

WIREDVIDEO.NET

STEP GUIDE TO COMMISSIONING VIDEO CONTENT - 2011.

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Each film is unique, but the process of taking your messages and turning them into images and sounds which will fix them indelibly in the brains of your audience is basically the same be it a feature film, a music video, a training film or an advert.

Everybody knows that creating professional video is an extremely labour intensive process. Even if you have been through this process many times before it can be daunting. It is all the more frightening if you are not sure what exactly is involved in the process.

We have written this step guide to take you through the basics of video production, to guide you through the whole process from the questions you should be asking yourself before contacting a production company to the outcomes you should expect from your video and techniques for evaluating the impact of your film and maximizing its reach.

STEP 1 > Things you need to know. Work you need to do.

The first step to commissioning a film will take place in your organization. Some bright spark has suggested making a video. This may be a great idea, but equally it could be a total waste of time, money and other resources. Sometimes you should just be sending a memo, holding a meeting, or commissioning a report. The following questions should help you decide.

>WHY DO YOU WANT TO MAKE A VIDEO?

Video is an excellent way to make an impact on your audience, to tell a story, to make them care about an issue, to make them aware of a product, to show them something new or how to do something, or to stimulate interest in a subject. It is definitely not a good way of getting across details, giving a lot of analysis.

>WHAT OUTCOMES DO YOU WANT?

What is the exact effect you want the film to have on the audience? Do you want them to immediately go out and buy your product? Change their behaviour in a certain way? Be entertained and come back next week to watch more?

>WHAT IS YOUR MESSAGE?

When you know what effect you want the film to have you should be able to very clearly define the 'message' of the film.

You might want to tell the audience about all the wonderful things your organisation does, but is that the most effective way of using those precious minutes when you have their attention? How much information did you retain from the last film you watched on TV? You should have one key message, and no more than a few secondary messages.

>WHO IS YOUR AUDIENCE?

By clearly defining your message and outcomes you will also clearly define who exactly you want to reach with that message. You may find that there are several messages and each has a different target audience. These days this it is easier, and cheaper, than ever to reach the audience you want thanks

to the internet. It may be cost effective to create slightly different films to talk to the different audiences. It is vital to remember, nothing can make somebody engage with a film that tells them things they **already** know or that are irrelevant to them. If you know your audience, you can give them something they will thank you for.

>HOW WILL THEY WATCH THE FILM?

Once you know who your audience(s) is/are you can decide how you are going to get them to watch the film. Providing that you have a clearly defined audience, the producer can help you devise a distribution strategy, which today will almost always involve an online element. Remember making the film is just one part of the process, if you don't have a realistic plan, and a probably a budget, for distributing your film how are people going to watch it?

>WHEN IS MY DEADLINE?

There is probably an ideal time for you to release the finished video. Maybe it is a product launch, an annual meeting, a conference, an exhibition, the publication of a report, a film festival deadline, the release of another film. It helps everyone to have a realistic deadline to aim for. If you can tie it in with some related news event then maybe you can get some free publicity?

>WHAT IS MY BUDGET?

There are always many different ways to make a film or video, your budget is one of the major factors determining the way to try and communicate your message. Even if you are trying to get the lowest possible quote for the work, you should determine parameters within which to work. As in all fields, the cheapest quote will not always be the best value for money.

REMEMBER The budget for filming **MUST** be accompanied by a budget for distribution. The work involved getting people to watch your film is often much more than in making it.

When working on a very limited budget, it is useful to give the producer a rough idea of your budget – between £X and £Y, or below £X. There are many different ways to do most things and they will be able to tell you clearly what they can do for that amount rather than giving you irrelevant quotes.

When you have the answers to these questions you are ready to approach a producer. Their job is to propose the best ways to convey your message to your audience within your budget and timeframe in order to achieve the outcomes that are the overall yardstick of the film's success.

Standard practice is to compile the answers to these questions into a "brief" or "tender" document, which is submitted to a number of production companies (generally 3 to 5). A good producer should respond to your enquiry with a written film proposal, a draft budget and some examples of previous work, before being invited in for a meeting.

STEP 2 > Pre-production: Planning the film.

Once you have chosen the producer, the client and the producer meet to finalise all the elements from the proposal to produce an itemised budget and suggested shooting schedule.

Production Schedule will be created in consultation with all the people involved. This will translate all of the elements in the desired final programme into days of production and post-production.

The schedule covers research and scripting needs, detailing the "look" for the video, the selection of those people and locations to appear in the video, identifying special graphical elements such as animation, determining the need for narration and music, any travel needs, and overall programme length.

Once these are agreed a contract will be signed, and it is normal to pay a deposit of up to half the total budget up front. During the shoot the client should sign off any additions to the initial budget – though it is normal that costs for transport and courier fees will be additional.

At this stage it is normal for a producer to talk through the distribution strategy for the film, whether or not the production company will be involved in this aspect of the project. Neither the importance of this stage nor the difficulty of effectively reaching your audience can be underestimated.

STEP 3 > Production: Making Movies.

The production phase is often the most exciting phase of the process. All the pre-production ideas have to be translated into actual moving images.

The actual recording of the programme elements may take place over a day, a period of days, weeks or months and can be done locally or in another city, another country or countries, in a studio, office or outside on location. All of these variables having been determined in the pre-production phase.

It is important to bear in mind that film-making is not an exact science, especially if filming 'on location', rather than in the controlled environment of a studio. There are always factors - like the weather, the behaviour of children or their adult equivalents, actors, that are outside the director's control.

The client should be available, or at least contactable, for some, if not all, of the production phase in case any last minute problems arise that will mean changes to the agreed script.

STEP 4 > Post-production: Editing, Graphics, Visual Effects, Music.

In the post-production phase all of your footage is then copied, edited and 'shaped' into its final form in a series of stages, which may take several weeks, or even months.

These steps include:

- Logging and capturing the footage - This will inform us of exactly what has been recorded and putting all elements into digital format, or these days more likely transferring from one digital device to another.
- The 'Rough Edit' – This is usually the longest single phase of assembling your programme. It may take a few days, weeks or even a few months.
- Consultation – It is essential that the client has adequate time built into the schedule to show a rough edit to everybody involved in their decision making process, so that a comprehensive list of changes can be drawn up before the film is finalised.
- Music – depending on your budget you can choose to have music especially composed, or use library music tracks. Often people will want to use a well known track from the charts, but generally licensing this music is not only economically unrealistic, it also involves a bureaucratic process of applications and long waits before eventual rejection. It is generally better to choose the kind of track your audience will like, and then commission music that will be appropriate – which could even be a 'soundalike' track. Often the large online music libraries will have tracks which are appropriate.
- Creating Final Narration, Graphics, Titles, Credits, Animation. In the rough stage time consuming 'fiddly' elements can't be fully completed until the overall structure of the film has been finalized
- Mastering your final Edit – production of the final 'master' copy of the video in a format that can then be duplicated as many times and in whatever formats, as required.

STEP 5 > Distribution: Get it out there!

In your initial discussions with the producer, and in the pre-production phase, you will already have talked about a distribution strategy.

Simply put this is simply maximising the impact of your video.

You will have already decided, and budgeted for, a number of copies of your video in various formats, to be duplicated from the 'master' copy supplied by the producer. The formats will depend on the intended audience, these days demand for an encoded clip of the video for use on a website is by far the most popular format – though, of course, there is still some demand for DVDs.

If your project could attract attention from television, perhaps it would also be worth preparing a Video News Release (VNR), high quality highlights from the video without captions or graphics, which can be used easily in news bulletins.

We generally advise clients to hold 'premiere' screening. You don't have to have a red carpet, but after all the hard work and time and money spent it seems right to celebrate and get some immediate reactions from an invited audience – one way to make sure some of them definitely see it.

NO MORE STEPS> The End. Final Credits.

Now you should go back to stage one, and answer the key questions:

>WHY DO YOU WANT TO MAKE A VIDEO?

>WHAT OUTCOMES DO YOU DESIRE?

>WHAT IS YOUR MESSAGE?

>WHO IS YOUR AUDIENCE?

>HOW WILL THEY WATCH THE FILM?

>WHEN IS MY DEADLINE?

>WHAT IS MY BUDGET?

Then contact WIREDVIDEO.NET for a no obligation consultation and quotation.