

Office Runner/Production Secretary

3 Stage Plan

If you are considering a career change, currently studying TV Production or you're a recent business graduate wishing to pursue a career in the TV industry then it's time to get organised.

After you have meticulously ploughed through the MFJTV Career Guides and settled on a potential career path that suits your personality and future ambitions, it's time to start making a plan, and we're here to help you do that.

This three stage career plan is designed to break down the initial steps for gaining experience and finding paid work in the industry. Obviously everyone has varying degrees of success finding work depending on their approach and determination - so we have based this plan on our experience dealing with CVs, and feedback from companies and productions posting their requirements for candidates. This checklist should increase your chances of getting where you want to go.

Stage 1:

Experience

- Look for work experience positions
- Look for internships in the production office.
- Read the Creative Skillset [guidelines](#) that define both of the above.
- A few credits as a PA/runner on short films. Or, paid office admin experience.
- Continue to work on student productions, but offer to oversee the budgeting and logistical side of things.
- Look to the MFJTV board every day for opportunities.

Skills

- Get a driving licence.
- Get a first aid certificate.
- Learn how to make spreadsheets on Microsoft Excel.
- Practice your negotiation skills - eg. haggling at the market or pulling in favours from friends.
- Swat up on Production Health & Safety.
- Learn about archive and copyright law.
- Get organised, read the Production Secretary Career Guide to build your knowledge of the Production environment.

Knowledge

- Use MFJTV CV and Covering Letter Advice.
- Use MFJTV CV Builder to help create an industry-focused CV.
- Research production companies and Production Managers by watching loads of TV (note down names from the end credits).
- Read *How to get a Job in Television* by Elsa Sharp.
- Read *Greenlit: Developing Factual/Reality TV Ideas* by Nicola Lees.
- Read *Production Management for TV & Film* by Linda Stradling.
- Read <https://app.hiive.co.uk/job-roles/tv/production-department/production-secretary/>
- Use MFJTV Industry Essentials to find training courses.
- Download the Production Secretary Manual from MFJTV (In development)

Stage 2:

Experience

- Create a network of contacts on your phone and/or in a little black book specifically for industry people.
- If positions become available in the production office take them.
- Gain more office admin roles if you struggle to find TV jobs.
- At least 3-6 Runner credits on TV dramas, factual programmes or feature films.
- Check MFJTV jobs board every day for opportunities.

Skills

- Able to demonstrate a professional attitude in the production office.
- Adaptable/amenable when working on a different range of productions.
- Driving licence and your own car if possible.
- Make contacts and stay in touch with them via social media and regular emailing.
- Know how to book accommodation and travel.
- Take multiple directions and know how to prioritise those tasks.
- Learn how to put a basic schedule together.
- Know what a production budget looks like.
- Practice creating a Call Sheet.

Knowledge

- Know what all the job titles actually do, (not just in your department), you need to be clued up on all production crew roles too.
- Continue to look to the MFJTV resources section for training opportunities.
- Know the role of office runner inside out.
- Know all the terms for the production environment and the general TV lingo (see list of important phrases on production secretary career guide).
- Attend free annual Industry events such as [BVE](#) and the [Media Production Show](#) to network and listen to panel discussions and seminars.

Stage 3

Experience

- Work consistently for 1-2 years as a production secretary.
- Work on corporate videos/commercial productions as a production assistant if no TV work available.
- Work on TV drama as a Production Assistant.
- If you are not going down the Production route make sure you have attached yourself to the department you wish to progress into (eg. Editorial, Legal or Accounts).
- Apply to get on a Talent development scheme such as [Ones to Watch](#) at Edinburgh TV Festival.

Skills

- Skills listed in the previous two stages plus a hearty work ethic and drive.
- Able to create a professional, thorough Call Sheet.
- Able to create/update contact lists and Production Bible.
- Confident at negotiating deals with freelance crew, location owners and kit hire companies.
- Up-to-date with the latest camera, lighting and sound kit used in TV production.
- Up-to-date with Health & Safety, Copyright Law and First Aid.
- Know what a Deliverables list consists of.
- Have a clear understanding of how pre-production, production and post production works.

Knowledge

- Look for work before the job you're currently working on finishes.
- Have a network of PAs, Co-ordinators and Production Managers that know who you are and what you can do.
- Know who your regional kit, stationery and catering suppliers are.
- Know which accommodation and travel chains/suppliers do good deals.
- Practice putting crew shoot packs together - and making check lists.
- Be fluent with industry jargon.
- Know where to source crew, talent, VO artists (agencies, trade unions etc.)
- Know how to reconcile cash floats, and process invoices.
- Aim to attend at least 2 or 3 big industry events per year - give out business cards and stick around for the networking parties.