

WHAT GOES INTO YOUR VIDEO PRODUCTION?

One of the first questions everyone asks is: “how much will my video cost?”

It's a common and expected question, but not one that always has a simple answer. People used to say that video costs about \$1,000 per finished minute. That concept has been around for more than 30 years. But what does that mean in a day when there are so many options related to your project?

Buying video production can be like buying a car. There are simple, utilitarian “Little Bugs”, more specialized and powerful “SUV”'s and the luxury car with 12 way stereo, leather seats and individual heat.

A producer is charged with the responsibility of producing your project using the tools of his trade. And today that includes many things not considered just a few years ago. It is his (or her) responsibility to suggest those options which will enhance your project, gain added value for you, while not wasting your money for the sake of personal ego or award winning goals.

When considering the cost of your project, here are some factors that affect the number of people and the amount of time and materials it takes to do the job.

- For location video work, will it be outdoors or indoors? Indoor shooting may require additional lighting, which can include a lighting director, added lighting equipment and added time to analyze, set up and tear down the equipment.
- How many locations are there? Will the production company have to tear down and set up multiple times in a variety of locations in order to perform their tasks? This takes time and time is money in production.
- Will you choose voiceover talent or on camera talent? On camera talent will cost you more in most cases both in talent fees and time to produce. There will be rehearsal and blocking times required. The talent may require teleprompter equipment, which adds to the cost to rent and the time for someone to input the scripted copy. Also it will generally take the producer longer to assemble the show because of the need to edit and match scenes and script to keep the flow smooth.
- How much time it requires on location will certainly affect the budget. Production companies generally charge an hourly or daily rate, so the less prepared you are in terms of having your people prepared and your facility in shape means more time for the production group to clean up the “look” of the scenes. And this also brings us to the point of talent -----
- Will ego dictate the need to have company officials performing the main talent function in the production? Many times this adds to the time required to “get it right” and can be frustrating to the producer, crew and the client. Except for the cases where the client is exceptionally talented and at ease in front of a camera, or it is necessary as part of the production to showcase corporate officials, the spokesman job should be left to professionals.

- There are many additional elements that might add to your production. Elements such as boom cameras, camera dollies, aerial shots, second or third camera units for certain situations, stedicams, and specialty lighting effects. In most cases any one or all of these will not make or break a production, but can add to the creativity of the producer and to the “look” and uniqueness of the production. These elements should be used sparingly and as your budget allows. Keep in mind that as you add options such as these, you not only incur the cost of the element, but the added personnel to operate it and the added time to set up, practice the shots, and tear down the equipment. Boom camera shots look great and add a lot to the variety in the project, however a little wind can turn a simple shot into hours of frustrating delay.
- You will also have added creative elements that you will want to consider. These would include such things as graphics used as backgrounds and transitions within your production. These may be created on film, in a computer or in an editing situation in the studio. They will tie your production together and make a more cohesive message for your viewer. Animation is also an element to be considered. Increasingly, companies are spending money to have their logo manipulated for visual interest. It is important that a client’s production stand out for the viewer as these elements help convey a message and they also make a client stand out from their competition who may be spending the money to look a little better.
- You will also find animation can convey specialized information such as time lapse, or portraying items and processes which does not yet exist. Tour an artery or show a building that hasn’t been built.
- A client’s own involvement in a project can mean more or less money. If a client is not prepared and does not have equipment, personnel, facilities and props ready for the production company to use, it will cost additional time to keep the project rolling along. When it comes down to it, a production company generally charges like any other profession – time and materials.
- On this note a client *can* be overly involved and this will cost him money in the end. An example of this is the client who insists on being involved in every process of the production. Most producers and their people are concerned, conscientious professionals and know their job. Our own people at PS/A have nearly 300 years of professional broadcast and multimedia experience. When a client wants to “lend a hand”, many times he distracts the professionals from doing the best job they can do. When a client wants to sit in on the final edit, for example, he usually winds up asking questions and making suggestions which are either not possible to perform, or will only add to the budget in terms of the amount of time to complete his project. When a producer is using a facility to produce in, that facility can be costing him \$5 to \$8 a minute. If a client decides to suggest changing a special effect (a change that many times has no real effect on the effectiveness or creativity of the production) he may take ten, fifteen or twenty minutes and in effect has just wasted \$70, \$80, or \$150 of his own money. Do this several time throughout the process and you can see how the waste adds up. Also, as the producer, editor and staff become more distracted and frustrated, the time increases and the creativeness can go down as well. A good client

is one who is involved to make sure his company's message is understood by the producer, but then lets the professional do their job to meet his goals.

- A "rough cut" of a client's project is something that not every producer does, but we here at PS/A figure that into every project. It gives the client a chance to see his material edited to his finished sound track, (even though in very rough form) before the expensive final editing is started. It's money well spent and this is the time to make changes as it allows the client to feel more comfortable that he will get what he expects in this project.
- A word about changes. Once a production has begun, there has been a game plan put into effect for a lot of people: the producer, director, assistances, graphic artists, talent, possibly animators, lighting people, etc. When a client makes changes, a producer can find himself going back several steps in the process to make script changes which means it involves the talent and possible location changes etc etc etc. When looking at the cost of your project, remember that **changes cost a client time and money.**
- Your budget: when starting a project, a client has the right to know what a project will cost and where his money is being spent. Many companies will quote a total price for the project. We here at PS/A break down every production element on each quote we provide. There are several reasons for this. It insures that we have taken everything into account that is required on a project. It provides the client with a true picture of his costs and it serves as the basis for later when changes are made. We will generally be able to formulate a fairly accurate budget for a project in the beginning and then we will finalize it once the final script has been approved. Virtually every project changes as the script is written. Longer shows cost more money. And as the finalized script is developed, other elements as listed above come into play. With all these changes, it makes it tough to give a totally 100% accurate price on any project till all the facts are in. And a good production company will keep a client updated on any changes and the costs associated with them.

We trust these quick ideas will help you to understand part of what goes into figuring the cost of your production. Producers do what they do with many years of experience and they are around to help you and your company. But they can only perform with adequate and accurate budgets. We at PS/A do not want to waste money: ours or yours. So we will make suggestions based on our experience that will enhance your project, while not wasting your budget on frivolous, unnecessary elements. Be sure to ask questions, plan ahead, and enjoy the production process - we do!



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