

So You've Written An Oscar Winning Screenplay

Contributed by Shawna McCormack

•Now What? So you have this wonderful script, a blockbuster hit, visions of your Oscar acceptance speech are dancing in your head - now what? Well first things first, come back down to earth! Securing representation and selling a script is tough, really tough. There is a saying in Hollywood that you can throw a stone and chances are you'll hit a writer. The competition is fierce not only between established working writers, but also among writers looking for their first break.

OK, now that the rose-colored glasses are off, let's take a realistic, step-by step approach to getting some "traction" on your script and avoiding some of the pitfalls that can be discouraging time-wasters. It may seem obvious, but immediately register your script with the WGA before sending it out to ANYONE. Protect your creative property. There are offices on both the East and West coast depending on your geographic location. Share your work with every writer friend and colleague you know, especially those who have published or sold their work. They can lend much needed feedback on structure, storyline and provide a fresh perspective. However, once you feel your script is ready to send to the pros, a good rule of thumb is only take notes from those who will be collaborating on the project, or who can potentially help move it forward. Don't fall into the trap of doing rewrites if it does not serve your story, or if the person giving notes is not committed to your script. Remember, everyone has an opinion, but it's just that, an opinion. Have a clear, concise, compelling one page synopsis as well as a treatment, logline and tagline. Also, do your homework and learn the industry format for scripts. If in doubt, log on to the WGA website and look at scripts, study the format. Next, make a decision to seek representation or to self-market. Just be prepared to do some serious self-marketing in order to get representation. Just one of the many catch-22's of the industry. When seeking representation, make sure the agent knows the market, has a finger on the pulse and solid relationships with studio executives and producers. Also, research their roster of writing talent and the properties they represent. It may be wise to avoid a particular agent if they represent too many scripts similar in genre to your own. Alternatively, if a particular agent is known for representing a particular genre, it may work to your advantage. On the topic of genre and writing style, it's important to be specific about your particular niche of screenwriting and hone your craft. Be sure you have several writing samples in that niche ready to show an agent if requested. But above all, write from the heart, write what you truly believe in. Don't chase a trend. By the time you have finished your script, the industry has already moved on to the next trend. When researching how to contact agents, The Hollywood Creative Directory is a good place to start. It's updated and published quarterly so the information is sure to be fresh. The WGA has a list of agents available also. There is a wonderfully entertaining website called [everyonewhosanyone.com](http://www.everyonewhosanyone.com). Check it out for names, addresses and emails of the top literary contacts, and for a big belly laugh or two! If you decide to self-market your script, there are a couple of avenues to consider. Register with online script sale services like [script pimp](http://www.scriptpimp.com) or [Inktip](http://www.inktip.com). This can be especially advantageous if you don't live near one of the entertainment hubs. With these sites a writer can post a logline, a synopsis or a full script that are viewed by producers, agents and studio executives in search of projects. The catch - writers pay to post on the service, but the industry pros do not. Some writers create roles with a particular actor in mind. If this applies to you, try to do whatever it takes to get your script to the actor directly, through their production company, by using an entertainment attorney, or through a friend of a friend of a friend. And last but not least, my mantra of network, network, network. Stay passionate about your work, and you will persevere. Shawna McCormack has experience as a CD, a franchised talent agent, documentary filmmaker, and is currently a screenwriter/producer. She can be reached by the comment system below, or her [myspace page here](#).