

Indie Visible
Berkeley FILM Foundation
“Design and Execute a Successful Release Strategy for Your Film”
with Matt Chandler and Michelle Fawcett
October 24, 2018
Q&A

Thank you for attending our presentation! As we were unable to address all of the questions during the workshop, we are providing some answers below. If you missed the event, please visit Berkeley FILM Foundation to view the video. If you would like to discuss your distribution plans with us, please contact Matt Chandler at matt@indievisiblefilms.org. We look forward to hearing from you!

Q. Can you share some film festival strategies?

- Festival strategies can vary widely and should be tailored to your unique distribution goals. If you are interested in securing an all-rights deal or distribution partners, focus on festivals that also have documentary markets like Hot Docs, IDFA, etc.
- Ask for screening fees to offset the cost of festival applications. Many films have success with this (festivals will be honest about their budgets, though won't offer screening fees unless you ask).
- While you need to be strategic about your premiere status by country, region and state, film fests are a great way to get your film seen by audiences, and great things can happen when you reach the right audiences who can be fans, champions and supporters of your distribution. Err on the side of screening your film whenever possible!

Q. Can you share some creative fundraising strategies to hire people like Indie Visible?

- A.** Screen your film to select audiences of potential supporters you have reached via networking. Nowadays there are no straight lines. Reaching and growing your niche audience through screenings can lead to opportunities for funding from individual donors who are passionate about your film. Connect with other filmmakers who have made films with similar subjects and find out where they received funding. Crowdfunding is still a great (albeit laborious) way to raise funds while also creating a base of engaged fans who can support all aspects of distribution. Many filmmakers are so focused on finishing production that when distribution begins teams neglect to start thinking about what the film can accomplish through distribution, why that is important and who can help support this. Get those ideas flowing, collect email addresses and start reaching out!

Q. What about documentaries that don't have a social call to action?

- A.** Not all documentaries have an explicit social call to action, such as changing public attitudes, practices or policies. And, yes, some grants are designed for these purposes. But all filmmakers want to reach, connect with and have an impact on their audiences, regardless of subject matter. Distribution is a matter of finding that audience, the people who want to see your film, who will engage with it, support it, spread the word about it

and possibly even create a community around it; in fact, your film could have more impact than you think! Our recommendation is to first complete a visioning exercise and ask yourself what success for your film would look like to you. Even if you don't have a measurable impact goal, like changing policy, you will still have an idea of what you'd like to see your film do in the world: Do you want people to become aware of an unknown artist or to experience nature in a different way or to transcend their everyday reality by seeing familiar subject matter through your perspective? Then make a distribution plan that involves finding and engaging your audience. Even if your subject matter is obscure, there could be organizations and communities that will be interested in your film, such as museums or history institutes or churches or university departments. While your film may not have a social justice goal, it still has a community waiting to embrace it.

Q. What type of team do you need for hybrid distribution?

A. This will depend on your unique goals and situation, though we'll share some possibilities that other films have found success with. Find a distribution strategist: Call upon a friend/colleague with experience in doing this or hire someone who can see the big picture possibilities for your film, help you identify your vision and design a strategic path forward. The strategist will help you figure out, based on your budget and goals, the right team to assemble. They can also recommend distribution partners and help hire specialists, impact producers or train your team to manage the release. This strategist can help coordinate a cohesive team of distribution partners which might include: theatrical distributor, publicist, digital marketing team, semi-theatrical screenings team, impact/engagement strategist, educational distributor. Other areas of work for your release might include partnership development, designing communications and ancillary materials, conducting grassroots outreach, managing screenings and special events. Teams for hybrid releases vary quite widely, and change throughout the life cycle of the film, so make sure yours aligns with the intent, vision and goals you've determined prior to assembling your team and define roles and lanes clearly through contracts and discussions.

Q. Organizations are expressing interest in my film; how should I coordinate this?

A. First, make sure you have an overall release strategy in place, so you can properly assess where to plug the organization in to your distribution plan and what your series of "asks" will be of them. If you are running a community screenings campaign, what are the goals for your campaign and over what time period will you run it? Is your website ready to handle new inquiries? Who will service the inquiries? Having a plan and executing it methodically will help you maximize the film's potential and reach your goals. A small community group may just want to host a single screening, but a larger organization with resources can become a partner that can propel your film forward in many different and sometimes unexpected ways. Be ready for that possibility! Self distribution does not mean doing everything yourself, so consult with your distribution strategist to help you map out a plan. Second, map out the "movement ecosystem" for

your film, starting with the organizations that contacted you and brainstorming other similar or related organizations. Third, map out potential ways that the organizations could align with your distribution efforts, but, more important, how your film can be used as a tool to help them in their work. Then, consider hosting a brain trust meeting where you invite key leaders of the organizations you think might be the most important to your film. Show your film and have a discussion about where they see the film doing its work in the world. Use this information to fill in your distribution map and plan.

**For more information, please contact Matt Chandler
at matt@indievisiblefilms.org**