

Video Training Manual for Advocacy Organizations

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VIDEO TRAINING MANUAL for Advocacy Organizations:

An Advocate's **Quick Guide**

The North Carolina Justice Center's Video Training Manual for Advocacy Organizations is aimed at helping any advocacy group produce high-quality, effective video clips to advance the organization's goals. **This Advocate's Quick Guide gives a basic summary of the manual, including equipment recommendations and shooting tips.** Willing to spend about \$800 worth on video equipment and have access to a Macintosh computer? We'll show you how to get into the video business.

● **Equipment Recommendations - The Advocate's Video Camera Kit:**

- ▶ **Camera:** A basic consumer handheld video camera that includes:
 - Microphone input jack for external microphone
 - Ability to record in high-definition
 - Ability to zoom and stabilize the image while shooting
- ▶ **Professional-quality shotgun microphone:** Be sure to also purchase a microphone cord with a mini-plug to attach the mic to the video camera.
- ▶ **Microphone bracket mount:** To secure your microphone to your camera
- ▶ **Data storage:** SDHC cards or similar
- ▶ **Tripod/monopod**
- ▶ **Camera bag**

● **Basic Video Technique**

Be creative in your choice of situations to use video: Personal stories are great, but there are many other ways to use video to achieve advocacy goals. Some include holding politicians accountable, highlighting great speakers at community meetings and reporting to fellow advocates and funders.

Take long, think short: When shooting video, always think of that part of a personal interview, meeting or other subject that will have the most impact. Aim to create a video that is long enough to illustrate your point, but short enough to keep your audience interested. Gather enough video to give you options while looking for the short pieces that will be most engaging.

● **Interviewing: Capturing personal stories**

- Start with the people you know. Talk about your video project as much as possible.
- Bring camera equipment to every community meeting, rally and event.
- Work with your coalition partners to help identify people who might be willing to share their stories.
- Keep at it – finding people willing to share their stories on video isn't easy.

- **Effective interview technique: it's harder than it seems.**
 - **Ask until you get what you need.** Don't be afraid to ask your interview subject a question multiple times to get an answer that will make a good, short sound bite.
 - **Sound, sound, sound.** Be mindful of background noise.
 - **Position yourself during the interview.** Stand behind or directly to the side of the camera when asking your questions. Have your subject look near the camera.
 - **Lights, camera, action!** Natural light is always best. If that is not available, choose a room with plenty of artificial light and use your camera light.
 - **Don't forget your B-roll!** These are the shots that provide background to your story.
 - **Remember a basic consent form.**

- **Collecting video at legislative meetings, community meetings, and rallies**
 - **Remember your sound.** Often background noise at a public meeting can ruin a video. Get as close as possible to the speaker.
 - **Consider a monopod.** This is easier to use than a tripod and easier to move around with at a meeting.
 - **Be polite but firm** if questioned when recording public meetings and public events.

- **Tips on editing your video**
 - Software: use iMovie on a Macintosh.
 - Keep it short.
 - Use title screens to separate video into smaller segments.
 - Use snappy transitions.
 - Don't forget voiceovers.

- **Tips on distributing your video**
 - Creation or use of an established blog where video complements and enhances other content
 - Social media - YouTube, Facebook, Twitter or any other social media you use
 - Your website
 - Your e-newsletters and similar publications
 - Online resources maintained by your partner organizations

For a full discussion of how advocacy organizations can effectively collect and use video see the NC Justice Center's Video Training Manual for Advocacy Organizations.

Introduction

At the NC Justice Center we've been using short video clips as part of our advocacy work since 2008. Like many advocacy groups, we are nonprofit, grant and donation funded and committed to improving our state and country for the better. In our work we are always looking for any way we can stretch scarce dollars to have maximum impact. And over the last few years we have found that increasing use of video has come with many benefits that have helped us achieve our goals, even in some ways we would never have imagined.

Despite this success, we also are anything but professional videographers and editors. We have shot, created and distributed all our video work without consultants or hiring for a specific staff position for video production. This isn't wholly by choice. With unlimited funding more staff would always be welcome. But, like all nonprofit advocates, we have to work within limited budgets and so we've made do by and large with integrating the idea of video into existing staff responsibilities and resources.

It's been hard work and we've learned a great deal, made plenty of mistakes, and realized none of us are going to be the next Martin Scorsese. At the same time we have had major success and rewards from this latest extension of what it means to be an advocate. This manual is an attempt to help our fellow advocates avoid some of our biggest missteps and distill down what we've learned over the past three years about effective video production in the advocacy world.

Our purpose is simple. With what we've laid out here, any advocacy group with about \$800 for equipment combined with a basic Macintosh computer should be able to go from video neophyte to producing fairly high-quality and effective video clips that advance the organization's goals in a very short time.

PART ONE

Equipment Recommendations – The Advocate’s Video Camera Kit

1) Camera

What you should look for in a camera:

It must have a microphone input jack for an external microphone. Increasingly, many consumer cameras – even fairly fancy ones - do not have this type of jack.

WE LIKE:

The Canon VIXIA HFM300 (about \$350) or Panasonic HDC-SD90 (about \$425). This sort of camera has several advantages over a “flip cam” or smartphone video camera. The main advantage is a microphone input jack so an external microphone can be attached. Other advantages: the ability to zoom a significant distance and maintain quality; a larger imaging sensor that keeps quality high. Newer models of this type of camera often offer image stabilization features that can make shooting on the fly much steadier along with the ability to shoot high definition video. Note that camera models frequently change – it’s the features that count.



The ability to record high definition video is becoming increasingly important. People are starting to expect very clear quality even in online video. Therefore, the quality that the video is originally taken and uploaded in is very important. Even if the video isn’t viewed on YouTube in high definition, it will look much more clear if it was originally taken and uploaded in the higher standard.

2) Microphone

This is absolutely critical. Our first microphone cost more than our first camera and was worth every penny. Microphones are available that cost less, but they will perform far less well than one of the

low-end professional models. Lots of people we work with ask us why we spend so much on a microphone. Here’s why:

A. It doesn’t matter how good your video looks if what people are saying

WE LIKE:

A low-cost, professional, shotgun microphone like the Audio-Technica AT897 shotgun (kit with mount and cord with mini-plug about \$260). *You must also purchase a microphone cord with a mini-plug to attach the mic to the consumer video camera.* Professional video cameras use a large three-prong standard mic plug that will not work with a consumer camera. This microphone cord is included in the AT897 kit we mention above.



isn't crystal clear. And in our advocacy world, what people are saying is often the most critical part of any video we are putting together.

B. A professional-quality shotgun microphone is able to better screen out background noise and side conversations to allow you to focus on the person who is speaking. This can also of course be accomplished by using a lapel (or lavalier) microphone, but this is much more complicated because you have to attach the mic on or near the person and keep up with transmitters and batteries. Often we advocates are recording at community meetings or public hearings where background noise is omnipresent and it is hard to quickly attach microphones.

WHERE AND WHAT TO BUY:

Many professionals buy video gear from [B & H Photo](http://www.bhphotovideo.com) in NYC. (www.bhphotovideo.com). That's where we have purchased our sometimes hard-to-find equipment because they sell both professional and consumer categories of cameras, microphones and accessories. The difference between "professional" and "consumer" video equipment is a little blurred but, in addition to price, it generally refers to a difference in construction, complexity and size of the technology. So, a "consumer" camera is probably less complex and easier to use, but will probably not be as versatile or robust (or at all as costly) as the professional camera. Our recommendations for advocates involve a combination of professional and consumer equipment designed to get the highest quality video at the lowest reasonable cost.

3) Microphone bracket mount

This may seem like an afterthought but a bracket is pretty important. A shotgun mic is relatively long and heavy compared to a small consumer video camera and the small consumer camera doesn't typically have a dedicated hot shoe mount for accessories like a mic. Even if it does have such a mount, the professional quality mic will likely be too heavy for the strength of the mount.

That's why we use a L-shaped bracket that attaches to the tripod mount on the bottom



of the camera, creates a handhold, and is topped off with a couple of flash shoes or mounting brackets where you can attach the microphone. They run about \$12 and are generally called something descriptive like "right angle bracket."

The second part of the microphone mount comes with the microphone kit we mention above – it's basically two hoops that suspend the mic in a small circular bracket that attaches to the flash shoe on the "right angle bracket."

4) Recording media: SDHC cards and similar are fine

With the small consumer video camera we recommend, typically an 8 GB SDHC card carries about an hour of high definition video. That hour is plenty for most purposes and having two or three cards (About \$12 each) enables you to have some backup recording material.

With the higher-definition consumer video camera we recommend above, we now find that in most situations we are getting quality results very close to our 6-year old professional (and much, much larger) Panasonic video camera that records on professional standard Mini-DV tape. So, using SDHC cards in the consumer camera gives results that are just fine for our purposes.

WE LIKE:



The Manfrotto MA680B with a Manfrotto MA234 swivel/tilt head monopod (about \$80). The monopod is easier to carry and, while you have to hold it while taking video, it does a good job of stabilizing the camera and it is much easier to reposition the camera to follow a speaker. (In video parlance, “pans and tilts.”) It’s also less obtrusive to use at community meetings and for quick interviews.

5) Tripod/monopod

Now that you have all this camera gear it is nice to have something to attach it to and stabilize the video. While new cameras include some internal stabilization functions, it’s still critical to have some method of holding the camera and microphone. Here’s what you need to consider:

A. Spend some money to get a decent tripod or monopod. Again, this is one of these expenditures that will pay for itself if you are going to make heavy use of the equipment. So, spring for low-end models of professional brands like **Manfrotto** (the largest maker of professional tripods and monopods). It will cost \$70 - \$200 instead of \$25-\$70, but when your \$25 tripod head falls apart in the middle of an interview like ours did, you’ll be happy.

B. Consider a monopod (essentially one leg of a tripod with a head on it to attach the camera).

6) Camera Bag

Don’t let this expensive gear get banged around – get a small padded video/camera bag. One like the Lowepro Flipside 200 holds everything and costs about \$60.

7) Lighting

Why is this last? Lighting is a usually critical part of any video production or interview. Poor lighting can mean lack of contrast of facial features, “raccoon eyes,” or a just plain dreary video. Basic video technique for interviews defines lighting as having a key light, or main lighting source,

a fill light to increase contrast, and a backlight to bring the subject out from the background. However, we rarely make use of video lights, lighting kits, and similar equipment.

Instead, typically what we do in an interview is to talk to our subjects outside or in an inside room with plenty of natural and existing artificial light. This certainly doesn't work as well, but is much easier on everyone. We want people to look good, but we also want them to be comfortable with us and we also want to be able to suggest to people pressed for time that we do a quick interview. Setting up multiple lights makes this harder to do.

We also find that taking video at community meetings, rallies, and government meetings almost always requires the use of existing light. The quality we get at these events is usually very good anyway and we are much less obtrusive without a large video light, even it was possible to use it.

In the end, while we've experimented with smaller battery-powered video lights which do help in some ways, overall we have gone more to a better camera/ maximum existing light technique rather than investing in and carrying around a set of fancy "interview lights" or even a single video light.



ARE FANCY VIDEO LIGHTS REALLY NECESSARY?

There are several reasons why we deemphasize the importance of lighting in our type of video production:

Good lights are really, really expensive. You can easily spend as much on a set of professional video lights as our above recommended entire equipment package, and probably much more.

Small cameras are getting better in low-light situations. The latest Canon high-def camera we suggest above does a much better job at getting good video in lower light than our similar consumer Canon from just a few years ago.

It's hard to drag around all those lights to community meetings, rallies, and other events where we typically meet people and often do a quick interview. In addition, when you have to set up your own equipment and do the interview yourself, it's hard enough just to mess around with the camera. If you have to set up lights too, that makes a much bigger production.

PART TWO

Basic Video Gathering Technique for Advocates: It's harder than it looks.

1) INTRODUCTION: Effective but (usually) short

As advocates, we've found that short video clips are enormously useful in our work. We have driven mainstream news coverage, introduced our work and our organization to thousands of people, held politicians accountable, highlighted the work of community leaders and let ordinary people tell their stories in their own words.

We've also found that while taking video is fairly easy, taking (and editing) video that people will actually watch is much, much harder. After creating and posting over 150 videos over the past several years we've had the success of seeing thousands of people watch our material and the humbling experience of having 10 or 20 people tune in. And what people watch and don't watch often isn't correlated – at least in our advocacy world – with the various types of video we do. For example, two of our most popular videos are a very long – for us – seven minute interview with a physician and author and a one and a half minute

clip of a young woman with cerebral palsy talking about the affect of state health care budget cuts on her life.

THE ADVOCATE'S TOP TWO THINGS TO REMEMBER WHEN GATHERING VIDEO:

A. Be creative in your choice of situations to use video.

While we primarily focus on personal story interviews, bringing highlights of a rally with an especially stirring speaker or reporting on what a politician actually said as opposed to what he or she has actually done can be very effective. There are many other uses. One of our more popular videos was about 20 seconds of a well-known organization's anti-health care reform rally that only attracted a few people to a large empty lawn. That one made a national talk show.

B. Take long, think short.

When we are shooting a rally, meeting or doing an interview always think about what tiny part of it you can use. We'll talk more about personal interview techniques later, but this is important for all subjects. For example, when shooting a speaker at a community meeting, listen for that 15 or 20 seconds that is the most powerful and would summarize the point being made. Then remember it! With the small consumer camera that records on SDHC cards, that's pretty easy – just stop recording at the next natural pause and then hit the record button to start again. The camera will save the first video file, start a second video file, and the critical part you want will be near the end of that first file. This saves time (something we advocates are always pressed for) in the editing process.

Suffice it to say that, generally, shorter is almost always better and will get more views and possibly have more impact. We try and keep personal story interviews under three minutes, so matter how compelling. And views of a rally or event should be even shorter. Seeing politicians speak is often really dull, so keeping those clips short is a must. An interview with a policymaker might be longer, but that person better be pretty interesting.

The one exception we have found to the "keep it short" rule revolves around interviews of really interesting people or showcasing of well-known speakers. For example, a sit-down interview with a well-known author to talk about a relevant issue to the organization could well gather significant views and attention.

THE FIVE BASIC GOALS OF VIDEO PRODUCTION BY AN ADVOCACY ORGANIZATION**A. Getting stories of ordinary people into the mainstream media to illustrate a particular issue.**

Reporters are always looking for a personal story to illustrate an issue. There are many ways to bring these stories to the attention of the media and policymakers, but one of the most effective is to have the person talk for themselves. Reporters looking for a person to feature can then get an idea of what this person will say and what the issues are they are dealing with in their daily lives.

B. Transforming ordinary people with good stories and interesting backgrounds into extraordinary advocates.

Example: The NC Justice Center met a local small business owner very interested in health care reform issues at a Center small business forum. We invited him in for one of our first personal story videos. Attention to the Center's video gave the business owner opportunities for more work with the media and further advocacy both as a presenter at community forums and as a spokesperson for small business interests. He is now regularly featured in mainstream news coverage about effects on small business of health care issues and has spoken as a small business leader multiple times at community forums with members of Congress.

C. Holding policymakers accountable for what they say.

Example: The chair of a powerful legislative committee announces with great fanfare that the committee will hold a public hearing on an issue critical to an advocacy organization. But when the organization encourages ordinary people to sign up for the hearing and speak, reports come back that the "hearing" is limited to 15 minutes and most people are being turned away. A short video is created where the announcement for a public hearing is juxtaposed with the limitations on time and the fact that many members of the public are being turned away. The video is then seen by key news organizations and political leaders. The result is a much longer hearing where everyone is afforded a chance to speak.

D. Interviewing key leaders to both get what they have to say out in a longer format usually not available in the mainstream media and to develop a better organizational relationship with those same leaders.

Example: The head of a state's giant public hospital system is also a former US Presidential advisor and former head of Medicare and Medicaid. He is interested in health care reform issues and speaks widely with state and national policymakers but is rarely afforded a longer format interview to express his views. Doing a long interview exploring key health care issues and publicizing and posting the resulting video can not only raise the statewide profile and credibility of the advocacy group but also create goodwill that can translate into cooperation on other issues.

E. Presenting a broader cross-section of an advocacy organization's work to the public, fellow advocacy organizations and funders.

This is an often overlooked example of the benefits of short video. Recently our organization put together speakers for a public hearing. It was a great event and we created a five-minute video that highlighted each of the speakers with very short, fast clips. It gave a real flavor of what was a successful public hearing. Feedback from partner organizations was enormously positive – they got to see in action what was the result of a large amount of coalition work. In addition, several state funders were able to see the work of our group presented in a very effective light.

2) WE ARE NOT NBC: Why going viral isn't necessary for success.

For advocates, one of the nice things about YouTube or other video sharing sites is the feedback they give on number of video views and other information about viewers. One of our goals is to reach the maximum number of people with our messages and this sort of feedback is invaluable as to figuring out what works and what doesn't to attract viewers.

500 VIEWS

We have found that the reach and effect of our video production is often less tailored to the number of views on the video sharing site than to exactly how we use the video to achieve our goals. This isn't to say that numbers of viewers aren't important. A majority of videos on YouTube are seen less than 500 times, so we count as very successful a video that breaks that number. But even a video seen by a small number of people can be very effective if it is used to fill one of the specific goals of advocacy organization video production.

For example, much to our disappointment, we found that our early talking-head commentary starring our staff members here at the Justice Center wasn't all that popular. It's a crushing blow to realize that not just anyone can be the next Jon Stewart but knowing our commentary wasn't working pushed us to try other things.

But numbers of views listed on YouTube or another video sharing site don't necessarily tell the whole story, and that's something for advocates to keep squarely in mind. Absent starting your own TV station, it's still pretty hard to get a wide audience for the public policy topics we care about. Unfortunately, a Mythbusters-style viral video of a compact car suspended on water streams pouring from six fire hoses is almost always going to get more views that even our best efforts. A great unscripted and revealing comment from a

political or community leader might get tens of thousands of views, but that sort of thing is pretty unusual unless an organization is dedicating enormous resources to exactly that sort of "gotcha" video production – and that really isn't what we are about.

PART THREE

How to collect effective personal stories on video

1) INTRODUCTION: Time and persistence.

Collecting personal stories that illustrate an issue is a challenging and often discouraging process for an advocacy organization. The disconnect is this: An advocacy group can be overwhelmingly familiar with statistics like the number (1.7 million) of uninsured people in North Carolina. With a number like that, every coffee shop in the state should likely hold some people lacking health coverage. However, getting even a few of those 1.7 million people to talk on camera about their experiences is much more challenging than the overall number affected makes it seem.

Why? People are often reluctant to relate personal stories of hardship, especially to an advocacy group who clearly isn't a TV news team. They worry about how they may appear to others and they also worry about angering the government or other powerful institutional interests like health insurance companies, employers, large hospitals in their community or similar organizations. There are always people willing to speak out however

– as advocates we just have to recognize that they usually aren't going to fall into our laps for a quick interview. We will almost always have to ask multiple people before we find someone willing to participate.

In the end, an advocacy organization must put the time it takes to collect personal stories on video into the benefits versus cost mix that chronically underfunded nonprofits everywhere make each day. We think it is worthwhile dedicating some staff time to collecting personal video stories but every advocacy organization needs to be realistic about the time it takes to collect video for these stories and make their own decision. No organization should underestimate the time and persistence it takes to get a good video story.

Below we have some suggestions to make this hard task easier.

2) PERSONAL STORY COLLECTION TECHNIQUE #1: Bringing camera equipment to every community meeting, rally and event.

Over the last few years, we've found that often the best way for us to quickly get some great personal stories is simply to be prepared to talk to a few people at every meeting or event staged by our organization or a partner organization. We try and make an announcement during the proceedings that we'd love to talk to people for our video series and, because people at such events are usually pretty motivated, we often do find someone who is willing to speak with us. This doesn't happen at every meeting. The cautions we set out above still apply, so it still can be discouraging when no one wants to speak, but we've had some of our most successful personal stories come directly out of our community meetings (or those of a partner).

There are two things to keep in mind in collecting stories at an event. First, one staff member can do it, but they need to be comfortable enough with equipment and technique to quickly complete the interview. Usually people are ready to go home after these sorts of meetings and don't want to hang around while someone is fumbling with microphone plugs and the like. Second, it may be that during the event some personal stories get told. Taking some video of that moment during the meeting and then following up with a little more conversation with the same person afterwards on a more personal level can create a very moving story.

3) PERSONAL STORY COLLECTION TECHNIQUE #2: Working with coalition partners.

As advocates, we work with partners all the time on a variety of issues. Some partners we work with have a much more direct connection to individuals, small business owners, and other people we would like to interview. Asking our coalition partners to help is an obvious strategy but, again, one that comes with a few caveats.

First, an organization that directly works with people who would make good interview subjects has its own credibility and reputation to protect. After all, that's why people are perhaps more willing to tell their story if the request comes from a trusted source that they know well. Working closely with that coalition partner to keep everyone involved in all aspects of the process is important to preserve that credibility. If one of our partners is worried about any aspect of our video project we either change it or stop.

TIPS FOR CONDUCTING AN EFFECTIVE INTERVIEW:**A. Get some background shots or “b-roll.”**

All this means is take a little video of the person’s home, family photos, or similar shots before or after you do the actual interview. This just allows you to break up the story a little with a shot that illustrates a part of the person’s story and makes the video more interesting.

B. Don’t be afraid to ask a question multiple times to try and get an answer that can stand on its own.

This is one of the harder things to do. Often as we edit our stories we have four or five different 10 – 20 second clips that together tell the story, but pasting them together looks jerky and is much less effective with that many video transitions. We also find that people often tend to just answer a detailed question and that it isn’t clear what was being asked in their answer. Ask shorter questions and make clear you want the person to talk and explain his or her issue in detail.

C. Stand behind or directly to the side of the camera to ask your questions.

Here a monopod comes in handy, because you’ve got to hold it to keep the camera upright so you can’t stray far from that position. Having the person look near the camera is critical.

D. Think sound, sound, sound.

At a community meeting, try and do the interview in a quieter room. Outside rally? Move a little away from the action. And don’t forget that background noises can be a killer even with a professional-quality microphone. We’ve unplugged refrigerators, turned off air conditioners, and tried different areas to avoid unwanted (and often unnoticed – at least until we were watching the clip) noise.

E. Light

Try for natural light, either outside or in, but if that is not available, make sure you choose a room with plenty of artificial light. The Canon camera we recommend has a tiny video light – use it. Even though it is small, it can really help fill in even if you already have enough light. One key thing to remember is to get enough light in people’s faces so they don’t look like they have the dreaded “raccoon eyes.” In the end though, this goes back to our mantra of making do without expensive light kits. We can still get good results – we just have to think a little more about where the interview takes place.

Second, consider co-crediting the video work with the partner. We’ve found that some of our partner organizations don’t have the time or equipment to do really good video story work, but are more than happy to help in finding people when it is clear that the finished project will highlight that this is an effort of both organizations.

4) PERSONAL STORY COLLECTION TECHNIQUE

#3: Talk with people you know.

This is another thing that is pretty obvious to advocates, but one of the best ways we’ve found to get people to agree to an interview is to talk about our video project as much as possible to colleagues, friends and family. Some of our best stories have come from these connections. There is an instant credibility that really helps because of that personal link and advocates are usually pretty gregarious people – we are always communicating anyway, so asking about one more project comes naturally.

5) Get a consent form from your subject.

While news organizations don’t do this, as advocacy groups that are not primarily news outlets it is a good idea to get a basic consent form from the people being interviewed. This doesn’t have to be very complicated. The basic idea is to let people know exactly how you plan to use their video and make clear the name and nature of your organization.

PART FOUR**Collecting video at legislative meetings, community meetings, and rallies**

You would think this was a simple matter of showing up at the meeting and pointing the camera at whoever is speaking and, largely, it is. However, as advocates, we are much better at organizing events than effectively getting them down on video. We also face unique challenges in some settings because taking video for later posting blurs the line between an advocacy organization and a news outlet. Advocates aren't reporters, but put a camera and a huge microphone in your hand, show up at a public event, and people aren't sure how to classify you. With all this in mind, here are our basic strategies for collecting good video in these public forums:

STRATEGY #1: Sound, sound, sound

The professional shotgun microphone we recommend works very well in a public setting, even far away, but closer is always going to be better, so get as close as you can to the person talking. The shotgun can also be quickly moved from one person to another following a discussion or questions. And in some situations, it may make more sense to point the shotgun at the amplification system instead of directly at the person talking. For example, in our state legislative chamber, everyone talks into a microphone and the output speakers are up in the corners of the room near the ceiling. Aiming the camera at the person talking while aiming the microphone away from the person and directly at the high-mounted speaker produces the best sound.

The other thing to keep in mind when using a shotgun microphone in these settings is background noise. The microphone can be really good at filtering out extraneous noise, but sometimes hums from a HVAC system or other similar droning can significantly degrade the sound quality. You really have to listen for this noise – our brains tend to filter out constant background sounds when we are focused on a particular person talking - and it's often only when you play back the video that you notice the problem. The solution is almost always to simply get closer to the subject.

STRATEGY #2: Consider a monopod

Instead of using a tripod, our small camera can easily be used on a monopod. This allows quick changes of camera direction to follow different speakers or different action and also is very easy to transport. The increasingly sophisticated optical anti-shake technology found in many cameras also helps to minimize apparent camera movement even though the monopod is less stable than a tripod.

STRATEGY #3: Weigh the benefits and drawbacks of video recording and, if necessary, politely but firmly resist attempts to get you to stop taking video.

This is a judgment call for advocates that differs from situation to situation. The availability of small cameras and easy sharing of video online is subtly changing public interactions,

BALANCING ACT

Overall, the use of video in public settings is a balancing act for advocates. We have found that most people are starting to accept the new medium and often appreciate that they may have another avenue of coverage of the event. Some people in public life may still long for the days when there was little danger of an uninhibited chat at a legislative meeting ending up a YouTube sensation – but most realize those days are now gone. In the end, with some forethought and good judgment, advocates can use video where appropriate to advance their cause without suppressing the open discussion and participation of the public that is so critical to good advocacy.

especially in politics and at public meetings. Comments without obviously identifiable news media present now can be recorded and may come to wide notice – perhaps wider than the speaker intended. The best-known cases are where politicians have said or done something at a meeting that they didn't intend for public distribution. However, the opposite effect can take place as well, especially at a community meeting where ordinary people may not want to speak if they know their comments are being recorded.

One of the best examples of a world adjusting to the new uses of video occurred for us over the last few years when we started taking more video in the North Carolina legislature. Not used to actually having cameras routinely recording legislative debates, NC legislative leaders occasionally try to ban or remove people – our staff included - taking video from the chamber. We politely let everyone know what we are doing and eventually the powers-that-be have always backed down, bowing to the inevitable. It also helps that a “legislative body banning the public and their cameras” story is likely irresistible to the traditional media too.

The opposite of the situation above often occurs at community meetings however. There, although we often bring a camera to interview interested people after the meeting, we usually don't routinely take video unless we have made clear we will be using video beforehand. We don't want people feeling they can't participate without being recorded. This caution doesn't usually apply at a larger public rally however. There, speakers expect or are eager to be recorded by the traditional media and use of video isn't a problem.

STRATEGY #4: Snapz Pro software

Snapz Pro (www.ambrosiasw.com/utilities/snapzprox/) is a Macintosh utility that lets you easily capture just about any video that appears on the web. For example, if there is streaming video of a speech or meeting, Snapz Pro allows you to quickly capture excerpts. This video can then be used in your own video production. As always, be aware of copyright issues though. You can't just capture an entire news report and post it as your own video. However, lots of public meetings, rallies, and other gatherings that appear on the web can be fair game, especially if you are just using excerpts and commenting on them in your own work.

PART FIVE**Editing your video**

Video has become so much a part of our lives that it's often easy to forget the effort it takes to transform raw video into a finished product telling a story people want to watch. Most of our video interviews for personal stories result in about 20-30 minutes of raw, unedited video. Our finished personal story videos are only 2-3 minutes long or even less. Likewise,

video of an extended legislative hearing or rally may run 30 minutes, 60 minutes or more. As advocates, our temptation is often to post the entire event “for people to see.” Resist! These extended pieces rarely get viewed and they really don’t fit into one of our five methods of using video for advocates because of their length. On the other hand, an edited few minutes on a particularly rousing speech or even a few seconds on a pithy point can be used very effectively.

Editing video is a triple balance for advocates involving the time it takes to post a finished product, minimum length versus coverage of the issue and quality. Books, seminars and entire video editing courses allow those interested to spend huge amounts of time and energy learning what is at bottom a very complicated skill and art. We have tried everything from sitting with local experts for tutoring to one of us spending a semester at Duke University learning how to use “Ken Burns” type video editing software. But don’t worry – you don’t have to do all that.

Why? In the end we have two words for our fellow advocates: Macintosh iMovie.

This consumer video software is enormously powerful and extremely easy to learn and use. It doesn’t do a tenth of what an expensive professional video editing program like Final Cut Pro can accomplish but it has several key advantages for advocates.

Just because we aren’t professionals doesn’t mean we advocates don’t have to worry about the quality of our productions. As video gets used more and more, even short clips and stories are expected to be well produced. With iMovie however, anyone can with a little investment in time produce a product that passes muster and may even look great.

To that end what follows are some basic tips on using iMovie. They assume some familiarity with the program of the sort that can be gained by anyone who opens it up and plays around with it for an hour or two. Our least computer-savvy staff report that, unsurprisingly, the more time they spend experimenting with the program the more comfortable they get with it. One other training strategy we use is to pay a local video producer and artist we know to come in for a few hours and go over some of the basics with staff members who want more help.

iMOVIE – WHY IT’S THE ADVOCATE’S ADVANTAGE:

1. Most people can learn to use it quickly and easily.

That means several staff members – even those that aren’t very computer savvy – can not only shoot video but also learn to produce short clips that include basic titles and transitions. One of our best outreach workers who rarely liked using a computer was able to learn to produce excellent personal story videos.

2. iMovie is so easy to use that someone who is moderately familiar with it can create and post video very, very quickly.

This becomes important if the short video the organization is creating has an element of time sensitivity. Want to comment on a hot issue or increase press coverage of a press conference that took place an hour ago? Then getting up your video fast is crucial.

3. As advocates, it isn’t necessarily the best goal in our video production to have the slickest and most professional video.

While looking (and sounding) as good as possible is nice, take a look at the goals for advocates – to jump a person behind a personal story into the mainstream media doesn’t take a slickly-produced video. Instead it takes getting a compelling story in front of a few reporters.

EDITING TIP #1: Keep it short, short, short.

This is easy to say, but hard to follow. When you've spent an hour talking to a family with a heartbreaking story that just begs for more publicity, instinct says to include as much of the interview as possible. This is counterproductive. Your goal is to have something that in under three minutes (under two minutes is even better) tells the basics of that person's story.

We've found it often helps to have someone who didn't interview the person you are featuring view the video and suggest cuts. Because they didn't meet the person they can provide an outside perspective on what is most compelling from the story.

Another main way to cut is to look for the sound bite. As advocates and writers, we tend to like to include background to statements people make. While explaining what a government program does or how the mortgage foreclosure process works (or doesn't work) might be appropriate in an op-ed piece, in a video story it's just too much. We aren't Ken Burns – personal story video doesn't have time for much background – so focus on what the immediate effects are to that person or what their immediate concerns may be.

EDITING TIP #2: Use title screens to fill in the blanks for the audience and break up your video story into smaller chunks.

Think George Lucas, *Star Wars*, and words rolling into the distance to set the scene for the whole movie. You can actually do that effect in iMovie, but a simple black title screen that either sets up the video ("Mrs. Black speaks about joining the new federal high risk health insurance plan") or transitions between one clip in the video and another ("But is it really affordable health coverage?") works fine.

EDITING TIP #3: Use snappy transitions (i.e. fade in and out, a rotating cube, and so on) to provide a quick feel to your video.

Again, iMovie makes this easy. For example, we recently put together a video of a public hearing that featured about 10 speakers. We just used a few seconds of each speaker and a rotating cube transition to spin from one speaker to another to keep things moving along.

EDITING TIP #4: Keep things simple.

iMovie actually can make it too easy to add graphics, exploding titles, gothic scripts, and animated transitions. Don't go overboard! These techniques can just become a distraction from what should be the real focus for advocates: providing a short and interesting look at a person, speech or action relevant to your issues. If you think your video isn't worth putting up without some really snazzy animation around it, the clip likely just isn't worth putting up.

EDITING TIP #5: Experiment with sound, just not too much.

This is a raging debate in our office. Should we add a little background music? Or how about a few sound effects? iMovie makes this so easy, it really is tempting. Sometimes

sound can be quite effective, but it is easy to go overboard. Generally, if we add background music to a video, we turn it down to about 10-15% of full volume – low enough so that sometimes you don't even notice it.

Remember too that you can't use copyrighted songs in your video. The nice thing about iMovie is that it includes a fair amount of prerecorded background music you can insert with no copyright problems. In addition, Apple's sound program, GarageBand, can quickly and automatically create longer background music tracks which can easily be used in iMovie.

We have also found individual sound effects can work, but they can also be distracting. For example, in our video of the well-known national group holding a rally in an empty field where hardly anyone showed up, we used a background track of chirping crickets. That was funny. Less so was the "sliding skis" sound effect we used a couple of times to introduce some of our longer interviews. That was just distracting.

EDITING TIP #6: Learn how to detach the sound track from the video you took and insert pictures or shots relevant to your story over a portion of that same sound track (voiceover transitions).

This is one of those techniques people who put together TV shows or movies use that is so ubiquitous most people never really think about it. The editing is just a natural part of the program you are watching. That is it *seems* natural until you actually are trying to edit your own video; then you realize you are missing something critical and don't have any idea how to make it happen. This sort of editing is the most complicated of all the techniques we recommend, but it is well worth spending a little time learning how to make it happen because it makes video look so much more professional.

A basic example often occurs in a news interview. The interview starts with a shot of a person talking to the camera. Then, as that person continues to talk, the video cuts away to either still images or more video that further illustrates the point the person speaking is trying to make. Say a mother is talking about unaffordable medical bills and the effect on her family. As she speaks, the camera cuts away from her to images of the actual medical bills with high charges on them highlighted in yellow. Or, the camera cuts away to a slow pan of the mother's family photographs. During both of these changes in scene the audio is constant – the mother being interviewed continues to describe the issue

BASIC STEPS FOR VOICEOVER TRANSITIONS IN iMOVIE:

1. **Select the video clip in which you want to insert another video over the original clip's audio track.**
2. **Detach the audio of the original clip.**
3. **Select a set portion of the video only of the original clip you wish to replace – we usually try to keep this to 10 seconds of the original clip or less.**
4. **Delete that portion of the video only of the original clip and – this is very important – note the length of the deleted portion.**
5. **You'll be left with the full-length original audio below two separate portions of the original video clip.**
6. **Now take a video clip of the same length as the one you deleted of the original clip and insert it between the two portions of the original clip.**
7. **Finally, turn the sound down completely on the new clip you inserted.**

and the video eventually cuts back so the viewer sees her finish her point.

Luckily iMovie comes to the rescue here too for us nonprofessionals. More sophisticated video editing software allows for these sorts of transitions to look really good, but much the same effect can be achieved with iMovie by people with less training.

It sounds complicated, but it really isn't too hard. And the improvement in the video is tremendous.

Getting the basics of editing using iMovie is usually enough for most advocates. With increasing familiarity, iMovie allows a very professional presentation. And time spent learning the program through trial and error is usually very rewarding. In our organization, we've had a lawyer, paralegal, social worker, and ex-print reporter all learn how to use iMovie to make effective and interesting short videos. And none of them had to give up their day jobs to do it.

Finally, while editing your work to make it short, interesting and effective is crucial, editing should never be a substitute for talking to interesting people and bringing to wider notice issues and events critical to our advocacy work. In the end, even with the new techniques of easy video production and distribution, advocates shouldn't forget that video is simply another method to complement the traditional strategies of organizing and advocacy. After all, without interesting and well-attended community meetings on important issues there wouldn't be anyone to talk to for a personal story. Without passionate community voices, there wouldn't be any public hearing on which to make a video report. And without hours spent building credibility with mainstream news media reporters, policymakers and the public, there would be little audience for any video, no matter how professionally produced.

PART SIX

Distributing and using your video effectively

"If you build it, they will come" is not a line that applies to the short videos advocates place on YouTube and other sharing services very often. Distribution is an uphill battle and directly affects the amount of time and effort advocates feel like they should put into their video work. After all, why do video if no one sees it?

Several years of experience here at the Justice Center have given us a little perspective on this question. **First**, no matter how good you are, there are going to be some – probably even quite a few – videos that fall completely flat. Not everyone feels as passionately about our advocacy causes as we do and, in a world where one now can click through to see the latest hilarious Stephen Colbert or Tina Fey short, there is plenty of competition for video attention. In this environment persistence is critical. **Second**, we look at video as one more method in our advocacy toolbox to use with all the others from the traditional community meeting to the latest social networking wonder. While it's easy to get seduced by the new ways video can broadcast a message, it is a mistake to forget the necessity for a good, basic communication structure that can use that video to the very best advantage. **Third**, keep

in mind the five different ways advocates can use video to advance their interests (see page 9). The goal may well affect the distribution method and the definition of success.

So even though advocates shouldn't look for viral-video-like view numbers as a goal, getting at least some people to watch is important. The first element in the equation that brings in viewers is what we've been discussing in this manual so far: combine a basic level of decent equipment with thought about subject and editing to produce something interesting. The second part is just as important and that is building the distribution structure and system to take advantage of the power of this new medium, and that's what we try to cover at least some of here. The strategies we use to build this structure are evolving constantly as we try to improve our distribution efforts, so in many ways, this is a work in progress. However, here are the main strategies we have used so far:

STRATEGY #1: Creation of an established blog where video complements and enhances other content.

Most advocacy organizations already have a blog as part of their standard operation and public outreach. Our general strategy with our blog here at the Justice Center (www.pulse.ncpolicywatch.org) has been to create the "go-to" place for discussion and current information on a variety of state issues. While we are always looking to expand our numbers, the idea of the blog is to first target what we call "the 10,000," a rough measure of people in our state who fall into the following broad categories: executive and legislative branch policymakers, the press corps that covers state news, fellow coalition members and advocates, various other public figures and leaders and the most civically engaged members of the public.

Shifting policy or changing the public perception on an issue is no easy task and also obviously requires more participation than just the people mentioned above. However, we feel this is a good group with which to start the conversation. Our blog began with daily writing on a variety of topics to create a dynamic and informative place for discussion of state policy issues. It took several years of extensive writing and commenting every day, but eventually our state-based blog has become one of the main "go-to" sites for people following NC state political and issue debates, reaching about 14,000 unique visitors a month.

Creation, maintenance and the (relative) popularity of the blog gave us a strong base from which to launch our use of video shorts. Three years ago, posting the very first video we created on the blog was a novelty. It soon became routine and interest in our videos served to help double our number of unique visitors within a year. Now the blog is the first line of publication for us when we put out a new video. We may use the video in other ways, but at least having the ability to put it in a place where we are guaranteed a certain number of visitors each month gives it a big push.

STRATEGY #2: Social media.

This one should go without saying. Any posted videos should simultaneously go out on an organization's Twitter account, be posted on the Facebook page, and anywhere else that might be useful.

STRATEGY #3: Use your website.

Again, an obvious suggestion, but this is actually the strategy that gives us the most problems and where we are looking for better answers. However, here's what we've done so far. First, we embed the videos on our front page, especially if they great stories that make a point about our goals or the people we serve. We also embed our videos on any project or issue pages where there are obvious connections. This serves to improve our page presentation and add good information for visitors. The downside to this strategy is the problem of keeping content current. Most advocacy organizations are always trying to balance the time it takes to update content with the benefits from a more dynamic website. We have found at our organization that we would like to change the videos that we present much more quickly and often than we have the staff time to devote to the process. However, we are looking for technical ways to make the updating easier and increase our video use across the site.

Strategy #4: Highlight in e-newsletters and similar publications.

With our established e-newsletter already reaching a high number of people, integrating video into the format has been very helpful. We are able to highlight specific stories and issues with video links.

Strategy #5: Encourage partner organizations to also post.

We communicate with partner organizations who run blogs to encourage posting of relevant video content we have created.

Strategy #6: Organizing your videos in a central place for easy accessibility.

This is a work in progress for us here at the Justice Center. Posting video on a service like YouTube provides a channel and some organizational capability, but it is fairly limited and often hard to integrate with other advocacy group efforts. We continue to use YouTube while we look for better options. We believe the ideal goal is a seamless system integrated with an advocacy group's website that organizes videos by category of personal story as well as overall topic. It should be cheap and easy to maintain. Reporters should be able to easily look for people in a particular topic area and it should be easy to highlight other work.

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