

Moving pictures

How to create emotional connections with corporate video

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Media Public Relations



The most powerful corporate videos I've made, and have seen others make, have created an emotional reaction. They make a connection to the viewer, even though there is a business purpose behind it.

Anyone can make a video where a voiceover tells us dozens of talking points and factoids about the company or product, but that's not as interesting as creating personal connections through storytelling. Leave the checklists for the PowerPoints and focus your videos on emotion. The key is to engage the viewers by speaking to their heart.

(Photo by [Jakob Owens](#) on [Unsplash](#))

I've travelled with film crews internationally and in the United States, but you don't need a big budget to make engaging video. Something as simple as a video shot and edited on an iPhone can pull people in emotionally. Here are some examples:

- An insurance company I was working with had a volunteerism partnership with the [U.S. National Parks Service](#). This video could easily have just become a series of talking points from leaders, but I knew there was something more. The leaders had a place, but this partnership was more about personal stories. How did people feel when they were volunteering? Why did they volunteer when they could be doing something else? The answers were surprising and didn't always fit neatly into the pre-established framework, but they were genuine. They were important, they were enlightening, and they had to be included. They were the true story.
- Another example is a video I created about [outstanding claims service](#). I never mentioned the obvious talking points about customer satisfaction ratings or claims rankings. I let the people tell the story, and they were powerful. What made them genuine is that I never spiked the punch. That is to say, I never infused my interview subjects with corporate lingo. You may think finding people like this is hard. It isn't. When people have had outstanding service or have gone through a powerful experience, many of them can't wait to share their stories. This is even true when telling the [histories of companies](#). People make them successful. Focus on the people.
- Even small events can produce powerful results. Recently, I did a video for a national health insurance company about an employee event where they brought in a bus with "pods" inside where people could [meditate for a short time](#). I let the interviews do the talking. I didn't need a voiceover talking about company values. The participants did it for me by sharing their experiences. I also allowed myself to get a bit creative in my approach, in terms of editing and music (both of these things can be powerful allies to your story). It was shot and edited entirely on an iPhone and posted on Twitter and the company's internal website. Employees were posting so many positive responses internally, that the employee comment section had to be turned off by the administrator for fear of overload. Using emotion and letting people tell your stories works!

Again, the most successful corporate videos create an emotional connection. That emotional connection makes people care. If people care they are more likely to be moved toward action. Humans are emotional creatures. Keeping our emotions in check can certainly help during many circumstances in the business world.

However, showing emotion in the right way can inspire, particularly with video. The emotion must be genuine or the viewers' doubting instincts can take over and reject the message as being insincere and having impure motives. This is true whether you are creating corporate video content for external or internal use. Also, don't be afraid to let images do some of the talking for you. Don't tell me something is great, show me. Seeing a sunset is always more engaging than having it described.

Following some simple tips can help you establish a framework for emotive and engaging storytelling through video:

- **Pick the right subject matter** – Emotion can be brought to just about any subject, but if engagement through emotion is your goal, try to focus on topics where you know there will be a nice story with a human touch. Also remember that sometimes an employee's personal story outside of work can speak volumes about the character of the people that work at your company. This can help with recruitment and indirectly reflect positively on the services or products you provide. Think outside the usual idea box.
- **Have a focus** – Your video should have a main takeaway or a call to action, even if you are letting your subjects tell the story for you. Don't try to jam in a bunch of talking points. If the essence of your focus is shared through emotion, even slightly obliquely, viewers will be engaged.
- **Find inspiring and emotional people (good storytellers)** – Your company is likely full of stakeholders, leaders, and employee programs that can be mined for personal stories and engaged workers. Finding them in a large company can take work, so ask those internally who have the most contact with customers and employees for leads and ideas. Also ask those in charge of employee programs about what they are doing and who they are doing it with. Managers can help you find people on their teams with personality. If you work at a small company, it may be easier to find engaged and emotional workers. But remember, just because someone is a leader (or a founder) they may not be engaging. With video, personality and sincerity, not rank, wins.
- **Ask the right questions** – This can take practice, but asking a few easy questions can get you on the right path. Ask about how people feel. Ask about what the subject matter means to them, whether it's a service, product, or activity. What inspires them? What do they tell others about their work? Try to avoid the typical content traps (see below).
- **Avoid clichés** – There are fewer things more disingenuous than clichés when telling a story. Some may seem to fit best into your storyline, but look for alternate ways to have them presented. For example, don't say, "It's in our company DNA." It's overused, and it's much more engaging to have an employee or customer say they feel the company lives up to its values by the way it handles its service, products, and customers. Another example is diversity. Being diverse is great for business, but you don't necessarily have to say it. Show it by the interviews and the accompanying video you create.

A final thought is about length. There is no absolute answer. Typically, videos for social media should be kept relatively short (00:30 – 1:00), while internal videos or those used in other ways can be a bit longer. That said, I believe a good story should always win out. It should be given time to breathe, instead of making your edit choices focused solely on length. But, it's a judgement call.

To give yourself the highest chance of success and engagement, I suggest sticking to your main message, letting your interview subjects tell the story, don't jam in a bunch of talking points, and stay genuine and sincere. In the end, the viewer is the final judge. Take them on an emotional journey. We all want our video content to be effective, but let's aim higher. Let's also have it be loved.



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Matt Skryja is a public relations and media relations expert with a specialty in video communications. Currently, he is in charge of public and media relations and video communications for a national health insurance company, with a focus on the San Francisco market. Previously, Matt ran the public relations department for a national auto and home insurance company. He then went on to form a multimedia communications department at the company. Matt also runs his own communications consulting firm, serving national and international clients. Previously, he was in charge of public and media relations at an internationally acclaimed auto racing venue. Matt has won numerous awards for his internal and external communications work, including the Bronze Anvil Award of Commendation from the Public Relations Society of America for a video communications campaign he spearheaded and led. Matt is also a former Emmy award-winning television journalist, having worked in several television markets in the United States, and has been honored by the Associated Press and the Radio and Television News Directors' Association for his work. Previously, he was a governor on the board of the National Academy of Television Arts and Sciences, San Francisco Chapter, and he remains active with the organization.

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