

Prevention Brief

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Video and Digital Storytelling

By Beth Berk

Many Safe and Drug-Free Schools and Communities (SDFSC) grantees are interested in using digital stories or videos to capture the heart of their programs, to market their success stories, or to communicate with funders and community members. But before venturing into digital stories, videos or any new media, it is important to understand both the benefits and pitfalls that come with putting a story on video. This Prevention Brief provides guidelines and considerations for SDFSC grantees, specific to digital storytelling and video.

The benefits of using video and digital media to get your prevention message out

The use of all kinds of digital material is central to many teenagers' lives. This is a medium in which they feel comfortable, and which is already being used by the alcohol industry and drug-use proponents.

According to the Pew Study on Teens and Social Media, some 93 percent of teens use the internet, and more of them than ever are treating it as a venue for social interaction – a place where they can share creations, tell stories, and interact with others.¹ About 57 percent of online teens say that they watch videos on video sharing sites such as YouTube. Older online teens, especially older online boys (15-17), are more likely to report watching videos on video sharing sites when compared with younger teens. The report concludes that digital images— stills and videos— have a big role in teen life.



Research compiled for the Office of National Drug Control Policy's "Drug Prevention and Social Marketing Brief," maintains that teens are huge media consumers, spending an average of 72 hours a week using electronic media such as TV, internet, movies, and music.ⁱⁱ The amount of time teens spend with media on an average week far outweighs time spent in school or time talking with parents, and media messages affect youths' knowledge, attitudes, and behaviors, whether that relates to purchasing decisions or health behaviors. Although the Brief specifically looked at media *campaigns* to combat drug and alcohol use and abuse, the

findings also give insight into how teens receive drug and alcohol messages in the video/digital media realm. For example:

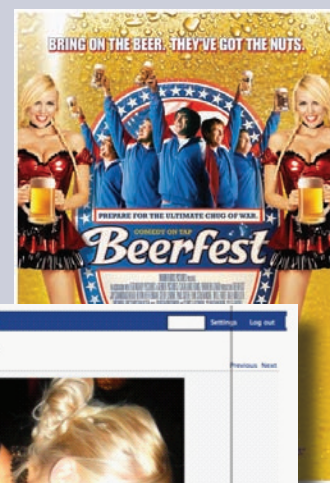
- Approximately 4.5 million teens view pro-drug websites annually, and teens that view pro-drug websites are more likely to report other high-risk characteristics such as having friends that use drugs, previously using inhalants, stronger intentions to use marijuana, and lack of parental monitoring of activities.
- Video and music go hand-in-hand, with up to 80 percent of popular rap songs containing at least one reference to illicit drugs, particularly marijuana and stimulants exposure is significant.

"Sexy thang on my arm, cup of drank in my palm ... Sippin' on some siz-erp." –From Three 6 Mafia rap song "Sippin' on Some Syrup." The song glamorizes cough syrup abuse as well as cocaine and marijuana, and exemplifies rap's new attitude toward drug use, according to Denise Herd, associate dean for student affairs at the UC Berkeley School of Public Health.

- Two out of five teen characters in the top grossing films from 1999-2001 drank alcohol, and one out of seven used illegal drugs. No character refused offers to drink or use drugs, and the negative consequences of drug use were rarely illustrated. Female characters were more likely than male to use multiple drugs. The author suggests that messages about alcohol and drugs in film may model unhealthy behavior to youth.

What does the research say about efficacy for the various uses of video?

"Unfortunately, I don't know of any specific research that's been done on the effectiveness of video/digital storytelling as a prevention tool," says Bernard Robin, PhD, Associate Professor of Instructional Technology at the University of Houston. Since 2005, educators and graduate students at the University of Houston's





Instructional Technology Program have been conducting a series of research projects to evaluate the effectiveness of Digital Storytelling.ⁱⁱⁱ The research has focused on the medium as an educational tool. Another digital storytelling expert agrees. Leslie Rule, the developer of digital storytelling workshops at San Francisco public broadcasting station KQED, says there are few resources available to study the medium's efficacy. "It's hard with digital stories to quantify anything," Rule says. "Doing that kind of research takes a lot of time. Right now everything is anecdotal."

Because the field of digital storytelling is in its early stages—it began in the 1990's—experts agree there is an increased need for research on its efficacy on many levels. Helen Barrett, PhD, a well-known e-portfolio and digital storytelling expert, has proposed a research design to collect data about digital storytelling— but this, too, focuses on educational uses. In part, Barrett suggests that if digital storytelling is to become an

accepted practice in today's schools, it will be necessary to collect data about its impact on student learning, motivation and engagement as well as teaching practices and strategies.^{iv} She also mentions specific researchers who are currently studying the effectiveness of digital storytelling as a learning strategy:

The research is just being conducted. Caleb Paull completed a doctoral dissertation in 2002 entitled, *Self-Perceptions and Social Connections: Empowerment through Digital Storytelling in Adult Education*.^v His findings "focus on the ways in which creating digital stories seem to help create a sense of personal and social agency and empowerment in the students, a space for reevaluation and moving forward." Teacher Tom Banaszewski has begun a Master's Thesis Project on Digital Storytelling. His blogs document his research process.^{vi}

In a Master's Thesis from the University of California, Davis, graduate student Whitney Wilcox conducted research that appears to be on the cutting edge of the exploration of digital storytelling and its effect in a community setting.^{vii} The purpose of this research was to explore how participants in three digital storytelling projects in Northern California used and understood digital stories as part of community-based projects. Wilcox says participants anticipated positive outcomes, but that those outcomes were not always realized. She cautions that organizations interested in pursuing video projects should monitor participants' expectations. Wilcox also suggests that future investigations exploring empowerment outcomes in these kinds of efforts could draw from The Johns Hopkins University's Center for Communication's metrics to evaluate the process and outcomes of communications activities focused on social change. Their tool includes a set of qualitative and quantitative data collection methods that look at outcomes characteristic of empowerment, including leadership, participation, collective self-efficacy, and a sense of ownership.^{viii}

Definitions:

Video – a generic term for a full-length movie or a short movie clip. Videos usually capture moving images. In fact, they are really a series of still images that change so fast, it appears the image is moving. The term video can refer to analog video tape (VHS), a digital format such as a DVD, or to a computer file (WMV, MPEG, etc.).

Digital Storytelling – the practice of using computer-based tools to tell stories. Most contain some mixture of computer-based images, text, recorded audio narration, video clips and/or music. Most last between 2 - 4 minutes.

What are you trying to do by using video?

Are you trying to tell a story?

During the past decade, KQED, the public broadcast station in San Francisco, has conducted workshops and taught digital storytelling at its Center for Digital Media. In the KQED Digital Storytelling Manual, which accompanies the trainings, producers describe the power of telling a story:

Telling stories is one of the most powerful methods humans have for sharing meaning and understanding with one another. Human stories are unique in that each individual's account will be different than another person's, even if the exact same experience happened to both people at the same time. People have different perspectives and thus story their lives unique to their interpretation and identity. The process of examining a story, reconstructing it through narrative and ultimately releasing it in a tangible form alters the experience from one person's internal account into one available for internalization and interpretation by others. By this act of conscious release, a story is transformed.

The restorying process can be used as an agent for personal change and the transformation of a negative experience into a positive one. As a therapeutic application, storytelling is a technique that encourages people to analyze events and relationships clearly and put them into perspective. This process grants permission for a negative or stressful situation to be developed into a positive or resurrective narrative. The concept is simple: you can't change what happened, but you can change where you stand in relation to that story. That is, you don't need to stand in the victim's place. If you retell the story, you become the author. Through that reauthoring process, the story gets rewritten according to your version of it.^{ix}

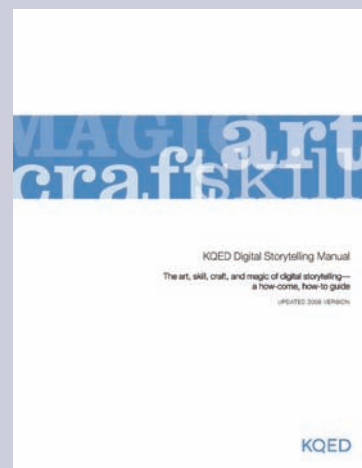
These stories don't need to become public to be powerful. For the past eight years, the Y.O.U.T.H. Training Project, which works with current and former foster youth, has successfully communicated the impact of its programs through "digital stories," mini documentaries that are created by foster youth to tell their own stories. The Oakland-based organization uses its stories on its web site and at trainings. However, program officials say that just the act of making the digital stories is beneficial for participants as an empowering tool for creativity.

Storytelling can be both powerful and empowering, but prevention providers should use caution when encouraging the re-telling of stories that might be traumatic to participants. Care should also be taken when storytellers use the names/relationships of people in their life as part of the story. Although it is a personal story, it could easily be disseminated. All parties involved should be aware of that potential and plan accordingly, in order to protect the confidentiality of program participants.



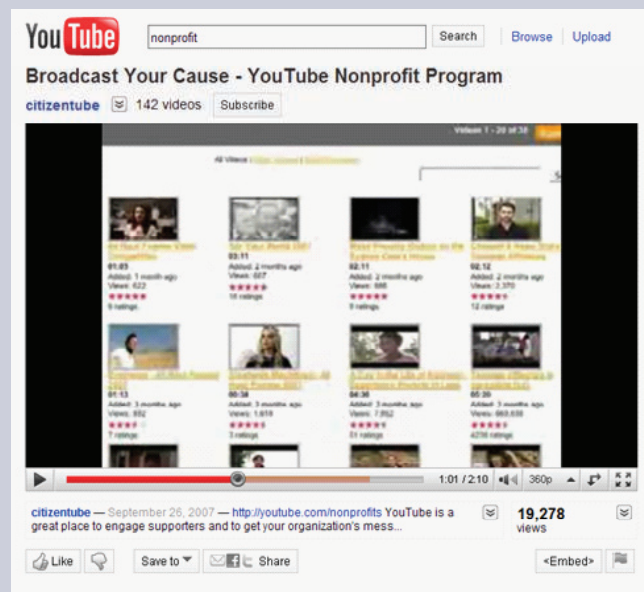
Are you trying to get other people interested in your program?

A documentary format can be a persuasive communications tool to disseminate information. Butte County Behavioral Health's Prevention Unit, under the direction of Program Manager Danelle Campbell, chose the documentary format to highlight the issue of underage drinking in the county and what prevention programs—such as the Committed Project—are doing to combat it. The 15-minute long video, "Wasted: The Truth of Underage Drinking in Butte County,"



was an intensive project that took a year to complete. Campbell says she was lucky because she worked with a professional video producer whom she had worked with for several years. She says he understood the vision for the project. "I wanted to create a documentary that was not only relative to our local situation and setting but also provided solutions and strategies that any community addressing underage drinking could use," Campbell says. "It was important to me that it was polished and extremely well done. We live in a media savvy world and I wanted this media form to hold up against any of the BIG media projects that the alcohol industry could produce." Campbell says the video, by Steve Chollet of Synergy Productions, was purposely created to be adaptable for use in other counties. The customization ranges from localizing statistics to re-shooting at different locations and interviewing other "local" officials. The original documentary cost less than \$10,000, which is considered reasonable by professional video standards. Localizing for other counties costs from \$1,000 - \$8,650, depending on the required changes. Campbell says this "customizable" approach can provide a ripple-effect to other programs. "This was an innovative, unique contribution to the field – that provided the opportunity for it to become even more useful to prevention groups, coalitions and other communities," she says.

If you are trying to market an issue or provide sustainability for a program, even the most basic video can connect to potential supporters and donors in exponential ways. In 2007, YouTube created a free Nonprofit Program, which gives nonprofits video production advice and a dedicated channel to post videos. There are some restrictions – participating nonprofits must have tax-exempt status and cannot be religious or political in nature. The YouTube program includes advice on shooting and editing videos, offers a free Google checkout button to help raise money, and suggests ways to partner and promote a cause.



Are you hoping to use digital stories as a tool to help evaluate the effectiveness of the evidence-based program you are implementing?

Video can be highly effective when used as a participatory evaluation tool. Participatory evaluation is a form of program evaluation that is growing in use and importance, especially within the substance abuse prevention field and community-based programming. It gives stakeholders – such as providers, beneficiaries and funders – an opportunity to participate in all phases of the evaluation process. Outside experts are usually brought in, not to conduct the evaluation, but to serve as facilitators. Stakeholders become essential members of the data gathering team, performing a range of activities from interviews to field surveys. It is in this area that video and digital storytelling can be particularly useful. The medium can convey things that are hard to put into written reports. For example, the Butte County Department of Behavioral Health's Prevention Unit has created video diaries to capture the diversity of its program participants. "There are a lot of different young people in our programs – from a lot of different backgrounds – not just one particular type of young person," says Danelle Campbell, the Prevention Unit's program manager. "I knew that young people's lives were changing partly because of their experience in our program, but we didn't always capture it in our evaluation. Video diaries do just that. They capture the person, the experience and the impact all in 3-5 minutes." (See more on the video diaries in SDFSC GRANTEE VIDEO EXPERIENCES, page 11).

A new CARS Prevention Tactic will discuss video and digital stories in participatory evaluation, providing practical tips on its use and utility as an evaluation tool, as well as special considerations for the AOD prevention field. Check the CPI website for new products and materials, www.ca-cpi.org.

How will you know if you are having the intended effect, given your purpose?

For this, you will likely need an outcomes assessment and evaluation specific to your proposed project. Unfortunately, you are likely to be blazing new trails. There is little helpful information specifically about evaluation of digital storytelling and video as a prevention tool. With regards to its evaluation as an educational tool, Helen Barrett, PhD, has outlined a potential study of the issues related to learning and reflection through digital storytelling. The data collected will provide research-based evidence on the effect digital storytelling has on student learning, motivation, and engagement. She includes a rubric from Scott County Schools in Kentucky, which has been used to evaluate a digital storytelling program.^x The University of Houston also has included several rubrics in their Educational Uses of Digital Storytelling web site.^{xi}

Planning your video

Who is your audience?

Before deciding how much time, effort and money to spend on video production, decide where the video will be seen. Who is your audience? Is this the story of an individual that might be shown to peers or perhaps at a conference? A personal, digital story would not only convey a message, it would tell the story in a simple, humanizing way. Digital stories are one area of video production that is well-suited to either self-production or production with the guidance of a workshop or training.

Will the video be shown to groups as a way to promote program awareness or for social marketing? Will it be uploaded to the internet and seen by an even wider audience? In that case, it could well be worth the investment to have a more highly produced video which can compete with the other media messages that are out there. One of the best ways to decide on the type of “look” you want is to see what other organizations are using.

Three ways to make a video

“Though the tools to produce video are relatively inexpensive, there is a high skill set that goes into producing a polished production. Similar to when the word processor appeared and some felt that they could become the next Ernest Hemmingway, today, some people believe that they can produce professional videos using the relatively inexpensive tools of the trade available on the market today, the typical person doesn’t have the time or experience to produce a professional video, just as I wouldn’t attempt to tune my car’s engine, even if the equipment was readily available.” — Irwin Myers, Video One Productions, Chicago, IL

Do-It-Yourself

Even with the caveat above, with the ready availability of video cameras, video-capable cell phones, editing software, and other tools – it is quite possible to shoot and edit videos yourself. The benefits include cost savings and complete control over the product. But remember that a polished, quality video involves a lot more than just turning on a camera and shooting.

Before creating a video, consider these things first :

- Will you use the video as a tool to enhance your project or are you hoping to achieve measurable outcomes? If this is a strategy vs. a tool, how does it fit into the theory of change/outcomes and how is it measured?
- Have you thought about confidentiality? How will you protect the videos from being uploaded to the internet? Will you destroy them after their usefulness/funding ends?
- Have you considered the privacy of the people in the video? If the subject matter is sensitive, have you talked to the people in the video about how the video will be used? Have you set up protocols for getting permissions/releases—will you ask the subject each time, get blanket permission to use whenever you want to, etc.?
- Does your organization/program have the time, resources and knowledge to see it through? Will you be able to balance the costs with the impact (is it just a “feel good” activity or is it making a difference in a project)?

The internet is full of reference materials on video cameras and editing software. It pays to do your research or even to talk to a knowledgeable salesperson. Nearly all personal computers come with free basic editing software already installed or easily accessible to download through the internet (Windows Movie Maker on PC's, and iMovie on Macs). There are other editing programs that cost money, but have more features. Basic video cameras, like the Flip, start at about \$200. The challenge is in getting the video that you shoot into your computer to edit. Video takes up a lot of space on a computer hard drive (about 13 GB per hour of video). You will most likely need an extra external hard drive. Your camera should use a format (DV, Mpeg2, etc.) that your editing software can read. If you don't already own this equipment and you need to buy a camera, computer, external hard drive, and editing software... it could easily take the project out of the "low budget" category.



If you are learning to edit a digital story, the internet has many resources. The University of Houston's web site on The Educational Uses of Digital Storytelling, contains links to software and tutorials. There is also an easy-to-follow tutorial on a technology web site for nonprofits called TechSoup. In it, J.D. Lasica provides a compilation of lessons learned in digital storytelling workshops, called "Digital Storytelling: A Tutorial in 10 Easy Steps – Expert tips on creating a polished, professional digital video."

For creative video on a budget that you don't have to edit yourself, consider local high school or college resources. Many schools have a video arts or digital arts department, complete with equipment. Contact department heads to find out if students might be available to work on your project. The school can provide samples of previous work. The California Friday Night Live Program produced their video on Alcopops with talent from El Diamante High School in Visalia (see page 12). You might also find resources at local cable access stations.

Workshops

If you are interested in do-it-yourself video with expert guidance and equipment, consider enrolling in a digital storytelling workshop. The Center for Digital Storytelling (CDS) in Berkeley, CA is considered the birthplace of digital storytelling. It began in 1994 when Joe Lambert, Dana Atchley and Nina Mullen founded the San Francisco Digital Media Center and developed a curriculum to teach digital storytelling. According to its web site, CDS has worked with nearly 1,000 organizations around the world and trained more than 15,000 people to share stories from their lives. The CDS web site describes available workshops:

The goal of the three-day Standard Workshop [\$495] is to design and produce a three to five minute digital story. Participants craft and record first-person narratives, collect still images, video, and music with which to illustrate their pieces, and are guided through computer tutorials that enable them, with teacher support, to edit their own stories. In response to demand we are now offering an Advanced Digital Storytelling Workshop [5-day class for \$900] for those individuals who are interested in deepening their own skills in creating Digital Stories. Participants go more deeply into script writing, image editing, audio and video editing.

The KQED Digital Storytelling Initiative (DSI) has been offering free hands-on digital storytelling workshops for the past seven years. They are typically available for teachers, students, community activists and any interested organization. The goal of these workshops is to provide everyone involved with the intellectual, technical and creative skills necessary to independently create digital stories about their work, school or personal endeavors. The KQED DSI comes equipped with a state-of-the-art portable (laptops) computer lab. But the focus of the trainings is currently changing to emphasize digital storytelling in an environmental context. "The model for digital storytelling has been a personal, transformational story. After seven years

of that, we're coming up with a new way to do it," says Leslie Rule, producing supervisor and developer of KQED's program. She says the new digital stories will be much more about places with problems, and using video to address those problems. For example, the first project will involve kids who live in San Francisco's Bayview Hunters Point district – an area known for toxic contamination from power and chemical plants, and waste from a former naval shipyard. The young people plan to use the techniques of digital storytelling to document conditions in their neighborhood, then present their work to local government and community groups. Rule says such personal stories about places – or about issues, like drug prevention – can be shown to community and government groups to bring about change. "Data doesn't convince people," she says. "Stories convince people, video convinces people."



Hiring Professionals

Hiring video professionals can be complicated, expensive, and can take organizational commitment. It can also produce a higher quality, more effective video product. Although the video diaries produced for Butte County's Behavioral Health Prevention Unit look simple, they are carefully conceived, and all are professionally shot and edited. "We really wanted to make sure it is high-quality and polished," said Danelle Campbell. If it needs to compete with professionally produced products, and needs to hold someone's interest, it is often worth seeking the help of a professional. Look for production companies that are interested in social issues. Local business organizations or other nonprofits in your community might be able to point out potential resources. The benefits of using professional video services include leaving it to the experts, and saving time on lighting, shooting, editing, and any other steps along the way. (For more information, see Tips for Hiring Professionals, see page 9).

Making any video production experience better

1- Outline what you want in advance

If you were going to drive cross-country, you probably wouldn't just get in the car and head east. You would plan your trip, look at maps, see which roads may be closed, and pack a suitcase. All of the prep work would make the trip a better experience. Videos need similar preparation. Unlike the written word, video production costs more if you have to redo things. There are several steps that should be taken long before you turn on a camera or sit down to edit.

- Choose a specific purpose for your video. Think carefully about what you want to say and how you will say it. Your ideas may be adjusted as you get into the project, but you should have a good idea of the main points you would like to make.
- Decide who your audience will be. This will help you plan the tone – formal, informal, fast-paced, packed with information.
- Outline a script. Some people create a storyboard to cover the main topics or points of a video. This can be done with index cards. Use one card to describe the video (picture, graphics, effects) the viewer is seeing, and another card below it to outline the audio (words, music) that will play during that scene. You might be more comfortable dividing a page in half lengthwise. Put the video on the left side and the audio on the right. You don't need a polished script, just a road map for the production.
- Schedule the shoot and scout for locations. Many professional videos are shot in just a day or two, in order to make efficient use of the equipment. Plan ahead. Call people who will appear in the video and try to schedule appointments on the same day. If you don't have professional lighting equipment, look for outdoor locations and take advantage of daylight.

- Consider hiring a professional video producer to handle this. If all of the above sounds like more detail work than you can handle, it could be worth it to hire a professional video producer to outline a script, set up the shoot, and then see the production through to the end. Many producers are adept at shooting and editing themselves, or can easily find professionals for that part of the project.



2- Tips for hiring professionals

Finding video professionals can be as easy as looking in a phone book. Many video production companies are also listed in internet directories. With the proper interview and references, this directory search could find the right person for you. If you would rather find someone who already comes recommended, consider calling local university video programs, cable access stations, or the closest television stations. If they can't personally help you, it's likely they will have contact with other video experts in the area. If you have seen a video at a conference or event, consider calling the organization that produced it

and asking how they put it together. Once you get the names of at least three video professionals, it's time to figure out if they are the right match for you.

- Ask for samples of their work. It helps if they have completed projects that are similar to the project you have in mind, but not always necessary. Ask if the person who produced/shot/edited the samples is still working for the company and if they would be the same person to handle your project. You might also want to see their last few projects. Maybe their best work was completed 10 years ago, and the more recent projects aren't as good.
- Call references. Would they use that video professional again? Did they complete the project on time and on budget? Was the video professional an adaptable person who was able to listen and communicate well?
- Consider price. Many video professionals discount their services for nonprofits. Some might even try to do pro-bono work for causes that they believe in. Don't be afraid to negotiate or ask for a discount. Sometimes the guarantee of more work in the future – such as several batches of video diaries – makes a discount possible. You could ask them to produce the video for a “flat fee” or stipulate that the project does not exceed a certain price.
- Ask if they are familiar with copyright laws and usage rules, such as the Fair Use Act, especially as it applies to music and pictures for your production. Will they be able to shepherd the project through this process without making you vulnerable to lawsuits?
- Find out what you will end up with when the production is over. Will you get one finished DVD, all of the video footage that was shot, help uploading the final video to your web site, etc.?
- Ask if they provide their own contract. If they do not, there are simple forms available on the internet that can be customized to suit your needs. Have them guarantee in writing a completion date with penalties for unreasonable delays that you didn't cause.

If the person you are hiring will be writing the script for the video, interview them to find out if they understand your organization and the vision for the project. You should ask to approve any script outlines before the shoot and to approve the final script before anything goes into editing. Many producers and editors also show clients off-line, “rough cut” versions of the video before going into the final on-line editing process. Ultimately, the video will reflect on your program, so it's best to make sure they get it right.

3- **Watch for legal pitfalls**

Whether you choose to work with a professional video producer or do-it-yourself, you should be careful regarding two legal areas, copyrights and privacy. Copyrights protect music, pictures and other intellectual property from being used or reproduced without permission of the owner. There are some exceptions to the law, and there are pieces of work that are considered “public domain” and are usable by anyone. The University of Houston web site has an extensive explanation of copyright, with links to other resources. Remember that most people consulting the site are making stories for educational purposes, so they have more access to material under the Fair Use Act. There are web sites that provide music and pictures for free use. There is also something called “creative commons,” a middle ground of copyright which allows others to use the work, with some restrictions such as giving the author credit. The University of Houston web site has a listing for creative commons, and many ideas on where to find legally usable material.

The other legal consideration that is important when making a video, especially in working with young people, is privacy and permission to use their words/image on camera. Such legal permission is typically called a “release” form. These forms usually:

- Describe what is being released (video images, audio, photographs).
- Include a provision that the videographer may sell or assign the right to use the images or other materials to third parties.
- Define the use of the images.
- Specify that the release is irrevocable.
- Include a place at the bottom for the individual releasing his/her images to sign and date the document.
If the individual is under 18 years old, the release needs to be signed by a parent or legal guardian.

4- **Information that should be in the video**

If you want to make someone care about a story, humanize it. Make sure to include personal stories about people who are affected by or changed by something. If you are focusing on a particular prevention program, interview someone who has benefited from that program. Better yet, get some video of that person in their everyday life or attending the prevention program. Use that story to illustrate the larger points you want to make.

Statistics can be helpful, but use them with care. If you can think of a creative way to display the statistics, they will have a stronger impact. In the video “Wasted: The Truth of Underage Drinking in Butte County,” the producer illustrates the percentage of teens who are drinking by having ten teens walk onto a stage, and superimposing colored bars over five of them to show 50 percent, over two people to show 20 percent, etc. However you choose to illustrate them, your video should use statistics wisely. Don’t turn the production into a video version of a written report.

Finally, after humanizing your story and using statistics or information to make your point, give the “call to action.” Where should the viewer go from here? Do you want to share ways to say no to drinking and driving under the influence? Do you want to galvanize people to help change a law? Whatever it is you would like the viewer to do—make it clear. Try to leave viewers excited about taking action and joining in on a cause.

Often the best way to present a video is in person, with someone from your organization available to lead a discussion after the presentation, to connect with the audience, and to answer their questions.



Conclusion

Although video has been around for decades, it is only recently—in the digital age—that editing capabilities have become easily accessible and affordable. Tools to take videos and tell digital stories continue to evolve and become more user-friendly. But this is still a new frontier in many ways. Research into the effects of video/digital storytelling is still in the early stages. It should be approached as a valuable way to reach young people and tell stories with feeling, but one that is not a proven practice.



SDFSC GRANTEE VIDEO EXPERIENCES

Butte County

In 2008, the Butte County Department of Behavioral Health's Prevention Unit began creating "video diaries" – 3-5 minute videos that each capture one young person's story in a new, fresh, raw way. The videos feature youth from various county prevention programs like Impact Mentoring and the Committed chapters, including those in alternative settings, such as group homes. The programs have contributed to countless success stories, and the department hoped to capture those stories in the young people's own words.

We asked Danelle Campbell, the Prevention Unit Program Manager who came up with the concept and developed the video program, to share her insight on the video diaries process.

Lessons learned:

- Allow extra time for first-time development: It took a while to develop a format for shooting and editing, but now it is fairly standard. We shoot video of as many as 20 young people in a session, spending about 10 minutes or less on each one.
- If seeking high quality, use a professional: I knew we had to make sure the video diaries are high quality and edited so that they are really usable. Steve Chollet of Synergy Productions, who has worked with me for the past ten years, is able to make sure they are professional and polished. He charged us \$150 for each video diary, which is good considering the going rate for finished video can be \$1000/minute. We use them all the time now – at trainings, conferences, staff meetings, with our funders, and with our partner agencies and organizations.
- Sensitive topics require a special approach and follow-up: Sometimes the young people say things that they wouldn't want their peers to know. They get in the mode of sharing, and it just comes out. It doesn't end up in the video, but it was still said in a room with other people. Because these are personal stories, someone from the prevention agency or program should be involved. The process will need that human services perspective.
- Build your knowledge and seek assistance: You have to be real confident with your media folks. If you're in a university town, they have some pretty high caliber capabilities. Many towns also have good media partners (local TV stations) who can help.

Recommendations to others:

- Explain the process and make it optional: Allow the young people to opt in or out of the video diary experience. If they do decide to participate, watch a video diary with them, tell them how it will be used, and get parent or guardian permission.

- **Practice and explore:** Create a template in which they can write responses within different focus areas. Then sit down – without the camera – and practice. You can direct the conversation, for example, by saying “tell me more about that.”
- **Confidentiality:** If you choose to have high school or other young people help you with the production, it would be better if they come from another community. Creating a safe environment is essential, and some kids open up about very personal things.
- **Understanding the value helps to secure funding:** Be willing to spend some money. I saw value in the leverage I knew it would give us in evaluation, with funders and within decision-making arenas. It’s going to help secure buy-in, funding, and better understanding of the services and the population. That’s not to mention the impact on these young people for who, when they first saw their own video diary and everyone stood up and applauded for them and gave them a standing ovation, it was the first time in their life they felt proud of their story—you just can’t even put a dollar figure on that.

Tulare County/California Friday Night Live Partnership

The California Friday Night Live (FNL) Program began in 1984 as a program dedicated to reducing the number of teens driving under the influence. The program has grown, and now reaches statewide, to promote healthy lifestyles free of alcohol, tobacco, or other substance abuse among youth. The program has used video in at least two prevention-related settings.

The “Casey’s Pledge” video was created after the tragic death of Casey Goodwin in 2003. She had dedicated much of her young life to FNL’s cause. After she was killed by a teenage drunk driver, friends and family developed the Casey’s Pledge program. It encourages youth to live a healthy lifestyle by committing their lives to staying alcohol free or never drinking and driving, and never getting into a car with a drinking driver. The Casey’s Pledge toolkit includes a video that was created by Cal Poly students in 2005 to tell Casey’s story and encourage teens to take Casey’s Pledge.

The second video was created in 2007. FNL, in partnership with the California Youth Council, developed an 8-minute long video called “Alcopops.” Alcopops are sweet, flavored alcoholic beverages – like Bacardi Breezers, Mike’s Hard Lemonade, and Smirnoff Ice – which had been taxed as flavored beers (20 cents per gallon) instead of distilled spirits (\$3.30 per gallon). Youth in the partnership felt that many adults did not know that alcopops even existed, or that they were marketed so heavily to teens. They took a leadership role in creating a video themselves, with help from the video department at El Diamante High School in Visalia. That video was shown in communities statewide and is considered a key element of the youth’s successful informational campaign about the issue. In August 2007, the state Board of Equalization voted to tax alcopops at the higher rate.

We asked Lynne Goodwin, Program Specialist for the California Friday Night Live Partnership to share her insights about the effectiveness of video. Her daughter, Casey, is the inspiration for Casey’s Pledge. Goodwin played a key role as advisor to the FNL/California Youth Council as they developed the video about alcopops.



Lessons learned:

- Video can help when you need to educate: The youth were making visits to the Board of Equalization members when we realized that we needed to have a succinct way to educate people about alcopops. We would only gain momentum in this movement if people knew about the detriments of the product and we found that people largely did not know about the product's existence at all, let alone its detriment. We needed a way to capture that quickly. Young people who were in the video class took the project on.
- Think about distribution: One big challenge was to get the finished video out where it would be seen. Once again, the young people made it happen. They took the alcopops video and showed it across the state, in their own communities. After that we got petitions from boards of supervisors across the state, took them to Sacramento, and we got a vote.
- It's okay to learn along the way: We have learned that we don't have to always have the answer right off and know what has to happen. Sometimes you just know that your communities need to be educated. We're working on a video on alcoholic energy drinks right now. Nine out of ten people have no idea that they exist, yet we're finding empty cans in high school trash cans. We're not sure what the answer is yet. We'd like to have them eliminated. But we know that we need more people to know that they're bad, and that's our first step.
- The youth voice is effective: Having youth tell the story was very effective and got publicity. It was featured on National Public Radio, in the New York Times and the Los Angeles Times, and it's been very widely accepted.



Recommendations to others:

- Consider your purpose: I don't think showing videos is going to change anything. Think about what you want to accomplish with the video.
- Encourage viewers to take some kind of action: All of our videos have a call to action and they educate with purpose. With the alcopops video it is asking the viewer to simply to take a position.
- Grants can help: We got a grant from the California Wellness Foundation to spend about \$3,000 on reproduction equipment so that we could burn DVDs and distribute them. We don't charge much, if anything, for the DVDs because we want to just get them out there. There are thousands of Alcopops and Casey's Pledge DVDs out there.



Interview with an Expert

Tom Wolsky, Producer/Director/Editor, has written books on the popular Final Cut Pro video editing program and conducts trainings around the country in high schools and universities. We asked him for his insight on video approaches, equipment and quality.

What are your most important tips for prevention providers who are interested in making videos? Finding the right participants and the right stories is the key. Also, I think they should try to involve video professionals.

There are benefits to having video subjects produce their own stories – benefits for the students and for the larger community. A combination of the two— subjects and video professionals— I think is best. The video professional can provide the structure and polish, while the students have a stake in the story telling themselves, and feel they're both contributors and participants.

What equipment do you recommend? I would stay away from the Flip cameras. Though they're very handy, they're very-production unfriendly. All the media has to be converted to a production format. I would look at the AVCHD cameras. Simple to use and work well with Final Cut Express, which is a professional, affordable editing system. An iMac and some fast external drives would be adequate. The AVCHD cameras are in the \$400-800 range. An iMac is about \$1800 with extra drives.

Any areas of particular importance for do-it-yourself video productions? Copyright infringement is a serious issue. Everything must have copyright clearance or be original media, stills, video, and especially music. But there is easy to find and inexpensive "buy-out" music (You buy the rights to use their music track in video productions as many times as you like, usually for about \$40) Two that I like are Fresh Music (freshmusic.com) and Gene Michael Productions (gmpmusic.com). Also Music Bakery (musicbakery.com) is quite good.



What does a typical professional video production cost? Production costs use \$2,000 a finished minute as a rule of thumb, but this can vary a lot depending on content and production value. Basically it costs as much as the production can afford.

What video content really stands out? A good, well-told story. More important than technical expertise is having something to say and saying it effectively and powerfully in words, music, and pictures.

Video/Digital Storytelling Checklist



- Purpose:** Think about what you are trying to accomplish with the video. Are you trying to tell a story, get other people interested in your program or issue, or use the video to help with program evaluation?
- Evaluation:** Consider how you will know if you are meeting your intended purpose. What outcomes assessment or evaluation could you use?
- Venue:** Decide where the video might be seen. Will it be shown to peers or at a conference? Will it be uploaded to the internet? Will it be put on a DVD and distributed to interested parties?
- How:** Pick the way you will capture your story. This could include purchasing video equipment, signing up for a digital storytelling workshop, enlisting the help of a local school video production program, or hiring a video professional.
- Preparation:** If you are hiring a video professional, do your homework. Check their references to make sure they are adaptable, on-time and on-budget. Ask to see samples of their recent work and make sure the same crew will be involved in your project. Find out if they are familiar with copyright laws and usage rules. Negotiate price and get a contract stating what they will provide. (If you are planning on hiring a professional, they could be given responsibility for the rest of this checklist.)
- Video Planning:** Outline a script. Think carefully about the main points you want to make. Remember to consider the pictures, words and music. Humanize your story by including personal interviews. Use statistics sparingly and try to make them visual. Remember to include a "call to action" so that viewers are clear on what they can do when the video ends.
- Timing:** Schedule the shoot and scout for locations. Try to group interviews and locations together to make efficient use of equipment. Lighting is important. Use outdoor/daylight shoots if necessary.
- Permissions:** Get "release" forms signed. These forms should be signed by everyone who appears in your video or by parents if the subject is a minor. The forms give legal permission to use their words/image on camera.
- Shooting:** Get plenty of shots to cover informative sections of your video. For example, if you are talking about drug use in your community, get shots of your town. When it comes to interviews, be flexible. Interview subjects might not say what you thought they would say.
- Organize:** Review the video, and select the parts that you will use. You might have interviewed an expert for ten minutes, but decide to use only one quote from that person. Often, the video has "time code," a data stream that assigns a specific time to each frame of video to help in editing. You can log your video, writing down the time code for each section that you like.
- Details:** Finalize the script by filling in exact quotes, shot references, and time code. If there is a "narrator" for the video, record that person reading the narrative part of the script.
- Editing:** If the video is being edited by someone else, ask to see a "rough cut" version. Changes made in earlier stages of editing are less costly and time-consuming.
- Copyright:** Watch out for copyright infringement. This is particularly important for pictures and music that are not self-created. There are web sites that help you navigate this area, and that provide music and pictures for free or for a reasonable fee.
- Dissemination:** Once video editing is complete, consider the ways in which your video will be shown. Will you present it to groups in person, with someone available for follow up questions? Will you mail copies of DVD's to any interested groups or hand them out at conferences? Will you require written approval from your video subjects every time their personal stories are presented? Control its dissemination by considering your options before any copies leave your control.

Resources

Butte County Department of Behavioral Health Prevention Unit, Video Diary Project www.butteyouthnow.org
 Center for Digital Storytelling, www.storycenter.org/
 KQED Digital Storytelling Initiative, <http://dsi.kqed.org/>
 National Youth Anti-Drug Media Campaign, www.whitehousedrugpolicy.gov/mediacampaign
 Synergy Productions, www.synergypost.com
 The University of Houston, Educational Uses of Digital Storytelling, <http://digitalstorytelling.coe.uh.edu/index.html>
 Tech Soup, www.techsoup.org
 Video One Productions, www.video1pro.com/articles.html
 Y.O.U.T.H. Training Project, www.youthtrainingproject.org
 YouTube Nonprofit Program, www.youtube.com/nonprofits

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