Ray DiZazzo

CORPORATE MEDIA PRODUCTION

Second Edition

Corporate Media Production

Ray DiZazzo

To Neal Spruce, Alan Curtis, and Richard Stewart—three of the best.

Preface and Acknowledgments

In 1998 and 1999, when the first edition of *Corporate Media Production* was being written, the corporate video field was in the midst of a major transition. Processes and equipment that had been used for nearly a half century were quickly becoming outdated. Video switchers, audio mixers, cameras, videotape formats, and most of all, editing and delivery systems were all taking on new forms. The growing buzzword was "digital."

Because of this transition, I felt *Corporate Media Production* should reflect both sides of the technology continuum. It seemed appropriate to prepare students for both the analog and digital worlds of video production. This meant explaining, for example, both the traditional video editing processes as well as the new, nonlinear processes. The same rationale prompted me to cover traditional videotape recording formats, including ¾-inch U-Matic, along with the newer Mini-DV formats.

Today, although the transition continues, I believe we have come far enough into the new digital age to feel confident that very few students will encounter the traditional video processes and equipment. Most will begin their production careers in the new, digital world, in particular utilizing the new Mini-DV recording systems and nonlinear editing systems. For this reason, when the editors at Focal Press and I began discussing the possibility of a 2nd edition, the timing seemed perfect.

The book now reflects the most current media production, editing, delivery formats, and processes. Most of the traditional processes and pieces of equipment are still included, for three reasons. First, I believe it is important for students to understand how the electronic motion picture recording process has evolved. Second, those parts of the book can serve as references or examples illustrating some point or contrast with today's digital world. And finally, many traditional recording and editing systems are still in use today.

The writing, preproduction, and directing processes covered in the book required only minor revisions since these activities remain, in many ways, timeless. The majority of changes have been made in the production equipment and postproduction sections. These include new types of production and editing equipment as well as contemporary processes and techniques.

As with the first edition, *Corporate Media Production* is not intended as a complete resource. Although it does go into considerable depth in most areas, others (primarily those involving technical skills) are covered as a primer which will hopefully motivate the interested student to dig deeper.

As with all of my previous works on the subject of corporate media, my intent with this book is to be as direct and simple as possible, leaving the student with a clear and comfortable understanding of a subject that can seem anything but clear and comfortable to the newcomer.

A few additional notes. I have also updated relevant bibliography material following each appropriate section of this book and the Glossary. I also updated the Glossary itself and a listing of relevant Internet sites. Any student whose goal is to dig deeper into one particular discipline would be wise to explore these and other available resources. The Internet has become a versatile and easily accessible source of valuable information on countless topics—including corporate media production.

Finally, I would like to thank Larry Chong and his company, Westcoast Video Productions, Inc. (www.wvpinc.com), for his generous assistance. I would also like to thank Jose Altonaga, a good friend and fellow corporate producer, and Videomaker Magazine for their help and support with this project.

Contents

The Corporate Media Evolution

1

The Changing Role of Corporate Media

Remember them? Those corny slices of picture-perfect American life known as training films? They helped teach a postwar generation of young people about topics such as personal hygiene, moral values, history, geography, and even why we pledge allegiance to the flag.

In the 1940s and 1950s, training films helped educate our armed forces—and they still do today. In the 1950s and 1960s, they became part of our classroom experience. Ever heard of the title "audiovisual specialist?" This person rolled the 16-millimeter projector into the classroom, threaded the reels, set up the screen, and ran the show for the teacher.

It wasn't long after this era that America's business managers began to consider an interesting question: If the medium was good enough for our soldiers and our kids, why not for employees as well?

The original production medium for these industrial training films, or "industrials" as they came to be known, was 16-millimeter film. Then in the 1970s, a new, much simpler, and more economical medium (one that was becoming more and more common on broadcast television) became viable—videotape.

Why was videotape simpler and more economical? Because this new medium was electronic. That meant it was both immediate and much less laborious as a means of recording and playing back pictures and sound. With videotape, there was no need to thread cameras, load magazines in changing bags, record sound separately on special audio recorders, or send the exposed film and audiotape off to the lab for the multistage process of development and printing.

With video, pictures and sounds were recorded on the same piece of tape, and new, "high-tech," innovations such as ¾-inch U-Matic cassettes made handling it a snap. No threading, no darkrooms, and no threat of exposure were necessary. Not only that, but you could set up a TV monitor, actually watch your scene being recorded, and play it back on the spot! *Amazing!*

Ah, yes. Technology.

We've come a long way since the first days of those early recording systems. The ¾-inch, 2-inch, and even 1-inch reel-to-reel formats have all but disappeared with the emergence of high-quality smaller formats such as ½-inch Beta SP, Digital Beta and ¾-inch D-2. Even smaller, more economical formats, such as 6-millimeter mini digital video (Mini DV), have come on the scene. The often cumbersome to transfer and manipulate analog signals that were the mainstay of early video recording and playback systems have been almost exclusively replaced by digital signals—a change that has resulted in higher image and sound quality and much greater ease in duplication and editing.

Speaking of editing, how about the early, cut-only edit bays? The rooms were stacked with piles of "window dub" videocassettes and reams of scribbled notes, and editors pulled out their hair as they rambled on about "dirty" edit decision lists and generation loss.

The digital era has catapulted the dark, frustrating world of the traditional video edit bay into the future as well. Most of the controllers and ¾-inch videocassette recorders (VCRs) have been replaced by computer monitors, keyboards, and hard drives. These new

nonlinear systems such as AVID, Final Cut Pro, Adobe Premier, and others are capable of digitizing, compressing, storing, and editing pictures and sound—without the use of videotape!

This advance is possible because picture and sound information has become streams of ones and zeros, just like any other file in your PC. Want to move a shot? No problem, just drag and drop it as you would cut and paste a piece of text in a word processing document. Don't like it there? Want it back where it was? No problem, just lift it out and drop it back in wherever you like. No generation loss, no dirty lists, no confusion, no problem! It's digital!

There's no question about it—an evolution is underway. The industrial film evolved into the **corporate video,** which is continuing to evolve into a new digital medium that we often refer to as **multimedia.** This medium encompasses multiple types of images and sounds processed and delivered not on film or videotape, but rather as digital files on computerized systems such as **compact disc (CD-ROM), digital video disc (DVD),** and the **World Wide Web.**

But how about the content of **corporate media** programs? Has it evolved as well? Absolutely. The corny, picture-perfect characters posed in front of the camera in their ideal settings have vanished. The slices of industrial American pie have "grown up" into serious, broadcast-quality programs—often news magazine and documentary-style explorations of issues critically important to modern business and its employees.

USES OF MEDIA IN THE CORPORATE WORLD

Those "critical issues" fall into the following four general categories: training, motivating, and informing employees, as well as informing or motivating the public.

Training Programs can teach employees specific ways to sell a product, follow a procedure, or deal professionally with customers on the phone or in person.

Motivational Programs can emphasize how high a company's productivity was for the previous quarter and rally employees to achieve even better results in the next quarter.

Informational Programs can keep employees abreast of changes within the company, thus helping to maintain good morale, open communications, and high productivity.

Public Programs can help market a company's products or perhaps inform the public about its latest goodwill efforts or promotional events.

And what changes have taken place in how these programs reach employees or public viewers?

DISTRIBUTION AND DELIVERY SYSTEMS

Videocassettes

As we all know, the audiovisual specialist with his or her projector on wheels and precarious screen on a three-legged stand is now virtually an extinct breed. The "silver screen" has been replaced by the television and VCR. Today, corporate programs are most often duplicated to VHS videotape and distributed on videocassettes to employee work locations. Employees gather around VCRs and TV sets in break and conference rooms. They watch these videos, perhaps receive accompanying handouts, and often take part in subsequent discussions on issues ranging from safety to job burnout. VHS videocassette is the most common distribution system currently in use in corporate America.

Corporate Broadcasts

During the 1980s, satellite technology also became a widely used medium for disseminating information in the corporate world. Key executives and product technicians discovered they could go "on the air" in a **corporate television** studio and have their message aired live via satellite. Though not cheap by any means, this direct broadcast satellite (DBS) proved to be a cost-effective way to distribute a consistent message to large numbers of employees in a short, critical period. DBS has also been used extensively to "roll out" new products to employees at different geographic locations without the use of expensive traveling demonstrations. Corporate broadcasts have another distinct advantage over prerecorded video programs—they can be interactive! Employees at distant locations are able to call in to submit questions or make comments, and in some cases they can talk live to key executives or technical experts on the air.

Distance Learning

Speaking of interactive programming and distant locations, the term *corporate broadcast* also encompasses distance learning programs in the business world. These are satellite broadcasts in which an instructor or **subject matter expert (SME)** teaches a subject before one or more cameras. Employees at distant locations are able to not only view but also interact with the instructor via signaling devices and telephone lines. Distance learning has also found a home in our educational systems, becoming a commonly used method of teaching college courses.

CD-ROM, DVD, Streaming Video/Audio

But the digital era has brought even more profound changes to this "interactive" part of the media story. These days, delivery systems such as CD-ROM (Figures 1.1 and 1.2), DVD, and streaming video are also becoming viable means of delivering corporate information.

Interactivity—A Key

Because these new delivery systems are computer based, they also add a new, higher level of interaction to corporate media. Employees are able to not only sit and watch a program, but interact with it in ways that tremendously enhance the learning process.

Have you seen or experienced the latest video arcade games? They are examples of digital sound and
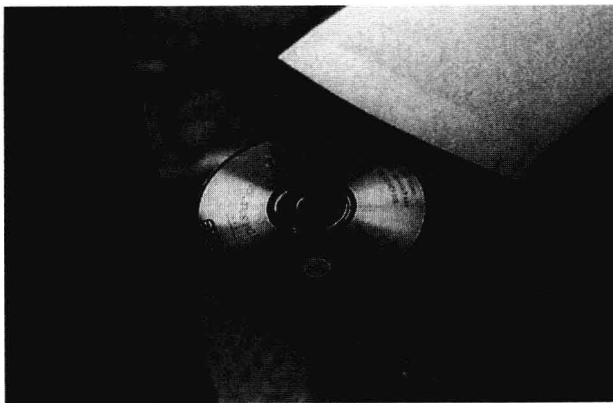

Figure 1.2 Marketing CD-ROMs the size of business cards are often given away at trade shows or sales gatherings. They allow the user to sit at his or her computer and view products and services through the use of an interactive multimedia program.

image technology combined with computer programming (authoring) to create an intensely interactive experience for the user. In the case of the typical race car or warrior battle game, the experience is primarily designed to entertain (although you do tend to learn quite a bit about how to defeat that warrior after a few tries, right?). In the case of business programs, however, such as flight and job simulators, media experiences very similar to videogames are designed to teach employees critical skills, such as how to operate electronic and other work-related pieces of equipment.

The World Wide Web

And how about cyberspace? With the advent of streaming video technology, which allows a digital stream of live or recorded sound and images to play on a PC, the use of digital corporate media has taken another tremendous step forward. Prior to streaming technology, an employee wanting to obtain motion pictures from an online connection had to first download that information onto a hard drive. But as you may know, colored moving pictures consist of very large amounts of digital information—too much for the average PC hard drive. Streaming technology, however, eliminates the need to download. It simply streams the sound and pictures through a software "player," which captures, displays, and drops out the viewed information, with no permanent hard drive storage required. This streaming technology is now being used as a much less expensive alternative to the traditional corporate broadcast. Instead of requiring a fully equipped television studio,

Figure 1.1 A CD-ROM inserted in a personal computer. The user is able to view and interact with content using a standard desktop PC.

a satellite uplink, and multiple downlinks, streaming video allows an executive or instructor to simply sit in front of his or her computer and stream a presentation out to employee PC locations on the World Wide Web (Figure 1.3).

Local Area Networks and Intranets

Local area networks (LANs) utilize this type of technology on dispersed groups of computer stations, perhaps in one large building or through an internal computer system spread over offices in different areas. Intranets
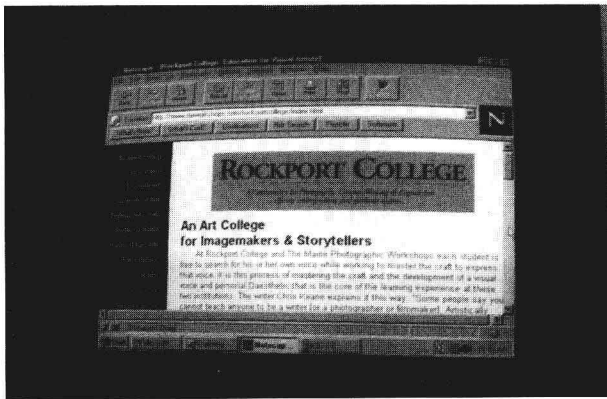
Figure 1.3 A typical World Wide Web page. From "virtual" locations such as this one, users can interact with information and training programs or run streaming audio and video applications.

provide this same type of service to private online networks, either locally or over wide geographic areas.

CREATIVE CHANGES?

The massive technological changes taking place in corporate media prompt an interesting question: How about the creative aspects of the medium? Have the jobs of the writer, director, and producer changed as well?

The answer is yes, but not to the extent the technology of recording and delivery systems has changed. A script must still be written, and although interactive programs often involve complex branching sequences, a typical scene must have the same qualities on CD-ROM or videotape. A scene involving actors must still be blocked by a director and recorded, whether it's going on film, tape, or a computer hard drive. A budget must still be developed. Equipment and studio time or locations must be arranged. Actors and perhaps employees must be booked to appear in the program. Artwork must be developed. Music must be picked. A crew of professionals must be hired, or a multiskilled producer must be prepared to accomplish a variety of technical and creative roles by him or herself.

All of which brings us to what this book is about: *how* corporate media programs are made, *who* makes them, and the direction their evolution may take in the future. The subject of "who" is probably as good a place as any to start.