Corporate Video Production
Corporate Video Production
Beyond the Board Room
(And Out of the Bored Room)

Stuart Sweetow
Dedication

This book is dedicated to my beautiful bride Sandy, who gave me her encouragement and patience, and who found us a home with an office for me to write.
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Corporate video production has come of age. At one time, cinematographers referred to corporate videos as “industrials,” a genre to which they retreated between “real” films. Talking-head videos or unimaginative safety films dominated the field, and too often one might hear the word “boring” precede the term “corporate video.” However, as professional video tools came down in price, corporations invested in cameras and editing gear. A generation of enthusiastic filmmakers who sought access to those tools took jobs in the corporate world. While broadcast television was reducing staff, corporate media centers grabbed up the best and the brightest.

The television producer who craves the excitement of a live broadcast will get that adrenaline rush by transmitting a shareholders’ meeting live to viewers at home. The ambitious video professional who wants to meet a top corporate CEO has an opportunity to film him or her giving a talk and beaming it via satellite to employees worldwide.

In addition to TV producers entering the corporate arena, Hollywood cinematographers discovered that corporate execs were not as stuffy as they once thought. Over the years, innovative companies developed communication departments with creative staffs. They sought imaginative filmmakers to apply their cinematic artistry to produce engaging marketing and training videos. As corporations developed social responsibility programs and discovered YouTube as an avenue to reach the public, documentary filmmakers found they could support causes in line with their own humanitarian values.

Many companies have equipped their video departments with cutting-edge postproduction applications and network storage infrastructures. Some organizations send video messages via their satellite networks, and growing numbers use IP distribution. When researching this book, I found a trend where corporate video producers favored location filming over studio production. Smaller HD cameras enable speed and flexibility, and many video producers edit videos on their laptops during the flight home from a shoot.

Throughout this book I included examples of video applications that corporations use, such as customer communications, product announcements, employee training, and public relations. Social media has enabled corporations to relate to the
public in an interactive way. Nearly every major corporation has a YouTube page, and many companies film their customers giving testimonials or offering praise for their products. Sometimes ordinary people say surprising things on camera, such as the Chicago woman who said she and her neighbors were praying that Wal-Mart would open a store in their community. You’ll read about that and other unexpected uses of YouTube in the social media introduction.

Production values of some corporate videos now rival Hollywood. AT&T created a series showing 20-something singles texting and exchanging files on smart phones with AT&T data plans. An educational film from Honda about their humanoid robot, ASIMO, combines elements of a science fiction film with artistic cinematography. IBM produced a series of videos for their “Smarter Planet” YouTube page that incorporate multilayered imagery together with smartly edited interviews.

Savvy video producers have reinvented presentations by using innovative production techniques to create videos that remove the boredom factor. There is no reason why employees or customers should be sentenced to “Death by PowerPoint” now that video producers can create lively, dynamic presentations with creatively composed video clips, dynamic 3D graphics, and carefully crafted scripts.

A well-designed short video has the capability to reach viewers on an emotional level. Poetic writing, rhythmic camera work, and a compelling soundtrack create synergy to grab the viewers’ hearts and convert visitors to customers. The market researchers understand the incredible impact that video could have to their companies’ bottom lines. Corporations are investing in video services to utilize the medium to the max, and video has become an integrated communications tool in the enterprise.

In addition to learning about corporate video production techniques and applying some of the examples shown here, it is wise for you, as the video producer, to learn about the values of the company you work for, how they use their brands, and who their customers are. Then you can apply those principles to producing videos that align with the mission of the enterprise. The literal image of the company is in your hands.