

How can I find development money?

1. Have a House Party

Video house parties are one way to raise money. A friend or film supporter will agree to host a house party in his or her home to help raise funds for the film's production. It is hard to say how much money will be raised doing this. The one example I know of was done by the Empowerment Project for a documentary. In two years they held over one hundred parties which were attended by over 2000 people and raised \$40,000.

2. Develop Partnerships - Use Newspaper inserts

Paris Poirier who made the documentary *Last Call at Maud's* used direct mail for her documentary. She printed 18,000 pieces. 3,000 were sent to people the filmmakers knew, and 15,000 were used as an insert in a monthly newsletter. Their paper and printing were donated. They spent \$1000 for postage and insert fees. Their letter brought them \$8,500 from 80 different individuals. The largest donation was \$500 from someone they didn't even know. Poirier created nine different versions of a letter. A sample is attached. Her strategy was to appeal for larger donations of \$100 and \$200 dollars. She offered a space in the credits for that donation. She also made it possible for people to give small donations of \$20 each.

3. Develop Partnerships - Use Direct Mail

This tactic will also work as an email campaign. One company worked with Jeffrey Friedman and Rob Epstein to raise money for the documentary *"Celluloid Closet."* The company covered all costs associated with the mailing and took a fee from what was collected. They did an initial mailing of 10,000 pieces and the response was so good they did another of 25,000 pieces. They raised over \$100,000. In addition to the letter, they also included a postcard in their quarterly card pack mailings. In this case every donation received a free gift (a souvenir Vito Russo memorial poster 8.5" x 11") and donations of \$1,000 or more received on-screen credit. In the case of the letter, I remember different giveaways and Lily Tomlin's name attached. For Friedman and Epstein this was just pre-production money. They eventually got their \$X million budget from HBO.

4. Give a Talk

There are 1000s of organizations that meet regularly in cities like Chicago. People organize around business, sports, race, religion, and other common interest. One strategy is to attend a meeting and do a short presentation there. Filmmakers who have done this sort of thing tend to make a 20 minute presentation and show a five or ten minute clip of their work. The filmmakers invite audience members to speak with them after the presentations to learn more about the project and about opportunities for supporting independent filmmaking. Morrie Warshawski refers to filmmakers who did Lions Club and Rotary Club luncheons. One filmmaker did 15 luncheons and raised \$60,000 another did just one and raised \$1,000. It was not clear how much was raised as investments and how much as donations by this strategy.

5. Apply for Grants

While there are fewer and fewer options out there for grant funding they should be explored nevertheless. Grants add prestige to productions. We will take a closer look at getting grants when we do our library/Internet workshop next week. I'm going to give you a handout of sample grants applications and #s on applying for grants.

6. Attempt to Pre-Sell the Film

We may attempt to pre-sell the film. This is very unlikely to work but should not be underestimated. After all, Darnell Martin, turned down FineLine's offer of \$2 million budget for her first feature and went on to accept an offer of \$5 million budget from Columbia. Fragmenting distribution rights is not looked upon too well by large distributors because they want all the rights. But, if we can make a sale we will have to consider the consequences at that time.

7. Talk to a captive audience - Fly first class

Doug Linderman, a producer on *Bar Girls* raised money by chatting people up in first class. He raised \$150,000 flying to and from film festivals, using frequent flyer miles to get himself an upgrade. "People who aren't in the entertainment business want to be told about it," he says, "and investing gives them an opportunity to participate at a low level."

8. Talk to your target audience

Lauran Hoffman, executive producer of the lesbian romance *Bar Girls* went barstool by barstool to potential investors in L.A.'s girl bars. She raised the first \$50,000 by selling shares at \$1,000 a pop. Anyone who bought five shares got his or her name in the credits.

9. Establish a 1-900

Make it easy for friends and family to make small donations to your project.

10. Establish a fundraising website

One production company asked people to send \$50 to be kept up-to-date on the production of adult thrillers.

11. Ask your boss for the money.

Jonathan Schell hit up his boss to pay for *Picasso Would Have Made a Glorious Waiter*, a 35-minute \$55,000 film. Schell works for *Glorious Food*, a large New York City company that caters high-end parties. Schell wanted to make a film about the waiters (actors, dancers, filmmakers) so he hit up his boss.

12. Have a fundraiser.

Julie Dash raised \$5,000 in seed money for *Daughters of the Dust* by holding a fundraiser where she showed a work-in-progress clip of her film.

13. Sell a credit in the film.

Documentary filmmaker Camille Billops offered "Angel Credits" in her film for \$100 each.

14. Find yourself a sugar daddy.

Philip Kan Gotanda found just that for his 15-minute black and white short *The Kiss*. Before forking over \$25,000, the anonymous patron, asked for a prospectus/business plan.

15. Convince Cast and Crew that they should pay for the film

Tom DiCillo's *Living in Oblivion* was financed just that way. About 20 of the people associated with the film invested in it. Joe Brewster's raised \$30,000 when he ran out of money shooting his independent feature *The Keeper* from his lead actor Giancarlo Esposito.

16. Sell, sell, sell...

Sell t-shirts. Baseball caps and/or any other promotional item you can think of associated with your film.

17. Have a raffle.

Get people to donate stuff and raffle it. Check the laws regarding raffles in your area.

18. Have a group yard sale.

Ask all of your friends to donate their "junk" to your fundraising yard sale. An estimated \$2,000 can be raised this way.

19. Ask the estate.

I formed a production company with some friends to adapt a novel into a feature film. One of the company members is the nephew of the now deceased novelist. The executor of the estate, not only optioned the rights to us for nothing but our sweat equity, he also "donated" \$2,000 to us for development cash AND he also gave our screenwriter his summer house in the Hamptons and a car, for 3 weeks to work on the first draft of the script.

20. And you can always...

Ask your friends/family for a loan or a donation.