

Collaborative Adventures



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Using Web Video to Get Your Story Out

By: Chris Cook

Ever been moved to tears by a movie? There is just something special about watching those images on the screen. Hearing the emotion in their voices, observing their body language, even the music. These are obvious components of a movie that can pull on our heartstrings. Then, there's the behind the scenes work. Eliminating awkward pauses, taking out all of the "likes" and "you knows" that we all throw in from time to time. Editing is the unsung hero of any good movie. So how does this apply to Systems of Care?

One of the most challenging things a System of Care (SOC) tackles is getting its story out. Genuine family involvement at all levels of your SOC can help, as can a solid outcomes process that collects, tracks and analyzes data and then reports it back to your governance board. However, what are you to do if you want to reach a wider audience?

The Choices TA Center recently collaborated with Cantaloupe, a company that develops short promotional videos. Cantaloupe sent a team of two people to record a training session the TA Center was hosting in Indianapolis. One person was responsible for recording, and the other interviewed trainers and participants about their experience. We were very pleased with how the training went, but honestly, we were a bit nervous about how we would look and sound on video. We recently had the opportunity to review our video and we were blown away. I couldn't help but think about all of the SOC sites around the state that could benefit from such a process. So, I asked Vicki Duncan, Story Development Director at Cantaloupe to participate in an interview.

Q. What are the keys to effectively grabbing someone's attention in social marketing?

A. It's fairly easy to grab attention. Holding it is the hard part. One of the biggest turn offs in social marketing is being too commercial or being "fake." Social marketing is a medium where people expect to interact directly with other people. The best thing to do is embrace this. Don't try to hide behind a scripted message or a company name. If you do, people will stop interacting which is the whole point of social marketing.

Q. What is essential for organizations to consider when attempting to get their story out?

A. The key component to telling a good story is to have compelling characters. When you have a good character they can tell *their* story passionately and effectively and that is conveyed to the reader or viewer. At Cantaloupe, we specialize in telling video stories. Video is powerful because it can express an emotion in a way text cannot. Video allows you to truly experience what someone is feeling. Through a tear, a laugh or even a pause in a sentence, video can take you to a depth that text cannot.

Q. What are the benefits of utilizing the web video?

A. Web video is a useful tool in showing the 'true colors' of an organization. In this day and age, most people will 'check out' an organization's website before they buy something or engage in any sort of transaction. Having compelling content that tells the story of an organization is a critical part of this communication. Video that is static

on a website or emailed to stakeholders is an easy, affordable, and engaging method to reach out to those who may be interested in your business or organization.

Q. What is the process you go through when you begin working with an organization?

A. At Cantaloupe, we want to understand 'who' an organization is and 'why' it wants to do video before we sit down and talk. We have story development process that helps us identify the messages a given story might have. But, the fun part about what we do is that all of our videos are interview style. That means no scripts, no actors, just real people telling real stories. The easiest part about what we do is turning on the camera and the lights and pressing 'record.' The difficult part is, on the front end, clearly establishing a plan that can tell a SIMPLE story and, on the back end, sifting through all the content and piecing together a 2-3 minutes story that captures the viewer's attention. Our business model allows us to work efficiently, while telling meaningful stories.

Q. Is there any research to back up the effectiveness of the work you do?

A. You can talk statistics about the explosion of video on the Internet. But, I think a compelling story of the impact of authentic (Cantaloupe-style) video has to do with the organization Theraplay. Theraplay is a therapeutic riding center. We did a series of stories about the organization's mission, how it has helped children and some specific stories on those lives changed through Theraplay's work. Through the course of the email campaign (they sent out the videos to their database), Theraplay donations more than doubled. That is a powerful anecdote that shows not only the power of video, but also what authentic, unscripted stories can do. You can see a testimonial from Theraplay here:

<http://www.cantaloupe.tv/video/stories?itemCode=k87PL93GUSxB07SLS2345AHvsBpJk6239EQ90L&v=2>

Q. What is unique about utilizing video to convey your story?

Every organization and every person has a story to tell. If you are in a business or in a service agency, there is someone, at all levels of that group that can talk about how it has impacted him/her. Whether it is a CEO or a person on the line, there is a story. Storytelling through video is an effective means of communication that leaves the viewer with a clear impression and feeling about the subject at hand. I find that service organizations and non-profits can use these 'tools' in a way many organizations may not. Instead of telling me about how your organization or program has helped someone, video can show it. That is powerful stuff.

Powerful stuff indeed. We will not only be able to reach our main audience in Indiana, but people all over the world will be able to literally experience the creativity and level of interactivity involved in our trainings. Please check out the TA Center's video produced by Cantaloupe at <http://www.choicesteam.org/tacenter.html>.