

VIDEO PROJECT PROPOSALS

Introduction

Whether you are a staff video producer or an independent freelancer, you probably will need to write proposals to get productions approved and funded. In this chapter we focus on project proposals and show you some examples of written proposals. Budgets are covered in detail in Chapter 4.

When a department wants to produce a video, they contact *you*. Your role is to flesh out the details of the video so you can estimate the amount of time needed to complete the process. They may not have thought through the details, and most likely they have not visualized the project scene by scene.

In my experience, many clients describe their idea for a video as if it were only a written document. They give little thought to the visuals and little regard to creating an engaging program that grabs the audience and maintains their interest. Their project description might include something like “John is going to talk about the history of the company. Then he is going to explain the features of the product. Finally, he will show a spreadsheet of sales projections.” Talk about boring!

Businesspeople who have had little experience producing videos don't know how they can use the medium to enliven the content and motivate their audience. As part of your proposal, you can suggest frameworks to present the material in a dynamic and captivating way. Perhaps you can suggest that in one scene actors are hired to dramatize the hardships of not having the client's product. You could introduce the concept of filming a host in front of a green screen with a virtual background. Show an example of how motion graphics with data revealed in layers could substitute for a spreadsheet.

Corporate managers view video producers as creative types, and they expect innovation from us. Go beyond a mere budget proposal to include some of your ideas that utilize AV media. Your imaginative approach could help sell your proposal, and your novel ideas will make the video much more interesting and effective.

In addition to developing a budget estimate in the proposal, the producer needs to specify the functions for which he or she will be responsible, as well as what is needed from the client. For example, you could write, “The client will provide a content specialist to supply information for the scriptwriter. The producer will send the client links to audition clips of proposed on-camera spokespersons for the client’s input on talent selection.” The proposal may also include an estimated timeline that shows approximate dates by which each phase of the production will be completed.

The freelance video producer, especially when he or she may be working for the client the first time, will need to provide samples of some of his or her own marketing materials to help sell the project. These include descriptions of the producer and crew members, contact information from past clients, and sometimes even a cost-benefit analysis. Businesspeople love case studies, and you can include brief descriptions of similar video projects you have worked on. If your proposal is in an electronic form, such as a PDF, you can include links to video clips from your website. Let’s examine some actual proposals that I wrote when my company was responding to RFPs (requests for proposals).

Sample Proposal: The Metropolitan Transportation Commission

Here is a proposal to produce a series of video clips and to be a consultant for live webcasting. The Metropolitan Transportation Commission coordinates public transportation and vehicle traffic in the San Francisco Bay area. The RFP stated that the cover letter—what they call the “transmittal letter”—and the other elements must be included in the proposal.

(Date)

(Individual’s Name)

Project Manager

Metropolitan Transportation Commission
 Joseph P. Bort MetroCenter
 101 Eighth Street
 Oakland, CA 94607-4700

Dear Ms. (Last Name):

This transmittal letter is part of Audio Visual Consultants' (AVC) proposal to be the video production services contractor for both Part I of the RFP for the video production of MTC's Excellence in Motion awards and for Part II of the RFP for on-call webcasting, video, and editing services. AVC will be able to provide the services as indicated in the RFP by August 13, 2008.

I, Stuart Sweetow, am the owner of AVC and will be the person signing the contract and managing the video production. I will be your contact person and will make sure we adhere to the production schedule. I will directly supervise AVC employees and subcontractors.

The AVC Advantage

- Audio Visual Consultants recently produced the awards video for the East Bay YMCA. This was very similar to your video in that we interviewed CEOs and other executives in their offices and homes. We also produced three years' of awards videos for Summit Hospital prior to their merger with Alta Bates. These included production and presentation.
- AVC has experience projecting completed DVDs at presentations and projecting live video of the talks as well. We use a special lens for live projection.
- The University of California, Haas School of Business uses AVC to produce tape-delay webcasts of the Business Plan Competition. We produce eight videos for Haas each year and have been their regular contractor for over 12 years. We also incorporate speakers' PowerPoint slides and digitally zoom into them during the video editing process.
- AVC is only five minutes away from MTC. This will allow for quick and frequent viewing of footage and supervision of the editing process.
- AVC specializes in corporate and public sector informational videos. We do not produce entertainment films or videos. We have experience working with company staffs on camera.

This proposal includes the following: a production treatment plan, AVC company information, experience of AVC and key personnel, description of equipment to be used, client references, signed price proposal form, and AVC sample DVDs.

Please let me know if there is any additional information you need. Should there be irregularities in this proposal or in the cost and price analysis form, I will be happy to make corrections.

Sincerely,

Stuart Sweetow

Producer Director

Encl.: Proposal to Produce "Excellence in Motion" Awards Videotape

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Sample Proposal: The Metropolitan Transportation Commission (Continued)

I created a title page (not shown) that would serve as the cover for the bound proposals. The RFP called for a number of duplicate proposals. I added the single transmittal letter to the stack of bound proposals.

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Cost and Price Analysis Form (2 pages)

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“Our Clients Are Talking”

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California Levine Act Statement

Script for Kaiser Permanente Video (15 pages)

DVD (2 videos): *Disaster Planning at Kaiser Permanente* and *Mission Possible*

Introduction

Part I Excellence in Motion Awards

In October 2008, MTC will host the Excellence in Motion awards program. AVC shall produce approximately 13 presentation clips, each approximately three minutes in length, that highlight the people, programs, and organizations that will be honored. These clips will be composed of interviews with the honorees and with nominators or others close to the winners. AVC shall get shots of the work they performed when available, as well as shots of the location of their worksite or the location of the activity for which they are being honored.

AVC staff shall coordinate with interviewees and MTC to record the interviews on broadcast-quality videotape, edit them appropriately, and assist with their presentations at the awards program.

The individual award clips shall be combined in a finished compilation video, together with an introduction by MTC's executive director or his/her designee. The running time shall be approximately 30 minutes in length.

Part II As Needed/On-Call Video and Webcasting Services

In addition to producing the Excellence in Motion videos, AVC shall be an on-call contractor to provide such services as webcasting, videotaping, and editing of workshops and meetings, and producing video news releases.

Approach I, Stuart Sweetow, serving as the AVC producer, will meet with the MTC project manager and other appropriate staff members to assess their particular needs. I'll review previous awards videos and will ask the project manager what MTC likes and doesn't like in the videos.

AVC is client focused, and we do all we can to assess client needs and preferences. If appropriate, we will conduct a brainstorming session to develop ideas for the interview segments and for the voice-over narration.

Preproduction I will create a written treatment for MTC approval. The treatment will be a description of the video project and will serve as a blueprint for the script. The treatment for the interview segments will describe such details as interview questions, B-roll video clips to be shot, photos, and other graphic elements that MTC will provide.

The treatment for the compilation video will describe such elements as the opening shots, how the director's introduction will be incorporated, what the voice-over narrator will say, how transitions will be developed between interviews, and what will be in the conclusion.

The project manager and I will meet to discuss what elements need to be included in the video and what resources are available.

Upon approval of the treatment, I will then write the draft script. The script will include all the visual elements and will include the wording for the voice-over narrator. It will describe the interviews and the order in which they will be compiled, and it will provide details on the opening, the introduction, and the conclusion of the compilation video. Upon approval of the draft, I'll write the final script.

While the project manager is reading and approving the script, I will provide samples of male and female narrators with whom we work. The project manager will choose the narrator.

The project manager and I will collect photos, TV news clips, video clips, and other visual elements from interviewees and MTC to provide visual support to the interviews and narration sequences.

Upon approval of the script, the project manager and I will work together to coordinate scheduling the videotaping of interviews. We will try to combine interviews to minimize the shooting days. We send each interviewee a link to a guide on our company website that suggests appropriate clothing, makeup, and jewelry. We also send a location filming guide to the facilities where we will be filming. It covers the logistics of bringing equipment in and out, and it discusses such issues as having a quiet area and locating interesting backgrounds for the interviews.

The project manager and I will meet to discuss the best approach to filming MTC's executive director or his/her designee for the introduction. We will also discuss the room setup of the awards ceremony and options to

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Sample Proposal: The Metropolitan Transportation Commission (Continued)

videotaping the ceremony. We will consider audio, lighting, and possibly projecting the live camera signal onto the screen.

Production I will compile the shooting crew and will be responsible for working with outside video contractors. We will determine the appropriate equipment and will arrange to bring backup cameras, lights, and microphones. I will be briefing the filming crew on the project and our policy to have minimal adverse impact on workers at the videotaping locations.

I'll direct the crew to set up the lighting equipment to best flatter the interviewees and to create aesthetically pleasing compositions with the backgrounds. I'll supervise the crew to make certain they capture the best-quality audio and video. I'll be watching the clock to make sure the interview segments that we plan to use don't exceed the allotted time lengths. If necessary, I'll coach the interviewees to help them relax on camera.

Some interviews will take place at MTC, and others will be at the interviewees' office locations. When our production crew is shooting at those locations, we will shoot B-roll of the facilities and processes to provide visual support to the interviews.

We will make window-dub copies of each day's video. The project manager may review the copies to select the most appropriate portions of the interviews.

Once the project manager has selected the narrator, I will schedule a sound studio to record the narration. I'll direct the narrator to speak with proper inflection at appropriate segments of the narration. I'll also direct the studio technician to maintain proper audio levels and to provide audio editing as necessary.

Postproduction I'll supervise Mitch Silver, AVC's in-house editor, to create a DVD with a menu for the awards presentation video clips.

The production manager may visit AVC at any time to supervise the editing process. We will provide music choices for the project manager's approval.

When all the audio and video elements are together, I'll supervise Mitch to piece together the scenes into a rough-draft video for client approval. Upon approval, the video will be finished and distributed on DVD or over MTC's website.

Videotaping and Presenting the DVD Videos at the Awards Ceremony The AVC staff will provide professional video production services to videotape the speakers at the awards ceremony and other relevant activities. Whether the ceremony will be at MTC or a remote location, I will contact the facility representative to discuss the following:

- Room layout
- Placement of camera on a riser
- Lighting, both of the room and of the stage
- Coordinating light dimming during DVD presentations
- DVD playback equipment
- Video/data projection
- Possibility of feeding the live camera image to the projector

At the ceremony, AVC staff will provide the following services:

- Videotaping the ceremony
- Connecting to audio from the PA system and monitoring audiorecording
- Possibly showing live camera on projection screen
- Start and stop DVD segments
- Dimming lights if dimmer is accessible

Production Equipment AVC will use a broadcast digital camcorder for top-quality production. Professional lighting with softening filters will give the video a clean look and will not be harsh on the performers. A sound recordist with a boom microphone will be used to capture audio clearly, and wireless microphones may be used for additional audio as needed. The equipment can be set up and taken down quickly. AVC has many years of experience shooting in the workplace and will minimize the impact on the workers and on the facility by using the least amount of equipment and accessories required.

Postproduction and video editing will take place at our storefront studio, about five minutes away from MTC. Staff editor Mitch Silver knows how to get the most out of our hardware and software for digital video editing. We use sophisticated DVD production software and hardware, and perform video duplication in-house to exacting specifications.

Company Description

Audio Visual Consultants, now in its 25th year, specializes in producing corporate training videos on location. Clients include East Bay YMCA, EBMUD, the University of California, and the city of Oakland. AVC provides scriptwriting and production services and contracts with outside professionals in particular specialties, depending on the scope of the production. AVC is client-focused and designs the video programs to meet the needs of the client.

AVC maintains its own broadcast-quality camera, portable lighting equipment, and sound recording equipment. It has an in-house editing facility and a full-time editor with a variety of software applications and DVD authoring equipment. Clients may supervise the editing as it takes place, or they may come in to approve different stages of the process.

AVC also maintains an in-house DVD production and duplication facility, as well as DVD duplication. Discs are checked using a quality-control procedure, and AVC provides labeling and packing of discs.

Description of Personnel

Stuart Sweetow, producer director, manages the overall production and supervises in-house and outside personnel. He will direct the shooting and postproduction. Mr. Sweetow has nearly 30 years of experience as a video producer and director specializing in corporate training videos. He previously taught video production at the University of California, Berkeley Extension, and has written scores of articles for professional video journals. He has won several first-place awards and managed in-house instructional video facilities for 12 years prior to starting Audio Visual Consultants in 1983.

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Sample Proposal: The Metropolitan Transportation Commission (Continued)

Michael Fleming, the camera operator, has 15 years of experience in video production. He previously was the manager of audio visual services for Mervyns and has extensive experience working with nonprofessional talent in corporate settings. He has served as camera operator on several video and multimedia productions.

Allen Lam, the sound recordist, has 17 years of experience recording audio on location for video productions. He recorded the audio for training videos for American Medical Response, DHL, St. Mary's College, and several musical and theatrical performances.

Mitch Silver is the AVC full-time staff editor who will perform video editing and other postproduction services. Mr. Silver previously worked at Cision as the lead editor and was responsible for producing promotional videos for public relations firms.

Jara Queeto, the production assistant, has 8 years of experience as a professional audio and video technician and camera operator for a variety of organizations, including Audio Visual Consultants, where he is employed. His technical expertise and easygoing manner help keep the on-camera personnel calm and the production running smoothly.

Audio Visual Consultants maintains general liability insurance and workers' compensation insurance and can obtain insurance certificates and riders to insure individual productions.

Previous Similar Video Productions

Client: Oakland East Bay YMCA

Project: Awards video produced and shown at banquet

AVC was the sole contractor to videotape interviews at various locations in Oakland and Richmond. These interviews were with CEOs, board members, religious leaders, and students. We worked with our client to develop a shooting schedule and contacted facility representatives to arrange logistics, such as bringing equipment in and out, using facility electricity, and getting into offices in advance to set up lights and audio. Locations included the Kaiser Permanente executive office, the Highland Hospital CEO office, the Richmond YMCA, and others.

AVC provided postproduction of the interviews to include subtitles and a DVD with a menu to enable clips to start and stop at will. The video clips ranged from 1 to 3 minutes in length and were shown at the awards banquet.

Client: Summit Hospital

Project: Employee Recognition awards, videotaping and presentation

Duration: Three years

Summit Hospital contracted with AVC to produce short video clips of long-tenured employees that were shown at employee recognition banquets for three years in a row. The project involved setting up a filming schedule for employees at all three shifts, filming them at their jobs, including photos of them when available, talking about their work history at the hospital, and adding additional footage. We used stock photos, newspaper headlines, and TV news clips of the decades during which they started working at the hospital.

Kaiser Permanente Emergency Preparedness Training Video Audio Visual Consultants produced the emergency preparedness video for Kaiser Permanente. It was used to train employees to perform triage and other procedures should a disaster, such as an earthquake, take place in the San Francisco Bay area. Stuart Sweetow served as the director and scriptwriter, and he worked with Kaiser physicians and other staff to utilize procedure manuals and other tools in developing the videotape.

Mr. Sweetow directed hospital staff as on-camera actors and supervised the videotaping of a scheduled disaster drill to get additional footage. AVC also has news footage of the 1989 earthquake that could be incorporated into MTC's video.

Mission Possible—Safety Training at Kaiser Richmond Using nursing and administrative staff, AVC produced a training video to reduce the number of work-related injuries. Incorporating a *Mission Impossible* theme, the hospital's safety committee assumed roles of investigators and impromptu training staff when encountering unsafe practices.

Stuart Sweetow was the director and scriptwriter. He met with the content expert and developed a treatment. Upon approval, he wrote the script and scheduled the filming. Vignettes demonstrated such hazardous conditions as workers using poor body mechanics, nurses throwing away used needles in regular trash bins, and employees verbally abusing one another.

Approval Stages

AVC's style is to work in a collaborative manner with clients. Several approval stages are built into the production process. These include:

- Treatment approval
- Script approval
- Talent approval
- Rough edited draft approval
- Approval of final edited master

Estimated Timeline

July 15–30: Review materials at the EOCs. Conduct meetings with client and content specialists.

August 1–15: Write draft treatment, client reads and comments on treatment, write final treatment.

August 16–31: Write script draft, client reads and comments on script, write final script.

Sept 1–15: Break down script into a shooting schedule. Contact locations to arrange filming times. Gather existing visual materials. Produce rough drafts of graphics.

Sept 15–30: Filming at the EOCs including interviews and B-roll. Record voice-over narrator at studio.

Oct. 1–15: First cut of edited versions of videos. Deliver to client for approvals.

Oct 15–31: Final audio mix, final cut of video, author DVDs, replicate DVDs, and deliver to client.

Note: This is an estimate based on information in the RFP. Once the process gets started, AVC will draft another timeline for approval of client.

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Sample Proposal: The Metropolitan Transportation Commission (Continued)

Budget—AVC Spreadsheet

(Please see also Appendix B-1, Price Proposal Form.)

Quantity	Unit	Description	Rate	Amount
12	days	Producer director	700	\$8,400
6	days	Camera operator	500	3,000
6	days	Audio recordist	500	3,000
6	days	Production assistant	400	2,400
60	hours	Postproduction	120	7,200
6	days	Camera equipment	500	3,000
6	days	Lighting equipment	300	1,800
6	days	Audio equipment	250	1,500
1	each	Scriptwriter	3,000	3,000
1	each	Voice-over narrator	1,400	1,400
2	hours	Audio studio w/technician	350	700
6	each	Digital videotape master	45	270
				\$35,670
1	each	10% contingency		3,567
				\$39,237

Following these pages, a page with reference names and contact information is provided. I did not include one with this sample, but here are some other data pages or appendix materials.

Sample Proposal: Accounting Training DVDs

In this proposal, we included a profit projection, since the client would be selling DVDs. We created two versions of the proposal with two different budgets. This is a technique that gives the freelance video producer two chances at winning the contract.

(Date)

(Individual's Name)

HMC, (Name) Management Group

100 First Street

San Francisco, CA 94105

Dear (Name):

Thanks for the opportunity to produce a DVD video for HMC and for taking the time to list the shots you want. This Word document explains the project and your profit potential. Two attached Excel spreadsheets show two different estimated budgets. Budget #1 represents a professional video that will incorporate Magic Bullet film look filtering and additional pre-production and post-production time. This would result in a more polished look than the more economical Budget 2.

The AVC Advantage

(As in the previous proposal, we list the advantages of using our company.)

Approach

The AVC producer will meet with HMC representatives to gather information and brainstorm ideas for the video. He will also review existing printed and graphic materials. The producer will conduct a brainstorming session to determine the most effective filming and postproduction techniques. In the alternate Budget #2, AVC will eliminate the brainstorming session.

Filming will take place in a client-provided conference room in Oakland. Client will provide PowerPoint slides that will be incorporated into the DVD during the postproduction process.

The video will consist of your lecture plus PowerPoint slides and other text graphics. Transitions and graphics will be accompanied by professional voice-over narration. Budget #1 includes motion graphics and layers that gradually reveal data. This is not only an eye-appealing process, but this technique helps the viewer understand and retain data. Client may choose the narrator from among candidates AVC will provide. Client may also choose optional background music from the royalty-free CDs that AVC owns.

Supervised by the producer, AVC's in-house editor will piece together the scenes into a rough-draft video for client approval. Upon approval, the video will be finished and distributed on DVD.

Assumptions

You will be the liaison with AVC. After the filming, you will review "window dubs," or copies of the videotapes that show time code (minutes and seconds). You will indicate the time code start and stop points. This will allow for an efficient editing and postproduction process.

HMC will provide printed materials for AVC to review. Appropriate photos, artwork, or video clips may be included in the video. The running time of the video will be approximately 90 minutes.

HMC will provide the location for the filming, and no professional studio, other than a sound studio for narration, will be rented. HMC will provide all on-camera subjects.

Production Equipment

AVC will use a Panasonic DVC 60 broadcast digital camcorder for top-quality production. The camcorder has a special "movie mode" that creates a film look. The first budget includes the option of using a postproduction digital filter called Magic Bullet. Professional lighting with softening filters will give the video a clean look and will not cast harsh lighting. AVC will provide a clip-on wireless microphone for you to wear. It will be for the filming only.

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Sample Proposal: Accounting Training DVDs (Continued)

DVD Production and Duplication

As part of the postproduction process, AVC will create a DVD with a menu and chapters. You will be able to select the menu style from a variety of templates. Users of the DVD will be able to select the chapters they want from the menu, and they will be able to navigate from one chapter to another.

AVC will subcontract for DVD replication and packaging. You will be able to supervise this process and will select the graphic styles for the package printing.

Estimated Income

You mentioned that you train 200 students per month. If the DVD has a life of three years, that would be 7,200 students. With a conservative estimate of one-third of students purchasing the DVD at \$20 each, the income would be \$48,000 from student sales. Additional, the SBDCs would be selling the DVDs to nonstudents who want to develop bookkeeping skills. If they sell the DVD at \$25 and you offer the DVDs to the SBDCs at \$15 each, that means a \$10 profit. If they sell 20 per month \times 36 months, that's an additional \$7,200 profit. Total income over three years would be \$55,200.

See the attached Excel spreadsheets for two production budgets based on different levels of sophistication.

HMC Budget # 1

4 hours	Production planning	110	\$440
1 day	Video production	900	900
10 each	Digital videotapes	10	100
10 each	Window dubs	25	250
50 hours	Postproduction	115	5,750
1 each	Narrator and studio	600	600
10 hours	Graphics production	115	1,150
15 hours	DVD authoring	115	1,725
5 hours	Magic Bullet digital filter	115	575
3,000 each	DVD copies	0.85	2,550
1 each	Packaging & printing	1,873	1,873
(Package design will be outsourced at an additional fee per client artwork)			
Total			\$15,913

HMC Budget # 2

2 hours	Production planning	110	220
1 day	Video production	900	900
10 each	Digital videotapes	10	100
10 each	Window dubs	25	250
25 hours	Postproduction	115	2,875

1 each	Narrator and studio	600	600
2 hours	Graphics production	115	330
10 hours	DVD authoring	115	1,150
3,000 each	DVD copies	0.85	2,550
1 each	Packaging & printing	1,873	1,873
(Package design will be outsourced at additional fee per client artwork.)			
Total			\$10,848

Notice that Budget #1 is the higher budget, and in the preceding narrative, I explained the benefits to the viewer.

These are just two examples of project proposals. Each production has its own individual objectives and considerations. You will be doing your viewers a favor by considering the audience demographics as part of your proposal. Emphasize your and your crew members' past experiences with similar video productions. Detail your individual competencies that relate to the specific project. Consider offering two or more alternate budgets so you can increase the odds of becoming the winning bidder.

Sometimes the bidding process includes a "bidders' conference" where the client meets with all the video producers who wish to submit proposals. The company representative answers questions from the bidders and sometimes will provide additional information not included in the RFP. While it may feel awkward to be in a room with your competitors, you can use this to your advantage by collecting their business cards or contact information. In the unlikely chance that one of them is chosen for the production instead of you, you can contact them to offer to be their associate producer, researcher, or scriptwriter.

With each successive proposal that you write, you learn more about answering RFPs, and you can use much of the material from previous proposals for new ones. As you compare your proposed budget with the actual production budget, you will refine your budget-estimating skills. Remember to offer your innovative suggestions about frameworks that you can apply to the client's video production. Businesspeople sometimes get so wrapped up with budgets and deadlines that they may overlook the importance of designing a video program that is engaging and motivating to the viewers. The proposal is an opportunity for you to demonstrate your creativity, your expertise and your professionalism.