

[Ten Predictions for 2014](#)

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Tricky business, these predictions, but I'll try once more to get something right here.

1. **This will be a deciding year in the film tech space.** We've got a lot of platforms in this space: Vimeo, VHX, ReelHouse, Fandor, IndieFlix, Snag, Mubi, Distrify...the list of platforms is long, and I didn't even mention the gorillas in that room. We've also got lots of competition in the discovery arena: MoviePilot, Letterboxed, SeenThat and Flicklist (which I'm still struggling to launch). Then we've got the tools like Assemble, MoviePass, TopSpin, Tugg, Slated, Seed & Spark, and more, all helping with various aspects of the film business. I won't even begin to list the numerous online news and review sites. I don't see many of these companies existing in 2015. *I think 2014 will be the year where we figure out who is going to grow up and own this space* (or, these spaces, these companies represent a lot of different business models). My money is on ReelHouse at the moment. They've just launched a partnership with Warner Brothers that is pretty interesting. If they can navigate the waters and merge indie, arthouse and studio discovery, viewing and engagement right, they could own this space. But there's an equally good chance that someone new will launch and eclipse all of these guys, or that Facebook just launches better versions of their services by close of the year.
2. **Branded Content Explodes.** I hate every word I just typed, but it's a better short hand than: Smart companies with a powerful relationship with their consumers/fans will realize that they can and should make smart films and other video content to better engage with them, and it will expand dramatically this year. I am biased, as one of my clients is in this space, but two non-clients are doing it best now: Red Bull and ESPN. I think we'll see many more doing it soon, and indie filmmakers should watch and learn...and debate what indie means, because many of these companies will want to work with you soon.
3. **Data finally taken seriously in this space.** I remember roughly five years ago when Lance Weiler told the crowd at Sundance that data was the new oil. Everyone ignored him. I too have been preaching this for quite some time, and now everyone has woken up and is exploring data in the film world. I am consulting on one project in this space, and I know of many others. I expect we'll see several amazing data projects in the film world this year, and we'll learn what more we could know as a result, meaning 2015 will see some longitudinal studies and more people opening up their data as they see the value in sharing it.
4. **Changing of the guard.** We've just seen three or four major institutions in the film world lose their leadership, for various reasons. There will be some new leaders announced, but I think we'll also see more shake-ups at a few more. I don't have any feelings good or bad about the changes, but I am excited to see who takes the reins at these institutions, and what next steps they will (or won't) make.

5. **Direct Distribution Backlash.** I'm already sensing this on the festival circuit and think it will become a more open topic of conversation. 2014 will be the year where everyone starts to dis direct distribution. Many will think I'm crazy for saying this- in a world of unlimited new tools to reach your fans and distribute your film right to them, how can I make this prediction? Because it's hard work, and it doesn't often pay off any better than going with a distributor. It's a tough business whether you do it yourself or go at it with partners. Not everyone has the stomach for it, and everyone is starting to realize it works well for certain types of films, but not every film. I am not saying direct distribution will die, or that certain filmmakers shouldn't try it. I am also sure we'll see at least one project a month that nails it – does it right and makes bank. But many people are starting to realize that we've not gotten rid of the middle-men here, we've just made more of them (aggregators, bookers, marketers, etc) and that sometimes you just want to make the next movie instead of becoming a carny for 18 months.
6. That said, **direct distribution will make someone a millionaire this year.** Who will it be? Probably a film to be discovered at Sundance in January. We'll see.
7. **Distributor Shake Out.** There's too many players in the space. In the documentary world especially, it's leading to unsustainable prices being paid to acquire content (good for filmmakers in the short term), and when that money isn't made back, heads start to roll. I predict we'll see some consolidation here, and several burn-outs.
8. **Episodic Content Will Rule.** It already does. It will explode even more this year, and my hope is that more indies will [learn from those leading in this space](#). Six million subscribers is more valuable than a film fest laurel, or even an Oscar.
9. **Online Episodic Creators will roll out more feature projects.** As [Freddie Wong](#) has already done twice, more creators will launch feature projects, and many of them will do it through crowd-funding direct from their fans, turning those millions of followers into real gold, and making the most exciting, truly independent work out there.
10. **More investors will lose money in film than ever before.** Thanks to the [JOBS Act](#) and the upcoming expansion of crowd-funding and crowd-investing initiatives, more people will get the chance to lose their investment on crappy film ideas with no business plan, and no chance of success. It will make it harder for the rest of us with good ideas to get funding, because we'll find more burned investors in the pool.