



working with a **UNIT PUBLICIST**

The value of effective unit publicity, commissioned as early as possible in the production process, can be immeasurable. A cornerstone of the marketing cycle, unit publicity helps mould the establishment of core marketing objectives. It plays a significant role in helping to inform the development of marketing collateral and ensuring the necessary elements are captured for release.

An experienced unit publicist will devise a publicity plan, based on the goals discussed by producer, sales agent, distributor (and Screen Australia Marketing where appropriate), and can help to identify numerous marketing opportunities down the track.

A publicity plan will identify elements that are crucial for planning the overarching marketing strategy:

- **Target audience** – although this is an evolving process and may be refined from production to distribution, it's critical to identify the audience for the film and how to reach them.
- **Key marketing hooks** – unique selling points of the story, cast, setting, etc. which will stimulate interest.
- **Publicity angles** – a variety of story angles which may go beyond traditional film coverage.
- **Timeline** – identifying when announcements, access and materials are needed for crucial stages in the production process and beyond.

The unit publicist's role is to collect and build the creative assets that will be used to promote the film by the distributor and the sales agent. They manage the unit photographer and EPK team, organise set visits for media, exhibitors and partners, and handle media and public relations.

One of the most valuable things an experienced unit publicist will bring to any production is their network: their relationships with media and stakeholders. A good publicist can help to generate buzz and anticipation around the project.

Investing in an experienced unit publicist pays off down the track. In addition to devising an overall strategy, they take on a broad range of responsibilities.

Start of principal photography announcement

The unit publicist will draft, seek approval and distribute a 'start of production' press release and, once approved, issue it to trade and news media.

Additionally, the press release is issued to local film, entertainment and arts media and international media to alert them to the start of production on the film. The announcement should also go to any key territory, eg a targeted list of US media including major US news and wire services – to encourage North American interest and awareness. Where a pre-sale is in place, in collaboration with the sales agent, the release may also be sent to foreign distributors for their local disbursement.

The unit publicist should ensure the film is listed with all key trades: *Variety*, *The Hollywood Reporter*, *Screen International*, *Film Francais*, *Screen Hub*, *Encore*, *IF Magazine*, *Filmink*.

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Media liaison

The media are a vital component to a film's success and early inclusion can help to build champions for the project down the track. Delicate management is needed to control the messages released to the public and an experienced publicist will field and respond to all media enquiries, act as single spokesperson and crisis-manage any difficult situations which may arise.

The unit publicist will also:

- liaise with producers and filmmakers to determine the level and degree of access to the set for journalists, partners and executives
- liaise with talent representatives to establish their level of cooperation regarding on set publicity and marketing activity
- in conjunction with the line producer, determine which shooting days are suitable for set visits from print journalists, EPK crew, etc.
- manage local and regional media (this is specifically relevant and important during location work).

Set visits

The shoot is often the stage of production that can build buzz for the project and the common angles that media pursue are positive: cameras are rolling, stars are in town and crews are working. It's important to capitalise on this and encourage supervised set visits.

Inviting exhibition partners and other stakeholders on set can also help to build early awareness and excitement for the project.

Set visits must be carefully managed by the unit publicist who will:

- liaise with the distributor to request set visit nominations
- pitch set visits to international media and locally based international media as required, and coordinate access to the set
- manage and supervise journalists set visits to speak with the filmmakers and cast if available; be present on set whenever media are expected

- follow up to ensure that suitable unit photography from the specific set visit day is approved and made available for print/online journalists writing 'teaser' and 'in production' pieces
- arrange early syndication of material where appropriate.

Production notes

Production notes tell the filmmaking story and provide a reference for media to check cast and crew credits and bios. Additionally, well-planned and written production notes help lead the media to themes or angles that serve the promotion of the film. An experienced unit publicist should be engaged to:

- collect and collate recent cast and filmmaker biographies from their representatives; fact check and update where necessary
- undertake interviews with cast and filmmakers for use and inclusion in the production notes
- research, write and edit production notes (production story, long and short synopses, key cast and crew biographies etc.), circulating these for approval, and edit or rewrite where appropriate.



Australian Government

