GETTING STARTED

PLANNING YOUR VIDEO PRODUCTION.

Did you ever end up on a project that required video and somehow you became the default expert? If you suddenly find yourself responsible for a complex video production—you know, more than sitting in front of your web cam—you'll want to do some planning. Here are some of the key things you'll have to consider, plan for and get done.

Scripts

You will need an approved script prepared in a standard format and distributed to the talent in time for them to memorize their parts. If you are a designer and writer, this is a great opportunity to learn the craft of scriptwriting. You'll need to learn how to show rather than tell and you'll need to know the effect that varied camera shots can have on your script. The alternative is to hire a scriptwriter.

From a practical standpoint, training videos typically use the two-column (audio and video) type of format with the narration in one column and visuals in the other. Dramatizations often use the full-page screenplay format. Just use the one that works best for communicating your ideas and for future planning.

Studios & Locations

Selecting your production environments will be another key consideration in your production planning. A common approach is to work with a video production company and use one of their studios where they will manage crew, lighting, filming and sets or visual backgrounds (green screen). A studio can typically provide the technology and equipment for virtual set environments via green screen filming techniques. This approach nearly guarantees you'll have an interruption-free location where you can really focus.

Alternately, you can produce content with scenes filmed in actual individual locations. In this case, every scene will need an appropriate location and you'll need to hunt these down. You might find suitable locations in your office that only require a few props or you might choose to film in a public area. You may need written permission to set up and implement a video production outside of a studio, so be sure to have the approval forms on hand. You may want to hire a professional crew to assist in the filming process to ensure the highest production value is achieved at these your locations. Keep in mind; this approach can present logistical and financial considerations if you will need to arrange for a crew to film in multiple environments or on multiple occasions.

Production Planning

There are several production documents that are essential for a multiple-scene or multiple-segment video production. Large productions require numerous documents, but you can probably get by with these three for smaller training videos.

- **Shot List:** One shot is a continuous segment of footage from one camera angle. You'll need to create a list of all the shots that need to be recorded. The video crew will need the shot list.
- **Shooting Script:** This is a working script that groups together all the scenes from the same location so they can be shot at the same time. The script will be shot out of sequence, according to location, which is the most efficient way to shoot video or film. The video crew will also need this script.
- **Call Sheet:** The talent will need a list of all the scenes to be shot, all of the personnel required for each scene and the date and time they will be needed. Some people include the props and equipment required for each scene too.

Talent

One of the best ways to identify actors for your production is to have auditions. You can also browse model/actor talent agency sites with video samples online. If you are going low budget, you can often cull a cast from acting students at a local college. Don't forget to have the selected talent sign release forms that give you the rights to use them in the video.

At all costs, try to avoid anyone untrained in acting, including your client's employees and friends. Unless they have some great talent that was previously hidden, using untrained actors in training videos can often diminish the production value and therefore yield a less than engaging content experience. We all know what that will do to learning effectiveness.

Video Crew

Okay let's face it. Most budgets for training videos are not soaring through the roof. We have clients that have directed video productions with one crewmember: a cameraperson. Ideally, however, you'll be able to afford the following:

- **Director:** If you are the person responsible for the video, you might likely become the default director. Forget the director's chair, you'll probably be standing up and running around half the time.
- **Videographer:** The videographer operates the camera. For small or low-budget video productions, you will have a videographer who also mixes the audio. Become best friends with this person, as he or she can help you with the direction. Don't hesitate to discuss each shot and see how it will look through the camera.
- **Sound Technician or Audio Mixer**: If you can afford a separate person to record, mix and monitor sound, it's worth the cost. A sound engineer is not just responsible for recording sound. He or she will help to choose the best microphones for the scene and will monitor the audio levels closely with headphones. If there is outside interference, the sound person will alert the director to go for another take.
- **Script Supervisor:** This person needs to be sure there is continuity when shooting from one day to the next. He or she will take note that the actor in Scene 12 is wearing a blue shirt on Monday and needs that same shirt on Wednesday for a related scene. The script supervisor can also work with the videographer to log the time code for each shot.

Instructional Crew

Videos that have a training focus will need one or two people on hand who are focusing on content and instructional strategies.

- **Instructional Designer:** Most training videos require the instructional designer to be present to ensure that key points are implemented correctly. There is often a barrage of unforeseen issues and questions that arise (imagine that!) and only someone familiar with the content and purpose of the scene can answer them. If the director and instructional designer are the same person, you've got it covered.
- **SME:** It's good to have the subject matter expert on hand when you are communicating technical or complex topics.

Post-production Work

Everything done to the video after the recording is considered the post-production work. This includes editing, graphics voiceovers, special effects and conversion to various formats. You'll need to plan who will do this type of work. If you don't have the capabilities in-house, you'll need to hire a video studio to do the post-production work. The producer of the video (which may be you) may need to sit with the editor to identify how sequences should be assembled.

TECHNICAL GUIDELINES

EQUIPMENT & TECHNIQUES.

Third Party Video Production

Please adhere to the guidelines below, which best duplicate the studio environment used at LightSpeed VT, for the best quality results in your video. Picture quality cannot be added in editing; the camera must capture it during production. The best results are achieved using professional equipment and personnel.

Equipment Needed

Use a Professional High Definition Camera, which will possess a CMOS or 3-CCD sensor. It should be capable of capturing a full HD image (1080p). Again, picture quality cannot be added in editing; the camera must capture it during production.

The camera is responsible for half of the production value on a video shoot. The balance of the quality foundon high-end productions is credited to Professional Lighting. Kino Flo makes lighting specifically for the video and film industry to achieve an even distribution of diffused, soft light. This light is most flattering to the talent, and also provides an added benefit, the absence of hot lights that normally light actors and create discomfort and perspiration. The ideal target color temperature for shooting is 5600 degrees Kelvin.

For recording audio, professional-quality wireless lavaliere transmitters, receivers, and microphones should be used. The microphone should be placed in the optimal position for recording dialogue (near the sternum).

In addition, there is other equipment that can be used to obtain a professional result, including monitors, teleprompter hardware and software, and a boom shotgun microphone.

Personnel

For the best results, experts should be hired to ensure a smooth shoot. A Camera Operator will be useful in setting up the camera for the best angles and framing, for adjusting focus, exposure, white balance, audio input and levels. He or she must understand the desired performance quality needed from the talent.

A Script Supervisor will be able to find clean break points for retakes, will load and edit the teleprompter, edit the camera slate, log shot information, and organize scripts.

For the best results attainable, plan to shoot all segments at LightSpeed VT, where the professional equipment and personnel are already in place to give your project a consistent look of excellence. See attached for deliverable file formats and compression requirements.

Lighting Techniques

Use Hollywood-style lighting, also known as 3-point lighting. With the Talent facing the camera, place the strongest light, called the key light, at an approximate 45-degree frontal angle to the talent, adjusting the light's distance or luminance until the talent's face shows a 5.6 f-stop using a light meter. Place another light, called the fill light, on the opposite side of the camera as the key light, using it to fill in the shadows on the talent created by the key light.

Lastly, an additional light, called the back light, should be placed behind the talent at a high angle, shining onto the back of the head and shoulders. This gives the subject separation from the background and fills in light missing from the key and fill lights. The approximate luminance, or brightness, of the fill and backlights should be 2 f-stops less than the key light. Avoid flares (lights or light rays pointing into the camera lens).

The Chroma Key Green Screen must be stretched, to avoid showing wrinkles, which cause shadows. Generally, it can be lit using two strong lights placed at 45-°©-degree angles to the screen, and adjusted via distance, flood/spot, intensity, until it is evenly lit. Ideal lights to be used spread light evenly, called flooding, instead of ones that shine direct beams, called spotting. No shadows can be cast upon the green screen by the talent, and no hot spots (noticeably bright areas) should be visible. Various equipment, such as scrims, barn doors, and diffusion, can be used to affect the shape and distribution of light onto the green screen or the talent.

TIPS FOR SUCCESS

BEFORE YOU CALL ACTION.

Before you step into the studio, here are some tips to live by:

1. Make sure your producer (or person responsible for your video production) understands the *Video Specifications as set by LightSpeed VT. You may also want to review your VT System with this individual to understand what a VT Module is, complete with Category/Course/Chapter, etc.
2. Make sure you carefully follow the Content outline and Worksheets as approved by LightSpeed VT.
3. Make sure you are saving the files according to the nomenclature set by LightSpeed VT (i.e. CourseName_Chapter#_ChapterPart#_Description.ext.).
4. Make sure your on-screen talent is not wearing stripes, dots or busy patterns or reflective objects. When shooting green-screen footage, remember to avoid anything green.