



Is social media enough for the Independent Filmmaker to get their film recognized?

I have been reading a lot about how studios/distributors are using social media to build huge fan bases for their films theatrical releases, DVD and Television broadcast. I have also talked a little bit about this in the past, and decided to continue more on the subject, because I have been asked by many people my thoughts on social media and how it can help the independent filmmakers. As always the independent world jumps on the bandwagon because they see the benefit and understand you have to do whatever you can to promote your film. However, comparing their films to what the studios are doing and getting a huge fan base on Facebook/Twitter is a different story. Well is Facebook/Twitter enough? How long will it take to build thousand's of fans?



I have read about studio films building a huge audience (hundreds of thousands, millions) on Facebook/Twitter in about 3 months. However they did not mention the studio had an advertising campaign in the form of TV, Radio, Newspaper, Magazine, etc. to help drive all of these fans to Facebook/Twitter.

So what do we do? Do we try to get a distribution deal and hope we get paid? Do we setup a Facebook/Twitter page and pound the social media? Well I say you do all of the above, and start it at the script level, at least in pre-production.

At the beginning, I would setup a blog/website, so you make regular entries about your progress. I would try to write something at the end of each day. It doesn't have to be long, just a paragraph

or two. I suggest getting started as early as possible from Script, Pre-production, Production, Post production and release through film festivals, premieres, theatrical and DVD. Start uploading any behind the scenes footage on your blog/website, Youtube, Facebook, etc. In addition try to have something on your blog or website that gives people incentive to want to give you their email address. This way you have opted them in and can send updates on your film. Maybe you do some kind of newsletter once a month on the progress of the film. Any kind of press is good from the beginning on. You cannot create enough buzz if you know what I mean. You are starting a grass roots campaign that requires a lot of hard work on your part. Just as you did when you made, or making your film, you substituted hardwork, relationships, contacts, etc. for money. If your film has any connection to corporations or organizations, try to get them involved as well. We discuss a lot of promotional ideas a specifics to organizations in **“So You Wanna Be A Filmmaker”**. The goal of course is to get a great distribution deal, or you might want to self distribute the film yourself through your fans, followers or contacts, depending on the size. You can also do both by maintaining the direct response rights (sell on your website or email direct to your fans) and allowing the studio/distributor the rest of the rights. This way you can sell direct to your customer base through your website, Facebook, Twitter, email campaigns etc. By the time the studio/distributor takes their distribution fees and the marketing fees, in addition to manufacturing cost, discounts and additional distribution cost you are lucky if you will ever see any money. You possibly could make more money selling your product direct to the consumer, you might not sell the volume, however there is a lot more profit when you manufacture and sell your product direct to the consumer. It is becoming more and more apparent with the addition downloading movies instead of the DVD is where the market is going. The consumer can download your movie off your website or email campaign. The bottom line there is no middleman.

The best part, you are usually doing this anyway, and with Facebook, Twitter and a blog you can reach so many more people who in turn can reach more people to be aware of your film. This is not easy, it takes a lot of time and effort, but you can do it. Have the star actors and other cast members, promote the film through their websites/blogs, Facebook and Twitter, especially from the beginning through release. The crew is a great asset and the city you shot in especially if they are not used to having films shot in their town. Maybe a particular location would like to promote that you shot there. I know a lot of this is common sense, however it is important to go back to the basics and cover all the ground you can. The reason why I wrote **“So You Wanna Be A Filmmaker”** is to give you the insight and save you an enourmous amount of money and time to help you keep your career as a filmmaker.

Technology is changing so fast, what was working 2-3 years ago has changed, so it is important to keep up and embrace the new outlets because in most cases they don't cost you anymore than your time. Even if you get a distribution deal that you are happy with you still have a built in audience who is aware of your film when it is time to purchase or rent.

The ultimate goal is getting you and or your investor's money back, so you can continue to make films as a career. If you are successful at doing this people will want to be in business with you.

Remember this as well, the most important thing of all is a great story. Spend more time on your story and script before you go shoot anything. The reason why companies like Pixar are so successful is because they are relentless when it comes to story. Their motto is story, story, story...

If you really want to learn more about how this works and of course how the whole business operates, pickup a copy of “**So You Wanna Be A Filmmaker**”, you will not regret it.

If you have any questions about this newsletter or the book, send me an email at info@film3001.com and I'll get back to you as soon as I can.

Thanks,
Dennis

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