Walk The Talk!

Film/TV Production Accounting Course Introductory, Intermediate & Senior Levels

Film Production Accounting 101 33.5 Hours

Course Description: This course is designed IN THREE MODULES:

- 1. Introductory Level to train the attendees in the practical elements of film accounting with a hands-on approach.
- 2. Intermediate Level to train with multiple hands-on drilling all facets of the industry specific general ledger. The emphasis is on practice and professional competence.
- 3. Senior Level to train the assistant accountant on how to assist the Key Production Auditor with multiple elements of the Weekly Cost Report and Budget Management. Emphasis is put on the cost control points and estimating the final costs as compared with the Film Budget. It is a very practical hands-on approach to upgrade to a Film Auditor.

This course introduces you to the fundamental film accounting practices, systems and forms used throughout the North American film industry, and indeed throughout the world. This course is for

- 1,2,3 for aspiring Film Accountants,
- 2,3 for aspiring Line Producers & Unit Production Managers who want to understand the cost control points of any film production, as well as CPA's interested in the 'Biz.
- 3 for experienced Assistant Film Accountants, or even professional accountants, to upgrade to a Key Accountant.

At all times the following GOAL is addressed:

GOAL OF FILM ACCOUNTING 101 WORKSHOPS:

The graduate will be able to start a film production as an assistant production accountant with the confidence that he/she CAN not only perform the tasks expected of them without extensive training, but also understand the cost control points of any film or television production.

Furthermore, this fact can be communicated to experienced Film Accountants convincingly, simply by telling them (and showing them) what you have drilled to perfection on this workshop.

Anyone who has tried to find work within the film production business has found it difficult to break in, regardless of their previous training and education. Experienced Film Accountants are reluctant to train new personnel in fundamental procedure, simply because of the time constraints. This is true for me, as well as for my colleagues. So, how do you get experience if no one will hire you?



A solution is to get "up to speed" in workshops like these, learning the various techniques through DOING in a controlled environment.

Film Production Accounting 101 – DAY 1 (Introductory Level)

1. An Intro to the Film Accountant's Role Within Film Production 60 Minutes (TB)

- ❖ The goal of this Day #1 workshop is defined brutally as being able to perform, and keep, work as an assistant film production accountant. The background of the Key Film Accountants, their workload and their needs are examined, with real life examples given how you can contribute to the Key Accountant's responsibilities.
- The "Product" of the Film Production Accounting Department is defined, with examples, and how the Assistant Accountant contributes to that "Product".
- ❖ An example Organization Chart for any medium sized Film or Television production is reviewed with the purpose of defining the Organization Chart of any film production. Emphasis is put on authority and responsibility and how the Accounting Department inter-relates with the Producer, the Financiers and the other production departments.
- ❖ A Summary a Film Budget is reviewed to understand the everyday terminology of film productions for example, Above-the-Line, Below-the-Line, Gaffer, Grip, Craft, etc. Simple conversational drills are done where the attendees discuss budgetary categories and departments so as not to feel tongue-tied with these terms.

2. An Intro to the Functions of the Film Accounting Department 30 Minutes (TB)

- ❖ The overall functions of the Film Accounting Department are reviewed with real life examples given to relate these functions back to the Purpose and Product of the Film Accounting Department.
- The job descriptions of the Assistant Film Production Accountants are categorized and listed.
- ❖ The scope of the workshop is defined as within the 6 basic Film Accounting & Cost Control Systems.
- ❖ An example is given of each system is reviewed, with any industry specific terms cleared. Practical examples are described to give attendees an idea of the volume and timing.
- ❖ The END RESULT expected of each attendee is defined just to keep ourselves motivated towards an agreed upon result.

3. Getting Started – the Workshop Materials

60 Minutes (TB)

- * Review of the attitude of film accountants, both from a practical viewpoint (how to approach crew, producers, the film auditor, etc.) as well as a quick review of the Fundamental Principles of Accounting.
- ❖ Identify the Basic Supplies ensure everyone has their supplies at hand and organized.
- ❖ Identify the CD of templates and Screen-recordings provided. Ensure you can access the CD. Review the folders and the files within each folder. Ensure you understand the terms of the folders so as to access the appropriate material during and after the workshop.



- ❖ Identify the Binder of Example Forms. Ensure you have material for each of the 6 accounting systems.
- ❖ A discussion of how the forms are prepared/printed/ordered for each film production.
- ❖ Drill preparing the blank check requisition for a fictional film production, "No Big Deal".
- Drill making the "No Big Deal" check requisition available to crew in the industry specific way.
- Drill preparing the blank Petty Cash Advance forms for a fictional film production, "No Big Deal".
- Drill making the "No Big Deal" Petty Cash Advance form available to crew in the industry specific way.
- ❖ Drill making the "No Big Deal" Petty Cash Envelopes (sometimes called Petty Cash Folders) available to crew in the industry specific way.

4. Getting Started – the General Ledger Software & Account Coding 90 Minutes (AA)

- ❖ Access the General Ledger software with the passwords provided. (Note: there are only 4 G/L software systems generally used in the film production industry. All can be licensed only none can be purchased.)
- ❖ John will demonstrate the overall parameters of the general ledger software, introducing only the Vendor Creation and the Purchase Order Entry for now.
- ❖ The account numbers are derived from the Film Budget. The Film Budget template is reviewed to identify several common account numbers. This review will take some time with numerous examples of application given.
- ❖ Define the term Chart of Accounts for the attendees and how it is used in the film production industry. Watch the Screen-Recording DVD to understand how the Chart of Accounts is created.
- ❖ Drill finding account codes until can easily find the more common accounts used.

BREAK FOR LUNCH

5. Define the Chart of Accounts – Practice With Coding 90 Minutes (AA)

- ❖ Define the term Chart of Accounts for the attendees and how it is used in the film production industry. Watch the Screen-Recording DVD to understand how the Chart of Accounts is created.
- ❖ Drill finding account codes until can *easily* find the more common accounts used.

6. Purchase Order Processing

- Purpose
- Example
- ❖ Study and Chart the Document Flow & Document Approval
- Summary PO Log
- Detailed PO Log
- **❖** PO Approvals
- ❖ PO Additional Notes
- ❖ Prepare 10 Purchase Orders from the data provided in your Binder of Materials.



- ❖ PO − Practical Drills x 10 unique PO's for each attendee (Preparation, Routing for Approvals, separation of copies, temporary and permanent filing). (NOTE: not entered to the G/L system at this point in the process).
- ❖ PO Tracking Form Letter
- Q & A with attendees.

7. Check Requisitions Processing (Ready for Check Running)

60 Minutes (AA)

- Purpose and Function
- ❖ Example of a check requisition (often called a Check Rec, or Check Request)
- ❖ Study and Chart the Document flow from arrival of the Check Requisition in the Film Accounting Office through to Permanent Files:
 - ✓ date stamping,
 - ✓ temporary filing,
 - ✓ account coding,
 - ✓ route for approvals to/from Prod'n Acct & Line Producer/UPM,
 - ✓ check running,
 - ✓ check copy filing,
 - ✓ check signing,
 - ✓ temporary filing
 - ✓ follow up for original invoice
 - ✓ tracking form letter to department heads for the original invoices
 - ✓ permanent filing, with check copy, in the "A/P Files" with an indicator on the file folder that still awaiting an original invoice.
- Q & A on the full process.

8. Vendor Invoice Processing (Ready for Check Running)

90 Minutes (AA)

- Study & Chart the Document flow from arrival in the Film Accounting Office through to Permanent Files:
 - ✓ arrival date stamping,
 - ✓ temporary filing,
 - ✓ matching to PO's,
 - ✓ account coding,
 - ✓ route for approvals to/from Prod'n Acct & Line Producer/UPM,
 - ✓ check running,
 - ✓ check copy filing,
 - ✓ check signing,
 - ✓ permanent filing with check copy.
- ❖ Vendor Invoices Practical Drills x 10 unique Vendor Invoice's for each attendee (Arrival Date Stamp, Match to PO, Code, Routing for Approvals & ready for check run.)
- ❖ The Vendor Invoice will be drilled being entered to the G/L software system in the next step.
- O & A on the full process.

9. Petty Cash Advances (P/C "Float")



- ❖ Example of a Petty Cash Advance Form
- Concept of a petty cash "Float".
- ❖ Study and Chart the Document flow from arrival of the P/C Advance Form in the Film Accounting Office through to Permanent Files:
 - ✓ date stamping,
 - ✓ account coding,
 - ✓ route for approvals to/from Prod'n Acct & Line Producer/UPM,
 - ✓ (approval from Department Head if appropriate)
 - ✓ advance of the cash
 - ✓ permanent filing in the "P/C Files".

END OF DAY #1 OF FILM ACCOUNTING 101

Total Hours for Day #1 - 10Hrs

Film Production Accounting 101 – DAY 2 (Intermediate Level – Competence as an Assistant Film Accountant)

START 2ND DAY OF FILM ACCOUNTING 101

10. Entering Purchase Orders to the Film Accounting G/L Software 90 Minutes (AA)

- Orientation to the Film Accounting software.
- ❖ John uses overhead projector to demonstrate a typical Purchase Order Entry.
- ❖ Attendees then create Vendors in the software system for each of the 10 unique Vendors per attendee.
- ❖ Attendees code the Purchase Order per the Film Budget account coding, inserting set codes where applicable.
- ❖ Attendees enter their unique Purchase Orders to the G/L system.
- ❖ Attendees audit each other's entries.
- ❖ John reviews their work and attendees correct as needed.
- ❖ Prepare 10 more Purchase Orders from the data provided in your Binder of Materials.
- ❖ Attendees then create Vendors for a new batch of 10 more unique Vendors, followed by entering the purchase orders.
- ❖ Again, attendees audit each other's work, with John approving final entries.
- Q & A with attendees

11. Entering Vendor Invoices to the G/L Software

- Orientation to the Film Accounting software.
- ❖ John uses overhead projector to demonstrate a typical Vendor Invoice Entry.
- ❖ Create 10 Vendor Invoices from the data provided in your Binder of Materials (the same material as you used to create the Purchase Orders #1-#10 above).



- ❖ Attendees then match the Purchase Order to the Vendor Invoice.
- ❖ Any significant differences between the Invoice and Purchase Order are tagged with a Note.
- (the Invoice should have a PO already entered, so no Vendor Creation should be required)
- ❖ Attendees enter their x 10 unique Vendor Invoices to the G/L system.
- * Attendees audit each other's entries.
- ❖ John reviews their work and attendees correct as needed.

12. Check Preparation - Vendor Invoices

60 Minutes (AA)

- ❖ Attendees then run checks through the printer (or, if no laser printer available, a "Mock-Up" of the check will be created.)
- * Route the checks for signing (with the appropriate PO copy and Vendor Invoice attached).
- ❖ Create 10 more Vendor Invoices from the data provided in your Binder of Materials (the same material as you used to create the Purchase Orders #11-#20 above).
- ❖ Do the above steps again with another 10 x new unique Vendor Invoices.
- ❖ Drill preparing File Folder Labels for each of the 20 Vendors drilled above.
- ❖ Drill printing the File Folder Labels (if nor printer, "Mock-Up" labels on the file folders supplied). Affix the labels to the file folders provided and file in the "A/P Files". **Note** − no more than 2 file folders per hanging file.
- Q & A with attendees

BREAK FOR LUNCH

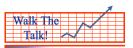
13. Entering Check Requisitions to G/L

90 Minutes (AA)

- Orientation to the Film Accounting software.
- ❖ John uses overhead projector to demonstrate a typical Check Requisition Entry.
- Any significant differences between the Invoice and Purchase Order are tagged with a Note.
- Create 10 Check Requisitions from the data provided in your Binder of Materials (see the section for Check Requisitions).
- ❖ Attendees create the Vendor in the G/L software for each of the 10 unique Check Requisitions.
- ❖ Attendees enter their x 10 unique Cheque Requisitions to the G/L system.
- ❖ Attendees audit each other's entries.
- ❖ John reviews their work and attendees correct as needed.

14. Check Preparation – Check Requisitions

- ❖ Attendees then run checks through the printer (or, if no laser printer available, a "Mock-Up" of the check will be created.)
- * Route the checks for signing (with the appropriate Check Requisition).



- Create 10 more Check Requisitions from the data provided in your Binder of Materials (see the section for Check Requisitions).
- ❖ Do the above steps again with another 10 x new unique Check Requisitions.
- ❖ Drill preparing File Folder Labels for each of the 20 Vendors drilled above.
- ❖ Drill printing the File Folder Labels (if nor printer, "Mock-Up" labels on the file folders supplied). Affix the labels to the file folders provided and
- ❖ File permanently in the "A/P Files" with an indicator on the file folder that still awaiting an original invoice.
- Q & A with attendee

15. Petty Cash Accounted For (i.e. P/C Folders)

60 Minutes (AA)

- ❖ Example of a Petty Cash Envelope (receipts accounted for).
- ❖ Study and Chart the Document flow from arrival of the P/C Advance Form in the Film Accounting Office through to Permanent Files:
 - ✓ date stamping,
 - ✓ auditing receipts,
 - ✓ account coding,
 - ✓ route for approvals to/from Prod'n Acct & Line Producer/UPM,
 - ✓ (approval from Department Head if appropriate)
 - ✓ advance in the amount of receipts accounted for (or, reduce the "Float".)
 - ✓ permanent filing in the "P/C Files".

16. Entering P/C Advances and P/C Accounted For to G/L

- ❖ John uses overhead projector to demonstrate a typical Petty Cash Entry.
- Create 10 Petty Cash Advances from the data provided in your Binder of Materials (see the section for Petty Cash).
- ❖ Attendees create the Petty Cash "Vendor" in the G/L software for each of the 10 unique Check Requisitions. Note the difference in the P/C vendor, where the P/C Holder has a unique general ledger petty cash number assigned to him/her.
- ❖ Attendees enter their x 10 unique Petty Cash Advances to the G/L system.
- **....**
- ❖ Attendee's create 10 Petty Cash Envelopes from the data provided in the Binder of Materials (see the section for Petty Cash).
- ❖ Attendees enter their x 10 unique Petty Cash Envelopes to the G/L system.
- Attendees audit each other's entries.
- ❖ John reviews their work and attendees correct as needed.
- ❖ Attendees then create 10 more Petty Cash Envelopes from the data provided in your Binder of Materials (see the section for Petty Cash).
- ❖ Do the above steps again with the additional 10 x new unique Petty Cash Envelopes.
- ❖ Drill preparing File Folder Labels for the above Petty Cash holders above.
- ❖ Drill printing the File Folder Labels (if nor printer, "Mock-Up" labels on the file folders supplied). Affix the labels to the file folders provided and
- ❖ File permanently in the "P/C Files"
- Q & A with attendee

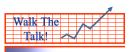


17. Finding Work as an Assistant Film Production Accountant

60 Minutes (TB)

- **❖** The Resume
- ❖ What a Key Accountant WANTS and NEEDS from you.
- ❖ Ways & means to gather addresses and to meet film production accountants.
- * Real examples of how this has worked for others.

END OF DAY #2 OF FILM ACCOUNTING 101 –Intro Level Total Hours for Day #2 – 10 Hrs



Film Production Accounting 101 – 9 Evenings of Live Webinars Senior Level – Upgrade to a Film Auditor

Note: Each webinar is recorded live and can be reviewed at your convenience.

WEBINAR #1 OF 9 - FILM ACCOUNTING 101 (Evenings)

Web#1-1. The Film Crew Deal Memo & Crew Timecard Introduced 30 Minutes (AA)

- ❖ John demonstrates a typical Deal Memo for an hourly paid employee.
- ❖ Attendees prepare a Deal Memo for themselves.
- ❖ John demonstrates a typical Crew Timecard for an hourly paid employee.
- ❖ Attendees prepare a Deal Memo for themselves.

Web#1-2. An Overview of The Union Pay Calculation

60 Minutes (AA)

- ❖ The appropriate pages of the basic IATSE agreement is looked at for the following terms:
 - ✓ "Scale rates"
 - ✓ Overtime
 - ✓ "Gold"
 - ✓ Meal penalty
- ❖ John demonstrates the IATSE local overtime calculations under the Basic Agreement using the concept of Worked Hours and Pay Hours.
- ❖ Attendee's calculate the pay hours and meal penalties from examples given by John. Answers are provided afterward for attendees to study.
- ❖ (Same practice repeated a few times until majority are comfortable with the Pay Hours and Worked Hours calculation, as well as the Meal Penalty calculation).
- ❖ John continues to use examples and correct attendees as before.
- ***** -----
- ❖ Depending on the time available the same steps above are completed for Screen Actors Guild daily actors (called Schedule A performers)
- *****

WEBINAR #2 OF 9 - FILM ACCOUNTING 101 (Evenings)

Web #2-1. Introducing the Weekly Cost Report

60 Minutes (TB)

- ❖ The "Product" of the Accounting Department is the Weekly Cost Report
- Pressures brought to bear on the Key Accountant to produce it on time and how the assistant accountant can help.
- ❖ Concept of timing the cost report is issued weekly so at some point the accountant will need to cut-off further entries during analysis and publication of the cost report.
- Define the columns of the Weekly Cost Report
- ❖ Reading the Estimates-To-Complete Column
- Practical examples given for different estimated Stunt man-days.



- ❖ Attendees practice the effect of changing the Estimates-To-Complete on the Cost Report.
- ❖ The concept of weekly "period closings" is presented as industry specific.

Web#2-2. The Concept of "Fringes" (Government&Union Contributions) 30 Minutes (AA)

- ❖ The producer must pay normal government and union fringes a breakdown of the types of fringes is given.
- ❖ When projecting costs (called Estimating in film) it is common to average the fringe rates for different unions. This process is reviewed for different guilds and unions.
- ❖ John shows the effect of fringes on the different SAG calculations above it is quite dramatic.

WEBINAR #3 OF 9 - FILM ACCOUNTING 101 (Evenings)

Web#3. The Weekly Cost Report – PO's Missing/Incorrect 90 Minutes (AA)

- ❖ The cost report is a complex document. The accountant has his/her hands full projecting costs. The entries to the general ledger have impact on that process.
- ❖ A practical example is given of a missing Purchase Order for a Steadicam Rental at \$3,000/Week.
- ❖ The effect on the Cost Report is given when a Purchase Order is not relieved when entering an invoice.
- ❖ How the assistant accountant can help the key accountant to ensure all PO's are entered and relieved properly.
- Example how to review the PO's entered to the system for and what to look out for.
- Some practical applications are put to the attendees:
- ❖ Example an invoice has come in the mail quoting a PO number which doesn't seem to be in the Accounting area. What do you do? How would that affect the cost report?
- ❖ Example an invoice has come into the accounting area which is quoting a PO which has been previously relieved. What do you do? How would that affect the cost report?
- ❖ Example a PO is in the system and is getting old normally it would be paid within that time period. What do you do? How would that affect the cost report?
- **&** Etc.
- ❖ Example a vendor has called and says he hasn't received his check yet. The Key Accountant has asked you to look into it. What do you do? Etc.

WEBINAR #4 OF 9 - FILM ACCOUNTING 101 (Evenings)

Web#4-1. The Weekly Cost Report - Ck Request, P/C 60 Minutes (AA)

- Check Requisitions are a "rush-cost" often put into the next period yet in the Cost Report.
- Similarly there are some types of invoices which haven't been estimated by a Purchase Order (e.g. shipping, courier, telephone, etc.)
- ❖ Additionally, Petty Cash envlopes could have an impact on the Cost Report, particularly in the Wardrobe, Set Dressing and Props departments.
- ❖ The concept of "Dummy" PO's − a PO temporarily prepared by the account and to account for a cost within the Cost Report.



- ❖ How a "Dummy" PO can help the accountant to present a better picture of the estimated final costs and when to use it.
- ❖ Attendees are asked to enter a Dummy PO to see it's before and after effect.

Web#4-2. The Cost Report - Projecting Costs Then Using A Dummy PO 30 Minutes (AA)

- ❖ Example Hotel invoices not PO'd for Cast
- ❖ A Day Out Of Days (DOOD's) example is shown and gone over.
- The attendees are asked to estimate the cost of a hotel in their area for that cast member based on the DOOD's.
- ❖ A Dummy PO is drawn up by the attendee for two of the key cast.
- ❖ The PO is entered to the G/L.
- ❖ The effect on the Cost Report is noted.
- ❖ This process is done again for the same Cast, but this time for their flights from the East (or West) coast, depending on the attendee's location.
- ❖ The effect on the cost report is noted.

WEBINAR #5 OF 9 - FILM ACCOUNTING 101 (Evenings)

Web#5-1. The Cost Report Projecting Costs to Completion – Extras 90 Minutes (AA)

- We examine the Costs To Date to see the date to which the Extras have been paid.
- ❖ We ask the 1st Assistant Director for an estimate of the number of Extra Man-Days.
- ❖ We estimate the future costs of Extras through to completion.
- ❖ We compare that estimate with the Estimated Final Costs available on the Cost Report.
- ❖ A different example is given of this to the attendees and they work it out for themselves in conjunction with John.
- ❖ A similar example is done with the Stand-In's

WEBINAR #6 OF 9 - FILM ACCOUNTING 101 (Evenings)

Web#5-1. The Cost Report Projecting Costs to Completion – Labor 30 Minutes(AA)

- ❖ This is a tricky projection that is somewhat arithmetical.
- ❖ I have prepared an Excel worksheet as the demonstration and a few departmental cost report presentation.
- ❖ Because this is a difficult step some review of labor hours worked and hours paid (Overtime and other penalties) will be presented and practiced.
- ❖ We will work through a few departments until you get understand the concept.
- ❖ Then attendees will do several themselves based on presentaions given to them, submitting results.
- ❖ John will go over the results with the attendees.

WEBINAR #7 OF 9 - FILM ACCOUNTING 101 (Evenings)

Web#5-1. The Cost Report Projecting Costs to Completion – Fringes 60 Minutes (AA)

- This is a tricky projection that is somewhat arithmetical.
- ❖ I have prepared an Excel worksheet as the demonstration and a few departmental cost report presentations.
- ❖ Because this is a difficult step some review of labor fringe rates for various categories of unions and guilds (and situations) will be presented and practiced.



- ❖ We will work through a few departmental fringe costs until you get understand the concept.
- ❖ Then attendees will do several themselves based on presentations given to them, submitting results.
- ❖ John will go over the results with the attendees.

WEBINAR #8 OF 9 - FILM ACCOUNTING 101 (Evenings)

Web#8-1. The Cost Report – Offsetting Over-Budget Costs

30 Minutes (AA)

- ❖ Offsetting the Variances Within the Department an example is given with the Set Dressing Dept.
- ❖ The attendees will do an example for another department based on my presentations.
- Offsetting Variances Among Different Departments.
- ❖ An example will be given of this.
- ❖ The attendees will do an example for themselves, based on my presentations.

Web#8-1. The Cost Report Presentation-Acceptable To Financiers 60 Minutes (AA)

- ❖ The purpose of this webinar is pull together all of the skills that we've learned to date culminating in producing a good Weekly Cost Report. The assistant accountant who understands what the key Accountant needs to do, will be very valuable indeed.
- ❖ The Cost Report is presented with a covering memo and a summary page of all offsets and over/under budget line items.
- ❖ There is an industry specific way of making that presentation.
- ❖ John will present an acceptable Cost Report in full.
- ❖ The attendees will be emailed this Full Cost Report in the first week of the webinar.
- ❖ The attendees, with hints from John, will review each department of the full Cost report, making comments as a Key Accountant for each department.
- ❖ John will track the Over-Budget items and the Under-Budget items, finally resulting in a a presentable Weekly Cost Report.

WEBINAR #9 OF 9 - FILM ACCOUNTING 101 (Evenings)

Web#9. Opportunities

90 Minutes (TB)

- ❖ What a Key Accountant WANTS and what he/she NEEDS.
- ❖ The Resume how to convince the Key Accountant, Producer, etc that you're the right person.
- ❖ Ways & means to gather addresses and to meet film production accountants.
- * Real examples of how this has worked for others.
- ❖ Overall Sum up and Q & A.

Total Webinars
13.5Hrs
Total Day #1
10 Hrs
Total Day #2

Total Hours for Film Accounting 101

13.5Hrs
10 Hrs
10 Hrs
23.5Hrs