

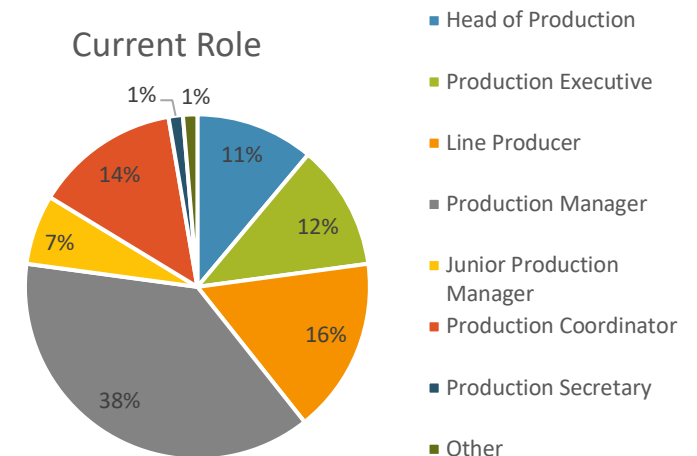
# Production Management Survey 2023

Expansion in the demand for TV content has not been matched by a growth in the talent available to make it. The industry haemorrhages experienced workers and nowhere is this more acute than in production management which now sits at the top of a long list of hard-to-fill roles.

The aim of the Production Managers Survey 2023, undertaken between 20th January and 12th February 2023, was to find out how people in production management roles think about their work, why they are tempted to leave and factors that might encourage them to stay.

The survey had 765 valid responses. The vast majority of those who responded are currently working in production (78%), with the largest percentage of these in the role of Production Manager (38%). A significant minority of respondents had left production management. These had either taken another role in television (11%), left television altogether (4%) or described themselves as taking a break from TV (7%).

Most of those working in production management roles had worked in the industry for more than five years (88%). Almost two thirds had done so for more than ten year (65%) but just over a quarter for more than twenty (26%).



# This is what we found

People who work in production management are **positively disposed** towards this industry. They enjoy working in TV (90%). They like the people they work with (89%). In principle, they think the money is adequate (86%).

*"I love TV but the lack of flexibility, the expectation to work every hour that God sends and the stresses a Production Manager is put under are sadly some of the reasons why I (and others I know) want to leave the industry."*

Yet, **three-quarters** of them have seriously considered leaving. So, what's the problem?

*"The expectation of production companies is that you'll work 24/7/365 with no additional compensation or consideration of the toll the work you're doing both mentally and physically."*

The top three most cited reasons for considering leaving are that **the role is undervalued/not respected** (94%), that there is an **'always on' work culture** (94%) and that they are left feeling **over-loaded and under-resourced** (94%).

Other significant reasons for considering leaving included the feeling that **extra responsibilities** had been piled on them, and that the hours are too long or lack flexibility. It is the long **hours and lack of flexibility** (90%) that was given as the main reason for quitting by those who had already done so.

*"Production management are expected to always be contactable, available to sort out any issues which may arise and take responsibility for the safety of everyone. This not the expectation of those in the majority of editorial roles. Roles for which the pay is much higher."*

# The gender factor

In particular it was the long hours and lack of flexibility that many **women** gave for being **unable to return to work** after a maternity break. This is significant for the industry as the vast majority of respondents were **female** (84%).

*“Production Management and the TV industry is lacking in flexibility for parents. I've been struggling to find a part time Production Manager role. I've even started to look at PC roles if it allows me to work part time but the roles are so few and far between.”*

It would seem that the **gender factor** is the main reason why the widespread **problems of retention in the TV industry** are magnified in the case of production management. It seems that too many women reluctantly decide that a career in production management is unsustainable and **take their skills elsewhere**.

*“I have a young child and feel that it's so difficult to work in a production management role with what's expected and the hours and also be there to look after my child around childcare hours, illness etc.”*

Most respondents (77%) had made career decisions in the interests of achieving a **better work-life balance**, including taking part-time work and taking lower-paid work in order to accommodate child-care and other family responsibilities.

*“I felt like there just weren't enough hours in the day to do a great job and I wasn't satisfied by doing an ok job, especially when just doing ok was also taking me away from my family in the evenings and on my days off. Ultimately the pay just didn't justify the sacrifice”*

# How can the industry retain production skills and experience?

Those who had already left production management were asked to tell us **one thing that they think would have kept them in the role.**

*"More positive feedback & recognition, and a larger team with more support. It would have reduced the work load enormously and reduced the stress and 'on call' aspect of the work."*

*"Shorter hours and ability to have down time. Most PMs burn out or have to take time off after jobs in a way that other departments don't experience."*

The main responses highlighted **shorter working hours**, with time to recover between intense periods of production.

A re-think of the **'always on' culture** that makes family life so difficult to maintain.

*"More awareness of how many hours are being worked outside of the typical 9-5 office hours e.g. weekend work, answering messages 24/7 and being on call to change things last minute."*

*Flexibility. I understand why this is so difficult to provide in a production environment, but I needed the ability to work with shoots that also worked for me as a new mother.."*

More **flexibility** from employers, in return for the high levels of flexibility they routinely expect from their staff.

*“More money in budget for production staff to make sure PMs would not be overloaded with multiple projects or be without coordinator support for example.”*

Proper staffing of productions, with sufficient resource available to **avoid overloading** production management teams.

And above all a sense of being **valued and respected** by their colleagues and employers.

*“Feeling valued and respected (to be fair in my last role I did feel valued and respected) but I think this is too often not the case.”*

*“Looking back, I realize now how much of my time I gave for free and I don't regret it, but I do regret the industry not being able to support a more balanced work-life culture. Everyone talks about it, but its pie in the sky really.”*

It was clear that most of these leavers had **left the industry reluctantly** because they could not see a way forward for themselves within it.

This research raises important questions for employers who are serious about finding and retaining production management skills and talent.

**What specific changes to current industry practices will begin to address these particular concerns?**