



Video development planning

A video can be a very powerful communicator but in order to achieve the impact it has to be properly thought out and planned. The following are the first key points to consider when you think you want to produce a video:

OBJECTIVE

Producing a video is likely to be the most expensive delivery option you can use. To be sure that it is money well spent it has to have a clear objective AND it has to be the best way of achieving that objective.

Ask yourself, will a video actually *add value* over other forms of communicating the message to the target audience? If you are not sure then you should have a good look at the alternatives before committing to a video, it could save you a lot of money!

AUDIENCE

In order for a video to effectively communicate the desired message you need to be very clear about the intended audience. Many different people may see the video along the way but it is important that the specific people it is talking to see it in the way you want them to see it. A couple of extreme examples, you wouldn't produce a video about pure maths for 3 year olds and you wouldn't talk to Senior business executives as if they were 12 years old.

The more specific you can make the target audience the easier it is to write a script and plan the shoot.

MESSAGE

Once you know the audience you need to clearly define the message you want them to understand as they watch the video. The message might be a very simple one but it can be reinforced throughout the video in different ways to ensure it is fully embedded.

CALL TO ACTION

The message might be clear but without a call to action the audience is not going to know what you expect them to do. The *objective* will have defined your expectation but the viewer won't know that, you need to spell it out for maximum effect, or risk them just going away thinking "that was nice" and doing nothing more.

LENGTH

Length is very important. We live in a fast moving world with shorter and shorter attention spans. Some TV ads are only 10-15secs and yet you can still get frustrated watching them if they don't interest you. Deciding on the optimum running time is therefore an important decision. Not only is it critical in retaining viewer attention but it also impacts on the script, the shoot and the editing.

A video of more than 5mins will have to be very special to keep a viewer's interest and you will need to have a really good reason why you need it to run over that limit. As hard as it can be in the scripting and editing, this is a real case where *less is more*.

You may want the same shoot to be cut to more than one length for different purposes. This needs to be clear before the shoot so that all options are covered.

DELIVERY MEDIUM

Where you plan to use the video is also an important early decision. It impacts on the script, the format it is shot in and the resolution of the final version.

life expectancy - do you want the video to promote an immediate, short term event or is it a core message that could be used for perhaps a year or more? It makes a difference to the script and perhaps to the edit.

Frame size - There are two industry standard sizes (4x3 and 16x9) but you don't have to use either of these if you don't want to. You may want it to fit a specific shape in your website or you may want it to be long & thin or tall & narrow for a more stylised effect. Whatever your choice, it is critical that this is made clear prior to the shoot to ensure the end result has the desired effect.

DELIVERY TIMESCALE

If you need the video for a launch or to match up with another fixed event then this must be made clear from the start. It may well impact on all aspects of the video, it might even be impossible to achieve – but everyone involved need to understand the delivery criteria.

STORYBOARD / SCRIPT

A storyboard is how most videos start their life. This involves rough sketches of set layouts and sets out the intended running order of the scenes that will ultimately go together as the final video. Although this rough plan may be very fluid for some types of video, for others it will be the master plan, like an architect's drawings. What it also does is allow all parties to collectively understand and agree the plan for the shoot and the ultimate edit.

Sometimes a video can evolve from an interview style approach (although you do need to have a good set of open questions written to extract the right responses). Other times some or all of the spoken video will need to be precisely scripted. This can be committed to memory (as an actor on stage has to) shot in sections to allow for re-takes, or it can be delivered via autocue to be read (like most political speeches). Whatever approach is planned the script will need to be carefully written and then adjusted so the person delivering it is comfortable with the words and phrasing. Either way delivering a script and sounding like it isn't a script is a real skill that not a lot of people have...

TALENT

By talent we mean who will be in the video – actors, staff members, the general public etc. The less experienced those involved are the longer it may take to shoot, particularly if they are required to read/recite a script (and sound convincing). The same applies to voiceovers, not everyone has a good voice for radio, (no matter how senior they may be in the company). If you want the video's objective to be achieved then sometimes you have to be firm about someone's suitability to be in front of a camera or microphone. We have all seen TV ads where the company's owner / Chief Exec has delivered a cringe making performance because no one felt they were able to say how bad it really was!

Using, and paying for, actors may seem as an unnecessary expense but sometimes it can save (expensive) time on the shoot but can also be the key factor that helps it achieve the objective.

LOCATION

One of the final key decisions that will need to be made is where to shoot. For some videos this will be dictated by the message it is delivering but for many there can be a lot of different options. A Chief Exec for example can deliver an inspiring end of year speech from behind their desk, walking the shop floor or sitting on a park bench... the location will completely change the style of the message – in this case from formal through team building to relaxed and personal.

The other factors with locations are practicality and cost. Anywhere outside of your own premises will inevitably require some permission or licence as well as hire fees, then there are insurance costs and travel costs for crew and staff. On top of this will be the location's availability at the time you would like. Unless it is a specific requirement of the video you don't want the general public anywhere near you and that can be difficult to achieve.

EVERYTHING ELSE

This is not an exhaustive list but it is a very good start on the process of deciding if you actually need a video and if you do what you need to work through before a camera even touches a tripod.

The team here at Yamsing Creative Solutions will do everything we can to help you through the planning and design of your video. The clearer you are about the message, the audience and objective along with any of the other details you can get into the pre-production, the more time you save in production & post production costs and the better (and more effective) the final result will be.



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