

JOEL WEBER

Creative Director · Brand Storytelling · Video · Filmmaking

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Creative director with 18+ years leading character-led brand, documentary, and narrative work, now running the creative for an in-house video studio at UnitedHealth Group. I set the creative and narrative bar, direct brand films from treatment through final cut, and build the playbooks and systems that let a team make a lot of strong work. I grew that team from 8 to 13 and a content operation that ships 1,500+ assets a year. I came up as a director and cinematographer, most recently shooting the award-winning feature Brooklyn, Minnesota starring Amy Madigan, so I still hold the craft bar myself. Working with AI generation as a hybrid layer alongside live action, using tools like Runway and Higgsfield.

CORE COMPETENCIES

- Directing character-led brand and documentary films from treatment through final cut
- Story casting, finding the compelling person and the real story inside an organization
- Writing treatments, narrative arcs, and creative briefs as daily, hands-on work
- Building creative frameworks: production playbooks, brief templates, tiered systems
- Leading and growing a bench of editors, filmmakers, and writers
- Using AI generation (Runway, Higgsfield) as a hybrid layer alongside live-action footage
- Cinematography and production craft: lighting and color pipelines across ARRI, RED, and Sony

PROFESSIONAL EXPERIENCE

Creative Director, Video

Sep 2024 – Present

UnitedHealth Group · Tilt Studios (in-house creative studio), Eden Prairie, MN

- Stepped into a studio that had no creative leadership, defined what creative direction should mean here, set the standards, and led the team day to day.
- Grew the team from 8 to 13, hiring and developing videographers, editors, and motion designers while raising the craft so the work matched the ambition behind it.
- Direct a content operation that makes 1,500+ assets a year, building the systems and workflows that keep the quality up at that volume.
- Raised in-house quality to the point that work we used to send to outside production companies, we now make ourselves, saving an estimated \$375,000 a year in directing fees alone.
- Drove the creative on enterprise reputation and brand-trust storytelling during a genuinely hard, high-scrutiny stretch, working closely with brand teams and lines of business.
- Partner across brand, marketing, agency, and corporate communications to keep our storytelling aligned with the larger brand.
- Brought virtual production and LED volume into the work, which widened what we can do and made shoots more efficient.

Cinematographer (Director of Photography), Feature Film

2024

Brooklyn, Minnesota · dir. Jessica Blank and Erik Jensen, starring Amy Madigan

- Shot the feature as director of photography, owning the look, lighting, and camera language alongside the directors across a full narrative production.
- The film premiered at the Woodstock Film Festival and won the festival's award for excellence in narrative filmmaking, and went on to win best narrative feature and an audience award elsewhere on the circuit.
- Brought a documentary instinct to a scripted drama, finding the honest, character-led moments that make a story land.

Co-Founder, Director & Cinematographer

Jan 2006 – Sep 2024

Rikshaw Films, Minneapolis, MN

- Co-founded and built an independent production studio, leading the creative and visual direction across commercials, branded content, documentary, and narrative film.
- Built brand storytelling and creative treatments for Fortune 500 clients including UnitedHealthcare, Optum, Target, and General Mills, owning the work from the first idea through final delivery, across productions in 40+ countries.
- Co-founded HealthTales, a production company devoted entirely to healthcare storytelling, with work for Mayo Clinic, Optum, and Prime Therapeutics.

Director of Photography

Jul 2008 – Dec 2014

Tremendous Entertainment / Travel Channel

- Shot and lit documentary content on location across 40+ countries for Bizarre Foods with Andrew Zimmern, a nationally broadcast Travel Channel series.
- Built the editorial and documentary instincts I still direct with, finding the real character and the honest story in every location and every subject.

EDUCATION

- Master of Science, International Business, Saint Mary's University of Minnesota
- Bachelor of Science, Film Studies, University of Minnesota