



Making the CEO and Other VIPs (Like You) Look At Ease On Camera

If you've been asked to appear on-camera for your company's corporate, training, or sales & marketing video, there's no need to panic. Being recorded on video tape doesn't have to be a headache, it can be fun, exciting and rewarding.

Before the director shouts, "action," there are several things you should know. Actually, let's start with the word "action." It's part of a three command series that starts with "Roll tape" which means that the camera person starts recording. The next word is "Speed" which signifies that five seconds has passed and the video recording device is recording. Four to five seconds used to be needed prior to the scene footage for editing machines to get up to proper speed, but now it's just to make sure everything is running correctly. "Action" comes last to signify when the scene begins, but many video production people don't even use the word.

Some video directors prefer to say "We're rolling" which means the machine is recording. Then there is a five second countdown, "Five, four, three. . ." The "two" and the "one" are silent. After the count of "one" the director will point at the talent to let them know they can begin speaking. The silent commands make it easier to edit, soundwise, if the talent jumps the gun and begins too quickly. "We're still rolling" tells everyone that recording is continuing. If you hear this it means that you can make comments or continue answering an interview question. Editing later will take care of transitions.

Before the video taping session there are a few things you should know. Here's some information about the recording session:

A casual atmosphere.

Video production people dress far more casually than "normal" business people. Even the director may be wearing jeans. Production people know that they each may have to carry equipment, get down on the floor to tape down cables, or scale a ladder to place equipment or get a particular shot. Their dress is part of their casual uniform. Also, don't be alarmed even though they exhibit a casual manner. They mean business. Each member of the crew knows their job as well as most other jobs on the shoot. The camera person you see on your production may actually be a producer or director on other presentations.

Allow time.

Allow time for the director to get your best efforts down on tape. If you only schedule thirty minutes for recording a five minute scene, you may only get one or two takes from which the final footage will be chosen. Industrial/business video directors know that your time is valuable and they'll generally take what they can get out of your busy schedule. Clear your calendar as much as you can, the more time you allow for the presentation, however, the better you may come across on-camera. Set aside an hour or two for a good quality recording session. Allowing plenty of time for a shoot reduces tension and helps everyone do their job. If you finish sooner, then things worked out perfectly.

Interview questions.

If you're being interviewed for your own production, you probably won't be given the questions first. This produces a more normal and unrehearsed response on-camera. It also saves you from having to memorize lines. Too much preparation can result in a stilted interview. A good director will let you know the general field of questions, but not the actual questions themselves. This allows you to be prepared, at ease, and attentive.

Particular points you want to cover in an interview.

If you have something you want the director to cover in the interview, either send a memo prior to the shoot, or suggest it well before the actual recording. Your points will probably fit in logically with the prepared questions. By letting the director know of your needs, it can be used as an integral part of the session and not like something has been added on.

Watching yourself on-camera.

Most directors recommend that you don't see footage of yourself during the recording session. That makes many people self-conscious. They worry about how they look and how they sound. Those worries are handled by the director and the crew. Trust that you'll look and sound good. After the session, you can look at yourself.

Adding on that one more thing.

At the end of the interview, the director may ask you if you have anything else you would like to say. This is your final chance to bring out a point that needs to be discussed on-camera.

Making mistakes.

Don't worry about making mistakes on-camera. Tape is cheap and video footage is easily erased. You're in control. If you or your staff recognize a gaff, ask to re-do your taped response right then. If you continue, the gaff may be forgotten until it shows up in the edited master. You always have the right to review the recorded scene or interview. You also should be able to review a rough edit for your approval.

One of the main things to remember is that you are in the hands of skilled video professionals. Their jobs are to make you look good. Relax and let them.

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