

Raising Money or Mastering The Fine Art of Fellatio

By Lloyd Kaufman

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Unfortunately, you are going to need some money in order to make your movie. The easiest way to get money is to come from a wealthy family. No matter how disapproving they may claim to be of your project, your parents are a much surer bet for some easy cash than a complete stranger. Assuming that you either do not have or are not on good terms with some fantastically rich relative, you will need to find some other way into people's wallets. The most common of these is convincing people with money that your project is a worthwhile investment.*

The road to getting investors is a tricky one. There are a lot of complicated legal issues involved that you've probably never even thought about, particularly if you're a young person who hasn't had to deal very much with shit like taxes. If you think Nasdaq is the creature from the cantina scene in Star Wars, you might want to do some financial research before heading out to raise funds.



Limited Partnerships

When Michael Herz and I raise money for a movie, we form what's known as a limited partnership. A limited partnership provides two big advantages for our investors.

1. Certain tax advantages in the likely event that the movie loses money.
2. The investors are protected legally under a limited partnership. Basically, they themselves are not personally liable for what is done with their money under the terms of the partnership. So, if somebody gets maimed or killed on the set, the investors are not responsible and can't be held accountable (dammit!).

Investors

Once you have an investor on board, you can use that person to find others. One dentist with money to invest in an independent film probably knows like-minded people (like dental hygienists, floss manufacturers, etc.) who might be interested. We often throw a cocktail party at the home of our primary investor. As a bonus, you might get to hear some pretty gruesome stories about painful dental procedures that can inspire another movie. There are also distributors like Troma who can provide you with finishing funds.

Grants

Of course, you might decide to forgo the entire process of looking for investors by applying for a grant. That's certainly a viable option and there are plenty of places to turn, from the National Endowment for the Arts to all manner of corporate foundations and fellowships. If you've got your heart set on making a movie about sex with farm animals and you've applied for a grant from the National Donkey Fucking Foundation, you might have no trouble at all. But if you've applied to the Endowment for the Humanities with the same script, you'll probably run into trouble.

You now interject: "I've sold all my bodily fluids I have access to and turned a few tricks, but I'm still short by several grand. What the fuck am I supposed to do now, big shot?"

It might be a good idea to come to terms with the cold reality that you might not be able to raise all the money you wanted to. The good news is that you can always cut corners. Take a look at your script and see what you could possibly live without. If you can raise every dime for every stage of the film this early in the game, great! Congratulations and more power to you. But if you can't (and it's very possible that you can't), don't let it stop you. Focus on getting your movie shot. The rest will work itself out in time.

Summary

1. Talk to everyone. Particularly dentists, orthodontists, and periodontists.
2. Sell the things you own that are worth money and you don't really need. Many vital organs come in pairs for this very reason.
3. You can always cut corners. In many ways, that's one of the traits that defines the independent filmmaker.
4. Be nice to your parents. It's much, much easier to save money if you're living at home rent-free.
5. Attempting to double your budget by taking your investors' money to Atlantic City is not considered a sound investment.
6. Neither is Las Vegas.

* Investment (noun): A valuable asset (usu. money) that is exchanged in expectation of projected profit at a later date. Many young filmmakers mistake an "investment" for a "gift."