

PRODUCTION PEOPLE

Even the most sophisticated television production equipment and computer interfaces will not replace humans in the television production process. The equipment cannot make ethical and aesthetic judgments for you; it cannot tell you exactly which part of the event to select and how to present it for optimal communication. Humans make such decisions within the context of the general communication intent and through interaction with other members of the production team—the production staff, technical crews, engineers, and administrative personnel. We may discover that the major task of television production is working not so much with equipment as with people. In general, we can divide the production personnel into nontechnical personnel and technical personnel. Because news departments work independently of the regular production personnel, we list them separately.

Nontechnical Production Personnel

The **nontechnical production personnel** are generally involved in translating a script or an event into effective television images. They are also called above-the-line personnel because they fall under a different budget category from the technical crew, who are called below-the-line personnel. The above and below-the-line distinction is anything but absolute or even uniform, however, and it changes depending on the crew members' union affiliations and the budgetary practices of the production company.

It is also important to know, however, that in smaller television operations one person might carry out several different functions. For example, the producer may also write and direct the show, and the floor manager may take on the responsibilities of the line producer. You may find an AD (associate director) in the production of soap operas or a digital movie but rarely during most routine television shows. The art director may also function as a graphic artist, and most medium-sized or smaller production companies have little use for a permanent costume designer, wardrobe person, property manager, or sound designer.

The figure below shows the principal functions of the major nontechnical production personnel.

PERSONNEL	FUNCTION
NONTECHNICAL PRODUCTION PERSONNEL	
Executive producer	In charge of one or several large productions or program series. Manages budget and coordinates with client, station management, advertising agencies, financial supporters, and talent and writers' agents.
Producer	In charge of an individual production. Responsible for all personnel working on the production and for coordinating technical and nontechnical production elements. Often serves as writer and occasionally as director.
Associate producer (AP)	Assists producer in all production matters. Often does the actual coordinating jobs, such as telephoning talent and confirming schedules.
Line producer	Supervises daily production activities on the set.
Field producer	Assists producer by taking charge of remote operations (away from the studio). At small stations function may be part of producer's responsibilities.
Production manager	Schedules equipment and personnel for all studio and field productions. Also called <i>director of broadcast operations</i> .
Production assistant (PA)	Assists producer and director during actual production. During rehearsal takes notes of producer's and/or director's suggestions for show improvement.
Director	In charge of directing talent and technical operations. Is ultimately responsible for transforming a script into effective video and audio messages. At small stations may often be the producer as well.
Associate director (AD)	Assists director during the actual production. In studio productions does timing for director. In complicated productions helps "ready" various operations (such as presetting specific camera shots or calling for a video recorder to start). Also called <i>assistant director</i> .
Floor manager	In charge of all activities on the studio floor. Coordinates talent, relays director's cues to talent, and supervises floor personnel. Except for large operations, is responsible for setting up scenery and dressing the set. Also called <i>floor director</i> and <i>stage manager</i> .
Floor persons	Set up and dress sets. Operate cue cards and other prompting devices, easel cards, and on-camera graphics. Sometimes help set up and work portable field lighting instruments and microphone booms. Assist camera operators in moving camera dollies and pulling camera cables. At small stations also act as wardrobe and makeup people. Also called <i>grips</i> , <i>stagehands</i> , and <i>utilities personnel</i> .

PERSONNEL	FUNCTION
ADDITIONAL PRODUCTION PERSONNEL	
<i>In small operations these production people are not always part of the permanent staff or their functions are fulfilled by other personnel.</i>	
Writer	At smaller stations and in corporate television, the scripts are often written by the director or producer. Usually hired on a freelance basis.
Art director	In charge of the creative design aspects of show (set design, location, and/or graphics).
Graphic artist	Prepares computer graphics, titles, charts, and electronic backgrounds.
Makeup artist	Does the makeup for all talent. Usually hired on a freelance basis.
Costume designer	Designs and sometimes even constructs various costumes for dramas, dance numbers, and children's shows. Usually hired on a freelance basis.
Wardrobe person	Handles all wardrobe matters during production.
Property manager	Maintains and manages use of various set and hand properties. Found in large operations only. Otherwise, props are managed by the floor manager.
Sound designer	Constructs the complete sound track (dialogue and sound effects) in postproduction. Usually hired on a freelance basis for large productions.

Television talent—the performers and actors who work in front of the camera—are usually considered part of the nontechnical production personnel.

Technical Personnel and Crew

The **technical personnel** consist of people who are primarily concerned with operating equipment. They are usually part of the crew. The technical personnel include camera operators, audio and lighting people, video recorder (VR) operators, video editors, C.G. (character generator) operators, and people who set up communication and signal transmission equipment. The term technical does not refer to electronic expertise but rather to operating the equipment with skill and confidence. The true engineers, who understand electronics and know where to look when something goes wrong with a piece of equipment, usually do not operate equipment; rather they ensure that the whole system runs smoothly, supervise its installation, and maintain it. You may find that in larger professional operations, however, the technical production people are still called engineers, mainly to satisfy the traditional job classification established by the labor unions.

The DP (director of photography) is sometimes listed as part of the nontechnical personnel and sometimes as part of the technical team. The term, borrowed from film production, has found its way into television. In standard theatrical film production, the DP is mainly responsible for lighting and the proper exposure of the film rather than for running the camera. In smaller digital film productions and EFP (electronic field production), the DP operates the camera as well as does the lighting. So when we hear that an independent television producer/director is looking for a reliable and creative DP, he or she is primarily referring to an experienced EFP camera operator.

As mentioned, many of the functions of technical and nontechnical production people overlap and even change, depending on the size, location, and relative complexity of the production. For example, one may initially have acted as a producer when setting up the video recording of the semiannual address of a corporation president; then, on the day of the shoot, he or she may find him/herself busy with such technical matters as lighting and running the camera. In larger productions, such as soap operas, your job responsibility is much more limited. When acting as a producer, he or she has nothing to do with lighting or equipment operation. When working the camera, he or she may have to wait patiently for the lighting crew to finish, even if the production is behind schedule and he or she has nothing else to do at the time.

Below is the figure of technical personnel involved in production.

PERSONNEL	FUNCTION
ENGINEERING STAFF	
<i>These people are actual engineers who are responsible for the purchase, installation, proper functioning, and maintenance of all technical equipment.</i>	
Chief engineer	In charge of all technical personnel, budgets, and equipment. Designs system, including transmission facilities, and oversees installations and day-to-day operations.
Assistant chief engineer	Assists chief engineer in all technical matters and operations. Also called engineering supervisor.
Studio or remote engineer-in-charge	Oversees all technical operations. Usually called EIC.
Maintenance engineer	Maintains all technical equipment and troubleshoots during productions.
NONENGINEERING TECHNICAL PERSONNEL	
<i>Although skilled in technical aspects, the following technical personnel do not have to be engineers but usually consist of technically trained production people.</i>	
Technical director (TD)	Does the switching and usually acts as technical crew chief.
Camera operators	Operate the cameras; often do the lighting for simple shows. When working primarily in field productions (ENG/EFP), they are sometimes called videographers and shooters.
Director of photography (DP)	In film productions, in charge of lighting. In EFP, operates EFP camera.
Lighting director (LD)	In charge of lighting; normally found mostly in large productions.
Video operator (VO)	Adjusts camera controls for optimal camera pictures (shading). Sometimes takes on additional technical duties, especially during field productions and remotes. Also called shader.
Audio technician	In charge of all audio operations. Works audio console during the show. Also called audio engineer.
Video-record operator	Runs the video recorder.
Character generator (C.G.) operator	Types and/or recalls from the computer the names and other graphic material to be integrated with the video image.
Video editor	Operates postproduction editing equipment. Often makes or assists in creative editing decisions.
Digital graphic artist	Renders digital graphics for on-air use. Can be nontechnical personnel.

NEWS PRODUCTION PERSONNEL

Almost all television broadcast stations produce at least one daily newscast; in fact, the newscasts are often the major production activity at these stations. Because news departments must be able to respond quickly to a variety of production tasks, such as covering a downtown fire or a protest at city hall, there is generally little time to prepare for such events. News departments therefore have their own news production personnel. These people are dedicated exclusively to the production of news, documentaries, and special events and perform highly specific functions. We should not be puzzled if we hear the assignment editor of a news department sending several VJs to cover breaking stories. VJ stands for video journalist—an individual who must combine the functions of reporter, videographer, writer, and editor. This rather demanding job was obviously not instituted to improve news coverage but to save money. Nevertheless it's apparent that you can no longer afford a narrowly focused training but must be fluent in all aspects of television production.

As in any other organization, television and corporate video involve many more people, such as clerical personnel and the people who answer phones, schedule events, sell commercial time, negotiate

contracts, build and paint the sets, and clean the building. Because these support personnel operate outside of the basic production system, their functions aren't discussed here. Below is the list of people involved in news productions.

PERSONNEL	FUNCTION
News director	In charge of all news operations. Bears ultimate responsibility for all newscasts.
Producer	Directly responsible for the selection and the placement of the stories in a newscast so that they form a unified, balanced whole.
Assignment editor	Assigns reporters and videographers to specific events to be covered.
Reporter	Gathers the stories. Often reports on-camera from the field.
Video journalist	Reporter who shoots and edits his or her own footage.
Videographer	Camcorder operator. In the absence of a reporter, decides on what part of the event to cover. Also called <i>news photographer</i> and <i>shooter</i> .
Writer	Writes on-the-air copy for the anchors. The copy is based on the reporter's notes and the available video.
Video editor	Edits video according to reporter's notes, writer's script, or producer's instructions.
Anchor	Principal presenter of newscast, normally from a studio set.
Weathercaster	On-camera talent, reporting the weather.
Traffic reporter	On-camera talent, reporting local traffic conditions.
Sportscaster	On-camera talent, giving sports news and commentary.