

# Communications: An Overview

## Video Production

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Lecturers: 1. Daniel Zerafa - Video Production 1 & 3 2. Louiselle Vassallo - Video Production 2 3. Monika Maslowska - Scripting Video 1 & 2

### 1. VIDEO PRODUCTION by Daniel Zerafa

Video production knows its origins from cinema (talkies) 'news reels'; the small informative productions prior to the full length feature film was the main channel to distribute audio-visual material to the masses. However, given the limited audience and the overall length of time it took for an item to be filmed and distributed (weeks at times), a more fast and quicker medium was required. By changing optical data (what we see) into electrical signals, the visual image could now break the barriers of time and space.

Technology has a major role in such a development, but with greater accessibility and features does not imply a greater sense of understanding. The art and craft of the audio visual medium under the form of cinema had established many rules and engrained specific conventions in filming and editing, which so called barriers when many a time shattered in video history. MTV brought about the rise of the directors, which editing styles were quite unconventional to say the least, but still within the control of the corporations. With the advent of the Internet and YouTube, it seemed that anybody could now broadcast their audio visual creations.

In any form of a audio visual narrative, the essence is storytelling, but it takes a good story teller to fully engage the audience. Anyone can tell a joke, but there are those who have the knack of bringing the joke closer and more entertaining than others. Given the multiple aspects of video (jenga: narrative, imagery, colour, dialogue, audio, format), it requires a lot of string pulling to get all these aspects in line with the vision of the director, and it is the handling of these multiple facets that distinguishes one director from another. What we are shown is as important as what is

not shown. We are not spoon fed through dialogue, but bombarded through the multiple aspects of the production to hammer in a single message or concept. What we are presented has been selectively and purposely chosen. The introduction to the final speech therapist from 'The King's Speech' provides much food for thought. Hence in the words of Youssef Ishaghpour, they tell us stories without telling them.

The origins of video (and cinema) are indebted to Edward Muybridge, a photographer who on a commission tried to discover if a horse could have all four hooves off the ground at the same time. As he discovered that movement could be broken down into a sequence of still imagery, he tried to apply the inverse; that is, if motion could be created from stills. His 'Motion Studies' were pioneering, albeit fraudulent as they never were actually moving subjects. But if he had failed, we would never have cinema, television, or even cartoons. The various standards that followed (framerate, framesize) were dependant on the technology available at the time. But moving images are not about the breaking up of time and space, or their creation alone.

The human aspect must be brought in for a full understanding of the concepts involved. Persistence of vision at the retina level, and beta and phi phenomena at the cognitive level contribute to the creation of these moving images. Walter Murch, a renowned film editor, even goes further in calling them emotion pictures, as it is ultimately the viewer that pours in his/her experiences into what they are watching to make them entertaining, humorous and believable.

2. CATEGORIES (VIDEO PRODUCTION) by Louise Vassallo There are different forms of production genres, although essentially all may be

categorised as either **fiction** or **non-fiction** productions.

Examples of fiction productions include drama and comedy series, soap operas, cartoons and animation, whilst non-fiction productions may include programmes like news, sporting events, documentaries, quiz, cooking or reality shows

At times, certain production-types spill into both categories, and may be a mixture of both. We see this clearly in docudramas (a combination of the words "documentary" and "drama"), where real events/true stories are dramatised, stylised and re-enacted by actors.

Docudramas may also be productions that include sequences of dramatised reality (i.e. portrayed by actors), as well as “real” protagonists portraying and representing themselves, as one would expect to see in a documentary.

## THE STAGES OF PRODUCTION

The production process is generally divided into three stage:

- pre-production • production • post-production

The **pre-production stage** consists of all that is required to be done before filming commence. This includes tasks like submitting proposals, conducting research, scriptwriting, creating/identifying an audience profile, hiring the crew and key personnel, casting talent, coordinating the costume and make-up departments, selecting shooting locations, constructing sets, planning shooting schedules, organising rehearsals and making budgetary decisions. Naturally, each and every production has its specific requirements and one must plan and act accordingly.

The **production stage** is the filming itself. The success of this stage depends how thorough and well planned the pre-production stage has been.

The **post-production stage** is everything that happens from the moment that the last shot is filmed to the final edit/mix that completes the production as it is to be viewed by the audience. Phases within this stage include logging of footage, selection of shots, the creation of a rough cut leading to a final edit, adding a soundtrack and/or sound effects, audio mixing, and the application of special effects, titles and graphics.

**NB.** *In the case of a LIVE TV TX (transmission) the production stage would be the final stage since, essentially, what would be considered “editing”, which is the selection of shots chosen by a director to create sequences and is normally part of the post production stage, takes place during the programme itself through the action of LIVE mixing as the on-screen action/activity takes place.*

### 3. SCRIPTWRITING by Monika Maslowska

Whether your project is a two-minute scene with **no dialogue** or a complex **psychological drama**, the first step in any narrative production is coming up with **an idea**.

Preferably an idea that is stimulating, engaging and ripe with audio-visual possibilities.

any storytelling begins with an  
**IDEA**

But where do you get the idea from?  
The spark?

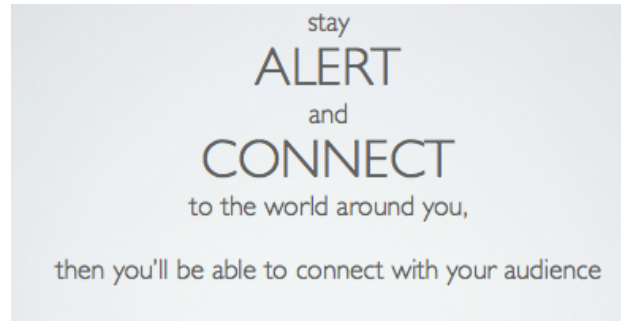
**Ideas may come to us at any time, from any source:**

- an act of kindness we witness on the street
- an individual we watch on the bus
- a piece of music that moves us
- or a YouTube clip that's given a spin

What you need is to find **THAT ORIGINAL** idea. Once you have, it's like fishing: you see that idea as bait, and it attracts everything else.

**What is a winning idea? Is it THAT ORIGINAL idea?**

A winning idea is an idea that is **original** yet **specific and familiar** and with **universal connotations**.



The audience wants to relate to what they see on the screen/monitor. That's where the power of storytelling lies – reinventing an old idea and giving it a new spin (think of cinematic adaptations).

**Remember:**

No matter what production genre you are going to choose, you are an audio-visual storyteller using a visual language.

You need to be:

– creative – dramatic – engaging

All production genres (feature film, documentary, short film, animation, commercial, PSA – Public Service Announcement) rely on structure and script– even if it is an image-based scrip, i.e. **no dialogue** – you still need to plan out the sequence of events/scenes. It clears your head, shows strong and weak points of your idea; additionally, people who will work with you on the project, will know what do to.