

Maximizing the Advantages of Video

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As judges of the ASAE 2000 Gold Circle Awards for video communication, we highly recommend the experience. At no other time will you learn as much from so many colleagues so quickly. Based on our experiences as judges, we have put together a few tips on how to communicate effectively using video.

1. Set clear goals for your video production. Before you start, determine your goals and what action you want your audience to take as a result of watching the video. Some of the most effective pieces we viewed worked so well because they had a specific call to action. The visual language of video is dynamic, and the length and pacing will vary according to the setting. In a one-page flyer your words are limited, whereas with video, the only limits are your budget and your audience's attention span.

2. Adapt your production to the setting. The best examples of video work were those that adapted to their conditions (conference preview pieces, public service announcements) and demonstrated a clear understanding of the context in which they would be viewed and the time and attention available. Some of the best pieces had a "mockumentary" feel. Some featured a mix of live shots, studio work, and still photography. Many professional videos are dry and waste the investment with a dull, ineffective end product. Just as speakers and instructors know to keep it light with their audiences, so should the video producer.

3. Connect with your entire audience. Devices such as interviews with leadership are helpful to connect with your members, but keep the interviews brief and be sure that the leaders have real points to make. Some otherwise excellent productions hurt themselves by relying too much on vanity spots. We all must work with egos, but a 10-second spot with a caption works better if the person whom you're profiling wants to appear self-effacing rather than being the focus of the program.

4. Measure effectiveness in terms of impact. We often forget with video that it comes down to eyeballs and impact. What are your audience metrics--how do you determine how many people really paid attention to your production? What did they retain? It helps to set some goals, then use interviews, meeting evaluations, or other means to elicit feedback.

5. Be sure that video suits your needs. Particularly for productions that are to be mass-produced and distributed, be sure that video is the right medium. More and more business audiences are able to handle CD-ROM, and someday bandwidth will be sufficient to allow quality video production online. Unless you truly have 30 minutes of content to impart, these newer formats will offer inexpensive alternatives.