

The portfolio review process

At USITT, we have expanded the name to Portfolio Reviews & Interview Materials Prep (PRIMP), because we know there is much more to share during job interviews besides a portfolio. Your resume and your reputation from past experience are what often get you jobs. You may not be asked for a portfolio at all, or only for your first couple years. This document is to help guide you not only for your PRIMP session at conference, but for any job interview.

The weird thing about a review is that the reviewers don't know exactly what type of job you are applying for, unlike a normal job interview. Introduce yourself (and be yourself), and tell the reviewers what kind of work you're hoping to get, so they know what direction to lead their advice. Be prepared to show two or three items for sure - pick your favorites or the ones that you want help on. Frankly, many do start with a resume as it's one of the primary things employers look at, but there are also opportunities like Resume Doctors on the expo floor to assist with that if you want to focus on other things. Have two or three of your favorite pieces of paperwork or other materials ready that you want to share, and tell us why you picked it. Be proud of your work. Talk about how the work you did supported the production and made a difference. Why was this project better because of you?

You can also use the time to ask the reviewers how they may have done it differently, but this is mostly about how they can help you shine in a job interview. Also, know that they are there to help you, and any criticism is to be constructive. This is also the opportunity to get more people to know about your work and potentially lead to connections and other jobs, but you've already made the first positive step by signing up for a review. It doesn't hurt to have a business card ready to hand the reviewers, or to follow up with them later. You'll also now have a familiar face as you proceed through the rest of the conference.

Breathe deeply and enjoy this opportunity. Ask questions. This review is for you! Get the most out of it that you can!

Portfolios and Production Managers

Production Management portfolios are different from those prepared by a designer or technician, since our "building" of a show is a different animal. Choose things that help tell your story as a production manager, what kind of productions you've worked on, and what kinds of projects you've organized. Paperwork is certainly one of our main portfolio components - pick paperwork you are proud of and then tell the story of how you compiled it, or what its use helped accomplish. Show examples of how you organize/communicate information. Perhaps that's a budget or schedule. Or maybe that's something else for you. Share your voice as a theatre maker and bring the reviewer into your conversation.

Production management encompasses a lot of different areas, so choose documentation that makes the most sense for you. Items to consider include:

- Your resume – you may want to provide several copies so that reviewers can write directly on it
- Schedules including season overviews, tech schedules, daily schedules, etc.

- Budget planning and tracking including per show budgets, rental v. purchase pricing, equipment acquisitions, etc.
- Policy development work, whether that is Human Resource (HR) or Health & Safety related, including community agreements you've helped create, guidelines for accountability, haze use policy, COVID policy, open flame policy, etc.
- Inventory
- Contracts
- A sample cover letter

Things to keep in mind:

- Redact any personal, private, or proprietary information
- If you have a digital portfolio, have it downloaded on your fully-charged computer or tablet; do not rely on wifi alone or a power supply - more discussion on websites below

Resume

For production management, resumes are often more along the lines of "typical" resumes (more corporate) and less like an actor, technician or stage manager's resume. Listing shows you've worked on is not really helpful. Help the reviewer quickly understand the size/scope of the project or venue, what you were responsible for, and what you achieved. Make it easily accessible and clear to understand.

There are many ways to organize a resume, and different employers may prefer different things. Depending on the credits you have and the type of job you are going for, you may choose to organize it by job title, academic vs professional credits, production management versus other areas, or by genre if you work on multiple types of projects. You might also have a variation of each of these types of resume to submit depending on the job. Find one that best showcases who you are and what you've done and know. The resume is usually the tool to get your foot in the door. Any additional materials should support the resume and tell a story.

1. **The top third of the page** - this is what will get looked at most to see if you are appropriate for this particular project. Place your most relatable credits here. If they choose to read the entire resume after that, the rest is golden. Your education information like degree earned/earning therefore could be placed more towards the bottom of the page, leaving your project or company credits more prominence.
2. **Fonts** - be judicious on the number and size of fonts you use. A special font for your name and headers is fine, but make the bulk of your resume one consistent legible font.
3. **Asterisks and other symbols** - Limit the use of asterisks or other symbols, then put a key to what the symbol means. Don't make the employer search for what each asterisk means. It might be best to simply include the words right where you are explaining what the job entailed, rather than using a bunch of symbols.
4. **Dates** - you will get differing opinions about whether to include dates or not. They are most useful if you worked for a company multiple years, or if the company has done the production multiple times, like an annual version of *A Christmas Carol*.
5. **Paper** - a majority of resumes are submitted electronically these days. If you print, plain white paper is just fine, but if you go with something else, a slightly heavier weight of paper is nice. Be

sure to print the same direction as any embedded watermark. Hold the paper up to a light source to see if you've printed the correct way.

6. **Number of pages** - if you are new to the career, you can likely trim your resume to a single page, especially if you tailor it to the job at hand. As you advance, keep a working document that has every credit, and tailor it to the job or genre as needed. A Production Management resume can be 2-3 pages, but more than that is too much. If you are asked for a resume, do not submit a curriculum vitae (CV). If you are applying for an academic job, a CV is more appropriate, listing every credit you've ever had, including awards and publications. Start keeping track of this in your early years and you'll thank yourself later - but don't submit all of it for most production management jobs. Keep it to two or three pages max.
7. **"Special skills"/Related information** - Be judicious on the term "special skills"...are they really that special? Are the skills really applicable to the job you're applying for? Early in your career you may want to share that you have had work in the production shops, but as your career advances, you'll have a more focused skill set or accomplishments. Think about things like training in first aid, OSHA certification, diversity and inclusion, theatrical firearm safety, etc, as well as your level of familiarity with industry software like Vectorworks and AutoCAD or ArtsVision and Propared. You may want to point out if you know both Microsoft Office and Google Suite products well - especially if you can work with pivot tables and other higher functions in them. Do you know any other languages, including sign language? Some like to throw in a good conversation starter, some think of that as a gimmick. Do be prepared to talk about whatever you list.
8. **Quantify things** - Use numbers when describing the work you've done. How many employees did you supervise? What was the annual or project budget? What was the number of projects per season? Help the reviewer understand the scope of your experience.
9. **References** - Go ahead and include references from the beginning. Some employers may decide that "references available upon request" is just one more step on their part that is too much to go through to hire you. Also, if they know someone who has worked at the same theatre you list, they may contact that person rather than the reference you suggested. It's also good to have multiple references available, to once again tailor to the job you are applying for. If you work different genres, have references appropriate to that particular work. References should be able to speak to your recent body of work, and someone who worked with you five years ago may no longer be in that position. Do make sure that you ask your reference if you may use them, and which methods of contact they prefer to have listed. Do NOT list these references publicly on the internet; this is a time "references available on request" is highly recommended or to only list names/titles but not contact information.

Cover letter

Different employers give different weight to cover letters. Some read them first, some check out your resume first to see if you're even a viable candidate. The cover letter can be used to explain some of your credits, as well as how you might best fit the job. Relate yourself to the job at hand. Help the reader relate the positions noted on your resume to the job you are applying for, especially if the majority of your prior experience is not in production management. Consider some of the broader ideas associated with production management: organization, leadership, communication, and time management. Then tie your past positions to these concepts. If you have availability concerns, or

preferences for specific projects in a season, you can list those in the cover letter, too. It's also great to tell the employer where you found their posting, so they can see where they are successfully getting candidates. As a tip, try to throw in a detail you know about the theatre that isn't something just regurgitated from the job posting. Show them you took an investment in learning more about their company and why you want to work for them specifically. Be sure to check for any squiggly lines your word processing program used to inform you of a grammatical or spelling error, too. Production managers are the communicators and detail-oriented people, so let your cover letter reflect this too.

Websites

You should have some sort of digital presence online, but you do not need to do a full website unless you wish to do so. If an employer does a Google search, you don't want your only hit to be photos on your social media of a wild night at the bar. Be judicious what is publicly viewable, and remember that anyone with a mutual friend may see what you post. There are also free options available like LinkedIn or webhosting at places like Wix and Wordpress, if you don't mind their branding. Do not plan for consistent wifi while at a job interview though (or the USITT review); have your materials downloaded.

Photos

A picture is worth a thousand words. You can use imagery to support your documentation and process on a project. It also allows for a great launch point for conversation. Full-stage shots give us more information about the show as a whole rather than a closeup on an actor's face. One photo might tell the person looking at your portfolio whether it was a heavily technical show or perhaps a single unit set with a lot of props. The number of people in the photo can also show scope and size, as well as perhaps explain the budget choices you're also sharing as part of your interview package.

Credit each photo with the name of the show, your role, and perhaps a one sentence explanation of your duties on the show, or what made it different from other projects. As room allows, it's great to also list all designers (don't forget sound or other "unseen" team members, including the director and stage manager). Think outside the box on what other photos might be interesting from a production management point of view. Take photos of your load in or a truck pack you helped organize, a workshop you presented, or the HR section of the callboard you contributed to, if you're proud of them, so you have choices later. Pick photos that help advance your story as a theatre maker, and have a reason to share why you picked each photo.

This is for YOU

All of the above are suggestions that can help you focus on the decisions you make, depending on what you are trying to present. You will also have people give you multiple opinions about exactly the same part of your materials. Take everyone's constructive criticism, and present the best you!