

PRODUCTION ASSISTANT (FILM/TELEVISION/VIDEO)

Kaiawhina Huangā

Print Page

Description

Production assistants help the production team organise the making of a film or television programme, and do much of the administrative work.



In the studio

He Whakamarama



Awhina ai i te ope whakaputa hotaka ki te hanga hotaka whitiahua, hotaka pouaka whakaata ranei me te mahi i te nuinga o nga mahi whakahaere.

Alternative Titles

- Film Production Assistant
- Television Production Assistant

Tasks and Duties

Production assistants:

- do administrative, publicity and research work, and deal with mail

- time rehearsals and scenes
- time music for soundtracks
- work out shooting schedules
- arrange production meetings
- coordinate and book the production crew
- hire and/or book vehicles, accommodation, equipment and flights
- ensure the shoot locations are allowed to be used
- photocopy and file scripts
- ensure everyone is in the right place with the latest script
- arrange voiceovers (recorded speech)
- organise contracts for the cast and crew
- deal with production enquiries from the public
- ensure permission has been granted by everyone appearing in a programme
- label and categorise tapes and deliver them to the director
- may ensure titles and credits are right
- may clear copyright on music used
- may do any paperwork associated with a production, such as documenting where everything is stored.

Personal Requirements

Skills

Production assistants need to have good organisational ability, and administrative skills including keyboard, computing, filing and word-processing skills. They also need to have skill in written and oral communication, time-keeping and time management.



Production Assistant Emilie Stevenson at work

Knowledge

Production assistants need to know how each department in their production company works and who does what. They also need to know about film and television production schedules, how a studio operates, who to contact to fix problems, and how to deal with the public. It is important that they have knowledge of the employment rules and regulations related to production work.

Personal Qualities

Production assistants need to be logical, practical, good at dealing with people, and able to work well under

pressure and as part of a team. They also need to be fast, accurate and good at solving problems. Production assistants usually work on short-term contracts, and therefore need to be able to network and promote themselves in order to gain more work.



"You need to be someone who is extremely organised and doesn't panic. If you strike a problem, you have to fix it rather than freak out - everything is fixable."

Emilie Stevenson, Production Assistant

Physical Requirements

Production assistants should have a neat and tidy appearance.

How to Enter the Job

Education

There are no specific educational requirements for production assistants. People often start out in the industry as production runners and move into production assistant roles. However, it is preferred that they have a tertiary qualification in media production, broadcasting, or film and television. A broad range of subjects at school is useful, including English and any subjects that involve creativity.

Related courses:



[Media and Broadcasting Skills](#)
[Media Production \(General\)](#)
[Video and Television](#)
[Acting, Drama and Theatre](#)

Take off to tertiary!

[Take off to tertiary!](#) - information and advice to help with study or training decision -making.

New Zealand Qualifications Authority:



[Electronic Media](#)
[Film and Television](#)
[Performance Production](#)

Entry Requirements

Most film and television companies prefer production assistants to hold a current, clean, full driver's licence.

Useful Experience

Experience working as a production runner or production secretary is useful for production assistants. Work as a secretary or administrative assistant in a high-pressure field, or any work involving organising and dealing with the public, such as in the hospitality industry, is also helpful.

Training on the Job

Most skills needed to work as a production assistant are learned on the job.



"You learn as you go, because the things you need to know in a job like production assistant keep growing and growing the more you do it."

Jo Trendle, Production Assistant

Working Conditions

Work Places and Travel

Production assistants work in offices, studios and on location. They may have to spend time travelling to and from location shoots.

Equipment

Production assistants use office equipment, including computers, and often have to use a stopwatch and clipboard.



A tape library

Workplace Conditions

Production assistants usually work indoors, although they may have to spend some time outside during location shoots. Conditions may be stressful, as they work to deadlines.



"The work can be stressful at times, but because it's at a consistent level most of the time you just get used to it."

Jo Trendle, Production Assistant

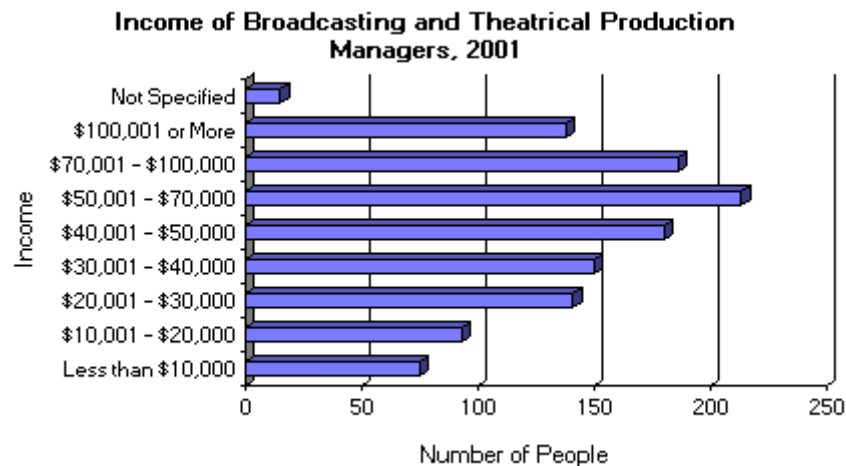
Employment Conditions

Hours

Production assistants usually work regular hours, but may have to work long, irregular hours, depending on the production they are working on. They may also have to work evenings and weekends.

Salary

Salary varies, but production assistants usually earn between \$18,000 and \$25,000 per year. Freelance production assistants usually earn between \$150 and \$250 per day, and many work on short-term contracts.



Source: Statistics New Zealand

[Interpreting Charts](#)

Contact with People

Production assistants usually work under the supervision of their producer or production manager. They have a lot of contact with people, including members of the production team, writers, directors, production crews, actors and their agents, and publicity staff. Production assistants also have contact with the public.



"I have contact with everyone in my team, the general public, and sometimes organisations like the Department of Conservation or the Council, depending on what and where we're shooting."

Emilie Stevenson, Production Assistant

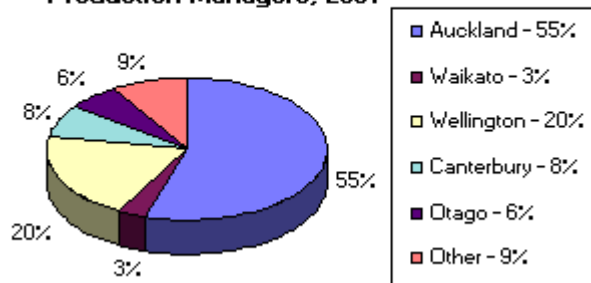
Job Market

Market Details

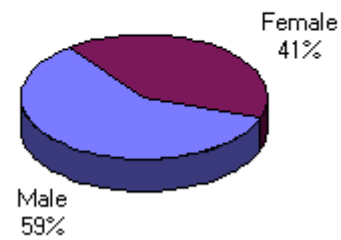
These statements and statistics are based on information available from Statistics New Zealand about broadcasting and theatrical production managers. Charts and statistics on broadcasting and theatrical production managers include data on producers (film/television/video), production assistants (film/television/video), production managers (film/television), radio producers and theatre producers.

- 1,191 people were employed as broadcasting and theatrical production managers in 2001
- 90% were employed full-time
- 41% were female
- The highest proportion of people were employed in the Auckland (55%), Wellington (20%) and Canterbury (8%) regions.

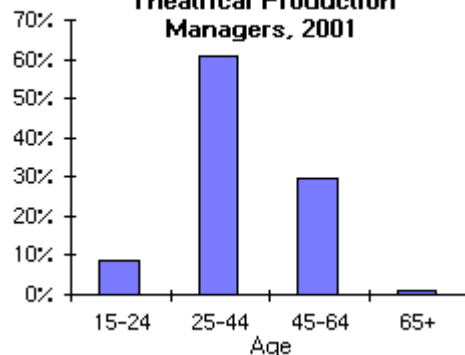
Regional Location of Employment of Broadcasting and Theatrical Production Managers, 2001



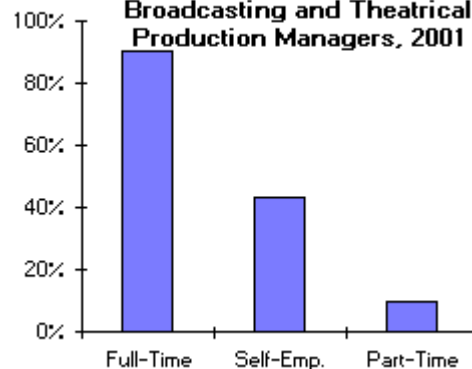
Gender of Broadcasting and Theatrical Production Managers, 2001



Age of Broadcasting and Theatrical Production Managers, 2001



Type of Employment of Broadcasting and Theatrical Production Managers, 2001



Source: Statistics New Zealand

[Interpreting Charts](#)

Job Outlook

The number of production assistants is expected to remain stable or grow moderately over the next two to three years; however, competition for positions is expected to be high because of the number of people doing or completing tertiary courses in this area.

Although there has been a rapid growth in television stations (especially regional) in New Zealand over the

last few years, the film and television industry is still fairly small. Many production assistants work on a contact to contract basis, although there are some opportunities for full-time work in production companies. Networking with people in the industry to obtain work continues to be one of the most important factors in getting work. Positions are rarely advertised and are generally obtained by word of mouth.

Government funding from the \$22 million grant to the arts may impact on the outlook of this job by providing more money to make films and television shows. New Zealand is also being marketed as an appealing production base for overseas film and television series makers. This has the potential to increase job prospects as international production companies use New Zealand workers.

(Updated 18/02/2003)

Regional Market Details

Northland / [Auckland](#) / Waikato / Bay of Plenty / Gisborne / Hawke's Bay / Taranaki / Manawatu-Wanganui / [Wellington](#) / Tasman / Nelson / Marlborough / West Coast / Canterbury / Otago / Southland

Auckland:

The number of broadcasting and theatrical production managers employed in the Auckland region is expected to remain stable over the next three to five years. In theatrical production, employment opportunities are influenced by disposable income levels and the demand from the public for productions. Limited theatre funding is currently impacting on job numbers. Despite an increase in the number of training courses available, and in the opportunities available to do amateur productions to gain experience, the amount of paid employment is small. However, for those with regular exposure and a solid reputation, opportunities are stable.

In the broadcasting industry, government funding impacts on smaller broadcasters making it harder for them to compete with government-owned radio stations. However, if new radio bands go up for tender this will create employment opportunities as it will allow new radio stations to enter the market. Technology is also impacting on this role as automated programming creates less need for broadcasting production managers but will increase the demand for technical support roles.

Turnover among broadcasting and theatrical production managers is moderate, and people in this occupation are employed both full and part-time.

(Written 26/03/2003)

Wellington:

The number of radio producers employed in the Wellington region is expected to remain stable or grow moderately over the next three to five years. Employment opportunities are often influenced by radio station budgets, the state of the economy and disposable income levels as these factors affect the ability of radio stations to operate, and in turn producer job numbers.

Most radio producers are employed part-time as this role is part of a wider job description. Turnover among radio producers is moderate to low and most stay within the occupation but change the station they work for. Enjoyment of the job, being good at the work and limited opportunities also contribute to the low turnover.

(Written 04/11/2002)

Current Vacancies



[Corporate Managers](#)



[KiwiCareers Job Vacancy Links](#)

Personal Profile

Jo Trendle



Jo Trendle left school and completed a film and television course, which led to her job at a Wellington-based television production company. "I started working on 'Celebrity Squares' at the end of 1996, after the course, and that went on for nearly a year. The course is quite hard to get into and it is quite expensive, but we got good training and they have good resources as well."

Jo started working in her current job in July 1997. "Since then I've been pretty busy. The job is quite challenging and there's always work to do, which I like. I've always wanted to be in this industry and being a production assistant is a good starting point. I got a good basic grounding from the course and the work is teaching me a lot more on top of that."

"My favourite parts of the job are working as part of a team and meeting lots of people. I like being in control and well-organised as a person, so it's good to be able to do it for a living."

The next step for Jo is probably a move towards being a talent coordinator, "which is pretty much part of my job at the moment anyway. That's usually the next step up from where I am. It's not like there are clear lines you move up through - there's a lot of sideways movement as well."

Emilie Stevenson



Emilie Stevenson has a Film and Television Diploma and is currently working for a television company. She says that one of the hardest things about the film and television industry is getting in. "It's really difficult because practically no jobs are advertised, you have to get out there knocking on doors and using your contacts. It's all about approaching companies you think you would like to work for, sending out your CV and ringing them. It's really tough; you need to be sure that it's what you want to do and then be really motivated to get yourself a job by hounding people. It's really hard to walk into a job straight from a course and you definitely have to start from the bottom and work your way up."

Production running is usually where people start out in the industry, and Emilie says this is where she learned a lot about the work. "When you start as a runner, people will leave lists of things to do on your desk and you just have to do them. It can be horrible at first because you don't really know

where you are, what you're doing and sometimes why you're doing it; but all the things you do are crucial." After about six months of being a production runner, Emilie got a job as a production assistant, which she says can be stressful, but a lot of fun. "It's very exciting and interesting because you get to meet lots of new people all the time and every day you are working on something different, so it never gets boring. I think everything about the job gives me a sense of achievement because at every stage you see the production coming together. You can see that what you do relates to the final product on television, and you see your name on the credits!"

The advice Emilie gives to people who want to get into the industry is to do a course. "Check out the course you are doing as well. Maybe give a film or television company a call and find out what courses they recommend or which courses they take people from. It's also really useful to do some work experience for a week and see if you like it, that's how I got in."

Further Information

Relevant Contacts

- Production companies
- [Film New Zealand](#)
- [NZ Film Commission](#)
- [TV3 Network Services](#)
- [TVNZ](#)

Related Jobs

- [Personal Assistant](#)
- [Production Manager \(Film/Television\)](#)
- [Production Runner \(Film/Television/Video\)](#)
- [Wardrobe Person](#)

Industry Overviews

- [Motion Picture, Radio and Television Services](#)

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