

One Way to Get Your Foot in the Door in the Movie and TV Business

[Scott Myers](#)

It's tough to break into the entertainment business as a screenwriter, but there are plenty of other jobs which can be a springboard to success.



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There was a Guardian article from the 2019 Cannes Film Festival entitled "Serious shortage of people doing 'proper' jobs on film sets."

Recruitment campaign announced at Cannes to counter huge shortage of skilled film workers, from plasterers and make-up artists

Cinema needs its moments of high glamour to attract funding and sell tickets, and each May the [Cannes Film Festival](#) provides them in grand style, with plenty of diaphanous gowns, jewels and famous faces. But tomorrow morning, on the beach where much of the deal-making takes place, an appeal will be made for something it needs even more: skilled workers who can build sets or operate cameras, as well as make-up artists, lighting and sound engineers.

A third of film and TV producers are reporting a skills shortage, from plastering and location scouting to accounting, new research reveals.

At Cannes this weekend Gareth Ellis-Unwin, head of film at ScreenSkills, Britain's industry-led training body, sounded the alarm on *The Croisette*. "We really do need more people to hear these opportunities are out there," he said. "We're not talking about the writer/producer/director roles. We're talking about the sparks, the grips, the construction teams, the hair and costume designers — those sort of back-room jobs."

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"If there are 462 people making a film, only two are the main writer and director. There are lots of other proper jobs, but several things seem to put people off," said Ellis-Unwin. "They think they don't know anyone 'on the inside'. They think they don't live near enough to a

studio and also often don't recognise anyone in the industry as looking like them. We can't leave it at that."

I often remind my university students, both undergraduate and graduate, to stay through a movie's end credits. I tell them, "Each one of those names works in the film business. That means they've gotten their foot in the door." And if their dream is to be a screenwriter, that proximity to above-the-line people can be a huge benefit once they've nailed a great script.

I know professional screenwriters who have worked in the business as assistants, development executives, script readers, production assistants, key grips, and that's just off the top of my head.

Let's say your dream is to be a screenwriter, but you've got talent as a painter. Go to L.A. and see if you can land a gig in a project's art department. That's precisely what one of my students did. She didn't even know there was that type of job until I told her. Now she's in L.A., working free lance, and continuing to write.

Here's a video which explains a lot of the jobs involved in producing a movie:

Obviously, anyone interested in screenwriting would love to land an initial gig as a writer's assistant, but those are few and far between, so extremely competitive. Therefore, open up your thought process, look at your non-writing skills, and see if there's something you're good at which you can

pursue to start working in the business.

That said, remember this: In order to have any chance of achieving a goal of becoming a screenwriter, you must continue to write. How to do that while working a full-time job? Check out this blog post with a simple formula for being productive: [1 2 7 14](#).

For the rest of the Guardian article, go [here](#).