

## **Pre-Production Guide #1 – Understanding The Process**

By Roy Flynn

Whether your show or series is shot on-location or in a controlled studio environment, planning is the most simplistic way of improving the quality of broadcast television. A pre-production checklist should be implemented long before shooting begins.

### **1) What is my idea? What do I hope to accomplish with this production?**

First and foremost, these questions should be assessed at your initial conception, and help provide clarity for the whole production.

### **2) Who is the audience?**

This is a key factor concerning content, airtime, and program length. All aspects of a show should be kept appropriate to the audience.

### **3) Do I need to write a script for this program? How much research will I have to do, and how much time should I allot for writing? Can I proceed with production during the writing process?**

Scripts can help determine program length, shooting location, and necessary talent. Legal questions regarding the information contained within the script should also be addressed.

### **4) Besides the producer, who else needs to be involved in this production? What crew positions need to be filled?**

Consider both crew and talent. Finding a shooting schedule that is acceptable for everyone can often be a difficult task.

### **5) What tools do I need to complete this production?**

**Cameras?** how many, what format, and the duration that you'll need to use them.

**Audio?** Audio is a delicate element. Will wireless lav's suffice for your program, or will a mixer and audio board be necessary? If you're shooting on-location, will there be a board that you will have access to? (Keep in mind that if you plug into someone else's sound system, like at a concert for example, the quality of your audio will be at the mercy of those running the board!)

**Lights?** Is there enough ambient light at your location for shooting purposes, or will you need lamps and light kits to provide additional illumination?

**Graphics?** Graphics can add a professional look to any program. Be sure to remember to create your graphics using the 4:3 aspect ratio of television.

**Special FX?** Chroma keys and additional effects are elements that will need arrangement before a production begins.

**Other tools and devices?** This would include still photographs, scanners, and props.

**6) Do I need to complete a site survey before proceeding?**

Site surveys are an essential. Try to visit your location at the same time of day that shooting has been conscripted. Note the location's ambient lighting, traffic concerns, electrical outlets and circuit breakers. How many feet of extension cord will be needed? How close to the event will you place your cameras? How will the production disrupt the lives of those involved, and likewise, how will the lives of those involved disrupt your production?

**7) What kinds of rights, clearances and talent releases are required for this production? Do I need special permission to shoot on-location? Will I need media passes for this shoot?**

Contact the owners or representatives of all locations long before depending upon a location. Double check that all copyright laws are being followed.

**8) How are we going to get to the shoot site?**

The transportation of all things, including gear and talent, should be arranged in advance.

**9) How much studio time will we have, and can we complete this project in the allotted time?**

Scheduling and booking for postproduction facilities is essential. Plan for a little more time than you think is necessary to finish all editing elements.

**10) What can go wrong?**

A list of possible problems that may arise while making a program will help producers create a