

THE BLACKLIST

BLUESCAPE[®]

 CASE STUDY

Creating the Suspense and Intrigue of "The Blacklist" Hit TV Series in the Digital Writer's Room

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"Bluescape is the next best thing to being there in person"

Jon Bokenkamp, Creator and Executive Producer of NBC's "The Blacklist"



Being in the Room

Writing is a complicated business. Sometimes writers need to sit alone in a room with nothing more than a bag of potato chips and a keyboard. Other times, they need to be in the room with other creative minds. These days, Jon Bokenkamp, the creator and executive producer of NBC's crime drama "The Blacklist," needs the latter.

"When I was a feature writer, I could work in isolation," said Bokenkamp. "Writing for TV is different; it's a highly collaborative process that requires being in the room with my team — especially when we're breaking stories and trying to turn ideas into storylines. There are so many moving parts, we need to be able to sit down, bounce ideas off one another, and chip away

until we get to the spine of the story." Never was this need more apparent than when Bokenkamp decided to leave California — and his team — to move back to his home state of Nebraska. Once there, he realized that video conferencing wasn't going to cut it. He needed a solution that would enable him not only to see the people, but also the story everyone was working on.

"That's when I found Bluescape," said Bokenkamp. "Bluescape is the next best thing to being there in person. It puts me in the room in a way that lets me see and understand the tone of what's happening and how ideas are received, and it lets me interact in real time as the story takes shape."

Bluescape Benefits

- The ability to work remotely while remaining virtually present in the same room with fellow writers.
- Enhanced collaboration and the ability to visually bring storylines to life.
- Faster and improved story development process.
- Real-time updates to storylines.
- Easy access to past episodes and character and subplot content.

About the Blacklist

Created by Jon Bokenkamp, "The Blacklist" is an NBC crime thriller television series about ex-government agent Raymond "Red" Reddington (James Spader), who, for decades, had been one of the world's most wanted fugitives. In exchange

for immunity — and on the odd condition that he work exclusively with rookie FBI profiler Elizabeth Keen (Megan Boone) — he agrees to team with the agency to catch his "blacklist" of mobsters, spies, and international terrorists.



Improving the Story Development and Creative Process

One of the biggest, yet unexpected benefits of Bluescape has been how it's helped Bokenkamp and team improve the overall storyline process.

"In the past, we'd break stories on a whiteboard — writing, erasing, rewriting entire blocks of text that would then need to be transcribed and converted into a detailed outline," he said. "With Bluescape, we've become much faster and nimbler."

"The Blacklist" writing team uses Bluescape to create and organize notecards that map to the series' six-act structure. Rather than relying on a static whiteboard, the team can now write, update, and move these notecards around in real time on the digital workspace as they flush out the storyline.

"Imagine the difference between writing a six-act story on a whiteboard versus using a flexible and infinite Bluescape canvas," said Bokenkamp. "While it may not help us come up with ideas any faster, we're able to complete the outline writing process

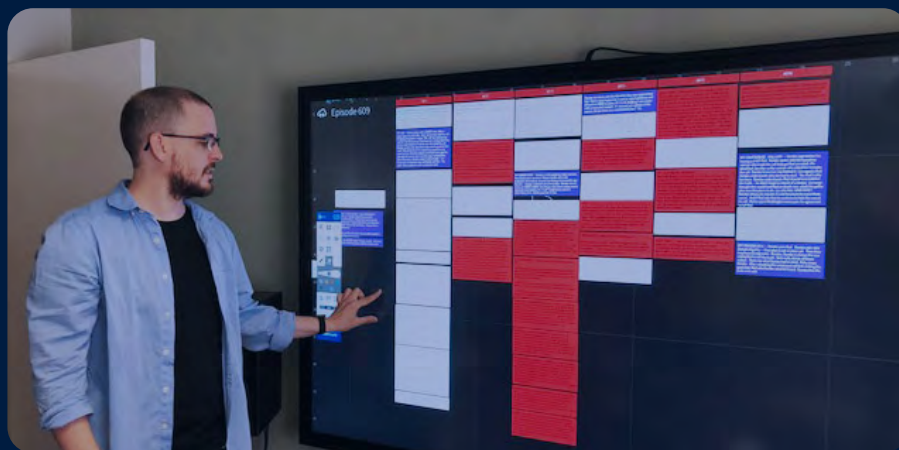
with almost perfunctory efficiency."

Additionally, Bluescape helped the team create color-coded templates that facilitate tracking of the numerous characters and storylines.

"It seems simple," said Bokenkamp, "but the use of color to distinguish the main story from subplots is incredibly useful, especially to help keep the latter alive throughout an entire episode."

A self-described luddite, Bokenkamp admitted that learning new software can be daunting, but that with Bluescape, it was relatively easy to get up and running.

"More than anything, it was a culture change for my team," he added. "The black marker and whiteboard are staples of any writers' room. Letting go of that tradition was more difficult than learning how to use the Bluescape technology. If you can tweet or log in to social media, you can quickly ramp up in Bluescape."





Leveraging Infinite Workspace to Track Storylines

The more comfortable the team got with Bluescape, the more creative they became with implementing new uses.

With a plot-heavy series like “The Blacklist,” storylines can be tricky to track. Bluescape’s infinite workspace let the writers easily revisit a season’s earlier episodes to jog their memories on the origins of the various storylines and better map out significant plot moves for future episodes.

“As plot lines shift, it’s helpful to be able to look backwards and forwards,” said Bokenkamp. “By the time you get halfway through a season’s run of 22 episodes, it can be tough to remember what happened in episode two and how it affected episode five. Bluescape not only gives us that global picture, but also allows us to manipulate it.”

One of Bokenkamp’s favorite features is the ability to write directly on the screen. He likens it to a football coach scribbling x’s and o’s to diagram plays. It’s all about options and “if this/then that.” For example, if one scene changes, it can have repercussions across other scenes. And with Bluescape, there could be a half dozen different stories created that Bokenkamp and team can pull up, reference, or adjust — whenever and from wherever.

“The biggest unexpected benefit of Bluescape is speed — in terms of how we move in the room and how quickly we turn what’s on the board into an outline; it’s helped make us much faster and nimbler. Bluescape is really the next wave of the screenwriting process.”





About Bluescape

Bluescape, a leading collaboration workspace solution, enables companies to innovate, collaborate, and work together more efficiently. Its online whiteboard gives dispersed teams a visually-rich, interactive platform to work and share multiple third party applications, documents, multi-media and web content simultaneously. Users can write, draw and add notes in real-time in the digital space to work more creatively in and beyond meetings. Founded in 2012, Bluescape is based in San Carlos, California and is a wholly owned subsidiary of Haworth. Visit Bluescape and follow us on Twitter, LinkedIn or Facebook.

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