

Lights, Camera, Action - Tips For Producing Online Marketing Videos

by Len Stein, Thursday, November 7, 2013 8 AM

"Video is so complicated. I wouldn't know where to begin." Many marketing managers, especially at small businesses, believe video is too expensive and time consuming -- and anyway, who's watching?

On the surface, producing videos as part of an ongoing marketing communications program can seem a daunting task. But video is an essential component of a complete marketing plan. Ignoring the opportunities that video presents only limits your ability to influence key audiences.

People *are* watching and searching for video content to solve problems ranging from balky garbage disposals to writing marketing plans. Well-crafted videos can do something for your business that nothing else can -- replicate face-to-face interaction with you, your services, and brand. And in our sensory overloaded era, when facts and stats have lost much persuasive power, stories still engage and persuade -- making video perhaps the most effective way to share your brand stories.

Still there is much to be done before beginning production; one must attend to pre-planning, beginning with choosing the right style of video, including:

Intro. A video that introduces browsers to your business, posted on the home page and/or distributed via social networks.

Behind the scenes. Shows customers a side of the business they haven't seen or educates them about your business.

The authority. Uses your expertise to promote your company while educating viewers.

Next, consider key production issues when contemplating adding video to your marketing program, including:

- Production and script development
- Video equipment
- How to get the best lighting
- Framing scenes
- Audio
- Editing and postproduction
- Uploading and publishing online
- Optimizing for search

This is an imposing list, but it's also an opportunity for business to display its' personality in action, making it available to anyone on any screen, anywhere, anytime.

Six steps for creating online videos

So let's roll. These six steps will help you become a seasoned producer.

1. Commit to a regular production schedule

Your videos will not get produced until you commit to making them a priority, creating a production calendar and investing the time required. Then, when possible, shoot several videos in one day to eliminate set-up time.

2. Create an on-set environment

There's no need to invest a fortune in creating sets. Your office or work environment should provide several naturalistic settings. Then carefully select a background, and take the time to set up the shots to eliminate distracting elements.

3. Develop a format

Establish a *style* for your video content: Talking head, Q&A, guest interview series, or step-by-step guide? Then storyboard a dozen topics to define a subject niche you can continuously explore.

4. Rehearse

Write script in hand, practice aloud. Time yourself! Ruthlessly rewrite until you've removed the fluff and reached the desired length (no more than five minutes, please). Once familiar with the script, practice the words while walking the dog or taking a shower to really lock them in.

5. Get help when needed

If you don't have the knack for cameras and lights, or don't care to invest time to learn to edit, you can easily locate a college film student who needs some cash and wants to build a portfolio.

6. Let your personality shine

Your audience wants to see the real deal. Be yourself. Try to have some fun with the script, if the material allows, and let your audience enjoy the ride. You can't please everyone anyway, so please yourself and keep at it. Practice is the way to Carnegie Hall.

Still not convinced you can learn to shoot a great video? Then consider turning to [50 Grove](#), an online directory of video producers, curated by Wistia, which includes a list of professionals who shoot advertising, product, training and testimonial videos.

If you feel ready to go it alone, shooting professional looking video doesn't require a *Star Wars* budget. For less than \$100, you can pick up the basics for a [lighting kit](#) at Home Depot to give your videos a professional look. So grab that megaphone. Action!