

Promote Your Business with Video

By Phil Isom, President JJP Media

Video is the medium of choice for communicating in the modern world. It has saturated our culture and changed the way we learn, entertain and interact. Video is everywhere. It is on our cell phones, in our cars and on our computer screens. In recent years, small businesses have approached our company, JJP Media, requesting video production services as the technology has evolved bringing production costs within reach.

The most common question asked is “how much does it cost to produce a video.” While that question seems easy to answer, the reality is that video production costs vary widely. Thirty years ago, the rule of thumb was that a video cost \$1,500 or more for each finished minute. In reality, there is no such thing as a “typical video.”

Producing a video is like building a custom home. Before a general contractor can tell you how much it costs to build your dream home, he must gather a lot of information. The same principle applies to producing a video.

You need to tell your contractor where the house is going to be built, what materials will be used and most important, you need to supply him with architectural plans. The video equivalent of an architectural plan is a script. Your entire production budget is driven by the script.

A script can be as simple as an outline of ideas or as detailed as a document containing the entire transcript of the video supplemented with full color illustrations and graphics. A typical script contains dialog and scene direction. Here is a sample:

SCENE	VIDEO	AUDIO	TIME
1	Fade up from black to animated program open.	Opening theme music	:00
2	Dissolve to MS of host. Zoom to MCU.	Hello and welcome to “Spinal Wellness.” Today’s program is the first episode of a five part series on spinal health issues.	:10
3	Animate title graphic in.	My name is Dr. John Smith and I am President of the American Neurological Association. Today my guests include the world renowned herbalist Dr. Mary Johnson. We will also talk, via satellite.	:17

This script sample provides a lot of information about the video. The program has theme music, custom animation, and title graphics. The video will be a five part series using the talk-show format. In addition, there are guests and a satellite feed from a second location.

Before we begin the budgeting process we need to answer some questions about the program. For instance, does the music and animation already exist or will those elements have to be created? Also, where will the video be shot? Will it be on location or in a studio? A script provides answers to these and many other important questions.

Failing to provide enough detail about the video project is the most common reason for exceeding the budget. Doing prep work will save time and money and minimize frustration. Here are some helpful key questions you need to answer before you start the budgeting process:

➤ *Who is my intended audience?*

Are they young or old, male or female? Sometimes the answer to this question is obvious. It is important to identify your audience early on in the planning process. This information will help you determine the best approach for presenting the content in your video.

➤ *How will the video be used?*

Is this video an element in a live presentation or is it intended to be viewed by itself? Will this video be used for a webcast or a broadcast? Will you distribute the program many different ways, e.g. DVD and internet? The answer to these questions will affect cost.

➤ *How long is the video?*

Is it a thirty second commercial or a one hour training video? Surprisingly, a thirty second commercial is not necessarily cheaper to produce than a one hour training video. However, program length does affect the cost of video production.

➤ *What is the production style of the video?*

Are you producing a documentary or a television commercial? Some treatments require more effort than others. Determining the production style early on will give you the ability to make more accurate budget projections.

➤ *Who will develop the program content?*

Will you need to hire a technical writer or a subject matter expert? Can the program content be developed internally? Developing and/or changing content once the production process has started can add additional costs and should be avoided if possible.

➤ *What is the delivery date for the finished video?*

You can probably imagine that a short turnaround time can increase the cost of production. Scheduling your project wisely can save you money.

If you take the time to thoroughly develop your content and plan out your delivery timeline then you will obtain more accurate bids from the video production companies. Your initial efforts will be rewarded with reduced costs and a higher quality video. You can find more information on our site at www.jjpmedia.com.