

The Four Main Reasons Why Your Film Is Not Getting Accepted Into Film Festivals And How To Fix It



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10 years creating award winning film festival & distribution strategies

The Four Main Reasons Why Your Film Is Not Getting Accepted Into Film Festivals And How To Fix It

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'I Don't Know What Film Festival Premiere Policies Mean'

'I Don't Know How To Create A Film Festival Strategy'

'I Don't Know If I Have A Film That Festivals Want'

'I Don't Know How Much To Spend on Festival Fees, Deliverables and Travel'

These are just 4 of the many common problems which filmmakers share with me – I'm here to help you on your journey and create for you an award-

winning festival strategy. Let's start by getting into the 4 main reasons your film is not getting accepted into film festivals and how we can solve these problems for you.

Why Listen To Me?



Dr. Rebekah Louisa Smith (aka Rebekah Film Dr) is an award-winning consultant and media personality with over 10 years of film festival strategy consulting experience.

After choosing not to pursue a career in Academia, Doctor Rebekah Louisa Smith began her film industry career in 2008, working as one of the producers of Wales' most successful national horror film festival, the Abertoir Horror Festival, which is part of the prestigious European Fantastic Film Festivals Federation.

Rebekah & her hard-working team are creators of success and are committed to nurturing filmmakers in order to help them secure visibility, awards, sales & distribution leads, and general recognition within the film industry.

Currently her company have won over 750 awards for their clients and secured 1 Oscar nomination and 2 BAFTA nominations. Rebekah and her team have supported over 848 creatives across the world enlightening and

inspiring their journey towards achieving their goals and following their dreams.

The Film Festival Doctor's Film Festival & Distribution Success Statistics for 2019

100% success rate for all of our clients

148 awards won for our clients

378 international film festival screenings

1 SAFTA Win

1 BAFTA long-listed short film

18 feature films acquired a suitable sales agent

78 worldwide distribution deals closed by our sales agent affiliates

Why Are Film Festivals Important?



A lot of filmmakers are aware of film festivals, however it is crucial to take into account when designing your film's festival strategy the importance of film

festivals, as this will help you to decide which festivals you need to target and what you want to achieve overall from the festival circuit.

There are two different types of film festivals – business festivals and audience festivals. Business festivals include Cannes, Berlinale, Venice, Toronto International Film Festival and Sundance. These festivals have a large budget and tend to be sponsored by corporate companies (such as L'Oreal for example). They have a major competition such as the Cannes Palm D'Or and have a market and business presence.

Audience Festivals are those which are smaller and tend to run in a major city or town (i.e. The Byron Bay Festival in Australia and the London Film Festival in the UK). Every city in the world will more than likely have one. These festivals don't tend to have huge corporate sponsorship and are primarily funded via ticket sales and private & local sponsorship.

The types of people who attend business festivals are buyers and sales agents (as it's part of their job to attend these kinds of festivals each year in order to acquire product to sell and buy), mainstream critics and press. The types of people who attend audience festivals are public audiences but not so much buyers and distributors – some sales agents and buyers attend some don't, it all depends upon what films they're looking for the festivals programme.

Not all audience festivals have a market, however they often have a business atmosphere. It's important for Film makers to attend both types of festivals for networking, feedback on their film, getting a feel for how festivals work and also how they can take advantage of the opportunities that festivals offer.

Film Festivals are very useful PR (Public Relations) and distribution tools, especially for independent films as they are the perfect places to 'launch' a feature film ahead of its theatrical/DVD/ VOD release. Festivals are also the perfect places for short film directors to introduce their vision. Short films are 'calling cards' for up and coming feature film directors and festivals are the 'home' for short films as a platform to showcase their talent. Film festivals are the main area where short films can receive theatrical screenings and is also possibly the only platform where this can be achieved as theatrical releases for short films are exceptionally rare.

Festivals are places to discover films and the talent involved. 'Discovery' films tend to be the straight to VOD high quality independent feature film gems which aren't big enough to receive a wide theatrical release or sometimes even those which don't have a distribution deal – they're just awesome films.

If you receive an invitation to screen at two festivals which are BAFTA recognised or one which is BAFTA qualifying and a British Independent Film Awards (BIFA) accredited then you'll be eligible to submit your film to be considered for a BAFTA or BIFA nomination. If your short film wins a particular type of award at festivals which are Oscar accredited (which is called the 'Oscar Qualifying Award' full list here -

https://www.oscars.org/sites/oscars/files/88aa_shorts_festival_list.pdf), therefore, you are

entitled to submit your film to be considered for an Oscar nomination. There is an exception with regards to the Manhattan Short Film Festival as every film which is selected (there are 10 films in total) is eligible to enter the Oscars.

The submission process for narrative and documentary feature films is different as this process includes having to release the film theatrically for 7 days in Los Angeles and New York. You are also required to acquire specific press coverage.

As previously mentioned, festivals are brilliant places to generate publicity. Depending upon the festival there are always lots of bloggers, press reviewers, on-line magazine editors and interviewers at festivals, the bigger the festival the more press; the smaller the festival the less press presence.

It is important to remember, when you receive your invitation to screen at a festival that you create your festival and P.R. goals and then invite as many of your PR contacts as possible by sending out press releases and of course inviting your peers and colleagues directly via e-mail. It's also very wise to hire a publicist to manage this work for you.

Another key reason why festivals are important is that they present the possibility for your film to get picked up by a sales agent – and this is with regard to both shorts and features. The latter is always difficult as the shorts market is very small, however, the best festival to connect with short film buyers would be the Clermont Ferrand Short Film Festival – the world's largest and most prestigious short film festival in the world.

On the topic of selling, Berlinale, Sundance and Cannes to name just several present golden opportunities for you to sell your film, as the Berlinale is home to the European Film Market and Cannes is home to the Marche Du Film. For a fee you can hire a screening room at one of these festivals in order to attract buyers and sales agents. It tends to be the former who attend these types of screenings. Ensure that you pick a decent screening slot (anything between 12noon-6pm is ideal) as early morning and late nights they probably wouldn't attend due to party commitments.

These types of screenings are, of course, the perfect place to form relationships with international distributors, even if they don't pick up your current film.

Not only are you selling your film at festivals but you are also selling yourself – you as a person; your authorial vision, but also your production company which is why it is very important to think about brand awareness. Make sure that you go to film festivals with business cards and posters and that you have a logo and name which they will remember.

Festivals are also events where you can win awards which, besides being good PR tools make valuable additions to the laurels on your film poster – some awards may even be cash prizes. Do bear in mind though that awards won't secure or guarantee you sales and distribution deals as sales agents

and distributors don't tend to take this into account when acquiring features (and shorts), as their main priority is to assess if the film is sellable.

If you won the Cannes Palm D'Or or Berlinale Bear award then that's a different story, yet there would of course be no guarantee that you would automatically acquire a sales deal as that depends upon the film's genre and of course again, how sellable it is (i.e. if it features stars or a name director, exec producer).

And finally, festivals are key places for networking - for all film industry professionals including producers, directors, PR Companies & actors – everyone! Festivals tend to mark the conception of new business relationships as they are useful places to meet new contacts and also make friends. The areas of festivals where you tend to meet these people are at parties and drinks receptions, so it is important to be a night owl during this time!

It is also crucial that you maintain those relationships post-festival and arrange to meet these people in order to nurture the relationships which you're in the process of building and you can do so when you re-visit the festival the following year – and believe me you'll want to. 😊

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Okay so, you're now at the point where you've begun submitting your film to festivals but nothing is happening – lots of rejections are coming in and you're starting to feel anxious and depressed – so what are you doing wrong?

Here are the 4 most common mistakes -

1. REASON NUMBER 1: You Are Not Submitting Your Film To The Right Film Festivals

Before doing any festival submissions the golden rule is - know your product & know your festivals. The **BIGGEST** mistake that filmmakers make is submitting their film to wrong festivals.

So, how do you identify if you have a festival viable film and what is it exactly that film festivals want?

The first step is to do your research and look online at previous festival programmes, make a note of the themes and types of films which these festivals tend to screen and review the trailers to these films on you tube etc. Look at the content contained within their programme – what type of genre and narrative themes are they selecting. Also review their mission statements as these are the places where they tell you what types of films they're looking for.

For example, The London Short Film Festival have a programme called 'God's Lonely Men' which is a programme focused upon men's problems and male life struggles. This is one of their themes and they are looking for innovative films which could fit this theme - if your film focuses upon a male struggling with a male issue (such as depression or a male-only health issue) therefore it's certainly a festival to add to your strategy.

Good places for you to research (besides google) are filmfreeway.com (always take a look at their reviews section and their top 100 best reviewed festivals), movie maker's top 50 film festivals worth their entry fee – this is a top 50 list which is updated each year (<https://www.moviemaker.com/50-film-festivals-worth-the-entry-fee-in-2019/>), festivalfocus.org and PDF's of BAFTA, BIFA & Oscar qualifying festivals are also available on the internet (again google is your friend to find them) to download for free. It is also worth researching on-line via social media Facebook pages of the festivals as these are very informative. When doing your research keep asking yourself the following questions – do I have a film for this festival's audience? What value could my film add to this festival? How could I form a long-term partnership with this festival and keep coming back as an alumni to showcase my work and growth as a filmmaker?

Below are several quotes from 3 film festival directors which offer further insight into what film festivals are looking for and what goes on behind the scenes during their selection process -

1. Steffanie L. Finn, Executive Director of the Winter Film Awards Festival, New York City

'The Winter Film Awards International Film Festival takes submission judging very seriously. We have a team of about 75 judges from around the world who watch about 2 1/2 hours of films per week and score them overall plus in 8 technical areas.

Each submission is watched by at least two men and two women. If the judges do not agree on a film, it is assigned to two additional judges. All judges scored are rolled up and we select roughly the top scoring 10-12 films in each category.

The most important things a filmmaker can do to impress a submissions judge is to ensure the sound is absolutely top-notch. Juries are forgiving of less than perfect acting, lighting or cinematography, but even the best film in the world will be turned off within a few minutes if the sound is bad. Also, very

important is to ensure your subtitles are accurate, legible, do not cover any important action and are on-screen long enough to actually read.'

Here is a link to read Steffanie's primary advice for filmmakers –

<https://winterfilmawards.com/2019/10/12-tips-for-your-film-festival-submission/>

2. Stephen Savage, Founder and Director. Idyllwild International Festival of Cinema, California

'As the founder and director of the Idyllwild International Festival of Cinema, heading into its 12 year in March of 2021, I'm in the unique position of being a working Hollywood filmmaker who has the honour each year of viewing hundreds of film submissions from around the globe. I have to say, the South African feature film, Losing Lerato, which won the top awards at our 2020 festival, is a prime example of what we at Idyllwild (and most film festivals I would think) look for in projects we invite to screen with us. The first is quality overall. In other words, we seek films which "look" like big screen releases. Losing Lerato had the look and feel of a bigger budget movie, though we understood it was not. Technology has made it so a film can be shot with a movie look although just because a film looks ok, there is so much more to making a professional film than that. Acting, editing, sound and score... all of these the filmmaker must be passionate about and willing to spend the time on in order to generate interest from popular film festivals and markets. Whether it's a feature, a short, or a documentary, don't sell your passion short by rushing it through. Cast it, film it, and work your post as if your life depends on it.'

3. John Currie, Festival Director of the Beeston Film Festival, U.K.

'The Beeston Film Festival employs a rigorous and openminded selection process. We request submissions across a wide range of genres, ensuring a diverse programme, however the joy of the festival is surprise! We of course objectively assess each submission against criteria such as cinematography, script and performance, but it is films such as The Cunning Man, that combine high performing technical elements with originality that stand out. Festival selections and award nominations are determined by our local Programming Team, whilst award decisions are driven by our international industry panel.'

The next important question to ask is what is a festival film? The way to answer this question is to pick your film apart and the place to start is with the script and the story. It's important to ensure that you have got a film that is not commercial, formulaic and predictable and 'by the numbers.' A film that you

see in the cinema like a Tom Cruise film, for example, follows a formula; you know what's going to happen next, you can guess the dialogue. The story is a A, B, C D, predictable, boy meets girl, boy loses girl boy gets to go back, and so on and so forth. It is all spelt out and the characters don't develop. That is a contemporary commercial movie, which sell a lot of tickets and is a lot of fun for spectators.

However, this is not the type of film that festivals want. They don't show commercial movies. They like narratives that are edgy, groundbreaking, contemporary, something fresh and innovative, that is well executed, something that breaks boundaries, take a risk, shakes up and disrupts the usual codes and conventions and the stereotypical formulas.

If you craft your story in a way that is different to the mainstream, or that's executed differently, that requires a bit of thinking when watching, is sophisticated and is not going to be commercially accessible to a general audience, then this is a good start.

Obviously, this story has to come with a well written script that has strong dialogue. A lot of films can have an interesting story, but not always strong or interesting characters, or not very well-rounded characters, and not very interesting dialogue that is predictable and dull. Overall, you need a sharp script, strong dialogue which is to the point and not overly long. It's also very important that your film is not self-indulgent.

A good film to watch for research purposes is 'Sex, Lies And Videotape' this was the film which made Steven Soderbergh (a star director) - it was not just the title which got people talking but how the story was told, it goes back and forth and is not told in a linear way, and the twist you do not see coming and the dialogue is very tight & realistic.

It also has a very carefully crafted script that is watertight in terms of its structure, and making sure no one foresaw the twist. Another thing that will affect your festival selections, is that you have to ensure that your product is polished as every film should be made professionally.

As Steffanie L. Finn stressed, good sound is crucial as it has to be strong, otherwise it can make the film look unprofessional. Good sound design is a very important component.

Another big decision-making factor is strong acting and performances, sometimes you can have an interesting film with a great concept but the acting is not good enough. The acting needs to be mature, sophisticated

and strong to the point where everyone carries the movie and that it is a piece of work which people can relate to.

And the final thing is a suitable running time. With regards to short films, although you might find that a festival says that the maximum running time can be up to 30 - 45 minutes, the reason why 30-minute + films tend to get programmed is because they do not need to be shorter and deserve to be that length.

My advice is to keep it short. If you feel it needs to be shorter, trim it in order to make it as strong as it can be. When it comes to programming short films the ideal length that programmers like is between eight and 11 minutes.

15 minutes is a good length for a film too, just ensure that it doesn't outstay its welcome. Try to cut the credits down as much as possible to make all your story really shine.

Anything more than 15 minutes it is important to ensure that the script is tight. With regards to a feature film no more than 90 minutes, 80 to 90 minutes is definitely a good length. Again, if the story and script justify a longer length and the pacing is good that is fine.

With regards to getting the length of your film spot on, I would advise to acquire feedback from people who are not attached to yourself and your film so that it is as objective as possible.

I would acquire feedback at the picture lock stage of your film when it's almost finished, and see what type of feedback you're getting from people and make changes where necessary.

Please do not worry about your budget. It is irrelevant if the film was made for \$1 or \$1 million – it doesn't matter. It has to have all of those things mentioned above in the film to make it festival viable and something which festivals want and are interested in.

2. REASON NUMBER 2: You Have No Strategy

Having no plan of action or a well thought out curated strategy will not get you the results which your film deserves.

A watertight, robust and strong strategy consist of the following key elements:

1. *A streamlined and focused festival strategy* which consists of a list of festivals to submit your film to that are the right level and tier of festivals suitable for your film and the festivals audience (as discussed above and in further detail in sections 3 &4).

2. *A streamlined and focused strategy with a list of sales agents to approach during (or after) your festival journey*

This point tends to be with regards to feature films, however, this can be applied to short films if one of your goals is to find a sales agent to sell your short. Our colleague Billy Hurman who is part of the Film Festival Doctor team from Skye Consulting (and has acquired a sales agent for all of the films which he worked on with The Film Festival Doctor including feature films BEYOND THE RIVER, LOSING LERATO, NOBODY DIES LAUGHING (a feature documentary) & THE TOKOLOSHE, to name just several) explains the role of a sales agent -

A Sales Agent is approached by filmmakers, whom wish to have their film represented and promoted, in the available worldwide territories to international film buyers.

Once the sales agent has screened the film and has then confirmed to the filmmaker, that they wish to represent it the sales agent will propose deal terms for their engagement, including such clauses as length of term, sales commission, sales and marketing expenses etc.

If the filmmaker regards the terms acceptable, then the Sales Agency Agreement or similar, will be signed. The sales agent in tandem with the filmmaker, will develop the strategy for marketing the film and representing it to international rights buyers.

Their approach would typically include promotion and screenings at the various international film festivals and markets. Film buyers who acquire the rights to the film will then distribute it within their territory.

Sales Agents also usually organise the delivery of the physical film materials and also legal services to close buying the rights contacts, once an accepted offer has been received from an international buyer.

It is important to include within your strategy film festivals where you can either connect with sales agents (the Dinard Film Festival for example in France which a lot of UK based sales agents attend) or the official selection laurel of the festival will prove to a sales agent that the film is of a high calibre and one which they might be interested in considering to acquire & sell.

When you do eventually acquire a sales agent, it is important to ensure clear and transparent communication with the sales agent and yourselves. It is very important to check in frequently with the sales representative regarding its sales strategy for an update including where it has sold to or will possibly be selling to at an upcoming market and where film festivals fit within the current strategy and what you need to keep on top of.

Managing a feature film festival strategy involves a lot of juggling as you

need to work around your target festivals and their deadlines, the festival's premiere policies and depending upon which territories it has sold to (or has a potential deal on the table for) it may affect the strategy and where you can screen it.

Managing a short film festival strategy is a lot more flexible, as a lot of short film distribution deals are non-exclusive and most of the time film festival screenings are welcomed by buyers and short film sales agents for the additional exposure. Always ensure that when you submit your film to festivals and to potential sales agents and buyers that it is a private link as everything needs to be kept exclusive.

Some sales agents manage your festival strategy for you internally and there are others that don't and give you free reign and control. Every agent is different – regardless of who is managing it clear and transparent communication is critical from both parties.

3. A streamlined and focused marketing strategy

This is relevant, and important to, both short films and feature films. When your film gets invited to screen at a festival it is worth investing money into local advertising. Getting postcards and leaflets printed to promote your screening will help spread the word about your film and also get your brand noticed. For example, putting postcards promoting your film screening in local shops, cafes, restaurants etc will help the local audience notice it and start to get them interested. Obviously, do put lots of promotional material (including posters) in the festival hub – this is the location which acts as the festival headquarters where you pick up your accreditation badges and where all of the festival delegates hang out and connect.

Advertising in local newspapers and magazines is also helpful, however, before doing this and spending money on paid advertising ask the festivals marketing team which local publications they would advise you advertise in. Also work closely with them to help you advertise your film as they will be able to support you to get the best attendance.

It is important to remember that you must not expect or rely upon the festival to market and promote your film for you as this is something which they can't do for every film due to budget limitations. They will certainly be able to support you and the best way to work as a team with them would be to know exactly what type of marketing you want to do and what you want to achieve from the screenings. Set your advertising goals before you spend any more money.

Another option is Facebook Advertising which you can target to the local area, however, my advice would be to consult with an expert in this niche to ensure that you have the right strategy in place to achieve the results that you want from it. Facebook advertising involves a lot of planning before

posting in addition to getting your message and wording positioned correctly.

It's important to acknowledge and understand that advertising is different and separate to P.R. as discussed in the forthcoming section -

4. *A streamlined and focused PR strategy*

Again, this is relevant, and important to, both short films and feature films. Our colleague Patricia Chica who is part of the Film Festival Doctor team from Chic Art P.R. explains that if your goals are to

1. get your film reviewed by multiple critics and listed in the trade journals
2. to stand out among the hundreds of selections at a film festival
3. attract a lot of press and audience members at your premiere

the first step would be to create a well-crafted promotional strategy that is custom made for results and will put your film and your brand in a position of power for wider media coverage, larger sales and immediate reach to your targeted audiences.

Patricia and her team at Chic Art Public Relations create outstanding narratives around your work so that your film becomes irresistible for media outlets. Their media and industry reach has over 2,5000 highly curated and weekly updated contacts.

For example, an outstanding genre short film which The Film Festival Doctor represented called GOODNIGHT GRACIE screened at over 100 film festivals and launched on-line after it finished its film festival run on the prestigious Alter genre platform (part of the Gunpowder and Sky empire). Our clients wanted the film to have its world premiere at a top tier festival and also get a P.R. strategy in place in order to acquire as many reviews as possible for the film with a global outreach.

The Film Festival Doctor team secured the world premiere of the film at the world's biggest genre film festival the Sitges International Fantastic Film Festival where it screened in competition. It also had its U.K. Premiere at the BAFTA recognised Norwich Film Festival. Chic Art PR acquired over 150 5-star reviews for the film including coverage in all of the key genre trades Bloody Disgusting, Screen Anarchy & Horror Society.

<https://www.goodnightgraciefilm.com/>

3. REASON NUMBER 3: You Have No Long-Term Planning In Place

As previously discussed, the biggest mistake filmmakers make is that they submit their film to festivals without putting together a plan and a strategy in place beforehand and sometimes they have no idea why they are submitting to festivals in the first place.

Some even make the mistake of submitting their film to a festival which is not the type of film which that festival is looking for. Knowing what type of film you have made a clear-cut set of achievable goals need to be created before any submissions begin, as your goals will help you shape (and design) your festival strategy.

The first thing to do before setting any viable goals though is to be tough on yourself and ask – do you have a festival viable product? This is often a question which is best answered by other people, your colleagues, peers and those not attached to your film project. Friends and family members often tell you what you want to hear so it is always better to ask people who will be honest about your film (myself especially!). See the answer to reason 1 above for further information and help with this.

If you have a festival viable film, the first question which you need to ask yourself is what do you want to achieve from the festival circuit with this film? What are your goals - are these goals realistic? ('have a reality check') setting a goal such as launching at Sundance will not be possible if you have no contacts there and you have a film that is not going to make the programming team go 'wow that so was different, unique and original'. However, launching at the Aesthetica Film Festival is still very tough but a little more realistic if your film is strong, is the kind of film that they're looking for and since that festival is focused upon predominately short films it narrows out the competition from a huge amount of feature films.

Goals such as - your top 5 'festivals which would be great for my world premiere' list (containing suitable festivals for your film), maximising PR, acquiring sales and distribution leads, achieving successful exposure and networking are all very realistic; you just need to make sure that you get your film seen at the most useful and beneficial festivals in order to achieve what you want and that you have the type of film that they would like to programme – all of this makes a beautiful long term relationship and a business partnership with film festivals.

For example, if you wanted to do lots of useful networking aim to have it screened at the London Short Film Festival or Edinburgh International Film Festival where lots of this takes place. Getting it screened at a smaller regional festival is fine for local exposure but the networking might not be as effective if no film industry professionals or filmmakers typically attend.

A lot of filmmakers worry about festival premieres and assume that every festival will want the world premiere of their film (which is the first public

screening of your film). The truth is that very few festivals require world premieres for both short films and feature films.

The Cannes film festival have world premiere policies for both short and feature films. Other festivals of a high calibre tend to be more flexible for both shorts and features, for example; SXSW (South by Southwest) have world, international and North American premiere preferences for feature films whereas their premiere policy for short films is an Austin Premiere. Tribeca is the same as above except for shorts their premiere policy is New York premiere. The Toronto International Film Festival is also the same however for shorts they require North American premiere.

A lot of the top tier short film festivals such as Encounters, Clermont Ferrand and the London Short Film Festival do not have any type of premiere policy. Higher end regional festivals are more flexible, for example; the Dallas International Film Festival have a Dallas Premiere policy for both shorts and features. The golden rule is to always check the festivals rules and regulations and you'll find their premiere policies within these guidelines. Make a note of each festival's premiere requirements on your festival strategy.

It is of course very important that you have the very first public screening of your film (the world premiere) at a festival that will help you to achieve your goals and is the kind of festival that you would want to launch your film at. Try not to get attached to one specific festival (i.e. Sundance) be open and flexible and have a wish list that has a minimum of 5 festivals on it.

Organising a private cast and crew screening of your film before you launch it on the festival circuit is fine – the only key thing to remember is not to make it a public event where general members of the public can buy tickets to watch it – it must be a private invite/guest list only type of event.

Always incorporate into your goals your long-term goals. For example, the short-term goals are what you want to achieve with this particular film, and the long-term goals would equate to. For example, what you want to achieve as a director and for your production company brand? what type of sales agent do you want? what type of distribution you want in the long-term bigger picture.

If you manage to get your short seen at the Encounters film festival, it would be a good idea to build up a good relationship with the programmers in order to see if you can get your next short seen there, since they admire your work after all and you're one of their alumni. Always have a larger plan in mind for the future, especially if you want to branch out into feature films and/or corporate videos etc as you could meet people at these types of festivals who might be able to help you do this. If you get on well with the new people you meet and form relationships with, they might also become an integral addition to your business.

It's important to know your purpose attending or participating in festivals otherwise it's easy to get sucked into the hype and excitement, without getting any real concrete results. Remember that you only have one shot at launching a film, so ensure that you know what you want and which festivals can help you to achieve your goals.

4. REASON NUMBER 4: You Have No Budgets Or Cash Flow Planning In Place

In addition to the above, another common mistake which filmmakers make is forgetting to put aside money for PR & Marketing. This is easy to do as a lot of producers are taught to produce a film from pre-production to post production. I would encourage you to put money aside for festivals and marketing (both for features or shorts) during the pre-production phases of your film, ideally during the financing stages.

I recommend that you devise three different types of budgets for your film and raise the funds for them as early as possible. If it means dipping your hand into your savings or taking out a loan, now is the time to cash flow so you can work with the right amount and decide what you need. 😊

Budget 1 – Festival submission budget - take into account how much you have to spend on festival fees. Never submit to a late deadline which incurs an expensive fee as you shouldn't have to pay that much money on a festival fee. Putting aside £50-100 per month for 6-12 months is fine. You would certainly be able to do plenty of submissions using £1,000.00 and that could last you over 6 months for sure by using it wisely and submitting to early or regular deadlines as opposed to waiting until very late.

A lot of filmmakers believe that if you submit to a late deadline your film will not get watched by the film festivals team and it will not be accepted into the film festival because you have submitted far too late in the process. This is not true because this doesn't apply to every single festival – we've had a lot of films get accepted into film festivals after submitting via a late deadline. My advice is always if the fee is high and it will take out a huge chunk from your submission fee budget don't submit. I always advise filmmakers to submit to early bird and regular deadlines because the earlier it gets in the film festivals pipeline the better and at the same time it saves you money.

All festival submissions carry a risk to them (especially if you're paying a fee) as there is no guarantee that your film will get invited to screen and you won't get a refund if you are not selected. Your film's festival life can be anything between 12-24 months from the day of its first film festival screening. The festival life may shorten if your film is a feature and it gets picked up by a sales agent and subsequently gets sold and distributed in certain territories

around the world, as the distribution companies would have control with regards to festivals.

Budget 2- Deliverables budget – this budget consists purely of money to pay for your festival screening, exhibition copies and press materials. Festivals tend to prefer to screen shorts from either Blue Ray or high res file uploads (H.624 & MPEG 4 etc) and sometimes DCP. Obviously electronic files are cheaper as you can send the film via Dropbox or We Transfer. Features tend to be screened off of a Blue Ray & DCP. Prices for these can vary depending upon the post house therefore, ensure that you shop around and get the best deal possible.

Budget 3 – Travelling budget – if your film gets invited to screen at any festivals definitely attend for

- a) the networking opportunities to help you achieve your goals
- b) the feedback on your film
- c) seeing all of your hard work up on the big screen
- d) to receive any awards that you may win.

It's important to remember not to rely on the film festival to fund your trip as not all festivals will be able to cover your travel and accommodation costs. The big ones might be able to contribute, however the small ones running on small budgets wouldn't be able to help. You would however receive a complimentary all access festival pass/entry to your screening.

In addition to putting money aside and cash flowing for travel (including making decisions with regards to finding the best deals on flights and figuring out which method of travel would be the most economical) and accommodation (Air B&B vs. Hotels – which is cheaper and worth the investment?) It is also important to factor in average cost of living including food, drink, taxis, buses, trams, trains to get around. Any additional festival extras that you might need to pay such as buying extra screening tickets for new connections that you meet during the festival and getting printed more postcards and advertising to promote the screening if you run out.

Connect With Us

A big thank you for taking the time to read this guide, I know it's not always easy getting your film seen on the festival circuit, however being around people that truly care about you is the next step to really helping you get what you want and your film the success it deserves.

If you want to personally connect with me come and say hi via E-Mail and/or Instagram

Via E-mail you can reach me, Rebekah, on – **info@thefilmfestivaldoctor.com**

Follow me on Instagram – **rebekahfilmdr**

I'll be in touch with you soon regarding my upcoming group coaching and on-line courses and the special deals that you'll be entitled to. 😊