

# Writers Approaching A Producer 101

## INTRODUCTION

Approaching a Producer is the first step in getting your script on the screen. Getting anything made in the screen industry is a team effort and requires solid creative partnerships to ensure success.

Below is a simple guide to assist you in your first approach to a Producer or Production Company.

## STEP ONE – RESEARCH

First thing you will need to do is a research (aka google) producers and production companies that are making the types of work that best fit the types of work you want to make. NZ on Air, NZFC & Te Māngai Pāho (amongst others) funding round decisions are a good place to start.

- <https://www.nzonair.govt.nz/news/?type=latest-funding>
- <https://www.nzfilm.co.nz/new-zealand/funding-and-support/funding-overview/past-funding-decisions>
- [https://www.tmp.govt.nz/funding\\_search](https://www.tmp.govt.nz/funding_search)

Watch, listen and read everything that is in your genre or style. Make sure you aren't trying to make something that has already been produced!

Most established production companies and producers have their own websites. You can also use resources like the [Data Book](#) in NZ and [IMDbPro](#) for international contacts – see the handout on finding an Agent, you may not be able to approach an international producer without an Agent or Manager.

Make your list in order of preference. Remember, you can approach multiple producers and production companies at the same time when you are first starting out.

## STEP TWO – WRITERS PROFESSIONAL MATERIALS

These are the materials you will need when approaching a producer or production company:

- Writing Slate – all works including, format, length, current state of development and any attachments (see handout).
- Biography / CV of all writing and screen industry related work, including script consulting / editing etc.
- Treatments – of your most developed works on your slate
- Sample Scripts – full length and smaller samples that are readily available.

## STEP THREE – APPROACH TO APPROACH

It is as simple as asking a Producer how they would like to be approached about working together, and how they would like to receive your materials.

Generally, it is a first email – I do not recommend social media as a first approach, most working producers and production companies have someone who manages their social accounts for them, and they might just bounce you. It can also seem inadvertently rude, especially to more experienced producers who operate via phone calls or emails in their professional space.

Though communication styles are slowly changing, and some producers do accept social platforms contact for the first introduction. However, be prepared to use email and make phone calls. This is how most of our sector still functions.

Things to include in the first approach email is information about you as a writer, the types of work you make (your voice and style) and then to ask if that producer is interested in meeting you or at the very least reading any of your materials.

It can take up to 6 months for some producers to respond to first contact, and a gentle nudge at the month point(s) is acceptable. But, not after 24 hours and do not be unkind about a non-response – you do not know what that producer is working on or even if they are available to accept new materials.

There are two pathways that follow an approach to approach, the first is rejection (non-response or the producer is not accepting new material or doesn't "vibe" with your work). And the second pathway way is positive, the Producer responds to you and your works and a working relationship is formed.

#### UNSOLICITED MATERIAL

The term 'unsolicited material' refers to scripts, treatments or story ideas (materials) that producers or productions companies have not asked for and do not want. This means that they will not accept any emails or contact that includes these materials from writers they do not have an established relationship with, or it doesn't come through an agent or manager.

Producers and production companies say no to unsolicited materials primarily for copyright reasons. This protects both parties.

Example: A writer submits materials which are rejected and then in the future a project is produced, which appears like the materials submitted, therefore creating grounds for a writer to take a copyright claim against the producer or production company.

Some good articles and links on what unsolicited materials means (primarily US based advice):

[https://www.reddit.com/r/Screenwriting/comments/6vtc1m/please\\_dont\\_send\\_unsolicited\\_material\\_to\\_pros\\_on/](https://www.reddit.com/r/Screenwriting/comments/6vtc1m/please_dont_send_unsolicited_material_to_pros_on/)

<https://www.villagevoice.com/2009/09/09/i-will-not-read-your-fucking-script/>

#### WORKING WITH A PRODUCER #WorkingRelationshipGoals

The Writer/Producer relationship(s) should be mutually beneficial, keep this in mind when having any meetings with any producers and production companies.

#WorkingRelationshipGoals starts with clear, concise, and kind communication. This begins by ensuring that the writer and the producer are making the same project.

Being in a good working relationship means you can have robust conversations together around rights, creative direction, funding decisions, roles and responsibilities and the expansion of the creative team. If anything starts feeling “off”, talk about it straight away and stay professional.

Look around at creative partnership that have successfully stood the test of time – they have all worked hard to maintain those working relationships.

Here are some starter questions to help you form great creative teams:

- Are you making the same project?
  - Get each person to retell the story you are making, is it the same story?
- Are you looking at the best type of funding or opportunities for the project?
  - Don't apply EDF if you are making a web series.
- Can you have open and frank discussions about any element of the project?
- Are you being kind and are you being fair?

Once it is established that a writer and producer are working together positively for the greater good, the rights and any rights assignments need to be established. NZWG members can come speak to us for assistance and producers can speak with SPADA.

A Producers perspective. This article is an oldie, and focused on short films, but speaks to all the points discussed, from the Producers perspective.

<https://www.mentorless.com/2015/10/02/a-producers-perspective-8-tips-to-help-get-a-producer-for-your-short-film/>