

EDUCATIONAL DISTRIBUTION DIY

*Tips from Judith Dancoff of
NewFilmMarketing.com*

How I got into DIY

- If I can, you can too...why at least a third of all filmmakers probably have the knack.
- It's not rocket science.
- Stick with it. If your film has a market, it will pay for itself and then some!

The decision to be your own academic distributor – pros and cons

Pros:

- Keep all the money/sell more films, potentially \$15-25K/yr net (maybe more?) for 5+ years or until you've exhausted your market.
- Reality check: is DIY really more effective? Some surprising examples via worldcat.org.

Cons - Time/Money Investment:

- First campaign - 40 hrs +/- to prepare & set-up a diy platform and deploy campaign.
- Website costs/alteration: \$2-500
- Costs for lists: \$300-1800
- Follow-up campaigns twice yearly - @10 hrs each campaign, \$free-1800 each campaign for lists.

Is your film right for academic distribution?

Make a preliminary judgment:

- Time: under 60 min suggested, under 45 preferred. If over 60, chapterize.
- Does your film teach/remember/explore
- important topic(s)? Narrative/theatrical docs might not do as well.
- Arts/humanities films easier to sell, but there are always exceptions.

- Also, be clear and honest about your film's potential: academic vs. home viewer vs. special interest.
- Why is this important? Marketing materials and pricing for each sector will be different.
- The Rule: potential=goals=strategy=plan

If you decide on academic marketing...

- Give it the time/investment it deserves.
- The hurdle of internet sales. Film marketing is like any product marketing.
- Locate your your market and know why your film is specialy relevant. Find 3 major selling points to academics.
- Easy ways to do that. Collect academic endorsements/reviews as you do.

Tailor materials to highlight film's academic relevance

- Website should be clear, easily scannable for internet sales. Examples of effective/ineffective. Why it matters. Avoid fancy/flashy sites. Emphasize content not style.
- Site and trailer should echo your selling points.

Fix an academic price

- K-12, public libs, ppr university license
- Don't pluck out of thin air - research
- VOD prices. Beware cheap streams, only for social networking. Academics do not use social networking for work. Set 3, 5, and in perpetuity licenses based on DVD price.
- Sell to individual schools, not consortiums

Errors to avoid

- The dangers of Amazon, distribber, et al. Don't cannibalize yourself. Know your potential/goals and work from a plan.
- Why? The academic market is lucrative but shallow. Also, only twice-yearly campaigns.
- Possibility of 2 sites?
- Equal dangers of cheap streams.

Prepare your campaign

- Cover letters - no photos, no flash, emphasize content. Be clear, easily scannable, incorporate 1-2 quotes. Letters are draw to site, "bait", don't say it all.
- Subject headers - content not title. Get people to click!

How/when to reach your buyer

- Start w/cheaper librarian lists to test market/ materials. Build to more expensive professor lists. See my site for resources.
- Follow-up phone calls?
- For free: videonews, catalist, professional organizations, other.
- When: early fall, early spring maybe summer for discussion lists. 3/yr max.

Fulfillment

- Yourself, Kunaki, other?
- Purchase orders
- VOD, but beware of cheap streams and consortium use

Continue till you're sure you've exhausted your market

- Early fall, early spring, maybe summer for discussion lists, but never Christmas break, no matter MDR's deal on lists!
- Spread word-of-mouth, build pr:
 - Classroom screenings
 - Campus screenings
 - Conference screenings
 - Professional Journal reviews

ABOVE ALL, REMEMBER THE ROAD TO SUCCESS IN BUSINESS IS NOT A STRAIGHT LINE,

but hills and valleys of small successes and failures till you get it right.

Failure is a guidepost, to show you the right way.

Give yourself some time before you give up!

How I work with clients

- from hourly consultations to coaching to complete platform preparation and campaign deployment.
- See my site for specifics www.newfilmmarketing.com, and subscribe to my blog!
- I'm happy to give 30-min consultations for free.