

Erin's Cliff Notes on Video Best Practices for Equine Brands and Media

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"It's all about telling a story. High tech and super quality are secondary."
Scott Moore

Basics

Camera

- You can produce great video without a full setup. DSLR chips and lenses can give great depth of field. GoPro is great for moving and wide shots.
- If using a cell phone, a microphone attachment is key to getting good quality. Use the kind that plugs in directly. Horizontal orientation is CRUCIAL. Use a tripod, even with a phone, and also look into handheld gimbals for moving shots.
- Movi is a new option— camera mounted on a stick with stabilizer embedded. Can plug in mic. Good little setup and can do a lot.

Editing Software

Robust editing options; higher cost

- Adobe Premiere
- Premiere Pro
- Filmora Wondershare (can also compress and burn DVDs)
- Final Cut Pro

Good free options

- Avid Media Composer First has all the basic functions
- DaVinci Resolve

- iMovie (standard on Macbook)
- Molavi

Compressing

- Social media wants HD compressed. 720 p is a good size for most uses.
- Good programs have ability to compress files to an appropriate social media size. Adobe has Encoder. Mac has Compressor. TMPG is a paid option that works well.
- Free options: Handbrake, VLC, or Mpeg StreamClip

The Shoot

- Pre-interview is a good idea. Careful selection of location is also key. Do the interview with a vet at the clinic rather than in a meeting room. This will give a lot of opportunity to grab B-roll and understand the real story.
- Alternate between tight, medium, and wide shots.
- "You can fix that in post." NO. Don't ever assume that'll work. Get it right during the shoot. Extra important for audio. Have the subject pause until the plane passes. Ask the guy to stop pressure washing for 5 minutes. Change the situation. It's annoying, but worth it.

- Aim for good sound, steady shots, and can generally see what the action is. People are more forgiving about the visuals if sound is good.
- Get a variety of shots. Build b-roll library. Always get a wide shot establishing the setting – outside of the building, sign out front. Also get the medium and tight shots. You'll end up using them all.
- If you truly can't use a tripod to be steady, make the motion purposeful. Moving shots, pan the room, etc. The wider you shoot, the more you can get away with this.
- Always put depth into a shot. Place the interviewee away from background. Give it some scale. Don't stand them against a wall; have them step forward 10 feet.
- Shooting action - When all else fails and you lose control of your focus, zoom out. Go wide.
- Use drone footage in small doses. Okay to establish location, but then get onto the story. Best drone shots are 10-ft and less (which can be difficult with horses).
- If you shoot in 4k, you can crop in to create a zoom effect. At 1080p you can crop a little in post, but it'll be a bit digitized. Instead, try to move the camera closer to the action during the shoot.
- Interview—get the boring background on audio “can you tell us where we are today.” You want to get the subject to commentate the video. It's ok to rephrase the question. Be nice and look perplexed and ask them to explain what's going on.

Audio

- Azden and Rhode Wireless Go are recommended options. On a DSLR the flash “hot shoe” on top can also take an audio receiver, plugs right into camera body for use with wireless mic.
- If picking up too much background noise, position the mic closer to subject's face. Can also reduce the recording level and/or put a wind screen on it. If you hide mic *within* the speaker's shirt (just the clip visible) it'll cut down on background sound.
- Use earbuds or headphones to confirm levels and audio.
- Instead of trying to capture audio of a panel discussion or group, consider doing individual interviews with each panelist afterward. Can sometimes also record directly from the PA system in the room to gather all.

Lighting

- Cameras like light. Use natural light when possible. Ask subject to come stand by the window. Additional lighting fills in the shadows to bring up the level overall.
- For lighting in indoor arenas, set the ISO manually on DSLR. It'll be either too dark or too grainy. Find the in between you can live with.
- Halogen lights work great, are super bright, but also get super hot so you can't pack up immediately to move shoot, etc. These can be used to bounce off a wall. Only point a light straight at a person if it's diffused with an umbrella or a gel or placed really far away.

- White balance – use a gray card or white balance to establish the settings on the camera so it recognizes what “white” is. Redo this in each set of conditions. Zoom into white object, then crank your exposure down. Zoom back out to shoot interview. (When shooting on auto mode this isn’t strictly necessary—but won’t hurt.) Don’t think you’ll be able to fix the tone on computer in post.
- Outdoors ALWAYS try to put the subject in the shade to even the lighting. Use a reflective bounce if needed to fill shadows. Move the subject to control the environment.

Post Production

Editing

- Go in with a plan, but realize it’s never going to work that way at the shoot. Roll with it.
- Transcribe all interviews to help editing and see how to make it fit together.
- Key editing point – keep each clip SHORT. Don’t linger. More cuts are better.
- Transitioning between music and natural sound is like starting a new paragraph. There should be an audio cue that the topic is changing.
- Let things move into the frame. People/horses move in to create transition.
- Average 6-minute story uses around 185 clips of b-roll. That’s why you want to shoot everything, from every angle, wide/med/tight framing. You’ll use it.

- When starting from or fading to black, 16 to 19 frames is a good amount of transition.

Recommended editing resources:

- Audacity – good program for audio editing/enhancement. Open source. Free. Can easily remove things like air conditioning hum.
- After effects and intro graphics—use Fiverr! Sometimes takes a couple tries, still worth it.
- Pond5 – resource for b-roll footage.
- YouTube has great royalty-free music that can be used in videos offering with attribution and non-attribution options that will not get flagged. Go to Video manager > Other features > Audio library. “Country Western” has a lot of low-key instrumental stuff that’s good for outdoors/animal stuff. “Hardcore” has a lot of dangerous/dramatic options. Also has sound effect library.

Storytelling

- Content is more important than the lighting or audio quality. Make the conditions work and focus on the story. Get the good story and the quality doesn’t really matter.
- Having a character is key to telling a story. Find the storytellers. Show announcers, etc.
- Ask the question in such a way that the speaker tells a story. Avoid a yes/no setup. Think ahead and ask the question you need to fill in the potential gaps in the interview.
- At conclusion, consider a call to action. How should we wrap the story? What’s

the closing statement? What should the viewer *do* with the information or story?

Live streaming

- You need an encoder (a device that streams directly from the camera) if not using phone. Ultrastudio Mini Recorder made by Black Magic Design. Converts video into laptop – like webcam.
- Program to allow it to stream is Wirecast Studio—or there's a free version called OBS (open broadcast software). You can specify where output goes—Facebook, etc. Can login to Facebook through it, can select which Page you stream to.
- Atim Mini – switcher, can plug in multiple cameras and HDMI out to laptop and switch on the fly.
- Livestream is 10:1 number of views— gets a huge audience.
- If using a phone, TURN IT HORIZONTAL.

Archiving

- Archive b-roll on external hard drives. Drives have raw footage. Files are named by event. Project: import from there. Can later pull the b-roll out of the project or the original for other projects.
- Suggest each client have their own external drive. Then they have a record of all their footage, it's theirs if they move, etc.
- Clips are named by project. Raw is the bigger file by event. Keep journal of clips and dates to cross-reference.

- Keep master file called “best of” separate in a folder. Color code on the file list and have a paper copy (dog biting foot is on Drive H, X shoot, minute xx:xx) in a flipbook.

Recap

Recommended Resources

- National press photographers association organizes seminars.
- Central Kentucky library system has Final Cut Pro and other Mac software available in the computer labs and they offer free classes.

Take-Home Messages

- Fix it in the field. Set up and manage your shoot to minimize needed post-production.
- When you get the voice that says, “I should get this shot or ask that question,” but you're tired or don't want to get the tripod out again, just do it anyway. Because that will be the piece you need.
- Shoot wide, medium, tight. Find the light. Be steady; use a tripod. Get good audio. Next step is composition. Fill the frame. Look for interesting angles, depth, reflections. That's what will set you apart.
- Steady shots, good audio, vary your shots, use a light. Don't zoom, just get closer.

“If you know everything about what I'm shooting, I want to entertain you. If you don't know anything about it, I want to educate you.” Scott Moore