
WEDDING VIDEOGRAPHY TODAY

The Business Edge for Professional Videographers

Wedding Videographer vs. Corporate Producer: Who has the 'Real' Video Career?

By Kevin Campbell

Thinking about "moving up" from weddings to the multi-million dollar corporate market? Think again. Corporate video production may sound glamorous, but it's a market you can easily fail in—unless you're very, very careful.

First, a word of explanation. By trade, I'm a corporate video producer, creating videos for clients like Cessna Aircraft, Rent-A-Center, and various banks, utility companies and other commercial clients. I shoot weddings on the weekends. Usually, I look forward to my Saturdays as a time where I can create videos that make a personal difference.

Yet when I talk to wedding videographers from around the country, I often hear a version of the "wedding video blues:" they're only doing weddings until they have enough experience to break into "real" video production; supposedly, corporate work.

Before you think about all the "big money" you're going to make in corporate video, I've got some bad news for you. And some really good news, too.

The Bad News First

Here are a few reasons why you should not try to get into the corporate video market.

According to the International Television Association (ITVA), "corporate" (non-broadcast) video production is a multi-billion dollar industry. In 1989, independent production houses generated revenues of \$2.9 billion; in-house, or company

owned production centers, generated \$3.2 billion. The Department of Defense, for example, spends more than \$50 million a year to make 7,000 titles.

A six-billion dollar market attracts some very heavy hitters, companies that make multi-million dollar investments in professional cameras, digital tape decks, and digital video effects systems, such as Abacus and Pinnacle (\$250,000 and up). Unless you can afford a substantial investment in production gear, the established production companies in your market may eat you alive.

Even if you have access to professional equipment, the corporate video market is vastly different from the wedding or event market. Corporate videos are usually training or sales oriented, in industries that range from aerospace to health care. You've got to be intimately familiar with a corporation's internal operations, needs and politics. You'll also need extremely strong research and interviewing skills to write and plan a corporate production.

Research, scriptwriting and weeks-long production planning are alien to most wedding videographers. It's not that wedding videographers lack the ability—indeed, many wedding videographers are far more professional than some \$200-an-hour industrial directors I've met. Wedding videographers simply haven't had the training to service a market that has enormously different needs.

"The corporate video market is extremely competitive," says Alan Siegel of Videomakers in Stamford, Connecticut. "In order to function in the corporate video jungle, you've got to be in that environment, and

provide service better than anyone else." Siegel should know. He spent more than a year networking through his local Chamber of Commerce, volunteering as a guest speaker and meeting people, before he landed a corporate account.

Established corporate producers have spent years cultivating clients, playing golf with them and taking them to lunch. It's the "old boy's network" in full force. A corporate or industrial client will always hire their established production company friends over a stranger like you, even if you are cheaper.

"Working with wedding clients is nothing like working with corporate video clients," Siegel says. "Corporations are slow, and each department has its own agenda. Your production gets turned into a hybrid that looks nothing like your original idea."

From Bad to Worse

Many corporations and institutions have their own in-house production departments. Corporations such as Boeing or USAA Insurance even have their own television networks. In fact, most large companies and institutions that have video needs produce their own programs, and would have little need for your production services.

For example, GTE-Florida has a \$1.2 million production budget and creates 70 programs annually. Amway, Inc., employs 32 video producers and creates more than 75 programs a year.

Even if you're undaunted by the competition, consider that the current economic downturn has curtailed the commercial production

WEDDING VIDEOGRAPHY TODAY

The Business Edge for Professional Videographers

business. In 1990, more video production companies and post-production houses went out of business than in any year since corporate video began. The adverse economy, cheaper equipment, a hodgepodge of digital and component standards, and the battle over HDTV have all thrown corporate video production into a tizzy. Corporations are cutting budgets and salaries, and throwing a lot of able-bodied production people out of work.

Good News At Last

If you're still interested in adding corporate video to your portfolio, take heart. Despite all the "bad news," the best time to ease your way into the commercial market may be right now.

Notice that I said ease your way. Corporate video is a market that takes time to cultivate and requires plenty of research and learning along the way.

The same forces that are upsetting the high-end market will make it easier for independent producers to break in. With the advances in "prosumer" cameras and editing gear, along with the Amiga and the Toaster, corporations are beginning to realize that they don't always need the expense of "broadcast quality" training videos.

And don't forget non-traditional clients. Small companies, non-profit organizations, city and state governments, institutions and retail outlets that couldn't afford industrial videos are now excellent potential markets.

Corporate Video 101

If you're still serious about approaching the corporate video market, here are some guidelines:

■ Read everything you can about corporate video. Unless you're familiar with the terminology and ideas of other corporate videographers, you can't hope to compete.

■ Join the local branch of the ITVA. To find the phone number, call local TV stations or production companies. The ITVA will be your best source for meeting other industrial videographers. Make sure you attend their meetings, since you'll get great video ideas.

■ Join your local Chamber of Commerce. Yes, there'll be a fee, but their meetings provide perfect opportunities to network with commercial clients and government officials who might have a use for your service

(Continued on page 24.)

THE TAPE COMPANY

800 837-1100 (OUTSIDE ILLINOIS)

708 595-3113 (INSIDE ILLINOIS)

Perfect Match!

The Tape Company Selection & Service



3M ST-120
Album Case
\$10.15

S-VHS



Fuji H471 S-120
Album Case
\$9.35

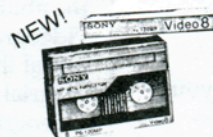


Maxell T-120 XRS
Cardboard Sleeve
\$8.39

- Largest stocking dealer for S-VHS, VHS and 8mm tapes.
- We stock a complete line of VHS plastic album cases and cardboard sleeves.
- Authorized distributor for Fuji, Maxell, 3M, Sony and Ampex.
- 97% of orders are processed and shipped the same day.
- Free shipping on all orders over \$400.00.
- Contact Mike Cullen or Tim Galassini



3M T-120 VHS
Professional
\$2.99



NEW!
Sony P6-120 HMPX
Hi-8
\$11.54



Maxell T-120 P.I.
VHS
\$2.99

MENTION THIS AD WHEN PLACING YOUR ORDER.

The Tape Company

801 Sivert Drive
Wood Dale, IL 60191

WEDDING VIDEOGRAPHY TODAY

The Business Edge for Professional Videographers

Wedding Videographer vs. Corporate Producer

(Continued from page 12.)

(hint: when you attend the meetings, listen and take notes. Don't try to sell).

■ Survey the market. Call potential companies and speak to their training or sales departments. Find out if they have their own production department. If not, ask them about their video needs. If they say they could never afford video, this is a perfect opportunity to request an appointment to talk about the services you can offer (notice I didn't say "make an appointment to sell them something." The best sales calls are conversations, not confrontations).

■ Have a good demo tape ready—and make sure it applies to the subject you're trying to sell.

"Don't show a client a wedding video if you're trying to sell them a video on steam turbine engines at General Electric," says Chris Petrograsso of Unique Video Concepts in New York. "If you're just starting out and you don't have a demo, make one up with a fake script, even if you do it for free. A lot of times it's easy to go shoot on spec, just to get a demo. That's how I got started, and I always got their business."

■ Be ready to invest in (or rent) high quality cameras, editing and graphics equipment.

■ Be prepared to spend some time cultivating clients. With industrial video, it's best to target people you already know.

You'll also need to research a particular industry before you can create video about it. If your work or social contact is in retail, for example, work your way in with stores that might need training videos.

Don't approach highly specialized markets, such as health care or financial organizations as first projects, unless you're already familiar with their needs. Remember, it might take up to a year of networking before a contact decides to take a chance on you—and then it might be a free, "on spec" job.

■ You'll probably need to quit your day job, too. Corporations have normal schedules, usually weekdays 9-5. They expect you to be available on their time. If you're not, they probably won't use you.

Expand Laterally, Not Vertically

With all the pitfalls involved, is it really necessary to battle uphill for the corporate market? If you need a break from weddings, there are dozens of other event-style markets you can approach, without spending a year networking, including graduations, dance recitals, school plays, seminars, pageants, reunions, receptions, funerals, births, and much more.

Miguel Arco of Video Memories by Kiki Arco is a wedding videographer who's considered corporate videos, but may now be changing his mind. "I've looked into the industrial market, but I've been booked solid (for weddings) every weekend since the beginning of the year. I don't know if I want the pressure of going out there and pushing myself for full-time industrial work."

Perhaps the most important thing to remember is that you're producing "real" videos right now. You're creating a production to please a client, and you're making money! That's just as "real" as any corporate video you could ever produce. □

Kevin Campbell owns ControlTrack, based in Wichita, Kansas and is the author of the widely recommended book, *Make Money with Your Camcorder*, available through his company.

Coming Up

- Creative Excellence Competition spotlights cross-country creativity.
- Wireless mike reviews.
- Promotions on wheels.
- New trends signaling new profit opportunities.

And more . . .

WEDDING VIDEOGRAPHY TODAY is an independent, subscriber-supported journal, published bi-monthly by Classic Events, Inc. and dedicated to the advancement of professional wedding videography. Annual subscription rates: \$55.00 in the U.S. and Canada. All other countries: \$65.00 (air mail). Payment in U.S. funds must accompany all orders. Send to *Wedding Videography Today*, 1319 Carlsbad Drive, Gaithersburg, MD 20879, or call (301) 869-6878 to subscribe by phone.

© Copyright 1991 by Classic Events, Inc. All Rights Reserved. No portion of this publication may be duplicated or reproduced in any form without prior written consent from Classic Events, Inc.