



The Current and Future State of Production in Media & Entertainment

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Many of our clients have reached out recently asking for our opinion on the current and future state of Media & Entertainment amid the COVID-19 pandemic. We thought this article would be the perfect opportunity to address the common questions we receive through our consultancy practice. Convergent understands that this is an unprecedented time that has created uncertainty for our community. The goal of this article is to share our observations while focusing on opportunities for innovation and proactive measures that strengthen organizations.

When will productions go back to work?

The vendor ecosystem has sustained itself with in-progress work during the initial phase of the COVID pandemic. Unfortunately, in-progress work is estimated to be finished between mid-July to September 2020. If Productions are unable to return to Principal Photography soon enough to refill the pipeline with new work, the vendor community will be financially vulnerable.

While no one has a crystal ball, we believe that there are some positive signs that indicate that productions will gradually return to principal photography over the next couple of months:

- Local productions in Europe, particularly in Germany and the Netherlands, have returned to principal photography.
- *Deadline* reported that Universal's 'Jurassic World: Dominion' returns to production in the UK on July 6th.
- In California, feature and TV productions were granted the ability to return on June 12 on a county-by-county basis. We are hearing that many Productions will not return until mid-July or August 2020.
- New York state is now accepting film permit applications for work starting after June 30th. However, state restrictions significantly limit the number of people who can be on set and the amount of camera and lighting equipment to be used. These restrictions may lead some productions to move to other states or countries that provide more flexibility for larger feature or TV production.
- Several health and safety protocols have also been written by the Entertainment community that go to great lengths to secure on-set environment. However, the below-the-line unions will also need to agree to a series of detailed protocols before productions can restart.



- Like New York, many local governments have also placed further restrictions that limit the number of people on set at a given time and prohibit action and crowd scenes. Productions may require rewrites of storylines or scenes or implementing shooting strategies that rely heavily on post-production and visual effects to remain compliant with restrictions.

The one thing that remains certain is that productions will look different, and the industry needs to gain more efficient ways to work through technological advancements.

How will Productions successfully collaborate and operate given the restrictions?

During the Pre-Production phase, Convergent has received many calls regarding new collaborative tools for creatives. One tool that stood out was 'WritersRoom Pro' by Showrunner Industries, which emerged quickly as a development tool for showrunners that provides a collaborative interface that best mirrors the creative process of the writer's room. We are also expecting that virtual reality tools and supporting collaborative platforms may provide efficiencies for directors and crew by giving them the ability to view locations from their living room, prepare art department/production design and lighting/rigging schemas, and collaborate efficiently between departments.

During the Production Phase, producers will need to evaluate the size of the production to determine whether it is possible for people to work on the show from remote locations or establish dedicated work areas or "bubbles" for departments/crews in an effort to confine interactions to prevent a potential spread of the disease. For example, the camera department may work from a truck near set and rely on robots or drones for shooting scenes. From a logistical perspective, a main challenge will be how common areas such as rest rooms, catering areas and transport will be impacted to maintain these "bubbles." Productions may choose to shoot more scenes from sound stages where there is more control or large open-air spaces that lend itself to maintaining these "bubbles." More time will also be needed for setup and rigging scenes, checking gear and sanitization, and striking sets to allow for all equipment and cables to be re-sanitized.

To avoid physical contact with dailies vendors, productions may choose to avoid the use of hard drives and send dailies directly via high speed content transfer tools or choose a model where all dailies are loaded to a server that syncs directly to a cloud instance where the vendor can access the content.

With content workflows rapidly changing, it is vital that risk assessments are completed to ensure the security of the content and that the digital environment is continuous monitored.

Convergent is prepared to:

- *Support productions on-site or remotely through our Managed Production Security & Assurance Services, which is a flexible suite of services that can be tailored to a production's needs.*



- *We can evaluate the design of your architecture and digital pipeline, provide penetration testing, conduct a full on-site or remote risk assessment of the physical and digital environment, and deploy our proprietary security stack for continuous monitoring.*
- *We are also available to evaluate new, cloud-based collaboration tools or emerging technologies.*

Throughout the coming months, Convergent will continue to research remote production workflows and update the community.

When will business return to normal for the vendor community?

The community should be prepared for a temporary lag period while the pipeline returns to capacity. Vendors may observe that productions adopt shooting styles that are more dependent on post-production and visual effects to achieve the desired aesthetics or storyline that cannot be supported by the current restrictions placed during principal photography. This could result in more post work coming through the pipeline.

Instead of focusing on business returning to normal, we recommend taking a proactive approach that provides flexibility for businesses to operate successfully – whether operations return to on-premises environments, remain dependent on a remote workforce, or require a hybrid approach. By proactively planning for a longer period of remote working, vendors have the rare opportunity to reevaluate their IT infrastructure to implement changes that:

- Create workflow efficiencies;
- Reduce dependencies on legacy systems or manual workflows;
- Embrace private or public cloud infrastructure;
- Implement PCoIP technologies for managing, monitoring, and scaling remote workstations; and
- Deploy Data Loss Prevention (“DLP”) software to secure data and content.

As changes are made to infrastructure and workflows, organizations must adopt a risk-based approach that goes beyond the traditional security controls that were designed for on-premises operations.

Convergent is available to assist in your risk assessments and evaluations of new technologies and workflows. We can also provide security training and assist in updating your policies.

Education will be needed for employees to understand the security risks of working at home. Vendors may find that their security policies are inadequate for a work-from-home business model and must updated acceptable use, mobile device, non-disclosure, and social media policies to reflect our “new normal.”



Is Brick and Mortar dead?

Many of our creative vendor clients have reported cost savings, efficiencies, and happier employees after implementing work-from-home operations. While there will always be a need for a physical presence, we expect to see a reduction in the size of facilities in the near term as vendors modernize and consolidate their operations in support of cloud infrastructure.

The new normal has demonstrated that there is no incentive for paying expensive rents. A hoteling model allows vendors to reduce their square footage to support employees who need to be on premises, while creating a flexible environment that can be reserved for client and team meetings. Supporting a secure remote workforce also provides advantages when hiring specialized labor, which allows hiring managers to look for skilled employees outside their geographical area.

We at Convergent understand that the COVID-19 pandemic has created a great deal of uncertainty, and the manner in which we work has changed. The one thing that remains certain is that productions and vendor facilities will need to evolve and be more efficient. We believe that now is the time to embrace innovation and focus on continuous improvement so we can weather this season and come out stronger in the long-term. We're here to help!

What is Convergent doing to ensure health and safety during on-site assessments?

Convergent is receiving more requests for on-site risk assessments, and we have undertaken these engagements with strict safety protocols. Our assessors and consultants follow the protocols set forth by the industry for safe social distancing and are required to wear cloth masks. We also support additional safety requirements that our clients implement.