

Seven Secrets to Producing a Compelling Marketing Video

By Russ Pond, Top Pup Media, LLC

Today's marketing culture is all about "show me, don't tell me". With the declining costs of digital production and a myriad of distribution channels, visual communication is no longer a recommendation—it's a requirement. Whether it's a short promotional video designed to create a specific response in viewers, or a CEO's motivational message to employees, a video can be a powerful communication tool.

When a potential customer is faced with the decision to read a lengthy PDF with facts and statistics, or watch an engaging video that's full of energy and excitement, which do you think he will choose? If you understand today's consumer, then you'll know that a concise, targeted video can be very effective. Decisions to buy your product or use your service happen much more quickly when the viewer sees how your product can be beneficial, or how your service can make life easier.

A well-produced video can be very convincing when telling your story. And today, videos can be played anywhere—from DVDs to tradeshow to websites. These highly-focused, marketing productions are quickly becoming a favorite medium among companies, big and small.

Creating a compelling, visual story that is different yet stimulating can be a challenge. We've all seen the videos that were painfully dull with poor production quality or just missed the message altogether. But, we've also seen a few that we remember like yesterday—timeless clips that made us laugh or cry, or both. If a picture is worth a thousand words, then moving pictures can be worth far more.

Let me share with you seven secrets to producing a compelling marketing video.

Secret No. 1: Have a Clear Message

Make a list of your objectives, and identify the main purpose of the video. These will guide you in creating a direct, focused message that you can communicate to your target audience. Are you launching a new line of products or a new service? Do you want to establish your company's reputation and increase brand awareness? What is the video all about? Once you have established the answers to these questions, you have now laid the groundwork to tell your story.

Be specific. Don't beat around the bush. If you're taking a stand, hit the heart of the matter without hesitation. Be confident and bold with your message. Avoid being vague. Stay away from confusing metaphors and ambiguous words. Clarity persuades best.

Make your message timely and relevant. There is no need to deliver a message that people are no longer interested in hearing about, or communicating something that is outdated or no longer in use. Make sure your audience can easily benefit from experiencing the production. Put value and substance into it, and turn it into something your audience can relate to.

Be authentic. Today's immediate access to vast information makes it easy for people to call your bluff. Your integrity and credibility can directly impact the effectiveness of your video. Don't be pretentious. It is said that 80% to 90% of what we communicate is in how we say it, not what we say. So, be real. This is very important for internal corporate videos. You must accurately and effectively capture the tone of your business so that it will translate to your staff, clients, investors, and the public.

Finally, be concise. Focus equals impact. Long overviews and descriptions are for brochures, not for videos. Remember, less is more. Don't overload your audience with information. Make room for establishing trust and for tapping into emotions; you will generate a more positive response that way.

Secret No. 2: Know Your Audience

An effective video engages the viewer to take action. Your business may have an amazing product or service to offer, but if you don't communicate it to the right viewers, then you will not get the reaction you want. Don't focus on the idea of simply relaying your story, but pay close attention to what is appealing to your select audience, to your customers. What you present in your video should be essential to them.

Find out who your target audience is, and build a viewer profile to know what appeals to them. What kind of story would appeal to them? How much time would they spend watching the video? Where are they watching them? You should have a solid understanding of what does and doesn't work with your target audience.

What is your viewer expecting to see—an edgy, fast-paced 3D animation for young gamers, or a touching, inspirational story for boomers? What draws them into it? What would keep them away? The answers to these questions will give you an idea of your audience's viewing preferences. Use this knowledge to help you convey your story in a way that will instigate action and engage the viewer.

Be honest with your audience. Have a conversation that is worth their time. Use a language they can understand. Tell your story as though you are talking specifically to the one watching. People like being spoken to directly and being able to connect even in body language. It's estimated that 80% to 90% of what we communicate is in how we say it, not what we say.

Understand your viewers—their thoughts and opinions. This can help you anticipate their next move and course of action. Show them what they want to see, and give them information on things relevant to them. Offering details that could be of interest not only helps get their attention, it is also the first step to establishing trust and relationship.

Let your story naturally connect your business to your viewing audience.

Secret No. 3: Tell a Compelling Story

Watching a video that shows no real emotion is like eating cake without icing—it lacks flavor and taste. It won't leave an impression on people. No lasting memory of the story. An effective video tells a compelling story that engages its audience at an emotional level; if it doesn't make people think, smile, or even get angry, then you've wasted your investment.

Start by identifying the kind of story you want to tell. Is it a documentary, narrative, or an interview? This will guide you in deciding how you want your audience to feel after watching the video. Know what kind of emotions you want to provoke, and develop a storyline that can trigger those emotions.

Genuine, raw emotion is powerful. Show people laughing, dancing, cheering, and even crying in your video—capture life at its best. Don't drown your viewers with facts and figures. Keep in mind that honest emotions create more impact than charts, PDFs, and tables.

Get people emotional. Make them go “A-ha!” Make them cry, or mad—do what you can to get the reaction you want. Keep in mind that emotion activates the brain 3,000 times faster than regular thought! Consumers pay 200% more when decisions are based on emotions.

If applicable, use mystery to tell your story. Audiences enjoy figuring things out without being spoon-fed the details. Mystery can be used effectively to engage certain audiences, and create a sense of resolve and viewer empowerment when the mystery is solved.

Make the story unique, interesting, and entertaining. Take your viewers on a journey. Timeless stories never get old. Introduce characters that people can easily relate to, allowing them to connect at a personal level. If possible, give your audience a hero. Hero stories are the foundation of most Hollywood movies, because people want someone to look up to and someone to rescue them.

Secret No. 4: **Be Consistent**

Consistency throughout your production is a key ingredient to producing an effective video. Maintaining consistency across your brand and marketing message will help communicate stability and confidence to your audience.

What is your position in the industry? How do you want your audience to perceive your business? What sets your brand apart from the competition? A successful brand, after all, is able to send a consistent message across all marketing platforms—including your video.

Make sure your video is branded according to your company's marketing requirements. Use approved logos and visual clues consistently, accurately, and in a manner that best reflects your brand. Employ a unique, but consistent color scheme that helps your audience associate your video with your company. If your business carries a slogan or tagline, use it and stick with it. Make it catchy and memorable, and let it stand out on its own. Aligning your visual story with your branding guidelines helps maintain consistency with your viewers.

Allow branding to reinforce the message you've already conveyed in your video, leaving a stronger impression in your viewers' minds. Use it to remind your audience of their experiences—from the things they've seen, read and heard, to the things they felt after watching your video.

Inconsistent branding is not effective when trying to establish yourself in the market. If your branding efforts are incoherent in the video, you will most likely confuse your audience, breaking down their trust in your company.

From branding to scriptwriting to the actual production and distribution of the video, consistency will strengthen your message and impact your audience at a much greater level.

Secret No. 5: **Generate the Response You Want**

Knowing the exact action you want to generate from the video can help you effectively plan how to solicit that particular response. Identify what you want your viewers to do after watching the video, and how you want them to do it.

Grab your viewers' attention. You won't get them to respond if you don't have their full attention. Start your video strong. Don't save your punches until the end. According to research, audience interest rises and falls dramatically within the first few seconds. If you can't capture their attention quickly, chances of keeping it fall dramatically. Be smart in how you craft your visual message, and how you will grab their attention at the start.

Solicit a reaction that's specific. Too many options can be confusing. Do you want to create sales, generate leads, communicate a new feature, promote brand awareness or educate investors? Don't confuse your audience with too many alternatives, because if you do, you will get mixed responses. Make sure the reaction you desire is clear and concise. This will help you build your story and message more accurately.

Lead the way. If your goal is to drive more traffic to your website, feature your website address in the video, so that customers will visit and learn more about your company. If your goal is to increase sales, then prompt your viewers to make a purchase by showing them where they can buy your product or the phone number they can call to order.

Generate a quantifiable viewer response. Whether you are running a simple opinion poll, or introducing a new line of products, the response must be something that can be measured. Most video distribution channels today have specific measurement tools. These metrics and analytics can provide specific feedback to make sure you are generating the response you want.

Secret No. 6: Start With the End in Mind

Cast a vision, and begin your video with the end in mind. Once you have visualized how you want your story to be told and the kind of reaction you want from your audience, picture how it will be distributed. Do you see the video on your website, or perhaps a trade show? Do you see it getting the 30-second prime time slot on national TV? Does it have the necessary components to go viral across social networks?

Strategic, targeted distribution of your video is necessary. A video is only valuable for your company when it reaches the audience you intended and compels them to take the action you want.

Identify the most effective and efficient platform for your video. Will distribution through traditional broadcast channels catch your viewer's attention? Will viral marketing do the trick? Will the social media networks provide the necessary exposure you need? With the end in mind, you can maximize your production budget and create a measurable, cost-efficient approach to reaching your desired audience.

Build a realistic production and distribution strategy that you can implement and maintain, with short-term goals and objectives to guide you along the way. Make sure you manage this process accordingly—from crew contracts, actor releases, location agreements, music licenses, stock footage rights, work for hire agreements and any other necessary paperwork.

Protect your work through copyrights. To avoid legal problems, work closely with your legal team before releasing the video to make sure all of the proper documentation is in place.

Anticipate the different stages of your production and distribution. Production is a very dynamic process, requiring you to make changes on the fly. Good planning and preparation will make your project flow more smoothly, making sure you stay on schedule and on budget.

Secret No. 7:

Differentiate Yourself Through Quality Production Value

Today, low-quality, hand-held videos have saturated the web. They're everywhere. How can you stand out with your marketing video? High-quality production value is an easy way to visually differentiate yourself from the others. Quality production is essential because it directly impacts not only your brand, but also how your viewers will respond.

Avoid sloppy, amateur productions that scream home video. Poor production value can easily turn viewers away. Keep in mind that the quality of your visual story is a direct reflection on your company's capabilities and even the credibility of your message.

Tap into production experts and specialists, and draw from their experience and knowledge of the industry. Let your business benefit from their production prowess. The right production company will know exactly what works for your business. Verify their ability to meet tight deadlines and complete projects within the given budget.

Review demo reels and sample projects to make sure the production company can produce quality videos. Make sure the team you've commissioned to visualize your message knows how to utilize key elements such as casting, lighting, sound, animations and camerawork. Also, look for production companies that have an established client base. Don't be afraid to ask for client referrals. A production company with nothing to hide should gladly provide you with client referrals.

A high-quality production with a uniquely crafted distribution strategy can require a substantial investment. Make sure you do your homework and ask lots of questions. That way, you can be sure to produce a high-quality, marketing video that will best communicate your message and generate the viewer response you want.

About the Author

Russ Pond



Throughout his childhood, Pond spent almost every day at his father's photography studio. As a professional photographer, Pond's father enjoyed shooting family portraits, industrial photos and his favorite, weddings. Pond later graduated with a degree in Electrical and Computer Engineering from the University of Texas.

Finding that unique balance between technology and creativity, Pond experienced immediate success in the corporate world with product marketing for two telecom giants in the Dallas area. His pragmatic and creative perspective provided a variety of opportunities in new business development and marketing communications. With five patents to his credit, Pond's approach to marketing is dynamic and innovative. His 16 years of experience working for Fortune 500 companies helped him gain valuable experience and business insight.

In 1998, Pond started a new production company, Top Pup Media. His knowledge and experience of corporate marketing combined with his upbringing in the visual arts positioned his company for immediate success. Today, Top Pup Media is one of the premiere production companies in the Dallas area producing a variety projects for clients and companies.

Pond is married with one son, and resides in the Dallas/Ft. Worth area.

About the Company
TOP PUP MEDIA, LLC



Whether it's to promote a product, launch a new service, or grow brand awareness, Top Pup Media helps organizations create compelling visual productions. Our full-service production company produces quality visuals that reach target audiences using the latest media tools and platforms. From marketing spots to corporate video productions, Top Pup Media has established itself as leader in visual communications.

We produce corporate videos that effectively communicate key messages within organizations, tradeshow and marketing productions that grow brand awareness, and interactive media presentations that provide powerful communicate tools to educate, train and market products and services. We have successfully produced award-winning films and television shows, giving us keen insight and experience within the entertainment industry. From conceptualization, crews, casting and creative marketing, we can assist throughout the entire production process.

If you have any production needs, please feel free to contact us:

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