

What Does a Production Manager Do?

Simple — manage production. It's right there in the title.

The problem is, too many “Production Managers” (and GMs) don't really understand what that means.

Some think they can do the job from behind a desk. If you were an IT Manager, maybe. But you're a Production Manager in a **Flexographic printing company** — and that means you can't just show up for a quick round or wait until someone brings you a problem.

Sure, there's plenty to handle at your computer — updating schedules, ordering supplies, tracking production and shipping, following up with vendors, and a hundred other details. But all that comes **after** you've spent time on the floor doing your real job.

Production Manager is a *boots-on-the-ground* role. So, lace up those boots and hit the floor.

The Role

You're the last line of defense. Press operators, finishing, pre-press, shipping — everyone relies on you when things go sideways. Machines break, materials arrive damaged, inks go bad, someone calls out, and suddenly jobs need to be rearranged. It's all part of the gig.

Buckle up, buttercup — this is where you shine.

Know Your Workflow

If you don't understand workflow, you're already behind.

A solid workflow makes life easier. A bad or nonexistent one makes life miserable.

Workflow is simply the path each order takes through the company. Once an order hits production, it's your responsibility to make sure it moves through smoothly and efficiently.

That only happens with a written plan — part of your SOP (Standard Operating Procedures) — that clearly maps out every step, from receiving the order to shipping it out.

Production should conceptually move in a straight line — A to B to C — even if your equipment isn't laid out that way. The key is to have a plan that keeps everything moving in order and on time. Workflow is the backbone of that plan.

Learn to Delegate

Delegation is your best friend — but only when done right.

Delegate tasks only to organized, trustworthy people who have been properly trained. Never assume others know how to do something just because you do. Train them your way, the right way.

As your company grows, your role will shift. In a small shop, you might handle purchasing, job jackets, and plates yourself. But once sales top \$2 million, those tasks need to move to dedicated roles — Purchaser, Project Coordinator, Inventory Control, etc. (listen up GMs and Owners)

When you delegate effectively, your stress drops, and you can focus on keeping production on schedule — which makes you a far better manager.

(And if you don't have a pre-press department yet, visit [ctflexo.com → Articles → “Why You Can't Afford Not to Have Pre-Press”](https://ctflexo.com/articles/why-you-cant-afford-not-to-have-pre-press))

Communicate — Constantly

You can't manage what you don't see. Be on the floor. Talk to your people. Learn their strengths and weaknesses so you can schedule smarter and help them improve.

Include your operators when planning the next day's runs. You may already know the best order, but they often have insights you won't get from behind a desk. Collaboration here pays off.

And stop changing the schedule every time someone yells.(again listen up GMs and owners)

Rush orders happen — and yes, charge accordingly. But constantly rearranging the schedule for whoever complains the loudest destroys efficiency, morale, and profits.

Frequent schedule changes = late orders, more waste, higher overtime, and lower profit. Every. Single. Time.

Be Friendly — Not Friends

A great manager is friendly but firm. Earn respect, don't demand it, and expect the same from your team.

If you were promoted from within, this part's tough. You're managing people you used to work beside. It's tempting to bend the rules for your buddies — until you have to fire one. Trust me, it's not fun. But remember: if you don't do your job, *you* could be next.

Real friends won't want you to look bad. If they don't care, maybe they're not real friends after all.

The Bottom Line

The Production Manager wears a lot of hats. You're responsible for getting orders out the door, on time, with minimal waste and maximum profit.

If you think, "*Why should I care about company profit?*" — then this isn't the job for you. Because if you don't care, the company suffers — and you won't have that job long anyway.

It may sound harsh, but it's reality. So, buckle up buttercup — it's your time to shine.

Questions or thoughts?

Reach out anytime:
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Please free to contact me to discuss what your Production Manager should be doing, or how we can work together to reduce waste and boost profits.

Visit ctflexo.com for more resources.

**Thanks for reading,
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