

# Top 10 Tips for Terrific Training Tapes

Producing training tapes requires more than lights, camera and action. Here are elements involved in making training videos. Follow these tips and enjoy the efficient process, effective programs and exciting payoffs.

**1. Objectives** - Know what you want viewers to think, feel and do. What should or should not be on your video? Is it the best medium for your message? Is information repeated often? Must it be accurate every time? Do different people deliver the same content? Do language barriers make it imperative to communicate visually rather than verbally?

**2. Script** - Take enough time to consider design, style, length and budget, before developing your blueprint for success. Choose an appropriate style --narration, dramatization, humor, etc. Fit the video to viewer time constraints. Will it be shown at work or at home? Should your project be produced in segments? An elaborate creative treatment dictates a higher budget. Conversely, smaller budgets allow for relatively simple programs. Unless you understand the art, science and craft of video scriptwriting, hire a professional scriptwriter to write --or at least edit-- your scripts.

**3. Producer/Director** - The producer coordinates details, gathers resources and oversees projects. The director shapes the creative concept into a coherent vision and orchestrates a team of artists, actors and technicians to bring that vision into reality. Each role requires different personality traits and skills, yet one person can

be both the producer and the director. Find people who share your vision and will take charge of your project and guide it to completion.

**4. Talent** - Both on-camera acting and voice-over narration require tremendous skill, training and practice. Communication is more a matter of what we see and hear than the actual words selected. Do not turn on the camera until you are ready to turn on the audience. Hire a professional or learn how to be one. A pro will work smarter, faster, and better.

**5. Lighting** - Video is lighting... period. You need extra lights to achieve a decent image. Artistic lighting helps people, places and things look right --or even better. Do not scrimp on lighting.

**6. Camera** - Use the best possible equipment and skilled operators. E.g., fluid-head tripods allow for smooth camera movements. Good camera people know the rules and when to break them. They have expertise in framing, composition and anticipation.

**7. Audio** - Use the right mic for the job. Prepare a back up mic. Control the audio environment; Use a studio whenever possible. Mic live audiences to capture reaction sounds. Select and include appropriate music and sound effects to add extra professionalism.

**8. Format** - Choose the tape format best for you and your budget. Current standard: Shoot on BetacamSP and edit to D2. Space does not permit a comparison here of S-VHS, Hi8, 3/4 inch or DVD,

etc. The industry is moving toward all digital formats.

**9. Graphics** - A graphic designer can help make your program both interesting and coherent. Graphical support should be used judiciously. Textual bullet points can reinforce spoken ideas. Animation, where appropriate, can be an exciting addition to your videos --though it is often costly. Good graphical elements can help you make an impression or maintain an image.

**10. Effects** - Less is more. Viewers should remember content rather than all the bells & whistles. Just because you can make image spin or flip, does not mean you should. Simple wipes and dissolves are effective. Editing is where magic happens. Find a skilled editor and you have a valuable asset.

Failing to follow these guidelines, you may still get a decent program, but you will not have a seamless piece of high-quality communication. Training videos also have a marketing function. Your video presentations, whether for employees and customers, reflect your level of commitment to quality and professionalism. High quality video is good public relations... And good video does a good job of training --while saving time, money and grief.

Budget for a roll-out. In addition to production costs, allow for distribution. For corporate training: Will the program be facilitated? Do you need handouts? How will you measure and track participation and retention? For products: plan on spending at least double the production dollars on marketing.

Form strategic alliances with marketers, distributors and fulfillment houses.

Desktop video has lowered the cost of production. Beware of people with the latest toys who may still lack the skills for effective communications. Most large companies have in-house video capabilities. Many medium to small

companies realize the value of training with video, but cannot afford to maintain a separate department or division. Establish a relationship with a producer as a *virtual video department* to meet your occasional needs without all that ugly overhead. If you need help funding or selling the training

investment, consult the many resources available on this topic.

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