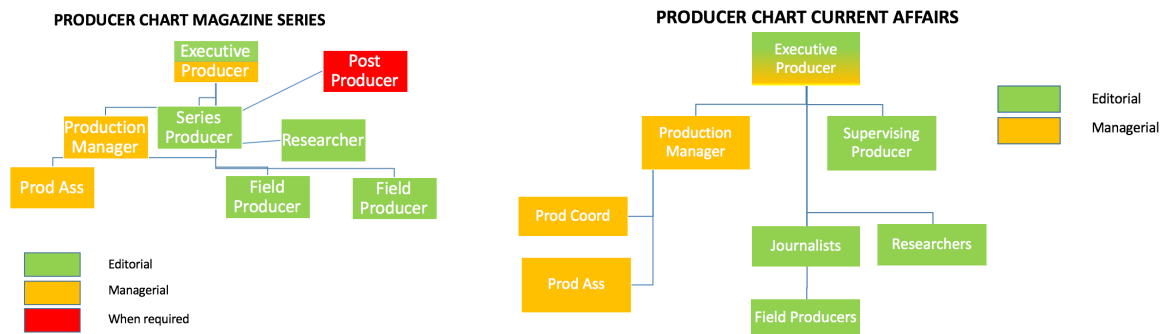


The Producer

written by Ivo Burum

There are various producer titles each relating to a role in the development, production, delivery and marketing cycle of a film, video, or online media project.

Figure 1 Shows a hierarchical order of producing for a magazine and a current affairs show.:



Executive Producer or EP credits in television are received by individual(s) who report to the networks, studios, or companies funding and distributing the series/show. The Executive Producer (Showrunner) has final responsibility for the creative and business aspects of producing a series. S/he will have direct authority over a majority of the producing functions throughout all phases of series production.

The Executive Producer is often responsible for the creation of the series, including the concept, format and other production elements. Over the course of production, the Executive Producer is expected to serve as the primary point-of-contact with the network, studio, and/or production company regarding the development, production, post-production and marketing of the series. During development of the pilot and/or series, the Executive Producer will supervise or participate in story or script meetings, approve all storylines, and supervise the creation of the series "bible." The Executive Producer will select or approve the hiring of all series directors, as well as the casting of all on camera talent including hosts and journalists. S/he will similarly select or approve of the hiring of key members of the producing team, such as the production manager, director of photography, and composer. The Executive Producer must supervise or approve the series budget and production schedule. On an independent production they can often develop these before the production manager is on board, because these will be required for commissioning.

Within post-production/marketing phase, the Executive Producer will continue to consult with the network, studio and/or production company regarding such delivery requirement issues as final cuts, air dates, and standards & practices. S/he will typically select and/or approve the choice of post-production facilities and editors, providing in-person consultation with them. The Executive Producer should view and provide consultation on the rushes, and should view, appraise and approve all cuts before leasing with the network and or distributor. S/he is typically consulted regarding publicity and promotional campaigns.

FUNCTIONS OF AN EXECUTIVE PRODUCER more specifically the EP in a Television Series is expected to exercise decision-making authority over a majority of the following specific job functions:

- Consult with the network, studio and/or production company regarding the development—look, style, editorial, tone format and business aspects of the series.
- Negotiate the network license fees and any additional financing required to produce the series.
- Conceive of and/or supervise the creation of the series "bible."
- Select and/or approve all presenters, office staff, heads, creative and other crew and be responsible for their contracts.
- Supervise or participate in story or script meetings, and approve all "in house" generated story outlines, shooting and edit scripts.
- Supervise and participate in all department meetings.
- Approve all set designs and set dressing for sets created and built for the ongoing series.
- Approve the choice of format (35mm, Super 35mm, 16mm, video, Hi-Def)
- Supervise and/or approve the preparation of the series schedule, budget and pattern budgets.
- Approve the choice of locations
- Select post production facilities
- View any rushes and sign off on all scripts, edits, mixes and programs

The SERIES PRODUCER or SP reports to the Exec. Producer. In Australia, on factual series, this is both a managerial and an editorial role. A good series producer is worth their weight in gold, because it frees up the EP to look at the bigger picture and to get on with getting the next show up. As the name suggests they work on series and you rarely have an SP on a one off project. SPs have overall responsibility for making programs happen from pre-production through to delivery. A key part of the role is ensuring that the series complies to the overall look and style, especially when different directors are making individual episodes. It's a senior editorial role requiring someone who has worked as producer/director for a number of years.

For example, *George Negus Tonight*, a nightly public affairs series on the ABC, had four series producers. Each ran a team scattered across four states and was responsible for a night of production. Because the SPs were working remotely with numerous field producer (8 across the series) and reporters (12 across the series), we would meet on a weekly basis to determine the week ahead. They would develop the week and I would sign off on story and program rundowns. Their job included:

- Having a clear vision of the series and the format, stylistically and editorially
- Providing producers and journalists guidance when planning stories
- Providing script points
- Signing off on edits (ready for EP to view)
- Signing off on voice overs
- Managing the team creatively
- Keeping stories and programs focused on the demographic
- Maintaining network imperatives
- Making programs for less

Overall SPs need to manage the expectation of the Executive Producer by keeping the project on schedule, on budget, on point creatively, and editorially sound.

THE SUPERVISING PRODUCER reports to the Executive Producer and in Australia, more often than not it's essentially an editorial role. On current affairs shows the Supervising Producer helps develop stories and story lines and shepherd the stories through edit and post production. SPs have a capacity to write and structure media into story in the edit suite. Generally, they are selected from a producing, journalism or writing pool and can have a senior research background.

THE SEGMENT PRODUCER on factual projects is often also the director, except on news, documentary or drama projects, where you can find both. On factual magazine productions they are responsible for producing one or more individual segments of a multi-segment production, which can also contain individual segments shot by other producers. On factual magazine type series the role of the producer is often split between the field and the edit suite, except in what's come to be called the 'Beyond Model'. This is a production model where the field producer/director remains in the field and editing is left to editors and a post producer and writers. On other magazine series the role of the producer, often called a segment or field producer, might look like this:

- producing segments
 - developing story ideas into briefs and outlines
 - planning the shoot
 - briefing the crew
 - overseeing travel arrangements
 - running the shoot and directing crew
 - ensuring all releases are organized
 - ensuring uplinks in place for live broadcast
 - editing the stories
 - working with journalists or presenters to write the script
 - writing the script on their own

POST PRODUCER edits raw footage into stories and processes these finished stories through post production. They are responsible for the creative and business aspects of the post production of the series, with a direct participation in making decisions that relate to format, rundown and schedule.

NEWS PRODUCER is one of the most integral members of any news-production team. A news bulletin showcases current breaking and developing live or packaged news stories. The news producer takes all the elements of a newscast (packages, video, graphics, etc.) and compiles them into a cohesive show (rundown).

The news producer (sometimes called a supervising producer) reports to the executive producer who reports to the news director. The news producer supervises the director, studio crew, reporters, field crew and others.

News producers are highly organized, pay attention to detail and are good writers under stressful conditions. The news producer's responsibilities are wide-ranging. In no particular order of importance (because all are equally important), they:

- Participate in the morning or afternoon meeting during which the stories are assigned.
- Write the draft script for the anchor.
- Organize the show elements, to ensure that there is good "flow"
- Gather leads for possible stories
- Monitor the wire feeds for potential stories
- Edit video for voice-overs to determine story length
- Decide on order of stories on the rundown
- Make sure the stories are in the system
- Time the rundown and news cast to make sure it is on time
- Coordinate the record of the bulletin
- Liaise with field crew and reporters during day
- Set up and integrate live crosses
- Write in-show and pre-show teases

CURRENT AFFAIRS PRODUCER I have worked in international current affairs and produced many stories (including occasional news stories) in more than 40 countries. Many of the skills above apply to news type current affairs stories. But the role of current affairs producers can differ depending on the program. Most current affairs producing is actually segment or field producing with a very strong emphasis of creative and editorial story production. I loved that. Often this involved editing stories on the road in makeshift edit suites and then sending them up (twice) on the satellite. Digital changed much of the process (lets discuss).

PRODUCER TRAITS

- Team Builders
- Communicators
- Multi taskers
- Networkers
- Process orientated
- Good negotiators
- Good time managers
- Good directors
- Good writers