

A grid of nine blank computer monitors is mounted on a dark, textured wall. The monitors are arranged in three rows and three columns. The text "BROADCAST VIEW" is overlaid in large, bold, red, sans-serif capital letters across the center of the image. The word "BROADCAST" is on the top line, and "VIEW" is on the line below it. The monitors are all turned off, showing a dark screen. Some cables are visible at the bottom of the monitors.

BROADCAST VIEW



Fuzzy animals or cute babies don't have to be the stars of your association's videos to guarantee success. What works best, according to organizations that have already let the cameras roll, is making a commitment to incorporating video into your overall content mix and putting a solid strategy behind it.

BY GAYLE BENNETT

DWIGHT ESCHLIMAN/GETTY IMAGES

IN

early 2014, staff at the Aircraft Owners and Pilots Association began hearing some troubling news involving its members: U.S. Customs and Border Protection agents were stopping general aviation pilots well away from the borders and conducting what were perceived to be warrantless searches.

“In some cases, [CBP agents] followed them using helicopters and other airplanes, and once they landed, drew weapons on innocent pilots because they had some reason to suspect them,” says Thomas Haines, editor-in-chief and senior vice president of media for AOPA. “But there was no reason for it.”

Haines and his staff of editors and videographers began interviewing affected pilots and ran the segments on the association’s weekly half-hour video program, *AOPA Live This Week*. “It’s much more compelling when these people tell their own story about what it’s like to look down the barrel of a gun, with a guy dressed in black with a dog and helicopters swooping in,” he says.

Not only did AOPA members become energized about stopping the searches, but members of Congress also took notice, Haines says, which “opened the door for us to have a very strong conversation with the CBP commissioner.” The searches have since stopped.

This situation and others like it are precisely why AOPA has invested as much as it has in video. It puts a face on important issues and motivates members to act in a way that a magazine article or blog post often can’t.

While it may seem easy enough to quickly shoot some video and post it to an online channel, creating truly engaging, successful video content requires strategy and commitment. The associations that are effectively using video to engage members are investing thought, time, and, in many cases, money—and that strategic investment is paying off in a multitude of ways.

Engagement and Education

Video, when used well, is a top-notch member engagement tool. Take the Entomological Society of America’s “YouTube Your Entomology” contest, which ESA started at the behest of society’s president in 2009. At this point, it was clear that YouTube was a force to be reckoned with—and taken advantage of—and the contest would give members the opportunity to showcase their talents and creativity through video. The contest was an immediate success, says Richard Levine, ESA’s communications program manager. (*The New York Times* even took notice of the contest in 2012 with an article on that year’s winners.)

Now in its sixth year, the contest asks members to submit videos in different categories—research, teaching, extension, and the general-interest open category. Winners in each category receive a cash prize. All videos are displayed on the ESA YouTube channel, and selected winning entries are shown at the opening session of the ESA Annual Meeting. “For some [entrants], it is a creative outlet, and you can see they are having fun,” Levine says. “For others, especially people involved in extension activities, where their jobs involve educating farmers, [the videos] provide an opportunity to expand their audiences.”

Associations certainly don’t need to hire a full-time videographer to make quality video, but professional expertise will likely become necessary at some point.



Video is also a great education tool, which is why YouTube is loaded with tutorials on everything from changing a flat tire to applying eye shadow. The California District Attorneys Association is taking this approach to video in the webinars and trainings it offers its members.

“About 20 percent of the seminars will have some sort of video component—either something we’ve developed or a snippet from a webinar on a similar topic that we’ll show in class,” says Greg Wilson, CDAA’s director of finance. Class topics that lend themselves particularly well to video include jury selection, cross-examination, and opening and closing arguments.

IN-HOUSE STUDIO BASICS

Creating an in-house video studio is an investment, but one that will likely last for years. And it doesn't have to break the bank. For \$10,000, the California District Attorneys Association turned an office storage room into its studio by painting one wall green (for a green screen) and installing lights, a soundboard, and a computer.

According to Personify Vice President of Marketing Paul Gannon, who heads the company's weekly video show, here's what you'll need to build a basic studio that can produce broadcast-quality video (all prices are approximate).—G.B.



Video Switcher or Mixer (\$5,000)

A switcher allows you to move between different cameras, titles, graphics, and video clips. With a switcher you can record your show or stream it live on the internet.



Cameras (\$1,500 each)

Multiple camera angles are probably the best way to improve the visual quality of your broadcast or recording. Start with two cameras and work your way up.



Microphones (\$100–\$350 each)

Each person appearing in a video segment will need a microphone. Wired, handheld microphones can be purchased for less than \$100, but a wireless lavalier microphone is a good investment.



Lights (\$200 each)

Plan on purchasing an LED key light and a fill light.

Audio Mixer (\$100)

You'll need to mix your different audio feeds in the audio mixer before sending it to the video mixer.



Accessories (\$500–\$1,000)

You'll need a tripod for each camera, a stand for each light, and a handful of different cords and other accessories.



Video Hosting (\$200 per year)

YouTube is free, but a video-hosting platform, such as Vimeo, provides better integration with your website and allows you to reap the benefits of improved SEO.

Wilson also found that video has helped facilitate alliances with other associations. In one of its first major uses of video, CDAA teamed up with the California Cattlemen's Association to produce a PSA about cattle rustling (stealing livestock), which was targeted to state district attorneys and the general public. CDAA is also working with California Crime Victims Assistance Association to create a series of PSAs on stalking and strangulation in underserved populations to educate prosecuting attorneys, victim and witness advocates, and victim services community-based organizations. Some of these videos are shown at trainings CDAA conducts with CCVAA, and all

are available to prosecutorial offices throughout the state.

Telling member stories to the outside community is one of the main reasons the National Beer Wholesalers Association invested in video. NBWA began shooting video to produce a mini-newscast to run during its convention, and it also produces short clips on relevant topics throughout the year. "The value of the industry can really come to life through the storytelling of the really great people who make up the industry," says Rebecca Spicer, NBWA's senior vice president of public affairs and communications.

For example, a few years ago, there was a potential defect with some Dos

Equis bottles that were going to hit the consumer market close to Cinco de Mayo, a big day for the brand. Heineken USA, which imports Dos Equis, reached out to the distributors, who were able to quickly identify the suspected problem bottles and ensure they didn't reach the marketplace. NBWA thought a professionally produced video where the leaders of Heineken USA could talk about the incident and the effectiveness of the distribution system would serve as a reminder to NBWA members about the value of the system.

Like AOPA, NBWA also uses video to help members become stronger industry advocates. "We want them to be able to walk into a Capitol Hill

“It might be that they can tell the story through words. Or maybe they can tell the story through a 90-second or two-minute video.”

—Rebecca Spicer



meeting and be able to articulate what their business does, what they are for, and what they support,” Spicer says. “It might be that they can tell the story through words. Or maybe they can tell the story through a 90-second or two-minute video.”

What You Need to Succeed

The primary ingredient for video success is commitment, says Paul Gannon, vice president of marketing at Personify, an association membership management software provider. Gannon leads Personify’s video marketing efforts, which include a weekly show on association technology.

“It really doesn’t matter what that commitment is as long as you make it,” Gannon says. “Otherwise, it’s just a one-off, ‘Hey, let’s do a video,’ and it never works. It’s like going to Vegas with the sole purpose of putting a nickel in a slot machine and hitting the lottery.”

AOPA’s hefty investment in video—three full-time videographers and other staff helping out—has been an evolution. The association first ventured into video in 2005 to provide visuals to accompany magazine articles. AOPA had already been doing air-to-air missions to shoot still photography, so it wasn’t difficult to equip the photographers with video cameras as well. As the videos became more sophisticated, it made sense to figure

out how to package them to increase viewership. That’s how *AOPA Live This Week* was born.

Where there’s a commitment of time, there generally follows at least some commitment of money. Through the AOPA Foundation, a few members have donated funding that has allowed AOPA to create a sophisticated in-house studio with custom sets. CDAA and Personify also have in-house studios.

In addition to time and money, associations that want to do video well need a distribution strategy. Many create a YouTube channel and use social media, newsletters, and other communication vehicles to distribute video links. That’s what NBWA does, but Spicer also uses the association’s annual convention as another distribution channel.

Two years ago, Spicer hired a former ABC News crew to create mini newscasts reporting on each of the three days of the conference. The newscasts, which included onsite interviews and previously shot pieces, ran on the hotel’s in-house channel, before general sessions, and wherever else it made sense.

“We used some of the videos to help tell the story about the economic, commercial, or regulatory value that distributors deliver to their communities,” Spicer says. “We also used them to highlight some of the outstanding people in our industry, whether the

life service award recipients or industry award recipients, and bring those awards to life.” It was such a success that Spicer continues to use the same crew at the annual convention.

AOPA’s weekly show has its own newsletter that goes to 60,000 subscribers on Saturday mornings, though the show posts on Thursday evenings. “We get a lot of feedback where people say, ‘That’s what I do on Saturday mornings. I sit back with my cup of coffee and watch the show,’” Haines says.

Associations certainly don’t need to hire a full-time videographer to make quality video, but professional expertise will likely become necessary at some point. ESA’s Levine has been able to improve his own skills by taking a video-editing class and purchasing Adobe Premier video-editing software. Levine created a spoof of the Dos Equis “Most Interesting Man in the World” commercials as a promo for ESA’s annual meeting. “Insects fly into his aspirator voluntarily, just out of curiosity,” says ESA’s Most Interesting Entomologist.

“I had the idea really quick, and I shot it in a local park about 300 yards from my house,” Levine says. It’s been a popular and effective video, but ESA also commissions a professional video company to shoot promotional videos for meetings.

At Wilson’s previous association job, the leadership delegated video production to members, which didn’t work well. From this he learned that if an association wants to do video, it needs to have someone on staff with that skill set. So, when the person running CDAA’s webinars left, he hired a replacement who had a degree in film.

As with any communication medium, the focus should always be on its strategic value to the association.

“People get wrapped around the axle trying to go viral,” Gannon says. “We have 1,500 views on that video! Who cares? What did they do with that video, with that information?”

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