Video Best Practices

Filming a Shop Tour

In today's visual world, video is an important addition to your marketing toolbox. Not only is it an engaging way to share information with customers—in a format they increasingly prefer—it is also more cost-effective than ever to produce. With advances in technology, it's now even possible to shoot convincingly high quality, 4K videos using just your smartphone.

Yet, if you're not familiar with video production or are relatively new to the process, creating your own marketing video can seem daunting. Between writing a script to having the right equipment to shooting and editing it can still seem complex.

This guide provides you with tips and techniques to help you create your own shop tour and take advantage of the power of video to boost your business.

Before You Start

When setting out to create your video, you should first consider outlining your objectives for the project. These insights will help you determine the content you need for your video. Consider putting your objectives down on paper in a written brief, so you can share them with your team and make sure everyone is on the same page.

Your brief should answer these questions:

1. Purpose

What do you need your video to achieve (e.g. raise awareness, generate sales, drive to your website)?

2. Audience

Who are the people you are speaking to? You will want to make sure your language and messaging are appropriate for this audience, for example, avoiding industry jargon or terminology that your viewers might not be familiar with.

3. Key Messages

What are the overall messages you want to get across?
These typically would include:

• The problems your audience is looking to solve

• How your business can help solve those problems

• Why the customers should believe you can help

• What makes you different from your competition

4. Call to Action

What do you want your audience to do after watching the video (e.g., visit your website, contact a representative, make a purchase)?

Video Style

There are no hard and fast rules on the format of your video. You could use a voiceover to accompany dynamic visuals or opt for an interview style. You could hire an actor as a spokesperson or have your CEO speaking on camera.

One of the most popular styles of video today is the video blog or "vlog". There are two main styles of shooting a vlog: a "talking-head" video where the camera is stationary while the speaker talks, or "in motion" video where the camera follows the speaker(s) around as they chat.

Vlog-style videos are relatively inexpensive and easy to shoot. It can be off-the-cuff, with just a basic script jotted down. This style of shooting gives your video an authentic feel that makes it relatable to your audience.

Whatever style of video you choose, at the end of the day, it's all about the content. To keep your audience engaged, you need to make your video interesting.

Which brings us to the script…

Tip: One of the most popular styles of video today is the video blog or "vlog".

The Script

Your video script doesn't have to be complicated. All it needs to do is tell a compelling story in a logical progression. Typically, it should open with an interesting hook that grab's the viewer's attention and keeps them wanting to watch as you tell your story, after which they are inspired to take action.

You may find that you don't need to write out every piece of dialogue in your script. If you are opting for vlog-style video, for example, it may be more natural to provide general guidance for the speaker. Nevertheless, having a structure for your video script ensures that you tell your story in a logical way while ensuring you cover all the key messages you want to get across.

Here is a general structure that you can use as a basis for writing your script.

Introduction
Open with compelling hook that lets people know why they should watch this video and intrigues them to keep watching.

Explain the problem/opportunity
Speak to what challenges you can help the viewer solve.

Introduce your business
Provide an overview of your business.

Your offerings
Break out the various parts of your business or areas of the shop into digestible sections, highlighting the key benefits.

Customers/Testimonials
Consider showcasing customers to validate your credentials.

Conclusion
Recap what your business can do for the viewer.

Call to Action
Provide a URL, contact information, or other action you want the viewer to take.

Script Format

In a video, sound and visuals work together to bring your story to life. Noting these elements down gives your people both behind and in front of the camera clear directions on what is supposed to take place in a given scene. The script provides directions for what actions should be happening on screen, what sounds you should hear, and what is being said (either by a subject on screen or a voiceover).

One thing to bear in mind is the length of your video. As a general rule, keeping your video short and sweet is most effective for your audience to stayed engaged. Whatever length you choose to make it, however, count on approximately two words per second of your video. This word count is based on an average reading speed.

Try to stick to this word count as closely as possible when writing your script so you don't end up with too much content than will fit into your video.

Average Reading Speed
30 second video = 60 words
1-minute video = 120 words
2-minutes video = 240 words

Two-column script

A simple way to format your script is to use a two-column table, which separates the visual and audio elements. This makes it easy to follow what is happening at any point in the video and how all the elements come together.

Audio	Video

Storyboard

A storyboard consists of series of boxes that show how every shot (or key shots) in the video will be visually depicted. They can be simply rough sketches as long as it clearly represents what you want to shoot. Under each box is a smaller box where you can outline the rough dialogue or describe the action.

Tip: If you're a visual thinker, you can also consider creating a storyboard of your video instead of, or to accompany, a video script.
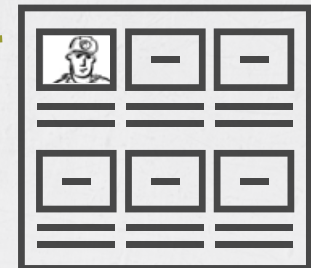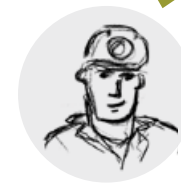
Creating a Shot List

There is a lot that goes on during a shoot. If your video includes multiple settings, spokespeople and actors or crew members, a shot list helps keep everything organized.

A shot list maps out what is going to happen in a shot, scene or the video and includes elements such as locations or areas of your shop you want to highlight, as well as, actors, props or other elements required.

Location	Shot #	Descr	Framing/ Angles	Action/ Dialogue	Actors	Props

Tip: The shot list will help you think about what you'll need for the shot and determine the best order for shooting.

A basic shot list would include:

- Location
- Shot number
- Shot description
- Framing or camera angles
- Action/dialogue
- Actors involved
- Props required
- Additional notes

Tip: group similar shots together based on location—even if those scenes are not in order

The shot list will help you think about what you'll need for the shot and determine the best order for shooting. For example, you can group similar shots together based on location—even if those scenes are not in order in the video—making the shoot more efficient and convenient.

Equipment

You don't need expensive equipment to produce a professional-looking video. You can even achieve great results simply using the camera on your phone. For a more consistent and professional look, you might consider investing in a few additional pieces of equipment.

Here is some of the essential equipment you will need for your shoot:

HD camera

Today, high quality cameras are not hard to find. You can shoot high-definition video on the latest smartphones or digital SLR cameras. Otherwise, you can use a camcorder that records to an SD memory card, a flash drive or internal hard drive.

Tripod

There is nothing more headache-inducing than watching a shaky hand-held video. Using a tripod or gimbal will help you stabilize your camera while shooting. Choose a tripod designed for the camera you're using. If you're shooting with a phone, make sure it has a phone attachment. A gimbal is a tool that you can attach to your camera and which rotates on an axis for smooth looking shots. It's like a tripod for when you're on the move.

External microphone

The audio quality of your video is crucial to the final result. If possible, avoid using your camera's built-in mic. Consider using a long "shotgun" type microphone which records sounds from the front of the mic, eliminating extraneous noise from the sides. When shooting outdoors, a "windmuff" on the microphone can be used to cut down wind noise. For recording voices, consider using a lapel mic (or "lavalier" mic), which clips to the speaker's clothing.

Lighting

Natural sunlight is one of the best and easiest ways to achieve great lighting. However, when that is not possible, you will need to use good additional lighting to achieve a high-quality result. A good multi-purpose lighting tool is the "ring light", which fits around your camera and illuminates your subject with a flattering, uniform light. It is especially useful for close-up shots but can be used for a variety of purposes.

Extras

In addition to the equipment above, it also helps to have extra batteries and a charger to avoid interruptions on your shoot. High quality video also requires a lot of space, so you'll want to have additional memory cards or an external hard drive to store all your video footage. A backup cloud storage plan, such as iCloud or Google Photos is also helpful.

Other extras you might want to have include different lenses to make your phone camera more versatile, as well as a case or cage to protect your phone and make it easier to grip or attach accessories.

Mastering basic video tips will help you create results that look professional and visually appealing. Here are a few tips for shooting your video.

Tips for Shooting

Vertical or horizontal?

Before smartphones, most video content was produced for horizontal viewing because that's how people watched films and videos. Today with the prevalence of smart phones and social media, that is changing. Vertical viewing has become more accepted since people mostly hold their phones upright and dislike reorienting their phones to view horizontal videos in full screen.

If you're shooting with a smart phone and wondering whether to shoot vertically or horizontally, consider how your audience will likely consume the content. In most cases, you will want to shoot horizontally, since that is the most universal format and allows you to capture the greatest detail. However, if you anticipate your audience mostly viewing your content on a smart phone – for example, scrolling through social media – consider shooting vertically.

Video resolution

While, for many projects, shooting in 1080p is sufficient, there are advantages to shooting in 4K that outweigh its limitations. Those limitations include larger files sizes and slower editing or uploading. Shooting in 4K gives you quadruple the resolution of 1080p. This is helpful when you want to zoom in on a shot and crop it (such as to create a close up). Since there is more video source material to work with, your footage can be cropped without losing too much resolution.

Even if your final video will be presented in 1080p, shooting in 4K will result in noticeably sharper image when it is "downsampled" to the final size. If you know you don't need ultra high resolution, you can set your camera to record at 1080p or even 720p for smaller sized videos.
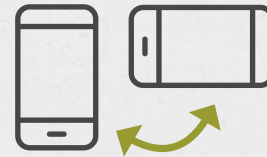
Tip: consider how your audience will consume the content.

Tip: Even if your final video will be presented in 1080p, shooting in 4K will result in noticeably sharper image when it is "downsampled".

Keep the camera steady

An easy way to shoot steady video is to use a tripod or gimbal, but there are other things you can do when you don't want to carry around heavy gear. You can brace the camera against a flat surface, a wall or another object. If you're shooting while walking around, try holding the camera closer to your body, as the farther it is away, the harder it will be to keep steady.

Tips for Shooting

Don't overdo the zooms

Too much unnecessary camera movement can make the viewer feel seasick. If you're shooting an action scene, let the natural movement dominate without zooming or moving the camera.

Also, if you are shooting with a camera phone or inexpensive camera, be aware that your camera is likely using a digital zoom function, which only enlarges the image on camera while degrading the pixel quality. If you want to get closer to your subject, it's better to physically move closer rather than using the zoom.

Play with creative shots

Consider experimenting with creative shooting techniques. For example, cutting from one angle to another is an effective way to add visual interest.

In addition, try to shoot plenty of "B-roll" or alternative footage to the main shots, which you can use as inserts or cutaways and allows for flexibility when it comes time to edit.

You can also take advantage of features such as time-lapse or slo-mo on your camera. Just be careful not to overdo these techniques at the expense of telling a clear, compelling story. Remember: simple is best.

Clean your lens

If your shots seem blurry or not quite crisp, it might be time to clean your lens. For a phone camera, the easiest way to clean the lens is to use microfibre cloth.

Framing your subject

As a general rule, asymmetrical shots – where the subject is off centre – are more visually interesting. Consider composing your shot using the "rule of thirds", which divides the frame into a 3x3 grid, and place your subject at one of the intersection points.

For close-ups, line up your subject's eyes along the top line of the grid for an aesthetically pleasing composition. If your subject will be centred in the shot, at least try to align their eyes with the top line. Also avoid having too much space above the subject's head. In very close-up shots, if you must crop something, let it be the top of the subject's head rather than the chin.

Tip: turn on the gridlines in your camera settings to help you with your composition.

Tips for Audio

The quality of your audio can make or break your video. People will put up with lower quality video, but fuzzy audio will quickly turn viewers off. Here are some tips for ensuring the best sound quality possible.

Check your acoustics

Before you start filming, check the acoustics of the location you are scouting. If possible, try to avoid locations where there is an echo. Be aware of the noises around you, like air conditioning/heating, shop equipment, co-workers talking or any buzzes and hums in the room.

Invest in a good mic

The mic on your camera generally will not produce the highest quality audio. If possible, avoid using the built-in mic and invest in a good quality microphone. If you're recording someone speaking, consider a "shotgun" mic, which will capture audio from the speaker's direction while eliminating sounds from the sides. You can also consider attaching a clip-on mic to your subject. Make sure the mic isn't placed directly against anything or making rubbing noises.

Use a separate audio recorder

In addition to a separate microphone, you might also consider using a separate audio recorder to better manage your sound. If you're relying on your video camera to capture audio, you run the risk that the audio will not be the same quality as the video, and some cameras don't give you a great deal of control over the audio levels. Even a spare iPhone using the Voice Memos app will work as an audio recorder. It's fairly easy to match up the audio and video tracks using editing software in post-production.

Take a field recording

One last tip is to try to capture a minute or so of the room noise – the ambient sound when no one is speaking or moving. Listen to that recording for any noises it picks up and try to eliminate those noises before shooting. This audio is also useful in post-production to help minimize that noise by applying a noise removal effect.

Get close to your subject

The best way to ensure great audio is to put the microphone as close to the subject as possible while keeping it hidden in order to isolate their sound from external noises. Less than three feet from the speaker is ideal.

Tips for Lighting

Proper lighting makes a big difference in the quality of your video. Lighting your video doesn't have to be expensive or complicated. Natural light, in fact, is often considered the best light for shooting videos or photography. Filming indoors requires a little more thought about the type of lights you use and where you position them. Here are some tips to help you achieve better results.

Take advantage of natural light

You can achieve great results just using sunlight to light your shots. However, the time of day and condition of the light will have a great effect on the final result. The best times to use natural light are close to sunrise or sunset as the angle of the sun produces a flattering light with a soft, warm look. Conversely, mid-day is the is most problematic time day as it emphasizes harsh, unflattering shadows.

Avoid mixed lighting

Different sources of light have different colour temperatures. Daylight, for example, produces a cool white light while tungsten lamps give off a warm, yellow light. If you're using a combination of daylight and tungsten, it will produce a jarring lighting combination. Depending on how your camera's sensor processes the colours, you can end up with either very yellow shots or pale, blue shots. You may also get inconsistent lighting colours from one area of your shop to another. If possible, stick with one type of light.

Lighting placement

Using one or two large lamps can help you cast the type of light you want indoors. One thing to avoid is overhead lighting as this can cause unflattering shadows on your subject's faces. If this happens, move your subject over a few feet from the light source.

Use flat lighting

While using lots of shadows on your subject can produce a dramatic look, for business and marketing videos, it's best to stick with flat or soft light. This means lighting up your subject's entire face with minimal shadows. To achieve flat lighting, you can use two light sources on either side of the camera – positioned either just in front of or just behind the camera. The larger the light source, the softer the light you will produce.

Another tip for creating soft or flat light is to use piece of white posterboard to bounce light from a smaller light source onto your subject to fill in any shadows.

Tip: Overcast days are ideal as they give you soft shadows that make for attractive footage. If you're shooting indoors, look for north-facing windows if possible, since these give you a gentle, diffused light.

Choosing Your Software

Editing your video is an important part of helping you tell your story in an engaging and convincing way. While it may be tempting to incorporate various effects during the editing process, a simple, clean editing style generally provides a more professional look.

Choose your software option based on factors such as:

• Your budget

• Ease of use

• The range of features

• File formats supported

Many free or entry level editing software packages have limited features and unreliable performance while high end professional software can cost thousands of dollars and include features you likely will never use. Make sure software you choose fits your needs.

Tip: The editing process is just as important as your script when it comes to telling your story and making it compelling.

There is a variety of video editing software that can help you bring your video to life – from simple tools such as Apple's iMovie to more professional options such as DaVinci Resolve, Final Cut Pro and Adobe Premier Pro.

Editing Your Video

Tidy up your clips

Take the time to clean up your clips when you import them. Trim their length by cutting out awkward pauses and silences and set the "in" and "out" points on the clip. Doing this in advance makes the editing process easier than having to trim each individual clip on the fly.

Cut "on the action"

If you are cutting from one scene to another, make the cut at a point where there's motion in both segments. This creates a smoother and more natural cut.

Assemble a rough cut

Before getting into a painstaking frame-by-frame edit, it's easier to first assemble your clips in rough order. This will give you a sense of how your video is shaping up and what parts need work without worrying about precise timing.

Don't overdo the transitions

Most editing software will include a range of transition options to cut from one scene to another. However, if you watch any professionally produced video, you will see very few of these transitions are ever used. The most common transition in these videos? No transition at all. That is, just a simple cut from one scene to the next. Most transitions are considered "gimmicky" and lend an amateurish feel to your video. If needed, opt for a simple cross-fade or dissolve to cut from one scene to the next.

Choose music conscientiously

Adding music to your video requires careful consideration to ensure that it's not only appropriate for your purpose and audience, but also that you adhere to any licensing requirements for its use. Most music is subject to copyright restrictions. The exceptions are if you are using royalty-free music, songs considered to be in the pubic domain, or music you have composed yourself.

Publishing Your Video

Once you've completed your video, it's time to publish it. Every video clip you watch has a specific type of file format. Which format you use will depend on the platform. How do you choose the correct format?

First consideration is to choose a format based on your required video quality but no more than that, since high quality videos are slower to download, convert or share. Also take into account how you will want to view the video files. Not all browsers, programs, and devices are compatible with a specific video format.

Tip: Most editing software can export files for you in different formats and sizes depending on its end use, such as email, YouTube or Facebook.

With that in mind, here are some guidelines for choosing a format.

For online videos

If the video is to be viewed online, choose a file format that is supported by most web browsers, such as MP4 or WEBM.

Future-proofing

Open source file formats tend to be more future-proof than proprietary formats. Good options include MP4 and AVI.

For Windows applications

If you will be using the video primarily for Windows applications, use a format that is compatible with Windows, specifically WMV.

Ideally, you would always share your video in its highest quality video format to preserve all its original data. However, this is not practical given the size of the files that would be required. Instead, it's best to create different versions of your file depending on its use. You might choose one file format to upload your file to your website, and a different format or size to email to your clients.