

4.7.7: Designing a Video for Your Needs

Learning Outcome

- Describe the process of planning, designing, and producing a video as a visual aid

If circumstances present themselves, you may want to consider creating your own video as a visual aid. This means you might need to wear multiple hats—screenwriter, director, and producer.

Let's imagine a scenario where you work for a pet supply retailer, and you've been asked to put together a video that helps your human resources department recruit the right individuals for positions in the retail stores, distribution center, and corporate office. The video should cover four or five different elements, is only a couple of minutes long, and has a medium level of complexity. Feel free to skip steps as you see fit, based on the complexity of your project. Let's get started!

Writing the Story

Videos are a storytelling tool, so first you need to determine what story you want to tell. You do this by:

- **Interviewing stakeholders.** Always sit down with a subject matter expert (SME) to determine what needs to be covered in the video. In order to determine what you want to advertise about your workplace, sit down with your recruiters and find out why people come to work at your company. In the case of the pet supply company, you find out that people enjoy working for the company because they love animals, they like the people they work with, and they get to learn great things. They also enjoy interacting with their customers and the community. Good information! These ideas and concepts will be the building blocks of your story.
- **Assembling a storyline or storyboard.** If you're going to highlight these qualities in a video, you need to put together the outline of a story. In the video it's a good idea to start out with a couple of broad statements about what it's like to work at the company. Then you'll cover each one of those reasons people work for your company (loving animals, great teams, etc.) a little more in depth. Finally, you'll end with a couple of thoughts that reinforce that your company is a good place to work.
- **Writing a script.** If you have very specific items that you want to capture, this would be the point at which you'd assemble a script. Sticking with the pet supply example, you're going to go out on the road with your camera and interview people who work for the company. It's better to let them tell you in their own words what they like about working at the company, and maybe ask a couple of questions that lead them to talk about loving animals or enjoying their interactions with customers. However, if you want a very polished, smooth video (for sales purposes, let's say) you might want to write a script. If you do, read it through out loud a few times to make sure it sounds as good as it looks.
- **Choosing people to interview.** Once you know what you want to do, send out a message to your field leaders in all areas of the business. Those leaders have a really good idea which of their employees would enjoy the opportunity to talk about their work. They'll assist you in choosing employees who would interview well and have great things to say.

Getting Ready to Film

Now that you have a basic idea of what kind of story you want to tell and how you're going to tell it, you're going to pack up your equipment and get on the road. The things you will need:

- **Your camera.** Today, most decent digital cameras have video capability. Make sure you have a good camera and lens, particularly if your final product is going to be shown on a large screen. A good DSLR (digital single lens reflex) camera is more than adequate to capture high-quality digital video. Most cameras are pretty point-and-shoot friendly, but read the instruction booklet carefully if it's your first time using the camera. Make sure you have a cloth for cleaning the lens, and make sure your batteries are charged!
- **Your microphones.** Good mics, even wired or wireless lapel mics, are fairly inexpensive. Pack a couple to take along with you so you can capture the best sound quality possible. If you're following a group of people around from place to place and trying to capture sound, a horn mic is an excellent option that won't restrict your sound capture. Pack a couple of batteries for each device so you're not caught off guard. (Note: it's always good to have a second source of sound in case a microphone fails. Videographers often use handheld sound capture devices to record while they're filming, to keep as a backup).
- **Your tripod.** Find a good, sturdy tripod that allows you to keep the camera still while shooting, and pan (move) the camera right, left, up and down. Even though it's a little heavier, purchase a tripod that has some heft so the camera's not easily knocked over. If you want to be able to move around more, look for tripod tools like a dolly (wheels for the tripod) or a

monopod, which is a one-legged post/pod that helps stabilize your camera while you're filming but allows you to move more easily and get into tighter spaces.

- **Your script and notes.** Don't forget to write down the questions you want to ask or the script you want your subjects to read/act out. Look it over a few times in advance and familiarize yourself with what needs to happen while you're onsite at the video shoot.

You can also consider things like lighting and make-up if you're going for a more professional look. You can contract with a video company to do the actual filming if you prefer to hand those details off to an "expert." OR...you can head out with your mobile phone and forget all the extras.

Filming Your Video

You've arrived at your filming location, and the person your interviewing is ready to go! You'll need to get your equipment set up and then start your filming. Remember to

- Scope out a quiet but well-lit place to do your filming. Today you're interviewing a store team member, so you may want to film in one of the aisles of the store, but find one that doesn't get a lot of foot traffic!
- Make sure your camera is securely on the tripod
- Test all the equipment to make sure it's working properly. Check battery levels. Do a couple of test shots and play them back to see how they look and sound.

Then, it's time to film. Turn on the camera and start asking your questions. Some good hints to follow:

- Ask your questions and get answers the first time around. When an interviewee is telling a story, he or she is almost always more animated the first time through. If you ask the interviewee to repeat it, the story will probably not be as entertaining! If he or she is nervous, you can tell them that you're practicing, and that usually puts the speaker at ease.
- Coach your interviewees to repeat the question in the answer, so you can edit yourself out of their responses. If you ask, "Why do you like working here?" the interviewee should respond with, "I like working here because..."
- Shoot your subject from the waist up with a lot of background all around him or her. You can always close in on the subject when you edit, but you'll never be able to get a longer shot!
- Capture a little bit of the room's ambient noise when no one is talking. Recording five or ten seconds of silence will help you fill in dead space if you have to edit out a noise or a sound. Every room has its own special noise—an HVAC unit running in the background, a radio playing softly—and when it's missing from the background you notice!
- Film in short spurts. Don't create a 20 minute file. Digital files that are three and four minutes long are much easier to view to determine if there's any useful footage.
- Capture more footage than you think you'll need! Especially when you're shooting footage to compliment the video. That's called "b-roll" in the video business, and it constitutes the action shots you see when someone's being interviewed. The interviewee might be talking about helping customers in the store, and you see the interviewee in action helping a customer while she's talking. That's b-roll. If you know you're going to need b-roll for your video, be patient and film a lot of it. You always need more than you think.

Editing and Post-Production

You've filmed your video, and now you're going to put it together. This is where you add the style and pizzazz that makes your video engaging. Let's get started.

- **Organize your footage.** Take a look at your footage and determine which files you'll be using for your final product. Go back to your notes, review your story structure, and assemble your digital files so that you know what footage you will use in what part of your story.
- **Start placing your chosen footage into an editing program.** Import all the footage into your editing program and start putting your story together. Determine where you can use graphics to break up sections and where you will need to add text to help tell the story or break up the sections. In this video you're making for the pet supply company, you've decided to call out the "pluses" of working there, which include loving animals, a great team of people, opportunities to learn, and so on.
- **Pick out some video music.** This is important and will be an influencing factor in your final product. Often you're going to want to make cuts and add transitions based on the music, so now's the time to pick a song and set the mood of your video! Check out the next section for some excellent places to buy royalty-free music.

- **Edit.** If you've never edited a video before, please be sure to take some time to play around and see what the program will do. Go online and check out YouTube videos that give hints and tips for the program you're using. But the best way to learn is to just play with the software and experiment. You'll learn by doing!
- **Add company graphics and branding elements.** Make sure you include your company logo and the elements of the brand that make your company identifiable!

Once the editing is complete, circulate it around to your subject matter experts for approval!

✓ Assessing the Final Product

Take a look at this final product and let's determine if it fits our standards of good visual media:

A link to an interactive elements can be found at the bottom of this page.

Let's take a look at each standard separately:

- **Is it clean, clear and simple?** Yes, you've established a theme up front that there are "pluses" to working for Pet Supplies Plus. Your speakers are featured prominently in each of your shots, and you have nicely framed b-roll shots.
- **Is it uniform?** Absolutely! Your titles of "Plus the opportunity to learn" and "Plus the uncommon" teach the audience what to expect right up front.
- **Is it persuasive?** Yes. Not only is the audience getting short, clear soundbites from interviewees talking about the reasons why they should be rushing out to apply for a job there, but they're being emotionally engaged with the kittens and puppies. There was a pig with sunglasses for heaven's sake!
- **Is it on brand?** That's the most important thing! Pet Supplies Plus prides itself on delivering an outstanding customer experience, and it's clear in the theme of this video that there are outstanding experiences happening in their stores daily. Their logo and their tagline are featured at the end.

This video makes the working experience at this company very accessible to prospective employees. Would they have gotten the same interactive experience if they'd been reading a website or an article? Probably not. This video brought the work experience to life. And that's what video can do for you as a visual media: it gives your story life like no other media can.

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