

Making Programmes

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Introduction – how do we know what to make?

Videotel - a KVH Company - is constantly reviewing its catalogue of training materials. There are four fundamental ways in which new media is conceived:

Firstly, we bring customers together with our agents, operational and education and subject-matter experts in our London headquarters to consider:

- what needs to be added to the catalogue?
- what has been superseded by technical or legislative evolution?
- which material must be replaced?

Existing media may be edited and updated or entire new programmes planned and scheduled.

Secondly, we may be asked for an existing product to be re-purposed with extra footage and re-edited to make it company-, type-, or vessel-specific.

Thirdly, we make tailor-made promotional, marketing and training videos for companies and organisations in the maritime sector.

And finally, the Production Department provides content for Videotel's own web sites, as well as in-house promotional material for exhibitions, project launches and presentations.

Put together, they add up to a substantial annual production output.

Once identified, there are three ways of commissioning the new work:

- Videotel sole production;
- joint production;
- bespoke production.

How do we make it?

Early in its history Videotel adopted the UK's Open University's structure of incorporating steering groups of experts into our production process. These include seafarers, ship-owners, subject-matter experts, academics, P & I club representatives, representatives of the IMO and flag states, and, of course, Videotel's in-house team of experts in video, print and multi-media production.

Steering groups ensure that the information in our programmes is accurate, up-to-date and reflects good industry practice.

At each stage of the production, the steering group will be circulated with draft scripts, workbooks and video rough cuts and asked for their feedback on the content. The aim is to make sure that all content is factually accurate, clearly conveyed and comprehensive.

The Production Arc

There may be as many as thirty projects on the 'production slate' at any given time during the year. Each one takes from six to nine months from first meeting to delivery of the finished product. This is sometimes referred to as a 'production arc'. The Senior Producer has overall responsibility for this and, working with his team, will put together production teams for each project.

One of the first appointments will be the programme's producer. Also referred to as 'line producers', they are in overall charge of as many as ten productions at once. They control the budgets, contracts, the correspondence and other record-keeping, they liaise with steering group members and handle the logistics, crew bookings and travel arrangements for video crews. They also negotiate location access, including to ships when required.

Along with the producer, a programme Director will be engaged. Our directors have strong backgrounds in broadcast television, independent and corporate production; some running their own production companies. Many of them have been with Videotel for years and have substantial experience of working aboard ships.

After research, consultation with steering group members and other experts, and possibly visits to locations, the director will produce a 'treatment'. This is usually a brief outline of the proposed material to be included and possibly suggestions about the presentation style and key locations. For example; will it be necessary to shoot on board a ship, or in a shore-based simulator? Is fresh footage required at all ... can the programme be made up of already existing library shots? Will it need animation or other graphics? Should it be presented as a drama with actors shot in a studio?

As well as translating into twenty-nine languages, Videotel productions are supported by workbooks. So, the appointment of a professional workbook writer follows closely after the producer and director. Often they are present at the first steering group meeting and share the research tasks with the director. Occasionally they will also write the video script.

Workbooks follow the video closely providing extra information as well as multiple-choice tests. These complement e-Learning Computer Based Training (CBT) where the delivery is blended. Work books are supplied as hard copy and as printable PDF files.

How do we keep your attention?

A general rule of thumb used in broadcast television is based on attention span. For educational programmes, such as documentaries, research shows that the average adult viewer needs to have their attention re-focussed every 15 seconds. The theory is that it will take at least three of these events (not necessarily consecutive) to record a fact in the viewer's short-term memory. Given that this grain of knowledge needs to be put into some kind of context (known as 'set up' in video production

terms) and that the effort of memorising needs to be followed by a pause before the next fact is served up, it means that, in practise, there can be a maximum of just three key learning points per five minutes of video.

This is why effective workbooks are so important. They allow the learner to go over points made in the video as many times as necessary, thus committing them to long-term memory.

This Whitepaper has given a glimpse of the considerable care, attention and professional expertise that goes into every programme Videotel produces. A future Whitepaper will explore what happens 'on location' and follow the experiences of a typical film crew.

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