



Can anyone make a good video and are production companies on the way out?

The technology is cheaper and better than ever before: an excellent HD camcorder can be bought almost anywhere, and the editing software that comes with it gives you the ability to make programmes that look quite good.

You can share your video on the web – on an intranet, through social-networking sites or, of course, through the amazing medium of YouTube. Millions of people could, potentially, click on to your video and take your corporate message and share it with all their customers, work colleagues and friends.

Easy. Production companies that offer broadcast professional services are dead. It's over. We can all go home. Simple.

But is it so simple?



I don't think so. I'm not saying that what some call 'User Generated Video', or UGV isn't here to stay; it is. It has its place. It may save money, get your message out there quicker and provide tangible results. It can be useful.

If you take your people out of their normal jobs so that they can spend the time to shoot and put together a short film, you can use it in any way you like. It might look good, but it might not.

It's important to remember though, that the vast majority of clips on YouTube don't get many viewings. Most get only a few hundred. The clips that cause a global sensation are few and far between: the exceptions that prove the rule. And that rule is: YouTube has far too much content for it to be an effective medium of communication.

And when you see a clip on another platform – your website for instance – lack of quality can really show. And that's when UGV can be dangerous. A badly made video can backfire. You or your company could look stupid. Or, you could find that an in-house joke undermines your brand.

Not so long ago German transport giant, Deutsche Bahn, was in take-over talks with UK-rail operator Arriva, when a video appeared on YouTube that ridiculed their negotiations. A clip from a movie about Hitler was 're-subtitled' to make fun of their approach to the discussions. No one quite knows who made it, but it damaged the German company's brand for a while!

So, UGV can be useful, but needs to be handled properly.

1 "There are ways of stopping you laughing; City Diary." Times [London, England] 24 Mar. 2010

A recent report by Every Sense² suggested that production companies were nervous about UGV, and didn't quite know if it was a threat or an opportunity. They interviewed professional programme makers and found a range of views, and a host of worries, but concluded that video companies had to stress the value that they can bring to a communications project.

And that's my main point. I don't see UGV as a threat. It is an opportunity, both for clients and for production professionals. It's another way I can help clients. People come to me because I can solve their communications needs creatively and cost-effectively. It takes skill and experience to do that: just as in any other walk of life.

I can't believe that a company would entrust a mission critical message – a message that is supposed to build their brand, attract paying customers, motivate or educate their staff – to someone who hasn't made a video before, and does not have the experience or contacts to bring in the right talent to make it look good. If a company did that, they'd be taking a big risk with one of their most precious assets: their reputation.

UGV can be appropriate in many instances: internal communications and at or around specific events, for instance, but when it comes to selling or building a brand you can't rely on what is, in all honesty, amateurism.

Production expertise and experience – the kind you get from companies like SugarSnap and others – add value to your message. You get more bang for your bucks; and you benefit from long experience to overcome obstacles and problems when they arise – as they sometimes do during a production. Above all you get objective and expert advice on how to shape the narrative and tell your story in a way that works for your message and your target audience. That's when the difference between a professional and an amateur really shows.



We all have an instinct for quality; we know when something has been professionally made, and we know when it hasn't. We all watch TV (on a set and online) everyday and we don't make allowances for lack of budget or expertise: if something looks bad it IS bad. That's it. And now that your video is only a click away from BBC i-Player, I think the difference is more obvious.

My advice is simple: when you're wondering whether to shoot or not to shoot – think of your objectives, your audience, your brand and what you want your audience to feel once they have watched it. If you're going to broadcast your message to the world – make it look good. That piece of video might be the only way your customers or peers can judge you.

If you would like to chat further, then give me a buzz. I'm here to make you or your company look good... whichever way we do it.

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2 "UGV Threat or Opportunity" Every Sense Ltd

