

# CAREERS IN EXHIBITION

## BY FILMHUB WALES & INDEPENDENT CINEMA OFFICE

### PROJECT MANAGEMENT

Bodies like the British Film Institute, regional screen agencies, or even event cinema companies require a number of varied roles, including:

#### DEVELOPMENT EXECUTIVES

In this management role, individuals might seek out talent, working with emerging and established filmmakers to explore partnerships and financial investment at the earliest stage of a film project, when the script is under development. Individuals help filmmakers to shape compelling projects that are on their way to finding production funding.

#### PRODUCTION EXECUTIVES

Production executives are responsible for the company's production slate. They will be responsible for reading scripts and working with filmmakers to develop the concept. They will continue to work closely with them during filming to oversee details such as budget, schedule, or liaise with other financiers and broadcasters.

#### AUDIENCE EXECUTIVES

In these project management type roles, individuals work directly with cinemas, film festivals, community cinemas or pop-up or film education providers. They help cinemas, thinking of ways to ensure that they have the tools to screen British and international films. This might mean development of training schemes, audience research to map trends in film data, or creating projects on the ground i.e. setting up film clubs, or designing themed film seasons that tour across the country.

#### EDUCATION EXECUTIVES

There are a number of companies that specialise in working with young film audiences. They might work with schools to set up film clubs or workshops, develop training for teachers or work closely with Government to develop the education agenda.

#### RESEARCH/FUNDRAISING

These roles can be freelance, with individuals offering skills for a specific piece of work. An organisation might want to find out how well films made in a particular region perform or they might want to commission someone external to apply for lottery funds on their behalf. They put together a brief which the consultant responds to.

Other roles might include directorial positions, finance, partnerships marketing and communications, event management or administration roles.

#### Example companies:

- British Film Institute
- Film Hub Wales and the wider Film Audience Network Hubs
- Ffilm Cymru Wales
- Independent Cinema Office
- Cinema For All
- Into Film



## WORKING IN INDEPENDENT FILM EXHIBITION

Independent cinemas sustain UK cultural cinema, ensuring that audiences can experience diverse film wherever they live. Roles in exhibition are varied, challenging and exciting:

### PROGRAMMER

The Programmer is responsible for choosing films that will screen in the cinema or at a festival. Knowing who their audience is, what they will like and how to develop new audiences are key. Programmers need to have an in-depth knowledge of both film history and new releases. They will attend preview screenings of films months before release and may travel to key international film festivals. It is often the responsibility of the Programmer to write film copy for marketing and to liaise with the Cinema/Operations Manager on scheduling. Developing good relations with distributors and the ability to negotiate are essential skills. Not every venue has a Programmer and roles can be combined, particularly in smaller venues. The ICO's Cultural Cinema Exhibition course is useful.

### CINEMA/OPERATIONS/GENERAL MANAGER

Responsibilities in this post vary but generally the Cinema Manager will take overall responsibility for all front of house areas such as Box Office, Café and Bar. They will have to work to budgets, and may have to deliver business plans and financial reporting. They also need to ensure that the cinema complies with all licensing and health and safety regulations. Usually the Cinema Manager will be responsible for managing and recruiting front of house staff and projectionists, stock control and cash handling. If the venue is very small, the Cinema Manager may also act as the Programmer. In larger venues the Cinema Manager may be supported by a team of Assistant or Duty Managers.

### PROJECTIONIST

Most modern independent cinemas have converted to a digital projection system (though some maintain a 35mm projector), meaning the role of the projectionist is now largely digital and can include downloading or uploading the film onto the projector servers; attaching ad reels and trailers to the front of the film; ingesting KDMs (Key Delivery Message – a time code sent by a distributor to unlock the film for specific screenings) to ensure that all film files are playable on date; and running the films. In large projection boxes there is very often a Chief Projectionist who will have management responsibility for the projectionist team and who liaises with the Cinema Manager and/or Programmer on film delivery and formats. Projectionists are also responsible for sound levels. For special events they may need to coordinate use of microphones and lighting. Projectionist training is mainly on-the-job.

### FINANCE

The Head of Finance or Finance Manager is responsible for all financial planning, forecasting and reporting; setting audience and sales targets; writing business plans; ensuring a variety of funding streams and assisting the Programmer when required to help negotiate terms with distributors. This post can fall to the CEO or overall Manager of a cinema depending on the cinema's size and structure, and is likely to be supported by an administrative team covering raising invoices, collating figures, paying invoices from distributors and other suppliers, banking, paying salaries and reporting income streams from various different areas of the cinema.

### MARKETING

Often responsible for managing a tight budget for the cinema's website and social media activity, the brochure and any advertising spend, the marketing department also manages the cinema's customer database, normally captured by the Box Office's computerised booking system. Depending on the booking system, it may be possible to target specific audience groups according to the 'product' or film. Skills required include copywriting, proofreading, knowledge of design software (such as the Adobe Creative Suite) and knowledge of e-marketing and social media. Film posters, trailers and other display materials tend to be ordered centrally, although smaller distributors may distribute materials directly. Routes into Marketing roles include marketing degrees and journalism experience but, often bigger marketing and publicity departments offer on-the-job training.

### PRESS AND PUBLICITY

Not always separate to Marketing, this role ensures that all cinema content is publicised locally or, where relevant, nationally and internationally. The two main outlets now are e-marketing and social media, although print is still used. Having sufficient knowledge of key social media platforms, such as Twitter, Facebook and Instagram is therefore essential, as is an understanding of how to use online advertisements economically and effectively. The ability to write well will come in



handy for composing press releases, as will an eye for a good story, and great tact is essential for dealing with any negative publicity. Routes into a Press and Publicity role are very similar to those for Marketing.

## EDUCATION

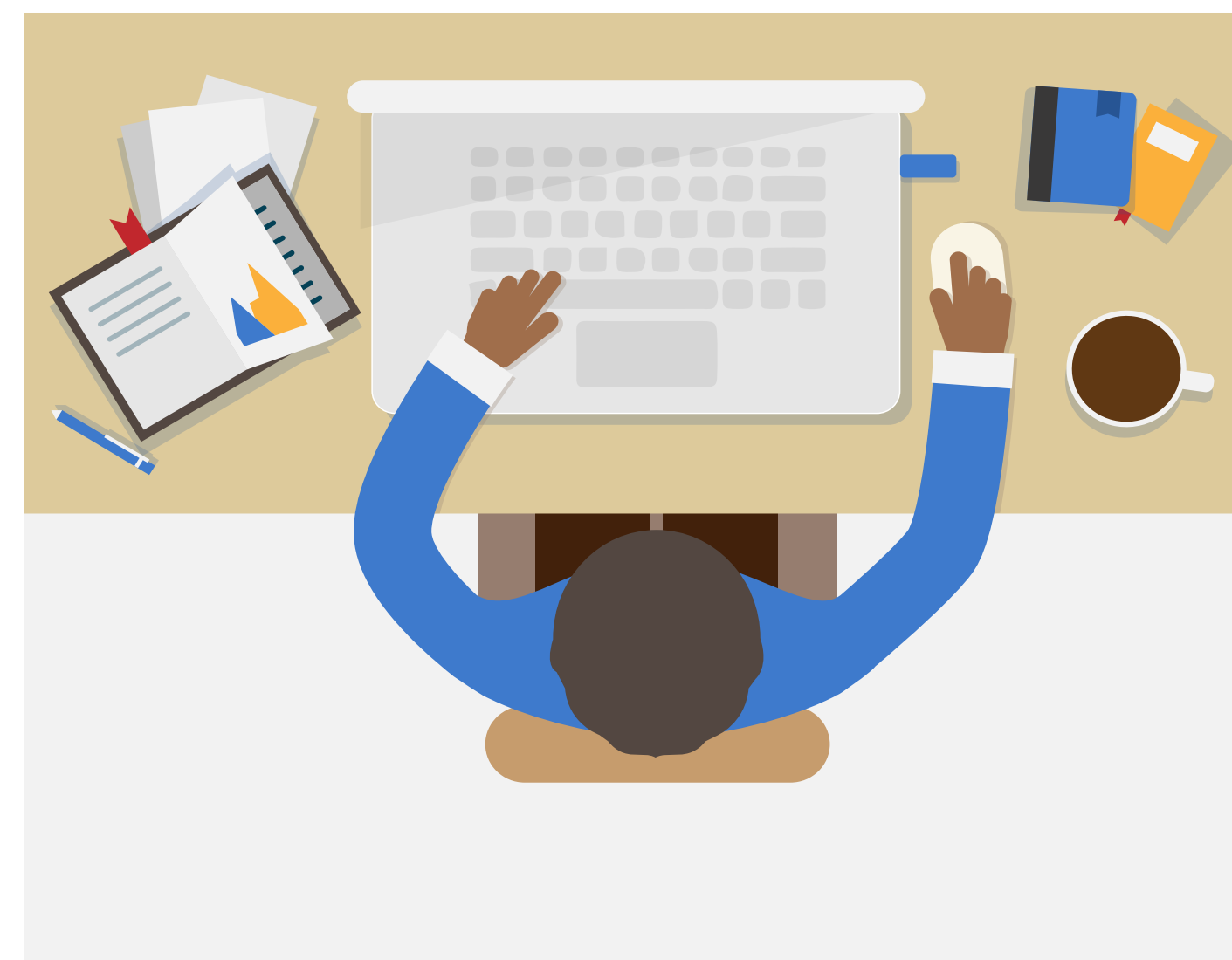
Usually a dedicated Education post is only found in larger venues. It can be a great way for a cinema to establish a relationship with its local community. For example, evening courses or programme notes at screenings. Adult education is equally important as activities for children or families. Some educators have previous teaching experience and a passion for film led them to cinema. Knowledge of the school curriculum, public speaking skills and, a good knowledge of film history are important.

## BOX OFFICE AND FRONT OF HOUSE – CONCESSION SALES/BAR/CAFE/USHER

Roles like these are an ideal starting point for anyone hoping to work in Cinema Exhibition because you have invaluable direct contact with your audience. You need to be personable, patient, friendly and ideally, interested in film.

### Example companies:

- Chapter Arts Centre, Cardiff
- Memo Arts Centre, Barry
- Aberystwyth Arts Centre
- Pontio, Bangor
- Clwyd Theatr Cymru, Mold
- Galeri, Caernarfon
- The Torch Theatre, Pembrokeshire



## WORKING IN COMMERCIAL FILM EXHIBITION

There are also many interesting and challenging roles available in the UK's commercial cinema sector, which may be located at a central head office as well as on-site:

### HEAD OFFICE: FILM BOOKER

Similar to the role of a Film Programmer in independent cinemas, a Film Booker is responsible for booking films in multiple sites and negotiating terms with films' distributors. Some Bookers will consult on-site management teams as to film choices and scheduling, as well as trailer running orders and marketing materials. Bookers dictate how many screenings of each film the cinema will need to fit in per day. They often have an agreement with each film's distributor for a certain number of screenings based on maximising profit. On a Monday morning, they will analyse takings data for each film that played that weekend and make a decision in negotiation with each film's distributor whether to 'hold over' their film for another week or take it off, depending on how well it has performed.

### HEAD OFFICE: MARKETING

All marketing – including online and website development – is done centrally and will usually be done for the entire circuit. Most Marketing departments will produce weekly print for their cinemas, advertising the films and times. Sometimes commercial exhibitors will do marketing deals with specific suppliers on certain titles – for example a big kids' summer release might be sponsored by a food manufacturer and any cinema marketing material will promote the sponsor. This is often done in conjunction with the film's distributor.

### ON-SITE CINEMA TEAM

Similar to the independent model, the team is usually made up of a Regional Manager (who travels around their allocated region to support the cinema teams) and a Cinema/Operations Manager who is responsible for the day to day running of the cinema; achieving targets, driving sales, staff training and customer care/safety. They will be responsible for a Front of House team consisting of box office/concession sales/bar/café/usher staff and the projection team. The Projection team in a commercial cinema tends to project all of their films from DCP (Digital Cinema Package). However, in some specialist branches of commercial cinema chains, they may also be called upon to screen from 35mm film, 70mm film or IMAX.

## PRODUCT AND CONCESSIONS

Virtually every commercial cinema has a concessions area selling ice cream, sweets and popcorn. Some will also have a café bar. For many venues across the country, these secondary sales are one of their biggest income streams. There is usually a team based at Head Office to select products the cinemas will stock and negotiate circuit-wide deals with the suppliers to get the best possible prices and set income targets for individual sites.

## ESTATES AND DEVELOPMENT

This department manages the circuit's physical cinema buildings. They are responsible for any expansion or other development, notably the building of new cinemas, and will be instrumental in any new design elements in existing cinemas. They will also be responsible for upkeep and will work closely with the cinema's Manager, who will feed back any repairs and building issues.

## IT

Responsible for ensuring that all the cinemas' box office booking systems, tills and concession systems, as well as email, are fully operational. This is a key data collection area with most data being collected and distributed at Head Office.

## HUMAN RESOURCES

Responsible for staff recruitment (although in some instances, cinema staff may be recruited by Cinema Managers and Regional Managers), terms of employment, staff training and development, disciplinary and promotional issues.

## FINANCE

The Finance department is responsible for all financial planning and the overall running of the business, although there is often a CEO who will oversee this and other departments. The role is very similar to that of the Head of Finance in an independent cinema but on a much larger scale, often managing the finances of a multi-million pound organisation. Almost definitely, they will be supported by an administrative team covering raising invoices, collating figures, paying invoices from distributors and other suppliers, banking, paying salaries and reporting income streams from various different areas of the business.

### Example companies:

- The UK Cinema Association (UKCA)
- Cineworld
- Odeon
- VUE



## WORKING IN DISTRIBUTION

The UK's film distribution sector ranges from the offices of international Hollywood studios to small, specialist independents, bringing both blockbuster and world cinema releases to audiences:

### SALES – THEATRICAL UK AND INTERNATIONAL SALES

If a Cinema Programmer is booking a film, it will be the Sales person they need to speak to, to ask about available dates and terms. The terms are whether the distributor takes a flat fee, or a percentage of the box office takings. For an independent, second-run cinema, the agreement they come to with the distributor will often be a combination of the two. These values will be decided by the amount of time and screenings a cinema can give to a film, the size of the audience (and therefore revenue), whether the film has already screened in a nearby venue, the distributor's plans and/or expectations for the release, etc.

### BUYERS/ACQUISITIONS/RIGHTS

A Film Buyer working for a distribution company will be responsible for identifying and acquiring films for the company. Buyers will attend major international film festivals and markets, where most films are sold. Buyers may also be looking at acquiring back catalogue titles, e.g. older films that they may wish to re-release.

They will need to find out who holds the rights for the geographical territory they wish to release the film in. Rights are usually acquired for a fixed amount of years, so it may be that the rights held by one UK distributor have expired, presenting an opportunity for another UK distributor to now buy the rights. Rights are divided into Theatrical (referring to films screening in cinemas), and Video – which means the company can release the film on video, DVD for home entertainment.

## HOME ENTERTAINMENT

The Home Entertainment division of a distribution company will handle any film released on DVD, Blu-ray or Video on Demand (VOD). A lot of films will have been acquired for both theatrical and DVD/Blu-ray and/or VOD, so the film is likely to have been released in cinemas already. This will have raised the profile of the film, helping to boost DVD sales. There's usually, but not always, a 'window' between a film's theatrical release and its DVD/VOD release. This enables the cinemas to maximise income prior to DVD/VOD release.

## PRODUCTION

Some distribution companies produce (make) films as well as release them. Production will be aiming to source potential new projects – they will be reading lots of scripts, many submitted to them but some sourced by the Production team; they may acquire film rights to a novel that they feel would make a good film and they may come across films through relationships with other production companies who perhaps already have a project they are working on, but are looking for partners to support its completion.

## MARKETING

The most public facing department in a distribution company and one of the most important, as it is the work done in this department – posters, social media and trailers – that the public are most likely to see and which will eventually (hopefully!) drive them into the cinema. The marketing department will decide the design of the poster and where and how wide to place these – online, on social media, in print (magazines and newspapers), on buses / at bus stops and at various other poster sites. They will decide the look of the trailer, as well as the amount of different trailers they will create; and will get it produced and edited using clips from the film.

## PR

PR stands for Public Relations - someone working in PR will mainly deal with journalists. The articles, reviews and coverage they manage to generate will be seen by the public and hopefully will encourage public interest in a film. There are two main areas of PR – firstly, Unit Publicity, which is publicity generated while a film is being made, and includes organising the filming of EPKs (Electronic Press Kits) and getting interviews on set with key actors (or 'talent' as they are often referred) or the director for magazines, online articles, social media, newspapers or blogs. The other area is getting journalists to review films which they watch at press screenings or film festivals.

### Example organisations:

- Peccadillo Pictures
- Thunderbird
- Universal
- Studiocanal
- Verve Pictures
- Altitude
- New Wave



*With thanks to the Independent Cinema Office for supplying the information within this fact sheet. For more information go to [independentcinemaoffice.org.uk/jobs/](http://independentcinemaoffice.org.uk/jobs/)*

*For more information from Film Hub Wales go to [filmhubwales.org/careers-in-exhibition](http://filmhubwales.org/careers-in-exhibition)*