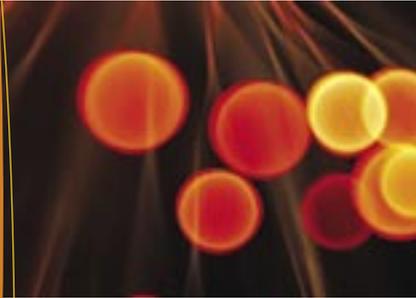




The definitive guide to purchasing
video production services

1. Introduction - the guide



Video is everywhere. It's in our homes, on our PCs, on mobile phones, on cameras, in shops, and of course – all over the Internet. Wherever we go, video is there. It's one of the world's most powerful business tools and it's going to play a huge part in our future.

This explosion of video is down to the way the internet has changed, the increase in broadband and the way your customers - and staff - expect to receive information. Search engines now return video in their main search, sites like YouTube are well established, and people have become accustomed to seeing video on their favourite newspaper or TV news websites.

But video can be a real challenge for business. A great video delivers a huge return on investment. But a poor video can damage a brand forever. Whether you need a video sales presentation or an advert, a training video or a video newsletter – for internal or external use, to get great results you need to know how and what to commission.

Not all video production companies are the same. Not all equipment delivers the same results. That's why here at Contrast, we've put together this buyers guide to video. We'll give you the inside info on the video production business and process, explain the types of video, its uses and costs, and give you tips on how to commission great video that delivers real results.

2. Types of video

Corporate video

Corporate videos and video brochures get your message across, quickly and effectively through the emotional power of film. No other medium gives you the same return on investment, ease of use and value for money.

High quality corporate videos increase conversion rates and improve the chances that your customers will buy. Because they show your products and services in action, and can be translated into multiple languages, corporate videos help you reach out to many more customers than ever before.

Sales Videos or Virtual Sales Presentations

Traditionally the backbone of business videos, sales presentations can help you give a full picture of your products and services with no loss of information or context. You can show your product in action, offer interaction, deliver customer testimonials and explain complex processes graphically. Sales videos speed up the sales cycle and can help you secure new business without leaving the office.

Internal & Training videos

Videos help you communicate effectively with your employees. Video newsletters can build your brand, keep staff informed and bring every part of your company to life. Training videos can support face-to-face tutoring or be used to deliver dynamic, interactive distance learning via the web. They allow remote employees to be trained effectively without hefty travelling costs. Capture your audience, inspire and educate them and ensure your brand ethos and culture are spread throughout your company.

Virtual Tours

Ideal for all types of business where your environment is important, from the leisure and retail sector to manufacturing and educational establishments, virtual tours let people explore your environment at their own pace. They are a powerful way to draw people into your world and show them the size and scope of your facilities. Virtual tours make great sales tools because they're hard to resist - they give your audience total control over what they see and where they go and can introduce new customers to an aspirational lifestyle or environment.

Video Testimonials

Nothing is more powerful than real people telling their own stories about your products or services. Video testimonials enhance your reputation, build trust and get your message across in the most powerful and compelling way.

Online & TV Advertising

The boom in online advertising is at the expense of TV ads. Today, the technology is there to enable broadcast quality video for online ads – and you can reach your precise audience more effectively online through targeted placement. TV advertising is still a force to be reckoned with and can deliver outstanding results, but to be effective it needs to be part of a holistic marketing concept and approach.

Viral videos

Viral marketing, using video, is now part of our business culture. An effective viral video, one that spreads by itself from person to person, needs to be carefully created to have maximum impact. Many of the best business viral videos have an element of amateurism about them – but in reality they are carefully crafted to appeal to a specific target audience who will then pass them along to their friends.

Podcasts & web-based video

Sites like YouTube now contain millions of videos created by both consumers and companies. If they are well constructed, well written and produced, like virals they can spread, making them a highly effective sales tool that delivers your message across the globe.

YOUTUBE

YouTube streams more than 1.2 billion videos every day

YouTube is the second-largest search engine. It's bigger than Yahoo and bigger than Bing, according to comScore.

VIDEO IN EMAIL

A recent Forrester Research report stated that video in e-mail is increasing. Click through rates significantly - double or triple what the same e-mail received without video.

WHO WATCHES VIDEO ONLINE ANY WAY?

In April 2009 alone, 119 billion unique viewers watched over 7 trillion total video streams!

3. Video Production – The Process

Pre-production

Planning is the most important part of the whole production process. Without proper planning, the video will never be a success. To produce a powerful video that delivers measurable results you need to work with your production company to:

- Discuss ideas & concepts
- Discuss locations & testimonials
- Explore whether your concept can be delivered over a number of media types
- Discuss output types – ie. DVD, web, mobile etc
- Gather all necessary information

Script writing

Always use a professional scriptwriter. Your production company will usually have their own writer and if they do – use them! Do not be tempted to try to write the script yourself – it is a specialist skill and requires the writer to work closely with the production team on storyboarding. A professional writer will always increase the return on investment.

Locations

Locations are key to the whole look and feel of your finished video. If the location is in your office or at your premises, it's important to ensure the production company has the space to work in and the room to set up backdrops if necessary. When it comes to outside shoots, your production company can advise you on the best type of location.

Voiceover artists and actors

It's vital you choose the right voiceover artist or an actor to appear in your video. Remember your target audience - will they relate to this voice or person? Will they feel comfortable with them, trust them and connect with them? Your production company will help you choose the right person for your video.

Shooting

Even the shortest video can take many days to shoot. Producing a high quality video is not a quick process. Even in the studio it can take many hours to get right and location shooting is made more difficult by light, weather and other external factors. Your production company will plan everything precisely but remember to be patient and allow them to take the time they need to deliver an excellent result.

Graphics, music & sound effects

Graphics, music and sound effects bring your video to life. They should be carefully chosen or created to reflect your brand and ethos exactly. Graphics include all captions, logos, photos and any animation. Music can be licensed for use or composed for you but always ask your company to deal with this aspect as there are many legal pitfalls which need to be avoided.

Post-production, editing & output

A video in post-production is at the stage where all shooting has taken place. It will now be edited together, sound and graphics added and the finished video produced. Post-production is time-consuming and normally the longest part of the process. The more time spent, the better the end product. Most video can be output and delivered in a number of formats including DVDs, online, for iPhone, Android phones, iPod or for use on plasma screens and exhibition stands.

By failing to prepare, you are preparing to fail.

Benjamin Franklin (1706-1790) American statesman, scientist and philosopher.





4. Costs

Video is possibly the most powerful, effective business tool available to companies today. But it can be time-consuming and complex to produce WELL. Video includes so many different elements - pre-production, scriptwriting, shooting, graphics, music, animation, sound effects, actors, locations and post-production. Whether it's one minute or an hour, many of these factors are common to both.

With video your imagination is the starting point. If you can picture it, you can reproduce it on film. Many major companies spend millions of pounds on bespoke animation, licensing iconic songs, commissioning high-profile composers or hiring Hollywood actors. But even if you only need a short sales presentation shot in a studio, the costs can mount up.

When you're choosing a production company, remember, as with everything in life, cheap does not usually equal quality. Talk costs right at the start of your production. Work with your company to refine your ideas so that it suits your budget. Discuss contingencies for bad weather and poor locations and keep an open mind.

Costs will always vary but a quality production will cost you from £1000 for every minute – on a sliding scale – so if you need 30 minutes you won't pay £1000 per minute. But you will get something that could transform your business, expand your customer-base, increase profits and create an exciting new future.

5. How to choose a video production company

All you need to do now is choose the right video production company for you and your business. Video is a big investment and you can't afford to pick the wrong team. Here are some tips to help you find the perfect production partner:

Use a specialist.

There are lots of companies out there, marketing and advertising agencies, PR firms and designers who also offer video services. But video production is a specialism and you need professionals to deliver the right result – especially for online video which requires special skills.

Ask how long the company has been trading

Because video equipment is reducing in price, many new companies are popping up across the UK. Check your company has a track record and the experience you need to get the job done efficiently and effectively.

Check portfolios & ask for case studies

Carefully check the company's portfolio – watch all the videos on their website. If they have none then don't use them. Ask for real-life case studies and ask to speak to someone who's used the company before.

Ask what ideas the company has for your business.

If the production company can't come up with any ideas that apply to you and your sector, then the chances are you are just hiring a cameraman and not a full production team.

Check how quickly the video downloads online

If you want an online video, check out how long it takes for the company's existing ones to download. Creating video for the web is a specialism and not everyone can do it effectively.

Do they have design skills?

The quality of the company's graphic design is just as important as the video footage they shoot. Poor graphic design can ruin even the most perfect video.

Think about your business.

It's not just about making a video. It's about getting a return on your investment. Is the company business-focused? Do they understand the difference between benefits and features? Can they understand your products and services? You need to be sure you're getting real, measurable results for your money.

Contrast Design is a specialist video production company. we have been trading since 2003 and have worked with agencies, small businesses and some of the largest brands in the world..... We would love to hear from you.

High quality corporate videos increase conversion rates and improve the chances that your customers will buy. Because they show your products and services in action, and can be translated into multiple languages, corporate videos help you reach out to many more customers than ever before.

Film is the most emotive of media. Images and sounds are incredibly persuasive and professional corporate videos give your company a powerful, sophisticated voice that instantly puts you ahead of your competition. It's not by chance that some of the world's largest and most profitable companies use corporate video to get their message across.

At Contrast we can produce highly compelling, cost-effective corporate videos from simple product demos to full-scale productions on location or in the studio. Now more affordable than ever before, corporate videos help your company make the most of your marketing budget.