

PLANNING YOUR WORKFLOW

With the variety of capture and delivery formats available to you today, it is important to plan ahead and make informed choices that will lead to the best possible results.

Determining your workflow early in your project is the best way to build in flexibility *and options*.

A workflow is a group of processes—employing hardware, software, and people—that, when put into action, deliver an end result, or a portion of an end result. There can be workflows for every phase of filmmaking:

- Pre-production
- Production
- Post-production
- Distribution

There are four main types of motion picture workflows; they each require the blending of analog and digital tools during capture, processing, and output:

- Film capture to film delivery (e.g., Super 16, 16 mm or 35 mm to 35 mm)
- Film capture to electronic delivery (e.g., Super 16, 16 mm or 35 mm to HD or SD or Digital Cinema)
- Electronic capture to film delivery (e.g., 24p to 35 mm)
- Electronic capture to electronic delivery (e.g., 24p to HD or SD or Digital Cinema)

Today's filmmakers rely on post-production facilities as partners in the creative process of telling stories with moving images for:

- Scanning film and creating digital dailies/rushes
- Color management
- Adding a multitude of visual effects
- Removing or improving image artifacts

What do you need to know to help make the new motion picture filmmaking process more efficient?

When you choose your capture medium, remember that you are committing to a level of image quality that, for the most part, cannot be improved later. Capture at the highest resolution and you will expand your options in post and gain the greatest possible flexibility for distribution, based on your budget. You can't cost-effectively correct clipped or blown-out highlights in post-production, for example. It is expensive to compensate for shortcomings in electronic capture.

If you don't plan ahead, you'll spend most of your time fixing images instead of using the post-production process to tell your story. And, unfortunately, even the best post-production facility cannot fix everything. If you shoot in a

16 x 9 aspect ratio, as opposed to TV's 4 x 3, and a 4 x 3 ratio is what you need for your final product, you cannot fix this in post.

Here are some suggestions on how you can make the digital post-production process more efficient and work toward a great finish:

Choose a release format

Making this decision first will help you plan and budget your project. Your choice significantly affects production and the post-production workflow your project will take.

Involve the post house early

Before you shoot, discuss your project and budget with the post facility. Determine their capabilities and discuss all available options. Members of your post-production team can provide valuable insight and help establish a workflow for your project.

Capture at the highest resolution

When you choose your capture medium, you commit to a level of image quality that cannot be improved later. Capturing at the highest resolution will ensure image quality, flexibility, and distribution options through the whole post-production process.

Scan at the highest resolution

Scan at the highest resolution and bit depth. Images high in resolution and bit depth are robust and withstand image processing better. They also offer flexibility in final output and distribution.

Record at the highest resolution

Record film at the highest resolution, given your choice of release format. This will provide the best image quality in the final print or electronic output.

Know that you cannot fix everything in the digital post-production process

While you can fix many things in the postproduction process, there are some things you can't, such as shooting in the wrong aspect ratio or clipping in highlights. Making fixes in post takes time and money that affect the overall budget.

Plan your budget / Price your options

Plan your budget carefully. If budget is an issue, price the different options available. What image resolution will your project require? Does the lab offer digital color-grading sessions during nighttime or off-peak hours? Are there scenes that will require more time and attention than others?

“...huge strides have been made in the digital video image, but ... The reality is there’s still nothing like film.”

—*Tim Orr, Cinematographer*
