



Producing a video – The first steps v2

Take this expert advice on how to produce a blockbuster, not a horror movie!

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If you've never attempted to use film as part of your communications strategy, the prospect can seem a little daunting. Equally, a bad experience can make you wary of trying again. The good news, however, is that the rewards of getting it right are often tremendous.

Firstly you need to find the right people for the job. Of course, I am little biased and would recommend ST16 but if you choose to go elsewhere then here are some things you need to remember when selecting the production company you want to work with:

'LIMITED' CREATIVITY

It is probably a good idea that you choose a company that has a good track record. Start by checking they are a limited company. Are they VAT registered? Do they have testimonials and case studies demonstrating their experience? Creating successful video is not simply about strong technical skills: Does the company you are looking to work with have the communication skills to fully understand your brief and come up with strong creative to ensure the film delivers against your objectives?

UNLIMITED CREATIVITY

Once you have provided a brief (even if it is pretty basic one to start with) the production company should be able to help you to start developing ideas. It is a good idea to let them know how wild you want to be. Creativity doesn't always mean big and brash, it can be very subtle and sometimes this can be the most successful approach. Give as much information as you can about your audience so the production company can tailor thinking for who you need to communicate to.

ASK!

If you are not sure about anything, costs, terms, jargon or timetables make sure you just ask! Production companies are used to working with people who have never produced a film before and a good one will be happy to spend time with you answering any of your questions.

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ENSURE YOUR SUPPLIER IS WELL-CONNECTED ...

A good production company will bring in specialist experts to help as the project dictates.

...AND CAN BE CONTACTED EASILY

Check that you can easily contact them once the project has started. We know of "one man bands" who can't be contacted for days because they're away on a shoot for somebody else while your project gets held up.

£1,000 OR £10,000,000?!

If you are new to video then you may be a little worried about how much it is going to cost, or you may just be confused because one quote for seemingly the same thing is 10 times the other quote you received. As with most industries there are suppliers for all ends of the market and it can be hard to find the right one for you. Don't panic though, make sure you get a like for like quote, make sure you are getting a similar standard of production value. Ask both companies to explain their proposals and the benefits to the resources they have quoted for. Then make a decision based on the work you have seen, the ideas and cost.

FIND A SUPPLIER YOU GET ON WITH

Perhaps most importantly ensure you employ a supplier who you get on well with. A single project can last for months, so the chemistry has to be right. Choosing a production company with people who're open, friendly and good to work with can be crucial to the success of your project. Like any good relationship it should last for many years...

Here are a few hints on making your project a successful one...

GENERATING INTEREST AND ATTENTION

Films that are carefully put together to meet specific objectives can produce great results, providing a cost-effective and trackable way of communicating worldwide. People love watching film and video and it can outperform most other media for getting attention and delivering key messages with impact.

DO IT FOR A REASON

Have a clear objective before you start and make sure you communicate it to the production company. A video should look great but first and foremost it must fulfil a business need.

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LOOK AT YOUR TARGET AUDIENCE AND ANY CULTURAL DIFFERENCES

How are your target audience used to receiving information?

Make sure you consider all the cultures you will be addressing in the film, be your audience global or domestic. DVD allows your film to be distributed all over the world in multiple languages (overdubbed or subtitled) on the same disc. Sometimes this makes it more cost effective than printed media, especially if you include PDFs etc. on the disk. Many of our films are distributed purely electronically through the Internet all over the world instantly.

TAKE THE TIME TO DEVELOP THE BRIEF

Gain an understanding of video media and technology and involve a video production company to help you develop the brief. Make sure they have experience in developing strategies, so they can understand the issues you face and help you tackle them. Ensure that they have the creativity to communicate your messages through every aspect of the film. Without this level of understanding and involvement the film might look pretty, but will probably not achieve the results that you want.

GET BUY-IN ON INTERNAL COMMS FILMS

If you are producing an internally facing film, the more people involved with the project that actually believe in it, the more credible the end product will be. If the film is going to feature interviews, make sure the interviewee has been briefed beforehand. They may have a busy schedule but if the entire workforce is going to hear their message, it is worth spending some time preparing!

Make sure the interviewee understands the key messages and objective. But don't script them. Parrot fashion regurgitation of a script by untrained presenters almost always looks awful. And worst of all unconvincing.

A video can be quite a big investment, and your employees will probably know it. If it is relevant to the subject of the programme, try and include as many parts of the business as possible so no one feels left out. Then, when you deliver the film, make sure everyone has access at the same time, although time zones may still cause a few complications!

GET HUGE RESULTS WITH SOCIAL MEDIA

With social media, developed to be distributed by your audience, the idea is absolutely critical. A production company with multiple examples of success is the best way to go as. Make sure they're not just talking the talk. What works well as a TV commercial may fail horribly as a 'viral' film for example. Ensure somebody is

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taking responsibility for an effective seeding strategy for your film so it get's out there into the wide world.

BE REALISTIC WITH DELIVERY TIMES

A film can be put together in a week, but it is best to give it as much time as you can. We usually estimate 4-8 weeks for an average project.

DECIDE HOW TO DELIVER THE VIDEO

Much of our work is now delivered electronically. This might be a social media project delivered through YouTube or another video sharing site. Or it can be a high definition WMV or QuickTime to be played on your laptop, your intranet, a mobile phone or even on a cinema screen! There are lots of other options like DVD, but make sure you work with your production company to work out the most efficient and effective way of getting your film in front of the audience.

COLLECT COMPETITIVE QUOTES

Since the scope of video is almost limitless, you could spend UK£5,000 or UK£50,000+ on the same project, depending on your exact requirements and expectations. Ensure you get two or three competitive quotes – and ask the suppliers to break down their proposals clearly so they're on a level playing field and so you can compare quotes directly. Be careful, though: it's not all about cost. Find a supplier who really understands your requirements, has the skills and resources to deliver and will help you develop the program from scratch. If in doubt ask the company to explain their pricing and why it is so different to other quotes you may have.

Although this guide is designed to help you no matter who your supplier, please visit www.st16.co.uk for more information about ST16, its clients and recent projects.

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