



Producing Corporate Video- What You Need to Know

By Steve King

Studies show that people remember merely 20% of what they hear, and only 30% of what they see, and an incredible 70% what they hear and see*. With this in mind, it's no wonder that video is such a powerful communications tool.

So your company has decided they need a video. Where do you start? What questions do you ask? How can you make sure the final product is what you are expecting? This article will give you the tools you'll need to have a professional video project you can be proud of.

First, let's talk about money. As with most things, you get what you pay for. Especially with video production, if you make a decision to hire a production company solely by picking the lowest quoted bid, you will probably end up with a video that is much less than what you expected.

Remember, this video represents your company. Do you want your video to look like a high school A/V project? On the other hand, there is no reason to go crazy and spend ungodly amounts of money. It's important to find a company that gives a fair bid for the type of video you need and can produce your project in a professional manner.

What is video used for?

Video Magazines: Any regular, organisational news programme. If you have control over the playback of the message, everyone gets the message. These can include:

- Product Knowledge- demonstrations done by people best suited.
- Company news- introduce new faces, uniforms, systems, job changes etc.
- Interviews- with suppliers, new personnel, industry experts, Board members.
- Event coverage – Conferences, branch openings, product launches (archiving the history of the business).
- Preview TV & radio advertising campaigns to staff.
- Recognizing successful employees, franchisees or branches.

Company Profiles: Can be used to support tenders or business proposals, attract new clients or franchisees, or introduce the business to potential suppliers & allies.

Marketing: Presenting the features and benefits of a product or service or a particular section of the business to potential clients.

Video Elevator Pitch: see Company profiles & Marketing- but shorter!

Induction Programmes: Company orientation for new staff. Can be generalised or specific to areas such as Health & Safety,

Training: Staff, franchisees, customers, even suppliers: carefully monitored demonstration of a process or system which can be played anywhere to anyone- Sales, Merchandising, H&S, Operations, etc

Cost- effective Alternative to Roadshows: Production of one perfect presentation distributed to every audience member *versus* one or more people visiting a number of locations over days or weeks, with the added expenses of travel, accommodation, venue hire, refreshments, time away from the office...etc.

CEO Updates: Many CEOs and managers communicate regularly and personally with their teams by producing short video messages delivered on the company intranet or secure internet.

Dynamic Visual Support for Conferences: bring a presentation to life, get hearts swelling and pulses racing with explosive conference starters, record the event and edit into a personalised musical conference close with a difference, record messages and addresses from folks who can't be there in person- cross 'live' to someone who can't be there in person... endless possibilities for bringing a conference some excitement and spark

Digital Media Support – video presented on, or as support to:

- = DVD
- = Web-streaming videos/ QuickTime/ Windows Media Player
- = PowerPoint Presentations
- = your website

More categories and uses are listed on the Screentime Communications web site

What should you look for in a company?

- *Experience:* Ask to see a recent finished project- even if it's not one created for the same purpose. Is it of the caliber you are seeking? What impression do you get from the production company's showreel?
- *Testimonials:* most companies should be able to supply these but if not... Ask to see a recent client list, and ring the contacts listed.
Were they happy with the production/s?
Did it come in on budget?
What were the people like to work with?
Was the company quick to solve problems or did the client end up dealing with them?
Basically get a feel for whether the company will make the process easy for you.
- *Awards:* Has the production company won any awards for the videos they've produced? There are national and international festivals that producers can enter their projects in. If your production company has won some critical acclaim, it's a good chance that they would be a good company to produce your video.
- *What video format will they be shooting and editing on?* DVCAM and higher is still the benchmark, but these days most companies are acquiring and producing completely within the digital (tapeless) domain with all its attendant benefits.

Why not make it myself?

Of course you can. You can get a digital camcorder (or webcam!), and an iMac or PC, with all the cables and simple editing software for under \$5,000, and be shooting and editing video within hours. But think about how many weeks, months or years it took you to learn how to do your business successfully and professionally. To instinctively know all the potential problems, and take on all the skills you need to work quickly, efficiently and creatively.

Most people are born with the physical ability to talk- the ability to communicate effectively is so much more. It's a learned skill, a well-honed discipline, a distinguished art, and one that's often taken for granted. It takes an expert to be able to craft, produce and deliver a message that's received in the manner in which it was intended.

So how long do you expect it would take to pick up all the skills of video production to produce a video to the standard that presents your business in that same professional light?

As a business professional, you do what you do well. Anything you don't do, or is not considered core business, you out-source. **An experienced production company should know how to save you money by cutting corners without cutting quality.** After more than three decades of widespread television viewing, today's viewers are sophisticated; they expect broadcast quality video productions. Poorly produced pieces stand out plainly to those accustomed to seeing high quality network television programs.

Professional video creators have a skill set that makes producing videos quick and economic. When you calculate the time and money involved for purchasing, learning and shooting a video, you will easily double the cost of any production you were considering doing yourself.

If, after all this you still choose to do it yourself, we have tips on our web site that gives great pointers on how to eliminate most of the newbie mistakes.

How much will it cost?

How much is it worth? It depends on how much work it takes to make it, and who you engage to produce it. The final duration is almost the last consideration when working out the budget, so ignore those who quote a price-per-finished-minute!

For a production company to provide even a estimated budget of any relevance, you need to consider the answers to questions such as:

- **What's the video for?** *Company Profile? Staff Induction? Conference? Trade show support?* Different purposes require different approaches. 15 minutes might be just right for a product training video- but not a product demonstration that is going to be played on a trade show stand or showroom display where you'll have the audience's attention for mere seconds.
- **Who's it aimed at?** *Customers? Clients? Staff (management or factory floor)? Women over 50? And what's their current attitude to/knowledge of the subject matter?* Again, what's suitable for one audience may be completely over the heads of, "too modern", or too cheap looking for another.

Steve Cartwright puts it best in his book "Pre-production Planning for Video"

"If the (viewers) perceived 'need to know' level is very high (they understand how important the information is to them), often we can devote less resources to the production. However, if you've identified that the viewers have a low 'need to know' level, or they're not motivated to view the programme, skimping on production values will have a disastrous effect. An unmotivated audience will not watch talking heads."

Remember, the message you want to deliver may be important to you, but not as important to the audience...

- *Where might it need to be shot?* How many locations and at what times?
- *What's your budget?* A video can be produced for almost any price. Your budget determines what tools the production company can use to make it. If you've already got an idea of what figure you feel would exceed your budget then tell the production company.

Don't be embarrassed if you're thinking too low, it's the producer's job to explain what's involved, how a budget will be broken down, and why the higher investment in the production might actually be more cost effective than you imagined when compared to the possible returns. In most cases the audience's "need to know" level drives the budget.

But if you've got a maximum budget, don't waste time by getting quotes for a production you'll never afford. If you've only got \$5000, find a production company that'll give you the best \$5000 video in town! ***With video, as with most things, the highest quality seldom comes with lowest bid.***

There's a saying in video production, "You can have it good, fast, and cheap... pick two."

- And, most importantly, ***what do you want the audience to feel or know after watching the video?***

A production company should be able to provide you with a guide to delivering a meaningful brief- either on their website or by email.

What's involved in making a video?

Pre-production:

- Researching, preparing and writing the script,
- Choosing or auditioning the people who will appear in the video.
- Location scouting,
- Sourcing any existing graphics or video footage which can be used
- Choosing and booking the production crew, equipment (& studio if necessary).

Production:

The actual shooting/recording of the material and ingesting ready to edit.

Post-Production:

Editing and collating video, graphics, voice-over and music, mastering ready for duplication and archiving. In most cases this should be able to be unsupervised until you're required to take a look at the first cut and many production companies now have the ability to provide reviews of your project online so you don't even have to leave your desk.

With most editing systems making changes to a video is extremely easy (if sometimes time consuming) so your editor will work a lot faster if they can make decisions themselves. This is where having a clearly defined and agreed-on script speeds things up immeasurably.

Communication is the Key

Leading on from this, it's imperative that you know exactly what you want in a final project and that this information is communicated to the production company. What you as client may see in your minds-eye as the final product may be vastly different from the view the producer or director has in mind. Make sure everyone is on the same page from pre-production through to final editing.

The proposal and budget should be detailed and allow you follow the production company's rationale for the resources, and therefore budget, they're proposing. It should cover:

- A recap of your brief
- A suggested approach (or selection of approaches) and how this satisfies the brief
- The production resources required to deliver this approach
- The budget required for those resources.

A one page quote offering to produce your video for a specific fee gives you nothing to compare with other quotes and tells you very little (except that the company will probably put just as much effort into your video).

You may not be an expert on video, but you are an expert on your company or business.

Your insight into corporate culture and mission, internal issues and management philosophy are critical to the success of the video. On the other hand, you're hiring a production company for its expertise. Take full advantage of it by listening to their advice and by enabling them to make the bulk of the production decisions, even when you don't understand them.

In Summary

Video is the next best thing to being there, from making a stand-alone video, to teleconferencing, to DVDs, to web-videos. As a visual communications medium nothing can compare with its visual, aural, and emotional impact.

And a final bit of advice. When all the bids come in and they're within dollars of one another, or when one company's abilities are indiscernible from another's, trust your "gut feeling". Chances are that others will agree with your instincts.

*Source: Harvard Business Review

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