# Elements of TV Director Style

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1.  Introduction

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There's a remarkable book available about how to write well called Elements of Style by Strunk and White.  Cornell English professor William Strunk compiled a "handbook" or "guide" of writing tips for composition students.  So useful was this guide, called "the little book," that one of his students nurtured it to publication for us all to use.

My aim in preparing these essays is to begin "a little book" about television directing.  The focus will be the work of TV directors in the local, multiple camera production environment, and the goal will be to provide clear explanation of basics.

## 1.1  Common Misconceptions

A.  "Directing is done in the control room."

Did you ever watch the Indianapolis 500 race on television?  Thirty-five cars charge madly around the track at seemingly outrageous speeds.  Lots of attention, glamour, and money go to the drivers.  As a spectator sporting event, the Indy mainly happens on the track starting at noon on Memorial Day.  But most drivers and car owners would prefer to know that the race is won before even taking the car to the track.  Not fair for an auto race, perhaps, but the idea is to control all the variables up front, to manage uncertainty.  The best racing teams, football teams, and TV directors like to know that they're prepared.  As a director, you want to eliminate as much uncertainty from the production as you can.  Always.

So, most directing is done before the director goes into the control room.  In live or unrehearsed programs, a director might have to make directing decisions from the control room.  But there's an inverse relationship between the number of control room calls and the surety of the program's outcome.  And so a vital principle: directors do most of their directing before entering the control room.  They carefully stack the production deck.

B.  "Directors are ulcers with a stopwatch."

Poor directors are.  It takes time to learn directing because in part there's so much to know and do.  You need to have reached the level to know instinctively that if something goes wrong, you can fix it and that regardless of what may happen, the show will be well directed.  This requires the experience of facing many difficult situations, of knowing the operational limits of equipment, of working with the production crew members, and of monitoring your own functioning in production settings.  It's a point where your self-confidence starts to build and challenges become opportunities.  In fact, accomplished directors often are eager to work on difficult programs because of the test of personal ability and character they entail.

But just because a particular director is "cool under fire" doesn't mean he or she is a good director.  To the contrary, that person might be relying on

enlightened self-interest and the crew's good will to keep the production more or less on track.  And even a calm, unflappable director can stage poorly, shoot wrongly, and edit sloppily.

It's true that stress increases as airtime approaches.  Good directors experience the stress more as a challenge to one's intellectual and emotional strength than as pressure.  Good directors are in control of themselves, and it is this self-controlled leader who controls the situation.  So, given the ability, training and experience, a director allows the stress to build much like an accomplished musician or athlete anticipates the performance.  Afterwards, there is happy fatigue.

C.  "<u>Directors have absolute power</u>."

Directors are powerful.  In "personal video," a director who stages, shoots and edits his or her own production has complete control of ends (or desired outcomes) and means (or ways to achieve them).  If one angle doesn't look good, try another.  If the zoom is too slow, zoom faster.

But most production situations aren't a matter of one person creating video for his or her own purposes, whether to make art or to while away some time.  Directors usually work for somebody.  In all but a very few cases, this "working for" relationship limits the director's power.  A director who works on a commissioned job must make something that the client will approve.  A director who airs the 6PM news must air a show that management will accept.

Ultimately, all directors in the communication business work for the viewer.

Along the way, directors work with people.  In reality, the crew members who work on today's show will be there again tomorrow.  The advertising executive who today brings in a commercial to record might also bring in one tomorrow.  You must be careful not to abuse authority while making today's show because there is always tomorrow's to make.  Keep "authority for the production" separate from "authority for the personnel."  You're responsible

for the show and have the necessary authority to make decisions which affect its success.  But when the show is over, you doesn't necessarily have authority over crew members who now might report to a different supervisor.  You are a project manager, and  your authority stems from the project, not from organizational position.

The work of a director is social because you work with <u>people</u>, not directly with images or equipment.  While the "personal video" hobbyist or video artist might operate his or her own equipment, directors of multiple camera productions must rely on others.  There's too much going on for you to press the "take" bar, open the mike pot, pan the camera, and page the prompter.  The director is a specialist: you talk with people.  Nobody who works with people has absolute power.

But to say that a director only talks with people is like saying that Lincoln's Gettysburg Address was just a few words scribbled on an envelope.  There's an interesting paradox here.  How could a few scribbled words, seemingly offhanded, be of such importance that today's high school students can quote them?  Luck? Chance?  Hardly.  Lots of preparation is needed for a person to know what to say and how to say it.  For a director, a calm manner and simple talk are the pinnacle and outward expression of inner preparation.

D.  "<u>But a control room is a crazy place</u>."

There is a certain madness on the floor of the New York Stock Exchange, another madness on the sidelines of a Superbowl game, and still another in retail stores the week before Christmas.  But from stock exchange to nearby K-Mart, there is purpose and order.  Maybe neckties aren't straight, and friendly smiles aren't properly placed.  Maybe there's less attention to the polite "pardon me" or "after you."  But there's more attention on the task at hand: to purchase or sell when there is no time to waste.

To a lay person, a control room's social atmosphere is madness.  The audio monitors drone, video monitors flicker, control panels glow, intercoms sqawk,

phones ring, papers russle, and people question, answer, shout, laugh and curse. Energy and concentration electrify the air.

Control room activity has been termed "organized chaos" and "controlled mayhem."  The competent insider senses organization and control; the outsider senses chaos and mayhem.  One significant duty of a director is to help outsiders such as studio guests feel the control and not be overwhelmed by the apparent chaos.

## 1.2  The Director's Role

The role is complex, as one might expect.  We can look at it from several points of view.

A.  <u>For the viewer</u>.

In the communication business, all directing is done ultimately for the viewer.  A director should allow the viewer to see what needs to be seen and hear what needs to be heard in a way that the viewer feels what needs to be felt, establishing the proper mood.

B.  <u>For the talent</u>.

Viewers see talent, not directors or technicians.  While talent are sometimes handsomely paid, they *do* earn it.  <u>They</u> are on the screen, in a position to receive praise for good work and blame for goofs.  It's always talent who must somehow explain away and apologize for the most technical of technical failures.  There's no way around it: if anyone gets egg on the face, it's always talent.

Talent is not in a comfortable working environment.  While in most programs the talent is expected to make a coherent presentation to the viewer, the work situation often is physically uncomfortable and informationally isolated. Not only does the lighting get hot and the air conditioning break down,

but runny noses can't be blown and sneezes can't be sneezed. Every broadcaster has a story to tell about the bug that landed on talent's nose, or the fly that flew into talent's mouth.

While production staff and technicians are able to converse freely among themselves during a show, talent can't. In formal shows, talent can never talk to the crew while on the air. Only in some studios can talent listen to instructions on an IFB earpiece, and even this must often be done while also talking about something else or reading from the teleprompter. Talent is at a huge disadvantage if there is a major change to be made during the show, regardless of who wants to make it.

A director should protect the public image of talent and also build talent's confidence that all will be well when working on <u>your</u> shows.

C. <u>For the crew</u>.

Production crews are made up of production operators and/or technical operators. Technical operators typically work in the engineering department, and they are assigned to operate production equipment during production hours or for production projects. While wearing the "engineering" hat, they might set up remote links, install new equipment, or do electronic maintenance work. Technical operators think of themselves as rational, stable, professional, and detail-minded. Many are "old timers." They deserve respect because of their technical knowledge and experience. They tend to think of production people, talent, and just about everyone else working in television as the lunatic fringe. It's not easy to be accepted by technical operators as a TV person, and there are some director behaviors that are almost guaranteed to prevent it.

Like police detectives, technical operators are hard to impress. They have seen good shows and bad, good directors and bad, and not much is new. Time for a new set? Not new for technical operators. A new consultant is in town? Well, consultants have been here before. Technical operators are impressed by competence, but not by boast.

And second, technical operators tend to find satisfaction in doing work effectively and without fanfare.  It's human nature to feel good that someone else knows when vital but hidden work is done well.  You as a director are in a position to provide this recognition.  But technical operators are a discerning bunch: flattery slathered on them is worse than no remark at all.

Production and technical operators alike are keenly aware of how a director uses authority.  It is unwise for a director to take too seriously, or to ponder too deeply your authority over crew members, even though you may have it, because this belief can easily reveal itself in an inflated sense of self-importance and arrogance.  It is wiser to believe and act that you have authority over the <u>production</u> but that you work as co-equal with the crew.  Authority over a production is assigned by management; influence with a crew is given up by crew members after you have earned it.  A director should be bold and decisive with a production, but supportive, respectful and friendly with operators.  Your goal is to help the crew do everything right: hence we say that a director manages a production by working <u>for</u> a crew.

D.  <u>For station management and other personnel</u>.

Management is interested in results.  A director is expected to have brought a show successfully to the air, on time and within budget.  Management expects to see and hear a program worthy of the station's public image ("brand ID") and corporate culture.  A director is expected to own up to errors when they occur.  While equipment malfunctions (and other acts of fate) may help to <u>explain</u> errors, they don't <u>excuse</u> them.

Most station executives and staff are not directors and have not directed.  There is a certain mystery about production for them, just as there is mystery about electronic circuits for directors.  Most managers know enough about production to host a tour of station facilities.  But when a production assignment is given to a director, they expect you to <u>make good television</u>.  They want network quality and no complaints from talent or studio guests or clients.  And they don't want grievances from unionized workers.  They are unmoved by all but the most obvious reasons why a particular effect cannot be

done.  Nobody likes to hear "we can't."  And everybody gets suspicious when they hear it.

# 2.  The Television Medium

Just as wrapping paper differs from writing paper and wallpaper, television differs from other communication media.  A director must understand how television is unique.

## 2.1  Physical characteristics

Television screens are small.  Viewers move to or from the set to establish proper screen "smallness."  Furthermore, television images are mosaics.  A viewer can't lean in very close to see picture details because they aren't really there in the first place.  So, there's an optimum viewing distance, somewhere between so close as only to see flickering dots and so far as only to see obscure forms and shadows.  The director can't change these physical realities.  You must work within them.

Specifically, the medium is suited for closeups.  The wider the shot, the fewer details the viewer can see.  Coverage of football games illustrates the point.  A shot of the quarterback taking the snap is interesting, but doesn't allow the viewer to see linebackers blitzing, blockers blocking, and running backs running.  To see an individual means not to see the play.  But a shot of both teams is so wide that on the screen we see only dots moving like bugs.  The problem is usually worked around by showing extreme wide shots or closeups in replay, after the action has already taken place.  Similarly, in a closeup of a studio guest we can't see what other guests are doing; but in a cover shot, we must strain to see any one guest well.  So, the medium favors the closeup, with cover shots used only when larger relationships need to be established.  HDTV and 16:9 screens are available, but aren't yet the standard.

One of the most difficult subjects for television is a ballet solo.  Dance is so complex that no shot on television captures all of the important action.  If shot "in cover," the viewer can follow the dancer moving on the set, but can't see the intricacies of steps and facial expressions.  If a "full shot" is used, details are compromised and the viewer misses how the performer uses the dance stage.  And, if feet and hands and faces are shot in closeup, the viewer misses not only the dancer's use of space but also body lines and direction.  Particularly distressing is the tendency of dancers in closeups to dance out of the frame, leaving the viewer behind to look at the floor!  When the "take" is made to a wider shot, the viewer then must take a moment to re-establish where on the stage the dancer is and what he or she is doing.  Slow-motion replay is not appropriate, of course.

Aspect ratio further limits a director's choices.  To double the shot's width from left to right requires one to quadruple the shot's area.  The effect of aspect ratio is not only to increase width but also to increase height.  So, to include a third or fourth person in a studio set means to include more and more of the floor or the background set.  Television aspect ratio is fine for a medium close-up of one person and acceptable for a two-shot.  It rapidly gets worse as subjects are added.

The TV screen is two-dimensional.  Unless you're really careful, subjects will appear flat and shots will seem dull.  In general, there are three ways of making two-dimensional images seem to have depth.  First, build compositions which contain <u>receding diagonal lines</u>.  A studio set may be positioned and shot so that various edges such as those on risers and tables are not head-on to the camera.  Or, lines may be built into the set or drawn on the floor or background flats.  It's also possible to arrange studio guests so that in a cover shot some are closer to and others farther from the camera.  In fact, sometimes we talk about planning compositions to include foreground material, middle-ground material, and background material.

The second way is to apply studio light so as to enhance contrast.  Light areas advance toward the viewer, dark areas recede.  So, when lighting a person (for a medium close-up), use backlight to pull the subject forward from the

background.  Use key light to pull the subject's features toward the camera. Use some shadow on the side opposite the key light to emphasize the subject's dimensions.

The third way is to arrange compositional elements such that one dominates through its mass.  One huge object on the screen will dominate many other smaller ones in the same shot.  Remember, though, that while a dominant element might make for a good composition, it won't necessarily suggest screen depth.

Some everyday shots come to mind which illustrate these points. Consider the "scenic panorama" vacation shot.  In the bottom half is earth (with trees, rocks, cars, whatever), and in the top half is sky.  A variation is an ocean shot, where in the bottom half is water and in the top half is sky.  A horizon line cuts horizontally through the middle of the shot.  The shot exemplifies poor use of medium in three ways.  First, there is only one line, running left to right across the shot, not on an angle.  Second, there is no enhancement of contrast: the sky is evenly bright, the earth or water evenly dark.  And third, there is no dominant element such as a rainbow or bolt of lightning in the sky or a boulder or boat in the foreground.

Or, consider a head-on shot of three people sitting on a sofa.  The wall behind the sofa faces the camera, the sofa faces the camera, and each of the people faces the camera.  Leading edges of the furniture run horizontally.  Even a line drawn approximately through the subjects' shoulders runs horizontally. It is the "three birds on a fence" shot.

Finally, in the police mug shot the subject's shoulders face the camera and establish a horizontal line.  the person's eyes and ears do the same thing. There are usually horizontal "height lines" drawn on the back wall.  And, the lighting is flat, providing no separation from the back wall and no shadow/highlight on the person's face.

Television audio gets less attention than video.   At every step of production, processing, transmission, and recreation, good audio tends to be a

secondary priority.  Microphones are never used in television as they are in radio, wherein they are placed so as to produce the best pickup.  In television, they are positioned first not to interfere with the shots and second to achieve good acoustic pickup.  Special microphones have been designed for television so that they are small and unobtrusive and so that they can compensate for being poorly placed.

Probably nine out of every ten dollars spent for production equipment in television stations go for video, not audio.  Most of the broadcast channel is used for video.  And a twenty-dollar walkman-type radio produces better sound than do most home television sets.  The popularization of "home entertainment centers" and the increased use of stereo by networks seems to be moderating this bias against good audio, but change comes slowly.

But videophiles argue that people <u>watch</u> television, not <u>listen</u> to it. Television is a <u>visual</u> medium, they contend.  Fact is, television is unique: neither radio with pictures, nor pictures with sound.  In television, video and audio go together to create the message.  Audiences expect to see and to hear.  Even the most ardent supporter of television-as-visuals would be surprised to find that a TV newscast without sound is uninterpretable, while the same newscast with sound but without pictures makes sense.

It's important for a director to remember that an audio mistake disrupts the viewer more than a video mistake does.  One can detect a video mistake more easily, perhaps, but one is less confused by it.

## 2.2  Mediated intimacy

Television mimics interpersonal relationships.  Talent are usually shot in medium closeup, and the typical delivery style is conversational.  In more formal programs such as presidential speeches and newscasts, shots tend to be somewhat wider and less intimate.

In real relationships, people in our culture expect to maintain a bubble of physical space around themselves. The bubble expands or shrinks depending on

the specific relationship with another person or the setting in which interpersonal communication takes place.  In general, our culture's rule for a person talking with a stranger is to maintain at least four feet of space between them.[1]  For friends and acquaintances, from one and one-half to four feet are satisfactory.  For intimates such as family, buddies and lovers, less than one foot can be comfortable.

The important point is that people are disturbed when these cultural norms are violated: if a person is required to stand up too close to a stranger, he or she will feel uneasy.

In television, we try to shoot as close as possible to overcome a physical limitation of the medium.  But we can't shoot <u>too</u> close.  When talent or guest is talking to the viewer, we are limited by cultural norm not to take the viewer closer than the equivalent of about two feet, which is a medium closeup.  This would be the closest acceptable conversational shot.[2]  As talent's style or the occasion increases in formality, more distance would be required.

But it is possible to use television in other ways.  For example, a guest might talk to a program host while ignoring the viewer.  Because a "relationship link" is not established with the viewer, the norms of distance do not apply (or there is ambiguity).  In general, the farther to one side a subject is looking, the closer the viewer may be taken.  When the subject is in full profile, in fact, it might be quite comfortable for the viewer to see him in extreme closeup.  Such shots are often used of musical performers and of people who are telling moving personal stories.

When talent is talking with the viewer, the appropriate shot is a full face medium closeup.  Sometimes the shot can be enhanced if talent's <u>body</u> is turned slightly to one side.  The same is usually true of a guest who is talking with

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[1]Burgoon, Judee and Thomas Saine, <u>the Unspoken Dialogue</u>.  Dallas: Houghton-Mifflin (1978), p. 95.

[2]There are exceptions, of course.  If talent says, "look at my lapel pin," or in another way invites the viewer to move closer, a tighter shot could be obligatory.  Sometimes intimacy is forced in commercial production (which might be good advertising but poor television).

talent but not viewer.  The quality of shot declines as the guest is seen more in profile.  So, for a guest such as an interviewee, the appropriate shot is a <u>near</u> full face wherein we see both eyes and maybe both ears.

This production style of apparent interpersonal communication ("AIC") is used in a large portion of television programs and is important for you as a director to understand fully.  The medium is used to transport the viewer into the conversational arena, regardless of whether the viewer is actually spoken to or looked at.  For a director, the goal is to supress the medium, to make it seem like a transparent window.  In AIC, the last thing a director wants to do is to call attention to the fact that the viewer isn't <u>really</u> a party to the conversation, or that the speaker or newsman or commercial pitchman isn't <u>really</u> talking to viewers one-on-one.

The AIC style is evident in newscasts, news interviews, and magazine-type shows.  The simplicity of AIC is evident when comparing program "opens" with lead studio segments.  Opens are fast paced with graphics and striking shots, each intended to call attention to and stimulate interest in the show.  But the lead studio shot usually is static, the action determined by talent's speaking rate, and there doesn't seem to be much happening visually.  Of course, there's a problem when one tries to call viewer attention <u>to</u> the medium and <u>away from</u> the medium at the same time.

A director should not confuse the AIC production style with "bad television."  Derisive comments about "talking heads" usually mean that the heads aren't saying much, which is a deficiency in producing, not directing.  Some of the best television imaginable is an unadorned shot of an eloquent "talking head."

A more recent production style stands in opposition to this approach. Building on the premise that viewers' attention is precarious at best, the "Music Video" style uses the medium itself to command attention. So "invisible" shots and transitions are to be avoided because they miss opportunities to stimulate the viewer.  And a stimulated viewer is not likely to tune out. Deliberately "miss-framed" shots, canted shots, shakey hand-helds, animated

supers, and other forms of distortion are used "creatively" to add informational content to shots, even when fundamentally distracting.

## 2.3  Switched transitions

The switcher is able to manipulate images in ways that simulate the way we look at the world.  Human eyes are strikingly complicated.  They are able to change focal length and aperture almost automatically when we want to shift our gaze from a distant object to a closer one or when we look from a bright object to a dark one.  This happens without our having to pay much attention to the mechanics.  Indeed, it is important for a director to understand that humans do not pay attention to what their eyes see while the eyes are making these adjustments.  Through <u>selective attention</u>, we are able to sense only what we intend to sense, disregarding all else.

For example, imagine yourself to be looking at a distant tree. Immediately in front of you and almost in your line of sight is a park bench. When you <u>pay attention</u> to the tree, you are aware that the park bench is near, but it is out of focus and indistinct.  Without moving your head or looking down much, you can shift focus to the bench.  Now, as you <u>pay attention</u> to the bench, you are aware of the background tree.  But you are not attentive to anything <u>between</u> the tree and bench.  Your attention switches from tree to bench, from bench to tree.  Although you <u>could</u> have been attentive to anything between these two objects, you were not.  By ignoring the intermediate subjects, you psychologically edited your vision without creating noticeable discontinuity.

Similarly, if you look around right now, you'll see specific objects in your environment.  As you move from one to another, you won't <u>pay attention</u> to anything else that is between them.  For me, I see a computer screen, an almanac, a clock and a file folder.  If I look again, I might notice that there's a videotape <u>between</u> the almanac and clock, or a paper punch between the clock and file folder.  When we enter a room and "look around," we always look at <u>specifics</u>: we never look at everything from left to right or right to left. Human vision is continuous while looking at one subject.   But vision is

discontinuous when moving from one subject to another, although selective perception makes it seem continuous.

For a director, it is important to remember that human vision does not pan.  It snaps from one point to the next.  But when snapping about, a person also knows where within the environment he or she is looking.

Television switching mimics human vision.  The <u>take</u>[3] has the same effect on the viewer as his looking from one subject to another, and there is no apparent discontinuity.  Hence, the take is the most useful transition in all of production.

The fade to black is a major <u>dis</u>continuity.  It has the effect of terminating attention on the subject.  While a viewer watches the shot fade away, attention fades with it.  Because the fade is a taking away of known content, the viewer is never confused while watching it.  As shot content fades away, there is less and less to pay attention to.  So, as far as shot content is concerned, a fade to black stops thought.

A dissolve, technically the simultaneous fade out of one shot and fade in of another, is also a major <u>dis</u>continuity.  If unpointed, it is more intrusive than a take or fade to black because (1) there is no visual counterpart to the dissolve and (2) it contains a zone of confusion.  If the program context suggests a change of time or place, then a following dissolve is pointed; it is not intrusive because it is anticipated.  If context does not imply such a change, the dissolve is unpointed, and the transition itself tells the viewer that time or place is changing.  A dissolve, whether pointed or not, does not stop thought; it introduces a moment of muddle.  The result is the intellectual realization of change (unpointed) or the psychological satisfaction that anticipated change has occurred (pointed).

Dissolves are problematic when used with a talking head.  Because the person continues to talk, the audio is continuous.  But to impose discontinuous

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[3]An instantaneous switch from one shot to another is called a "take" in live TV, a "cut" in recorded TV and film.  Some producers and production houses use the terms interchangeably.

video transitions can produce complete confusion.  An extreme case is the use of dissolves when shooting an interview: while two people are talking continuously in one place and one time, each dissolve implies the contrary.

Switcher transitions can also interact with production style.  We are able to see crisp details in some environments such as when studying at a well-lighted desk.  But other environments are less crisp, less hard-edged.  Consider how many details we can't see when having a candlelight dinner!  It's possible to use a dissolve to mimic soft-edged vision, occasions when we don't look with intense, analytical scrutiny.  For example, consider a soloist in a studio singing a lullaby.  As we change shots with the various sections of the song, it would be too jarring to use takes.  Dissolves are more consistent with the delicate, gentle atmosphere a lullaby tries to create.  As a rule, dissolves tend to be appropriate for <u>some</u> music, religious services, and commercials.  They are always appropriate for western-style funeral services.

# 3.  A Mix of Communication Purposes

Humans are extraordinarily complex animals, and they engage in countless behaviors.  Theories which are used to explain and predict behavior are necessarily a bit sloppy because "individual differences" and "specific circumstances" may cause a person to act in ways contrary to what a theory would predict.

It's easier to categorize physical objects than to categorize human behavior.  For example, the distinctions between "animal," "vegetable" and "mineral" are easy to define.  Scientists would argue about some borderline cases such as those produced in laboratories of genetic engineers.  But overall, we don't have much trouble separating rocks from ducks.  The physical world is assumed to be law governed so that ideas such as conservation of matter are believed to apply to all matter in all circumstances.

The picture is not clear when we turn to humans.  We speak of a person as happy, active, smart, and professional, but these attributes are qualitatively different from attributes of rocks and ducks.  <u>Human</u> attributes are inferred

from our observation of human behaviors.  The problem is how to decide which behaviors to observe.

Let's take the attribute, happiness.  Which behaviors can we take as valid and reliable indicators that a person is happy?  Maybe whether or not the person smiles.  Okay, how many times need a person smile before we say he or she's "happy"?  Three?  Okay, how broad a smile?  A slight upturn at each corner of the mouth, enough to show teeth, or a broad grin?  Enough to show teeth?  Fine, we now have defined one <u>dimension</u> of happiness and indicated how to measure it: a happy person shows a toothy smile three times.

Would you be satisfied that this dimension would satisfactorily define happiness?  Probably not.  Happy people seem to do lots of other things that unhappy people don't, such as laugh, giggle, take risks, and show compassion. We would have to define and show how to measure these other <u>dimensions</u> of happiness before our job would be finished.

But even if we were to do that, the result would still be inadequate. After all, can't a happy person be unhappy at a particular moment?  Isn't it possible for a person to be happy and yet not to smile?  Of course.  Our <u>operational</u> definition doesn't capture all instances of what we would consider happiness.

Furthermore, isn't it possible to use our definition to determine that a person is happy and be wrong?  Don't some people smile when they are in pain, or feel guilt?  Don't some people try to <u>act</u> happy, regardless of their true inner states? Of course. You'll probably be pretty nervous when you go to your next job interview, but chances are you won't try to behave nervously!

The important point is that human behavior is simply human behavior, and we can observe it only as behavior.  Human thoughts and feelings are inescapably private, and we cannot observe them.  So, we interpret actions and make guesses about inner states and motives.  Our interpretations and guesses are never foolproof.  The more abstract our descriptions become, the more prone to error they are.

Communication is an abstraction just like happiness. What human behaviors qualify as communication behaviors? We can't be sure. When one person smiles to another, is he or she trying to "say" something, or is he or she just "being happy"? It's important to realize that we study, talk of, worry about, and practice communication as a _fuzzy set_ of human behaviors. We would all agree that when a person makes a speech, he or she's trying to engage in communication, but we could never agree whether a cough from an audience member was a response to a physiological disturbance or a cue to the speechmaker to sit down.

Similarly, we can't be sure of a speaker's intentions or purposes. Just as we saw that happiness is a cluster of inner states which we infer from a person's behavior, to speak of communication purpose is a shorthand way to cluster communication behaviors. Traditionally, communication purposes have been grouped as to inform, to persuade, and to entertain.

This traditional approach rules out lots of human behavior because it implies that we are only interested in that behavior which is intended to affect another person in one or more of three ways. It means that a person who sings in the shower is not communicating. A person who writes a poem never to be read is not communicating. Of course, we wouldn't all agree about this, because lots of people would argue that it's quite possible to talk to one's self! But this failure to agree simply underscores the point: abstract concepts such as communication refer to fuzzy sets.

In communication intended to inform, we want the receiver to acquire information, to learn something. When we intend to persuade, we want the receiver to believe in a certain way. In both informational and persuasive communication, we want the receiver to act in a particular way as a result of having the new information or of having acquired the new belief. Change based on information or belief are presumed to be actions of the intellect. We choose to act in one way or another based on what we know or what we believe.

When we intend to entertain, or to delight, or to inspire, we want the receiver's emotions to be stimulated. Classical scholars have argued that

easier for a person to learn new information or to acquire new beliefs (and to choose new actions) when in the right "frame of mind."  It's easier to give a gift when one feels happy, and it's easier to seek revenge when one is angry.

For a director, it's important to know that each of these modes has different implications for production, and that communication is not limited to only one mode.  When we want to inform an audience, we must persuade them that our information is true and useful.  To persuade them to watch a newscast or buy a product, we must inform them of specific benefits of watching or buying.  And, our chances of being informative or persuasive are improved if we also stimulate the viewer's emotions.[4]  It is wise for a director to consider whether and how every production could be enhanced (by adding "production values") to help engage the senses.

Programs which aim mainly to entertain often require large budgets and are available through syndicators and networks.  Such programs involve script development, production design, set design and construction, costuming and makeup, and more.   In this post-consolidation era of local television, station owners are not rewarded in the marketplace by investing substantial resources in programming.  So we find that most local productions aim mainly to inform or to persuade.   Local TV fare is dominated by newscasts, interviews, and persuasive spot announcements.  Even within these general types we find an increased reliance on computer-based rather than studio-based video.  Graphics-intensive cinema-style production of program elements is less labor intensive, and hence cheaper, than other forms of traditional production.

# 4.  Director Talk

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[4]Learning, either through acquisition of new information or realization of new relationships and drawing new conclusions, is inherently pleasurable.  To learn is to enjoy, to be delighted. Aristotle explains that audiences are not trained in ways of learning or in following extended lines of reasoning.  Owing to the defects of our hearers, it is necessary to discover and employ the available tools and techniques of communication.

You've probably marveled at a writer who could keyboard very quickly and with great precision.  The person uses precise, condensed movements and there are no excessive movements. He or she probably looks only at the manuscript and operates the keyboard almost without thought.  Sometimes, of course, a writer will look at the keys, for underlining, spacing, and so forth, but this is the exception rather than the rule.  Clearly, a good "keyboarder" knows exactly the operating limits of the machine and does not try to exceed them.

If you were to watch a TD[5] or director call a show, you would notice that he or she is not operating equipment (except maybe a timer).  The TD might have a script (like the writer's manuscript), but rather than pressing keys, the TD merely talks.  <u>A skillful TD is a skillful talker</u>.  Like the "keyboarder" who displayed economy of movements, the TD displays economy of talk.  He or she says only what is necessary -- no more, no less.  The TD does not look at all of the monitors at one time, but looks at the right monitor at the right time.  A TD must understand the operating limits of the televison equipment <u>and</u> operating crew, and must not try to exceed them.

Technical Directing, then, is that part of television production concerned with executing on the screen what has been planned.  If the producer and director have done their jobs perfectly, the TD should not have to think about matters of content and style, but only about execution.  Each shot will have been planned in advance, and the TD is concerned only about making the shots on the screen conform to the shots in the plan.

<u>Unrehearsed</u> programs require the director both to direct and to TD. For a director to be able to think about directing during a show, technical directing must be automatic.  Imagine how difficult it would be to create an essay while keyboarding the final copy.  That is, what is typed must be right the

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[5]"TD" for Technical Director is a network-level term for the person who switches.  The director/technical director distinction is useful because while a director makes blocking and editing decisions, a TD normally does not.  The TD is concerned with coordinating the technical elements to achieve what the director intends.  In some settings, especially local television, a director will also perform TD functions, with the switcher simply doing the switching.  This case of the functional combination of Director/TD is the subject of the present discussion.

first time and you are thinking the sentences as you type them! If you have to pay attention to typing, you can't pay attention to the ideas you are writing about! Keyboarding must be automatic. For you to direct while TDing, the TDing must be automatic. The talk has to come out in the right way, at the right time, without thinking about it.

## 4.1  Setup & Execute Calls

Technical Directing is a matter of getting <u>what</u> you need in the <u>way</u> you need it at the right <u>time</u>. <u>What you need</u> you will explain to the crew in the setup call. <u>When</u> and <u>how</u> you need it are functions of your execute call, both your words and tone of voice. The technical director gives two sorts of calls to the crew: the setup call and the execute call. The crucial aspect of the setup call is the words you use; the crucial aspect of the execute call is <u>rhythm</u>. A setup call always precedes an execute call. Do not give an execute call without first giving a setup call. Setup, execute; setup, execute. The setup call tells everyone <u>what</u> will happen next; the execute call tells everyone to <u>do it now</u>.

Imagine that you are on Camera 3 (C-3) and that you want to go to Camera 1 (C-1) with Microphone 4 (Mic-4). In other words, C-3 is on the air, C-1 is waiting with the next shot, and Mic-4 should be turned on or "opened." C-3 might be on an art card, and C-1 might be on talent; Mic-4 might be talent's microphone. Here is the <u>setup</u> call:

SETUP:  Next, we'll take one with mike four.

When you say this sentence, you are telling everyone (by saying "Next") that you are giving a setup call. The "take one" portion of the setup call conveys important information to the switcher, the floor director, the camera operators, and the talent. The "mike four" portion is important to the audio operator, the floor director, and the talent. At the proper time, you would next give an <u>execute</u> call, like this:

EXECUTE:  Mic, cue, take one.

The order of these words is important, as will be explained later.  Notice that the execute call does not end with an exclamation point.  It's a simple, declarative sentence.  The basic idea of the execute call is to tell everyone when it's time to do their respective operations. Practically speaking, you could say, "Do it," or "pistachio," and the crew would do precisely what you had readied them to do in the setup call.  But that's risky: it's better to discipline yourself to call everything.  Even though the execute call is a timing mark, use the right words in the right order at the right time:

SETUP:  Next, we'll take one with mike four.

EXECUTE:  Mic, cue, take one.

For a different example, let's imagine that you're on C-1 and are going to videotape machine #2 with voice-over sound, followed by sound from the videotape.  This might occur in a newscast where talent is on camera for the end of one story and off camera for the introduction to the next story.  At the beginning of the second story, the picture changes from a studio camera to videotape, while the announcer continues reading.  At the end of the introduction, the announcer stops talking and sound is brought up from the videotape.  Your setup call would be:

SETUP:  Next, we'll roll V-T-R two.  We'll take that silent,
                 followed by sound up.

Once again, you begin the setup call by saying, "Next...."  The rest of the call says that the switcher will roll the machine.  Then, the switcher will make a take to the videotape, but there will be no change in audio.  Then, audio will bring up sound from the videotape.  Usually, videotapes require a "preroll," which is a second or two of delay while the machine comes up to speed.  Usually, these preroll times are consistent from machine to machine.   An increasingly common practice is to roll from stillframe, which then requires no preroll call.

Here is the execute call for a videotape transition:

> EXECUTE:  Roll V-T-R two.  (Pause)  Take tape.  (Pause)
> Ready with sound up.  (Pause)  Sound up, cut
> the mike.

Notice the exact sequence of the words.  An additional setup call is contained within this execute call because some time will elapse between the take and the end of the introduction.  The extra setup call ("Ready with sound up") is to make sure the audio operator remembers what is supposed to happen.  Also, in the execute call, you call to have the talent's mike's turned off.  Because the call to close a mike trails all else, and because an error (not turning it off on time) would create no on-air error, a setup call is not necessary.

Next, assume that the taped segment is nearly over and that you want to go to talent on Camera 2.  Here's the setup call:

> SETUP:  Next, we'll take two with mike one and sound out.

Although the setup call does not tell the floor director to get ready to cue talent, he or she should be aware of what will be happening.  If you aren't sure of this, give the floor director a setup as well:

> SETUP:  Next, we'll take two with mike one and cue,
> followed by sound out.

Regardless, the execute call will include the instruction:

> EXECUTE:  Mic, cue, take two, sound out.

Give setup calls for everything.  Your audio operator might think of a European vacation for a moment, or your switcher might be dozing off.  Don't take it on faith that they will be hanging on your every word.  They probably won't.  Tell them clearly and precisely what you will want and when you will want

it.  Give a setup for every camera shot, every audio change, every video change, every studio cue.

A special case of the setup call often arises within interview shows.  If a host is talking with two guests, most video would be some sequence of singles, two-shots and cover shots.  The normal transition between these shots is the take.  Since the context or program flow suggests takes, and since there is usually no script, the setup call may be shortened.  Whereas a complete setup might be:

SETUP:  Next, we'll take one.

the shortened setup is:

SETUP:  Ready one.

That the execute call will involve a take is understood.  Of course, should you be unsure that the switcher will know that a take is forthcoming, the setup you use should be complete.  Also, should you use the shortened setup and prior to execution decide to use a dissolve, you must give a new setup call:

SETUP:  Ready to dissolve one.

Or you may say to the switcher:

SETUP:  Make that a dissolve.

So, once again, every execute call must have its correct setup call.

In this same situation, the setup call is mainly for the camera operators and the switcher. From the point of view of the camera operator whose camera you are going to take, though, the "ready one" phrase might not be correct. When cameras are not on the air, the operators are doing a variety of things such as  checking focus, hunting for shots, dollying and trucking.  "Ready one" tells C-1 that his or her camera will be taken, but it does not tell the operator

what shot should be set when the take is made.  If you want the operator to "hold that shot," a good setup call would be:

SETUP:  Hold one.

"Hold one" has the additional advantage of being easier to say than

SETUP:  Ready one.

or

SETUP:  Ready to take one.

Also, in an interview, rarely should you take to a zooming camera.  "Hold one" tells the operator to freeze the shot he has at that moment.  After the take, framing can be adjusted as needed.  Usually, of course, a director would TD such a program, and the setup call would come after a choice of shot and camera, and after a verbal request:

SETUP a:  One, a two-shot.

SETUP b:  Ready one.

EXECUTE:  Take one.

## 4.2  Where to look

One measure of a director's personal competence is the extent to which you don't think unnecessary thoughts and look unnecessarily at elements in the environment.  A layman who first enters the control room is likely struck by the blinking lights and flickering monitors.  But for a director, there is a time to be looking at any one of these elements.

When you're directing from the control room or TDing, look at <u>future</u> events, not at the program as it's on the air.  Much like our expectation of an airplane pilot who we expect to be watching where we <u>will</u> go, not where we are, a director must look to what will happen next.  It's easy to get caught up in the program as it's on the air (after all, that's the whole idea for the viewer), but to do so for a director spells trouble.[6]

When making a studio show, your attention should be divided among the camera monitors such that about 80% of your time is devoted to watching the camera to be used <u>next</u> and the remainder is devoted to the other studio cameras.  If you are on C-1 and are using two cameras, you should be paying attention mostly to C-2.  When you make a take to C-2, your eyes should shift immediately to C-1.  From time to time you will glance to the on-air camera and to the line monitor, but mostly you should be looking at the off-air camera and setting its shot.  If you need to set up a special effect, do so after your next camera shot is ready.  Generally, a director can almost ignore the line monitor, watch the on-air camera's monitor a little bit, watch the next-to-be-used monitor closely, and watch other camera monitors only a little bit.  For these reasons, it's a sure sign that a person knowledgeable of television production was involved in designing the monitor stack when the main source monitors are bigger than the line and preview monitors.   Sadly, many control rooms are designed by people who seem ignorant of such production concerns.

# 5.  Production Principles in Newscasts

Back in the days before digital effects which enable slides to be shrunk to fit a key window, news production slides had to be either created to fit the window or shot to fit over talent's shoulder.  A key slide of, say, the state's seal would be framed in the upper left corner so talent could be framed in the

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[6]Directors often find that crew members' attention is lost.  They can get caught up in the show, too.  It is important for a director to monitor the extent to which crew members are operating the show, not watching it.

lower right.  If for some reason talent were put in the lower left corner, the slide had to be reversed to put the seal in the upper right.  Unhappily, while talent and seal would be framed correctly in the composite shot, the lettering on the state seal would be backwards.  They were not wonderful to deal with.  Yet one large-market Ohio station's news editorial policy mandated that no story would be aired unless there was either a key slide or film to accompany it (half of the newsroom was filled with file cabinets of key slides!).  Another large station has a news production policy that the station's call letters and channel number is to be on the screen in some form throughout the newscast.

Both of these policies represent dubious audience-centered production thinking.  If an appropriate slide is available, it should be used.  But if only a generic is on hand, does it necessarily help tell the story, or could the story be told more effectively in medium closeup without the visual clutter?

When  viewers tune to a channel to watch a  newscast, they probably don't care to be reminded of the channel they've already chosen to watch.  The channel number and call letters certainly aren't relevant to news stories per se.  Why have them on the screen where they produce clutter?  One answer is that viewers who are ratings families have to record their viewing behavior by channel numbers and/or call letters.  Stations can't afford to have other stations get credit for their viewers.  Also, some stations are carried on cable channels that have different numbers than their over-the-air channels.  So a rule to keep the station's identification in front of the viewer might be bad production but good business.  Again we must remember that a director works for lots of people.  A director must make the best television that the given circumstances permit.

One well-respected director has said that there are three ways to look at resources needed for making small-budget televison: people, equipment and time.  A competent director can make good television with any two of these.  If there aren't enough people, or people who are skilled enough, extra equipment and time to fix mistakes can compensate.  Or, if the equipment is limited, good people in time can make it do the job.  Or if there isn't time, one needs good

people and good equipment.  People, equipment and time amount to a station's capital resources - and they are expensive.  Station managers don't want to have any more than necessary.   So you can expect always to face a situation where there seems not to be enough of the right equipment, or  the people don't seem sufficient in number or skill, or there's just no time to do things right.  As an employee, you create value to the extent you can get the job done under such conditions.


Newscasts tend to be station showpieces.  Many companies dedicate an entire studio, often the only studio, to news.  The typical set is quite huge relative to the studio space available.  Again, to make a statement about the station's professional dedication to news (and parity with network operations), the set far exceeds the production need.  Often the set is seen just in the opening and closing shots; sometimes, in fact, it is used only under the credits in the close!  Dubious production, but good business.

So, for the most part, studio segments can be reduced to one MCU, with only an occasional 2-shot or cover shot.  All else is constructed in the control room.   The studio shot is usually combined with key slides, stillstores or stillframes.  Stories are either prepackaged on videotape (meaning that the narration is already recorded on tape) or partially packaged, requiring studio talent to read the voice-overs.  Titles are used extensively to help identify people, places and times.  Commercials are pre-taped.  Newscasts, then, are an exercise in execution, not a matter of creation or interpretation.  In fact, each "show" is a rehearsal for the next.

Air time is at a premium in newscasts.  Stories are kept short and concise; shows are paced quickly.  Value is placed on visuals.  Special effects are used when the story can't be told in an engaging way (such as economics stories told through graphics).  At some stations, spectacle effects are used whenever possible (remember: dubious production might be good business).

Use takes, not dissolves. Use dissolves or wipes from one taped story to another.  Do not fade to black except before and after commercial clusters.

Dissolve or take to and from title effects, but be consistent.  In this case, a take is more intrusive because the transition is unpointed.  Do not shoot talent closer than medium closeup.  Shoot studio guests closer, depending on angle and content.  Do not pan/dissolve to key shots: take to and from them.

Specific newscasts are never rehearsed.  They are always live or, in the most unusual of circumstances, live-on-tape.[7]  Program <u>format</u> permits this approach.  In the case of a theatrical production, the production ensemble prepares one specific show, to be modified only as the audience interacts with performers during a particular performance.  Each scene change, each actor gesture, each audio cue is carefully rehearsed so as to prepare the show for the opening night performance.  the assumption is that subsequent performances will be repeats (with minor adjustments) of opening night.

In television news, every show is opening night: stories are new, scripts are new, story sequences are new, even weather forecasts are new.  But in a meaningful sense, every show is like the previous one: talent are shot in the same way, cameras have to be moved to the same places at the same times, videotaped packages have to be rolled and aired in the same way, and graphics are used consistently from one show from another.  As the saying goes, the names change but the faces stay the same.

So, newscasts are made somewhat easier by the fact that the <u>format</u> is rehearsed (on the air), although the particular show is not.  After a particular format has been used for a few weeks, newscasts are quite routine.  Only specific nuances in particular shows might be unusual for a camera operator, a switcher, or the director.

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[7]"Live-on-tape" means a show is produced as though it were live but is recorded on tape for later broadcast.  Live-on-tape is a common production mode because it enables stations to schedule production crews and guests for peak production hours rather than at the extremes of the broadcast schedule.  Also, the norm is that no post-production editing will be done on live-on-tape shows because by their nature they could be aired live anyway.  The convenience of videotape might allow a production disaster to be repaired, of course, but only in the most unusual of cases.

Various production deadlines for news have a tendency not to hold up. While everyone would like to have scripts, tapes, slides and other artwork ready in time to double check everything before air time, the nature of late-breaking news and sports sometimes makes this goal impractical. TV personnel often are preparing the newscast <u>for</u> air while it is <u>on</u> the air.

In general, if all production materials are completed and turned over to operating personnel by 20 minutes before air time, there is enough time to solve most last-minute problems of execution. If the director has not been involved in pre-production of the newscast, 20 minutes is a narrow margin for him or her actually to receive the scripts: 30 minutes would be more prudent. The director should take the script pack, a stopwatch, and some felt-tipped pens to a quiet work area. There, he or she will "mark the script."[8] The script pack includes: the program schedule (log") opened to the page preceding the news; the newscast script; a list of character-generated titles for news stories; a list of ESS frames[9]; a rundown of news stories, running times, sources, outcues, and so forth; and maybe some audio carts, "cam cards" or "pix" (photos to be shot by studio cameras, but normally pre-recorded as ESS frames), and other items. The script page numbers often are wrong: the physical order of the pages is the intended order of airing unless an error has been made. <u>Never</u> change the order of the pages unless you are correcting an error. <u>Always</u> keep the script together with a paper clip unless you are marking or airing it.

Personal preferences and habit influence how a director will mark scripts. The objective is threefold: to memorize the show, to record production-relevant information, and to create memory aids. The most important of these is to memorize the show. You've probably seen World Cup downhill skiing on television. When the skier is at the top of the hill, in the gate waiting for a green light, you can see him close his eyes and mentally ski down the slope. He or she is preparing himself for each turn, each patch of ice, each jump that he

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[8]Sometimes a quiet work area is not available. Some directors prefer to mark scripts in the control room because of easy access to electronic timing and communication.

[9]Electronic Still Store is a method by which frames of video are digitally recorded on magnetic disk. ESS frames are called up like a page from a character generator, but they are entire frames (or single fields) of full-color video. Sometimes they're just called "stills."

or she will encounter.  The overall mental runthrough gives a feel for the upcoming moves: at 90 mph, there's no time to analyze the course yard by yard. Similarly, the director develops a knowledge of the show by reading through the script.  You won't read every word talent will read.  Instead, you'll look for "units" of action such as "from talent on 1 to silent tape on 7, followed by sound up, with two supers, followed by a roll and wipe to 9, and back to talent on 1." You mentally tag the subject of each story to each of these action units, such as "auto accident" or "mayor" or "school strike."  Small action units which entail one news story are grouped into sets, these corresponding to segments of the show.  Often, there are three news segments, a weather segment, one or two sports segments, and a closing segment.[10] Commercials usually serve to separate segments in the director's mind.  With studied experience, you'll become able to "watch" in the mind each camera, audio source, videotape machine, satellite feed, and switcher setup and transition throughout the entire show while looking through the script.  When something later goes wrong on the air, it is the fidelity of this mental picture of the show, coupled with your analytical, decision making, and communication skills, which enable you "to direct your way out of" the trouble.  This is the "directing" part of directing newscasts.

Scripts specify video and audio content, not sources.  The director must supply sources.  When the script indicates "MOC," you must decide from which camera and write that camera number on the script.  When the script calls for "VTR SOT," the director must know which VTR to roll, to take to, and to bring audio from.  When you turn a page and see "COMMERCIAL" written in big letters, you have to know not only which machine(s) to roll but also for how many commercials and what length. Commercial clusters are indicated on the program schedule.  While most stations dedicate one videotape machine for commercials, it is not uncommon to use slide/cart combinations or to add video/audio tags on the air.  Often, the director's marked script is the only written document which identifies sources for that particular show. Sometimes all the show's commercials will be dubbed to a "spot tape" before the newscast. Each "cut" on this tape contains an entire roll-through break.

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[10]Sports and weather tend to be ad-lib, using minimum of script.

The director also should make notations which will help production information stand out in otherwise cluttered scripts. These reminders serve as a map to the show and to the script for the director. Use one color (such as red) for any notes that refer to video; use another contrasting color (such as blue) for audio. Starting at the top of the first page, above the video column, write the sources of material in the "endbreak" preceding the newscast and the videotaped newscast open. If the news begins with a studio "tease," the tease will be the first page of the script, and the videotaped newscast open source will be written at the bottom of that page. Below the newscast open source, mark the audio and video sources that will air immediately after the open. At the top of the second page, again mark the video source(s) that was put on the air at the end of the first page and is now on the air at the top of the second. Read down the second page, assuming that what is now on the air will stay on the air for the entire page. Mark in the video column any changes, such as supers, camera takes, and the like. If a tape is to be pre-rolled, write "roll #" at the roll point in the audio column. Put an "X" at the take point in the audio column, and draw a bold line left to the video column. In the video column at that line, write, for example, "S T-V6," where the "S" is written in blue and means "sound," and the "T-V6" is written in red and means "take videotape number six." Circle the supers (in red or other "video" color), and you might want to circle tape running times. At the audio outcue, mark the next sources you will go to. Continue this procedure until you have reached the end of the first story. The second story will probably be on separate pages of the script. Turn ahead to see what sources will be needed, then turn back to the end of the first story and mark the beginning of the second story there. Then turn to the second story and mark the "reminder" source at the top of the page. Continue in this manner throughout the script. Most directors will verify the script as they mark it. They will time parts of stories, look at ESS frames (to verify that they are correct and to be able to recognize the proper frame when it comes up for airing), double check that the proper audio carts are in hand, and so on.

Every director has a personal way to mark scripts. Start with this one and then modify it as you gain experience.

Develop a procedure for processing script pages while airing the show. One approach is first to put the entire (paperclipped) script in a pile in front and slightly to the right of you.  Put the program schedule (if you're working with paper) and rundown to your far left.  Then remove the paper clip from the script.  Pick up the first page of the script and put the show on the air.  You may now see what is on the air (you have that page in your hand), and you may look at the upcoming page of the script.  When you make the last call on the current page, put it down in front and slightly to the left of you, next to the program schedule and rundown.  Using this method, you always have the next, current and former pages in front of you.

# 6.  Production Principles in Talk/Interviews

We have seen in Section 2.2 that television production styles can mimic interpersonal communication.  Also, it is possible for the TV technology to draw a viewer into a conversation, not as a participant, but as an eavesdropper.  So, an important question for the director is whether the viewer will be acknowledged by studio hosts and guests, or ignored by them.  It is possible for the viewer to be recognized at some times during the show and to be ignored at other times.

It is also important for the director to know the main purpose of the program (see Section 3).  Within the general category of "programs to inform" are several sub-categories representing specific purposes.  Some programs are designed to give members of the press a chance to "grill" public figures; others are to profile the private lives of public figures; still others are to explore various facets of controversial issues.

One common program is a "community showcase," intended to provide exposure/publicity for mostly non-profit groups and their causes or events.  This program type serves to illustrate the types of "talk/interview" challenges a director faces.

"Our Town" is a daily 10-minute public affairs program which airs during early morning hours (after the syndicated agricultural show).  It is taped three times per week, from 2:00 until 3:00 PM.  Two shows are recorded on Mondays, two more on Wednesdays, and one on Friday (when the studio is available for 30 minutes).

The show's producer is responsible for lining up guests, which is done at least one week but normally not more than three weeks in advance.  Sometimes community spokespersons call the station to ask whether airtime might be available (often, they want access to the newscasts).  They would be referred to the producer.  Other times, guests are "regulars."  And, other guests might be recommended to the producer for future shows.  The producer explains the details of the program to the guests and arranges for them to come to the station for taping.  Guests are instructed to arrive between 1:25 and 1:35 PM.  Depending on what they want to talk about, they might be invited to bring handicrafts, foods, posters or slides, filmclips, actors, and the like.   The producer checks that "formats" are compatible (so they don't bring an audio cassette, if the station can't duplicate one!).

At about 1:30 on taping days, the studio crew will put up the set, microphones and lights.  Cameras will be put on the chart.  Sometime near 1:30, the director will select a videotape from stock, prepare a label for it, and see that the program's open and close are on hand, either in the tape room or control room.  He or she will check with the engineering crew chief (or on-duty supervisor) that any necessary patching has been done.  He or she will pull the format sheet (like a script) from the file, if one is needed.

On a separate piece of paper, the director would "backtime" the show.  "Our Town" is scheduled to run for exactly 10 minutes.   The close runs for 42 seconds (known from the format sheet).  So, the host must stop talking 42 seconds before the program's 10 minutes have elapsed.  On paper, the director would write, "9:18 -- CUT" to signify the running time at which the studio segment must end.  Then, on the paper above the cut time, he or she would write down the running times at which various time cues must be given: "8:48 -- 30; 8:18 -- 1; 7:18-- 2; 6:18 -- 3.  This procedure will then provide a twin column

of numbers, with the top row designating the 3-minute and the bottom row designating the CUT times.  Always allow a few seconds "lead time" on time cues because they don't go directly and immediately to the host: usually, they must go through the floor director.  Depending on the host's habits and program close, it might be appropriate to allow a little extra pad time, thus giving the CUT cue at 9:12 or 9:07.  This procedure is dangerous, though, because a host will soon realize that the cues aren't true, and a guessing game can result (a director does not want others to try to outguess him).

At about 1:40, the director will go to the "holding room" to meet the guests and review program content.  He or she will then go to the studio to make any needed changes ("we'll need an easel for camera two and a display table for camera one").  Then, he or she'll go to the tape room to be sure the tape is "up" and ready, and that a test recording has been made.  He or she'll go to the control room to check with the switcher and audio person to ferret out any problems.  He or she'll go back to the studio to check on the changes.

There are some customary arrangements of sets and cameras in talk shows.  While every production might be unique in specific details, the nature of talk/interview produces generic shots, angles, and switching sequences.  If the program host is "pointed" during the (audio) open, a take to a MCU of him is probably correct; if unpointed, a dissolve might be used.  Normally, a leading cover shot is not needed when the host is pointed, although you might be able to dissolve to one while the announcer is reading the audio open.  If so, you would either dissolve or take to the host, depending on whether the host is pointed.

Usually, the host begins by talking directly to the viewer.  After some seconds, he/she will introduce the guests in a pre-arraged sequence, often from closest to the host to farthest from the host.  The director should listen for cues such as, "Our first guest..." or "Let me welcome our guests..." so he or she may take to the other camera of the guest who is being introduced.  The shot

of the guest whose name has just been mentioned is called an "obligatory shot" because the program is obliged to show the guest having implied that it would.[11]

If two cameras are used, the guests should be positioned in an arc, the focus of which is the camera's pedestal, such that they are in focus for this guest shot as the camera pans from one to the next. Normally, the camera would pan from one guest to another as each is introduced. If three cameras are used, one may either pan or take between shots on the non-host cameras. Regardless, a cover shot is usually appropriate after guests have been introduced so as to help the viewer understand where in the set each person is sitting with respect to each other. In a two-camera production, the host camera would usually zoom or dolly back to set up this cover shot while the guest camera is taking care of the introductions. The director would take to the cover shot after the final guest nods in response to his introduction. While on the cover shot, the host will set up the first question; the guest camera would set up on the middle guest (unless a specific guest has been predetermined to take the first question). The director would ask the guest camera's operator to get a shot of "whoever answers." Sometimes the question contains a cue for the director, such as: "Mary, that's really a wonderful flower arrangement in your hair. What got you interested in flowers?" Such a cueline is redundant because the host has provided both name and description of who should talk next. Truly professional hosts lead the crew; be careful of hosts who say, "Well, I'm interested in why you all became nurses. Why did you?" Such a question doesn't help the crew at all; rather, it requires an off-air zoom out to a group shot of the guests, a take to the shot, and waiting while the guests figure out who should answer. Then, the guest camera must zoom to that person while on the air.

While the guest is answering the first question, it might be appropriate for the host camera to zoom in to the MCU of the host to await the take to him for the next part of the interaction. Notice that by committing both cameras to MCUs, the director is vulnerable if a different guest talks after the first

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[11]Variations may be used, of course. For example, the guest might lead off by talking about the group of experts who are guests and then proceed to introduce them individually. It might be appropriate to use a group shot, followed by MCUs.

guest answers.  The director might say, "uh, camera one, pan to that person."  Of course, it isn't easy for the camera operator to know who "that person" is because in his viewfinder he or she is seeing the MCU of the person who isn't talking.

After the take to the host for the second question, the production will have settled in to its own routine.  The specific pace, tone, and interaction patterns are now controlled by host and guests, and the director's role is to help the viewer see and hear the conversation.  Usually, a combination of MCUs are relied on, but cover shots might be used at transitions between sub-topics.  Experienced directors usually go to cover shots "by feel," putting themselves in the position of attentive viewer.

Near the program's end, the host will thank the guests for being participants.  If it is done by name, a MCU of each is appropriate, as was done at the beginning of the show; if done quickly or as a group, a group shot is needed.  Guests almost always speak or nod recognition for this host's expression of thanks, and the viewer needs to see them do it.  Next, a shot of the host is expected while the host bids farewell to the viewer and maybe promotes upcoming shows.  Finally, the close is run, perhaps to include a wide cover shot depending on format.

For this recording session, the director would probably want "to roll tape" at about 2:15 and again at about 2:35.  You would be in serious trouble if the first show were not begun by 2:30 because, if it takes 10 minutes to record the first show, 10 minutes to re-set for the second, and 10 minutes to record the second, there would be no time to correct mistakes should they occur.  Shortly before 2:00, you would go back to the "holding room" to make sure the host has shown up and met the guests.  You would tell everyone that "we'll be ready to go in a couple of minutes."  Then, you would again make the circuit through tape room, control room and studio.

Shortly after 2:00, you would ask the floor director to bring in the guests.  They would be seated, miked, and briefed on procedures.  You would again "make rounds" from control room to tape room and, finally to studio.

There, you would check that guests are prepared and comfortable, tell the host which camera will "open" and which cameras will shoot the posters and display items, check the various shots with camera operators, yell "Stand By!" and go to the control room.

While taking your seat, you would check with the audio operator and video switcher that they are ready to begin.  You would do several things in quick succession:

1.  look at the line monitor to be sure that color bars are up;
2.  look at the film camera monitor, VTR monitor, or ESS monitor to be sure that the program open is up;
3.  look at the opening shots of the cameras; and
4.  reset his clock and arrange script or format sheet.

Then, you would ask for audio tone and say, "ready to roll videotape in record." The show has begun.