

## Need for Creative Content Generates Growth for Media Co.

By [Mariel Concepcion](#)

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Photo courtesy of ProductionCrate, LLC. Founded in 2009, ProductionCrate has seen a 25% increase in memberships since mid-March.

At any moment, ProductionCrate, LLC's 1,700 square foot Kearny Mesa studio might seem like some sort of a fun house.

In one corner, CEO Christopher Kelly and members of his team of seven may be testing out underwater explosion effects. In the other, in front of a green screen, a few others may be shooting a goblin sword fight scene. The studio is stocked full of "ridiculous" costumes, he said, enough toys to fill up an at-home daycare center, left-over sets from previous productions, and, of course, camera and lighting equipment.

The level of creative chaos varies depending on the day, said Kelly: one week they might be shooting a scene with local actors, and the next they are parked in front of their desks, editing footage or running 3D simulations.

Since the novel coronavirus crisis hit stateside, ProductionCrate, a media and post-production company which builds and provides downloadable tools for media, video and film, has been even more dynamic.

## 25% Increase in Memberships

Founded in 2009, ProductionCrate has seen a 25% increase in memberships since mid-March, when the COVID-19 lockdown began. With user count hovering around 700,000 these days, Kelly said revenue growth projections for 2020 are now 50% to 55%, as opposed to the 35% to 40% he forecasted just two months ago.

“I was surprised to see such incredible growth during COVID-19 – a lot of people are using their time in lockdown for creative pursuits,” said Kelly, whose company makes seven figures in annual revenue. “We’ve had thousands of new users signing up and our previous users are visiting the site with more frequency than before.”

## Need for Digital Content

For businesses that have previously mostly relied on storefront marketing, the need for digital content has become paramount to their success during the pandemic, said Kelly. Most are marketing and advertising, connecting and engaging online, through social media and on their websites, he said. Creating attractive videos is an effective way to promote themselves and their businesses, Kelly said.

That’s where ProductionCrate comes in, he said, providing music, sound effects, motion graphics and video effects that can be useful to both a novice and an expert making digital content.

## Upgrade Digital Content

Deanna Underwood, a San Diego-based online blogger and content creator, said it is important for both independent influencers and larger entities to ramp up their online offerings during the lockdown. She said companies like ProductionCrate make it easier for apprentices like her to upgrade their digital content without breaking the bank.

“I don’t have a studio, high-end equipment or a huge library of resources to expand and mix up my videos,” she said, adding that this is a good time for professionals to connect with their audiences and “spice up” their content in order to increase engagement, stay active and remain relevant. “ProductionCrate is a helpful tool,” Underwood said, especially as Americans spend more and more of their time online while sheltering-at-home.

“With more people in front of their screens during the pandemic, you have the chance at gaining more views and engagement,” she said. “It’s important to change up your content to capture your intended audience, and having an array of professional tools, music and effects (to choose from) helps tremendously.”

## Filmmaking Industry

ProductionCrate's clients run the gamut from local developers and members of the filmmaking industry, to businesses like Digital Cube Media, a San Diego-based digital design studio, and Platt College San Diego, said Kelly, the latter for which he is also an advisor. Memberships range from free (with a limited library of tools), to \$49/year and \$299/year at the enterprise level, he said.

"We're passionate about empowering others to create," said Kelly. "Implementing visual effects can seem daunting, but through our tutorials and community, we're making sure that filmmaking is accessible to everyone."

Miro Copic, marketing professor at San Diego State University and co-founder of BottomLine Marketing, said ProductionCrate's recent success is pegged to good timing. As more people are working on their social media and web pages during the crisis, and with more time on their hands as a result, they are open to getting more creative with their visuals.

"Most people don't think much about their video production" past good lighting and video quality, said Copic. "But, now, all of a sudden, they have the time to play around with editing tools. For everyone sheltering in place and now forced to do things for themselves, they are researching and probably coming across companies like ProductionCrate to help them improve what they produce."

## Short Films

Since his sophomore year at San Francisco State University, where he got a bachelor's degree in Liberal Studies, Kelly has been into making short films.

It was then he was introduced to a software called Adobe After Effects and was instantly hooked, he said. After spending most of his summers blowing bursts of flour to simulate smoke or creating miniature detonations that he would manipulate to make appear in a globe-sized scale, and recording all of it, he created a website where he would go on to house all his videos. Before he knew it, others in his network of like-minded creators began downloading from his library. He even started to see some of his visual effects used in other YouTube videos, he said.

Pretty quickly, traffic on Kelly's website began to grow. He added some ads to the sidebar and made enough revenue to pay the hosting fees, he said.

"The early users were mostly other YouTubers and student filmmakers," said Kelly. "They would request new content and I was happy to make it."

## The Craters

In fact, ProductionCrate is constantly adapting to the feedback from its community, dubbed The Craters, said Kelly.

"They began requesting tutorials, so I found Adrian (Jensen), who is currently our lead (visual effects) artist, to make some tutorials and put them on Youtube," he said, adding that ProductionCrate has over 110,000 Youtube subscribers and nine million views. "That really accelerated our traffic. We aim to help filmmakers of all levels – from kids making their first 10 second movies to expert visual effects artists working on feature films."

Soon, Kelly said he plans to release a mobile app. One of the major hang-ups he hears is that some users don't have access to a computer and use their smartphones for almost all of their technical needs these days, so, it makes sense, he said. The best part, Kelly said, is that ProductionCrate has a massive library to pull from already.