



Production manager

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'Managing a production' is making possible what is artistically desirable within the limits of what is commercially possible. This requires a combination of the right elements (people, money, material and audience) at the right moment. Delegating the management and coordination of commercial parameters such as money, space and time leaves the artistic personnel free to develop their artistic ideas.

What does a production manager do?

The production manager reports to the artistic and business management. It is the key figure within the various departments of a company or participants in a project. The production manager also maintains contact with the auxiliary departments such as the secretariat and publicity department. In small-scale (ad hoc) projects the production manager often plays more the role of project manager.

The production manager is responsible for converting the artistic idea into a practical production plan. And the production manager is responsible for the process of production and the corresponding production budget. In other words, the production manager has to organise the production within a number of limiting conditions, such as time and money.

Tasks and activities

The primary task of the production manager is to coordinate and provide backup for a process of production. The production manager is the central anchor person for all personnel involved in the production, the spider in the web that prevent things from being done twice or not being done at all.

The production manager is responsible for setting up a production and keeping it running smoothly, and for keeping an eye on progress and deadlines. Each organisation has a different description of the tasks, but the main one is always the aspect of coordination and organisation. The range of tasks may be extended to include aspects of publicity, or of a technical, artistic or commercial nature.

Skills and capacities

The profession of production manager is a diverse and irregular one that requires the ability to work under stress. A large part of the work consists of resolving problems that arise from unforeseen circumstances. The ability to respond flexibly to situations is a must. Communication is very important because of the coordination involved in the function. Good social skills help to resolve and prevent difficult situations and conflicts. Because the production manager is located between all the departments – and therefore all the interests – it is important for them to recognise those interests, acknowledge them and make adjustments when necessary. This sometimes calls for a measure of distance from the various members of personnel, although on the other hand a certain degree of trust is required if they are to work properly together.

The most important aspect is maintaining a clear vision of the production on the basis of a realistic planning and budget. This is assisted by looking ahead, timely reaction to anticipated situations, and delegating. If the production manager has a clear vision, they can inform and provide backup for all other members of personnel.



The difference between the production manager and the business manager

Whereas the production manager is concerned with short-term planning and budgeting (per production or per season), the business manager is mainly occupied with drawing up policy guidelines for the long term (several years, following seasons).

An important task of the business manager is the financial management: securing funds, managing them, and accounting (annual statement of accounts/accountant auditing). The spending of the production budget, that is, that part of the budget that is directly concerned with the making of the production, is the responsibility of the production manager. The production manager works within the limits of the budget that the business manager has reserved for a production within the total (annual) budget.

Besides the financial management, it is the task of the business manager to convert the artistic plans into a policy plan in which the vision of the future, desired positioning of the company and the activities geared to achieve those ends are described. It is important for the business manager to maintain contact with the field, to closely monitor developments in the commercial and policy area, and to take these into account as far as possible in the implementation of the policy plan.

Finally, the business manager is also the employer of the personnel of the company. This includes negotiations concerning contracts and the conclusion of contracts, responsibility for payments and contributions, and compliance with the provisions laid down in the Factories Act (*Arbowet*). Negotiations with freelancers and companies are often done by the production manager. Selling a performance is a task that is not directly the responsibility of the business manager, but is nevertheless often done by them.

How do you find a production manager?

Good personnel are hard to find, and production managers are no exception. A good production manager can sense what is going on, knows what is coming, and responds to the wishes of the choreographer or director in every detail. How do you find somebody like that? The best way is by word of mouth: ask your colleagues, companies or umbrella organisations with whom they have good experiences. You can also consider assigning the production and business management to an agency. In making your choice, pay attention to whether the candidate knows what he or she is embarking on and whether you expect to be able to work together in stress situations as well.

More information

Go to [BeroepKunstenaar.nl](https://beroepkunstenaar.nl) for more information about intermediaries such as theatre agencies and impresarios. Also take a look at the downloads The process of production and Selling a performance.