

A decade on her own

Feldmann calls producing, building relationships

by Josh Larsen

All this week, Shirley Feldmann's title is production manager on a promotional video for Avid through Montreal's Figaro Films International. The promo is worked around interviews with Avid users in a music video style for showing at NAB.

Would she say this is a typical freelance job? Not really, she admits, figuring that 80% of her work comes from radio and television production and the rest from production management. But Feldmann, celebrating a decade of freelancing in October, is comfortable in any production situation.

If she has a specialty, a niche in which she is comfortable, it's working directly with advertisers. For six years, she worked side-by-side with the late producer, Paul Robinson, on countless Homemakers commercials. She produced for Homemakers 18 months after his death and the sale of the furniture company. The new owners simply folded Homemakers spots into its house agency.

An independent contractor, Feldmann is incorporated as Feldmann's Flicks, a handle that tends to confuse because she is known as a solo producer. The Feldmann's Flicks logo is on her frequent newsletter which enables her to keep in touch with her clients "in a non-obtrusive manner." She cites the typical freelancer's dilemma: "When I'm looking for work, everyone's so busy it's hard to get them on the phone. When I'm busy, it's hard to make phone calls."

A compliment she remembers came from the late Ed Maroney Sr. at JWT. "He said he always enjoyed getting the newsletter. We never had a chance to work together, but the fact that he remembered it says something."

If it weren't for a misdialled telephone number, Feldmann might never have embarked on a production career.

"On my first day at college, I picked up the phone to call my mom and somehow got the school's radio station," she says. "I was told they were looking for people to help out. Before long I was



Shirley Feldmann

reading copy on the air."

She studied radio/TV/film at Northern Illinois University, graduating in 1985. A variety of jobs followed: marketing manager at TCI cable, distribution rep at Video Publishing House and writer producer at Super Spots, a company that produced syndicated TV promos for radio stations. After two years there, she went freelance.

Her Super Spots background was a help last year when Ameritech's agency, Ammirati Puris Lintas, hired her as producer of postproduction to create a massive number of Ameritech commercials from extant footage originating from Ammirati's New York office.

Working with two New York office creatives over what amounted to three months, Feldmann produced 10 commercials from previously shot footage on voice-mail and caller ID products, and 220 direct response, 800-number versions. Radio commercials were also part of the package.

Through it all, Feldmann builds relationships. "If I work internally in the agency, I'm building relationships on behalf of that agency with the postproduction facility, the editors and the music house. It's so important to remember that it's not just you and your client. Every relationship in the process is really important."

Shirley Feldmann can be reached at 773/348-0742. ★

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