

Producing for the Studio

An Introduction:

Although less visible than the technical crew positions, the work of the Producer has a significant influence on the success and “look” of a studio production. A show that is carefully and thoughtfully produced will be more coherent for the viewer and less stressful for the crew.

This class will examine aspects of producing from the early stages of developing program content through the day-of-production duties of the Producer. We'll also look at tips for reserving studio time, requesting live/replay times on the cable channels, and recruiting volunteers to fill crew positions.

The Job of the Producer:

In the most basic sense, the producer is the “organizer” of the production. She is typically responsible for activities that happen before the day of the shoot, including:

- 1) Creating the original concept for the program (Pg. 2)**
 - Deciding what the show will “be about” in general terms
- 2) Developing the content of the program (Pg. 3-9)**
 - Deciding what information to present in the program
 - Identifying a “target audience” for the show
 - Settling on a “format” for the production
 - Making decisions about the “look” of the program
- 3) Reserving time in the Studio and on the Channels (Pg. 10 - 11)**
 - Booking time in Studio A or Studio B through the Equipment Room
 - Submitting paperwork to Playback to get the show carried Live and/or replayed later
- 4) Recruiting “talent” to appear on the program (Pg. 12)**
 - Finding a “Host/Moderator” if necessary
 - Identifying and inviting guests and experts
- 5) Recruiting volunteers for crew and assigning positions (Pg. 13 - 14)**
 - Determining crew needs based on production style
 - Finding a “Director”
 - Filling other positions (switcher, CG, audio, VTR, cameras, floor director, teleprompter)
- 6) Creating/Assigning Creation of pre-produced program elements (Pg. 15 - 19)**
 - Graphics, roll-ins, teleprompter scripts
- 7) Developing a “Run-Down” (Pg. 20 - 21)**
 - Working with the Director to define the “flow” of the show

The Day of the Shoot:

In the traditional definition of the Producers job, she turns the production over to the technical crew on the day of the shoot. That is, the production has been thoroughly planned out, and it is now the job of the “techies” to turn the program you imagined into an actual show.

However, in Community Media, the Producer often changes hats and joins in as a member of the technical crew as well.

Developing the Concept:

This part of the process really is the act of deciding what subject you've always wanted to see as a television show: Should someone be making a show about the proposed construction of a park in your neighborhood? Does the community need a program to teach people how to provide better dental care for pets?

Studio or Not Studio:

Deciding that there ought to be a TV show doesn't necessarily mean that a Studio is the most appropriate equipment system for making that show.

Studios are ideal for capturing an event as it occurs without the intention of "editing" the presentation. That is, you will show an interview of a Veteranarian talking about Doggy Dental Care. This will include the entire interview, including information that you might regard as extraneous. While it is possible to take the recording you make and edit out any parts you don't like, it really undermines the strengths of studio-style production. In this case, you might prefer to shoot the production on location, with a single camera, and then edit the video to present only the highlights of the discussion.

Also, while a studio is a very efficient way to create a production, it may not be a comfortable or natural environment for the performers. A band, for example, might perform better when they play in front of an audience. In this instance, your best option might be to use the Micro-Mobile unit to shoot them in their natural environment, such as a club or auditorium.

Will This Make Good TV?

Not everything is suited to be turned into a TV show. For example, a presentation that involves a speaker lecturing to the camera for 60 minutes might as well be a radio show; it doesn't take advantage of the power of television to be able to add visual information to the sound.

In some cases, you may need to change an event to make it "fit" the limitations of television. For example, say you attended a panel discussion with a question and answer session at the end. At the event, 8 people sat at a long table and took turns speaking. Later, audience members were invited to call out questions for the panelists.

While the topic might have been fascinating and the information compelling, simply trying to move that event just as you experienced it into the studio would prove difficult:

- 1) The long panelist table makes it difficult to get a shot that includes all 8 speakers at the same time without making them microscopic on the viewer's TV
- 2) How will you get a microphone near the audience members as they call out questions?
- 3) The Panelists and audience members are facing in opposite directions. How will you position cameras to shoot both? How will you light both? What will be the background behind each angle?

In cases like this, instead of trying to figure out how you can recreate the discussion you watched live, it might be more useful to think about how you can reconfigure the event to take advantage of the strengths of studio-style production.

Developing the Content:

This may be the most important job of the Producer. Now that you've decided that you want to do a show about a particular subject, and that the subject can be presented effectively on television, and that the studio is an appropriate tool for making the show...

What Should My Show Be About?:

Although this seems like a pretty "duh!" kind of question, the point here is to encourage you to narrow your focus. That is, although "Model Train Collecting" might seem like a great subject for a 30 minute TV show, it seems unlikely that you'll be able to cover everything anyone might want to know about the hobby in that amount of time.

A better subject description would select one or two subsets of the topic -- how to start a collection or how to display your collection -- and then thoroughly explore those ideas. At this point in the process, you don't necessarily need to figure out every detail of what will be discussed or demonstrated; as you do research or speak with potential guests you'll develop a better sense of what to cover later.

How Long Should the Show Be?:

Most producers err on the side of making their programs too long. Remember, your viewers need to step away from your show to eat, go to work, raise their families, etc. Also, people can only absorb so much information at one time.

Another consideration is that programs in excess of 1 hour are more difficult to schedule for replays on MetroEast channels. If you submit a show for playback that is 3 hours long, it won't fit into the most desirable time slots, and will likely play late at night.

If you have lots of great material, consider creating Parts 1 and 2 of your show, instead of one long program.

Who is My "Target Audience"?:

What kinds of people do you think are interested in the subject you're considering? Who would you expect to watch the program?

While you may think that EVERYONE should want to watch a show about model train collecting, the reality is that not everybody may be interested in the subject. In this case, it's probably pretty likely that the collector is:

*"A 52-year-old married man with children. He enjoys toy trains in his childhood and became involved with them again about 20 years ago. *His home layout contains approximately 213 square feet and is either of traditional design or combines traditional and hi-rail elements. *His annual income is approximately \$73,500, and he spends about \$1,500 on toy trains and related merchandise." (from a survey of model train collectors in Classic Toy Trains Magazine)*

Why should you care? Because creating an effective television show for a 52-year-old man is different than creating one for a 12-year-old girl; the choices of pacing, format, graphics, music, host, guests, set decoration, etc. should be made according to what will work best for the viewer.

What Are Your Objectives for the Show?:

Why are you doing this show? What do you want people to do after they watch the show? Your show is likely to be more powerful and interesting if it actually has a purpose. Don't just seek to fill the TV screen for 30 minutes. Instead, aim for altering the viewer in some way through having watched your show.

In our "Model Train" show example, your objectives might be:

- 1) To encourage seasoned collectors to display their trains in a new way
- 2) To convince non-collectors to take-up the hobby
- 3) To show non-collectors why their husbands/fathers think it is a great hobby

In the first example, you don't need to spend time in the show explaining the difference between "Standard" and "Narrow" gauge trains. You can assume that your target audience already knows this. Since your viewers already love the hobby, you can proceed directly to sharing tips on displaying their trains more effectively.

In the second example, your mission is to convince the viewer that collecting is a great hobby and that they should allow their mild interest to blossom into full-blown enthusiasm. In this case, your target audience might be the same as the first example, but the objective and tone of the program are different.

Example number three assumes a different target audience (eg - the 12-year-old girl), and a different objective. In this version, you're not trying to reel-in converts to the ranks of collectors, you are merely trying to give "outsiders" a tour of the pastime.

Kinds of Objectives:

There are a variety of things that you might be trying to achieve by doing a show:

- 1) **Take an Action** - You will try to coax the viewer to "do something" after they watch the show. For example, you may want them to visit your website or call your collecting club. You might try to convince them to display their collections in scale layouts with tiny trees and buildings instead of in glass cases.
- 2) **Think Differently** - In this objective, you are trying to alter the viewers opinion about a subject. To do this, you must present an idea, and then support it with evidence or arguments. You aren't necessarily trying to convince them to do something, but you are trying to influence how they feel about a subject.

In these cases, your approach to the subject could be very different; the first might include showing the viewer the cool toys and trying to pique their interest in the hobby. The second might include a more emotional appeal and persuasive arguments.

Keeping it Real:

Your objectives should be narrow enough that they can reasonably be accomplished by a cable TV show in East Multnomah County. Although "convince everyone in the world to become a model train collector" might be a worthwhile objective, it is probably too broad for a 30-minute public access show.

What Information Should I Include?:

One of the more challenging aspects of developing a show is deciding what information to present, in what order to present it, and how much time to devote to each subject. If you try to cover too much, the program will seem rushed, and material may be left out.

Consider the Target Audience:

If your target view is likely unfamiliar with the subject, you'll need to spend more time laying a foundation for the presentation, and cover the topics thoroughly, and without using terms that require special knowledge. You don't want the viewer to feel like they are walking in on the middle of a conversation.

If your target is already knowledgeable, you should avoid presenting too much basic information for fear of boring the audience.

Consider the Method of Delivery:

The viewers ability to understand and retain the information in your program is influenced by how you offer it to them.

- 1) **Speaking only.** Watching someone talk about a topic is probably the least effective method to help the viewer "get it" because your presentation is only using the viewers sense of hearing, without the support of any significant visual input.
- 2) **Speaking and Graphics.** Augmenting the presentation with text or images that illustrate and support the speaker improves the viewers ability to accurately absorb the information. It also supports viewers who may be watching in a noisy environment, or are hearing impaired.
- 3) **Speaking, Graphics, and Demonstration.** Imagine a cooking show in which the chef described baking a pie. Now, imagine the same program, but with the addition of on-screen graphics that list ingredients and cooking temperatures. Then, picture the chef actually cooking the meal as she describes her technique, supported with graphics listing the ingredients, etc. Which method is most likely to be effective? Which would you most like to watch?

Develop an Outline:

Before you begin creating interview questions or planning demonstrations, create a simple outline of the program. The outline should identify, in very broad strokes, the information you want to present, and the order in which you want to present it.

Also, it's wise to follow the old term-paper method of presentation:

- 1) Introduction & Preview: Set the parameters of the show, and tell the viewer what they will see if they watch the show.
- 2) Tell your story.
Topic 1: Subtopics A and B
Topic 2: Subtopics A, B, and C
- 3) Summarize. Remind the viewer what was covered in the show, and what they should do now that they have seen it.

Filling-in the Outline:

For the model train show example, your outline might look something like this:

General Show Subject: Model Train Collecting - Displaying your Collection

Introduction:

- The Purpose of collecting includes enjoying yourself, and sharing with others
- Several methods of displaying your collection: Working Display and Case Display

Topic #1: The Working Display

- Seeing the trains as they were meant to be enjoyed
- Can involve considerable work and expense
- May result in wear and tear on the Collection

Topic #2: The Case Display

- Enables closer inspection and optimal display angles and lighting
- Preserves value of the collection

Summary:

- Each display method has strengths and weaknesses
- Collectors should use the method that meets their needs

Developing Questions for an Interview:

Creating questions for an interview program will vary substantially based on the subject, program format, guests, and target audience.

One useful tool is the traditional “5 Ws” of journalism. These questions are useful when trying to find out information about an event:

Who - What individuals or groups are participants or affected by this topic? Who is it about?

What - What happened, what’s the story?

Where - What was/is the location of the occurrence or event?

When - What day and time did it occur

Why - What was/is the reason for the occurrence

How did it happen (a description of the event)

When forming interview questions, you should:

- 1) Avoid biased forms that encourage a certain answer: “Don’t you agree that working layouts are better than case displays?”
- 2) Don’t ask questions which are really 2 questions: “Do you like acrylic display cases, and where can you purchase them?”
- 3) Avoid questions that can be answered yes or no: “Do you enjoy collecting?”
- 4) Don’t ask questions that are really statements: “Don’t you think that people who display trains in cases are really just in it for the money?”

Work from the General to the Specific:

Ask a question which define the broad outlines of the topic first. Then ask follow-up questions that add more specific information to the discussion.

Select a “Format”:

There are dozens of different options for how you can make a show in the studio, and the form in which the program can be presented to the viewer:

Live, Live-to-Tape, or Segment Recording:

It's possible to do a production using a full crew and all of the assets of the studio, or to use only part of the available equipment.

Live:

A “Live” show is broadcast over the cable channels as it happens in the Studio. It is also recorded, so that it can be replayed several times after the live showing.

The primary reason to choose to do a live show is to allow interaction with your viewers through accepting phone calls, e-mails, or other real-time communications. If you choose to do a live show, you should plan to use a full crew since you'll need to add graphics, music, effects, roll-ins, etc. as the show happens (rather than later on in the editing process).

If you don't plan to take calls from viewers, doing the show live only puts extra pressure on the crew to do everything correctly.

Live to Tape:

This type of production “pretends” that the show is live, without actually going live.

The goal of this method is to create a complete show, that requires no (or minimal) additional editing or production before it is ready to air. This technique doesn't create the additional pressure of going live, but also can't interact with the audience.

The object is to start the show, and continue without interruption until the end. However, if you do make a mistake, it's possible to “fix” it by reshooting that part and/or editing the recording. As with the live show, you should plan to have all crew positions filled for doing live-to-tape.

Segment Recording:

This method uses only some of the available equipment in the studio, and is never live. It always assumes that you will do some amount of editing of the material you shoot. The number of crew members may vary from only a few to filling every position.

For example, say that you want to shoot performances by 2 bands. You would probably need to stop shooting after the first band finished to reset the room for the second group. In this instance you would want nearly a full crew (3 camera operators, an audio technician, a switcher, and a director). However, you might choose to not fill the VTR position (not much to do), and the Graphics person (safer to add graphics during editing)

On the other hand, say you've shot a video using field cameras. Now, you've decided you want to record a short introduction for the video with a host standing in front of a “green screen” effect. Since you are only going to use 1 camera and 1 microphone, you can probably get the job done with only 2 crew members.

Kinds of Studio Shows:

There are several broad categories of shows which are commonly shot in a studio:

Talk/Interview Show:

This format is one of the most popular types of studio productions, because it is a relatively easy form to create, and an efficient method for sharing information with the viewer. The talk show can take many forms, from a one-on-one interview, to a moderated panel discussion.

It is particularly well-suited to live production, and is most effective when guided by a host .

Capturing a Performance:

Another popular use for the studio is to record the presentation of a musician, band, dancer, actor, or other performer. Although they may not be performing in the most natural setting, the multi-camera ability of the studio allows the audience the opportunity to see close-up detail of the performance in a way that they could not if they were watching in a club or auditorium.

In this format, the production is really just capturing the performance as it is given by the artist, and not influencing their presentation.

Demonstration or “How To” Video:

These programs typically show a performer painting a painting, cooking a meal, tying a fishing fly, fixing a broken faucet, or similar activity. Although the studio might seem like a less natural environment for the demonstrator, it provides complete control of lighting, sound, and camera angles in a way that might be difficult in the artists studio or living room.

Teleplay:

This method involves having actors perform a scene while the studio crew records it, switching between cameras as they perform. While many people assume that movies and television shows are shot in this fashion, most are not.

Most movies (and many TV shows) are shot with only one camera, which is moved around to record different angles while the actors perform the scene over and over. Then the best performances from each angle are “cut together” in editing to create the illusion that multiple cameras were present. This method also permits the director to get a perfect performance of each line of dialogue.

Some TV shows, especially comedies recorded in front of an audience, are shot with multiple cameras in a studio setting. However, in most cases all the cameras are recorded, and then the final product is edited from all of the separate recordings and multiple takes.

Almost the only examples of the teleplay routinely seen today are the “soap operas” shown during the afternoon. In most cases, because of the need to produce a show each day, the production is shot “live to tape” for each scene, and then the scenes are edited together into the complete show.

Which Type Should You Choose?:

The best programs are those which combine elements of several of these types. That is, a talk show that includes a performance or demonstration is much more effective than just talk.

The “Look and Feel” of the Program:

While these decisions can be left up to the technical crew, many producers have a “vision” for how they want the show to look when it is actually recorded. Considering the content and subject matter of the program, do you want it “Light and Happy” or “Dark and Serious”?

Staging:

How will you position the performers on the stage, and in relation to one another? Will your talk show guests sit in a casual semi-circle or a more confrontational face-to-face style?

Lighting:

The performance area for a band could be brightly lit and full of color, or it could have a dark background with some areas lit and others in darkness for a more moody effect. The band could be bathed in peaceful blue light, or washed in angry red tones. You can splash the back drop with contrasting colors, or projected light shapes.

The Set:

The performers can appear in front of a light curtain (lit with color or not), which can be pulled taut or allowed to hang in pleats. For a more dramatic look that focuses the viewers attention on the performers, you can place them in front of a black curtain. Or, you can pull the curtains away, and use the smooth wall (lit with color or not) for a deeper color.

The talent can sit or stand. If they sit, they can sit in short arm-chairs, tall directors chairs, a couch, or on stools. They can all be on the same level, or you can create different heights in your staging for a tiered effect. They can have side tables, a coffee table, or a desk.

You can fill the area behind and around the performers with columns, or “flats” of different textures and finishes. You can hang posters or banners in the scene, or even suspend small 3-dimensional objects from the light grid on invisible fishing line. You can surround the stage with plants (short and tall) for added color and texture.

Some of these items are available for your use from the MetroEast set storage room, while others may be items you would bring from home.

Graphic Elements:

Your show will likely have graphics that show the name of the show, identify your host and guests, give the song names for the band, give the call-in phone number for live shows, provide contact information or web-site/social media site locations, and some sort of “credits” to acknowledge your crew at the end. What colors, fonts, clip-art pictures, and screen placements would you choose?

Music:

Will your show have a theme song? Will it be classical, country, happy, ominous?

Program Pacing:

Will your program cover material at break-neck speed, or be relaxed? How will you transition from one segment to the next?

Reserving Time in the Studio:

Now that you've decided to make a studio show, it's time to commit to a date:

Which Studio Should I Use?:

Studio A

Accommodates all kinds of productions, large and small, live or taped

1600 sq. ft (approximately 40' x 40')

3 Floor Cameras, plus 1 remote control high camera, and 1 documents camera

Green Screen capability and other visual effects available thru switcher

24 channel audio mixer

Full dimmable and adjustable light grid, including 8 "cookie" lights

Graphics Generator and Teleprompter

Full Crew = 8-10

Studio B

Designed for small scale productions without much movement of talent, live or taped

255 sq. ft (approximately 15' x 17')

3 remote control floor cameras, no documents camera

Basic switcher (no green screen or digital effects)

10 channel audio mixer

Full dimmable, fixed position light grid, no "cookie" lights

Graphics Generator and Teleprompter (same as Studio A)

Full Crew = 2-3

Call the Equipment Room: 503-667-8848 ext. 307

- You can reserve time in the either studio from about 1 to 3 months in advance.
- Typical reservation lengths are 5 hours for Studio A and 3.5 hours for Studio B. However, these can be negotiated if you have special requirements for more time (eg - a very elaborate set-up, or a desire to shoot more than one show in the session)
- Both Studios are available for use 5 days per week:

Mondays, Thursdays, and Fridays	9:00 am until 10:00 pm
Saturday and Sunday	11:00 am until 9:00 pm
- The Equipment Room is open to take your reservations:

Mondays, Thursdays, and Fridays	2:00 pm until 10:00 pm
Saturday and Sunday	11:00 am until 9:00 pm
- To reserve studio time you must have completed the Basic Studio Workshop (Studio A) or Introduction to Studio B workshop, and have paid the \$50 annual Producer Fee.
- Because the Studios are quite busy, you should be prepared to ask the Equipment Room Staff to provide you with a few available dates and times within the next few months, and then select one of those available slots.

Planning a Live Show?

After you receive a few available studio dates from the Equipment Room, stop by the Playback Department, so that they can check to make sure that there is space on one of the MetroEast Channels that corresponds to your time in the studio (allowing for set-up and rehearsal time).

Getting Your Show Played on Television:

Whether your planned production will be live or recorded, it will eventually need to be scheduled to play on MetroEast Channels.

What Channels are Available:

MetroEast airs programming on 6 channels on the Comcast and Frontier Fios cable television systems. However, some of those channels are reserved for programs produced by schools in our community, while others are used for broadcasting local government programs.

Public Access Channels:

These 2 channels are available for broadcasting your programs -

Channel 11 (Comcast) or Channel 22 (Frontier)

Also known as the “Community Access Network” of CAN, this channel is shared by several other community media centers in the metropolitan area, including Portland Community Media, Tualatin Valley Community Television (communities west of Portland), and Willamette Falls Media Center (Oregon City).

Because the channel is shared, it reaches into the parts of the community served by the other media centers, and reaches about 350,000 homes in the metro area. However, the available time on the channels is also divided among the centers, with MetroEast receiving a few hours each day.

Since there are fewer hours available for us to schedule, your program will generally only get one play on Channel 11 (22). Also, if you are planning a live show, it may be more difficult to find available time on Channel 11 which corresponds to available time in one of the studios.

Channel 21 (Comcast) or Channel 32 (Frontier)

This channel is programming exclusively by MetroEast, 24 hours per day. However, it reaches Portland, and East Multnomah County only, about 180,000 homes. Because we have more time available on the channel, your program will play 3 or more times on Channel 21 (32).

MetroEast Community Media programming cannot be viewed on satellite TV services such as DishTV or DirecTV, and cannot be received with a TV antenna.

Planning a Live Show?

After you receive a few available studio dates from the Equipment Room, stop by the Playback Department, so that they can check to make sure that there is space on one of the MetroEast Channels that corresponds to your time in the studio (allowing for set-up and rehearsal time).

Fill Out a Cablecast Request Form:

Stop by the Playback Department, and fill out a brief “Cablecast Request Form”. The form lets you request specific replay times or dates (if available), as well as warn MetroEast if your program contains content that some viewers may find objectionable.

If you submit the form in advance of your studio date, Playback can pre-schedule your show on the channels. That way, you can create promotional materials to advise viewers when they can watch your show on TV. Live shows MUST be pre-scheduled.

Playback will mail you a copy of the program replay schedule soon after you submit the form.

Recruiting “Talent”:

Finding the right mix of people to appear on the show -- host, experts, performers -- is key to producing a compelling program.

The Importance of a Host:

Not all types of shows require a host. However, for programs that do, a talented host can elevate the production quality almost more than any other single factor.

Qualities of a Good Host:

- Willing to allow the guests to be the center of attention
- A confident speaker. She must be able to speak clearly and concisely
- A good listener. The host should spend most of her time listening to the guests, not speaking to them
- Able to ad-lib questions, not just read them from a list
- Multi-tasker. Able to guide a conversation, keep track of time, take signals from the floor director, and be charming, all at the same time.
- Relaxed. It's easy to get overwhelmed with all the technology and the idea of being “on TV”. The best hosts are able to ignore the fact that they are surrounded by cameras, and pretend that they are chatting with a friend.

When preparing your host, emphasize that her role is to guide the conversation, but not to direct the show. She will need to follow cues from the director regarding when to begin or end a segment, take a call, play a roll-in, show a graphic, etc.

Finding Guests:

The expertise and opinions of your guests are the fuel for your show, so it's important to find the right ones.

- 1) **Do some research.** Go on the Internet or visit the library to get some information about the broad outlines of the topic. This will help you shape the program content, but will also lead you to names of people who might be willing to appear on the show.
- 2) **Ask your guests.** Once you find one guest, ask them if they can suggest colleagues or associates that might fill other positions on your show.
- 3) **Contact related associations.** If there are any clubs or groups which represent people who share the profession, interest or hobby, they could be a rich source of information and contacts.

Before the Show:

- 1) Contact the guests several weeks in advance, and then remind them a few days before.
- 2) Provide detailed maps, driving directions, or mass transit information. MetroEast can provide maps if you desire.
- 3) Advise the guest about clothing. Suggest they avoid wearing black or white, and avoid finely detailed patterns (polka dots, herringbone) unless needed for the show. Most colors are fine, although they should avoid green if you are planning a green-screen effect.
- 4) Discourage over-preparation. Some guests want to memorize a speech, which rarely comes across well. They should just think of this as a chat with a friend.

Recruiting Crew:

One of the important tasks of the Producer is to recruit volunteers to fill the various technical positions on the crew. MetroEast has a substantial pool of volunteers who have attended training workshops and have expressed an interest in helping Producers with their shows.

By this stage in your planning, you should have a pretty clear idea of what kind of production you want to do; Live or Taped, Talk Show or Teleplay. Knowing these details should help you to decide how many crew you will need, and what positions you will need to fill.

What Crew Will You Need?

The variety of roles on a production crew range from positions that may be appropriate for a volunteer working on their first show, to jobs which require more training and practice. The level of skill required will also vary by the kind of production you do; running the audio for a simple 2-person talk show is very different than mixing the sound for a live band shoot.

Director: This is the most complex, demanding, and important position on the crew. The Director is the technical manager of the production, and needs to have a thorough knowledge of the basic functions of all of the other crew positions and equipment.

Technical Director (“switcher”): This individual operates the video switcher in the Control Room. This may be an appropriate position for a relatively new volunteer unless your production will incorporate some of the more advanced switcher effects (e.g., green screen).

Audio Operator: The audio tech selects and places microphones, and operates the audio mixer in the Control Room. It is not usually a beginner position.

Graphics (“Character Generator” or “CG”) Operator: Creates all of the text “pages” that will be displayed during the show for titles, names, and credits. She should be comfortable with computers and have an eye for graphic design. This is another more advanced skill position.

Videotape (“VTR”) Operator:

Responsible for recording the show on videotape, and may also be responsible for cueing and playing pre-recorded segments from tape, such as opens, breaks, or field-recorded interviews. This can be a skilled position if many “roll-ins” are needed, but it may also be a position that doesn’t require a separate crew member if the only function needed is to start the recording.

Camera Operators:

This is usually the best crew position for the new volunteer, although some shoots may need more experienced shooters; you’ll need 3 camera ops, so you can use a mix of experience.

Floor Director: Helps to keep the talent informed by relaying information from the Director. This position requires little technical training. This crew job is not always necessary, but can help keep the talent comfortable and on task.

Teleprompter Operator: This crew member types-up and displays text on a special screen so that the talent can read a statement but still look directly into the camera. This feature is not used on many shows, and so may not need to be filled.

Making Contacts:

A good first step is to **speak to Elizabeth Reed**, the MetroEast Relationship Manager. She can help you get in touch with volunteers who are trained and ready to help on your show.

You can also post information about your production and crew needs on the **Bulletin Board** located just outside the MetroEast Equipment Room.

One of the best ways to find volunteers is to **do a little “networking”**. As you attend classes at MetroEast, talk with other students to find out if they are interested in volunteering on the show you have in mind.

Also, **consider volunteering** as crew on other peoples productions a few times before you produce your own program. This will help you understand the production process more completely, generate some ideas for your own show, and give you a chance to meet other volunteers who might be a good fit for your crew later on.

Tips for Recruiting Volunteers:

The people who help you with your production are generously giving their time and talent to make your show possible. You should make every effort to respect this by making sure you use their time effectively, and thanking them for their work.

- 1) Contact prospective volunteers well in advance. 2 weeks or more notice is best.
- 2) Describe briefly the kind of show you will be shooting (talk show, music program)
- 3) Be very specific about what crew position you wish them to fill. Also, warn them if the production will require basic or advanced skill in the position. Listen carefully; if they seem hesitant about their ability to do the job, consider assigning them to something easier.
- 4) Ask them to describe their experience working on other shows in similar crew positions. This will provide an opportunity for you to get a feel for whether their ability level will meet your productions needs.
- 5) Chat with them a little. While their technical skills are important, you also want to try to judge whether their personality is a good fit for you to work with.
- 6) Give them a specific time for arrival and when they can expect to be finished.
- 7) Describe the content of the program to them. Make sure that you won't be subjecting them to material that might be offensive or uncomfortable for them.
- 8) Advise them if you will be providing snacks or food for the crew (a good idea!). If so, ask if they have any special requirements (allergies), or favorite snacks.
- 9) Give a reminder call and/or e-mail a few days before the shoot.
- 10) Be sure to communicate to potential crew what jobs you will want them to be doing before and after the show, not just during the recording. Will you want a camera operator to help with lighting or audio set-up? Will you ask your CG operator to sweep the floor after the shoot?

Parts of the Show:

Every show produced is unique. However most include some or all of these elements:

An Open:

While it may not make or break a show, the open can help to grab the viewers attention and make them want to stick around for the rest of the program. There are many types of opens:

- 1) **Produced Open.** A pre-recorded segment, played during the first 30 to 60 seconds of the show. It usually includes music and graphics, and may include narration, photos, or video.
- 2) **Graphics and Music.** A less work-intensive option is to create one or more full-screen pages of graphics on the CG that can be displayed at the start of the show. You can also play music from a CD or tape along with the graphic.
- 3) **Graphics over Video.** Typically superimposes the title of the show over a wide shot of the guest and hosts waiting for the show to begin.
- 3) **Teaser.** In this variation, the host appears at the start of the show, and tantalizes the viewer with a brief glimpse of the rest of the show. The “tease” is usually followed by a one of the opens listed above.

Introduction:

An extension of the open, this section gives the host an opportunity to:

- 1) Summarize what the show will be about
- 2) Introduce herself and her guests
- 3) Welcome the viewers

The open is the part of the show in which the host is speaking directly to the audience watching the show at home. For most of the rest of the show, she will be speaking directly to the guests, and the viewers are merely observing the discussion.

A Sample Open:

“Hello, and welcome the to the “Train Station”, a show all about the great hobby of model train collecting. My name is Loren Coulter...

Today, we’ll be taking a look at various methods of displaying your collection, including some great tips for showing off your collection in cases or in working displays. Later in the show, we’ll include a demonstration showing some great tips for lighting your display...

Joining us today are John Smith, who is the president of the Gresham Model Rail Club, and a life-long collector, and Judy Jones, the owner of a great local train store called “Whistle Stop”.

Teleprompter?:

Should your host read the open from the teleprompter? In many cases, the presentation will seem more natural if you don’t use the prompter. The sample above doesn’t really need to be said exactly as written. The teleprompter is most useful when you need to relate more information than can reasonably be memorized, and/or it must be relayed with precision.

Your host may also wish to have 3”x5” cards or a clip-board with notes about guest names and titles, questions, etc. However, she should get familiar enough with the content to not have to spend much time referring to them.

Graphics:

Pages displayed from the Character Generator (CG) can help the viewer to more fully understand and retain information presented by guests on the show. These pages can also make the program more interesting to watch. You may want pages for:

- 1) The Title of the program
- 2) “Lower Third” graphics to identify the Host and each guest. These may include the subjects name, as well as their title, web address, e-mail address, contact info.
- 3) Other Lower thirds (todays topic, contact info, the show name, call-in phone number for live shows)
- 4) A “Bug”. May be the shows logo name, displayed in the corner of the screen.
- 5) “Bumpers”. These are graphics used to act as a bridge between different segments of the show. A bumper might just be a full screen page showing the name of the show, or contact info for the guests on the segment that just ended, or a “coming up next” message.
- 6) Information Pages. These support subjects being discussed by the guests. They may be “bullet points” that summarize the discussion, charts, photos.
- 7) Credits. Listing all the people who contributed to the show. Can be a roll, or several still pages. The credits might also include the name of your show, contact info for the guests on the show, and special thanks to people who contributed but did not appear.

The Value of a Logo:

Creating some kind of symbol or even choosing a specific font or color scheme for the name of your show can help to give it an identity, and give the show a more polished appearance.

Other Visual Aids:

Your guests may have access to maps, charts, photos, or objects which could help them to present information, and make the show more visually interesting for the audience.

These can be shown to the viewer in a variety of ways:

- 1) On object on the set. You could put a chart on an easel near the guest. However, it may prove awkward to have them point at it as they speak.
- 2) Not on set, but visible to cameras. You could position the chart on an easel so that it is not part of the set, but in a place where one of the studio cameras could get a shot of it. This means that the guest can’t “point” at some part of the image. This method also temporarily makes that camera unavailable for shooting the talent.
- 3) Graphics Camera. The “document” camera in the Control Room can serve the same purpose as #2 above, without tying-up a studio camera. However, the documents cannot be larger than 9” tall by 12” wide.
- 4) Electronic image on CG. Many guests have access to digital photos and images. These can be e-mailed, or delivered on a CD disc or “thumb drive”, and loaded into the Character Generator. The CG can use most of the common forms of images (jpegs, png, etc.) These should be loaded before the day of the show to allow time for trouble-shooting if needed.

Demonstrations:

Having your talent “DO SOMETHING” and not just talk for an hour is one of the best ways to make the show more interesting for the viewer. However, you will need to consider:

- 1) Where you will do the demonstration? Your guests might be able to show some things while they are seated in an interview setting, but it might not be the ideal location. It may look better to set-up a second set area, away from the main area.

If you will set up a second set area for the demonstration, it must also be lit, decorated, and “miked” for sound.

- 2) The “transition” to the demonstration area. Plan to use a “bumper” or other break to give the talent a chance to move to the demonstration area. It’s almost impossible to do a good job of shooting them walking from one set to the other. Also, it gives an opportunity for the crew to move cameras, unplug and reconnect talent mics in the new area, etc.

You’ll need to consider how much time you need to make the transition, and how long the viewer will watch the bumper before they change the channel.

Roll-Ins:

A “roll-in” is simply a pre-produced video that you will “play” for the viewer. Roll-ins are a great -- although somewhat labor intensive -- way to make your studio show more fun to watch.

They make it possible to show things and visit places that you couldn’t easily do in the studio itself, and can also provide a great “break” in the show to let you transition between segments.

The roll-ins can be played as “stand-alone” segments, or shown (without sound) while a guest is speaking, to illustrate or re-inforce the points she is discussing.

The Timing of Roll-Ins:

One of the trickiest aspects of using roll-ins is getting the timing right. That is, you don’t want your host to introduce the roll-in, and then sit staring awkwardly into the camera for 20 seconds while you struggle to get the tape rolling.

To help to make the transitions smooth:

- 1) Consider using a bumper first. That is, transition to a full page graphic first (name of the show or title of the video) for a few seconds, then roll-in the video when it’s ready.
- 2) Create the video so that it has a “built-in” bumper, with a 5-10 second graphic at the start. That way, you have a little leeway in the timing. You might also want to include a bumper graphic at the end, rather than just cutting to a black screen.
- 3) Don’t let the Host decide when to show the video; that is the Directors job. The floor director should cue the host to “go to the roll-in”, and then count her down to the start. She must then adjust her intro to end just as the count down ends (sounds easy, eh?)

If you are shooting segments (not “Live” or “Live-to-tape”) and intend to use roll-ins, you may prefer to add them later, during the editing process. However, if you intend to have your guests comment on the roll-ins, you may need to roll them in as you record.

Getting People to Watch Your Program - Promotion:

Pg. 18

Why do a show if nobody is going to watch it?

Many producers put long hours of work into creating shows, and almost no effort into attracting viewers to watch the show. Commercial television networks spend as much time advertising their own product (their TV shows) as they do selling time to advertisers selling soap and shoes. We should follow their example!

Ways you can build an audience:

1) Make a promo.

- Create a 30 to 60 second “commercial” that tells viewers when the show will be on (date, time, and channel), what it is about, and why they should watch.
- The promo can be highly produced, with clips from your show and snazzy graphics, or just you sitting in a chair talking.
- Submit the promo to the Playback Department in the same way you did your program. Fill out a Cable Cast Request form. Playback will air the promo dozens of times before the actual air date of the full show.

2) Write a Press Release.

- Send a few paragraphs about your show -- when it will be on (date, time, channel), what it is about, why you are doing it -- to newspapers in the area. If you get a mention in the Oregonian, Gresham Outlook, Willamette Week, Portland Mercury or other paper, you dramatically increase the number of people who know about your show.

3) Use Internet and Social Media sites.

- Make a Facebook Page for the event. Encourage all of your Facebook friends, and all of their friends to visit and “Like” the site.
- Put a sample on the Internet. If the show will not be live, take a sample of the show, and upload it to YouTube or other Internet “video hosting” site. You can even use the same promo that you made for air on MetroEast channels.

4) Notify interested groups.

- Send information about the air dates to the local model train collectors clubs. Their membership is a built-in audience of people who are already interested in the topic, and have been waiting for somebody to make a show just like yours.
- If the club or association has a newsletter or website, ask them to put some info about your show there as well.

5) Throw a “Viewing Party”.

- Invite everyone you have ever known to your house, or a local pub that has a TV, and turn the premiere of the show on TV into an event!

Assigning Pre-Production Work:

Many Community Media Producers only use volunteers for the actual production of the studio show itself. This means that the Producer gets stuck with far too much work for one person, or decides to not include all of the graphics, bumpers, roll-ins, etc. that can elevate the quality of the show dramatically.

Consider assigning pre-production jobs to volunteers, rather than trying to do them all yourself. This can have several benefits for your production:

- 1) Reduce your work load on the program
- 2) Take advantage of the technical and creative skills of your crew
- 3) Provide volunteers with an opportunity to practice their various skills
- 4) Make volunteers feel like they are more a part of the production
- 5) Improve the quality of the program by providing more of the elements that make it fun to watch

As producer, your role would be to:

- 1) Assign the various different jobs to one or more volunteers -
 - Shooting/Editing an open for the show
 - Building CG graphics
 - Shooting/Editing roll-in segments
 - Designing a show logo
 - Designing or constructing a set
 - Locating props or set decoration elements
 - Selecting music for an open, bumper, close
 - Conducting research on the topic
 - Creating publicity for the show
- 2) Make sure they have the information they need to do those jobs. For example, the crew member making your CG pages will need names, dates, titles, phone numbers, contact information, bumper facts, and a crew list to make your graphics.

Also, give them any relevant “style” information they may need, such as the fonts and colors you’ve chosen for the production.

- 3) Provide feedback and (constructive) criticism of their work.

Consider creating a “Production Team”:

Now that you’ve built this awesome squad of individuals for your show, why let it disband? Or worse, why re-create the wheel every time someone wants to make a show.

Turn the group into a unit, that can get back together anytime a member wants to make a show. Give the group a name. Create a structure for choosing projects. Get matching uniforms. The possibilities are endless!

Creating a Rundown:

One of the final steps in the pre-production process is creating a “run-down”. This document is an event-by-event breakdown of the show, letting you map out and pre-visualize how the show will fit together, both in terms of content and technical issues. It also becomes the “map” for the crew to follow when you actually begin shooting the program.

You may want to consult with your Director in the creation of the rundown. This will allow her to provide technical expertise if that is not your strong suit, as well as beginning to get her familiar with the show.

Non-technical, subject-matter elements:

- 1) Content. What subjects will be covered in the show?
- 2) Order. What will come first, second, third? Remember this will include all the parts including the teaser, open, discussion, demonstration, credits.
- 3) Timing. How many minutes will you devote to each topic or demonstration?

Technical Considerations:

- 4) Sources of Video and Audio. The Director may wish to block out which cameras will be used for shooting various elements of the show, as well as anticipating where the sound will come from (mics, CDs, videotape) for each segment.
- 5) Transitions. The rundown is a great way to see where you might encounter difficult parts of the show. For example, if your rundown has a discussion segment on Set 1 followed by a demonstration segment on Set 2, you might realize a bumper is needed.

Don't Keep it a Secret!

After you've created the run-down, pass-out copies to your crew. This will enable each crew member to “mark up” the sheet with cues that are specific to their job in the production.

The Structure of the Rundown:

Rundowns take many forms, but a popular version is shown on Page 19. This one consists of 4 columns that list important elements of the show:

- 1) **Video.** The text in the column gives a brief description of what the viewer sees, and technical information about where it is coming from (Studio Camera, VTR, CG, Camera Stand)
- 2) **Audio.** A description of the sound, and its source.
- 3) **Segment Time.** This shows, in minutes and seconds, how much time will be devoted to that particular part of the show. For example, your open might be 30 seconds, or the discussion of Topic #1 might be 7 minutes.
- 4) **Total Run Time (TRT).** This time value shows where each segment falls within the length of the program. For example, your demonstration segment might be scheduled for 4 minutes (in the segment time), but would start at 22:30 into the program.

Production Name: “The Train Station”

Producer: Loren Coulter

Production Date: 3-31-11

VIDEO	SEG	TRT	AUDIO
STUDIO: Tease - Host on camera on set 1	00:30	8:00:00	STUDIO: Mic on Host
TAPE: Open - VTR A	00:30	8:00:30	VTR A: Ch. 1 & 2
STUDIO: Host on Cam, Set 1 Intro basic subject of show Intro guests	02:00	8:02:30	STUDIO: Mics on Host and 2 guests on set 1 (ch 1,2,3)
STUDIO: Train Display discussion Out Cue: throw to demo after break	05:00	8:07:30	STUDIO: Mics on Host and 2 guests on set 1 (ch. 1,2,3)
CG: Bumper #1 Pg 14 Turn cams to set #2	01:30	8:09:00	CD: “Showtime”, track 6
STUDIO: Demo display, set 2	06:00	8:15:00	STUDIO: Mics on Host and 1 guest on set 2 (Ch. 10, 11)
TAPE: Visit to “Train World - VTR B Move back to set 1 during tape	06:12	8:21:12	VTR A: Ch. 1 & 2
STUDIO: Discussion - “Buying model trains on the Internet”	05:00	8:26:12	STUDIO: Mics on Host and 2 guests on set 1 (ch 1,2,3)
CG: “Tip of the Week” pg. 17	00:08	8:26:20	CD: “Showtime”, track 1
STUDIO: Host on Cam, tip on polishing your collection CU on host, guests remain seated	01:00	8:27:20	STUDIO: Mic on Host only Kill other mics continue CD track through section
CG: Credit Roll - over camera 4 wide high shot of studio	01:10	8:28:30	STUDIO: Kill host mic CD up to fade to black

The Rundown can be as simple or as detailed as you desire. It’s a good practice to leave some blank space in each line as shown so that each crew members can write notes about their own particular needs. For example, the audio tech can note which audio mixer channels will be used for each of the segments. The Director can jot ideas for shot types or transitions.

Production Checklist:

Program Content Creation:

Concept developed Program Name: _____

• General Topic: _____

• Sub-Topic: _____

• Sub-Topic: _____

• Target Audience: _____

• Objectives: _____

Outline Written Questions Developed

Equipment and Channel Reservations:

Live Live-to-Tape Segment Recording/Editing

Studio A Studio B Studio Reserved

• Day: _____ Date: _____ Time In: _____ Time Out: _____

Playback Paperwork Complete: If live, talk to Playback staff to coordinate reservations

Production Personnel:

Talent Recruited

• Host _____ Contact: _____

• Guest 1 _____ Contact: _____

• Guest 2 _____ Contact: _____

• Guest 3 _____ Contact: _____

Host briefed on content and guest information

Talent advised about wardrobe and prepped on content

Talent notified about arrival time for show

Talent provided with directions to MetroEast

Received visual aids from guests (charts, roll-ins, photos)

Notes: _____

Production Checklist:

Crew Recruited

- Director _____ Contact: _____
- Tech Dir _____ Contact: _____
- Audio _____ Contact: _____
- CG Operator _____ Contact: _____
- VTR Operator _____ Contact: _____
- Camera 1 _____ Contact: _____
- Camera 2 _____ Contact: _____
- Camera 3 _____ Contact: _____
- Teleprompter _____ Contact: _____
- Floor Dir _____ Contact: _____

Pre-production Assignments/Jobs

- Open: _____ Crew: _____
- Graphics: _____ Crew: _____
- Roll-in 1: _____ Crew: _____
- Roll-in 2: _____ Crew: _____
- Logo: _____ Crew: _____
- Set-Design: _____ Crew: _____
- Props _____ Crew: _____
- Publicity: _____ Crew: _____

Run Down Completed

Notes: _____

Have Fun and Have a Great Show!

