5 Tips for Creating Social Media Videos That Get Noticed

September 1, 2020 5 min read

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The following excerpt is from Ultimate Guide to Social Media Marketing *by Eric Butow, Jenn Herman, Stephanie Liu, Amanda Robinson and Mike Allton (each of whom contributed additional reporting to this week's topic), available now via Entrepreneur Press. Pre-order now from* Amazon | Barnes & Noble | Apple Books.

Using video in your social media marketing can seem daunting, but if you follow some basic rules, you'll be an expert in no time. If you want to create video that not only gets views, but helps convert sales, follow some of these best practices.

1. Get the right equipment from day one

One of the first reasons people often cite for not creating video content is that it's too expensive to buy the right equipment. Let us help you with that.

Today, virtually everyone in business has a smartphone, and you can use that smartphone to livestream or record video anywhere. In fact, under the right conditions, that video footage can be just as good as anything you'd get with a dedicated video camera. Similarly, most laptops come with a built-in webcam and an audio port to plug in a headset and mic.

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2. Boost your lighting

The biggest drawback to using a laptop or smartphone to record video is that it is harder to compensate for poor lighting. In fact, if you're going to invest in anything for recording video, better lighting should be at the top of your list, particularly if you want to record in a dim office.

When you task a camera to record you in poor light, the resulting video is dark and grainy. Conversely, when you're well-lit, the video is crisp, clear and, most important, your audience can see you nicely.

To that end, the recommended placement of lights is to have two in front of you, on either side of the camera, and one that is directed behind you to eliminate shadows. You'll find that lights designed specifically for video work can be adjusted and directed more easily than normal household lights, but feel free to work with what you have.

To test your lighting, simply open a video recording program on your computer, such as QuickTime for macOS, and see how your video quality looks. Are you grainy or shadowed? Lit too harshly? Get up and move your lights accordingly and then see how that impacted the quality of the video. If necessary, record yourself briefly and send it to a friend for input.

3. Look 'em in the eye

Eye contact is effective for establishing a connection with your audience. It's how you start building rapport. People who never look at the camera risk suggesting to the audience that they cannot be trusted.

That's not to say you can't take your eyes off the camera. But the more you can directly look at the camera – making each and

every viewer feel like you’re looking at them – the more effective your videos will be.

So practice that! Get into the habit of looking at the camera while you’re speaking. Treat it as though it’s the person you’re talking to. If it helps, imagine it’s a dear friend you’re having a wonderful conversation with.

One trick is to minimize whatever video screen you’re looking at. Make it small and centered at the top of your monitor, so it’s as close to your camera as possible. That way, even if you’re looking at yourself, other guests or a feed of comments from a live screen, your eyes are never far from the camera.

4. Give yourself a break

It’s also important to give yourself time and grace when it comes to creating video content. No one is born knowing how to produce gorgeous videos. It takes many, many hours of practice and experience to get good at it, and even then, like every other skill, it takes a lifetime to master it.

Remember that generally speaking, your audience and viewers are rooting for you! They want to learn from you and connect with you, and they will bear with you as you struggle here or there.

If you’re broadcasting live and say something wrong, just laugh it off and move on. Heck, some of the video clips that have gone the most viral for mine and my co-authors’ 360 Marketing Squad are the blooper reels I inevitably pull out. Those actually serve a wonderful purpose: They show your authenticity, humanity and hopefully your sense of humor.

5. Plan for a test period

Finally, when you’re deciding on your video strategy – where you’re publishing videos and what you’re going to talk about–

also include a time frame for how long you're going to commit to doing this before you render any real judgment.

It can be discouraging to spend hours filming and editing a video only to publish it and get no views. But don't let that stop you. Publish the next one, and the next one, and the one after that. Keep pushing out that content and scratching out an audience for yourself. If you're not sure whether the videos are good, find trusted friends and colleagues who can give you candid, professional feedback, and then keep publishing the videos.

Related: 3 Kinds of Social Media Marketing You Shouldn't Ignore

It takes a long time to build an audience and even longer to start incorporating feedback and input and get great at making videos. Give yourself sufficient time to accomplish that, and have some reasonable expectations and metrics as a gauge for success.

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