The 3 stages of production.

It is very exciting when you first commission a film but it can also be a little daunting. The secret is, no matter what the production it goes through the same 3 basic stages. Depending on the nature of your particular production the time these stages take to complete and how in depth they need to be will vary.

Stage 1: PRE-PRODUCTION

Pre-Production refers to everything that happens before your video shoot can take place. As a general rule nothing you see on screen is an accident, someone somewhere has planned it!
Don’t think that because your film is just a series of interviews this stage doesn’t need to happen, there will still be planning to do.

Pre production normally begins with an initial meeting to discuss your needs for the film. Once this has been established the production team will work on the creative idea for the film, thinking about the style, scripting, devising questions for interviewees and storyboarding.
As a client you should be able to choose how involved you would like to be at this stage. Often it is just reading through the script and facilitating some introductions to people who will be filmed, but you may want more involvement.

Then it is a case of pulling together all the logistics of your shoot such as casting, location planning, scheduling, travel arrangements and sorting consent or licences that need granting.
Everything that would need organising to make sure that when filming happens things can run like clockwork.

The pre production stage of a film is incredibly important, especially on larger shoots or if you know you will be filming on a tight deadline.
It is always important to remember that “people that cost money”, so if everyone is held up while a location or costume is sourced, or a script is still being written, that is not a cost effective production!

As a client you should be prepared for plenty of meetings and phone calls and emails during pre production. If you know you are extremely busy and won’t be able to give much time to the project you could delegate a jnr member of staff to the project, it can be a really rewarding process. If this can’t happen make sure the production company know the best time to talk to you during the day. It can be very difficult if a customer goes “offline” when you need to run something by them.
Stage 2: PRODUCTION

This is the fun bit! It can also be the shortest part of the whole process. In a video shoot this stage is where all the filming takes place to gather the content for the film. Shoots can often be quite hectic, with cameramen, directors, actors and presenters all trying to do their part. BUT because of all the careful planning in stage 1, this stage should be painless!

Depending on your production a crew can range from a 1 – 2 person crew upwards. However everyone working for a good and experienced production company will know their role and will make it all look easy. Don’t be fooled, it can actually be quite stressful for them. Your production crew may know they have one day to shoot a lot of footage, or that there is only one shot at filming a particular scene or interview and everything will need to be right for this. With the best will in the world, sometimes things do conspire against them (normally weather and building works), but an experienced crew should be able to work around most things.

Production crews tend to work 8-10 hr days and will understand the need to be flexible in when they can shoot. This means things don’t tend to shoot purely within 9-5. So if you choose to accompany the production crew onto the shoot be prepared for a long day, early start or late finish.

Stage 3: POST-PRODUCTION

Some people think this is the magic bit of the process because it’s where all that footage that has been shot gets turned into your final film. This stage includes editing, adding voice over or music, adding any graphics, text or additional footage to the film. This stage can often take the longest, so long in fact that we tend to break it down into its own 3 stages.

The first thing is preparation of the footage is when the editor looks at what they have, makes sure it is all synced up and in a format they can work with in the edit. Then comes editing the footage. This is the process of cutting up and piecing together all of the footage and audio that has been recorded in a way that gets your message across. An experienced editor can take what to the untrained eye seems like a jumble of words and pictures and make something truly spectacular. There workflow is normally, assembly of the footage, rough cut, final cut.

An experienced production company and editor will always want the client to view the film after rough cut and sign off the film after the final cut.
The final post production stage is preparation of the footage for distribution. These days this tends to mean encoding your film for viewing on the web, but it may also mean authoring and duplication of a DVD or ensuring your piece is broadcast ready.

That’s it! The 3 stages of production explained.

If you are thinking of producing a film do give us a call, we would be happy to chat. +44 (0) 1225 338294

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