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## How do I sell my Screenplay? By Donna Michelle Anderson

When new screenwriters finish their scripts, they often begin the search for a rep to submit the work around town. But is that the best way to do it? Well, sure! But it's not the ONLY way to do it.

As you prep to get your script sold, incorporate this info into your marketing strategy:

### SEEK REPRESENTATION

But only if you have a bona fide "in" to their direct office line! It's very difficult to get a lit agent to read a script for representation without a personal introduction by a repped client of theirs. If you know a screenwriter or other industry member with an agent who actually is getting scripts read by real studios and funders, and you have TWO solid scripts (more on that later), ask for an introduction. Give your contact a substantial gift whether you are signed or not!

Of course, it's not necessary to have a lit agent to shop a script. Make getting an agent only one part of a broader shopping strategy.

### EXPLORE LEGITIMATE SUBMISSION OUTLETS

The main places you're trying to get your script to, production companies, studios and even top-five actors' shingles, are sometimes more accessible than lit agents. If you're not already, make sure you join professional writers' groups like ScreenplayLab and Scriptwriters' Network, and attend every possible event to make those contacts. There's a list of organization links to get you started at Movie in a Box.



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Again, the way to shop a script in our industry is to know someone. It's tough to open a new professional relationship by asking for the considerable favor of an agent referral, so try a strategy where you're offering something they could use in exchange for the introduction. And expect them to request to read your script first - and listen to their notes without argument.

Another credible outlet for getting your script noticed is via some of the online sites. If you're not already, make sure you're active at Inktip, for example. And be sure to explore the hundreds of screenplay competitions, like Scriptapalooza - but check first to see what success stories you can verify from their sites.

### **WRITE AND QC MORE THAN ONE SCRIPT**

"QC" stands for "Quality Control." Do not ever submit a script that is not structurally sound, no matter how ready you are to stop looking at it! This is neither a judgment, an assumption, an insult or a joke. It truly is a requirement. I was a reader at one of the biggest prod cos in Los Angeles, I've had scripts optioned, I run a filmmaking seminar, I've taught at UCLA Ext, I've written a very popular screenwriting book. Please trust me on this. There are no second chances for first impressions in our industry. And it's not just your rep on the line, but also the rep of whoever opens that door for your submission.

Why "more than one script"? That is because if someone reads work of yours and thinks you have promise, their next request (to confirm the initial impression) is very often, "Can you send me another spec?" If you can't, that is by no means a dealbreaker. But if you CAN, and the second script is equally hot, that could be a dealmaker! The second script needs to be structurally sound, as well.

Be sure that your screenplays are structurally solid (on a first submission, nothing else will do! Trust me!). Be sure that an experienced Hollywood reader has read the script and you've addressed the notes. As I always say, "if the story does not fit, you must not submit!" If you submit a flawless first spec, you will never have to live up these



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standards again, but you should. If you submit a flawed first spec, you will not get the chance to live up to higher standards at that company; you will be blocked from future submissions.

### **CONSIDER PRODUCING YOUR WORK YOURSELF**

If you find you are getting great feedback on your work, but it's never quite the right fit, consider producing the film yourself. This is a great approach when you have a lower-budget indie project (think "Open Water") versus an effects-laden thriller! It is an enormous undertaking to produce a film, but there are many resources out there for people who have compelling scripts to develop. And just as you studied and trained to write well, be sure to research and train extensively before taking on a massive project like producing a movie. Your first stop should be a professional organization like Film Independent (FIND), which can connect with you with terrific partners and/or mentors, as well as vital resources.

However, you decide to get your screenplay sold, it should be clear by now that you don't do it alone - you need community support and resources - and no one else does it for you - even an agent! It is no one's responsibility to open a door for you to sell a screenplay. It is your responsibility to create a tight script, research appropriate buyers, and relentlessly seek submission opportunities until someone buys - or you decide to produce your work yourself!

DMA is a former film story analyst who is now the executive producer of Tidal Wave TV, a new media and reality TV production company in Los Angeles. Learn more about [how to sell a screenplay](#) from DMA's industry guide "The 1-3-5 Story Structure Made Simple System: The Nine Essential Elements of a Sellable Screenplay." Or visit [Planet DMA!](#)

[http://www.movieoutline.com/articles/sell\\_screenplay.html](http://www.movieoutline.com/articles/sell_screenplay.html)



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