

Titan Film & Events

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Guide to video production

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Chapter 1 - Why video is key to your marketing

Have you dipped your toe in the water yet with on-line video yet? If not - why not? Even for small business owners, there's strong evidence to suggest that online video marketing should be one of your key marketing activities.

The stats

I know people say there are lies, damn lies and statistics, but there are some well-known organisations that have researched this area and produced some fascinating statistics as a result:

- 60% of people prefer watching video to reading text
- 45% of people contact a company after watching one of their videos
- 50% improvement in SEO for web-sites containing video
- 83% increase in time spent on web-sites with video
- 90% of on-line shoppers find video helpful in making buying decisions
- 50% of executives watch work-related videos on You Tube

[Sources: Forbes Survey, Forrester Research, Wharton Research Centre, Online Publishers' Association]

In fact, Dr James McQuivey of Forrester Research says one minute of video is worth 1.8 million words of on-line text – just imagine how long it would take you to generate that much text!

So, the stats are compelling in terms of the impact of video on the effectiveness of your marketing provided it is not beyond your budget.

Next steps

Now for a word of caution – a lot of you will be thinking either:

- Budget is not an issue as I can do it myself with my iPhone or iPad; or
- I can't afford to get help with producing a video.

Let's start with the "do it yourself" argument. As you may be aware, Titan, amongst its range of services, produces videos for clients to broadcast quality, so with my significant level of experience and expertise, I feel more than qualified to comment on this. The simple fact is that the quality of your video will, in potential customer's minds, reflect on the quality of the company. A poorly scripted, poorly lit, poorly shot and poorly edited video is only going to make your potential customers think that you're running a "poorly" company.

Is a DIY video better than nothing at all? Perhaps the jury is still out on this but in my opinion the answer to that is a definite NO! My view is that it is horses for courses so outsource what you are not an expert at to an expert and reap the rewards. If you're still not convinced, then I really hope you take on board some of the tips in this guide before your DIY video is produced so it can at least be better than many I have seen.

Moving on to the "I can't afford it" crowd, all I can say is that when you consider the statistics then can you afford not to get some video? I meet so many small business owners that have spent significant sums on adverts, SEO, flashy brochures etc. and achieved absolutely no return. Video production is not expensive – as an example, Titan have a suite of packages for SME's starting from £150 for a couple of one minute professionally produced videos. If you can't afford to spend that on your marketing you have to question whether you are serious about your business. No matter who you use to produce your video, by following the tips in this guide, you'll be able to do a lot of the preparation yourself helping to ensure you get the video you want at the most effective price.

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Chapter 2 - Key considerations

Having decided video is the way to go, what are the first things you should consider before getting going?

Who is your target audience and what is the key message?

This sounds obvious but I've had clients come along that want video but can't answer this question. Clearly it is critical, like any marketing activity, to have a clear picture of who you are targeting and what you want to achieve.

In terms of who, consider:

- Is this a generic piece about your company in general or designed to highlight specific products or services?
- What are the key characteristics of the people you are trying to attract e.g. demographics, sex, age etc.?

In terms of what, consider:

- What does your target audience want to hear (perhaps ask some existing customers for ideas)?
- What action do you want the viewer to take after watching the video (e.g. call you, e-mail you, purchase on-line) so you can ensure a call to action is included?

How long do you want your video to be?

So how long should your video be? As ever the answer to that is – it depends! One statistic that is clear is that however long it is, it needs to get early engagement from the viewer.

According to research by Visible Measures, 20% of your viewers will click away from a video in 10 seconds or fewer. Once you get to 30 seconds, you'll lose about 1/3 of your viewers, increasing to 45% of them by 1 minute and almost 60% by 2 minutes. The research indicates that those numbers remain the same no matter how long the video is.

What that suggests to me is that you need to really grab the viewer's attention quickly so good scripting is key and an early mention of a later offer might just help keep them viewing long enough to get the viewer to your call to action.

The video needs to be long enough for you to get your message across but without boring the viewer.

Another issue to bear in mind is that the longer the video, the more it will cost to produce so it needs to fit in with your budget.

What locations are you going to use?

There are numerous options open to you in terms of locations for filming your video. Making the right choice depends on what you are trying to achieve with the video and, as usual, your budget.

Your options include using a studio environment, external location shots and internal location shots e.g. within your offices or factory. Getting the right mix involves being clear on what your video is trying to achieve. There is more detail on this in Chapter 4.

I've seen so many videos on YouTube where, despite having good content, the video is ruined by being shot in the wrong location with poor sound quality and inadequate lighting – just consider what impression this gives a potential customer who views it.

What is your project deadline?

A video does not necessarily have to take long to produce, but, like any project, it needs to be carefully planned with agreed timescales to ensure it is produced on time and, just as importantly, on budget. Quite simply, overruns result in more cost!

If you are going to use external help to produce your video (you already know I'm a huge advocate of this), it is well worth deciding who, at your organisation, is going to be in charge of the project and then get them to draw up actions and timings with the people and organisations involved in the project.

This is not always as easy as it sounds, especially if you have a number of individuals who need to be filmed for the video and if you are using multiple locations. It is vital to ensure the individuals and locations are aware of what they are doing and when – it is an expensive mistake to have a filming crew turn up to find the people to be filmed are not around.

In my experience, it is also important to give the project manager enough authority to take key decisions during the video production process – decisions by committee always seem to result in procrastination and cost overruns!

What is your budget?

This is a fundamental issue that you need to address up front because it makes such a difference in terms of what can be produced. Not only that but it can save a lot of time and effort too – I've had so many meetings where people have got really enthusiastic about what they want and then had a huge disappointment when they realise they have not set aside enough budget to deliver it.

Creating a professional video that makes a real impact is not a cheap exercise and there are far too many people around who expect something for nothing. However, we all know times are hard and purse strings are being squeezed and, provided there is room for compromise, it is still possible to produce quality videos on a limited budget – for instance Titan's special SME packages mean you can produce a couple of minutes of video for just £150.

Because of limited budgets, there is always the temptation to "do it yourself" – I hope my earlier comments highlight the danger of this and the negative impact it can have. Surely it makes far more sense to get hold of a reasonable budget, project manage the production effectively so you don't overspend and then end up with videos that make your business look good and pay for themselves several times over in terms of return on investment.

Chapter 3 - Scripting your video

Making an impact with your video is key – it needs to be engaging, interesting and provide the viewer with a call to action. As a result getting your script right is going to be critical, as well as how this script is supported by graphics and messages that may appear in the video itself.

Remember earlier I quoted statistics from Visible Measures that said 20% of your viewers will click away from a video in 10 seconds or fewer. Once you get to 30 seconds, you'll lose about 1/3 of your viewers, increasing to 45% of them by 1 minute and almost 60% by 2 minutes. This demonstrates the importance of grabbing attention early so that they stay for the duration or else they won't be around when you make your call for action!

So give some thought to what can be said to keep them watching – perhaps a hard hitting fact or controversial statement delivered right up front might do the trick. Perhaps alluding to a fantastic offer that will be communicated later in the video will have an impact. A strong opening is vital!

The script should focus on the benefits that you bring to your clients – why is your organisation better than the rest? A testimonial snippet by a customer at this point will help to reinforce what you are saying. Remember to focus on how you solve issues for your customers not on how great your organisation is.

Having a call to action is vital and to get the viewer to take that step, including an enticing special offer will help your response rates. Don't make the special offer so special that you can't afford it so consider throwing things into the offer that have value to the customer but cost you very little or even better nothing at all.

Spending time developing your script is time well spent – you'd be surprised how quickly 30 seconds elapses when you are scripting so it is vital to keep it short, sharp and to the point and read it through yourself while timing it. One of the real benefits of using a video production partner in creating your video is that they will have plenty of experience in knowing what works in a script, so make sure you take advantage of their advice. They can help you to fine tune your script to maximise its impact.

Finally, a great script can severely limit its impact if it is poorly delivered so another important consideration revolves around who is going to deliver it. How many of us have watched people deliver a message with no energy or emotion in a monotonous dirge that just turns you right off? Would you want to buy from them – I doubt it! It could be that you have the ideal person in-house who will do a great job for you, but don't forget you can also access voiceover artists who deliver scripts for a living. If your budget allows, you can even use a well-known personality with a distinctive voice.

Chapter 4 - Filming locations

There are numerous options open to you in terms of locations for filming your video. Making the right choice depends on what you are trying to achieve with the video and, as usual, your budget.

If your video is to generically promote your business then you need to consider having some filming done at your business premises giving you the opportunity to show how your business operates and the people that work in it. To create more impact, you might want to get some filming done at some of your clients' premises with some testimonials included. Just remember, the more locations, the higher the cost and it is important to assess the suitability of the location for filming with issues such as background noise and lighting taken into account.

If your video is designed to promote a product or service then a studio shoot should be considered – this can be done with a green screen background to enable the video producer to add in suitable backgrounds and graphics after filming. It also means the sound and lighting can be optimised in a controlled environment.

Some words of caution here for the “do it yourselves”. I have seen innumerable videos on YouTube where people have clearly tried to do their own thing, often filming themselves in their work or home office environment. If you really do feel you are best served by creating the video yourself then do put yourself in the shoes of the viewer before you press “submit” to load your video onto your YouTube channel.

I've seen “talking silhouettes” who have stood in front of windows and could quite frankly be anyone as they have no discernible features. Alternatively I've seen people who don't appear to have paid their electricity bill as the lighting in their office is so poor you can barely see them. Then there's the Norman Collier effect when you seem to be only able to catch every other word due to the poor sound quality. Finally there's the “what's in the background?” effect where the viewer's attention is on the untidy mess that sits behind the presenter because they have not thought about what is behind them before filming.

The message is simple – the better quality your video is, the better impression you make so if you are going to DIY, at the very least avoid some of the basic mistakes!

Chapter 5 - Post-production

Editing is the most vital stage of any video production and so often the most overlooked. The editing process sets the whole style, pace and tone of the video. It is here where special effects can be added such as graphics, voice, text, music and lots more. It is also extremely difficult to make a decent job of it if you produce your own video because you simply will not have the tools to do the job effectively.

This is really an area where using external experts pays dividends. Mistakes and stumbles over the script can be edited out – for the DIY brigade you either have to keep re-filming until you get it right or finalise it warts and all! Even then, your standard DIY video will effectively be a talking head with their office in the background with poor lighting and sound quality – not that inspiring for the viewer and really lacking impact.

With the equipment available today it is possible to do some amazing things at a low cost to really enhance a video – using graphics and text on the screen enables key points to be re-emphasised and increases brand awareness. The use of music and/or voice-over will further enhance the viewer experience.

In the past I have been asked to see what I can do with a piece of film that has a poor presenter and script and I've managed to produce an effective end product in our editing suite to rescue the situation because I have access to the latest equipment that can create that "wow" factor. Having said that, I would much prefer to get involved right from the start, so that all the elements of the process are of sufficient quality.

The post production stage can take some time to complete and it is important to visualize how you want the end product to look when planning your video. Using graphics, text, music and voice-overs all add to the production cost and so it is important to decide up front how much of your budget is going to be allocated in this area.

One other benefit of using professionals for post-production is that they can produce a draft edit (and subsequent versions if required) before getting final sign off to complete the job. This means you can ensure you are 100% happy with the end product. A word of warning though – a clear plan of what you want up front is vital because at post-production phase, if you decide you want to make major changes, your budget is going to be blown!

Chapter 6 - End product

The nature of your end product will depend on what you plan to use it for.

If you are looking to hand out your video to customers or even sell it, then you will need to have it burned onto DVD's and inserted in a library case with a specially designed cover. Multiple copies can be reproduced relatively cheaply but you will need to include the costs for this in your budget.

If you are just going to post your video on the internet then you only need a copy of the file and you can either upload it to your web-site and/or YouTube channel yourself or get your web-site provider to do so.

If you are using an external company to produce your video, make sure it is clear that once it is finalised and handed over to you, that you own the copyright on it or else you could be held to ransom in the future if you want more copies or to make amendments.

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Chapter 7 - About Titan

Titan Film & Events consists of talented professionals from video production, marketing, events, training and business management and all with an excellent understanding of how business works. This combination of skills ensures we deliver continued creativity and results to our clients.

Our production team remains innovative in its approach, providing you with high quality video production and events within your budget.

Working across both private and public sectors, our production service incorporates every aspect of contemporary business communication delivery; from brand videos, product launches and live events to conference design and strategic collaboration programming.

Whether it be corporate product or sales video, opening or punctuating a conference, enlivening your exhibition stand or reception area, an anchor for a training program, personalising a presentation or business pitch, creating video news or enriching your website with product or service information – Titan Film & Events has vast experience in all these areas.

This guide has been designed to give you some key tips in producing a professional video with impact that enhances your organisation's image. As you have probably gathered, we do not advocate the "do it yourself" approach because we have seen far too many examples to mention where an internally produced video has ended up having a detrimental effect on a business.

Because we know from experience how effective video can be for business, we have started a crusade to provide affordable and effective video production to organisations of all shapes and sizes so that no-one has an excuse for not using this as part of their marketing strategy.

Our range of packages for SME's start from just £150 and further details can be found on our web-site - www.titanfilms.co.uk/packages/sme - you see lack of budget just is not a valid excuse!

Trusting who you work with is so important and we have built up some longstanding satisfied customers over the years – see for yourself - www.titanfilms.co.uk/what-people-say

If you are still wavering about discussing with us the impact video can have on your business then take a look at this - www.titanfilms.co.uk/is-video-production-expensive

All you have to do is provide us with a brief and we'll present you with a proposal that will deliver your audience an engaging, memorable, and effective viewing experience.

We hope you found this guide of real use to you – all we ask in return is to give us a chance to work with you on your video project – call us now on **0121 561 4701**. Our discussions will cost nothing and there is no obligation to work with us, so you have nothing to lose!