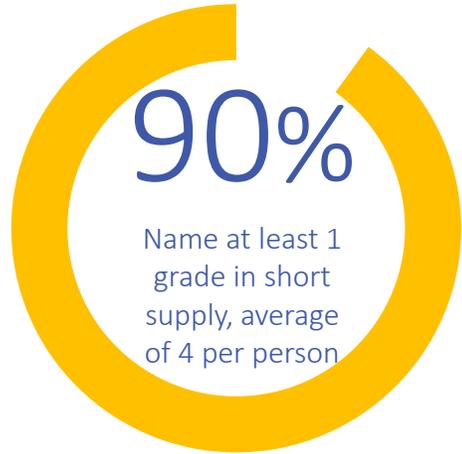




HETV: Skills Research October 2017



Crew and skill shortages are a problem for (almost) all but the severity depends on circumstance



Often, the shortage is cited as a shortage of quality crew...

Complexity of the work requires more crew and new grades within grades...

“In the past you had an Accountant who was just an accountant, now I need a Production Accountant, a Payroll Accountant, two assistants and a Financial Controller” LP

“When I was a Unit Manager I drove an MX-5 with a few cones and florry vests in the back – now you’re expected to have a trailer full of kit, be able to tow bowsers and tower lights, fix a generator when it breaks down” Location Manager

The severity of the issue depends on circumstances, which are difficult to plan against...

The number of concurrent productions – especially in N&R.

The time of year

Budgets vs rates demanded

Late commissions

Commissions switching to regional spend



Crew and skill shortages: in their own words



“We’ve never got to day 1 of the shoot and we haven’t filled the unit list up. In the last few days we always find someone somehow, they might just not be very good”
Production Manager

“We’re just starting on a production at the moment and to find a Production Runner has literally taken us 6 weeks to fill”
Line Producer

“Because there are so few Production Accountants, some of those Accountants will actually do 3 jobs at once”
Creative Director

← THE ISSUE RANGES FROM SLIGHT TO VERY SEVERE →

“Finding good people is definitely really, really hard but finding people overall is really difficult”
PM

“If we’re saying we’re a scalable industry and based on the trajectory we’re on, there’s a shortage in everything”
Line Producer

“There’s no question there are pressure points and times when you can’t get enough people – if there’s 3-4 other productions happening in an area then that’s all the good crew used up”
Co-Producer

“Right now, before I take a job I’m making those phone calls [to crew] because it may well be that I can’t get anybody and that means that I can’t take the job. It really is as tight as that”
Line Producer

“Some friends of mine who are ADs who are having a lot of trouble getting floor runners and they’ve never had that before, it’s been really insane”
PM

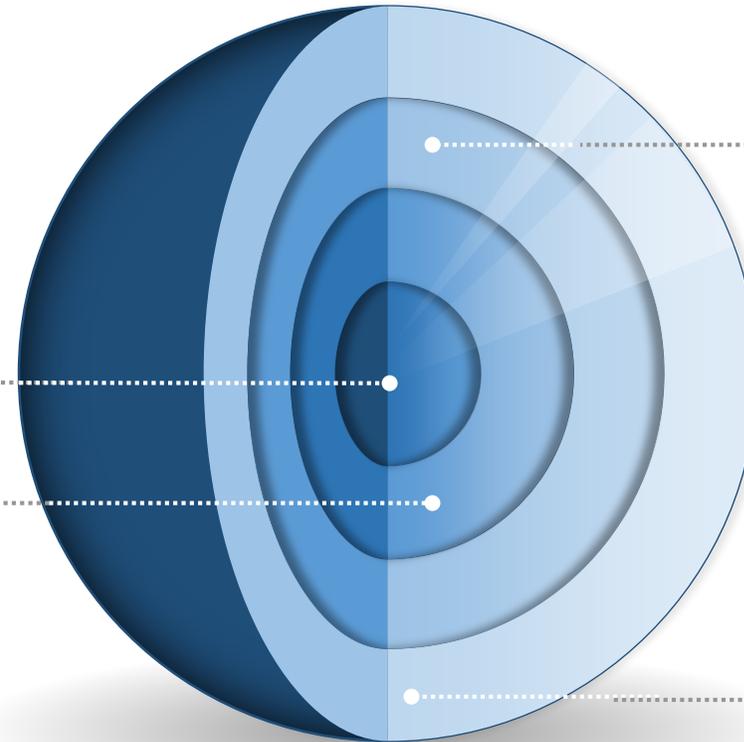
A wide gamut of grades are given as being scarce, some much more commonly mentioned



2 TO 4 MENTIONS

10+ MENTIONS

Production Accountant (23);
Production Co-ordinator (19);
Location Manager (17);
Line Producer (15);
Grip (12);
Script Supervisor (11);
Trainees (11)



Camera Operator; Production Secretary; Trainee (Art Dept); AD (all); Production Office (All); Standby Carpenter; Script Editor; Costume Designer; Draughts people; Set Decorator; Editor; Boom Operator; Costume Assistant; Prop Master; Art Director; Clapper Loader; Location Assistant; Standby Art Director; Assistant Co-ordinator; Assistant Location Manager; Continuity;

1 MENTION

5 TO 10 MENTIONS

Production Manager (8);
Electrician (7);
Unit Manager (7);
DoP (6);
1st AD (6);
Assistant Accountant (5);
2nd AD (5);
Focus Puller (5);
Producer (5)

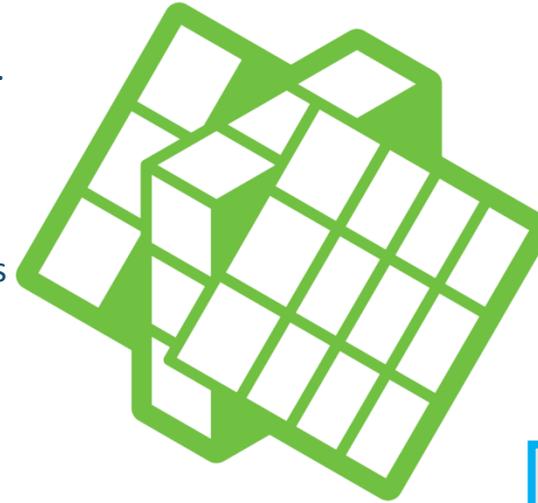
SFX; Trainee (Accountant); Gaffer; Production Buyer; Trainee (Grip); 3rd AD; Standby Props; Production Executive; Standby Rigger; Cashier; Trainee (Camera); Wigs; Trainee (Make-up); Trainee (Rigger); Sound Mixer; Trainee (Sound); Art Department; Director; Standby Costume; 2nd Camera; Stunts; Prosthetics; Development Producer; DIT; Trainee (Costume); Floor Runner; Trainee (Locations); Set Builder; Production Assistant; Model makers; Concept artist; Costume Supervisor; Prop Buyer; Production Runner

Production people are highly resourceful and find ways to cope but it makes a tough job much tougher



A SET OF COPING STRATEGIES ARE REQUIRED TO CREW UP:

- More time making calls, more time checking call sheets – takes longer to crew up.
- Bringing in crew from other areas – impacts on budget if you're putting them up and paying per diems.
- Booking crew in earlier – not always feasible without a greenlit production.
- Looking outside of the regular team – a more positive aspect of crew shortages as it can force people to look beyond their preferred contacts.
- Finding cover until the person you want becomes available.
- Compromising on skills and experience – taking the second or third best option.
- Re-jigging the crew structure – perhaps taking two juniors instead of a senior.
- Looking for people on Facebook – a large number of groups exist on social media.
- Stepping people up earlier than their experience allows – seen as a real issue.



“You have to think outside the box a little bit, for example if you can't find an additional Grip, sometimes it would be sufficient to find a Chippie... sometimes you get into a position where you don't have much choice” Production Manager

“Whereas before it would have taken two weeks to pull everyone together, now it takes about five” Line Producer

“Your choices are so limited now that actually you just want some one who has done the job, even if it's once before” Head of Production

“We had to find cover for a 1st AD and I think there were 15 people on the list that I called and they were all busy” Production Manager

“We had a first time Producer so we made sure we got an incredibly experienced Line Producer. You find yourself you have to manipulate the team around the person” Exec Producer

Stepping up too early is the biggest issue from a lack of crew and is driving a shortage in skills and experience

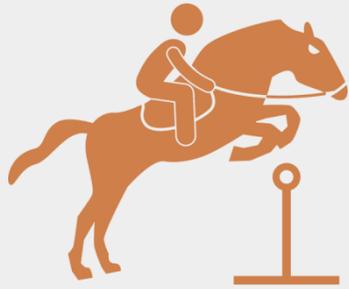


- Spontaneously mentioned by around half of those interviewed.
- Acknowledged that stepping up has always been ‘part of the process’ of production and that it’s good to have one or two crew stepping up in order to drive progression within the industry.
- However, it is now seen to be too widespread.
- To some extent driven by the need to fill spots – sometimes it’s perceived to be the only option. Some suggest it’s a result of a void left by more senior people leaving to work in-house at Production companies or leaving the industry.
- However, it is largely seen to be driven by individuals’ opportunism; crew who step themselves up with very little experience in order to take advantage of higher rates of pay.
- Happening across departments – notably in the Production office, Assistant Directors and Runners.
- The stature of HETV work means those stepping up early can be easily exposed. This can often trigger a defence mechanism in the person who has stepped up as a way to protect themselves, compounding the issue.
- Can impact on budget management.

Opportunism is also leading to other poor behaviours and practices



SHOW-JUMPING



- Crew might sometimes ordinarily leave a job slightly early, but mostly with good reason.
- Crew are now much more readily jumping off productions early, also sometimes accepting a job and then leaving even before it's started.
- Nearly always a result of the chance of higher pay or longer contracts.
- Seemingly little concern this may mar their reputation.

HIGH RATE DEMANDS



- Rates are being driven up which is more prevalent in some craft grades.
- Some US productions are pushing up the level of expectations around rates of pay and crew are less inclined to drop back down.
- Some suggest this increase in budget needed for crew affects the money on screen.
- Production office feel they are the ones losing out as the rates around them rise fast.
- Some are now much more vociferous about overtime.

Things are great now but the future may look uncertain



IT'S NEVER BEEN SO GOOD!

- There are masses of UK and US high end production work around at the moment, benefiting nations and regions as well as London.
- Universal acceptance that this is due to the tax relief mechanism, a weaker pound vs dollar and the rise of on-demand brands.
 - Crew are enjoying the moment – working for more weeks of the year than they would usually.
 - Some are even able to pick and choose work, such as the level of demand.

UNCERTAIN FUTURE?

- Due to the fact that those interviewed have generally been in the industry a long time, there is some cynicism around the sustainability of the current level of demand.
- What would happen if the tax relief was removed or altered? Is this current level of work a bubble? What will be the impact of Brexit?
- Many remember the quieter times and so are expecting a cyclical downturn at some point.
- A number of people cite the story of Ireland in the late 1990s and early 2000s when a tax relief system created a boom in production, in turn leading to a large hike in rates. This then led to production leaving the country seemingly overnight and left the industry in Ireland very flat.