

Making a video for your business

“How-to” guide

You can hire a pro to make a video for your business or do it yourself. Either way, a strong video can help you boost sales. We'll show you the ins and outs of both approaches.

Do you think you need extra hands, or are you hands-on?

You can hire a pro to make a video for your business or do it yourself. Either way, a strong video can help you boost sales. Whatever you decide, this guide walks you through both approaches to help you stay organized and tell your story.



01

Hire a professional

Finding and hiring the right videographer to shoot your business video can be a challenge, but knowing the terminology and considerations can be a huge help in realizing your vision. Our guide looks at both logistic and aesthetic considerations, and provides resources on how to find a video production professional in your area.

While making a video can be inexpensive and fun, we understand if you decide to just hire a pro. Even that can be pretty affordable these days.



As you shop around for the right videographer, keep these issues in mind:

- ✓ **Style**
Take a look at each vendor's samples and consider which one's style is closest to what you're after.
- ✓ **Schedule**
Bringing this up early in the conversation helps you determine whether or not the videographer is available in your window, and if they are, also helps set expectations.
- ✓ **Experience**
Experience is important, but what's more important is a videographer's work. Ideally, you want to find someone who's worked on projects similar to the kind of video you're envisioning.
- ✓ **Budget**
Videographers can charge anywhere from a few hundred bucks to thousands of dollars. Knowing what you want to spend in advance can help you find someone who can delivery quality within those parameters.

Establishing your vision



Most videographers are trained to ask the right questions to help you prepare for your video. These are some of the topics you'll likely discuss before diving in:



Your vision

Your vision for this video, including examples of videos you like

Estimated length

2 or 3 minutes is a good rule of thumb

Script

Your rough storyline or script

Target audience

Your target audience and where you expect them to watch your video (online, trade show reel, presentation, etc.)

Soundtrack music

Soundtrack music that would best set the tone and mood for your video

Brand elements

Soundtrack music that would best set the tone and mood for your video

Call to action

Such as visiting your eBay store page or calling you for a brochure, that you'd like to invite your audience to do

Finding a professional

You don't have to spend a lot of money to get a professional-quality video. If you have a limited budget, see if you have a friend or colleague who might be able to take on the project. Local film students are another option. Whatever your budget, there are plenty of sites to help you find the right fit for your video project. Also, don't discount the power of your search engine! Search 'video production companies' or 'video production,' plus the name of your city as part of the search term.



TIP: Web searches

“Don't discount the power of your search engine! Search on promotional video production plus the name of your city as part of the search term.”

02

Do it yourself

We're not going to promise it'll be easy, but making a video with today's relatively light, portable and inexpensive technology is way easier than it used to be—once you know the basics. We'll walk you through the main considerations in making a video that best fits your budget and needs. It's divided into the three phases of any video project: Plan, Shoot, and Edit.

Planning a video entails determining the style you're after, what you want to say, coming up with your shot list, and finding gear that fits your needs and budget. Even with simple videos, having a plan can help save time, money and help you stay organized.

Choosing a video type and format

Take the time to figure out what you want to say about your business. It doesn't have to be complicated. In fact, the shorter it is, the better.

What kind of video do you want to make? Once you have a good idea of what you want your video to say, think about what type of promotional video you're going to make. Here are three examples—you'll find that most successful videos are a blend of all three approaches.



Introductory

- Introduces yourself to your customers
- Gives a human element to your business
- Promotes authenticity



Products

- Showcases a range of products, or focuses on a single product
- Highlights the quality and features of your products
- Shows your products in use



Testimonial

- Uses customers to advocate for your products
- Brings to life a connection that a customer has had with your product

Choosing a video type and format



Talking head

The most common technique for shooting a promotional video is a talking head. This shows the audience who's talking, which in most cases, will be you. Showing your smiling face is an effective way to connect with your customers.



Talking head + "B-roll"

Sometimes showing yourself won't be enough. You may also want to show your products, employees, customers, and the inside of your business.

This is called a talking head with B-roll.

Writing your script

Whether you hire a video production company or shoot the video yourself, it's always a good idea to write a script. It'll help you outline scenes and keep track of all the information your audience sees and hears.



TIP #01 Keep it Simple

“Every new person or location on camera adds potential complications and expense to a video shoot. Try to limit your on-camera talent and locations to one or two.”

A typical way script outline might look like this:

Introduce yourself & tell your story

- What are you passionate about?
- How'd you get started?
- What's your mission?

Talk about your business & products

- What do you sell?
- What makes your business and products great?
- What excites you the most about your products?

The main narrator of your video can be:

- On-camera (you, or interviews with others, or testimonials)
- Off-camera (voice-over narration)
- A combination of the two

Conclusion

- What feeling do you want to leave your customers with?
- What action do you want viewers to take?
- Where can they find you?
(This is critical because your video will appear on sites besides eBay, such as YouTube and Facebook, so you want to make sure that buyers know to go to eBay.com to shop.)
- Can viewers follow your social channels, such as your brand page (This is critical because your video will appear on sites besides eBay, such as on YouTube and Facebook, so you want to make sure that buyers know to go to eBay.com to shop.)
- Can viewers follow your social channels, such as your brand page on Facebook?

Script and video length

Hold your viewer's attention by keeping your video to 2 minutes, tops. You can always create additional videos for other topics or products and alternate showing them in your store. Also, read your script out loud before shooting. Each page of a double-spaced script generally equals a minute on screen.

Use of People

Use of people. If you use people, especially particular celebrities, in your videos, you'll need to consent to being featured in the video because they have a right to control their own publicity rights.

Creating your shot list

Once your script is done, list the shots you'll need. It'll save a lot of time and money and help serve as a production plan for considerations like location, your "actors" on camera, and the products you'll need on hand.

Choosing your gear

Picking the right camera

A smartphone can be perfectly suited to shoot video for your business. For the highest quality videos, however, you may want to spend a little more.



Smartphone

You likely already have a smartphone that records audio and video. Some phones, like an iPhone, even have apps that let you edit video on the phone itself. This is a great option if you don't mind sacrificing quality for convenience.



Point & shoot camera

Most people don't think of their digital cameras as video cameras, but most models have the option to record decent sound and video. Just be aware this option doesn't provide the best sound and video quality.



DSLR

The latest digital single lens reflex cameras (DSLRs) allow you to record High Definition (HD) video. They also allow you to swap lenses for different use cases. Macro lenses, for example, are great for detailed close-up shots of jewelry or other handcrafted items.



Camcorder

The most popular and option. This is the device of choice for most professional videographers.



Recording audio

What your customers hear is just as important as what they see, so recording good audio is crucial. When it comes to recording audio:



Smartphones can record audio, but not with the same quality a camcorder.



DSLRs and point-and-shoot cameras can record excellent video, but since they're primarily intended for photography, their microphones aren't optimal.



Camcorders offer the best quality for recording audio conveniently.

Some devices may allow you to connect an external microphone. This can improve the quality of the audio you record dramatically.

You can also record audio separately and drop it into the video later during editing.

Built-in computer mic



External mic



On-camera mic

OK, you've come up with your plan. Now it's time for the really fun part—shooting your video. Whether it will be just you and a small crew, or a professional videographer, you'll get the best results by knowing your shot types, how to compose them, and the following tips and tricks. Roll camera!

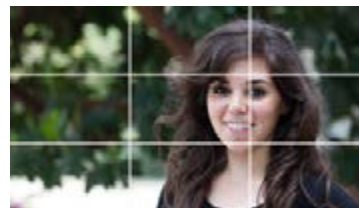
Shot Types

Take a variety of shots so that you'll have plenty of options to choose from when it comes time to edit. Here are the three main types of shots and what they're typically used to capture:

Close-ups – Products

Medium shot – For any talking head interviews, products

Wide shot – Your store exterior, outdoor scenes



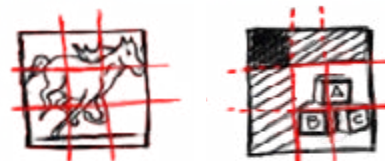
Good



Bad

The Rule of Thirds

Artists, photographers, and designers have used this “rule of thirds” for centuries because it adds more tension, energy and interest in the composition than simply centering your subject. For medium or wide shots especially, try to make your main subject fill about two-thirds of the screen.



Tips on composition



Good

Shoot at eye level

For most shots, use a tripod to avoid any unwanted movement. If you don't have a tripod, you can improvise with whatever is available, like a chair or stool.



Bad



Steady your camera

For most shots, use a tripod to avoid any unwanted movement. If you don't have a tripod, you can improvise with whatever is available, like a chair or stool.



Shoot multiple takes

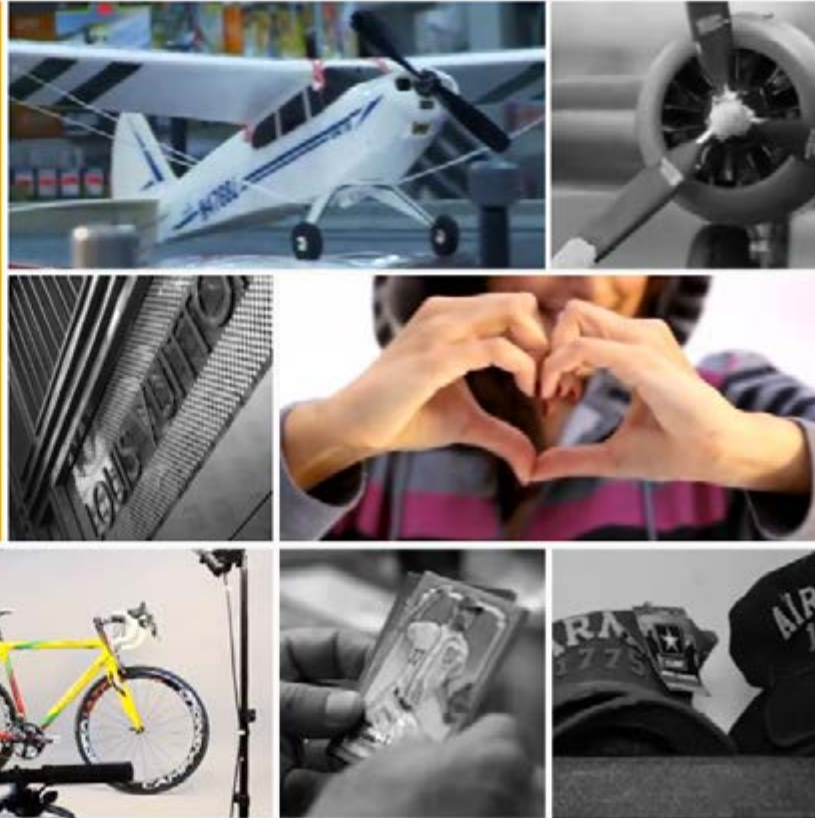
When you're editing your video, you may find certain takes don't work for one reason or the other. By shooting multiple takes, you give yourself more flexibility when it comes time to edit.



Use cue cards

Plenty of people improvise their on-camera action and dialogue, but for a more professional presentation, consider using cue cards.

Happy shooting!



Congratulations are in order if you've got all your footage "in the can." Now it's time to put it all together in the editing phase. We'll walk you through the available software, transition types, and where to purchase soundtrack music. After that, it's a wrap!

Video editing software

Free Software

As with camera equipment, you have options for video editing software that are either already in your computer or that you can easily download for free.



iMovie (Mac only)



GarageBand (Mac only)



Microsoft MovieMaker (PC only)



YouTube Video Editor



Pinnacle Studio



Ulead VideoStudio

Paid Software



Final Cut Pro



Premier Pro

Online editing tutorial

If you've never done any video editing, explore these sites for tips on how to use your editing software. They include a few videos that guide you through the entire process, from importing your footage to publishing your complete video.



Free iMovie Tutorials

<http://vimeo.com/videoschool/lesson/33/video-101-editing-with-imovieFree>



Movie Maker Tutorials

<http://windows.microsoft.com/en-US/windows-vista/Getting-started-with-Windows-Movie-Maker>

Titles & Transition Types

Titles

Use titles to set the tone for your video and to draw attention to your subject:

- Keep your font selection to one or two fonts – too many can look busy and unprofessional
- Use clean fonts that are easy to read
- Make the type size large enough to easily be read by the viewer

Transition Types

These are easy to implement with today's editing software and can include:



Fade in

From black, usually at the beginning of a video.



Cut

This is just switching from one shot to the next with no effects.



Dissolve

When one shot gradually fades into the next.



Fade out

When a shot fades to black, usually at the end of a video and before any credits or end titles.

TIP: Learn from the videos that you love

“Watch other videos that inspire you and study the techniques that they’ve used”

More tips...

Go easy on the text

If you superimpose text during editing, keep it brief and use a basic, easy-to-read font. Remember, the power of your video will be in the images and voices that tell your story, not in the printed words.

Go easy on the graphics

Unless you're a professional designer, extraneous graphics could confuse and distract your audience from your unique and personal message.

Don't worry about being fancy

As you edit, just as when you film, keep things simple, direct, and genuine. The point of your video is to present you and your business as authentically as possible. If you get too fancy and slick, buyers won't get a feel for the real you.

Soundtrack music

Music is just as important for setting the mood as the visuals. While not every video requires music, it can certainly help express the tone and style of your business and products. A few basic guidelines:

Choose music without heavy beats and that doesn't interfere with your voice-over.

- Don't use copyrighted music without permission
- Do use music that's a good fit for your business and brand
- Do use music that's royalty-free



Ambient



Aggressive

TIP: Royalty-free music

“By purchasing a royalty-free song, which usually costs around \$10-\$50, you’re buying a license to use that song for whatever projects you want, for as long as you want.”

The following sites sell royalty-free music:

- <http://www.premiumbeat.com>
- <http://www.musicloops.com>
- <http://www.smartsound.com>
- <http://www.royaltyfreemusic.com>
- <http://jewelbeat.com>
- <http://www.productiontrax.com>

TIP: Photos and stock illustration

“If you want to use still photography in your videos, keep in mind that the same rules apply as music—the image needs to either be “public domain” or purchased for a modest fee from a stock image website.

Here's a list that ranges from includes free stock image sources to more high-end professional sources that you can still use for a modest fee:

- stock.xchng
- istockphoto.com
- Veer.com
- GettyImages.com
- Shutterstock.com
- masterfile.com