

Video Storytelling:

Demystifying the Process and Maximizing Return

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I. Video: Do it yourself or hire an expert?

A. There are four areas to consider when making this decision.

1. Purpose

- a) Is your video nonessential, more of a quick touch with your existing customer base, or periphery to your main goals? Consider producing it yourself.
- b) However, if your video must accomplish a critical objective, hire an expert.

2. Resources

- a) In order to produce a video, you need equipment, people, time, and ideas. Do you have all these things?
- b) Factors affecting production budgets
 - (1) Scope and nature of work
 - (2) People and time required to shoot/edit
 - (3) Number of locations
 - (4) NOT length of video

3. Content

- a) Is the content good enough to stand on its own? Or does it need some serious editing work before it makes sense?

4. Audience/Venue

- a) If your video will only live online, that may be a factor in deciding to produce it yourself. There is a place for well-produced video online, however.
- b) If your video will be shown on TV or at a big event with lots of stakeholders, you should have it produced by experts.

B. So, you decide you'd like to give it a go yourself. Here's a quick survival guide.

1. Video

- a) *Headroom*: Don't put your subject's head in the middle of the frame. Don't cut off the person's head, either, unless their head and neck fill the entire frame. You want a comfortable amount of distance between the head and the top of the screen, but not too much.
- b) *Rule of Thirds*: Divide your frame into thirds, horizontally and vertically, so you're looking at a grid of nine rectangles. Many cameras have a feature that will do this, but you can also do it mentally. Place important items in the frame along these lines or at their intersections.
- c) *Lighting*: Avoid harsh light and shadows. Don't make your subjects look into the sun. It's not a bad idea to shoot outside so you know everything will be well lit. If you shoot inside, try to get SOME sort of extra light on your subject. It will help them stand out from the background and make your scene more visually appealing.

2. Audio

- a) *Use Headphones*. Nearly all video cameras have a headphone jack. Plug some headphones in while you're filming so you can accurately monitor what the video is going to sound like.
- b) *Eliminate Noise*. Do everything you can to eliminate background noise. Trust us, you'll thank yourself later! Turn off A/C units, tell neighbors to be quiet, move to another location, etc.

3. Content

- a) *Keep it simple*. If your audience can only learn one thing from your video, what is it? Focus on driving home a few main points.
- b) *Be authentic*. The primary advantage of self-produced video is that it has a real, raw, authentic feel to it. Play to that strength with your content.
- c) *Tell a story*. Try as hard as you can to have a purposeful narrative, a beginning, middle, and end to your video.
- d) *Know your audience*. Keep your audience in mind every step of the way. Ask yourself, would this make sense to them? Would they be interested in this part? Would this section motivate them?

C. So, you decide to hire a production company, here's the value they can bring...

1. First: all that stuff we just talked about? Forget it. They'll handle it (and way more!)

2. You're an expert at what you do. You're (likely) not an expert at video. You don't have the time! Hand it off to someone who knows what they're doing.
3. They'll bring a fresh perspective and second opinion to the table. How many times have you felt yourself to be stuck in a marketing rut? An outside creative team can provide that spark you may need.
4. These companies are and should be expert storytellers. They know how to use video to charm and persuade more than anyone out there.

II. The Art of Storytelling

A. Remember to construct your video around the traditional Story Arc

1. Challenge: The initial problem.
2. Struggle: The journey we take to solve the problem, building tension along the way.
3. Resolution: The triumphant moment when the problem is solved or we realize that there's hope in solving it.

B. Aristotle's Rhetorical Triangle as a Framework for Persuasion

1. Ethos - Boost your credibility
 - a) Tell the backstory of your organization. People love to hear that stuff.
 - b) It's OK to be transparent and authentic.
2. Pathos - Use emotional appeals to ignite passion
 - a) Violate expectations. This reengages the viewers attention.
 - b) Make sure to include a feeling of hope to assuage any fear.
 - c) Make the viewer feel like a hero, like they can help be a part of the solution. Or, make them sympathize with a hero in the story.
3. Include tension and drama to retain attention.
4. Logos - Use logical appeals to stimulate the brain
 - a) Tucking and folding stats: If you include the stats inside the story, viewers will naturally pair the two when they think about them later.
 - b) If your video is all emotional, you may get an immediate but short-lived response. Engage both the heart AND mind, and you've gained a long-term fan.

III. So you've got your video. Now What? How do you share it?

A. TV: Media Buying 101

1. Hire an expert.
 - a) Media Buyers are generally paid a 15% agency commission directly from the station. While you could get 15% off your media buy by acting as your own agency, the added value a media buyer brings is worth more than that.
 - b) You could never stay up-to-date with all the media trends to make sure you're getting a fair deal. You need an advocate.
2. Remember: everything's negotiable.
 - a) A station's top clients can sometimes be paying as low as half of the rate card.
3. Plan Long Term
 - a) You'll not only get a better deal from the station, you'll get first-come, first-serve placement.
4. Segment and Target
 - a) You can't afford to hit everyone. Don't even try.
 - b) Imagine you have 100 seeds, but only one pail of water. Now, you can either fully water 20 seeds, or partially water all 100. Would you rather have twenty full grown trees or 100 seeds that died before they even sprouted?
 - (1) The point is, you have a limited amount of money. You'd rather have 5 customers than 20 people that didn't see your ad enough times to become customers.
5. Use common sense in picking programs / stations.
 - a) Don't pick programs you like or watch. Pick programs your audience watches.
 - b) It's OK to stereotype a bit. Targeting guys? Pick football. Targeting stay-at-home-parents? Pick some daytime shows.
6. Be wary of packages
 - a) They can be good deals, but they're usually for the station's benefit, not yours.
 - b) It's better to spend the money on a package customized to your needs. Even if you get a great deal, who cares if you get 20 spots in some program that your audience doesn't even know about?

7. Understand the Metrics

- a) It's an imperfect system. Millions (excuse me, billions) of dollars are spent every year based on the relative handful of volunteer handwritten diaries. How crazy is that?
- b) Rating: 1 rating point is 1% of the TV household market.
 - (1) Typical Husker Game here in Lincoln/Omaha can hit 30 rating points. Typical primetime show is around 5-10 points.
- c) Share: Percent of TV households that are watching TV at a given time.
- d) Reach: Percent of your target audience who will see your ad.
- e) Frequency: The number of times your audience will see your ad.
 - (1) If you can hit 3 or 4 in a 2 week time period on TV, you're a rockstar.
- f) GRP (Gross Rating Points) = Reach x Frequency. Used to assess effectiveness of a schedule.
 - (1) Shoot for 300-400 over two weeks if you're building up for a big event.
- g) CPP = Cost Per (Ratings) Point
 - (1) Useful for comparing media buys from different stations, but difficult to compare apples to apples sometimes.
- h) CPM = Cost Per Thousand (people reached)
 - (1) Also useful for comparing media buys from different stations.
 - (2) It's an 'M' instead of a 'T' because...that's just how it is. M is the Roman Numeral for 1000.

B. Online

1. Always keep your goal in mind.

- a) Driving traffic to your site? Getting more Likes on FB? Filling up your YouTube Channel? If your video doesn't lead to SOME sort of next step online, it's not worth showing.

2. SEO

- a) Keep your videos around 2.5 minutes if you can. While the average video length is around the 5 minute mark on the web, the average time spent watching those videos is only 2:45.

- b) Google places a lot of emphasis on video content now. It can boost your SEO tremendously.

(1) Do a Google search for something, and videos are likely the top hits!

3. Social

- a) Get your video in front of social mavens and connectors. Find your advocates and let them share the video for you.
- b) Post your stuff in more than one place, and keep posting it.

C. Local & Live Scenarios

1. Sales Meetings: Is there an opportunity for you to use video in small one-on-one or one-on-five meetings?

- a) Instant Credibility
- b) Tells some backstory
- c) Can be a replacement for principals

2. Tradeshows

- a) Have a killer, media-driven booth
- b) Remember: it's loud. Don't expect people to pay attention to the sound of a video on a big screen at your booth. Make sure the video can stand without audio.
- c) Once they're in your booth, engage them with an iPad and some headphones. Let them get lost in the experience.

3. Live Events Checklist

- a) Beforehand:
 - (1) Did you get there ahead of time to check out the equipment?
 - (2) Did you test everything? Did you test it again? Make sure to simulate the actual showing environment as much as possible.
 - (3) Be sure to think about what your video looks and sounds like under poor circumstances. Most of the audience will probably have a poor viewing angle and won't be right in front of a speaker. Make sure your video can rise above this.

b) At the event:

- (1) Darken the room. It removes distractions and enhances the emotional connection to the video: makes it special.
- (2) Turn it up! Think of how loud movie theaters are. Its that way for a reason...it transports the viewer.
- (3) Never play from online source. Play locally from your computers hard drive or from a DVD player.
- (4) Have a plan 'B' (and plan 'C') if something goes wrong.

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