



Partners, costs and formats – essential for a successful film

The production of a film or video goes hand in hand with a lot of decisions to be made. Should you do it yourself or look for a partner? Is the film for Internet or for television? How professional should it look? The following Tip Sheet tries to give some advice to science communicators, as well as scientists, who plan to get into filming.

Partners

Usually you need professional help to make a film. That's especially true for an institutional image film, but nearly anyone wishing to make films and videos can profit from the experience of professional partners, who are specialized in filming science and know the subject. Ultimately, the decision about partners will be made based on the projected costs and the money available, as well as the standards of the film desired. Do you want animation, subtitles, a professional speaker? In some cases, it is not necessary to hire a company to produce the entire film; it may be enough simply to have someone experienced giving advice.

If you plan to make a film yourself, you need suitable cameras, equipment for sound and light, and editing software. In addition, you must ensure that you have the necessary journalistic and technical resources. Usually the standards desired and the necessary investment are quite high –in most cases, they are even greater than hiring a company to do the job.

Costs

The costs for a film made by a company can vary greatly. They depend on the length and the production features. Experience in Germany shows that a one-minute Internet film might cost about 400 Euro; a three-minute film with animation and other additional features, between 3000 and 6000 Euro.

If you're making the film yourself, the costs vary according to the standard of the equipment used. Free editing software is available, but keep in mind that making a good product can take lots of time, because you have to get accustomed to the software.

If you use material that you didn't shoot yourself, keep in mind the copyright and possible costs for that.

Formats

A further question concerns the film format. TV stations nowadays normally use HDTV material (16:9).

If you produce a DVD you should take into account that there are different standards for different continents. PAL is the standard for Europe, NTSC for North America, some parts of South America and East Asia – this means making a separate DVD for every format.

For making films for the Internet you should address the format issue early, since the rendering process is expensive and takes time. Usual formats are .mpg4 (Streaming and Flash), .mov (Quicktime), .avi (a Windows container format) and .flv (Adobe).

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For further information about science communication, the “Handbuch für Wissenschaftskommunikation” (in German) of the Raabe Verlag is recommended. For further information see

www.wissenschaft-kommunizieren.de