



Bring Your Brand to Life:
Harnessing the Power of Remarkable
Corporate Video Stories to
Ignite Conversations and Spark Action
By Thomas Clifford

5 Myths of Corporate Videos

Corporate videos are here to stay.

Every industry has myths surrounding it. The world of corporate video is no exception. Let's go behind the curtain of Oz and dispel some fictional tales that will, ultimately, help you create the inspiring and authentic video your organization deserves.

MYTH #1: MY CORPORATE VIDEO HAS TO LOOK BORING LIKE EVERYBODY ELSE'S.

You've seen them. I've seen them. Boring and poorly-produced videos have pervaded the corporate landscape for years. Why? Two main reasons: poor storytelling, and apathy on behalf of many in the video business.

Fact: The mini-documentary format powered by genuine and honest human interest stories produces amazing and compelling corporate videos anybody anywhere will enjoy watching... oh, yeah, and talking about.

MYTH #2: WE DON'T NEED A SCRIPTWRITER.

Don't try this at home, folks. Saving a few dollars by having a "writer" (i.e. someone who does not write for the eye and ear) craft a television script is not worth the aggravation in the long-run. Save now. Pay later.

Fact: A seasoned scriptwriter can craft the most compelling story given all the demands of production (filming schedule, on-location logistics, unearthing the best story, budget constraints, corporate politics, etc). A writer who does not understand the production process can ultimately be a costly proposition.

MYTH #3: OUR CEO NEEDS TO BE IN THE VIDEO.

Nope. Of course, there are times when it will be necessary for executive management to appear on-camera, but not often.

Fact: Not every CEO can tell a great story and come across as “camera-friendly.” Your audience, in most cases, would rather see and hear stories from “the field:” their peers. Creating emotional connections with your audience is one of the biggest gaps to cross in producing a successful corporate video.

MYTH #4: ALL INTERVIEWS LOOK 20 YEARS OLD.

For years, lifeless interviews were combined with uninspiring cinematography and became the lifeblood of corporate videos. It was easy, it was quick and it required little imagination.

Fact: In most cases, you can capture an emotionally engaging interview with dramatic eye-catching cinematography in about the same amount of time it takes to set-up and film a stale and tired looking interview.

MYTH #5: CORPORATE VIDEOS COST \$1,000 A MINUTE.

Wrong. How long has this been going around? I've been hearing this for over 20 years and the dollar amount hasn't changed a penny!

Fact: Every single corporate video is hand-crafted. From scratch. So is every video budget. It's hand-crafted, too. No exceptions.

Creating a corporate video that gets conversations started can be fun, exciting, and most importantly, life-changing. Producing an engaging corporate video isn't really all that difficult. What's difficult is showing a video nobody cares about.

Secrets from a Corporate Documentary Filmmaker

As a corporate-image filmmaker, I am a pretty lucky person. I've traveled the country, filmed in almost every state and most importantly...transformed, inspired and moved people to action along the way.

I get to craft and shape an organization's image and story on film.

Read that again...closely.

Two of the most powerful tools available today, story + film, ignite together to create a "third dimension" for an organization's message...it's powerful stuff!

When I started directing in 1984, I remember creating "reality television" videos for The Travelers Insurance. "Reality television" wasn't even born yet, but we featured "real people with real stories" frequently. We called it "cinema verite" or "cinema of truth." It's an accurate phrase because the "truth" or our "story" is contained in each of us...it's undeniably ours.

It has also been tremendously rewarding to work closely with CEO's, Senior Management, HR Executives and Department Executives of many organizations to tell their story on film.

When I say "story," I mean "authentic story."

Two of the most powerful tools available today,
story + film, ignite together to create a
"third dimension" for an organization's message.

I'm not talking about some canned script that has been approved by everyone in the marketing department. Nope. I'm talking the real deal. I'm talking about the emotional DNA, or e-DNA, of a company's story contained in its people.

Remember the cinema verite principle?

Real people + real stories = Authentic Story; the e-DNA or emotional DNA.

So, I got to thinking. Chances are many people have questions about how to tell their video story, like:

"How do I know what to look for in a producer?" "Are all filmmakers alike?" "What makes a filmmaker different from the others?" "How do they tell stories?" "Who, then, should tell our corporate story?"

Stay tuned. I will explore the "inner secrets" of what a corporate-image filmmaker offers an organization, why you should care about your video story and how an authentic video inspires people to action.

Films matter...the story is in the "e-DNA!"

10 Reasons Why Remarkable Corporate Videos Matter

No one ever told me this, but here's what I think. It's all about TIME.

In my 23 years of corporate video filmmaking, I think clients want to slay their biggest dragon: TIME.

If time could just be wiped out...Boom!...more would get done. Businesses would:

1. Recruit faster.
2. Train faster.
3. Sell faster.
4. Produce faster.
5. Grow faster.

So then why bother making a corporate video, really? Producing a remarkable corporate video takes time...just like everything else. But what if there was a way out? What if there was a way to:

- Use time to your advantage?
- “Squeeze” your ideas, dreams and vision into a “time capsule” for all your potential clients to see?
- Tell your story in an emotionally and engaging manner to a world anxiously trying to create meaningful conversations?

Then time would be your best friend, right? Remarkable corporate videos packed with “eMotion” help slay that ugly dragon: time.

Emotionally and engaging videos framed around a context of relationships ignite conversations and create meaning...all in just a few minutes. And why is that important? Simple. If no one is talking about you, you do not exist. Period.

Emotionally engaging and energetic videos spark conversations. They get people to talk, think and act. And in the end, we want people to act a certain way through our story.

What is my goal? To get you to think...and act.

To get you to think about how you can befriend time by creating a short, remarkable corporate video. To think about corporate videos as an emotional tool to stimulate and spread conversations about your vision, team, department, leadership or your organization.

Here are a few reasons why remarkable corporate videos matter, in no particular order.

1. Generate sales; create new leads
2. Raise awareness; change perceptions; change lives
3. Reinforce existing relationships; create new ones
4. Reduce administrative costs; save travel costs and employee time (it's the dragon)
5. Create consistent stories, consistent messages
6. Save time. Ever go to a meeting that was a total bust? Next time, open the door with your video and start a dialogue. Create a conversation. Then get on a plane. You'll...
7. Save money. See # 6. Repeat #6 and #7.

8. Strengthen your brand.
9. Humanize corporate policy. Videos personalize corporate issues like diversity, new hire orientation. They screen potential employees before spending thousands on training and development, profile leadership in action, raise awareness about misconceptions, and more.
10. Simplify. Take complex ideas and make them simple for others to understand.

Bonus: Change the world.

By the way, everybody has a story to tell...the only question is, who's telling yours?

“Hey! How Much Is A Pound of That Video?”

“Is that with or without actors, a scriptwriter, an original music score, transcriptions, motion graphics, narration, Hi-Def or DVCAM, small crew, large crew, with travel or without, one day of filming, two days of filming, oh...I forgot, do you need a director, too?”

“Uh...geez, I'm not sure!”

“Well, then, pull up a chair and let me hear your story; from the beginning. Tell me about the time you...”

Funny, it always goes back to the story.

Over the years of producing and directing corporate films, this is without a doubt, one of the most often asked questions I get.

Here's the answer: there is no answer!

“But, hey Tom, what about that ‘\$1,000 a minute’ rule of thumb that everybody keeps talking about?”

Sorry. Urban myth, legend, fairy tale. If I had a dollar from everybody who believes that, I’d be a millionaire.

There is no magic answer to how much a video costs because telling video stories is a handcrafted art form. Every film is unique. No two films are alike. Each one is a “limited-edition collectible painting.”

Every film is indeed fashioned and made by hand. There are no shortcuts. There are no assembly lines to create a video story. There are no “put it in here and it comes out there” video machines.

Every film is a new story and every story is a new film.

When a producer and a client begin working together on a new project, they are starting from scratch to “handcraft” the strongest possible story with the highest possible return on investment on two levels simultaneously:

1. igniting the audience, and,
2. effecting the bottom-line

It takes time to handcraft a story through video that shines brilliantly for all to see.

Yes, films are still fashioned the old way: with your hands. The only difference now is we have a ‘mouse’ to make things easier in the edit room.

The 5 Laws of a “Remarkable” Corporate Video

Ever think about having your own marketing video?

Sure you have. You’ve probably wanted your own corporate video for the longest time. With so many businesses producing their own marketing videos, not having your own video is like throwing money into your competition’s hands. Heck...you might even own a fancy video camera with all the latest editing software. Oh, yeah...you even have your own free, worldwide broadcast network, remember? YouTube.

Every film is indeed fashioned and made by hand. There are no shortcuts. There are no assembly lines to create a video story. Every film is a new story and every story is a new film.

So you’re good to go, right? Nope. Not so fast. What will make your video stand out from the others? How will it be different so your potential customers will notice you?

These “5 Laws” serve as a creative “springboard” to help micro (1-2 person) companies use video creatively and uniquely...like an “escape route” from the “same old, same old” video techniques. However, the “5 Laws” work equally well for micro and macro companies.

1. THE LAW OF STORY

From my lens, tools do not a story make. They never have; they never will.

Do you know the secret DNA code for your video? It's your story. Period.

Not the latest hi-tech gear. Not those cool, whiz-bang-eye-catching effects. Not that slick camera with all the tricks built-in. How about that wicked new software? Nope.

Story “makes” video. YOUR story is YOUR video.

So here is the formula: your remarkable story = your remarkable video.

How do you make your video “remarkable?” WHY you do what you do holds the key to your remarkable corporate video.

Think about this for a minute.

Why do you do what you do? Go back in time to that “A-ha!” moment. In that instant, in that single moment, you realized you could change somebody’s life for the better. That is what your audience cares about the most. That is what has to be captured in your video. Your audience wants a story. So tell them a story. Beginning, middle, end. Simple.

1. Tell them what you do.
2. Why you do it.
3. How it helps them, and
4. What it means to them.

That’s it.

Then your audience will care about you. More importantly, they will care to tell someone else.

2. THE LAW OF CARING

“Why should my audience care about me?” “Why would they care about my product or service?”
“Will they even care about my video?”

Caring means “concerned, compassionate, kind, considerate and sympathetic.”

Why the heck should your audience be concerned and sympathetic about what you do?
They’re terribly busy. You are just one click away from your competition.

Tough stuff, indeed. But once you tell your audience why they should care about you, then you offer them meaning behind the product. Then they begin to care. When they care, you have their attention.

I care about filmmaking because it literally changes people’s lives. It changes careers. Videos can change our thinking, our perceptions, and our consciousness.

Your remarkable corporate video should have the same passion. People care more about authentic stories than fancy features, statistics, comparisons, charts and graphs and drop-down menus.

So...get me to care about you and your story, then I will feel connected. Then I will get emotionally involved. Then I will tell others, too.

Now that you have my attention and I care...perhaps a sale is not too far away.

3. THE LAW OF DIFFERENT POINTS OF VIEW

Who ever said a scripted voice-over with video is how to create a corporate video?

To jumpstart things, consider incorporating these different points of views in your video:

- You
- Current customers
- Potential customers
- Sales people
- Primary audience
- Product/Service
- Human Resource
- Purchasing Department
- The CEO
- Department heads
- Department teams

Each one represents a point of view, a personality, beyond yours. Now that's different!

4. THE LAW OF BENEFITS

It's all about me and my world. That's how your customers think.

Connect with your customers by showing your audience the benefits of your service over your features. Why?

Because consumers buy with their emotions and feelings. Think of it this way.

Your features are food for the "left brain." Your benefits are food for the "right brain."

Assume for a moment that the left brain is satisfied with the features you offer: the features work, they're cool, they're different, they're unique. But your viewers are still hungry. That's where the right brain comes in, where the emotions and feeling are stored.

Ultimately, we are motivated to purchase things by our feelings and emotions. We feel good buying your product. We feel enlightened using your service. Your customers don't feel the features. They feel your benefits. Sell the benefits. It's about them, not you.

5. THE LAW OF CHANGE

Think 30.

30 seconds, that is.

Commercials have completely re-wired our brains to think in 30 second time slots.

Your corporate video should follow the same path. Think of your five minute video as a series of 8-10 commercials; change the music and ideas every 30 seconds.

This is the best-kept secret to make people think your video is shorter than it is. Changing the pace and rhythm every 30 to 45 seconds keeps things moving and keeps your audience engaged every moment along the way.

Think of these "5 Laws of Remarkable Corporate Videos" as the foundation for your video story. They can be applied by anyone with any product or service, and easily customizable.

Is Your Corporate Story an “e-Motion”?

When organizations decide to tell their story through film, they take a leap. As a filmmaker, I take that leap with them. Together, we take a leap into the unknown...that “place” where questions unfold endlessly.

Questions like:

- Who will tell the story?
- How will it be told?
- Why is their story worth watching?
- Who cares?
- What’s the payback?
- Will we make a difference?

Sometimes the answers come easily...sometimes not.

But I trust, and know, that the DNA for the corporate story is contained in every employee. I trust the voices that carry the DNA will be captured authentically. I also trust smart organizations will seek opportunities for that DNA to express itself...authentically and emotionally.

Authentic corporate films = the blueprint for the “e-motional” DNA of an organization.

Why are you pushing the “play” button for your audience? If you get stuck reaching this objective, remember this:

“3H Mantra” = Head...Hands...Heart.

- Head: Do you want your viewer to think a certain way? Are you changing or correcting a perception?
- Hands: What do you want your audience to do? Call? Write? Share? Log on?
- Heart: How do you want your viewer to “feel” the moment the show ends? Define the ‘eMotion’ in one word.

The deeper you go...the better the film...the better your results.

Six Ways to Make Your Corporate Film Pop!

To avoid falling into the trap of having your video look like everyone else's, remember:

1. Use authentic voices. Let your people tell your story.
2. Avoid, as much as possible, scripting what people say...your audience is smarter than you think.
3. Be clear on why you are making your film...end-of-year spending maketh not a great film.
4. Remember your audience. You are making the film for them...not for you. (That'll rattle some cages!)
5. Seven minutes or less is a perfect length for most corporate videos. Avoid buying video “by the pound.” Less is more.
6. Consider multiple ways of distributing and re-purposing your film. Digital files offer more opportunities than ever before to maximize your message.

Apples to Apples: RFP's Like Mixed Fruit Salads.

RFP's take a lot of time out of a producer's schedule.

- Be as specific as possible when writing an RFP.
- Set parameters.
- Invite questions from producers and post the answers on-line.
- Tell us everything we need to know.

Having a mixed fruit salad wind up on your desk makes it hard for you to compare apples-to-apples.

It also makes it hard for us to propose our best ideas for you.

So, when creating an RFP for a filmmaker, remember this: If I have to second-guess what you want, nobody wins. If you're not sure what to propose, then ask us. Pick up the phone and call us.

After all, we both just want an apple to be an apple.

What is a Corporate Video Edit Session Like?

It depends who you are.

- For some, it's like watching paint dry...or a tug of war.
- Or it's like two people struggling to paint one picture.
- Or it's like sparks flying in every direction.

For me, editing is like a miracle.

Imagine crafting a compelling ten minute story from 300 minutes of original footage.
Imagine thinking you have the answer and then the editor “ups” your idea...all day long.
Imagine seeing your “closely held” ideas morph into concepts you never dreamed of.
Imagine your idea is a “spark” and the edit team is the “wildfire.”

What Difference Can Four EXTRA Minutes Make in a Corporate Video?

If it were your career, it would make the difference between one job or another.

And if it were your company, four minutes could potentially save you tens of thousands of dollars.

Problem: How does a Fortune 500 company reduce hiring, recruiting and training costs for new hires? How can a company quickly, effectively and realistically show their culture, values and communicate their “vibe” to potential candidates ahead of time?

Solution: Produce an honest and compelling documentary featuring four diverse employees. Have the “heroes” share their personal stories about the corporate culture, the pace and rhythm of work, a typical day, the training required, the role of teams, etc. Show the real deal. Tell the real deal. Create a pre-written script? No, thank you.

This approach actually captures the integrity and honesty of an organization: the outer actions reflect inner actions. The trust factor increases between all stakeholders.

I was commissioned to create such a film...a 10-minute film. After five days of intense editing, the film ran 14 minutes. Now, I’ll tell you up front; if I were asked to produce a 14 minute film, without hesitation I would say, “That’s too long. Tighten it up.” This film proved me wrong.

Throughout the editing process, I realized something I had not realized in a long time: sometimes, more time can tell a story better than less time.

Those extra four minutes can, and will, change someone's world for the better. And the change could go either way. "Thanks for telling me more of your story. Hire me. I'm a great candidate." Or, "No thanks. I saw all I needed to see. I'll pass."

Both parties win either way.

This 14-minute story is actually better than a 10-minute story. In video, that's rare.

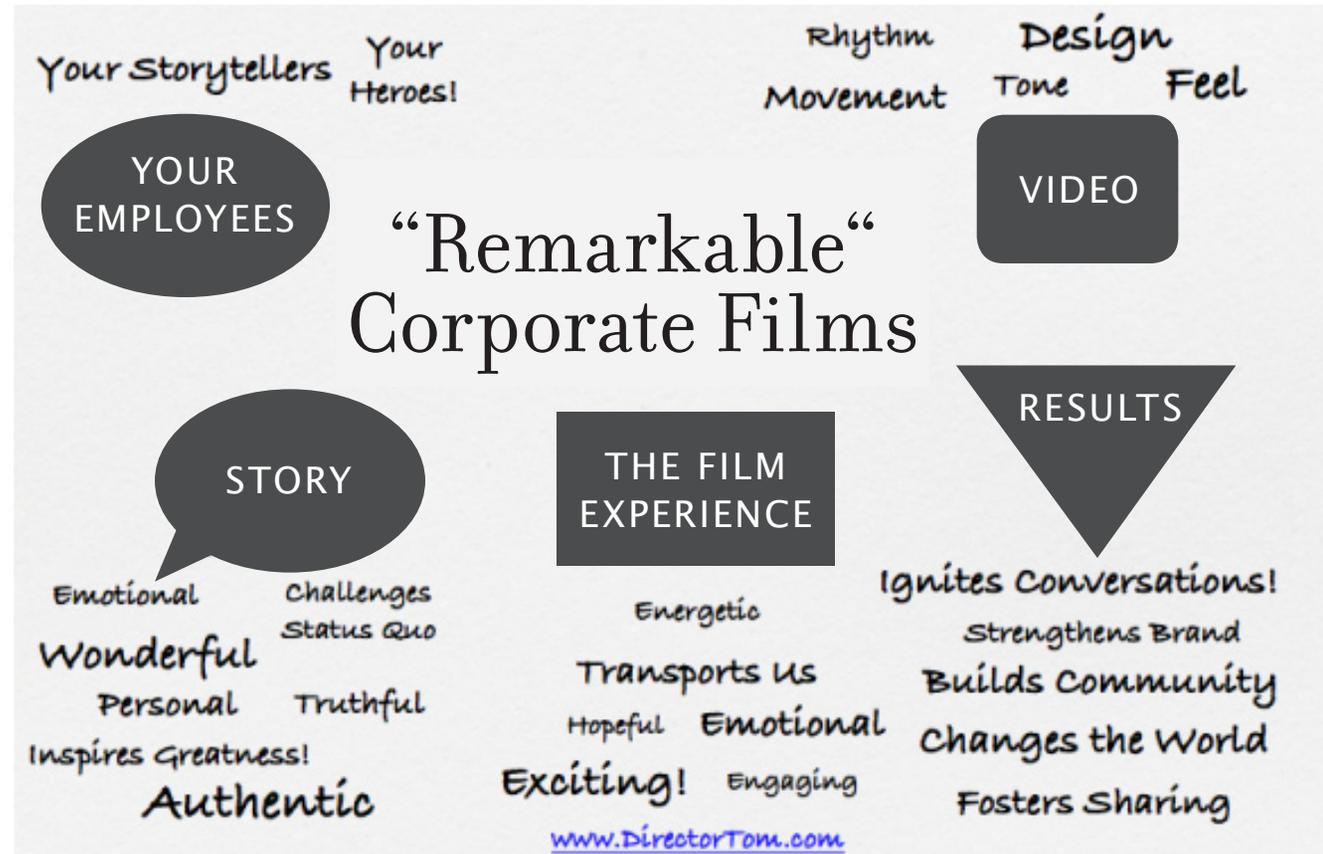
Just like honesty.

DNA Map: What Makes a Corporate Video "Remarkable?"

Almost 25 years of documentary filmmaking distilled here.

It's a filmmaker's "footprint." A corporate video is simply a journey. A journey to a new place.

Heroes as corporate storytellers, formerly known as "employees," invite us to share their journey, their dreams and struggles with them. They are the organization's "voice." Remarkable films have remarkable heroes, yes?



What are the Two Biggest “Dips” in Every Corporate Video?

Imagine this. What would happen if you knew ahead of time when to quit something: a project, a job, a relationship?

Seth Godin’s new book, *The Dip*, helps you figure out exactly that. When to quit and when to stick.

The “dip” is that “long slog between starting and mastery.” The “dip” separates the beginner from the expert. It’s that place where people quit just when a little extra effort would take them through the “dip” and on to the “other side.”

Now, let’s plug in your corporate video. What are the two biggest “dips” facing every corporate video project? And when do they occur?

1. The “RISK DIP.” This happens at the beginning of every video project.
2. The “DISTRIBUTION DIP.” This happens at the end of every video project.

The Risk Dip

The “RISK DIP” occurs when you go for “safe.” Instead of risking an authentic story with un-scripted interviews, many corporate videos take the safe route...crafting predictable, disengaging and unemotional messages. Bang! They hit the “RISK DIP.” Decide in the beginning to take a risk. Decide where the risk is. And then decide if the risk will help you create a video that’s the “best in the world.” If not, why bother?

The Distribution Dip

The “DISTRIBUTION DIP” occurs when you realize few people can actually see your story. Decide in the beginning that you need to create a “best in the world” distribution system for your video. What is hard is figuring out HOW you are going to distribute your “best in the world” video when you are done with your project.

Knowing your “dips” ahead of time can help you create a corporate video that’s the “best in the world” and worth talking about.

3 Reasons to Share Your Corporate Video

“Shhh!!! Don’t tell anyone. It’s a secret.”

“What’s the big secret?”

“Most companies are afraid to put their videos on the web.”

“How come? Seems silly, to me.”

“I think it’s because they want to keep control of their story.”

“But anybody can find out anything about any company now. Don’t they know that?”

“Yup. Silly, indeed.”

No need to keep your story a secret, folks. Stories need a carrier, something to make it spread. Welcome...Web 2.0.

Organizations can begin using their video story to design meaningful conversations and sharing their story by:

- embracing their story
- embracing new media
- embracing the concept of publishing their story on-line

Here's a cheat sheet why posting your corporate video on-line can ultimately help you:

1. Your Stories Are Being Told Anyway; Be Part of the Conversation.
2. You Will Boost The Quality of Your New Recruits.
3. Your Authentic Corporate Video Strengthens and Extends Your Brand

Do you want to bring your “brand to life?” Need to tell your story in a clear, authentic and remarkable way? Wish you could bring your organization’s brand story to life and make it jump off the screen and into your customers’ heart?

Watch what happens when you ignite conversations and connections. Remember, customers do not buy products. They buy stories about who you are and what you stand for. Corporate videos can help strengthen and extend your brand recognition. 

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ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Filmmaker Tom Clifford speaks to and consults with companies to bring their brand to life by tapping into the power of corporate video storytelling. Tom's films center on the concept that an organization's best storytellers are its employees, or as Tom calls them, its "heroes." Clifford is recognized among an international community as an accomplished and respected filmmaker and is a graduate of Loyola University in New Orleans. His blog, [Director Tom: Bringing Brands to Life](#), is dedicated to empowering companies to tell their organization's story in a clear, authentic and remarkable way. Honeywell, PricewaterhouseCoopers, Deloitte, MassMutual, Timex, St. Francis Hospital and more have benefited from Tom's remarkable videos.

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