Learning Evidence – Longform Article

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Learning Goal: I want to create short marketing videos for social media and presentations, including the process of planning, shooting, and editing by the end of the semester. I am interested in creative content, so this skill will be helpful as I seek post-graduate jobs. Throughout the semester, I would like to create three final videos and be able to list video creation as a skill on my resume.

Target Publication: The Atlantic (Magazine)

Building a Brand

How non-profits can create video content to tell their story

With smartphones in our pockets and social media at our disposal, video creation is no longer something only the professionals can do. Combine this with the ease of sharing online and you have the perfect recipe for nonprofit branding; it's a cost-effective way to raise awareness, spread your message, and potentially even pick up some new funders along the way.

The Oasis Center, a nonprofit in Nashville, Tennessee, is embracing this mentality and is creating their own video content to spread their mission and gain more visibility. Oasis offers nearly 20 programs all centered on youth development and has been present in the community for the past fifty years. Because of their lifespan, they have built a strong community relationship and have a positive reputation with the Nashville area.

I recently set out on a journey to learn what it takes for organizations to create videos on their own. Over the past several weeks, I worked closely with members on the Oasis team to learn about the process of video creation and to gain the skills necessary to produce a final product. Along the way, I discovered the three primary aspects to a great video: planning the message, taking quality shots, and editing the content seamlessly.

Brainstorming and Prototypes: Planning Your Project

Don't count on getting lucky with a great final product. Plan for it. Videos are meant to convey a certain message and reach a target audience, but if you fail to plan for it carefully, you might end up with a message you did not intend. And for organizations, especially non-profits whose mission is the center of their work, sending the right message is vital. The last thing a non-profit organization wants to do is tell their story in an incomplete or careless way.

Before you do anything else, you should define the purpose of your video. What message do you want to send and what outcomes are you hoping to achieve? If you cannot answer these questions, you are not quite ready to get behind the camera. Before I arrived at Oasis with my goal of gaining this new skill, they were already in the process of defining the purpose for their next videos. They knew that they wanted to create videos for their programs that showcased the change they were enacting in the community.

As you are defining your purpose, it is important to keep in mind that there are a wide variety of types of videos you can create (Mansoor). You can create company culture videos which focus on what it is like to be an employee in your nonprofit or informational videos that focus on your cause. You can also create animation videos, testimonial videos, and documentaries to name a few. While thinking about your purpose, you should select the best method to convey what you ultimately decide.

After you have your purpose in mind, it is time to brainstorm. The most important principle here is *creativity*. In the beginning, think of everything and anything that you could create without worrying about whether it is feasible. You can get into practicality later, but for now, let your mind wander. Throughout this process, I not only bounced ideas off of the team I worked with, but I also talked directly to the programs and created different storyboards. Storyboards can be simple sketches of what different shots might look like in the video, which can be helpful for envisioning a final product and spurring new ideas (Burgess).

Once you have a long list of ideas, start finalizing your actual plan and creating a detailed outline for your story. When creating the outline, you should think about the different shots you will need, potential scripts, and any individuals who will be in the video. Creating a thorough outline will help to ensure that your purpose and message show in the final product. You can refer to the outline throughout your process.

Lights, Camera, Action: Shooting Your Content

No matter how great your outline and plan, a video is only as good as its technical quality. To make a high-quality video, you need the right equipment, including a camera, tripod or stabilizer, microphone, and good lighting. Throughout this experience, I learned how to choose (and use) the right equipment to make our plan come to life.

First and foremost, you should have a camera that takes clear video. Depending on the needs of you or your organization, you might want something more or less advanced or all-inclusive. We decided to use an iPad for our videos for a few reasons. Most importantly, it was extremely mobile

and easy to take wherever we need it. Additionally, it has the capability to edit the

A sample storyboard template to help plan your video

videos on the same device, which is both convenient and budget-friendly.

With our camera ready to go, the team showed me some different options of stabilizing the camera. Unless it is part of your video theme, you want to make sure that your camera shots are not shaky or tilted. Typically, people will turn to tripods, but those only work if you do not need to move around. You might use this if you are making an animation video or filming an interview with someone. However, if you are filming an event or a documentary-like film and need to move around, you would want to find a stabilizer. If you are using a tablet or phone, you can fit a stabilizer around the device like a case. A stabilizer has handles on the case to give you greater control over your shot and to prevent shaking. They are also typically thick enough to double as a tripod, enabling you to simply set the case and device on a flat service and film.

Next, I learned a lot about the process of creating well-lit areas for filming. If you are filming outside or in a naturally-lit room, you may not need to add more light, but if you find yourself filming in poorly-lit office spaces or under a harsh light, adding more light sources will increase the clarity of what you shoot. We used two LED spotlights that fit into a standard wall outlet. They had long wires, so we were able to position them where we needed. When you set them up, have one light sitting on each side of your main area of focus, facing towards the individual. This is known as two-point lighting, and it will create an even distribution of light on whatever it is that you are filming and will enable the camera to better pick up the picture (Camp 2013).

Additionally, if your video will include sound, as you would need in an interview or a documentary, you will need to invest in a microphone. If you are using a mobile device or tablet, you can find microphones that connect directly to the device through the headphone jack, which is what Oasis uses when they create videos. Throughout my research, I discovered different types of microphones, including wireless and handheld, but the microphones that simply clip onto a shirt or tie and connect directly to the device are the most cost-effective and easy to use.

When you have all of your equipment gathered, you can finally begin to shoot your video. During this step, the most important thing to pay attention to is the angle of your shot. Finding the perfect shot will largely depend on the type of video that you are creating. However, throughout this process, I discovered that the best way to find out is to take practice shots. Before you start filming, try out different angles to see what works best. Depending on what type of video you choose, you might also consider shooting the same scene from multiple angles so you have more to choose from in your final stage.

As you are taking your practice shots, you will learn a lot about what does and does not work for your specific project. As you iterate, it will be important for you to apply the lessons you learn in one practice shot to your final shots. You might find that you need to move the lighting around or that one background works better than the other. During this process, I discovered that these details are specific to each project you put together, making this perhaps the most important step along the way.
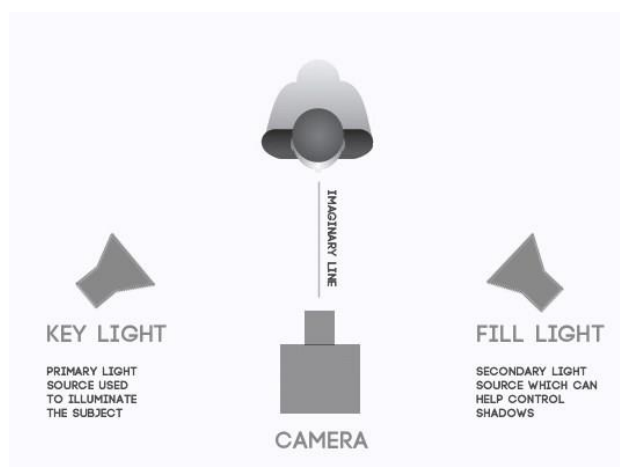
A diagram of how to set up two-point lighting (Camp, 2013)

## Putting It All Together: Editing Your Final Product

Once you have completed all of your filming, it is time to move onto editing. There are plenty of editing software programs to choose from, but the Oasis Center uses iMovie to put everything together. Not only is this program easy to use, even for beginners like myself, but it is also convenient if you are already filming on an iPad, as we were doing during this process. The program enabled us to edit our video directly on the iPad, where we had all of our videos stored, so we did not

have to worry about transferring files anywhere.

To edit in iMovie, simply select all of the clips you want to include to upload them to your project. Because you already created an outline, you should have an idea of what order everything should be in, so you can upload the videos in order to make it easier on yourself. When you have all of the videos uploaded together, you can play the video to watch them run together as one complete video.

Once you have all of your videos uploaded to your project, you can play around and edit the individual clips. There are three primary sections in iMovie. In the first section, shown below, you can see all of the videos that you have uploaded to this project under "My Media." This area also allows you to add different transitions between individual clips, upload audio files, and an overlay of text on the video. Adding text is especially helpful if you want to include the names of individuals, locations, or captions throughout the video. You can access this feature through the "Title" tab in this section, which gives you plenty of options to choose from for the formatting.
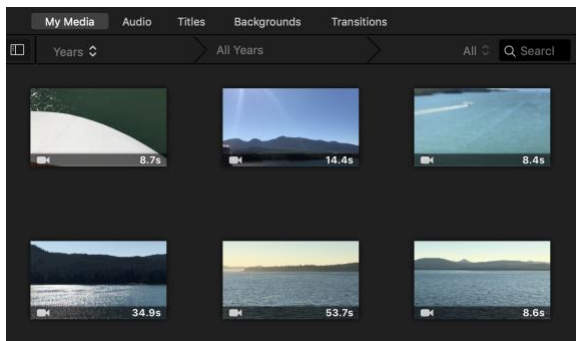

In the second section, you can watch your current video, including individual sections, to check any transitions or text that you have added. Additionally, the menu bar across the top offers more editing features, such as

adding filters, cropping the shot, and even stabilizing the video if it is shaky.
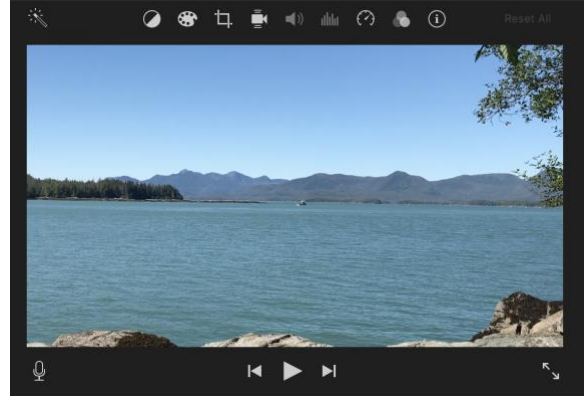
The third section below will show you the clips that you have added to your video in sequential order. Here, you can click and drag clips to change their position in the final project, detach the audio from the individual clips if you would like to delete it, and split the clip if you want to edit a part of the video out of your final project. Using the speed trimmer, you can also speed them up or slow them down by dragging the edges of the video clip (compress to speed it up or drag it outward to slow it down). Because you can edit each individual clip, you have a lot of control over the different sections or parts of your video so that you can get it exactly how you want.
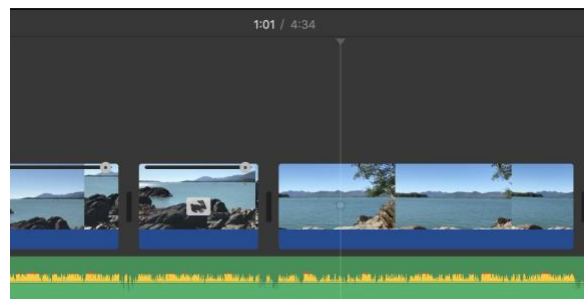
In terms of sound, you can also detach audio from each clip if you want background music instead of the sound from the original clip. Simply right click and then click on "detach audio," which will allow you to delete the

sound while keeping the video in your project. To add background audio, simply click on the audio tab to view and add free music selections. Additionally, you can upload your own audio if you want to add a narrative voice or your own music.

The amount of editing you will need to do will largely depend on your initial outline and the type of video that you chose. If you are doing an interview video, you will likely have little editing to complete; however, if you are making a program overview, you will have multiple clips and likely need a substantial amount of editing to make everything come together. Regardless of how much editing you will need, iMovie proved to be a user-friendly program that is straightforward and easy to learn.

Video content can be a powerful way to show your brand to the world. From the planning stages to the final edits, it is important to keep your original purpose in mind. Each project I worked on with the Oasis Center had different video types, angles, lighting, and outlines, but throughout all of our videos, we checked to ensure that we were conveying our original message along every step of the way. And while this experience taught me my original goal of learning how to create video content, I ultimately learned just how effective video content can be for nonprofits. As a low-cost and versatile method, video content may be the next best thing your nonprofit can do.