Understanding the Television and Film Industries.

By Michael Gomersall

There are lots of different jobs in the television and film industries and they can be divided into the following categories; management, creative, editorial, technical, research, financial, organisational and administrative. . Here is a brief explanation of these jobs.

## Management

Management is about getting people to work to complete goals with available resources efficiently and effectively. Management roles can be planning, organising, staffing, leading or directing. The role is also about managing people to get the job done well. As well as managing people, management can also manage money and other resources such as technology, buildings and products. Management jobs can include financial, organisational and administrative jobs such as

1. Production accounting –controlling finances of a production
2. Transport Manager – controlling what and who needs to be transported to where.
3. Producer -who would oversee all aspects of a production
4. Casting Director- Getting the best actors for roles.

## Creative

Creative jobs are about creating how the production will look and sound and are part of the team that makes a production look professional and worth watching. Here are some creative jobs

1. Director –the creative force in a production translating scripts into films. A director chooses cast, crew and locations, direct rehearsals and performances, and manages camera, sound lighting, design and special effects. Directors also work closely with editors to create the final cut.
2. Casting –choosing actors
3. Hair and Make up –designing hair and make-up
4. Actor – performing, bringing a role to light
5. Choreographer – directing dance or fight scenes
6. Music – composer, supervisor, choosing appropriate music
7. Props- maker or master
8. Scripts –script editor, screen writer
9. Costumes- designer or maker

## Editorial

Editors need to select, prepare and mix visual, audio, written and film mediums together to create and produce a final product. Editors need to make corrections, organise the material and use other modifications. It is a technical job but the editor also needs a good eye and good communication skills. The story or show needs to flow seamlessly and grab the attention of the audience. Editors work closely with directors both before the shooting begins looking at maximising the potential of the screen play and after all the shooting they will work in the edit suite. Editors need to keep a good idea of what the story is as takes can be out of sequence and editing scenes aren’t necessarily done in order. Editors are often freelance and get the job based on their reputation. The work hours can be long and unsociable. Editing jobs include editors, assistant editors, title designers and post production supervisors.

## Technical

Technical jobs are about making sure the technology used is being operated well, is there and working and set up. Technical jobs can include camera work, lighting, sound engineer. Technical jobs in the media include Camera operator, production sound mixer, sound designer, music editor and boom operator.

## Research

Research jobs in the media are about exploring different options and possibilities in different areas so that the best options can be chosen. You can do research in lots of areas in the media. For example a documentary might need a researcher to find out information about the topic or find good people to interview or locations or what if it was a historical drama, the kinds of clothes people wore or what kind of furniture they had. Research skills are also needed for targeting audiences knowing what platforms to use to promote brands and products. Research jobs include media planners, location managers, casting directors and costume designers.

## Financial

Financial jobs make sure the money is coming in for a project, resources are used efficiently and wisely. Managing risk is important so that the company doesn’t lose money, keeping good accounts and ensuring that there is no overspend. Accountancy teams would need a good understanding of government legislation and also provide contracts to employees. Production accounting, distribution and sales are examples of financial jobs.

## Organisational

Organisational jobs are managing people or things and making sure everything runs smoothly and to deadlines. Time is always of the essence in media as it is an expensive medium so smooth organisation is vital. Organisational jobs include, transport manager, location manager, unit publicist, catering manager and events manager

## Administrative

In the media the admin team will ensure people are paid, scripts are ther and copied, people are phoned and get their messages and a whole host of office duties to make sure everything runs smoothly. Jobs might include assistants, accounts team, people who draw up contacts and organise payments.

## Working patterns

There are lots of different working patterns in the TV and film industries and these can include shift work, fixed term, office hours, freelance, irregular patterns, hourly rates and piece work,

Workers are often hired on a freelance basis being hired for a specific project or being paid for piece work. A freelance worker is self-employed so pays their own taxes and national insurance stamps and needs to factor in sick pay and holiday pay and pensions.

Freelancers need to be good at networking and marketing themselves to get work coming in. They need to be professional as they will be judged on the quality of previous projects.

A common type of payment in the media is ‘on completion’. A person gets paid when the piece of work they have been employed to work on is finished so the person who commissioned the work won’t sign off and pay them until they are completely happy with the job done.

Freelance workers include camera operators, sound technicians, editors and the creative. Piece work and on completion workers might be script writers. This kind of work can lack stability but can be rewarding.

When you are starting out in the media you might break in through an internship. Internships can be unpaid or expenses only paid or low waged but they can give experience in the industry and provide an opportunity to build your portfolio and your networks.

It is possible to get full time permanent contracts for some jobs. This means a person is employed usually for 35-40 hours a week, often office hours. The jobs will have a fixed salary with benefits such as sick pay, holiday pay and maternity or paternity leave. These types of jobs are more likely to be in a production company such as Channel 4, Sky, Netflix or the BBC rather than for a specific film or show. Managerial roles, accounting and admin roles are examples of this type of work.

You can also get part time contracts with similar benefits for example in sales or marketing.

When making a film, hours can be long. Canteen workers might have shifts to ensure that the crew always have something to eat. Some broadcasters e.g. Sky, radio stations etc work 24 hours a day so there will be admin staff available all day so this is another example of shift work.

Workers may need to be flexible, working long hours and perhaps working on location when making a film or show. There are often deadlines to meet and there might not be time for family or social life during a project. Incentives such as extra pay might be given to staff for irregular and long hours or location work.

## Employment Legislation

Employment legislation is about laws and standards that regulate and lay down the relationship between employees and employers. It covers what is expected from both parties. Employment legislation covers different areas.

### Contracts

A contract is an agreement laying out the terms of what is expected from two parties. There are different types of contract depending on what the two parties are agreeing to. For example a full time contract might be when an employee will work full time for an employer and will lay out the amount of hours, payments, overtime payments, benefits and duties. You can get contracts for different work patterns too such as for freelance work where the contract may put in time periods, rates of pay and lay out job specifications. Other employment contracts could include permanent, temporary, part time or intern contracts,

In the media you can also get contracts covering confidentiality and exclusivity,

A confidentiality contract is when an employee has to sign a contract not to disclose an employer’s secrets. This can be explicit like in programmes like Dr Who, the actors and crew sign confidentiality contracts saying they will not disclose story lines. However, even if there is no confidentiality contract, it is implied that an employee will not do anything to harm an employer’s interest.

An exclusivity contract ensures that an employee can only work for a certain company for a length of time or that when working on one contract the employee will not work on another project. It could also be that if a visual effect is being used on one production it can’t be used anywhere else.

### Health and Safety

Health and safety is a big concern for any industry and of course that is also the case for the TV and film industries. Health and safety will include risk assessment procedures where employees check that their areas are safe and report problems so they can be dealt with. Employees are expected to know health and safety guidelines and use equipment safely and keep spaces in a way to lower the risk of accidents. Accidents and incidents have to be reported.

### Equal Opportunities

The Equality Act was passed in 2010 replacing previous anti-discrimination laws with one act. It expects employers to treat job applicants and employees equally regardless of; gender, disability, sexual orientation, race, religious affiliation, marital status, age and membership of travelling community. It also expects employers to promote equal opportunities for all and prevent discrimination, bullying and harassment. Equality includes equality of pay and equality of opportunity.

### Employment Equality (Age) Regulations 2006

This act was about age discrimination but has been superseded by the 2010 Equality Act.

### Employer’s Liability

All employers need to have Employers Liability Insurance by law. In the media this insurance covers workers such as cast and crew in case they have accidents at work. It is the producer’s responsibility to ensure the cover.

### Employee Rights

Employees’ rights are protected by law and include

* Written statement of terms of employment within two months of starting work
* An itemised pay slip and for no unlawful deductions to be taken from your pay
* The right to be paid the National Minimum Wage
* Holiday pay, ante natal, maternity and paternity pay
* Flexible working hours
* Maximum 48-hour working week
* Not to be discriminated against
* To be given notice of dismissal (providing you have worked for at least one month)

These rights are for employees and not for freelancers, however freelancers have a right not to be discriminated against, have a right to a safe working environment and to be paid for the work they do.

### Belonging to a Trade Union

The Broadcasting, Entertainment, Cinematograph and Theatre Union (BECTU) is the UK’s media and entertainment trade union. BECTU protects the rights and interests of its members as workers. It provides services such as negotiating pay, conditions and contracts with employers, representing and advising members as well as running training and networking events. Membership is voluntary and its activities are funded by members’ subscriptions.

## Intellectual Property

It is important for employees in media to be aware of intellectual property issues such as copyright and trademarks. This is about who is the owner of work that is created- is it the creator or the company who is paying the creative worker? Scriptwriters usually sell the rights to their original work so that it can be made into film by the production company. Once the company owns the copyright over the script, they can do whatever they please with it and the original author has no rights over it. When music or media is copyrighted and another company wishes to use a clip or a song they will need to get permission and pay for the right.

### Trademarks

Trademarks are intellectual property usually taking the form of a logo or word. Trademarks need to be registered with the Intellectual Property Office and are protected against misrepresentation. When making a film it is important to make sure if any logos or brands you are using are trademarked and need clearance before they can be used. Sometimes trademarks are used in films as product placement to advertise their branding to consumers.

### Passing off

Passing off is when something that looks similar to a trademark or brand is used in a production and misrepresents the company. The company could make a claim saying that they are losing sales or their reputation is damaged by how they are being represented.

## Ethical

Companies are not bound by law to be ethical but use written documents such as codes of practice and policies and procedures to lay out what is expected of their employees. Codes of practice look at how they expect their employees to behave in certain situations where as policies and procedures will cover how the business acts including; recruitment, health and safety, equality, confidentiality etc. These policies and procedures are often informed by legislation.

### Emerging social concerns and expectations

Issues arise and may cause problems or confusion and policies are put in place so that the organisation can learn from the experience and deal with similar issues in the future and a way that is ethical. The Jimmy Saville Scandal will have caused the BBC to look at policies and procedures on how they deal with accusations both privately and publicly.

Representations

There are ethical issues in how media portray individuals, groups, religions or issues. In the past certain races or groups weren’t represented at all and then weren’t represented accurately. There are always debates as individuals or groups can be offended by how they are being represented. As BBC are paid with by public money they try and represent all their license viewers and have specialist shows both on TV and on radio. When viewers complain these complaints are looked at and there are acts to protect misrepresentation by law.

## Legal

There are various acts that broadcasters need to be aware of to ensure that they do not discriminate, victimise or publish material that will ‘deprave and corrupt.’ The Equality Act (2010) mentioned earlier outlaws discrimination. The Broadcasting Acts set out standards and complaints procedures to ensure fairness in broadcasting. The Obscene Publications Act protects literature and prevents the publication of obscene materials such as torture, bestiality, necrophilia and rape.

The British Board of Film Classification (BBFC) gives a film a rating on who should see it. This isn’t legally binding as it is up to individual councils to decide but councils usually stick to it making it legally binding.

### OFCOM

Ofcom is the independent regulator and competition authority for the UK communications industries. This is where people can make complaints about TV and radio and is often used for representation issues. Ofcom receives complaints and decides whether to investigate or not. Its decisions will be based on whether it is breaching the Broadcasting Act and Ofcom’s own broadcasting codes on viewer harm and offence. For example a woman whose number appeared on a phone in Eastenders received over 3000 calls and texts. Her complaint was upheld and the BBC apologised. Ofcom did not uphold complaints from the Traveller Movement who felt that Channel 4's Big Fat Gypsy programmes was not only offensive but’ harmed children, promoted discrimination and racism and fuelled misunderstanding, bullying and hostility towards these already marginalised communities’.

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