, get it 100% in your own world and write it from there. They will get it from you eventually, but how can they know what you are trying to say? How can they understand your vision unless you are actively writing it for them? They may say they want it, but it's just for their own personal pleasure. Even if they say they want it, how often are they going to actually follow through? Your ideas are for you to share, not for you to hoard and show only to your friends. 3. Don't take everything personally After reading over my own screenplays and stories, I find that I have been doing a few things wrong, I have spent too much time judging what is bad and what is good, because when you read the dailies from a shoot, don't be the director saying "this is great, but he is shooting it really fast" or "we could have done this here." It's so easy to say this stuff and do it in your own head. Go back to your script and look for why you wrote it. Who is the main character and why? What does it tell us about him or her? If you put it down on paper, it becomes easier to sell. I have to remember that I am writing for myself, and that I make mistakes, but that's also part of the learning process. You are only going to be successful by writing good scripts that people want to see, so you have to make sure you don't waste time on terrible ones. I have had great feedback on my scripts, but I have had much more constructive feedback. 4. If you don't get a "No," don't take it personal After I wrote Iron Man 3 and got the call, it was only by getting that "no" that I discovered a part of the process that I didn't want to understand. I was too caught up in writing it for myself and had too many ideas on the table to know what would work and what wouldn't. If you don't get a "no," I think it's better to push on anyway. You are only going to waste time doing something wrong. You have time to waste, but there is no time to learn. If you hear the "no" and aren't sure how to write something else, I don't think you should write anything else. I don't think you should have a movie that was as successful as I was. Sometimes a "no" can be the best thing for you. There are two ways to write a screenplay: one is to read books that describe how to write a screenplay, and the other way is to write a screenplay based on your research. I do not recommend that anyone does both, and I am currently not offering my services as a screenwriter, which you can check the Screenwriting Service or Why I Might Not Be The One To Help You Write Your Screenplay. So, here's how you should write a screenplay. Conclude the main plot in the first 10 pages. The main plot should be done in the first 10 pages to be successful with a reader. If the movie gets worse from page 10, then this project isn't viable. The main plot shouldn't be vague or open to interpretation. A reader should be able to understand what the movie is about from the first page of the script. Save the complicated subplot for the second draft, as it will usually be made obvious in the first 10 pages and will be hard for a reader to follow. Don't make the movie "surreal," don't make the reader fall into the fantasy, and be careful with the amount of characters. Usually, one or two characters is sufficient, but it is necessary to avoid the wordiness of a hundred characters. The less characters, the more impactful the story is, but don't write a love story. Avoid telling a story from the point of view of one character to another, as it might be a mistake, because you might get an outline wrong. You can, however, introduce a second character and then show that character's point of view. Don't give away important plot points early on, if you have a plot twist, be sure to have it near the end. But remember that it should make sense at the end and not a throwaway, as it should add depth to your story. When you put a twist in, it will be more impactful to the audience, however don't reveal the mystery early in the film. Make your story clear by the first ten pages, because when you know what the story is about, you will write the script much faster. Addison Smith is a writer and blogger for HollywoodDynamics. She loves women's fiction, a good novel, a tall glass of cabernet, and nachos. Reddit and its creative vision and practical thinking. By focusing on achievable concepts, crafting a sellable story, and keeping production realities in mind, you can create a screenplay that stands out and attracts attention. Remember, success in indie filmmaking isn't just about talent—it's about strategy, networking, and persistence. So, whether you're wondering how much does a screenwriter make or how to sell my movie script, the key is to keep learning, keep writing, and never give up. Let me know your thoughts in the comments below! Have you written or produced an indie film? Share your tips and experiences—I'd love to hear from you. Skip to content Selling a screenplay can be a challenging yet rewarding journey for a screenwriter. Mastering the art of selling a screenplay not only requires talent and determination but also a grasp on the intricacies of the film industry. This article on how to sell a screenplay aims to provide valuable insight into the process of selling a screenplay, offering practical tips and strategies for aspiring screenwriters to follow in order to improve their chances of success. The writing process itself is only one aspect of the overall equation; marketing the screenplay is equally crucial to achieving a sale. It is essential for screenwriters to research the market, understand the current trends, and identify which production companies are most suitable for their work. Furthermore, developing a standout pitch and effectively showcasing a screenplay through other mediums can significantly impact the likelihood of a sale. In the following sections, we'll delve deeper into specific steps and strategies for selling a screenplay. By following these guidelines, screenwriters can maximize their chances of seeing their work come to life on the big screen while also gaining invaluable experience in the world of screenwriting and film production. A screenplay is a written script for a film or TV show, containing dialogue, scene descriptions, and stage directions. A spec script, on the other hand, is a screenplay that a writer creates without being commissioned or hired by a studio or production company. The spec script market has its own rules and processes compared to commissioned screenplays, including the need for writers to independently market their work and find producers or studios interested in their stories. In the spec script market, the writer's goal is usually to sell their screenplay to a producer or studio who will then develop it into a film or TV show. When writing a screenplay, it is essential to consider the genre and current industry trends. Understanding the audience for your script and the preferences of studios or producers will increase the chances of it being sold. For example, if you have a comedy script, focus on studios and agents that make comedies. If you have a drama script, approach specialty companies that produce award-winning dramas. Some of the popular film genres include: Action/Adventure Comedy Drama Horror Science Fiction/Fantasy Romantic Comedy Industry trends change over time, so it is crucial to stay informed about the market to maximize the chances of selling a screenplay. Researching the market, keeping up with box office hits, and studying successful films or TV shows within your chosen genre can help improve your understanding of the audience and what production companies are currently seeking. By understanding the differences between screenplays and spec scripts, along with the importance of genre and industry trends, writers can better navigate the screenplay market and increase their chances of selling their work. A great script starts with a strong story. A screenwriter must create a well-structured plot that follows a clear beginning, middle, and end. Incorporating compelling themes, conflicts, and emotional arcs can further enhance the story's appeal. To build a powerful narrative, consider the following: Outline a clear storyline with a unique and original premise Develop a strong central conflict that drives the plot Incorporate subplots that complement and enrich the main story arc Utilize a three-act structure to create a well-paced and coherent narrative Further Reading: The Dan Harmon Story Circle The characters in a screenplay are essential to bringing the story to life. They should be well-developed, multidimensional, and reliable. To create compelling characters, screenwriters can: Craft detailed character backgrounds and motivations Avoid stereotypes and create dynamic, unique, and complex individuals Identify each character's arc and how it intersects with the overall story Ensure that the characters have distinctive voices and traits Dialogue should feel natural, engaging, and authentic, revealing aspects of the characters and moving the story forward. To write effective dialogue, consider the following tips: Keep dialogue concise and to the point, avoiding verbose or unnecessary conversations Differentiate character voices through speech patterns, vocabulary, and tone Use subtext, allowing characters to express thoughts and emotions indirectly Incorporate conflict and tension in the dialogue to create dynamic interactions between characters Incorporating these elements in the process can help a screenwriter craft a great script that could capture the interest of producers and ultimately sell. The key is to focus on developing a strong story, create compelling characters, and write engaging dialogue to truly make the script stand out. Polishing your screenplay is an essential step in increasing its chances of being sold. Start with revisiting your script and refining the structure, dialogue, and pacing. Make sure each scene and character is necessary, has a clear purpose, and contributes to the overall story. Enhancing your screenplay with more visual elements and dialogue that feels natural will make it more engaging for potential buyers. Remember to proofread for grammar, spelling, and clarity, as errors can distract from the story and lead to a negative impression. Before sending your screenplay to potential buyers, seek feedback from others to ensure it is the best it can be. Consider sharing your work with fellow screenwriters, writing groups, or industry professionals to get their insights and suggestions. Listening to different perspectives and accepting constructive criticism can help refine your script and address any overlooked issues. However, ensure that the feedback aligns with your vision for the story before implementing changes. A coverage service is another tool that can help screenwriters polish their work. Coverage services provide professional analysis of your script, pinpointing areas of improvement and providing detailed feedback. This feedback focuses on elements like plot, character development, pacing, and formatting, helping you understand how industry professionals might perceive your screenplay (slyosopher). It's essential to research and invest in a reputable coverage service to receive the most valuable feedback possible. In summary, polishing your screenplay involves revisiting the structure, refining dialogue, and enhancing visual elements. By following these steps, you can increase your chances of successfully selling your screenplay. Selling a screenplay can be a challenging process for anyone trying to break into Hollywood. One essential aspect of finding success in this field is learning to deal with rejection and maintaining perseverance. It's common for screenwriters to face multiple rejections before finally making a sale. The key is to remain determined and continue refining your work based on the feedback you receive. Another important factor in successfully selling your screenplay is developing strong pitching skills. Attending industry events and pitchfests can be an excellent way to build a network and receive valuable feedback on your work. These events allow screenwriters to practice their pitches, which is crucial for a successful sale. Various resources, such as the New York Film Academy's article, offer tips for honing your pitching skills in the industry. Finally, an essential element in selling your screenplay is to showcase your talent through an expanded portfolio. 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After submitting your screenplay to agents, managers, and production companies, it's important to follow up on your submissions in a professional and respectful manner. Don't bombard anyone with constant emails or phone calls, as this can be off-putting and counterproductive. Instead, wait a few weeks after your initial submission before following up to inquire about the status of your script and whether the recipient has had a chance to review it. Patience is key during this process, as decision-makers may take time to review your screenplay. While waiting for responses, continue to network with industry professionals and refine your writing craft. By staying proactive and persistent, you'll increase your chances of successfully selling your screenplay. Selling a screenplay can be a challenging process for anyone trying to break into Hollywood. One essential aspect of finding success in this field is learning to deal with rejection and maintaining perseverance. 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