Q: Be honest. Would most video companies prefer to creatively direct the shoot or would they prefer to work with a client’s creative agency/an outside creative director?

A: If given the choice, sure, most production companies would love to direct the creative. Why not? But working for an agency or creative director is also a great gig, and it’s a pretty familiar and comfortable arrangement. We’re always flattered when an agency or creative asks us to be the production company on a creative project – it means they trust us to bring their creative to life, which is great fun. In the end, what all production companies want is to help create a successful spot, regardless of who owns the creative direction.

Q: What are your thoughts on video graphics packages and why should a company create one? Also, are there infographics that don’t work in video form?

A: First, for those who aren’t familiar, a video graphics package is a set of elements, including logo animation, lower thirds, and a moving onscreen “bug” or logo, that are frequently used across many videos.

Creating a core video graphics package has three main benefits:
1. They ensure consistent branding across all productions
2. They add a level of polish and professionalism that elevates the content
3. They save money, so that graphics aren’t being recreated and re-designed for each production

We encourage all our brands to build out a core package of graphics. The brands that do are rarely disappointed.

On infographics, yes, I think there are some topics that just don’t work on video. If the content is really dense, and there’s not a lot of flexibility in editing the content, then an infographic probably isn’t a good fit. When the messaging consists of bullet-points, data, and quotes, an infographic is a great way to bring information to life with some color, music, and motion.

Q: What sound proofing is needed in a noisy environment to reduce ambient noise?

A: That varies pretty widely from environment to environment. Thick walls, less glass, and lots of wall hangings all help to absorb sound. On location, a sound engineer can bring sound blankets to “deaden” a room. When building a studio, acoustic tiles, heavy doors, foam coating for ceilings and even special paint can help to reduce ambient noise and create a very quiet space.
Q: In my experience the difference between an impactful video clip is good quality sound and good quality lighting. My questions are:

1. In the presentation it seems that that Videographer is also handling the Lighting Designer role. How big does a production need to be to have its own Lighting Designer? A: Like most things, there is no “one-size-fits-all” answer to this question. However, generally, when there are multiple talents appearing on set, challenging location features, or other factors that involve multiple considerations, a lighting designer is preferable. A professional videographer should be able to provide variations of good quality lighting for one-on-one interviews and B-roll most anywhere on his/her own with a reasonable amount of set up time for each shot.

2. Also, what is the minimum lighting equipment for a talking-head in OTS and straight-on? A: Traditional three point (key, fill, back on talent) and at least a fourth light for the background. Properly adding more lights and/or grip gear (flags, filters, gobos, etc.) can add to aesthetic value.

3. Is it even worthwhile using a camera that has no professional sound inputs? A: Yes. But you do want to make sure you capture great sound. You can record sound separately, or use a pre-amp or various other gear to help compensate for a less than ideal input. Make sure you have a way to sync the sound, like an old fashioned slate or one of the many apps available.

Q: What are some essential production tips for live broadcasts?

A: As the team discussed, to ensure a great live broadcast, choose your location wisely. You want to control your environment as much as possible. You should consider these things when scoping your production environment: foot traffic, ambient noises including vehicle traffic, heating and air conditioning, and construction (remember the jack hammer?), as well as ease of setup for lighting, sound and cameras. You want everyone to be comfortable on the set. Our founder, Doug Weisman recently blogged about this topic.

From a content perspective, be sure your topic and content resonant with your target audience. It should provide valuable information that sets you apart from your competition. Your content and how you deliver it can either help you become a thought leader, or just a ‘me too’ player.

From a talent perspective, be sure you are well organized, you know what you want to say, and your talent has practiced. As the saying goes, practice makes perfect. Stay on message, relax and have fun!

Q: What’s the best way to get people to act natural when they aren’t used to being in front of a camera? Sometimes we need certain things to be said, but it needs to come across as not being staged or scripted. How can we make that happen?

A: Know your subject material. Be yourself. Rehearse, warm up. Sometimes walking, or using props helps relax people. When possible, having a person stand in, next to the camera, to create a personal connection to talk and interact with works well. Those around can coach, but don’t overdo it. Give limited constructive criticism and lots of positive feedback. These things can help loosen people up after they have memorized canned responses. Dedicating time to rehearsals, run-throughs and repetitions builds confidence, reduces nervousness and is really worthwhile.
Q: At what point is it cost economical to bring video production in house vs. using a video production company?

A: To make this decision, you need to be clear on the types productions you’re going to be undertaking, the number of productions you’ll have, and the level of crewing, gear, and post production they will require.

Once you’ve considered these, and built out an editorial calendar, the factors that I think go into consideration are:

Cost of resources – What will it cost to buy, maintain, and upgrade production hardware and software?
Cost of personnel – What will it cost on an annual basis to hire individuals with technical skills, marketing talent, and enough experience to keep your productions at a competitive level?
Cost of additional resources – After budgeting for the above, what will you need to supplement your in-house team in order to execute on your plan?

The trend for this decision vacillates depending on technology and required expertise. Traditionally, productions went out-of-house, and then trended in-house with the advent of affordable gear and plentiful film school grads. Now, they’re moving out again, as experience and diversity of talent has become critical in creating videos that cut through in a very competitive viewing environment.

Q: What are the challenges, and how do they differ, when shooting indoors or outdoors? (Along the lines of lighting, sound, and overall production (pre, pro, post)).

A: Wow-just about anything can and may happen. This could be a whole book or two!

The biggest issue is control (and therefore money). Outside, you are subject to many more variables you cannot control, including constantly changing lighting just to start. Indoor and outdoor shoots require different color temperature lights. When outdoors, you have to work much more with the available light, which can be both an advantage and a disadvantage. Indoors you generally have much more lighting control. In both cases, you need to not only think aesthetics, but set up/break down time and power for the lights, and securing them in position.

For sound, be prepared with a variety of good microphones, and top quality recording and monitoring gear. Bring plenty of different length audio cables, and wireless transmitters/receivers if possible. Don’t forget batteries. Inside and outside, there are possibilities for sound intrusion, including wind and even breath noise. You need to monitor audio carefully and critically with headphones, and fix any problems on the spot, rather than editing your way out later (though, you may be able to do some mitigation in post).

Outside, the weather can be major factor, of course. As can curious onlookers who may get thrills jumping into your shot or making unwanted noise. Be prepared with a warm or cool dry place (can be a van, tent, etc.) to prepare equipment and get talent and crew comfortable between takes. Have food and water available for talent and crew.

Expect to spend more time both shooting and editing than you might think. Your shot-to-use ratio will probably be quite high. Have a clear vision before you start to shoot, and especially before you edit. Allow yourself plenty of time, and listen to suggestions from your photographer, sound technician, editor or other involved parties - they may see or hear something you don’t.
Q: What did Carlos mean when he was talking about recording the room with no one talking to bring into editing in case there was some noise in the room while taping? What does that do?

A: Room tone is used as a sound bed to accompany any new sound that is added to a scene in post-production, for example, re-recorded dialogue. If the new audio is recorded in a separate area, the difference in background noise would be subtle, but different enough to ruin the continuity.

Placing the room tone underneath any new dialogue eliminates this difference (naturally you also need to avoid adding any new background noise with the new audio). Another way you can use the room tone is to identify the low or high frequencies that you want to remove with your editing software.

Q: What type of lighting do you suggest for shooting interior videos, also what type of mic is ideal, i.e., wireless, boom, etc.?

A: Both lighting and audio really depend on the subject matter and what the interior conditions are like. There is no one answer to either part of this question.

For a simple head and shoulders style interview in a light controllable environment three or four point soft lighting can work well. If you are talking about color temperature - incandescent lighting/TUNGSTEN/3200° is great inside, if no sunlight comes into the room. Daylight/5600°, designed primarily to be used outdoors, is good if there is daylight in some areas of the room. Different bulbs, filters, or gels can be used to achieve the right color temperature.

The Boom mic can be a good choice if there is a group of people. For traditional interviews or a single person, 99% of the time a good lavalier (clip on) mic does the job. Outdoors you will need a windscreen. Either way, pay attention to avoiding or limiting unwanted sound intrusion, and be sure to constantly monitor audio carefully and fix any problems immediately - don’t wait to try to fix in post if you can help it.

Be sure to visit our website to watch this webcast on-demand.

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