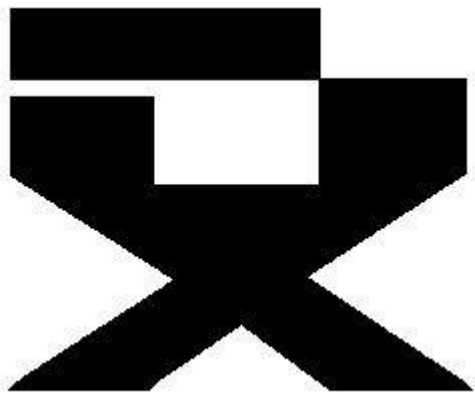


**Production Department**

**Office  
Production  
Assistant  
Guide**



## OFFICE PA – Survival Guide

**Welcome to the Production office.** If you have never worked on a film or TV show, you may be unaware of the office and its function. Essentially, the office is command central.

A **Production Office** is the administrative office responsible for managing a film or TV show. The office is responsible to the Producer(s) and Production Manager and is always opened in the pre-production phase and continues until at least post-production. The production office usually contains offices for most of the departments such as Directors, Assistant Directors, Art Department, Accounting, Costumes, Locations, Set Decorating, Props, Stunts, etc. Many physical production offices don't have enough space to contain all the departments and thus they might end up scattered around in satellite buildings.

The Production Office itself includes the following positions: Production Office Coordinator, 1<sup>st</sup> Assistant Production Office Coordinator (1<sup>st</sup> APOC), 2<sup>nd</sup> Assistant Production Office Coordinator (2<sup>nd</sup> APOC) and Office Production Assistant (OPA). There is some flexibility in this and many productions have more than one person in each position.

A Production Office will look different for each production depending on many variables including the type of film, the production company producing the film and the size of the budget of the film itself. A Production Office can be as small as one or two people (mostly seen in an independent film structure) or as big as ten or more on a film with a sizeable budget.

In many cases away from Set, whether for Crew or the general public the Production Office is their first contact with the Production. Whether on the phone or in person please remember that you are likely their first impression, and first impressions count. If there is any department that would be considered the customer service department, that would be us. Please remember that and try to be courteous, or even better, friendly to everyone.

The job of an Office Production Assistant varies with every show but there are some constants. Answering phones, photocopying and dealing with FOOD are everyday responsibilities. More details about the kitchen & food and office machines are under those headings below.

The most important task is catching the phones; it should not ring more than twice. There are different ways to answer - please defer to your Production Coordinator as to their preference, but you can generally not go wrong with 'Good morning/afternoon/evening, Production, this is <your name>'. Important: always take a message with a phone number. Messages should be on a message pad, not a post-it note. Message pads will leave you with a copy of the message as well, which is helpful to look back at, or have in case the recipient loses theirs. People will say "They have my number" – write it down anyway.

Equally important, when guests arrive in the office, please greet them. On every show there will be people wandering around not knowing where to go; acknowledge that you have seen them and try to help guide them to whom or what they are looking for.

Every Production office runs a bit differently so please defer to your Production Coordinator.

Please do not be afraid to ask questions if you don't know, we are all on the same team!

## DOCUMENTS

Here are some documents that will be very helpful to familiarize yourself with:

- Crew list** – list of the crew by department, includes title, phone numbers, email addresses
- Extension list** – list of the internal phone extensions of the crew; will sometimes include cell phone numbers and/or email addresses

**NOTE – we never give out anyone’s personal number or email address. Take a message and pass it on to the crew member.**

- Call sheet** – daily schedule for a shooting day
- Prep schedule/Daily schedule** – schedules issued in prep generally covering a week or two, listing all meetings/scouts etc. Should include a list of attendees for each of these
- One liner**– schedule for the shoot, created by the First AD
- Day out of Days** – taken from the one liner, indicates what cast work on what days
- Shooting schedule** – detailed schedule listing out what the requirements are for each scene
- Cast list** – list of the cast for a given production
- Non-Disclosure Agreement (NDA)** – many shows now require that any interviewing crew, visitors and vendors entering the office/sets sign an NDA. Getting them signed and keeping track of them generally falls on the Production office.

All documents will be revised periodically. In order to quickly identify which version of a document you have, in addition to the date, each revision will be printed on a different colour paper. It may fall on you to make sure every new revision is printed and distributed. The colour order for each Studio is slightly different, so please familiarize yourself with your Production’s order.

### THE KITCHEN & FOOD (aka Craft Service)

Keeping the “Off Set” production and prep crew caffeinated and fed generally falls on the Production office and the kitchen will generally be your domain. As much as we would like others to help keep the kitchen/lunch area clean, never plan on it. Your day should include frequent visits to the kitchen to make sure it is tidy and stocked. Please do NOT wait to be told that the kitchen needs attention. The fridge should be cleared out at least weekly, checking for any expired or tired items.

The dishwasher(s) will likely need to be run multiple times a day as we are (hopefully) all encouraging the crews to use real cups/plates/cutlery instead of plastic. Please check to see if it needs to be run and that it is loaded correctly.

Every few days you should do a walk-through of all offices to make sure no one is hoarding any dishes and unknowingly running science experiments.

Shopping for food will generally be done weekly and in bulk, although depending on the number of people, there may need to be supplemental trips during the week. Chances are good that you will be inundated with special requests - before you act on any of these please check with your Production Coordinator as it may not be feasible to provide everything to please everyone. We recommend that you keep a running shopping list and while it is tempting to stick with familiar items, remember that variety is appreciated and buying the same things week after week just makes people crabby.

Lunch – on some shows lunch is provided for the off production crew and chances are you will be involved in this whether the lunch is catered or ordered from restaurants. You will likely be the person in charge of making and updating a menu binder of restaurants near the Production office.

If your office has catered lunch you should make sure the area is set up by putting dishes out and making sure that you have enough plates, cutlery and napkins.

On some shows there will be a request for a mid-afternoon snack; this again will often be your task.

### **OFFICE MACHINES**

Since we are seen as the keepers of the office machinery we often end up being considered the IT department as well. There are likely at least 2-3 machines in every office. When you start you will be trained on the models that are in each office but they often include:

1. Fax/scan/network printer
2. Large copier
3. Colour copier/scanner/network printer

You should know where each of them are, and check on them periodically for jams or any other trouble and to make sure the paper trays are full.

As many people will use these as network printers you should learn how to add the network printers on both PC and MAC machines.

Chances are your domain will also include making sure the paper and other supplies for all these machines are stocked. You never want to run out of toner. Also remember to familiarize yourself with your Production's colour order for revisions so you can ensure that you have all the necessary colours.

### **RECYCLING/COMPOSTING**

We are all working hard to recycle and compost as much as possible and this adds to your routine. Please check the recycling bins daily to make sure that they are not overfull and that people are rinsing their recyclables. For compost, it should be emptied at least once a day. You should familiarize yourself with the schedules for pickups of the recycling, garbage and the cleaners.

### **DISTRIBUTION**

The Production office is responsible for making sure that all crew and cast have the information they need to do their jobs, so we are the ones responsible for distributing the above documents (and many, many others). The documents will be distributed electronically or hard copy or both. There are a number of electronic distribution systems in use – Scenechronize, E-Studio, Pix, Dax.... They are all similar but different. Find out which one (or ones) the production is using and ask for a tutorial, ideally before you have to distribute something quickly.

Nothing should be distributed outside of your Crew/Cast/Studio/Network without approval from the Producers. The Agents/Managers of your cast may ask for schedules; please refer these requests to your Production Coordinator.

Many shows are highly confidential, so no information should be released unless you are certain who you are speaking to. If you aren't sure about someone, take a number and tell them you need to confirm and will call them back.

## GENERAL TASKS

It is always a good idea to keep a notebook handy to write down anything and everything that you are asked for or to do, just in case you need to refer back to it.

Here are a few things to keep an eye on:

1. If you have a boardroom, check it before and after meetings to make sure it's tidy. It's a good idea to check the next day's schedule to make sure you can be ready for any meetings
2. Make sure all filing for production is up to date, as the office needs to go through it often to recheck things
3. Please try to keep in mind to not leave your desk (unless necessary) if others are away from theirs and let someone know where you are going
4. Organize office supply cabinets, **restock**, keep tidy
5. Take outgoing mail every night to the mailbox or closest post office

## TIME MANAGEMENT

Often times you can be given many tasks in rapid succession, on top of the tasks you already have to accomplish on your daily task check list. Don't let yourself get flustered – this is a team sport. Ask your Production Coordinator to assist with reprioritizing your tasks to ensure they are done in the most important and efficient way. Thinking for yourself is good, but there are certain times when it's best to check in with your POC to ensure the priorities of the Production are maintained and executed.

## OPENING/CLOSING THE OFFICE (DAILY)

Your Production Coordinator will have specific daily tasks for the person who is first in and the person who is last out daily. These will vary from office to office but generally will include

OPEN	CLOSE
Turn on lights Check voicemail Empty dishwasher Depending on type of machine – make coffee Warm up copy/fax machines	Make sure that all distribution for the day is complete Check doors to make sure everything is locked Final clean kitchen Start dishwasher Take out garbage/composting if the cleaners aren't coming that night Tell anyone still in the office you are leaving Turn off lights

## ACCOUNTING

**Start Pack** – the first thing you will need to do for Accounting is fill out your start pack. This includes your deal memo, start slip, tax documents and will generally include a Non-Disclosure agreement, Policies and Procedures memo, information about the Production Company's Safety and Anti-Harassment policies. Please read all these documents. You will also need to provide some kind of proof of residency – this varies from company to company but can include a copy of your driver's license, your previous year's Notice of Assessment from doing your taxes, or 2 utility bills. If you are receiving a car rental you will need to provide a copy of your insurance and you are required to have your car insured for BUSINESS use.

**Petty Cash** – you will likely have a Petty Cash (PC) float and you will need to do PC envelopes frequently to replenish your float. This will involve taping up your receipts - please be careful not to put tape over any printing on them (most thermal printing will be erased by tape over time). Check with the Accounting person doing petty cash if you have any questions about how they want receipts taped up and the envelope filled out. Most shows now will not accept receipts that are more than 30 days old, and for some it might be less. Petty Cash should never be used to pay for Rentals or Labour costs. Most shows have a single transaction dollar limit over which you need to get the Production Manager's approval. Please check with your Production Coordinator or Accounting department regarding the policies. Remember this is cash and keeping your PC float and receipts secure is your responsibility. Make sure that it is always kept somewhere safe.

**PCard / Credit Card** – some shows are now issuing PCards or Credit cards instead of cash floats. The rules are essentially the same, however, the envelope you do will likely be a little bit different. Some shows require that Purchase Orders be done to account for Credit Card purchases, others require an envelope be done to match the receipts to the bills. Again, please check with your Production Coordinator or Accounting department.

**Purchase Orders** – a Purchase order (PO) is done to alert Accounting that something has been ordered and there will be an invoice coming. Please get an estimate from the Vendor to fill out the PO, have the Production Coordinator sign off on it and turn it into Accounting. DO NOT wait for the actual invoice to come in to complete the PO. For a new Vendor you will need the full company name, address, phone number, GST number and the quote information to complete the PO.

**Cheque Requests** – sometimes a Purchase Order can't be issued for a purchase or a service; for example at a vendor where the Production doesn't have an account. In these cases, a Cheque Request will need to be done. You will need all the same information as you would need for a Purchase Order.

**- ENJOY -**