

# Paper Trail that Saves Trees

TWO SCRIPT APPS ALLOW CHANGES DIGITALLY WITHOUT LOSING SIGHT OF PREVIOUS DRAFTS  
 BY KAREN IDELSON

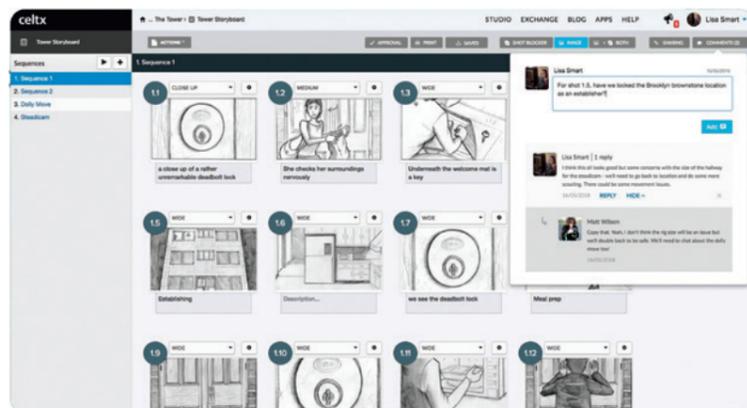


Most productions are forced to manage script changes until the day the show premieres. As production schedules become more compressed and everyone struggles to get the latest version of a script out to the cast and crew, two companies have entered the fray with tools designed to make it all manageable somehow. Scriptation and Celtx both offer PDF annotation designed to be nimble and manageable for everyone who uses it. Here we break down what they need to do and how they can save money for directors and their teams.

## » CELTX

**THE BASICS:** Celtx offers a series of production planning tools and just premiered its Premium Script Editor this year. Developed based on the feedback of its large user community, this PDF annotation app is designed to give users the ability to annotate and edit any way that makes sense for their production. The app allows directors and all crew to update versions of a script for distribution throughout a production. Users can annotate with static images, notes or footage. There's also seamless, real-time scriptwriting capability so writers can collaborate whether they're in the same room or on opposite coasts.

**THE EXTRAS:** In addition to its Premium Script Editor designed for film and television production, Celtx also has GEM, which is designed for VR and gaming and the special needs those kinds of productions face. Between its suite of products, Celtx can cover users who are trying to keep up on changes and develop new scenes or dialogue for multiple types of productions. Premium Script Editor is available on Android



PHOTOS: COURTESY OF CELTX

and Apple mobile devices. Premium Script Editor is available to subscribers of Celtx.

**IN PRACTICE:** Celtx has more than 100,000 subscribers in any given month who use its tools for pre-production planning and script management for film, television, VR and gaming.

**TAKEAWAY:** Writer/director Brian Levant, who has been working in film and television since he started writing for *Happy Days* in the 1970s, loves using Celtx Premium Script Editor, which he utilizes to teach classes as well.

"Dealing with changes and lots of photocopying and making notes was always difficult when I first started," says Levant. "It was easy to lose track of pages, and managing your script always took so much time and energy that it could take you away from the writing you needed to do or—if you're a director—it could take you away from the planning and creativity you need to make your show the way you want to make it. The other thing was that this was easy for me to pick up. It's very intuitive and simple, so after just a little while, you're using it and it's solving all these problems for you."

## » SCRIPTATION

**THE BASICS:** Available since 2016, Scriptation was designed to solve the problems encountered by Steven Vitolo, an experienced script coordinator who works on the series *Black-ish*. The idea came to him when he realized how much time and paper he wasted every time he had to get a new draft out to the cast and crew. He wanted something that would update everyone with script changes while also keep track of previous drafts for reference. He also wanted users to be able to make notes and search words, characters or anything they needed to double check for reference. Vitolo went to an app developer and then sought out feedback as he launched Scriptation.

**THE EXTRAS:** Users can annotate their scripts with everything from notes to photos, as well as highlight different sections for everyone from production designers to actors. All previous versions of a script are also easily accessible and searchable. It's possible to email, text or Airdrop script changes in an instant. Scriptation can also connect to Dropbox. iCloud integration is in the works. The app is available on phones and tablets; the company is also working on a desktop version.

**IN PRACTICE:** Many productions have already incorporated the app, including *The Mindy Project*, *Stranger Things*, *Modern Family*, *The Walking Dead*, *Scandal*, *Star Trek: Discovery*, *Silicon Valley* and *Superstore*.

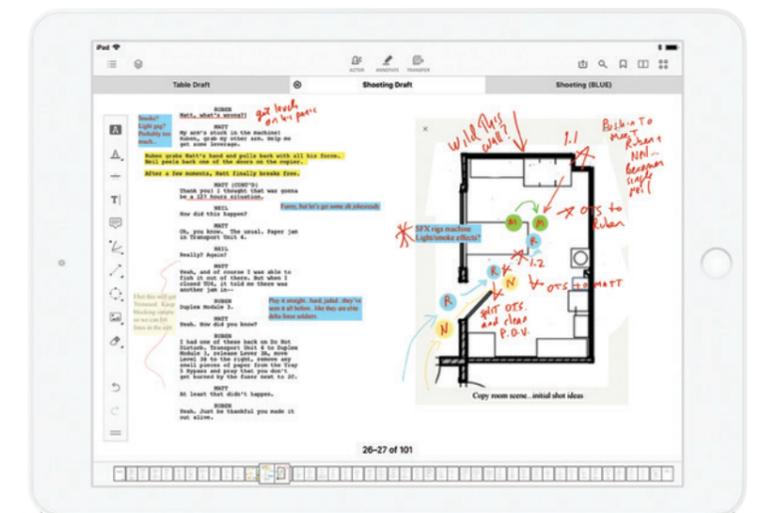
**TAKEAWAY:** "It's a total game changer as far as I'm concerned, because it's not unusual to get eight or nine drafts of a script on a project, and I'm someone who takes notes, takes photographs for reference, and when I was using paper, it was so laborious to transfer all of that over every time," says Michael Spiller, a director of *The Mindy Project* and *Superstore*. "And then you were worried about losing information from previous drafts. That doesn't happen anymore."

Adds Daniella Eisman, 1st AD for *Alone Together*, "I love the tabs that make it possible for me to jump between different versions of scripts. I've been able to get script changes at 2 a.m. and then incorporate them and walk onto a set at 7 a.m. with a script that has everything in it. I never thought I'd use something digital but this makes everything so much easier and saves me so much time."



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**Michael Spiller**  
 Director: *The Mindy Project*, *Superstore*



PHOTOS: (TOP AND BOTTOM) COURTESY OF SCRIPTATION; (MIDDLE) MITCH HADDAID/ABC