



FILM DISTRIBUTION

HANDBOOK

This guide is intended to help filmmakers navigate the convoluted distribution process, understand their best options, and ultimately achieve their distribution goals.

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What is Film Distribution?

Film distribution is the commercial process by which a film reaches the marketplace and is made available to its target audience. Ideally, its target audience has been made aware of the film and how to watch it. A well-planned distribution strategy can help achieve this via theatrical release, broadcast networks, DVD companies, and/or Video-On-Demand (VOD) platforms.

Guide to Distribution: Drawing Back the Curtain

Film distribution can be a confusing process - but it doesn't have to be. The unfortunate reality is that many sales organizations and distribution companies intentionally camouflage the process in order to protect their own interests while neglecting the interests of the film and the filmmaking team. At Buffalo 8 Distribution, we draw back the curtain and provide direct visibility into the entire process. Our goal is to educate and support content producers to create a more sustainable business for both sides. This guide is intended to help filmmakers navigate the convoluted distribution process, understand their best options, and ultimately achieve their distribution goals.

FILM b8 STUDIOS



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b8 SERVICES ABOUT



b8 DISTRIBUTION

We simplify distribution, empowering filmmakers to take control of their release and to reach a global audience.

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DISTRIBUTION STRATEGY: START EARLY

Planning a Successful Distribution Strategy

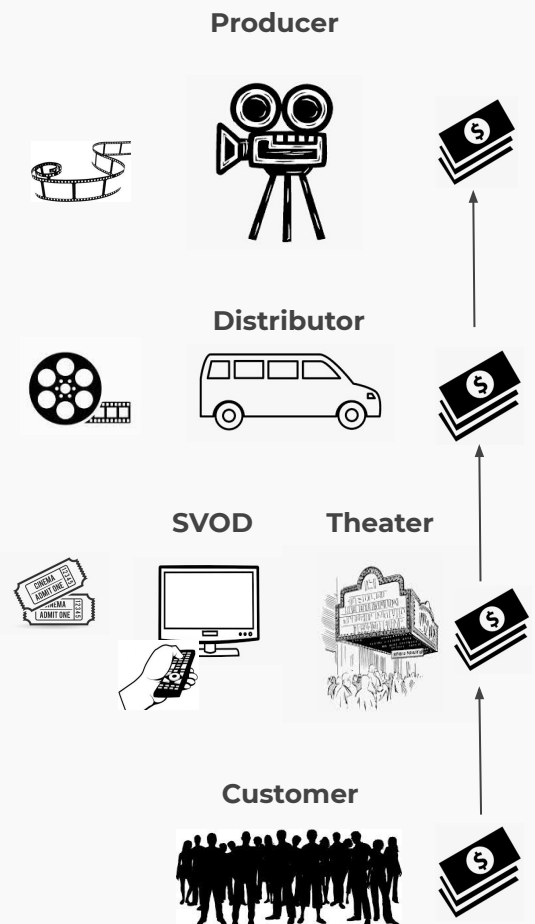
Many first-time filmmakers wait until their project is complete before even thinking about distribution. Veteran filmmakers understand they need to design a customized distribution strategy as early as possible.

Build Distribution into the Budget

- Distribution is expensive. It involves the marketing and advertising of your film, as well as hiring aggregators and distributors to upload your film onto platforms.
- Make sure you budget for distribution before beginning production to avoid a money scramble when you need it the most.

Film Investment

- Often, investors will not even consider investing into your film until you have a distribution game-plan in order to guarantee a path of profitable return.



Distribution Marketing Strategy Tips

1. Consider your Target Audience

- Get Specific. What is the age range and demographic that this film targets? Where do they watch their movies? What platforms specifically? What types of films are they interested in? How can I reach them?

2. Identify the Right Platforms

- Identify the distribution platforms your core audience is watching and connect with distributors and aggregators who have output deals with those platforms. Do your research, and find a distribution partner or aggregator with a track record you can trust. It's imperative your finished film makes it in front of your target audience.

3. Utilize Social Media

- Are people talking about the film? Do the cast members have a high number of followers on their Twitter, Instagram, Facebook, and TikTok accounts? How many people are engaged or could quickly become engaged online? Baseline social media presence can be a strong indicator of a film's success.

4. Research Similar Movies

- Do your research, check out how other films in your category have marketed in the past, and make a list of apparent Do's and Don'ts!

5. Aim to be Thorough and Flexible

- Your distribution strategy should be thorough and flexible. Be open to changing what isn't working, listen to the advice of veteran filmmakers and distributors, and keep an open mind to new strategies that could attract a lot of attention to your release.

DISTRIBUTION TERMINOLOGY



VOD Distribution Platforms

Ad-Supported Video-on-Demand (AVOD)

Viewers must watch ads before, during, and/or after the film to access it.

→ *AVOD Platforms include TubiTV, PlutoTV, IMDbTV, YouTube, and Crackle.*



Subscription Video-on-Demand (SVOD)

Users pay a subscription fee for access to a platform's library of content.

→ *Popular SVOD platforms are Netflix, Hulu, HBO, and Amazon.*



Transactional Video-on-Demand (TVOD)

In this pay-per-view model, audiences pay for each film they want to watch. Either through Electronic Sell Through (EST) (consumer downloads the film and has unlimited viewing access) or Download to Rent (DTR) (the digital equivalent of renting a movie for a short period of time).

→ *TVOD platforms include iTunes and Amazon Video.*



Cable Video-on-Demand

Premium channels buy the rights to stream your film to their subscribers.

→ *Popular networks include HBO, Hulu, STARZ, and Showtime.*

Free Video-on-Demand

Free VOD is popular for filmmakers with no built in audience that want to quickly get their movie out in front of as many viewers as possible.

→ *The most familiar Free VOD platforms are YouTube and Vimeo.*



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METHODS OF FILM DISTRIBUTION

Top 3 Methods of Film Distribution

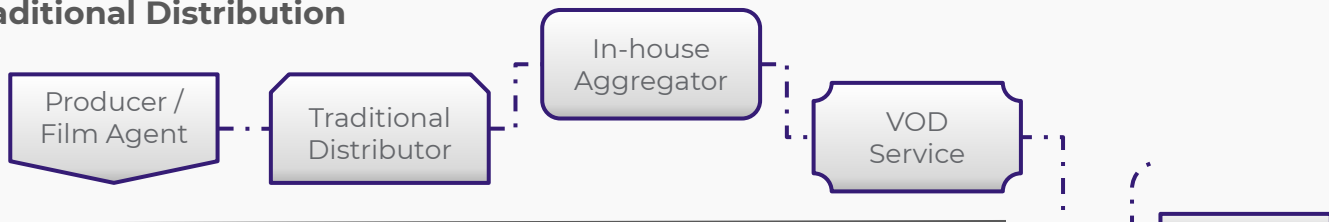
As technology continues to upend the industry, three different methods of distribution have emerged, and each has their own release windows:

1. Traditional Distribution

2. Self-Distribution

3. Strategic Distribution

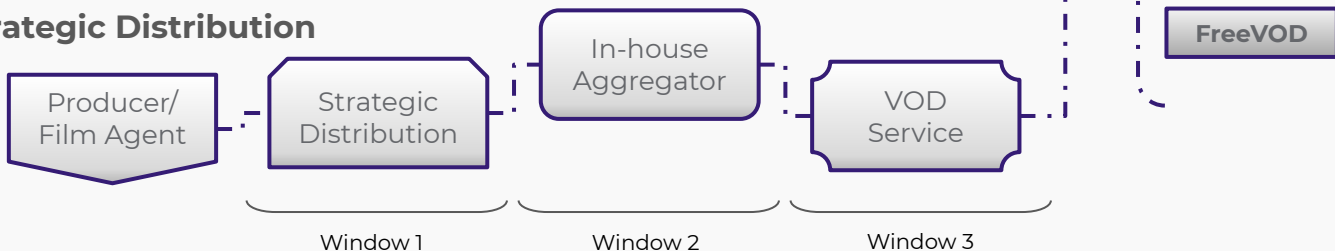
Traditional Distribution



Self Distribution



Strategic Distribution



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1. Traditional Distribution

Traditional Distribution is the process whereby a content distributor (studio, television network, streaming platform) buys the exclusive rights to your film for anywhere between **3 to 25 years** - typically offering an upfront payment and, in some instances, profit sharing on the backend. The distributor then oversees the film's marketing, exhibition, collection of revenues, and performance reporting of the film.

Traditional distribution companies also require large upfront fees, demand marketing caps, claim the majority of all proceeds your film generates, and take control of all future windowing opportunities, such as physical DVDs, TVOD, SVOD, and AVOD exploitation within the specified timeframe.

- Traditional distributors generally shroud the film's economic performance from the filmmaker after the upfront payment has been made.
- Traditional distribution is best-suited for films with studio-level production quality that star a well-known cast.
- Traditional distribution offers can cover certain territories, like North America, or the whole world, depending on the project.

The implications of COVID-19 have drastically hindered the traditional distribution market by effectively eliminating theatrical releases to go straight to SVOD.

2. Self-Distribution

Self-Distribution is the process of utilizing an aggregator or similar platform to release a film. Technology's disruption of the content-viewing experience has given filmmakers new ways to reach audiences, cut costs, and make a profit. Self-Distribution options are structured whereby filmmakers submit their projects for distribution through a centralized aggregator that has output deals with iTunes, Netflix, Hulu, Amazon Prime Video, Tubi TV, and others, with loose restrictions on exclusivity.

- To distribute your film through a streaming platform, you'll need to utilize a content aggregator - such as Buffalo 8 Distribution - to leverage their existing outputs in the content acquisition space.
- A successful self-distribution release requires a bit of planning and a modest marketing budget, but it grants you direct visibility into your title's performance while cutting out superfluous fees and long-winded, restrictive licensing periods.
- Self-Distributed titles must battle the realities of a growing content marketplace, with new titles appearing on the same platforms everyday.

For the above reasons, our team always recommends consulting with a sales expert to come up with an optimal self-distribution plan that maximizes revenues via structural negotiations and minimizes useless overhead costs.

3. Strategic Distribution

Strategic Distribution is our preferred method of distribution, developed by Buffalo 8 after successfully financing **over three hundred** films and television series at BondIt Media Capital, and directly producing **more than one hundred** at Buffalo 8.

Strategic Distribution combines the advantages of traditional distribution with the digital dynamics of successful self-distribution campaigns.

Buffalo 8's strategic distribution packages give filmmakers the ability to customize their release strategy, consulted by a team of experienced, traditional distributors who understand the nuances of an increasingly digital audience.

By strategically distributing with Buffalo 8, we can:

- **represent** your film to traditional distributors;
- **secure** discounted aggregation services;
- **analyze** your current film to accommodate a tailored marketing campaign to match;
- **provide** guidance, negotiation support, and transparent performance reports;
- **educate** throughout the process by providing direct visibility and a sustainable business for both parties.

Aggregator vs. Distributor

What is an “aggregator”?

If choosing to self-distribute a low budget film or series, you must hire a content aggregator to place your film on major streaming platforms (like iTunes, Amazon, TubiTV, PlutoTV, Google Play, Netflix, etc.). In addition to submitting your independent film and brokering deals with the various Video-On-Demand platforms, aggregators also take care of everything else, including encoding, packaging, and delivering your film to digital platforms. Content aggregators have exclusive output contracts with VOD platforms that grant the aggregator preferential treatment when pitching projects to the platform.

- Notable streaming sites almost always require placement through an aggregator and rarely accept outside pitches from individual filmmakers or content producers.
- If deciding to self-distribute, hiring an aggregator is essential to your film's success.
- Aggregators may charge setup fees and even partial ownership in your film, so keep that in mind when searching for an aggregator.

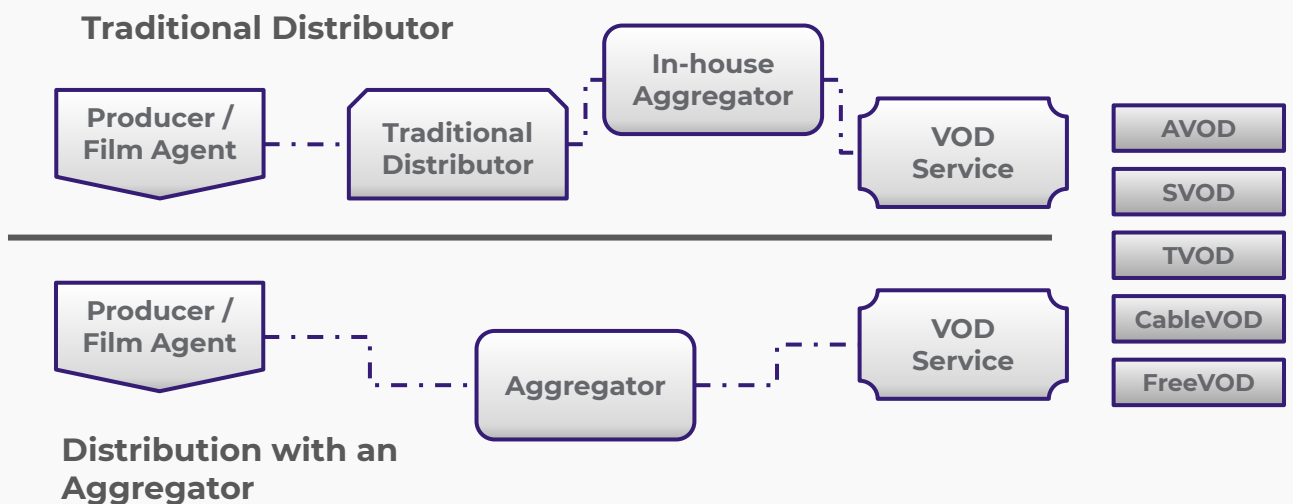
What is the difference between aggregation and distribution?

Signing with a distribution firm means entrusting a third party with the public release and multi-territorial exploitation of your film. The distributor will secure the rights to screen your project within a defined list of worldwide territories for a period of several years (five, seven, and ten are typical terms).

While the specifics of distribution agreements can vary firm-to-firm, it's standard practice for distributors to require gross corridors or minimum proceed thresholds in order to recoup their expenses before sharing profits with the production team.

Alternatively, you can forego working with a distributor altogether and distribute the film yourself. You can deliver your film to the major online retailers (iTunes, Amazon, Google Play, etc.) via content aggregators.

Utilizing an aggregator grants you more favorable ownership and a majority of the revenue split, but you are ultimately responsible for all aspects of your film's release.



Which Method is Right for My Film?

All three strategies come with their positives and negatives.

The upside of working with a distributor is knowing that your film's release will be supported and carried out by a team of professionals. The downside is that you are relinquishing control of your film for years and are sharing a large percentage of revenue with another company.

Self-distribution, on the other hand, means retaining control, ownership, and a larger revenue share, but its worldwide exploitation may suffer without a dedicated sales team. Box office performance is reliant on time, money, and a strong understanding of marketing, promotions, public relations, and release timing.

Strategic distribution is the best of both worlds. Filmmakers get to work with a team of professionals and utilize their industry connections for a fraction of the cost, while retaining the rights and keeping control of your movie. By partnering with strategic distributors (like Buffalo 8) who can provide aggregation services in addition to developing a targeted distribution strategy, the filmmaker will save time and money while positioning the film for success

The distribution process doesn't need to involve smoke and mirrors. By aligning with your mission from the start, Buffalo 8 can help make the most of your film's release, while protecting you from common pitfalls and industry sharks.

B8 Strategic Distribution Packages



Our team understands that every project is unique, which is why we tailor our distribution packages to fit your project's specific needs and customize pricing to effectively accomplish your goals in reaching your audience.

The Foundation [\$4,250]

- Consult weekly with our B8 Distribution Team
- Develop a personalized 60-Day Distribution Strategy
- Utilize the library, brand, and relationship value of B8 to achieve the strongest output
- Collaborate with your personal B8 Sales Executive to define the timelines, milestones for deliverables, and release date(s)

For: First time and emerging creators.
Basic Distribution Services

Foundation + Aggregation [\$6,500]

- 2x weekly consultation with our B8 Distribution Team
- Develop a personalized 120-Day Distribution Strategy
- Oversee revenue reporting with monthly visibility
- Asset delivery and management support
- Contract review and negotiation
- Aggregation package for 5 global video On Demand Platforms

For: Larger films.
Advanced Distribution Services

Start to Finish Distribution [\$9,500]

- Regular Consultation with our team of Industry Experts
- Develop a personalized 150-Day Distribution Strategy
- Personal B8 Sales Executive Representation available on call
- Oversee revenue reporting with monthly visibility
- Contract review and negotiation
- Aggregation Package for 8 Global Video On Demand Platforms
- Advertising package to national web/digital/radio outlets
- Marketing support and guidance
- Trailer & Key Art Completion

For: Top-of-the-line Productions
Pro Distribution Services.

Questions? Consult with our Distribution expert: info@buffalo8.com

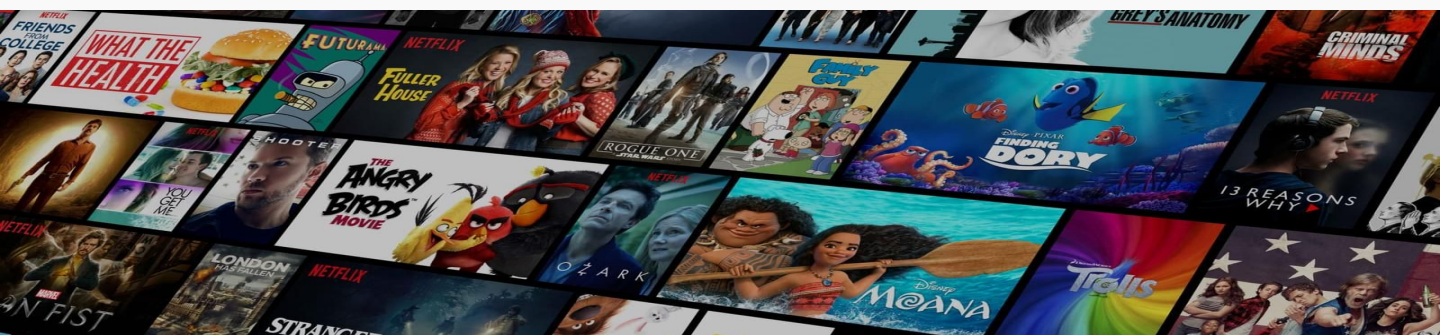
Position your film for Distribution Success

As the world of content continues to become increasingly digital and the demands for our attention multiplying everyday, the ability to capture potential audience members becomes just as important as the filmmaking process itself.

If you are a filmmaker approaching the finish line and looking to make money.... you need to pretend you are an objective end-consumer. Position your film like it's something you would buy/rent/stream – and also something that you'd be able to discover in a world overflowing with content and information. Here are ways to attract audiences to your film and maximize your film's success on.

VOD platforms:

ARTWORK: You've launched iTunes and are scrolling through the video page. What you see is the title of your movie and the poster shrunk down to a one-or-two-inch thumbnail. You need a clean, bold image to convey what your film is about while simultaneously catching other viewers' eyes. Posters with too many faces, words, or collages of sharp detail will make it difficult to catch. Remember that you have a split-second to attract a consumer, and the poster artwork become the most effective mechanism to do that.



SYNOPSIS – Your poster is now eye-catching, and someone has clicked on it to learn more. Now you have a synopsis (on average 250 characters on the digital storefronts) to hold the viewer's attention. Not only do you need to clearly convey what the film is about, but you want it to be action-packed and exciting enough for the viewer to feel like they haven't seen "your film" a hundred times before.

This can be a great place to instill a sense of action, dread or suspense for a genre film. If your film is a pedigree-drama or festival-winner, it can be opportunistic to highlight your film as a selection of a top tier film festival or note one of its actors who's better known from a mainstream project. Just be careful, as 250 characters goes quickly, and you can't afford to waste a single space. Average iTunes Store viewers will spend between 7-12 seconds on a project page.

TRAILER – The viewer has read your synopsis and wants to know what makes your movie different than the next. We've all seen a million trailers. Excellent trailers are able to depict what the film is about, while also weaving in key selling points, such as explosions for action, darkness and jump-scares for horror, cute moments and wish-fulfillment for romantic comedies, and recognizable actors for talent. Even the smallest films can have incredible trailers, and if we've learned anything from the film business, it's that trailer salesmanship is absolutely critical for every budget and every genre.

Film Festivals

Film festivals are popular routes for finding distribution. Showing your film at a festival can lead to a distribution scout gaining interest and desire to pick up your film. Focus on submitting to festivals that fit your film's niche or genre for the best results. Don't neglect local festivals as they can serve as a simple platform for building a fanbase and growing hometown recognition. Local festivals are generally easy to get into and win awards from.

Windowing

When your film is released within certain parameters (e.g. domestic theatrical, subscription video on demand (SVOD), transactional video on demand (TVOD), ad-based video on demand (AVOD), etc.), each of these are known as a window. By staggering these windows strategically, you can maximize exposure and the revenue that transpires throughout the lifecycle of the film.

<u>Window 1</u> Festival/Promo <i>Months 0-12</i>	<u>Window 2</u> DVDs in stores + High Touch PPVOD <i>Months 3-15</i>	<u>Window 3</u> Broad PPVOD <i>Months 9-24</i>	<u>Window 4</u> SVOD <i>Months 18-42</i>	<u>Window 5</u> Loss Leader <i>Months 24-99</i>
				
				
				



Avoid Being Taken Advantage of by a Traditional Distributor

Traditional distributors intentionally create their agreements to be vague and complex. This can result in filmmakers being overcharged for services or distributors cutting corners on the work that's expected of them.

To protect you (and your film), you need to understand exactly what you're signing and if their proposed terms are industry standard. Ask a ton of questions and stay involved in the process, and if you're still unsure, hire a distribution strategist with a proven track record on IMDb. By working together, you can ensure your film achieves the milestones you've set out from the beginning.

Choose Effective Distribution Partners

A distribution team is as important as a production team. Before working with a distributor or aggregator, talk to filmmakers they worked with in the past to see how their distribution experience was. Be wary of distributors who want to buy all the rights to your film in perpetuity.

It is important for filmmakers to think about the aspects of distribution they can confidently handle themselves and what needs to be outsourced. Do your research and interview potential partners before hiring them as strangers.

Complete Transparency

Divide revenues fairly and define responsibilities clearly. Build in guarantees (eg. minimum number of cities and maximum marketing spends, performance guarantees), approvals (deals, marketing, editing), and safeguards (escape clauses, expense caps, bankruptcy protection, limits on assignment, and dispute resolutions).

DELIVERABLES

B8 Required Deliverables

Depending on where your film is being delivered, asset requirements may vary. Generally, the core assets include ProRes masters of the feature, a closed caption file, and a piece of vertical key art.

For Buffalo 8's AVOD partners, we require:

Title Video File AND Trailer File in the following format:

Accepted Video Codecs:

- Prores 422 HQ
- Prores 422
- H.264 (AVC)

Accepted file containers:

- .mov
- .mp4
- .mpeg
- .mpg
- mxf

Accepted Frame Rates:

- 23.976, 24, 25, 29.97, 50i, 59.94i fps.

Resolution:

- Native resolution is required with minimum size: 640x480 pixels.
- The Preferred resolution is 1920x1080.

Audio:

- PCM 16-32 bit, 44.1k-48kHz audio.
- AAC audio
- A stereo audio stream is required when available.
- Important: A stereo stream or correctly labeled streams to be mixed to stereo are required.

DELIVERABLES

B8 Required Deliverables

Image Requirements

- ❑ Image 1: Poster / Title Image
 - ❑ Size: At least 900 x 1285 pixels at 72 dpi.
 - ❑ Do NOT include credits, ratings, company logos, and promotional information on the artwork image.
- ❑ Image 2: Landscape Image
 - ❑ Size: At least 896 x 504 pixels at 72 dpi.
 - ❑ The Image must contain the title, without any other text.
- ❑ Image 3: Hero Image
 - ❑ Size: At least 1920 x 1080 pixels at 72 dpi.
 - ❑ Do NOT include any text, including title art, credits, ratings, company logos, and promotional information on the artwork image.



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