



VIDEO PRODUCTION TIPS

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Colorado Springs Utilities
It's how we're all connected



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Video Production Tips

Before You Begin

1. Educate yourself – Learn as much as possible about the technology, workflows and geek-speak.
 2. Link your video production goals to company business. How does video production align with your business goals?
 3. Get management buy-in. Equipment and software costs can be significant. You'll have to provide a rationale for purchasing equipment.
 4. Make video production costs a regular part of your budget.
 5. Befriend your IT department! They can make or break your video production plans. Work closely with them every step of the way!
 6. Develop and coordinate technology standards. Using an approved standard set of media delivery technologies will drastically improve your odds for success.
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Pre-Production

1. Know your customers and their business.
2. Involve decision-makers.
3. Communicate expectations.
4. Agree on the output – DVD, CD, Web, CD, LMS, blog, Facebook, YouTube, training course, etc.
5. Consider the possibilities of still imagery – Still image productions can cost significantly less and take less time to produce.
6. Consider shelf life – If possible, use captions to label people and/or their titles. Should the featured actor change positions, changing or removing the caption is a lot easier than reshooting.
7. Always write a script- Don't allow your talent to improvise. It doesn't work!
8. When writing a script, information alone isn't enough. Information will bore your audience to death. Try to tell a story.
9. Review script with ALL stakeholders.
10. Use a Storyboard.
11. Review storyboard with ALL stakeholders.
12. Carefully choose your shoot location. Are there issues that could negatively impact your production shoot? Things like safety hazards, noise, poor lighting, people not involved in the production who might get in the way, etc.
13. Video Shoot Location Survey - Conduct a pre-shoot visit and survey for possible issues.

14. Lighting – If shooting outdoors, avoid direct high sun shooting. If indoors, make sure there is plenty of “good” light.
15. Audio – If possible, plan on using lavalier and/or shotgun microphones and plan to monitor your audio input while shooting using a good pair of headphones.
16. Casting – Choose the right talent for the video. If you’re shooting a humorous production, avoid using a “serious” person with no sense of humor.
17. Attire – Strongly suggest what your talent should wear; even if it’s the big boss. Visit the following link for suggestions for looking your best on camera:
<http://www.barlowpro.com/video-production/dress-tips.aspx>
Generally speaking, your talent should avoid wearing:
 - a. Busy, patterned or bright clothing (including white)
 - b. Tight patterned clothing - tend to create optical illusions on camera. Simple no-patterned ties work better than busy ties.
 - c. Eye glasses that reflect light. Repositioning your actor or adjusting light might be necessary.
 - d. Jewelry that reflects light and/or creates unwanted audio noise.
 - e. Clothing that makes a lavalier microphone stand out on camera.
18. Pack hairspray and makeup. Encourage talent to bring a backup set of clothes. We keep a few company shirts in stock just in case.
19. Indicate to your talent that makeup might be necessary. You’ll want to avoid shiny faces or heads and sometimes makeup is the only solution. Pack at least some foundation makeup.
20. Consider hiring a voiceover professional. They work faster and provide better results. The cost of recording an employee or SME can equal or cost more than hiring a pro.
21. Consider a tapeless solution.
22. Estimate length of shoot and communicate to all participants. Consider adding 30% more time than you anticipate. Minor snags can increase production time.
23. Pack extra batteries and cables. If possible, use AC power.
24. Invite all involved in the project to the production shoot – ask them to arrive early.
25. Use a checklist – There are too many pieces of equipment to remember from memory.

Production

1. Arrive early.
2. Bring copies of the script.
3. Use a tripod unless impossible to do so.
4. Be prepared to post the script for your talent, i.e. teleprompter, cue cards, etc.
5. Conduct a pre-shoot briefing with production crew and talent.
6. Test lighting before shooting- One actor to the next can look different under the same lighting conditions due to complexion, hair color, clothing, etc. Be prepared to adjust from one actor to the next.
7. Test audio before shooting- One actor to the next can sound different in the same environment due to voice quality, inflection, projection, etc. Be prepared to adjust from one actor to the next.
8. Log your scenes/clips – A notebook works.
9. Shoot for the best take as possible. Avoid accepting mediocre clips. Post production corrections, edits, and splicing multiple takes together to create a continuous scene can take an enormous

amount of time. “Pay now or pay later” is true when it comes to production/post-production time. Taking the time for good takes up front will save you time and money later.

10. Coach your talent – The goal is to make them look good while achieving the mission of the production. Explain this to them and communicate your coaching process/technique. This will sometimes mean being brutally honest. Regardless, always be positive and constructive when coaching. Nervous or tense actors typically project their state of mind on camera. Keep them as relaxed as possible. Kind humor always helps.
11. Shoot B-roll footage – Helps bring context to the production and allows for cutaways in case something doesn’t look right on screen with your talent.

Post Production

1. Consider branding - consistency is best if you plan to rollout a series. Consider consistent introduction screens, logos, soundtracks, etc.
2. Gather graphics, clips, audio effects, and soundtracks including background scenery if using chromakey (green screen) prior to importing to your production tool.
3. Use only assets that contribute to the production. Graphics or soundtracks that don’t match the production will only deter from your final product.
4. Be aware of copyright laws.
5. Before you begin the editing phase, organize project assets including clearly labeling your video/audio clips, graphics, and soundtracks.
6. Output for customer review – Explain the review process to the team. Publishing to a server and sending a URL to team can work. Reviewing together works better. By this point, there should be no surprises if stakeholders were involved in the process.
7. Subjectivity can be your enemy – nitpicky feedback can significantly delay your project. Ask for constructive feedback.
8. Avoid becoming emotionally attached to your productions
9. Be flexible.
10. Low-fidelity can work if the story is good. It doesn’t always have to be a Hollywood-quality production!



Video Production Tools

Before You Begin

1. If building for training purposes, use a training needs analysis tool and process.
 2. Word processor for scriptwriting – See links to Texas Pictures Industrial Strength Storytelling resources on included Video Terms, Links, and Resources document.
 3. Storyboard – Consider apps priced at a reasonable cost.
 4. Voiceover talent (if necessary) – Cost for voiceovers varies based on length of production.
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Production

1. Camcorder - \$150-\$5000
 - Canon XL2 camcorders*
2. Digital Camera (optional but can add significant impact) - \$100-\$2000
 - Nikon D70*
3. Tripod - \$50-\$500
 - Manfrotto*
4. Microphones
 - Wireless Lavalier - \$300-\$1000
 - Azden 330 ULT*
 - Shotgun - \$150 - \$800
 - 2 – Audio Technica AT8035 Shotgun microphones*
5. Teleprompter - \$800-\$5000 (consider apps for significantly less)
6. Cables - \$20-\$1000
7. Lights - \$200 - \$2000
 - Flolights Kit 330AW3*
8. Scripts – Use teleprompter or cue cards.

9. Portable DTE Recorder (Tapeless) - \$1000 - \$2000
 - Focus FS-5 120 GB DTE (Direct to Edit) Recorder*
10. Room acoustical treatment if indoors in a “controlled” environment - \$300 - \$10,000
 - Auralex Room Kit*
11. Support personnel – Bring enough support staff to your production shoot. Costs can vary depending on number and price of your support crew. Remind your boss that using a professional production company for a 5-minute video can range from \$8000-\$20,000! Most companies can’t afford this price point and the cost of one production is enough to buy plenty of equipment to get you going.

Post Production

1. Computer – More power is best as rendering video takes lots of horsepower - \$1500 - \$4000
 - Dell Precision T5500 Workstations*
 - Quad Core Xeon Processors, ES606 – 2.13GHz*
 - Windows 7 Pro, SP1 64-bit*
 - NVIDIA Quadro 4000 graphics cards*
 - Dual monitors*
2. Video-editing software - \$100-\$1000
 - Adobe Premiere*
 - Photodex ProShow Producer*
3. Audio-editing software - \$0 - \$500
 - Adobe Audition*
4. DVD editing/burning software - \$60-\$400
 - Adobe Encore*
5. Graphics software - \$50-\$800
 - Adobe Fireworks*
 - Adobe Photoshop*
 - Techsmith Snagit!*
6. Soundtrack software - \$99-?
 - Many options to purchase music libraries as needed
 - Smart Sound Sonic Fire Pro*
7. Multiple CD/DVD Burning Tower - \$200 - \$1000*

*Indicates equipment used at Colorado Springs Utilities.



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Video Terms, Links, and Resources

Good-to-Know Terms

Analog - The process of taking audio or video and translating it into electronic pulses. Older technology that degrades after each use, i.e. cassette recording, VHS tape, etc.

Aspect Ratio - The shape of an image or frame, expressed as the width-to-height ratio. **Widescreen** film uses a **16:9 aspect ratio (1.78:1)**, whereas **standard television** uses **4:3**.

B-Roll Footage - Video footage, often without a narration or sound track, used by broadcasters/videographers to supplement the main elements of a production.

Clip - A short piece of video and/or audio, often containing an individual *scene*.

Close-up (CU) - A tightly framed camera shot in which the principal subject is viewed at close range.

Compression - To reduce the size of audio or video data through the use of a compression scheme. Also called **encode**.

Digital - Audio or video pulses converted into binary code or a series of 1s and 0s. No degradation quality after many uses.

Dolly - Physical movement of the camera toward or away from a subject. The effect may seem to be the same as zooming, but dollying in or out results in a more dramatic change in perspective than using the zoom.

Establishing Shot - The opening picture of a program or scene. Usually, a wide and/or distant perspective that serves to orient the viewer to the overall setting and surroundings.

Firewire - A digital data interface standard that provides a high-speed Plug-and-Play interface for personal computers. Used for connecting DV camcorders to computers, as well as to hard disk drives and DVD drives.

Frame Rate - Playback speed as determined in frames per second. Film is presented at 24 frames per second (FPS).

Pan - Horizontal camera pivot, right to left or left to right, from a stationary position.

Render - To generate a video production in its final form, including transitions, effects, and superimposed tracks. You can render portions of a Timeline in order to preview your edits at that point, or render the entire production before exporting it in its final form.

Sample Rate - The rate at which samples of a continuous signal, such as music or a sound are captured into a digital representation of the original signal. A higher audio sampling rate, with more samples per second, creates a more accurate representation of the original sound.

Scene - A single video sequence, typically shot in one continuous take.

Tilt - A vertical camera movement from a single axis as on a tripod.

Tracking - A lateral camera movement traveling with a moving subject.

Transcode - To convert from one compression format to another, i.e., digital video format to MPEG-2 for DVD or Flash for Web delivery.

Transition - A visual effect to segue from the end of one clip or scene and the start of the next.

Links

Digital Video Editing Terminology: http://www.manifest-tech.com/links/video_terms.htm

Elements of the Video Script: <http://www.mindspring.com/~mmm/element.html>

Videomaker (Your Guide to Creating and Publishing Great Video): <http://www.videomaker.com/>

How-to Plan Your Video Production Part 2:

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=09sM4ZomXRI&feature=related>

Custom Soundtrack Options:

- <http://www.smartsound.com/sonicfire/> - This is what Colorado Springs Utilities uses.
- <http://www.royaltyfreemusic.com/>
- <http://www.royaltyfreemusic.com/>
- <http://www.productiontrax.com/index.php>
- <http://musicbakery.com/>
- <http://www.premiumbeat.com/>
- <http://www.jewelbeat.com/>

Cue Prompter.com (Online teleprompter): <http://cueprompter.com/>

EasyPrompter Pro! (Online teleprompter): <http://www.easyprompter.com/>

25 Filmmaking Apps for the iPad & iPhone: <http://filmmakeriq.com/2010/07/22-filmmaking-apps-for-the-ipad-iphone/>

eLearning Guild – Information, networking, and community for eLearning professionals. Various membership levels available with access to many live forums per year and hundreds of archived (recorded) forums: <http://www.elearningguild.com>

When it Makes Sense to Pay for Professional Narration: <http://www.articulate.com/rapid-elearning/when-it-makes-sense-to-pay-for-professional-narration/>

What does a corporate web video cost? 25 Factors (with prices) that affect corporate video production costs: <http://onemarketmedia.com/blog/2010/03/what-does-a-web-video-cost-25-factors-with-prices-that-affect-video-production-costs/>

Corporate Video Production – What Works Today and Why:
<http://onemarketmedia.com/blog/2012/04/corporate-video-production-what-works-today-and-why/>

Auralex Acoustical Treatment Products:
<http://www.auralex.com>

Additional Resources

Texas Pictures – Industrial Strength Storytelling - <http://www.texas-pictures.com/resources.html>

- [Understanding Corporate Video Production](#) - This PDF document, written by Glen Muse over 15 years ago, describes the video production process, and includes valuable information that can help make your production experience painless and fun.
- [Scriptwriting Template](#) – Contains general instructions about scriptwriting and a table-based template for a standard industrial format script suitable for video or multimedia applications.