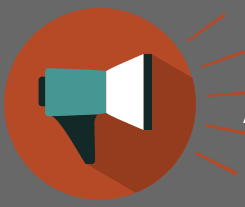# The Power of Animated Videos for Sales & Marketing

The Marketers' and Business Owners' Guide to Producing and Using Animated Videos to Increase Sales
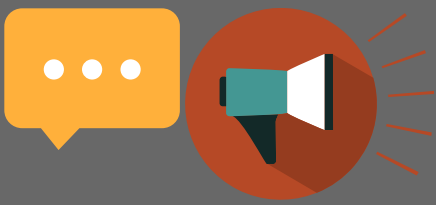
By Matthew Gethins

Acknowledgements

This book couldn't have been written without all of the other people I've worked with over the years to produce animated video content.

I must acknowledge my wonderful clients who trusted me with their marketing dollars to produce their video content – not much could have happened without them – thank you all.

I would also like to acknowledge and thank my collaborators and partners in this work; most especially my creative partner Adam Wellborn. Adam and I pretty much started this journey together and I have always found it to be like Christmas morning when I get to play one of his creations for the first time and see his amazing creativity in action.

I would also like to thank all of the other wonderfully skilled and creative people that make these videos a reality from animators and illustrators to the voice-over pros who perform the scripts.

Much thanks and appreciation for my editor Lisa Monroe and my longtime colleague David Rankine who first introduced me to the idea that video content is a powerful marketing tool.

This guide does not comprehensively cover all there is to know on the subject of producing and using video for business. Instead, the guide focuses on producing and using animated videos to improve conversion rates or the number of leads and sales generated, whether on a landing page, your main website, social media and even at events.

If you are reading this and you're a marketing professional, work at an agency or operate a business, this book should give you what you need to produce animated video content without projects ending up in a ditch. This is also written from the standpoint of the writer and producer; if you are interested in becoming an illustrator or animator this won't be the right resource.

Over the past 10+ years I have worked with companies ranging from startups to Fortune 50 tech giants who needed to generate more sales. My company would be hired to get more sales appointments, demos booked, and inbound inquiries, basically, more activity at the top of the sales funnel - more deals in the pipeline.

We utilized the usual tools and methods such as cold calling, content marketing, list building, email marketing, event promotions and pay-per-click ad campaigns. The one tool that had the most remarkable impact on results was and is animated video, usually an explainer style or whiteboard video. These fun affordable videos really work!

This guide will be useful to a founder, business owner or marketing professional who knows they could benefit from having animated video content and would like to quickly get a practical grounding on how to produce and use this type of content. If you fall into that category, you will find my perspective useful. I say that because I approach this exercise from the standpoint you are probably in right now - you need to get more leads and sales.

I started my journey with animated video content in 2012 when we used a whiteboard video on a Google AdWords campaign that was actually doing quite well. We simply wanted to do a test. The impact on results was astonishing, we actually got double digit conversion rates!

No question, I needed to use animated videos for more of my clients. I started out hiring freelancers to manage the whole process and got mixed results. After a few months of frustration, I decided to take over and become the writer and producer,
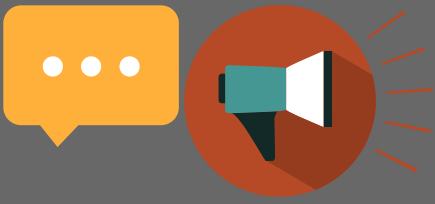
and build my own team of illustrators. This means I will be able to give you a logical process to follow when producing your own animated video content.

I hope you find the guide useful and I will close the introduction by saying that working on animated video projects is actually a lot of fun, so enjoy the journey.
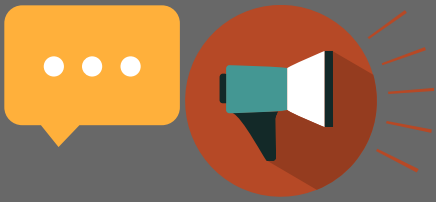
Video like any element of digital marketing has been studied to death and there are all kinds of statistics and data supporting the need for video and how it can improve results. Your target audience expects you to have video content for them. At a practical level, you simply want to make it easier for someone to get your story and key information; you want to reduce friction and lack of clarity at the top of your sales funnel.
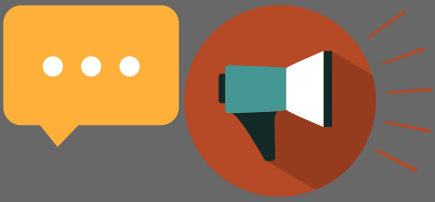

If you are a startup with an innovative concept or product, then going through the exercise of writing and producing an explainer video will help you develop that short pitch so you can acquire those early customers that you need and make your pitch to investors if you are looking for funding.

If you are a marketing professional that needs to persuade the boss or client to go along with an animated video project, below are a few key reasons to help you convince them.

These are the three main reasons video has become so important:

1. ***Attention Spans Are Shrinking*** *and it is unlikely your audience will take the time to read text in order to get your message. A short video can convey more information than pages and pages of text. We have all heard the old saying "A picture is worth a thousand words." Well, a video is worth many thousands of words.*

2. **Better Retention with Animated Videos** – Animated video makes the information you are trying to convey more memorable. There is some good research that has shown that people remember a lot more after watching an animated video versus simply hearing information (or watching a talking head on the screen). This means that you get your point across more easily and that a meeting with a prospect that has seen your video will be more productive.

3. **Animated Video Increases Your Marketing ROI** – A good animated video will almost always insure you get more from the marketing programs you are already using. Are you doing email marketing, Google Ads and PPC or SEO? A good video will improve the ROI on all of those types of programs. In some cases the increase in ROI can be dramatic.

Here are a few other stats that have come out recently that seem relevant:

- Almost 50% of Internet users look for videos related to a product or service before visiting a store. *(source: Think with Google)*

- 52% of marketing professionals worldwide name video as the type of content with the best ROI. *(source: Syndacast)*

- People spend an average of 260% more time on pages with video than without *(source: Wistia)*

- Executives (i.e. decision makers) are watching more video. A study conducted by Forbes and Google found that 83% of executives are watching more video than they did a year ago.

- The study by Forbes and Google also found executives take action after watching video; 65% have visited a vendor's website after viewing their video and, on average, 50% of executives conducted a search for more information after watching a work-related video

There are a variety of animation styles or types to consider for your video content and you will need to look at some examples and decide which would be a good fit. "Fit" could be the look and production values and it could be the cost of production.

The two styles of animation most companies will use are whiteboard or sketch style and 2D vector graphics (these are the ones that look more like cartoons). These two types are used the most because they're affordable to produce. Other animation styles such as 3D animation and stop motion are far more costly and time consuming to produce so the whiteboard and 2D vector style predominate.

Whiteboard / Sketch

The "Sketch" or "Whiteboard Videos" are the videos that have the hand with a marker drawing out images and text on an apparently infinite whiteboard. These videos really grab the attention and, even after being around for about 10 years, remain popular and people still watch them.

Some people just don't like the look of whiteboard or sketch style videos. They feel they look cheap or the production values aren't good enough. In plenty of cases they're correct and even the best whiteboard video content produced by world-class illustrators just won't fit with a particular brand. Most startups or smaller businesses should be fine with a whiteboard style video and these videos will definitely be budget friendly.

Pros: Affordable and proven to capture attention and produce results. Whiteboard videos can also be produced quickly.

Cons: Production values may not be a good fit for many brands

Technology used to produce them: Adobe AfterEffects, VideoScribe by Sparkol, and many others

.

2D / Vector Graphics

These videos are very popular and many people feel more comfortable with the production values of 2D-style videos. 2D vector graphics videos look like cartoons you might see on TV. These videos are mostly created using Adobe AfterEffects, though other products such as "Crazytalk Animator" are on the market to make it easier to produce them than using AfterEffects.

This style of video is generally more costly to produce than a whiteboard video because it is simply more labor intensive to make them (as a general rule of thumb, they are about twice as expensive as whiteboard videos). They're still somewhat affordable and can be quite effective as a marketing asset.

Pros: Higher production values

Cons: More expensive, software to make them is harder to learn

Whiteboard vs. 2D Vector Graphics Videos

If you have to pick one or the other, go with the style in which you feel most comfortable. My experience using both types in actual marketing campaigns is that you can expect either style to be effective. That said, if you have the budget, you could test both types and see which will perform best with your audience.

There has been some research that indicates that whiteboard videos are particularly effective at capturing the attention. My opinion is that the audience simply doesn't know what is going to happen next with whiteboard videos and they are paying closer attention.

Well known author, professor, and researcher Dr. Richard Wiseman became interested in whiteboard videos and did a simple study to discover whether whiteboard videos or talking head videos do a better job of conveying information. In his study he created two videos, one a simple video of himself presenting some information and the second a whiteboard video that used the audio from his live video presentation. He then showed both videos to a thousand test subjects and afterward gave them a short test to determine how well they remembered the information from the two videos. The results: On average, people retained 15% more information from the whiteboard style video.

After years of experience I do not think it is surprising that a whiteboard video performed better than a live video. I would still recommend that you do your own testing to find out for yourself what style of video will work best to actually improve your conversion rates.

I have done a few tests on whiteboard vs. 2D vector graphics and the performance was very close between the two. In the limited tests that I conducted, the whiteboard style had a slightly higher conversion rate.

Over most of the history of marketing, it has been expensive to produce video content of any kind. Today the price to produce video content has come down dramatically even if you are hiring professionals to do most of the work for you.

Reasonably good quality videos can now be produced by professionals for fees most companies can easily afford. Your production costs mostly comes down to how original you want your video to be. If you don't care about originality and production values, then you can keep production costs quite low. It does take real talent to produce an original and watchable video that won't be an embarrassment to your company and that's where your production costs go. Having a good writer for the script and a genuinely talented and creative animator or illustrator costs a bit more.

Regardless of what you pay or who is hired to run the project, here is an outline of the production process that can be followed. I developed this process in early 2013 and have since used it for hundreds of video projects and less than 1% of those projects failed to be completed.

Production Process:
Here is a quick overview of the production process. I will go into each element in more depth in the back of the guide I have provided the tools I use and examples of scripts.

- **Kick-off meeting** to discuss intent and scope of the video
    – Who is the video for and what will you be trying to communicate?
- **Script writing**
    o You will need a good script to produce a watchable video – and remember the script determines how long the video will be.
        • Tip: If you are writing your own script, read it out loud while you are writing because it is going to be performed and you want the script to read well.

Voice-over
- Once the script is finalized, it needs to be recorded by a competent voice-over professional who has the right tone and voice style for your project.
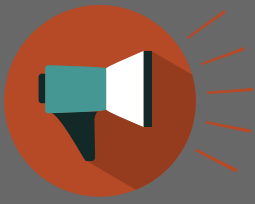
Storyboarding

- Once the finalized script is ready, you will then have a meeting or meetings to decide what will appear on the screen while each section of the script is being read.
- In this meeting, read out each line of script and then write out in text the storyboard notes of what should visually appear on the screen for that line of the script. You can then have the illustrator or graphic designer produce sketches to be reviewed and approved prior to animating or simply have them go ahead and make a video to watch.

Video Production

- This is where the video production team or artists will create the illustrations that will be used in the video. This is the most time intensive part of the production and is how you can end up having higher production costs The more original illustrations and effects, the higher the cost.
- Animated videos are created using the digital illustrations and software that animates the illustrations and combines audio tracks and any other visual effects into something you can actually watch.
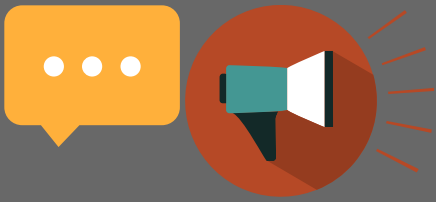
Review and Revisions

- Once you have something to watch, you then meet with the production team to decide if there is anything that needs to be changed or revised.

Sample Timeline for Video Production

- ❑ Kick-off Meeting - 1-day
- ❑ Script writing - 7-10 days
- ❑ Video production - 7-14 days
- ❑ Revisions - 1-7 days

This means you can generally expect to have a video completed in about a month. To compress the production time, get the script completed more quickly and try to keep the animation side less demanding.
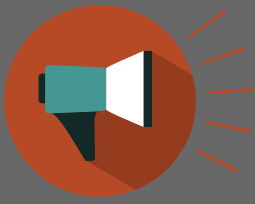
We all want to avoid unproductive meetings and for a video production kick off meeting I developed a step by step format to follow to compile the information needed to efficiently write and produce a video. I call it the "Video Production Worksheet" I have provided a copy of the VPW. The VPW will give you a logical way to begin your video production.

This worksheet or information gathering outline has made it much easier for me to get my clients' minds focused and to essentially have a good way to start and end a first meeting to work on a video.

The Video Production Worksheet Outline

- **Audience:** Who is the video being produced for? You may have well defined personas for your perfect customer which will make this part easy or you may have to think through who your audience will be.

- **The Problem or Opportunity:** Since these are videos being produced for marketing and lead generation, we need to define what problem your product or service solves. Or in some cases, you are marketing an opportunity of some kind that would be appealing to someone's interest in finding ways to make money.

- **Features and Benefits:** how will your product or service solve the problem? By all means, list out all important features and what those mean to your potential customer in terms of making life better. Just be careful when writing your script to avoid having a video that becomes a list of stuff which will likely bore your audience and have them hitting the back button.

- **Objections / Concerns:** What objections or concerns will your audience have? You should know what these are and, if possible, address these concerns in your video. There may be other ways to approach this and I'll discuss that in the section about landing pages.

- **Proof:** If what you are portraying to people in your videos is attractive and sounds good, what is the proof that it is true? Unless you're marketing to small children, you can count on your audience being skeptical and hard to convince - they need proof and you need to provide it. If you can fit this proof into the video itself, that's great; you may also be able put proof on your landing page.

- **Call to Action:** After the video is over, what are you going to ask the watcher to do? Call, fill out the form, schedule a meeting, or something else?

The typical script for a marketing video will be 150 to 300 words in length because you will want your video to have a 1- to 2-minute runtime. Remember those short attention spans? Well the data is pretty clear that if you produce a good video, you can't expect to keep the average viewer longer than a minute or two. That means you have to find a way to say what you want to say in very few words.

The script determines the length of the video and the general rule of thumb is that 150 words = 1-minute of video. Some scripts read faster than others and you can tell your voice-over pro to read at a faster or slower tempo to keep a video to a certain length.

One thing to keep in mind about your script is that the majority of marketing videos are performing a mission at the top of the sales funnel. You're trying to give watchers enough to get their interest engaged so they will call, fill out a form or request a meeting, etc. That means you won't try to completely educate and inform your audience with your video. Just tell them enough to create interest or curiosity about learning more.

So how do you write a short script that will engage your target audience enough to get them to give you a minute or two of their time and then fill out a form or pick up the phone?
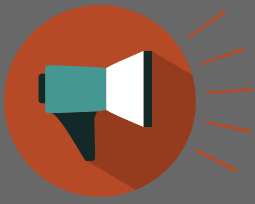
If you look for guidance or techniques on writing a script, you will find advice and methods that are all over the place, such as using classical storytelling techniques like the hero's journey. Take a look at doing that; you may be able to write a script using these methods.

I took a different approach to writing scripts based on years of experience having to quickly and clearly persuade and writing effective presentations and proposals. The scripts I've written identify with the audience by introducing a problem or challenge that they are likely experiencing if they are watching the video. I want them to quickly understand that this video is about them, and we're going solve a problem they have or provide an attractive opportunity.

Sample Openings Stating a Problem:

"Complying with new healthcare regulations is difficult and expensive - the stakes are high and if you don't get it right, your company will have high penalties to pay…

"Your sales team is the engine that drives growth and preventing these key employees from being bogged down with time wasting activity will ensure topline performance…

Another opening technique I use on some video scripts is to make a promise and introduce something that can pique a person's curiosity.

"In this 90-second video, you will learn how you can reduce the cost of healthcare compliance and avoid the biggest mistake HR departments make with compliance documentation."

CALL TO ACTION

The big promise opening also lends itself to an effective call to action you can use in email marketing or search ads. The call to action could be "Learn How to Avoid the Biggest Mistake HR Departments Make with Compliance Documentation - Watch 90-second video"

Sample Openings that Ask a Question:

"Are you looking for a marketing tool that you can rely on to generate more sales leads?"

Once you have an opening line which ideally hooks the attention and makes it clear the video is about them and what they were looking for or will get from watching, then you proceed to tell the rest of the story.

The middle part of the script can be used to present features, benefits, proof and perhaps touch on a common objection or concern that your audience is likely to have.

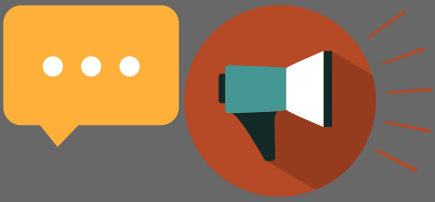So, for example, if we continue with the healthcare compliance example:

"For over 20-years, Med-Soft has been making it easy and affordable for thousands of busy HR departments to manage all of their compliance needs."

(The next line introduces the company providing the relief to the problem and some proof as to why their message is credible: they have been in business for over 20 years and their product is used by thousands of HR departments.)

"You can now get Med-Softs' proven compliance tools in the cloud. That means you can quickly solve your compliance headaches and get it done without an IT project to manage.

"You only pay for the number of seats you need to get the job done and, with no IT investment required, you won't have to increase your IT budget to become compliant.

"And if you do need help solving your compliance challenges, Med-Soft's consulting team is available to get you and your team up to speed with HiPAA, ACA and all aspects of HR and Healthcare compliance. It's all done for you by an experienced team."

A 20-year old company that develops and markets software for HR or compliance probably has a huge array of features and benefits, add-on services, bells and whistles of every kind. The script however, focuses on three key items that would likely be important to Med-Soft's audience.

- **Cloud-based offering so it's easy to start using the software**
- **A per-seat-pricing model and no IT investment to become compliant**
- **And services if they are needed to solve more difficult problems**

There is enough to make the HR person looking for a way to solve compliance challenges to feel that Med-Soft is a company that could be trusted to solve their problem for a reasonable investment or, at the very least, a company that should be evaluated.

"To learn more, fill out the contact form to schedule a demo and to get all of your questions answered."

The call-to-action in this sample script is pretty simple; we're asking the watcher of the video to fill out a form if they want to learn more by getting a demo and talking to Med-soft. If you feel that a sizable segment of your audience won't want a demo or to talk to sales people, you can offer a download or the opportunity to register for a webinar instead.

As you write your script read it out loud to see how it sounds. A script is performed and, if you are not accustomed to writing a script, you may write something that won't read well.

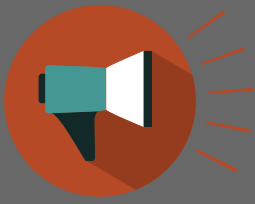So let's look at this sample script as a complete draft:

"Complying with new healthcare regulations is difficult and expensive - the stakes are high and if you don't get it right, your company will have high penalties to pay

"For over 20 years Med-Soft has been making it easy and affordable for thousands of busy HR departments to manage all of their compliance needs.

"You can now get Med-Softs' proven compliance tools in the cloud. That means you can quickly solve your compliance headaches and get it done without an IT project to manage.

"You only pay for the number of seats you need to get the job done and with no IT investment required you won't have to increase your IT budget to become compliant.

"And if you do need help solving your compliance challenges, Med-Soft's consulting team is available to get you and your team up to speed with HiPAA, ACA and all aspects of HR and Healthcare compliance. It's all done for you by an experienced team.

To learn more, fill out the contact form to schedule a demo and to get all of your questions answered.

This script came in at about 175 words, so if the goal was to have a 1-minute video, I would look at ways to trim about 25 words. If the run-time goal was 90-seconds or 2 minutes, then there's room to add more to the script.

Pro-tips on Script Writing:

- Organize the source information in a logical way that follows the video production worksheet.

- Read your script aloud as you write it to avoid clunky language that would not sound very good or persuasive when performed.

- Once you have written a first draft of your script, set it aside for a day or two and then come back and make revisions.

- Make sure every stakeholder has signed off on the script before you move into further production activities.
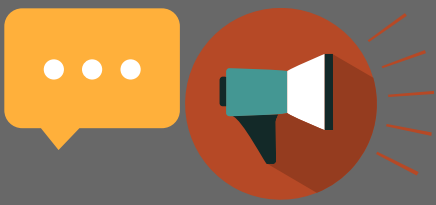
Video Runtime

In the previous section, I talked about scripts and mentioned that the runtime of your video is determined by the word-count of your script. **So, how long should your video be? What are the pros and cons on video length?**

Some will strongly insist 1-minute or less, and definitely shorter is better in most cases. You should make your video as short as possible and that usually means keeping it to 2 minutes or less. Even complex subjects or products can be covered in under 2 minutes.

Here are stats from Wistia, a company that provides hosting and software for business video content. This company is in a good position to gather data so I'm sharing its statistics on video length and engagement.

Basically, the longer the video, the lower the completion rate of the video and the higher the viewer drop-off before getting to the 50% mark of the video.

Video Length	Viewed 50% of Video	Watched Entire Video
< 1 Minute	80%	60%
1-2 Minutes	72%	48%
2-3 Minutes	62%	42%
3-4 Minutes	58%	37%
10 -20 Minutes	45%	28%
60+ Minutes	22%	8%

Ok, so generally the shorter the better but any length video is fine so long as you craft it properly. That means having the most important information toward the beginning or in the first half of the video and doing your best to make the video good enough that more people will watch to the end.

It's also worth noting that even if you have a longer video, some portion of the audience will watch the whole thing, and perhaps these are the people you really want. I would recommend that you keep your video under 2 minutes if you can. In some cases you may have a more complex topic or product and it's simply not possible and you need more time and that's ok. We've produced 3- and 4-minute videos that are effective.

If the video is for lead generation and early stage engagement, then definitely go all out for a shorter runtime.
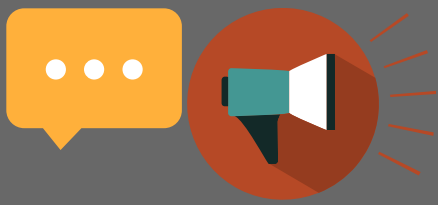
Voice-over

When your script is 100% finalized and all stakeholders are happy with it, you will next have the script recorded by a voice-over professional. You may want to record it yourself, not unheard of, and I'll provide a checklist to follow in the resource section in case you want to record your own script. But in most cases, you will get an experienced professional to do your recording

There are plenty of affordable ways to hire good voice talent. You can go to online marketplaces like Fiverr or Upwork and review the demo recordings of hundreds or even thousands of voice-over pros. The rates you will pay when hiring talent on these platforms will range from under $50 to several hundred dollars to get your recording done.

What you pay for your voice recording will usually consist of two fees, one fee to simply record the script and a second fee will be some kind of commercial license if you are going to use the video for marketing online or on TV.

For my video projects, I regularly use a handful of professionals I've found who have reasonable fees and are easy to work with - quick to get recordings turned around when needed. I also audition new talent when clients don't want to use one of my regulars. If you plan to produce a lot of video content, you can audition a wide range of talent and pick one or more voices to be the regular voice of your brand.
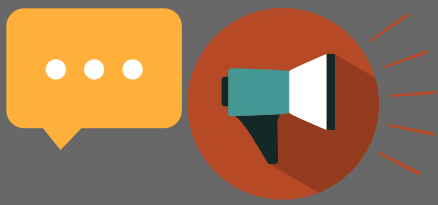
It's easy to audition new voice talent. Simply contact the person you find on your chosen online platform and ask them to send you a demo reel and share that with everyone who is participating in your video project. The demo reel is simply an MP3 audio file with about a minute of recording samples.

The voice-over element will usually be an affordable component of your project, but it can start to get expensive if you change the script after it's already been recorded. In fact, making script changes further along in a project is one way to drive up costs and even push your project into the ditch. Remember the Pro Tip: Make sure your script is 100% done and finalized before moving into voice recording and video production.

One question on voice-over that I get on a regular basis is whether it's better to have a male or a female voice on your video - is one better than the other?

There is no right or wrong answer on this, though if your video is about something that would obviously lend itself to a male or female voice to be more authoritative or trusted for that particular product, then pick the gender that is appropriate.

I have periodically looked for research to provide a firm answer and most of the research seems to find that it makes no difference whether you use a female or male

voice talent. However, it does appear that if your project calls for force and authority, you're better served going with a male voice. On the other hand, if your project needs to be more soothing and convey trustworthiness, then a female voice may be the better choice.

I can't help but say that with the breadth of voice talent out there, you can find a female pro that can be forceful and authoritative and you can find a male pro that can be soothing and trustworthy. In other words, hire the pro you like that seems to resonate with your brand or industry.

Background Music

Should you have background music on your video? It's not absolutely necessary, though I usually have background music on the videos I produce.
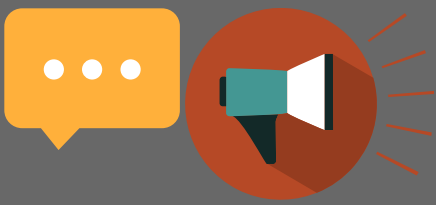
It can be very difficult to pick out background music and I have spent hours listening to tracks to find the right one for a project. I have been lucky in that some of my illustrators over the years were good at picking the right music.

When picking the music, simply make a general decision on whether you need more sedate versus a more upbeat sound. Once you decide on that basic aspect of what kind of music is right for your project, you can go to sites that sell royalty-free background music and start listening to samples. These sites usually have music organized in a way to make it easier to begin sampling.

Once you pick you background music, it will need to be added to the audio track or combined with the voice track. Probably the easiest way to handle this is to give the background music clip to your voice-over pro and ask them to mix it for you. They may charge an additional fee to do this for you.

If you want to mix your own audio, you can use GarageBand if you're an Apple shop and you can also download Audacity which is a very good and free digital audio workstation product. Audacity is easy to use and there are a lot of tutorials on YouTube so you can learn what you need to know about using Audacity by investing a few hours of your time.

Pro-tip on background music: Watch your levels. What I mean by this is make sure your background music volume isn't so loud it makes it difficult to hear the voice track. I see videos with background music set too high all of the time; don't' be one of those guys.

Storyboarding the Video

Storyboarding is the step in the production before you actually start animating and illustrating the video. It simply means that you go through the script line by line and decide what will be on the screen for each part of the script.

If there is any doubt about you script being 100% approved or done, don't send it to be recorded until after the storyboard session. Revisions to scripts sometimes happen during the storyboard session

Traditionally an artist or creative director would sketch out a storyboard after reading a script and, indeed, on some projects that may still happen. For higher budget 2D vector graphics videos, I will get a storyboard created so everyone on the project will be able to see what the visuals will look like before the animation begins.

In some cases my client will say they have no desire to be involved in working on a storyboard or figuring out what the visual side of the video should be. I will say that some of the best videos we ever produced were ones where we let the artist just go do their thing. That said, artists can be inclined to push the limits a bit, do things that are over the top - if you're comfortable with that, then let them go.

On about 90% of the projects where I'm the writer and producer, we have an online meeting with the client, the illustrator or animator and we all read through the script line by line and brainstorm together to put down in text the visual ideas for each line of script. I call it making storyboard notations. You simply write out descriptions under each line of the script, the visual ideas, and you may even do some image searches for images and photos to use as source material for the artist to have a clearer idea of what you want on the screen.

You will need to get a sense or have a feel for how much you can put on the screen for a given line of script. For example, if your line of script takes 8 seconds to read, be careful you don't try to have 20-seconds worth of visuals stuffed into that 8-second timestamp.

I try to avoid having too much on the screen in any one scene. If the audience has too much to process in a short period of time, then they'll feel overwhelmed and confused and hit the back button.

You can have a complete scene for each line of script and, in most cases, that will be how it works out. It may also make sense for a scene to build over the course of multiple lines of the script. This can help the animator or illustrator giving them more time to get everything on the screen so that it works in the timestamp you have.
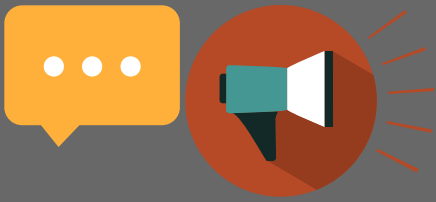
At times it can be tough to come up with visual ideas for a line of script. Some topics don't lend themselves to visual expression. I've been on storyboard calls where we would spend 45 minutes working on ideas for one or two lines of the script.

Here are some of the techniques to consider:

- Use a cliché - The problem with a cliché is that it is a cliché, not creative, original or artistic, but people know what a cliché means and you won't risk confusing your audience. So, you can use a cliché and perhaps make it your own in some creative way.
- Icons - If you have an illustrator or designer that is good at creating icons, they can be used to convey something complicated very quickly.
- Formulas - You can illustrate text, images or icons to create a formula that gets you through a tough line of script and is very clear.
 Example:
  Line of the script: "*This combination of aptitude (CAN DO) and motivation (WILL DO) is called "Talent DNA", a combination of intangible human traits.*"

Formula: CAN DO + WILL DO = Talent DNA

- Photos - Occasionally, the best thing to do is to use a photo of the thing the video is about. I've done a lot of projects about physical products, things like manufacturing and building products, and while we would illustrate some elements of these products, we also used photos too.

The Power of Animated Videos for Sales & Marketing   **20**
©Matthew Gethins 2019
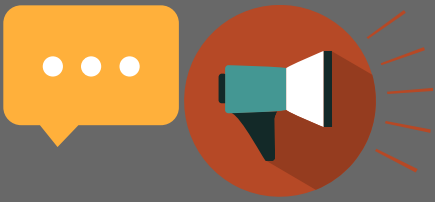
I'm writing from the perspective of a writer and producer for someone that wants to produce animated videos - not an artist, illustrator or animator. When I first determined that I was going to begin producing animated videos, I decided I wasn't going to learn the software used to make animated videos. Instead, I found a few people that were interested in doing this kind of work and asked them if they wanted to learn how to make videos.

Two of the people I asked to work with me were genuinely artistic and one was a more technical person. All three of them readily learned the software, which in 2012 happened to be VideoScribe, and started doing projects with me. However, from the very beginning, the two artists made better videos.

The lesson I quickly gathered from this experience was that the creation of the video you watch is an artistic endeavor. You need real artistic talent to be good at it. The two artists that learned to make videos could both be handed paper and pencil and would be able to draw and make art. That basic talent or skill translated into higher quality more original videos. They also both seemed to care more about the artistic merit of the videos they made.

I've said all of this in case you are planning to learn the software to make the videos. If you really can't draw or do design, then maybe it's better to leave that part to someone that has that talent. If you really want to do it all, then products exist for making videos without having artistic talent or training and you can learn to use one of those.

Here are the two products my team works with, although there are many others that could be worth evaluating.

After Effects by Adobe - A powerful video production tool for creating not only animated videos, but doing video editing and production in general. Learning to use After Effects well enough to produce videos will take more time than learning other products, but After Effects videos will generally have high production values.

Video Scribe by Sparkol - A product that's been around since 2012 and has more than 250,000 users worldwide. This is the product I initially used to produce whiteboard videos and I still produce a fair number of videos with VideoScribe. The product is easy to learn and you can get something to watch on the screen quickly. VideoScribe takes .SVG images and makes it appear as if they are being drawn on a whiteboard. My opinion is that you can produce quite good whiteboard style videos with VideoScribe if you have talented illustrators.
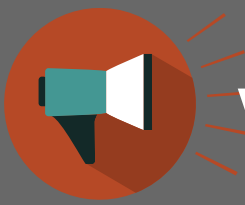
CrazyTalk - *An affordable animation product that can be used to make 2D vector graphic style videos and is fairly easy to learn and use. You don't need artistic skill to make videos with CrazyTalk. For someone that is interested in producing the 2D vector style videos but doesn't want to invest the effort into learning After Effects, this could be a good solution.*
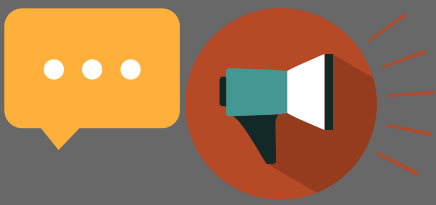
I've only mentioned a handful of the animation products you may want to consider using - there are dozens of them and more coming along all the time. If you plan to learn a product and do your own animating, you should be able to find something that will work for you.

I'm essentially a production company and what has worked for me is to develop long-term relationships with a few animators and illustrators. I've now worked with the same people for years and we can consistently get projects completed in a reasonable amount of time with affordable production fees for clients. Two of the people I work with were in my social circle and one of them I found via Freelancer.com. If you can, do a few test projects to discover the right person or persons to work with.

Once you have something to watch, you then share the video with everyone to get feedback. I do this by uploading the video to Vimeo and sending a link to everyone. At this point, you simply want to get feedback from everyone involved. Avoid a situation where, for example, the CEO is sent the video after everyone thinks it's completed and the CEO decides that major changes to the script and visuals are needed. Keep all stakeholders in the loop from the beginning.

Next, gather all of the feedback. If necessary, have a meeting with everyone to go through the video scene by scene and confirm the revisions. Some of the ideas from the original storyboard session may not have worked out and you may need to make a change to the scene. Ideally you want to give the animator or illustrator one complete list of revisions; this simply makes the whole process more efficient.

If you have followed the above steps, you now have an animated video to use for your marketing and lead generation campaigns. In the next steps, I will share some practical experience in using these videos to generate results.

Before launching into a review of how you use your new animated video, I'll briefly cover video hosting. Some readers may know all about video hosting and can skip this, but I regularly have to explain how this works to clients that have no prior experience with the topic.

The completed video will be a file that is fairly large, possibly over a gigabyte and will need to be hosted somewhere so you can easily use the video in your marketing or on your website.

You will not send the actual video file to someone in your target audience. Instead, you will send a link to a page that has the video on it. I'll talk about this more in the next section when I discuss landing pages.

In most cases, you will not host the video on your own server or webserver for your website. Doing it this way is more complex and you would need to pay a developer to code this into your website. I've only ever had one client that did it this way.

The vast majority of video content is hosted by a third-party service, the best-known service being YouTube. In fact, you may be producing your video to have content for your YouTube channel or to market on YouTube. My advice is to look at YouTube as a separate entity or channel and to host your video somewhere else if you are going to be spending money to promote the video.

Before talking about options for professional video hosting, I want to explain how your video content, that is "hosted" or saved somewhere else, is played on your website or landing page. Once you have uploaded video content to the hosting service you have chosen, you are able to get what is called an "embed code snippet." You generate or create this with backend settings of the hosting service when you upload the video. The "embed code snippet" is then inserted on one of your pages and voila, your video will now play of the page.

There are about a dozen or so video hosting and analytics companies that you can use to host your video content. If you are going to be hosting a lot of video content and spending significant sums promoting that video content, then it would make sense to invest the time to carefully evaluate the various services.

Wistia and Vidyard are two companies to take a close look at if you are making a big investment in producing and promoting video content. Both have a deep feature set to enable you to promote videos and analyze engagement with your video content.

My opinion is that Vimeo is a good option for professional hosting if you want a solid and affordable service but will not require as many features. Their VimeoPro service is about $200 per year and probably has more storage and bandwidth than most companies will ever need.
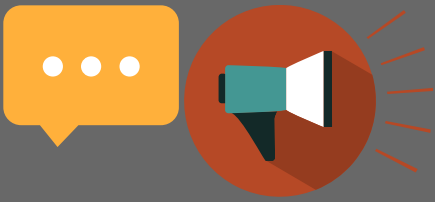
The key advantage of a paid hosting service versus YouTube is that the paid service will not be promoting their platform to your audience. YouTube is typically trying to get people to watch more content on YouTube to generate more ad views. This means when someone has finished watching a video on your website or landing page and it's hosted on YouTube, they will be presented with more videos to watch on YouTube, and these could even be videos produced by your competitors.

This is not to say that you shouldn't put videos on YouTube. In fact, you should, but as I said earlier, view this as a separate channel. If you are doing a video ad campaign on Google, you will actually have to host your video on YouTube, though if you are doing a pay-per-click search campaign (Google Ads PPC) and sending people to your landing page with a video, the video on your landing page does not have to be hosted on YouTube.
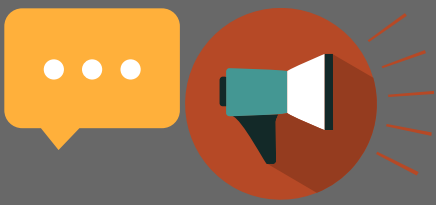
Once you have a well-produced video, how do you use it to get the best results? You will most likely use your video in conjunction with marketing programs you are already doing. My clients use their videos with their email marketing, Google Ads and Bing advertising, SEO, online ad campaigns, social media and, of course, as content on their websites.

I have also produced videos designed to be used at tradeshows and conferences. A video can be a good tool to make the most of a live event. One of my clients in the software industry played a whiteboard video before a talk that he gave at a conference and then had the video playing in a loop in his trade show booth.

When you are deploying your video for inbound or outbound marketing campaigns, the one thing you will need is a well-optimized "Video Landing Page." Your Video Landing Page is a key element to actually getting a sales lead or call. Let's talk about the Landing Page first.

The Landing Page

Experienced online marketers know all about landing pages and how important they can be. If you have no idea what a "Landing Page" is, here is a simple definition: A Landing Page is a web page that has been designed to increase the likelihood that you will get a response.

Marketers spend a good deal of time and effort developing effective landing pages because a good landing page can dramatically increase Marketing ROI or ROA (Return on Advertising).

The idea is to combine a well-designed or optimized landing page with a powerful content piece - your video. This combination can generate incredible results and it's worth the effort to get the landing page right because this is where everything comes together.
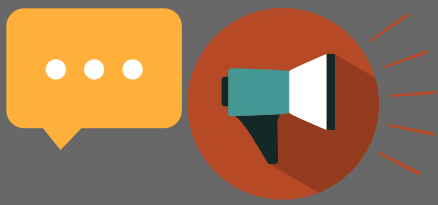
Let's run through some marketing math to illustrate what I mean in real numbers. For example, if you are spending $5 per click on Google or Bing and you can double or triple your conversion rate, obviously your budget will go much further. Five dollars a click is a pretty common CPC, and many companies spend even more. Here are the numbers to illustrate:

2% Conversion rate at $5/Click = $250 per lead

5% Conversion rate at$5/Click = $100 per lead

10% Conversion rate at $5/Click = $50 per lead

A 2% conversion rate is, in many cases, considered acceptable and maybe even good depending on how competitive the industry is. A 5% conversion rate is usually viewed as wonderful, definitely a good outcome. Everyone is happy.

A 10% conversion rate…well that is much less common, maybe even unheard of depending on the industry. I have seen this happen many times with a good animated video and a well-optimized landing page. That's the value of an animated video deployed on a well-optimized landing page.

When I first tested an animated video on a landing page, it was in an AdWords Campaign (now Google Ads) that was averaging around an 8% conversion rate. It was a b2b lead generation campaign and in a competitive space - we felt really good about 8%, even the agency support people at Google were impressed. The whiteboard video we used on the landing page replaced a brief automated slide show. Immediately we saw conversion rates go to 15% - nearly double. Cost per lead dropped by almost 50%.

I have worked on optimizing landing pages since about 2008 and my experience clearly indicates that keeping landing pages simple and clean is the best overall approach. I think the reason simple is better is because it gives people less to process, increases clarity and reduces the chance of confusion.

Here are the elements of a video landing page or any landing page:

- Banner with your logo and possibly a phone number.
- Sub-banner – A small amount of text that might clarify what you do or sell
- Main Header – Strong benefits driven statement of some kind
- Sub-header – A small amount of text to clarify header (sub-header is optional)
- Video – In most cases the video should be set to auto-play
- Call to Action – Ex. "Get a Free Quote"
- Contact Form – The fewer fields in the contact form, the better
- On the bottom portion of the page, you should ideally have evidence or proof, testimonials, sample client logos, and awards that will confirm and support what is said in the video and the rest of the landing page is more believable.

It is also a good marketing practice to do split testing or A/B testing with your landing pages. This means you make variations of the landing page you initially build and that seems to work fairly well. Testing is done by changing different elements to see if you can improve your results. You could for example see if a different variation of the main header text will give you a lift. Variations in the Call to Action and how the page is structured can also be tested to increase lift.

As a final overall design recommendation, I would advise you to reduce the need to scroll in order to see what's on the page as well. So, if you have some great proof on the page, you don't want the person to have to scroll down to know it's there. One easy tip for reducing the need to scroll is to not use big huge banners or banner artwork at the top of the page. Most of the time these huge banners that you see everywhere don't actually help to convince anyone to do anything and simply create an opportunity for confusion.
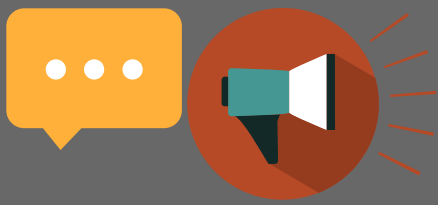
The landing page should make it crystal clear what a person should do; you don't want confusion or friction. If you want them to fill out a form, make sure the form is easy to see and that there is a clear call to action above the form. If you want them to call you, put the phone number in a large font where it can't be missed and say "Call us."

You also want to be sure the page is mobile-friendly or responsive because a huge amount of traffic is from mobile devices, mainly phones.

Landing pages don't have to be built from scratch; you can use a service like

ClickFunnels, InstaPage, Lander, Unbounce or other hosted landing page builders. If you are going to need to build a lot of landing pages and want to do it without the help of a developer or someone who can code, then this will be a good choice. Landing pages are not super complicated pages; it's a single a page and doesn't take lot of coding to create. My developer builds new landing pages for me in less than an hour.

In the resource section of the book, I will provide examples of landing pages and a link where you can go to download a landing page template.
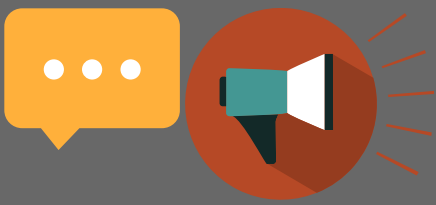
Once you have your video landing page developed, you then drive traffic to the Video Landing Page with whatever inbound or outbound marketing programs you normally use or decide to use in order to promote and test your video.

Let's briefly go through some use cases that I have used or seen my clients use.

Email

In an email your video can be the Call to Action. Asking a recipient on you email list to watch a video is a good and non-threatening Call to Action. Mentioning video in the subject line will also increase your open rate.

When we are involved with developing an email marketing campaign that uses a video, we briefly give the reader some compelling benefits for a product or service and then say something like "To Learn More, Watch This 2-Minute Explainer Video." You then hyperlink the Call to Action in the email to the Video Landing Page.

Other ways to use a video in your email include the following:

- Link to your video in the banner of an email
- Link to your video as a primary or secondary call-to-action in the body of the email
- Link to your video in the signature of your email. Sales people and business owners can have this as part of their signature and it makes it easy for prospects to learn more about you and will make future conversations more productive.

Google Ads, Bing Ads & Online Ad Campaigns

We've used video in Google Ads and pay-per-click campaigns for years and most of the time an animated video increases conversion rates. In some cases the increase in conversion rates is astonishing, it is not uncommon to get double digit conversion rates.

We did a whiteboard product video for an insurance company that got a 27% conversion rate!

When you write your ads, make it clear that there will be a video playing when they click on the ad because your video should be set to auto-play on your landing page.

You can use the video and video landing page as the main destination for a click on the ad or you can use it as a sitelink.
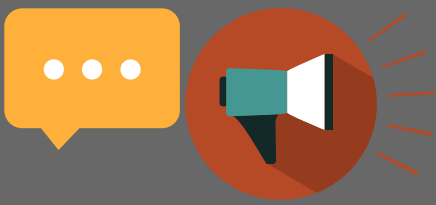
Social Media and YouTube

Naturally if you have produced a video, you would share it on your social media accounts like Facebook, Instagram, LinkedIn, Twitter or YouTube. If you produced a video that is in the 2-minute range, it's a good idea to do some video editing and create smaller clips that are 15 to 30 seconds in length. Short clips are more useful for social media platforms.
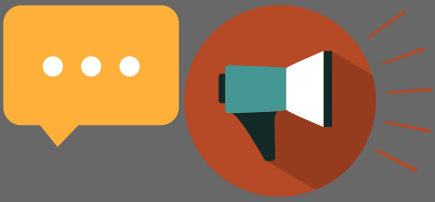
All of the social media platforms offer paid ad campaigns and the shorter video clips can be used for these campaigns. Your ads can also be used to drive web traffic to your video landing page to generate leads. You can get a lot of mileage out of your animated videos on social media.

Trade Shows & Events

Years ago I was a sales guy and would occasionally have to work shows and I would experience something like this: I would be talking to someone visiting my booth, while another person would come up and stand there for a minute and then leave because they didn't wait for me to finish talking to the first person. A video in the booth can help keep the person there and at least transmit some key information to them before they take off. Video is great for tradeshows and conferences.

The Wrap-Up

I've done my best to give the busy marketer or business owner what they need to begin producing animated videos to improve performance at the top of the sales funnel. You should now be able to start - and, most importantly, finish animated video projects and begin deploying those videos to generate better response rates.

The Video Production Worksheet

Company/Client Name:

Product / Service:

Phone Number: Email:

Website:

Audience – Describe the intended audience for the video.

Problem or Opportunity – Describe the problem the product or service solves or the opportunity it creates.

Product Features & Benefits – List and describe the features and benefits or how the product solves the problem or creates the opportunity.

Proof – Describe the proof or evidence that the claims and benefits are believable.

Objections – Address any obvious or common objections a prospect for the product or service will have.

Call to action – Provide a clear instruction on what to do next if the prospect is interested and would like to respond.

	Upbeat	Slow	Rock	Blues	Jazz
Music for Video					
*Choose music or voice-over	Slow	Fast	High-energy /sales	Confident-Educational	Other (specify)
Professional voice-over					

It is affordable to hire voice talent, but you may want to be the voice of your own business or brand or do voice-over as part of the services you offer to clients. Here are the steps you can follow to get set up and ready to begin doing voice-overs.

You will need to have a suitable recording space that doesn't echo, a decent microphone, and software loaded on a PC to facilitate recording and managing audio files.

Preparations

- Recording Space: Probably the single most important element of recording your voice-overs will be the physical place you choose to do the recording. We'll assume you don't have access to a studio. So where and how do you get a good space for recording? The simplest answer that you will find is to set up for recording in or facing into a closet. Many voice-over pros making a living doing voice-over recordings today are recording in a closet. The reason is that a closet has clothes hanging in it and the clothes do a good job of preventing echo. So choose a space where there will be as little echo as possible. Large spaces with lots of hard surfaces, like an office, won't work.

Equipment:

- Microphone: You will need at minimum a decent quality USB microphone. If you are more serious about recording quality and are willing to spend a little more money, you can get a professional-grade microphone.
- Headphones (optional): You can go without headphones but it's a good idea to get an affordable set of studio headphones.
- Audio Interface (if needed for the microphone you choose): If you get a professional grade microphone, it won't plug directly into your PC via a USB port and, in that case, you will need to buy a converter or interface that accepts the 3-pin XLR connector from the microphone and has a USB interface to plug into your PC. A company called Focusrite makes a product called the Scarlett Solo that will do this for you. There are many affordable products you can check out to do the job.
- Pop Filter: you may have seen a pop filter on T.V. it's the screen that is placed in front of the microphone to keep blasts of air from hitting the mic and causing a pop when you pronounce Ps.

Sample Script #1

Tangible Product Script Example

Example #1 https://tmplps.com/tangible_1/

Cladiators Video Voice-over Script Final

- Are you evaluating Aluminum Composite Material or "ACM" for your building project but are concerned about the cost and complexity?

- Cladiators launch of the Calor system is a revolutionary, thermally isolated ACM panel system for the architectural industry; eliminating thermal transfer through the building envelope.

- Cladiators can be used for exterior and interior applications and eliminates all of the downsides of traditional ACM projects and provides benefits that will reduce material and labor costs while also generating a Return on Investment.

- You get a 30-year warranty on a zero-maintenance product that costs about the same as brick or stucco but with no maintenance costs and greater durability.

- Unlike typical ACM products the Cladiators system does not need to be fabricated or customized prior to delivery to the job site, you don't have to worry about lead times, just order it and install it.

- Cladiators ACM panels and Calor attachment products can be custom cut on site, no special tools required, and that means less waste and a simple, fast installation.

- The Cladiators patented Calor wall technology also **eliminates the mess and complexity** of sealants and gaskets, there are
    - No Rivets
    - No Screws
    - No Bends
    - And no Routes
- Panels can be easily customized onsite to create a flat or three dimensional arrangement.

- You get a thermal envelope that will expand and contract during hot and cold weather. That means you get moisture protection, and the most energy efficient wall cladding solution available to reduce your heating and cooling costs.

- Cladiators comes in a variety of standard colors and you can request custom color matching as well.

- You can get full sheets or customized sheets of ACM panels and we will provide assistance with selecting the appropriate Calor attachment products for your application.

- To learn more or request a quote, contact Cladiators today or visit Cladiators.com

Sample Script #1 with Storyboard Notations

Are you evaluating Aluminum Composite Material or "ACM" for your building project but are concerned about the cost and complexity?

    –   Image: Finished building – examples of buildings from residential to commercial

Cladiators launch of the Calor system is a revolutionary, thermally isolated ACM panel system for the architectural industry; eliminating thermal transfer through the building envelope.

    –   Image: Logo – show the physical product – illustrate thermal isolation
(outside temp doesn't get in and the inside temp doesn't get out)
thermal graphic from ASTM

Cladiator can be used for exterior and interior applications and eliminates all of the downsides of traditional ACM projects and provides benefits that will reduce material and labor costs while also generating a Return on Investment.

    o   Image: Building with Cladiator logo the near product inside and outside the building.
    o   Image: Two Graphs 1st: Labor & Material graph going down 2nd Graph: ROI graph going up.

You get a 30-year warranty on a zero-maintenance product that costs about the same as brick or stucco but with no maintenance costs and greater durability.

    o   Image: 30 Year Warranty Badge
    o   Image: Brick and Stucco Building degrading and
3 sections to the screen "brick" "stucco" and "Cladiator" show the brick and stucco cracking and degrading. Morph in cracks and degradation – savings are stacking up.

Unlike typical ACM products the Cladiator system does not need to be fabricated or customized prior to delivery to the job site, you don't have to worry about lead times, just order it and install it.

    o   Image: Factory to jobsite delivery in a week with standard colors -
Fabricator with X through it.
    o   Factory to Jobsite and Install

●   Cladiator ACM panels and Calor attachment products can be custom cut on site, no special tools required, and that means less waste and a simple, fast installation.

    o   Image: Truck comes in with Pallets of Cladiator (with logo) show guys at the jobsite with regular tools (circular saw, drill, router)

●   The Cladiators patented Calor wall technology also **eliminates the mess and complexity** of sealants *(caulking gun image)* and gaskets *(client will send image of ACM gasket)*, there are

    o   No Rivets
    o   No Screws
    o   No Bends
    o   And no Routes
        ▪   Image: Cladiator Logo - guy in middle of screen all of the of the above rivets etc. disappear in a puff of smoke.

Sample Script #2

Intangible Product Script Example

Example #2 https://tmplps.com/intangible_1/

LDC Video Voice-over Script Final - Leadership Development

- What's next in your life? In your career? In your family?

- These key questions arise at least once in almost everyone's life.

- You're going along in your daily routine and then, all of a sudden, you're hit with a huge, life-altering decision.

- These decisions slow you down. They interrupt. They distract.

- But you manage to maneuver around them. Over them. Through them.

- Until…you're hit with a life-altering decision you have never faced before and it stops you dead in your tracks.

- What now? Why can't you move forward?

- So ask yourself: Who am I? Where am I going? How do I get there?

- To answer these questions, you need confidence, vision and focus. This will lead you to a framework and a plan of action.

- At Leadership Development Company we provide the tools and one to one guidance you need to face the biggest decisions in your life.

- Over two or three months, we'll get to know you, both through conversations and assessments to learn your personality, aptitudes, temperament, values, goals and motivations.

- By the end of your time with Leadership Development Company you will notice an increase in confidence, vision and focus. You will know yourself better than you ever thought possible. You will have a clear understanding of every thread that runs through you. Then you can ask yourself the ever-important question: what's next?

- A framework will be illuminated and you will have a plan to tackle your next big life decision. And it won't look so big. It won't trip you up or slow you down. You'll take it in stride and move forward.

- Call us today. Help us help you figure out: what's next?

Sample Script #2 Storyboard Notations

- **LDC Video Voice-over Script Final - Leadership Development**

What's next in your life? In your career? In your family?
- o Image: Icon of a person – standing at a fork in the road – questions marks appear at each road in the fork - continues into next line of script

These key questions arise at least once in almost everyone's life. You're going along in your daily routine and then, all of a sudden, you're hit with a huge, life-altering decision.
- o Image: Person at a desk with a cup of coffee – morphs and not a desk drinking coffee but on a roller coaster ride - continues through next line of script

These decisions slow you down. They interrupt. They distract. But you manage to maneuver around them. Over them. Through them.
- o Image changes to side view of the roller coaster

Until…you're hit with a life-altering decision you have never faced before and it stops you dead in your tracks.
- o Zoom out and have the problem on the track not far ahead.

What now? Why can't you move forward?
- o Zoom back in on the person – fear and or pain on their face

So ask yourself: Who am I? Where am I going? How do I get there?
- o Three question marks appear around the person's head "Who" Where" "How" (have them pop up)

To answer these questions, you need confidence, vision and focus. This will lead you to a framework and a plan of action.
- o Image: "Confidence appear over 'Who'" "Vision" appears over "Where" and "Focus" appears over "How"

At Leadership Development Company we provide the tools and one to one guidance you need to face the biggest decisions in your life.
- o Image: Illustrate the Logo –
- o Text underneath: "To Face the Biggest Decisions in YOUR Life"

Over two or three months, we'll get to know you, both through conversations and assessments to learn your personality, aptitudes, temperament, values, goals and motivations.
- o Image: Person in the middle of pieces of circular puzzle fitting together around them

By the end of your time with Leadership Development Company you will notice an increase in confidence, vision and focus. You will know yourself better than you ever thought possible. You will have a clear understanding of every thread that runs through you. Then you can ask yourself the ever-important question: what's next?
- o Image: Confidence Zoom out Vision Zoom out Focus – Zoom out a little further show the guys face – with a rock steady look dressed in a suit and tie – looking at his watch, maybe pushing a button on the watch

A framework will be illuminated and you will have a plan to tackle your next big life decision. And it won't look so big. It won't trip you up or slow you down. You'll take it in stride and move forward.
- o Image: Illuminated grid on the treated text "Problem" - character in the video will be looking at this.
- o Image: Problem is busted into pieces

Call us today. Help us help you figure out: what's next?
- o CTA – Call Us Today

The Power of Animated Videos for Sales & Marketing