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Film-Friendly Businesses Can Help Diversify State's Economy

By Finance New Mexico

Marisa Xochtl Jimenez hasn't lived in New Mexico for long, but the director of operations for Santa Fe Studios is already passionate about bringing jobs to the state.

Her area of expertise is film production; she manages one of the nation's most prolific independent film studios and is part of the management team of MBS3, a global equipment services and management company associated with the film industry. Jimenez sees abundant opportunities for gung-ho, flexible, friendly and dependable New Mexico entrepreneurs to prosper in this growing industry if they're willing to accommodate its nontraditional needs and long hours.

"New Mexico has welcomed the film industry with rebates and tax incentives since the 1990s," Jimenez said. "And although we have world-class facilities, we still need to continue to train, grow and develop in order to remain a competitive state for productions to want to film in New Mexico."



Film crews need lots of things when conducting business in New Mexico: They need to rent land and other properties for lodging and filming, buy set-building materials and contract with caterers and other service providers. According to Jimenez, businesses are either strongly interested in working with the film industry or not interested at all. This can jeopardize whether or not a film production moves to New Mexico, she said. Jimenez believes each encounter is an opportunity to make a good first impression and create a positive experience that will lead to more productions.

Jimenez acknowledges that film and TV production is innately demanding because everything is time sensitive. But with the right attitude and approach, she said, a business can become indispensable to production companies and their crews.

Be agile and flexible. These are essential traits in an industry where 11th-hour, unusual demands are the norm. "Client relations is key and therefore it is important to stay positive and helpful,"

Jimenez said. “All of these people will come back into your life because in the film industry, it’s a small world.”

Understand film industry clientele and anticipate their needs. A bar willing to serve food after 10 p.m., for example, will attract film people, who work long days and like to relax together in the evenings. “You need to be ready for them when they’re not on the set,” Jimenez said. Having on-call hours during production is one way businesses can respond quickly to requests.

Be willing to customize rental contracts and other business agreements. Production schedules vary from days to months to years, she said, so businesses need to customize their rental agreements accordingly. And irregular production hours, Jimenez said, means crews “will need to have accessibility 24/7 to their vendors and rental properties.”

Ask Questions. Jimenez said she was able to learn and adapt to the industry and the market by asking questions and gathering information from sources such as the New Mexico Film Office, local crew and business owners experienced with film in the state.

Businesses could ensure that the industry becomes a permanent player in New Mexico’s economic development by collaborating to identify and take advantage of overlooked opportunities. “My goal is to bring as many jobs as possible to the state,” Jimenez said.

To learn more about Santa Fe Studios, visit www.santafestudios.com.

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