



10 Tips for a Recession-Proof Production

by Robin Chilton, Producer/Director

In these most challenging economic times, there is still a need to communicate. Our needs for progress only increase during times like these, and there is no better way to get your message out than through quality video works. With this in mind, we have generated 10 useful tips for producing quality video on a budget. This is a short list of methods derived from our own practical experience, and we truly hope that they help to facilitate your next production.

1) Do it Yourself?

With production technology becoming more and more accessible, the option to produce one's own video is becoming ever more enticing! Whether this is the most cost effective option however, is not always known until you've tried. Video Production is a skill that takes many years to master. If you are seeking professional results, it is very important to examine your skill set, your free time, and your options closely, and to make the wise choice to either hire your Producer or to be your Producer.

2) Keep it Simple

The most effective communicators do not always convey the most information. They convey only what is necessary to reach their objectives and their audience at the highest level possible. Simplicity can be your most effective and cost effective option at the same time. Less is often more, and if your working on a budget, put more money into less, and leave the rest for another day.

3) Know Your Limitations

By knowing and communicating your limitations, you empower your hires to maximize them. Is your budget abnormally low? Is the only location possible for Production near a loud freeway or in a flight path? Do you have to have a speaking dog in your video? What ever your limitations or requirements may be, think them out and make them known. A production crew can seldom "come back tomorrow" without having to charge you for today, so make sure your producer is well informed and has an opportunity to search out problems and solutions for him/herself. Your level of risk will be lower, and your process will be smoother.

4) Find "Jack" (or Jacqueline)

If you do decide to hire a producer and you're on a budget, the "Jack of All Trades" may be your best option. There are multiple skills required to produce quality video. Who will run camera? Who will record sound? How about the script, AV editing, project management, and make-up? As much as we recommend that each of these positions be filled by a skilled professional, this is often not possible due to budget. If your concept is kept simple, and you find a multi-skilled Videographer who can do it all, your audience may not know the difference!

5) Trust "Jack" (or Jacqueline)

Once you have found Jack, you must trust Jack. Video and Film Production is a highly integrated process. To make the most of your budget, it is important to a) choose the right professional from the beginning, b) communicate your goals and ideas effectively, and c) to release creative control to your Producer from that point forward. Don't forget to include meetings and creative sign-off along the way, but know that your best path to success lies in the hands of your Producer. For more on how to choose that individual, see #6 below.

6) Hire Experience

It is logical to assume that low-budget production calls for low-budget professionals, and based on your quality needs, this may sometimes be the case. Quite often however, experience saves. If veteran



Producer A costs \$150/hr and newbie Producer B costs \$100/hr, and Producer A is twice as efficient as Producer B, you save money! By selecting Producer A you also hire someone with deeper knowledge who not only knows what he/she needs to do, but also, what he/she doesn't need to do. This can minimize your scope and overall cost as well.

"Experience" however, does not mean the "best in the business." If you are working with a four-figure budget, find professionals most experienced at working in that price range. A big budget Hollywood Director may not be the best choice for a \$10,000 training video and vice versa. When searching for a Producer, seek references, research their reels, and be sure to ask what job they held in the productions they show you.

7) Stay Organized

Project Management or a lack thereof can make or break your budget. The more organized you are, the less time and money is spent on unnecessary hang-ups. Every budget production should factor in project management to maintain client correspondence, staffing, production schedule, etc. Managed risk is minimal risk, and project management keeps your investment in all the right places.

8) Use Existing Material

Producing quality video can be costly, and for good reason. Professional equipment is extremely expensive to own or rent. Videography is also a highly specialized craft, and professional rates reflect that. There often are however existing media assets like still photographs, and legacy film and video that can minimize the amount of new video needed. Take inventory of existing media within your organization. It could save you a lot of money and diversify your format at the same time.

9) Make the Minimum

There is a minimum production budget that can be considered reasonable to maintain a professional production standard. Gaining an understanding of how much production costs and why, can keep you in the know on what you can and can't expect for your dollar. Mutual respect between client and producer for one another's needs is important to project chemistry and the working relationship. One project often begets another, and establishing a good working relationship can only add to production efficiency on future projects.

10) Focus on Fundamentals

Solid fundamental production lays a solid foundation for your message. Your minimum production budget should allow for the fundamentals and build from there. Scriptwriting, principle photography, sound, and AV editing are the most basic fundamental areas in production that must work together to make your message shine. A beautiful picture with weak sound can have as little as 30% of the potential impact. Snappy sound and video editing only makes so much sense without a quality concept or production script. Your budget, whether low or high, should always focus proper attention to all of these fundamental areas to yield a consistent, quality outcome.

Peregrine Media Group is a Script to Screen Production Company on California's beautiful Central Coast. Please feel free to contact us or visit our website at www.peregrinemediagroup.com.

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