

Four Important Keys to Successful Fundraising Videos

BY PHIL COOKE

Hundreds of non-profit organizations and religious ministries use fundraising videos to tell their story. It's a powerful medium, and along with other projects, our team at Cooke Pictures produces fundraising and donor development videos for some of the largest non-profits and ministries in the country. After years of producing these around the world, we've discovered some important keys to creating an impact with the audience. The next time your organization considers a promotional or donor video for your website or to show at a live event, here's some important principles to remember:

1. Keep it short.

Some studies indicate as many as 66% of viewers stop watching a video after the 2 minute mark. For a live presentation you have a captive audience, but even then I rarely produce anything longer than 4-6 minutes. Leave the audience wanting more. As a famous opera singer once said, "You need to stop singing before the audience has stopped listening."

2. A successful video isn't about facts, it's about emotion.

The audience won't be moved by the fact that last year you served 10,000 meals, housed 500 homeless people, or built a medical clinic in the Congo. They want to see the lives changed because of what you did. Stop using statistics with fancy graphics, and start telling stories. Never forget that video is about emotion, and if you need to share facts, then print them on a brochure or put them on your website.

3. Don't create a music video.

I don't care how much that worship song by *Chris Tomlin* means to you, illustrating a song with shots of your work doesn't impress anybody. Interview people and let them tell the story, or have a narrator do it. Music videos rarely lend themselves to sharing your vision, showing the results, and calling people to action.

4. Do it well.

Your brother-in-law may have a home video camera, but trust me – he's not going to show the emotion, the drama, or the story an experienced professional will capture. The point of a donor development video is to call the viewer to action, so get the kind of advice you need to do it well. I can't stress enough the potential of a compelling video presentation, so don't leave it to chance. Be creative, be contemporary, and most of all, be strategic.

Potential donors want to hear your story, and in today's visual culture, showing a powerful video is an incredible tool. ■