

Six Tips on Making a Successful Training Video

Today's television saturated audience expect to watch good television. This is why poor acting, grainy vision and boring dialogue will no longer cut it in your training video.

Off-the-shelf training videos can often be poorly produced, so much so that they engender more laughs than learning. Or the messages tend to be too broad and not targeted enough for a specific audience.

To avoid this trap, companies often custom-design their training videos, in order to get unique messages across to their staff or customers.

Yet, just because you have a tailor-made production specifically for your staff does not mean that they will be willing to learn.

So how do you get your training messages absorbed?

1. Get the Script Right

The script is the backbone to your production.

It needs to be short, succinct and written in the same language understood by your audience.

Avoid transcribing manuals into a training video script. They will be too wordy to be of interest on screen.

Spend the maximum time on your script, as it will determine the quality of your production.

2. Keep them Involved

Many training videos often have procedures that need to be demonstrated. Keeping the camera locked on a staff member talking through what they are doing, will never keep anyone interested for long.

The golden rule in making a successful training video is to keep changing what is shown on screen.

This means that each scene needs to run for no longer than 7 seconds. Mix it up by using graphics and titles, cutting to a wide shot or close up, using a different voiceover or even using animation.

By using lots of overlay shots, not only to explain procedures in more detail, you keep the viewer involved with the action on screen.

3. Work out your Style

Using one camera angle continually on your presenter has the tendency to make audiences sleepy.

Work out the best style for your particular training production, in order to engage your viewers.

Keeping the 'mix it up rule' in mind, choose one or more of the following (preferably more than one for best results):

- Have actors (either staff or professional) acting out procedures.
- Use professional actors to dramatise scenes to communicate any emotional messages.
- Use a narrator to talk through what is happening on screen, or to elaborate on points made by the actors.
- Use an on-screen presenter to link scenes together, provide summaries of important points and bring your video to life.

4. Highlight Important Messages

The beauty of video is that it communicates both visually and audibly.

When conveying key messages, both the vision and the audio track need to be telling the same story. The audience will lose the message if the vision doesn't match what the voiceover is saying.

For example, say the voiceover mentions that “You must get the customer to read the document before signing it”. You will need to show the customer receiving the document, reading it and then signing it.

It would be confusing showing just the customer receiving the document and then signing. Or showing just the document being signed. You have to show on the screen every step of the procedure, in time to the narration.

To further reinforce salient points, titles can be added that coincide with the narration. This is a great way to get the audience to remember important pieces of information. Particularly, information such as statistics and names of certain procedures.

5. Do as I say, not as I do

As a parent of a toddler, it is amazing to discover how much your child picks up from just watching you.

It’s no surprise that even adults learn by example. Good leaders know that if they want their staff to follow their lead they have to make sure all of their actions coincide with their verbal instructions.

Often clients ask us to show on the training video the wrong way to do something.

Due to the funny way our mind works, we remember what we have seen. So if you want to teach your employees the wrong way to do something, showing them the incorrect way is a pretty good place to start!

The best method of training is to show the right way to do something.

6. Test their knowledge

The days of instructors playing a video tape and hoping that the audience has learnt their lesson is over.

Training video content can now be played on a computer together with an on-line assessment tool.

Short video modules can be watched ending with a question that the viewer needs to answer.

This not only ensures that the viewer pays attention, but is more likely to help them retain information.

At the end of the training session, simple reports can be downloaded by the trainer. This important information can be used to assess the areas in which more training is required.

(c) Marie-Claire Ross 2006. All rights reserved.