

Demystifying the Video Production Process

A guide to getting the most from your video production



Crossbow[®]
STUDIO

www.CrossbowStudio.com

Demystifying the Video Production Process

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S T U D I O

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Foreword

So, you recognize that video has become an important, if not critical, part of communications.

While technically, anyone can make a video with nothing more than a smartphone, there are some critical differences between shooting pictures of cats for YouTube and creating a video that works hard for you and creates the desired response from your audience.

Whether you hire a production company or do it yourself, proper planning and organization is the key to having a powerful marketing, sales, training or communications tool that can quickly pay for itself many times over.

Unfortunately, without an understanding of the video production process — where to begin, what steps to take to finish the project and how to get a singular message across — many organizations don't know the key questions to ask or how to get the most from their efforts.

This guide has been designed to demystify the process. The following pages can help relieve those anxieties and eliminate any confusion that you may be experiencing about creating a video for your organization.

Armed with the information in this guide, you and your production company will be able to work together as a team every step of the way, so that producing a video can be a fascinating and enjoyable experience, and you can be assured of being thrilled with the result.

By requesting this manual, you've already taken the first — and most important — step to learning the video production process.

Planning

Step One:

Determine the purpose of your video.

Any effective communication is determined by its clarity of purpose. Your video should be created to convey one single message, promote one single product or service, or express one singular idea or goal. The key to a successful video is keeping it simple and limited to a solitary goal or intent. A cluttered, disorganized video will leave the audience confused, antagonistic, or wary.

The video production process begins by choosing the purpose of your video. How do you want your target audience to respond? What are you trying to get them to do? Do you want them to buy more, donate more, do more, work faster, sell more, or just pick up the phone and call? Define your video's purpose and how you want your audience to react. Then, write it down in big block letters and tack it up all over your office, desk, calendar. Keep it in mind through every step of the production process — it is the most important part of creating a successful video.

Remember, if you lose track of your video's purpose, so will your audience.

Step Two:

Define your target audience.

Who's going to see your video? Clients or Employees? Sales and Marketing Managers or Corporate Executives? Company Presidents or Office Assistants? Are they young? Old? Ready to act now? Or indifferent? Although videos made for each of these target audiences might convey the same idea, their style, message, content, mood, and even quality will likely vary.

Define your target audience and then do a little research as to what motivates them. Your selection of location, music background, flashy special effects or simple straight cuts and fades will be geared towards what your target audience wants to see, what makes them pay attention and listen, and what their internal motivating factors are.

Similar to defining the purpose of your video, the more refined your audience definition, the better. You are more likely to reach that audience member if you have a very clear picture of him or her. And, paradoxically, the tighter and more specific your definition, the broader your reach within that audience.

There are a few other considerations worth mentioning that will make your video accessible to a greater audience. They include captioning the video for the hearing

impaired and translating the audio and recording it in multiple languages. These will, of course, affect your video's budget, so its worth thinking through now.

Step Three: **Begin planning distribution of your video.**

This step may seem a little premature, simply because distribution of your video isn't possible until the final edit has been approved. We've included this step in the planning phase because while determining your target audience, you'll also want to consider how to reach them.

Sadly, many organizations produce their own video, hand out a few DVDs or put the video on YouTube and then forget about it as they get busy with other promotional tools. This is costly and negligent. There are quite a few corporate videos on YouTube that over a period of a year have had only 100 views. Others get 100,000 views. The difference is in planning.

YouTube is the second most popular search engine in the world.

Video can be your most powerful promotional and marketing tool. But to achieve its goal, it needs to be seen by its target audience.

Achieving your video's goal requires both a

solid distribution plan and room in the budget to execute that plan.

Generally, your video will be intended either for in-house audiences (a training or inspirational video for employees) or to outside organizations or individuals (to corporate clients, donors or consumers). The video may be distributed and viewed in many ways: Online video that is hosted or embedded in various websites, DVD, Video on USB drives, mobile phones or tablets, at a trade show booth, even printed marketing material can be used to present video marketing messages. While the Internet is the most popular way of viewing videos, DVDs should not be ignored. A DVD sent through the mail generally gets viewed. People are too curious not to look.

Distributing video on the Internet on sites such as YouTube, Vimeo, Facebook and others can give you a lot of bang for the buck if it's planned properly. For instance, tag your video strategically on YouTube, and you can dramatically increase the number of potential viewers. Alternatively, you can make your video available only to certain people, or embed it in your website and restrict access to a specific audience. You'll most likely want to cross-promote your video on several platforms if you are using it to drive traffic to your website.

Don't write off DVDs. They will be with us for some time and still offer a targeted way to get your video message to your audience. Some people are more likely to pop in a DVD than to go to a website.

A website visitor is 300% more likely to press “Play” than to click on a “Learn More” link.

Some corporations have blocked access to web video portals like YouTube because they are concerned about employees wasting time. A DVD comes in like a Trojan horse through the mail.

If you are planning to distribute DVDs, you need to plan for the production time in your schedule. Often, the DVD duplication, packaging, and distribution may be handled by your production company. This can be incorporated into the production contract. We've included a sample DVD duplication price list for your reference and budgetary considerations.

Quantity	Full Color Printed Direct To Disc
50	\$2.42 / disc *
100	\$2.36 / disc
300	\$ 2.02 / disc

500	\$ 1.90 / disc
1000	\$ 1.45 / disc
>1000	Call For Quote

*There is a \$35.00 set-up fee on quantities less than 50 discs. DVD cases with clear inserts or printed jackets are available for as low as \$.49 each.

FYI:

National/Regional Video Case Studies

Customer Service. A smartphone replacement parts seller faces a constant customer service challenge: showing lay people how to take apart electronic gadgets and install fragile components. The traditional instruction manuals could not answer all the questions customers had so customers called the company's customer service department. They posted how-to-videos as an alternative to the instruction manuals and very quickly, the company's library of instructional videos reduced customer questions by half. They were recently able to eliminate phone support and cut their customer service budget 40 percent.

* * *

Product Demonstration. When you can't get the customer to come to you and you don't want to send a salesperson on the road, online video may be the best way to demonstrate a product. A 40-person manufacturer with about \$5 million a year in sales had a producer create a series of demos for their product line. Their YouTube videos are embedded in the company website and attract search engine traffic with certain key words. The videos are designed to help customers choose among 30 different

styles. Full of useful information, these videos have attracted more than 500,000 views. The company President says he believes video has helped increase sales 15 percent a year.

* * *

Professional First Impression. Online video is becoming a first stop for many customers. It is akin to what the website itself was a decade ago — something that can give organizations instant credibility or an edge over competitors. It gives you a channel to talk directly to customers in ways previously accessible only to large companies that could afford TV advertisements.

* * *

Small business benefits. A business consultant spent less than \$2,500 to have a producer produce his website “welcome” video. The video is straightforward and simple without a lot of extras. Visitors get a feeling for his personality and unique value immediately. It brings the consultant several new leads a month and has paid for itself many times over.

* * *

Reach More Contributors. A regional non-profit put their appeal on video, including interviews with actual beneficiaries of the charity.

Distributing via DVD and targeted websites, the organization was able to tell their emotional and poignant story to tens of thousands of potential donors, and is on track to hit their \$10 million campaign target. That's a lot of bang for the buck.

* * *

Simplify and Explain. A regional non-profit put their appeal on video, including interviews with actual beneficiaries of the charity.

Distributing via DVD and targeted websites, the organization was able to tell their emotional and poignant story to tens of thousands of potential donors, and is on track to hit their \$10 million campaign target. That's a lot of bang for the buck.

Pre-Production

Step One:

Selecting a Video Production Company

The initial consideration of a video production company is often determined through one of three ways:

- 1) By Recommendation. Chances are, someone you know has worked with a specific video company and experienced great results. Ask your business associates, clients, or friends for their personal recommendations.
- 2) By Reputation. Established production companies, with repeat clients, begin to build a 'brand' within the business community. Scan your local directories and you may see names you recognize.
- 3) By Trial and Error. The Internet abounds with companies listed under "Video Production Services," plus many individuals who buy a camera, with or without experience, call themselves a videographer.

Pay close attention to whether the video producer is friendly, eager to answer your questions, and possesses a

good knowledge of technical information regarding the filming and editing process.

A reputable firm will take the time to answer your questions and ease any anxieties you may have. Once you've obtained references, rate guides, and preliminary information, you should have a list of some very favorable companies.

Now, you'll want to consider the creative ability of the video production company. Even if they have not previously created a video for a company exactly like yours, there are important factors to consider when looking at their work. Do they seem able to translate an idea into a comprehensive, smoothly flowing story? Do they possess the technical ability to produce a quality video? Do they quickly understand the purpose of your video? Do they place importance on your message, or on technique?

Lastly, consider the personal rapport between you and your potential video production team. Remember, you'll be working very closely with these individuals over a period of time. Do you have confidence in them and feel comfortable putting your video production in their hands? Likely, they will also be sizing you up. Good

rapport and mutual confidence is as important to them as it should be to you.

Step Two: **Budgets and Contracts**

Based on your initial discussions, the production company should be able to present you with a rough budget. On complicated projects, the production company may propose two budgets; one to do the research and development of an outline or script, and then one for the production of the video.

The latter, two-step process is designed to reduce your risk, because the production budget is then based on the unique requirements that arise out of the outline or script.

Also, should you find the outline unacceptable, your contractual obligation with the production company will end. The video company retains their fee, and the outline becomes yours to use as you wish.

If the research and development is broken out separately, the typical fee for this service is about \$100-150 an hour, plus reimbursement of client approved expenses such as travel, mileage reimbursement, or lodging.

Single budgets, that combine the research and development fee with the overall production cost, have their own advantages. By keeping the overall budget in mind from the outset, the production company can ensure they develop a script that is able to be produced within that budget. Another advantage is simplicity and momentum; there is no need to stop and review a second contract and budget.

Either way, be sure the budget includes all aspects of the of the production, such as music licenses, talent, location fees, etc. The budget should be all-inclusive. Refer to our Master Budget Form in the Appendix to see what should be included in the total, and how the total is reached.

Most of your budget will be spent on services. The only tangible item you are purchasing is a master video file and the right to reproduce it as often as you'd like.

With the approval of the budget, you will be asked to sign a Production Contract (see the Appendix for a sample). Production Contracts vary but the general language covers the same points. Most contracts will specify payment terms. Video productions are typically paid for in three parts — the first payment due upon the signing of the contract, the second payment due upon completion of

the principal videography, and the final payment due upon delivery of the finished video master.

Step Three: **Developing an Outline**

Prior to this point, your dollar investment has been zero. Now, you'll begin to spend part of your video budget.

During this phase, the production team will likely ask for more detailed information regarding your project. They may also ask to talk to different executives in your organization or to other stakeholders, as well as visit your location or locations. By doing so, they will obtain a first-hand opinion of what you do, how you do it, what makes you truly special, what is your point of view.

The research and development period will require your cooperation in order to assure a successful video production.

***Changes
at this stage are
far less expensive
than later, during
production.***

At the completion of this crucial phase, you will receive a complete outline from the production company. Sometimes the production company may create storyboards or a written script as well. Their goal is to present whatever is necessary to communicate the concepts for the video and the content of the message.

This outline requires your concentrated attention. Now is the time to make revisions and offer suggestions. Changes at this point in the production are made easily. Later on, when the production is under way, revisions can be both costly and laborious. Your production company should work closely with you during this time to insure that your outline is a good one — and that it fully demonstrates your organizations's policies, views and tone of voice.

An outline should remain flexible. It is simply a good starting point for the ideas and message that the video will communicate. Ultimately, the outline should guide the video, rather than limit it.

You and your production company should be striving for an outline that focuses on telling a story. Listing facts in your video won't move your audience to action, emotion will.

Your approval of the outline ends this step of the video production process. Hopefully, you will be pleased with the concepts, ideas and the written results so far and your approval will move the production to its next step, which is scheduling the photography.

Production

Step One: **Scheduling**

The completion date of your video should be specified in your contract. However, this time frame is usually a bit fluid. It is to the video production company's advantage to deliver the video to you as soon as possible, but they should resist sacrificing quality or effort in order to deliver the video prematurely. If you have a specific deadline for the completion of your video, you should allow two to three months for the total production. In other words, plan ahead.

One of the easiest cost saving measures at this stage is to keep the shooting days to a minimum. For instance, if you are using interviews as part of your production, help the production company schedule multiple interviewees in the same day instead of spreading them out over several days.

Depending on the type of video, you may be amazed at the amount of equipment and lighting required to make each shot look good on video. So as they plan the shoot day(s), the production company will tell you the amount

of setup time they'll need before they are ready for each interviewee, or the time required to move from one location to another.

A word about animation

If you are producing an animated video — not just animated titles or charts — scheduling will be a little different. The production company will discuss with you their ideas about different techniques to tell your story. Is the animation hand-drawn or smooth graphics? 2d or three-dimensional? Stop motion or computer generated?

The production company will follow up the approved outline with storyboards or concept frames that show you the look of the animation. Then, depending on the complexity of the animation, you may see motion tests at various stages. Without seeing a physical production crew and cameras, it is sometimes difficult to envision how the production is moving along, but the production company will keep you aware of the timing as your video progresses.

Step Two: **Revisions and Approvals**

Please note that in our sample production contract you have built-in approvals of the video at various stages in its development. These are typically the approval of the script; the approval of the rough-cut edit; and the approval of the final-cut edit. Remember though that revisions made too late in the game can be costly. We recommend that you consider changes or revisions while the video is still in paper form as an outline or script. These revisions cost you nothing and are easily accomplished.

You will be asked to approve the rough-cut edit of your video production. The rough-cut edit is the first video assembly of the production in continuous form. Revisions and suggestions are still fairly welcome at this point, because changes to the rough-cut edit are still relatively easy to make.

Once the final editing has begun, however, revisions to the video will be time-consuming and costly. That is why it is crucial to have your full attention to carefully evaluating the video at each stage of the approval process.

As the project progresses from script to edit, it's highly recommended the appropriate decision-makers are

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available at each stage. However, to avoid costly confusion, we also recommend that all communication with your production company come from one point of contact, your project leader.

When you review each stage, it is most important to “take a step back” and pay attention to the flow of the video, and how clearly it gets your message across. Also, verify that the statements and ideas presented in the video are factual and best represent your company.

You will most likely leave technical matters such as special effects or background music up to the discretion of the video producer, with your approval, of course.

Step Three: **Your Completed Video**

Rough-cut editing is often performed with temporary titles, narration and other elements to judge the structure and flow of the video. When this version of the video is completed and approved, the images are color corrected and more polished titles, special effects, music, and narration are produced and rendered in the final-cut edit. This finished video is transferred to you via a digital file, usually compressed and ready for embedding in a website or social media sites. Depending on the contractual obligations of the production company, you may receive a DVD as well.

Congratulations!

Now, the production company will most likely archive the uncompressed master video file unless you request a copy. There may be a charge for purchasing a hard drive or the physical media for sending you a copy of the master, since the original video files are quite large.

Distribution Considerations

You planned for it at the beginning of the production, so this should be smooth.

If you requested DVDs for distribution, the production company will at this time be executing several steps, including:

- Designing the DVD menu

- Designing the DVD label

- Designing and producing the DVD case or jacket label

- Duplicating the DVDs

The length of the DVD design and production stage will vary, depending on the accessibility decisions you made earlier. Language translation and recording takes time, for instance. Special features may affect the complexity of the DVD menu design. Once the final DVD master is approved, allow 5-7 days for the actual duplication of your DVDs, but your production company will keep you aware of the overall timing.

FYI:

4 Sample Video Productions and their Budgets

Or, What Your Money Buys...

We've included this portion of the guide to give you an idea of what some typical video productions might cost, and how they are used. You can consider these four examples when deciding what type of video production is right for you and your budget.

- 1) A three-minute university marketing video, used to promote their masters programs to prospective students. It took six weeks to produce and included several animated graphics. It was filmed in two locations, using real students and teaching staff.
TOTAL BUDGET: \$24,000.

- 2) A two-minute product demo and explanation. Filmed in a single location with a professional model, it took one month to produce.
TOTAL BUDGET: \$11,000.

- 3) A 12-minute film for a non-profit organization, screened in front of an audience at a gala event. It was narrated by a professional actor but was filmed using real people in several locations. It also

included several animated sequences. The video took three months to complete.

TOTAL BUDGET: \$38,000.

- 4) A six-part video totaling 40-minutes for a marketing consultant. The subject is a workshop training series, sold as a product and delivered online. The video series was produced within three weeks.

TOTAL BUDGET: \$5,500.

All four videos succeeded in reaching their goals. All but one video included script, narration, titles, and editing. The exception was the training series where the workshop content was the script. All four videos were shot in HD and could be used in broadcast productions.

In looking at the budgets of video productions, remember the following:

- A well produced video should serve your organization for at least three years.
- Some of the most effective video productions are surprisingly short. Shorter videos are generally clear, concise, and to the point, and don't risk boredom from your audience. While the length of the video doesn't always determine its cost, many

shorter programs will be less expensive than longer ones.

- The value of your video is more often determined by the care and planning of the producer than by how much you spend. It is your producer's job to deliver a video program that accomplishes your organization's goal.

Summary

We have prepared this manual with two key points in mind:

1. To make you an informed client
2. To solicit your business.

Informed clients make better clients, as they already possess a knowledge of what it costs to produce a quality video, where the money is spent, and exactly what they receive for their investment. We also believe that the more you know about the video production process, the more you will appreciate us.

If you have any questions or comments regarding any of the points made or implied in this manual, please contact us. We'll be happy to clarify anything you wish to discuss, without charge or obligation.

Respectfully submitted,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Greg Koorhan', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Greg Koorhan
Crossbow Studio
info@crossbowstudio.com

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Appendix

Sample Production Contract

Date: _____
Name: _____
Client: _____
Address: _____

Dear _____,

When signed by you and us, the following will constitute our agreement:

Crossbow Studio agrees to produce ___ video(s) based on the script we shall write. This video will have a running time of approximately _____ minutes. We will provide the following services for this production:

___ hours of scripting and preproduction planning services. Your active participation in this process will help create an approved script that will be a blueprint for the filming and editing of your video. Additional scripting services are available at \$100/hr subject to your prior approval. Changes to the approved script after filming begins will incur additional charges.

We will provide ___ day(s) of principal photography at the location(s) specified in the script. We will produce your video in HD and will supply all necessary equipment and personnel.

We will provide all rough cut editing according to the approved script. You shall have the right to screen and approve this

rough edit to insure that it conforms to the script. We will give you reasonable notice of such screening. You shall apprise us within three days of such screening of any changes to conform the video to the script.

We will provide a maximum of _____ hours of post production to include all editing, professional narrator, text and motion graphics, and music according to our approved script. Additional post production time is available at \$175/hr. Your active involvement in the editing process will insure that we produce an effective video on the budget that follows.

With your approval of the rough edit, we will perform all necessary final editing, including titles, lower thirds and music. Subject to causes beyond our control, we will deliver the final edit, via a digital file, within three weeks of the completion of photography. The file will be compressed and ready for you to upload to your YouTube channel, your Facebook page and embed it in your website.

You shall have the right to order an unlimited number of copies of the video.

Scripting and production times are portal to portal. Cancellation of a scheduled filming, or editing session with less than 48 hours notice will incur a kill fee of \$350.

This agreement may be changed only by mutual agreement if specified in the attached Change Order with additional terms and costs.

In full payment for our undertakings contained herein, you agree to pay us and we agree to accept the sum of \$ _____ payable as follows:

\$_____ - 1st payment upon execution of this agreement, receipt of which is acknowledged by us.

\$_____ - 2nd payment to be made on the first day of filming or on _____, whichever comes first.

\$_____ - 3rd payment to be made on our delivery of the edited final master file as specified on page 1.

The foregoing is approved and accepted on

By: _____

Title: _____

Company: _____

Date: _____

Sample Change Order

Date: _____
Client: _____
Title: _____
Company: _____
Address: _____

To:
Crossbow Studio
333 East Lancaster Avenue #360
Wynnewood PA 19096

We hereby to make the change(s) specified below:

(Note: This Change Order becomes part of and in conformance with the existing agreement)

WE AGREE hereby to make the change(s) specified above at this price: _____

Previous
Contract Amount: _____

Revised
Contract Amount: _____

Crossbow Studio: _____

Date Acceptance: _____

Client Signature: _____

Master Budget Items

Production # _____
Date _____
Client _____
Contact _____

ABOVE THE LINE

Producer: _____
Director: _____
Staff: _____
Office Overhead: _____
Casting: _____
Talent #1: _____
Talent #2: _____
Talent #3: _____
Music Rights: _____
Taxes, Non-Payroll: _____
Insurance: _____
Contingency (%): _____

PRODUCTION

Camera Equip: _____
Sound Equip: _____
Grip Equip: _____
Booms, dollies: _____
Aerial Photography: _____

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Director of Photography: _____
Audio Engineer: _____
Grip: _____
Production Assistants: _____
Storage: _____
On Set Graphics: _____
Location Fees: _____
Crew Support: _____
Props: _____
Transportation: _____
Misc-prod: _____

POST PRODUCTION

Editing: _____
Visual FX: _____
Audio Mix: _____
Titles/Animation: _____
Stock Footage: _____
Transcription/Translation: _____
Captioning: _____
Duplication: _____

Above The Line Subtotal: _____
Production Subtotal: _____
Post Production Subtotal: _____

TOTAL BUDGET: _____

Company Profile

Writer/Director/Producer Greg Koorhan has been designing and producing visual communication for more than 25 years. His clients have ranged from multi-national giants like American Express and Toyota, to regional hotels and non-profit organizations to smaller start-ups and local businesses. His work in advertising and production has been recognized by his peers, nationally and internationally, in every medium.

Clients love that they will always get an educated, thoughtful recommendation from him regarding their project or, frankly, just about anything else.

Based just outside Philadelphia, Crossbow Studio produces vivid stories for those who want to make powerful, authentic statements with clarity. Whether the point is to increase your brand recognition, showcase your depth and breadth of knowledge, or compel your audiences to take an action, we develop captivating videos that allow you to communicate your ideas more persuasively.

We take your truth, aim to enlighten, and shoot to enhance your brand.

Crossbow Studio has been ranked in the Top 25 Video Production firms by the Philadelphia Business Journal since 2009.

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