

FROM THE TRENCHES

VIDEO MARKETING: BEST PRACTICES AND SIMPLE TIPS FOR LIBRARIES

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Abstract

Many information professionals have experimented with creating video content for instructional purposes. Video marketing is another mode of video communication that can appeal to and engage library users. In this article, the authors of a forthcoming book on video marketing for librarians share best practices, along with practical tips for video marketing production. Tips include specific information on topics such as message development, preproduction, video equipment, postproduction including editing, as well as accessibility and discoverability. Alternatives to traditional live-action video, including online animation, are also explored.

Keywords: video marketing, video production, marketing, branding, animation, library marketing, libraries

Introduction

Marketing has come a long way in the world of information professionals; the inaugural issue of this journal is clear evidence of this fact. No longer simply deemed nice to have or relegated to an afterthought, marketing has begun to be recognized as a crucial activity for libraries. Promoting library resources, services, and expertise is now seen as essential in the face of persisting misconceptions about what modern libraries have to offer their users. Video marketing can be a powerful tool for information professionals seeking to market their libraries. Many libraries, such as Brigham Young University's Harold B. Lee Library and Orange Public Library, have achieved great success with marketing videos, with YouTube views of over 3,500,000 and 480,000 views, respectively. Yet the video production process can seem intimidating to amateur video makers, leaving information professionals unsure of where to begin. This article will discuss best practices for library marketing videos, as well as practical tips to help get those interested in video production started.

Best Practices

Every video marketing project is different, but there are some universal rules of thumb you can follow that will contribute to your video's success. Here are some best practices to consider when starting your library video marketing project:

- 1. Know your purpose.** If you are

going to through the effort of creating a marketing video, you should understand the purpose of video marketing in comparison to other forms of marketing. One of the most frequently misunderstood aspects of video marketing by information professionals is, in fact, its purpose. Information professionals may generally be aware of videos designed for instructional purposes, such as tutorials related to online searching and information discovery. In fact, in recent years many librarians have developed expertise in various aspects of instructional design with the aim of creating better learning objects such as videos, which make course content as accessible and engaging to their target audience as possible (ALA, 2008, p. 2). While there is some overlap between best practices for marketing videos and instructional videos, they are really separate beasts entirely. The primary function of a marketing video is not to educate, though this can be an added benefit. Instead, it is to appeal to the viewers' emotions. Just as some information professionals may be uncomfortable with the "M" word (marketing), some may also be uncomfortable with the idea that marketing videos involve appealing to something other than their audience's intellect. Appealing to their viewer's emotions may be misconstrued as a manipulative ploy to gain atten-

tion. However, information professionals should understand that their viewing audience is probably more sophisticated and self-aware than they are given credit for; we often recognize when a company is playing to our emotions. Unfortunately, the value offered by libraries is often misunderstood due to misconceptions about what modern libraries are and how they function. If appealing to your audience's emotions through humor, excitement, or other means turns viewers into library users, information professionals should feel no qualms about doing so.

2. **Know your audience.** In an ideal world, one marketing video would be able to connect with all viewers. In reality, "one size fits all" marketing videos are rare. It is best to create your video with a specific target audience in mind (e.g., students or faculty at an academic library, teens or seniors at a public library). Your audience should not be so narrow that it appeals to only a very small niche of people. However, your message should be targeted so that you are appealing to a specific group. An example of a poorly executed library marketing video in terms of target audience is the meandering library tour video that is not shared with a specific audience, but is instead posted on a library's website and left to languish in relative obscurity. If you are going to create a video, start by asking

yourself who you want to watch it. Once you have answered that, ask yourself an equally important follow-up question: How are they going to see it? Will you be sharing it during an orientation? In conjunction with a specific event, such as an anniversary? Will it be shared via social media, and if so, on which platforms?

3. **Keep it short.** When conducting research for *Video Marketing for Libraries: A Practical Guide for Librarians*, one recommendation for marketing videos appeared again and again in the literature: Keep it short. It is essential to grab the viewer's attention quickly in the beginning. The average length of top YouTube videos clock in at 4 minutes, 20 seconds. The optimal marketing video length is in fact, closer to two minutes or less (Johnson, 2011). It may feel impossible to convey your message in less than three minutes, but again, keep in mind that your goal is not to instruct, but to appeal to your viewers' emotions.
4. **Production value is key.** Online video content has exploded in the last decade (Bowman, 2017). More and more, people are using video to get their news, for entertainment, and to communicate with one another. Production quality is important, so invest where you can. Quality productions are received more favorably. Don't fret; high quality is attainable. Libraries

can get help from their communities (e.g., by engaging theatre, film, and communication majors). Professional equipment can be rented, and tweaks can be made to your film set to improve lighting and sound.

5. **Brand it!** It is every library's hope that their resources are utilized and valued by their community, so from the moment a viewer begins watching your video it should be clear who created it. Make sure that videos include relevant identity symbols and logos, and frequently update older videos as these symbols and logos change. In addition to including visibly identifying features, keep in mind that the overall look and feel of the video is also a reflection of your library's brand.
6. **Enhance discoverability.** Enhance the discoverability of your video by featuring it prominently on library-owned media channels, such as websites and blogs. Sharing on social media channels such as Twitter, Facebook, and YouTube is also an excellent way to reach a large audience quickly. Whichever online media channels you choose to share your video, be sure to keep content fresh by updating it on a regular basis.
7. **Assess, assess, assess.** Frequently assess the video's impact on viewers by taking advantage of available video analytics, library

statistics, and viewer feedback. You will find metrics beyond view count available on social media and video hosting tools; for example, average view duration will show if your viewers watched the entire video. Complement these metrics by reviewing traditional library statistics. If your marketing video is promoting your video game collection, review the circulation records before and after. Or, if your goal is to increase questions at the reference or research help desk, see if there is a noticeable difference. Finally, gather qualitative feedback from your users by conducting interviews, focus groups, observations, or surveys of your target demographic. If you do not learn how they perceive the video, and zero-in on view count alone, you might falsely believe your video is succeeding or failing.

Simple Tips to Get You Started

1. **Have a plan.** Information professionals have embraced project management and excel at various forms of project and strategic planning. Collections professionals manage complex e-journal packages, licensing and invoice systems, and multimillion dollar budgets. Access services professionals may manage multiple front-end service points, complicated processes such as interlibrary loan, and the scheduling and development of dozens of staff members. Clearly, systematically managing tasks,

systems, and collections are the strong suit of many information professionals. Those interested in creating marketing videos should apply this same panache for organization and planning to their video project. A major component of video production—preproduction—basically all boils down to planning and setup. A project plan will typically consist of project overview, project description (including purpose, background, scope, deliverables, timeline, budget, and project roles/responsibilities), key success factors, risk identification, project stakeholders, and your communication/marketing plan for the video once it is completed. Before you shoot, you will spend a lot of time creating and perfecting your scripts and storyboards. This is a perfect opportunity to work with non-librarians to make sure your videos are free from jargon.

2. **Collaborate and build a team.** Don't make this a solo effort. Work with other librarians, library users, community members, and students. Tap into the talent that surrounds you. You may have to give up a little creative control, but you will have fun in the process and likely make a better video.
3. **Know your message.** When crafting your video's message, it is essential to craft your value

proposition. Your value proposition, put simply, is what your viewers will get out of your service. It describes how it will solve your viewers' problems and/or benefit them. It is important to keep your value proposition short and clear. Define the objective of your video and focus only on that message. A simple formula you can follow to define your message is to focus on the problem of the viewers, identify a solution, and explain why the library solution is a good and/or unique solution to the problem.

4. **Consider alternatives to traditional video.** No video equipment? No problem! Traditionally, marketing videos have been made in the same way feature films are made, by utilizing professional video equipment, as well as a cast and crew, to capture a live-action narrative. Luckily for information professionals with a limited budget or staff, there are now plenty of options beyond the traditional approach to video production. Online animation tools have opened up a new world of possibility for those seeking to create compelling marketing videos for their libraries. Check out online options like GoAnimate, Spark Video, and PowToon if you've decided to go the animation route. Keep in mind that just like live-action video production, creating animated videos will require planning,

effort, teamwork, and funding, and there will still be a learning curve.

5. Learn some filmmaking basics.

If you're creating a live-action video, it certainly helps to understand some basic filmmaking concepts and terms. No one is expecting you to be the next Steven Spielberg, but you should understand basic concepts such as camera angles, continuity, and composition in order to make your video interesting and aesthetically appealing. It is also helpful to understand the different roles in a film crew, even if your crew is small. A great place to start with filmmaking basics is Steve Stockman's *How to Shoot Video That Doesn't Suck: Advice to Make Any Amateur Look Like a Pro* (2011, Workman: New York) and the classic by Cantine, et al.: *Shot by Shot: A Practical Guide for Filmmaking* (2000, Pittsburgh Filmmakers: Pittsburgh, PA). These texts are also great for understanding lighting fundamentals, another key aspect of filmmaking.

6. Viewers will forgive poor visuals but they will not tolerate poor audio.

Focus on capturing the best sound possible while filming. If you do not have access to a studio, try recording away from noisy HVAC vents. The microphone that comes with your smartphone might be bet-

ter than the one with your camera; test both before production day. You can record audio with a smartphone and your video camera and sync it later. Alternatively, you can add a shotgun microphone to your camera.

7. Using video equipment isn't as hard as you think it is.

Modern video equipment has been created with the amateur video maker in mind. You can purchase a decent, easy-to-use digital video camera for under \$300. If it is an option, you may also want to consider renting video equipment, especially when it comes to lighting kits and sound equipment.

8. Non-linear editors (video editing software) are not too complicated.

Newer tools have made video editing much simpler and more accessible than ever. Entry-level non-linear editors (NLEs) have titles and animations that you can use. Simple editing can even be performed completely online with YouTube or WeVideo. Your library may already have tutorial creation software (e.g., Camtasia, Adobe Captivate, or Articulate), so check to see if they can edit videos to your liking. If you have a need for more creative control, and/or the proclivity to learn, obtain a trial of higher-end non-linear editors (e.g., Final Cut Pro, Adobe Premiere Pro). Make sure your com-

puter meets the specifications of the editing software you use.

9. Postproduction editing improves with time and practice.

Most professionals first assemble their files into clips then make rough cuts before moving on to making fine edits and joining clips seamlessly. Non-linear editors are non-destructive for files. As you make cuts, the software simply points to different time markers on the files. Feel free to experiment as you edit—it's the best way to learn your software—but before you do, duplicate your editing sequences so you do not lose the edits you've made. There are a lot of techniques you can add in editing as you become more familiar with your software. For example, you can film in front of a green screen and use chroma keying to add a different background or add simple transitions between scenes. Remember to cite: Make sure you cite all non-original media (images, songs, movie clips) you add to your videos.

10. Design for all users at the very beginning.

Definitely include either captions or a transcript of your video for individuals with hearing impairments. Write your scripts with enough descriptions that a person with visual impairments can still follow along or add audio descriptions to your videos as needed. Steer clear

from using colors to convey important information, unless you choose high contrast colors. Be sure to avoid flashing lights and strobe effects. See <http://we-baim.org/techniques/captions/> for more.

11. Use YouTube.

YouTube is a very scalable, accessible hosting tool that is freely available to you. You can easily add captions to your videos in YouTube, which can be edited at any time. Users can change the way that the captions appear. YouTube also works with a variety of devices, big and small. Don't worry about the commercials on YouTube; you always can turn off the monetizing on your video.

12. Promote your video.

A marketing video that is not promoted is an inherent failure. You should have a communication plan in place before you start production for how your video will be promoted. Keep in mind that assessing your video's impact is also essential, and be sure to report back about your video's impact to all stakeholders.

Conclusion

Video marketing is one of the most powerful forms of marketing in existence. With proper planning, message development, and training, librarians can leverage video marketing to promote their collections, services, and expertise. Librarians can use their skills

in organization, project planning, and assessment to their advantage when creating and promoting a marketing video. Although video production may seem daunting to the untrained eye, by following the best practices and simple tips set forth in this article, even the most inexperienced video maker can succeed.

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