STRATEGIC COMMUNICATION MANAGEMENT

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BEST PRACTICES, CASE STUDIES AND STRATEGY FOR COMMUNICATORS

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How Deloitte built video into the corporate strategy

Reaching more employees and keeping costs down through new media

BY KAREN FRANKOLA

Video can be one of the best ways of connecting employees with business strategy, senior leaders and each other. And, according to Karen Frankola, it can save the organization a lot of money in the long run. Here, she explains why you may be missing out on a great opportunity to reach your workforce, particularly Gen Y, if you haven't yet embraced this channel.

Deloitte.

Deloitte Touche Tohmatsu (DTT) is a global network of independent member firms that provide audit, tax, consulting and financial advisory services. About 165,000 professionals work for member firms in 140 countries.

Deloitte member firms around the world hired 45,000 people in fiscal year 2008, many of them straight out of college. As one of the largest professional services organizations in the world, there's nothing more important to Deloitte than recruiting and retaining top talent. And since the average recruit and employee are under 30, our communication strategy can't ignore the enormous popularity of YouTube, which has revolutionized the experience of watching video.

Corporate video has traditionally been a highly produced, professional product, but the success of YouTube and other sites shows people are more interested in compelling content than a polished, expensive look. Audiences crave authenticity. They can tell when someone's reading a script or talking from the heart. Corporate communication isn't just about leaders speaking to employees; it's about giving employees their own voice.

Establishing a video department

In 2005, I was hired to launch a video department at Deloitte Touche Tohmatsu (DTT), the global network that connects 165,000 professionals. In the first week I was asked to arrange a shoot for a senior leader who couldn't make it to a conference. I soon discovered it would cost thousands of dollars to get his brief remarks videotaped. For someone who had spent most of her career working on a limited budget in television news, it seemed like there had to be a better way.

Now, three years later, we have a small in-house team that produced more than 50 videos in 2008 alone, creating a return on investment (ROI) of roughly 300 percent, excluding savings on travel. (The ROI was calculated by dividing the estimated value of videos if they were produced externally by our in-house costs, as described in "Focus on Behavior Change to Prove ROI", *Strategic Communication Management*, April/May 2008, Angela Sinickas).

Why video is a critical communication tool

It seems that the demand for web video is increasing. The number of videos viewed in the last year by Americans has increased by 34 percent, with 12.7 billion videos viewed in November 2008, versus 9.5 billion the previous November, according to the latest report from comScore Video Matrix. If you're not using video on your intranet, internet or on sites like YouTube, you're missing opportunities to reach people.

The tough economy might make you think producing videos is a luxury you can't afford, but video is becoming such a critical communication tool that having an in-house team could save you

significant money in the long run. And now that employees are used to watching video on their laptops, the look of corporate video is changing. Your people would probably rather watch a colleague in the trenches speaking from the heart than a slick three-camera shoot of a leader wearing make-up reading from a teleprompter. Plus, a video shown online doesn't need to have the same high production value of one shown on a large screen at a conference. This new style of corporate video makes it even easier and cheaper to "do it yourself".

Also, consider how online communication skills have evolved. Most of us don't pay a vendor to create and post written content for the web because we need those skills every day. It won't be long before corporate communication teams find video expertise just as critical. Even if you can't afford to hire additional people, some of your staff might already have the necessary skills. If not, you can create a video production team just by filling your next two vacancies with people who have video expertise. You can buy all the necessary equipment for less than US$20,000, which can easily be less than the cost of commissioning one video (see the sidebar on page 19).

Building an in-house video production team

While it's possible to produce a video with a "one-man band", using two people will greatly improve quality and provide a back-up. The videographer sets up the lights, operates the camera and runs audio. The producer concentrates on logistics and "talent" (the person appearing on camera), which may require conducting an interview or running a teleprompter (autocue). After the shoot, the producer will typically screen the footage, select sound bites and write a script that the videographer uses to edit the video.

As I had been given a small budget to launch my team, I hired a college graduate proficient in shooting and editing. For the first year and a half, I produced all our videos and then as our work expanded, I hired another graduate to produce. She also shoots and edits, but her focus is primarily on reporting and writing. Typically, it's hard to find someone who is equally skilled in the technical aspects of videography as well as reporting and writing.

Choosing the most effective format

When we launched our video department, most of our videos were simple "talking heads" (a person speaking on camera without supporting visuals). It's not the most exciting type of video but, for example, when partners in India watch Deloitte's global CEO speaking about the success of their firm, it has a real impact. The ROI on a shoot like this averages more than 1,200 percent if you factor in the travel savings of the leader. (An external crew in New York City would charge at least US$5,000 to shoot and edit this type of video.) And being able to save one of our top leaders a 15 hour plane ride is of course priceless.

"Talking head" videos are the easiest to produce. Typically, an internal communicator writes a script, we put it on a teleprompter, and the leader reads it in a couple of takes. It's important to write a short, conversational script or provide bullet points to allow improvisation. The total running time of remarks shouldn't exceed three minutes. In an era where sound bites on television news are less than 10 seconds, audiences just don't have a high tolerance for watching someone speak at length. Even if the speaker's content is strong, there's no feedback loop for the audience and a talking head is not that visually compelling.

Unless it's important for a group to hear from a particular leader such as your CEO, it's typically more engaging to create a video with multiple speakers. What would you typically find most interesting – a three minute scripted address from one person or a news story with short statements from a variety of people speaking candidly about their different viewpoints?

So we produce most of our videos by interviewing people rather than writing a script for them. Unless your talent is a senior leader experienced with reading from a teleprompter, it's hard to sound conversational. And an audience who spends its time away from work watching YouTube and blogging is likely to be turned off if the speaker's words don't ring true.

Deciding on video content

I've interviewed hundreds of people who work at Deloitte member firms around the world and have been able to get at least one or two good short sound bites from every single one. Just have ►

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KEY POINTS

- **Deloitte member firms want to attract and retain top talent. This means having a good understanding of how young people like to communicate.**
- **In 2005, Deloitte Touche Tohmatsu launched a video department and now there's an established team tasked with making corporate videos in-house.**
- **"Deloitte TV", a web portal available to all Deloitte member firms, can be accessed through the global intranet and quickly became one of its top 10 most visited sites.**
- **Videos of conference highlights can be posted online and are a good way of making more employees aware of the proceedings and increasing transparency.**

"IF YOU'RE NOT USING VIDEO ON YOUR INTRANET, INTERNET OR ON SITES LIKE YOUTUBE, YOU'RE MISSING OPPORTUNITIES TO REACH PEOPLE"

a conversation with your subject and tell them to ignore the camera. Since our organization is global, some speakers are nervous about being interviewed in English. If they really aren't confident, I'll ask questions in English and allow them to respond in their native language. We use English subtitles for the finished video.

The importance of diversity is another reason for using multiple speakers. We don't want to just feature the same senior leaders over and over again. For example, once I was asked to create a video on the importance of talent, featuring three senior leaders, all of them who were middle-aged and male. Instead we interviewed men and women from a variety of job levels, ages and countries to attract potential recruits.

Creating a video with a variety of speakers is more time-consuming than simply shooting one person in front of a teleprompter, especially if we add supporting visuals, known as b-roll. For example, producing a video on the importance of our brand featuring speakers from all over the world took us several months.

One of our main challenges is interviewing people outside New York. One cost-effective way of overcoming this involves our crew attending a global conference and over several days interviewing dozens of people, gathering material for many different videos. (We'll also shoot major sights and street scenes. Shooting your own b-roll means you own the rights and can use the video without any restriction.)

Editing videos

Most people don't realize editing takes much longer than the actual shoot. Typically, videotaping a single speaker takes an hour for set-up and a half hour for the interview or reading the teleprompter. At a busy conference, we can interview someone in less than two minutes, just like a TV reporter. But once the interviews are completed, the real work starts. Someone has to review the interviews (you can have a service transcribe them but a producer still needs to look at the actual videotape because the way something is said is almost as important as the content). Then the producer writes a script and the editor begins the lengthy process of putting together the speaker sound bites, narration, music, video and supporting graphics. A complex two minute video can sometimes take 100 hours to edit.

On the other hand, we also frequently produce a highlights video for major conferences in as little as one day. Many large conferences use several cameras to provide a variety of views to attendees. It doesn't cost much more to record the camera output. Then you can easily create a highlights video made of speaker sound bites and interviews with attendees. You can show the video to close the conference on a high note and also post it online for people who couldn't attend. Creating conference highlights videos is a powerful way to increase transparency.

Making video part of your online strategy

Just three years ago, most of the internal videos we made were for conferences, but we can reach a bigger audience online, helping to support critical initiatives. To make it easy to find and use our videos, we created Deloitte TV, a web portal available to all Deloitte member firms through our global intranet. Employees and partners can

PRODUCING ENGAGING VIDEOS

HAVE ONE BIG IDEA
If you need to get across complicated information, use another vehicle. You've done your job if viewers come away with one main idea such as, "This new audit system is going to make my job a lot easier."

THINK OF YOUR AUDIENCE
Don't focus on what someone wants to say in a video, but what your audience might want or need to hear.

TELL A STORY
Video is linear so it should have a beginning, middle and end.

MAKE IT AUTHENTIC
You want sound bites that provide perspective and emotion, not a dry recitation of facts.

KEEP VIDEOS SHORT
Online videos should average one minute (research shows most people tune out after that). A video with multiple speakers and lots of visuals can run longer than a simple talking head.

GET METRICS
For online videos, find out when viewers stop watching. For example, if people are only sitting through 30 seconds of a four-minute video, you know your videos are too long for your audience. For conferences, ask for evaluations and keep track of requests.

watch videos live, download high resolution versions to play at conferences, or even download a version for their iPod. This also adds value by maximizing the number of times a video is played around the world. Some of our member firms translate our English language videos and use our raw files to create videos in their native languages. We also post videos produced by member firms, giving them a global audience. Deloitte TV immediately became one of top 10 most visited sites on the global intranet and won a 2007 International Business Award.

A growing demand for videos means our small team can't produce every video. So we offer advice on what types of videos are most successful (see the sidebar on page 18) and provide consulting that can save money even if an outside team is used. There are also major legal issues around producing videos (music copyright, for example) and having an in-house team can protect you by offering specific advice. We also provide a valuable service by maintaining a centralized tape library of both raw and finished videos.

Going viral

Just a few years ago, the only place an external audience could watch your videos was on your internet site. But with YouTube and social networking sites like Facebook, users can share your video and make it "go viral".

For example, tens of thousands of YouTube users viewed videos created by employees of the Deloitte US firms who answered the question, "What's Your Deloitte?" for a competition called the "Deloitte Film Festival". The top videos were also shown at recruiting events. (See the further resource box, right, for more information.)

Our communication team also created its own YouTube channel, primarily targeting potential recruits. To promote the DTT 2008 Annual Review, we used a sketch artist to create a video that expressed our "Always moving" theme in simple images. The video has no narration or sound bites and so can be used in every country and for situations where audio isn't desired. We also profiled high performers around the world by asking their colleagues to videotape them with a home camcorder instead of hiring professional crews. The cost of the video was almost nothing and the style was designed to appeal to young people looking at Deloitte as a potential employer.

The trend toward user-generated content may offer our in-house video team some competition. But we'll still need communicators who know what makes a great video and can help get that content online. Our team looks forward to working with colleagues around the world as they turn the cameras on themselves. scm

WHAT EQUIPMENT DO YOU NEED?

These days, equipment is probably the most inexpensive part of creating video. You can buy the basics for roughly US$12,000. At minimum, you'll need:

- **Mini-DV camcorder - $4,000 – If you're a global organization, choose a camera that shoots in both PAL and NTSC, the two most commonly used formats. You don't need a more expensive Beta or HD camera unless most of your videos will be shown on a very large screen at a conference.**
- **Stand lights and a small light for the camera – US$1,200**
- **Two quality wireless microphones – $500**
- **Editing station – $1,800-3000**

For maximum power and render speeds, a desktop computer is preferable. But if you need portability, a laptop will suffice if you have plenty of disk space and memory. Macintosh operating systems and graphics cards are quicker and more stable.

- **Editing software -– $2,000 Apple Final Cut Pro Studio 2 (Mac) or Adobe Premiere 2.0 (PC).**
- **Camera tripod $500**
- **VTR Deck – $1,300**

One that plays both mini-DV and DV-cam is helpful as conferences are frequently recorded in DV-cam

- **Teleprompter (autocue) – US$500-2000.**

There's a wide range of price and capability from a small on-camera teleprompter operated by a connected laptop or a stand-alone prompter with advanced features.

N.B. All costs estimated as of December 2008 for purchase in United States with US dollars.