Creating a Successful Video Pitch

a 1 hour crash course in filmmaking fundamentals

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My background

• Currently the Multimedia Designer & Video Director for the Robotics Institute @ Carnegie Mellon University

• Currently teaching “Intro to Multimedia Design” at CMU
  Students write, create graphics, mix sound and animate

• Taught filmmaking courses at Pittsburgh Filmmakers for 14 years

• Design agency & corporate client experience
Pitch 101

• Problem
• Solution
• Market
• Competition
• Team
• Business Model
Key Takeaways

- Write something fresh. Avoid cliché or overdone concepts. Get to the point. Attempt to work the points of a pitch into a story.

- Stabilize your camera, any movement should flow and guide attention of the viewer.

- Audio that is clear, well recorded and precisely delivered is critical.

- Be creative with the tools you have and reflect a theme and style inspired by your product/service.

- **Visualize** as much of the problem, solution & market as possible.
Video Pitch Styles

McGinnis Competition Website: You should pretend you are pitching to real investors and include all pertinent information.

• Narrator + Team Interviews + B-roll
• Team leaders first person video + Explainer Animation
• Dramatization + Supporting Data
• *Not* only a screen captured slideset and disembodied voice
filmmaking is
creative/technical
writing  
visual design  
sketching  
planning  

composition  
direction of camera  
direction of subjects  
control camera movement  

cinematography  
knowledge of camera lenses  
control depth of field  
creative use of natural light  
technical control of artificial light  

film language  
team management  
task delegation  

audio recording  
narration vs live  
synchronizing audio  

audio editing  
audio mixing  

image control  
saturation  
white balance  
color temperature  

editing  
transitions  
screen direction  

title design  
graphic production  
motion graphics  
animation  
compositing  

video frame rates  
video frame sizes  
knowledge of codecs  
rendering strategy
writing
visual design
sketching
planning
composition
direction of camera
direction of subjects
control camera
movement

film language
team management
task delegation

audio recording
narration vs live
synchronizing audio
audio editing
audio mixing

image control
saturation
white balance
color temperature

editing
transitions
screen direction
title design
graphic production
motion graphics
animation?
compositing

video frame rates
video frame sizes
knowledge of codecs
rendering strategy

cinematography
knowledge of camera lenses
control depth of field
creative use of natural light
technical control of artificial light
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GLOSSARY
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“Does the team demonstrate confident, effective storytelling?”
Confident, Effective Storytelling

• clear, vivid communication to appropriate audience
• high production value, consistent style
• appropriate design, visual flow
• clean audio, sharp camera work
• original, creative
• fascinating to watch, connects with audience
Vision

• Style? What style fits the personality of your team? Your idea?

• Stand out: Be creative, unique and honest.

• Be careful of being too gimmicky.

• Your video shouldn’t look and sound too much like someone else’s.

• Avoid the echo chamber or straight up templates. A template is great… until a VC sees it for the second time or worse - a third.

• To stock or not to stock?
Conceptualize, Sketch
Pre-Production
Production
Post-Production
Brainstorm, Clarify Message
Write, Plan & Schedule
Make & Gather Media
Edit and Mix the Media
Script

• Write, read out loud, record it, listen to it, rewrite, repeat

• Write a multi-column audiovisual script

• Precise, efficient, clear message

• Appeal to the mind and heart of audience

• The pace, rhythm and other information will dictate word cap

• 150 words per minute is a good starting point

• https://wistia.com/learn/production/wistias-scripting-tips
# 3 column script + storyboard

## Script

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Time</th>
<th>Visual</th>
<th>Audio</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>0:00</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>0:02</td>
<td>Descriptions of imagery, image/camera movement, style of animated text</td>
<td>Narrator:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Music:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>SoundFX:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>0:05</td>
<td>Includes type that is seen, but not spoken.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>0:10</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>0:20</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>0:30</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Visuals and audio over time in text

Sketches: Shot size, visual details
Visualize

• Simple storyboard sketches can be great planning tools

• Take advantage of the moving, visual medium

• Will you shoot video? Use photos creatively? Hand drawn or vector drawings? Stop motion?

• Animation? Motion graphics? Dynamic typography? A composite of all of these elements?

• Where will viewer see person speaking and when will they see supporting imagery and video (aka b roll)?
• How to visualize the key points of problem, solution, market…?

• Visual metaphor or theme to tap into?

• Record *scratch track*, aka *animatic* (*basically an quickly made video that uses rough sketches over time to prove the script works to the ear but also flows well - see next slide*)
Record a version of your script and synchronize sketches from your storyboard before shooting the real material. This upfront pre-vis planning can bring the project into focus.
film language 101

if you plan to dramatize
It’s all about control.

- framing of shot, movement of camera
- proximity of microphone, placement of camera
- lighting, placement of subject
- camera: focus, exposure, white balance, depth of field
- level of microphone to record audio
- location cleanup, arrangement, clothing and prop color
Shot Sizes and Continuity

• Language of shot sizes: ECU, CU, MS, LS, ELS
• Maintaining screen direction is important
• The “eye-line” of a character, camera placement, composition and common sense ideas like left=west and right=east all establish screen direction
• 180° Degree Rule - See following slides
• Upcoming images courtesy of “Shot by Shot: A Practical Guide to Filmmaking” by Cantine, Lewis and Howard
Shot Sizes

ELS, LS
MS
CU, ECU
An overhead view showing the 180-degree line and three camera positions for a sequence of four shots. The numbers indicate the order of the shots in the edited sequence.
Talking to camera vs. being interviewed

• Consider when person speaks directly to camera vs. slightly off axis from the camera during an interview.

• Team should likely address the camera directly

• Other testimonials might be speaking to a person off camera
Rule of Thirds
a basic composition guide
Rule of Thirds vs. Symmetry: Composition

• Rule of Thirds / Grid Guide: https://vimeo.com/1461280

• Centered/Symmetrical: Wes Anderson https://vimeo.com/89302848

• You gotta know the rules before you can break them properly
clean, clear audio
Recording Audio

• The goal is to record clean audio with proper volume level
• Use a mic close to the person speaking
• Record in a quiet environment without echo
• Use carpet or rugs to reduce echo
Watch your levels...

- Use the VU meter to ensure the audio being recorded is not too quiet or too loud.
- Digital audio VU meters use -12 dB as a “sweet spot”.
- This idea of audio level is possibly more helpful to grasp when mixing audio in your video editor to smooth out and make all sound a consistent volume.

**Sweet spot, good level, but not too hot**
ZOOM H4N PRO
4-Tracks, Unlimited Creativity.
Smart Phone Tricks

• How to get best narration track from an iPhone

• Using a double system with 2 iPhones, or iPhone as boom mic see the Wistia video below. Or sit a Zoom recorder just out of frame.


• Sorry for the iPhone bias in this slide set. I know there are good resources on getting the most from your Samsung Galaxy, etc.
lighting
Lighting Properties to Control

- Intensity: Dark ----------------------------------- Bright
- Hard ---------------------------------------------- Soft
- Contrast: High ----------------------------------- Low
- Shadows and Highlights
- Directions and Angles, Number of Sources
- Color (use the same bulb type, white balance)
- Low Key ------------------------------------------ High Key
High Key, exterior with bounce fill

Jean Nolte
Acura Product Specialist
Low Key, interior with less fill for dramatization
But, as you saw from Wistia demos, only balanced frontal illumination with a background light behind subject works for their style.
What if I don’t have a light kit?

• Some room walls reflect light to soften it and fill in shadows

• Use common sense approach to natural light: face window, not backlit in front of it.

• What natural backgrounds can you with?

• What are your brightest rooms?

• Wistia: http://wistia.com/library/choosing-a-background
Assemble
Control Audience Focus with Editing

- editing: visual flow and rhythm
- transitions: keep it simple! Cuts are the most common for a reason.
- audio mixing/editing: audio tracks, music
- Good visual editing & audio mixing removes or avoids distractions
- Audience is hearing, seeing, reading, thinking... all at once. Guide that experience.
Video Editing Software
Universal Interface Guide

• Import video, photo and audio files: Media Bin
• Cut, expand, contract media clips: Timeline Window
• Synchronize voice, sound effects, mix: Timeline Window
• Virtual razor blade, tape, overlap: Transition Panel
• Choose “in” and “out” points: Source Player (near Media Bin)
Transitions mean something

Cuts are powerful.
Dissolves show the passage of time.
Starwipes are bad. Unless ironic.
Music

• Choose carefully. Does music support tone and message?

• Don’t choose distracting music!

• Music should be dropped in volume in your editing software as to not be too loud or drown out narration or other information

• In technical terms, I typically reduce audio by -8 dB while often boosting spoken audio by +1 or +2 dB
Screen capture and graphics

• ScreenFlow is my preferred screen capture software

• Consider using your slide graphics in the video editor as title cards or as animated moments
Output Video for Upload

• Outputting your final video using H.264 or H.265 codec set to high bitrate such as 10Mbps and AAC audio or MP3 audio set to 128kbps or higher are great options. Depends heavily on what video editing software you are using. Does the output look and sound good?

• If members of your team are submitting videos to be compiled, these same settings for intermediate clips is good, but consider 20Mbps for video and 256kbps for audio source before then recompressing down to the settings in first bullet.

• It is possible for 1 minute of rendered video to be anywhere between 50MB and 200MB depending on settings. Be cautious of any compressed file that seems too small or too large.
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• Stabilize your camera, any movement should flow and guide attention of the viewer

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• Be creative with the tools you have and reflect a theme and style inspired by your product/service

• **Visualize** as much of the problem, solution & market as possible
• iMovie on the Mac still sets the bar for a quality tool at a low price.
  - even an old Mac will have more than enough power to make a 1080p video

• https://www.lynda.com/iMovie-tutorials/iMovie-10-1-8-Essential-Training/618709-2.html

• http://wistia.com/library  (DIY lighting, DSLR workshop, direction tips)

• ScreenFlow (Mac) <$100 video editing software
  http://www.telestream.net/screenflow/overview.htm

• Camtasia (Windows & Mac) <$100 video editing software
  https://www.techsmith.com/camtasia.html

• Adobe Premiere Elements (Windows & Mac) <$100 video editing software

• Wistia Learning Center (tagged “DIY”):
  https://wistia.com/learn?page=1&tag=diy-video
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