



SPLcommunications

Case Study: Cost-effective 'Vodcast' Production

CHALLENGE

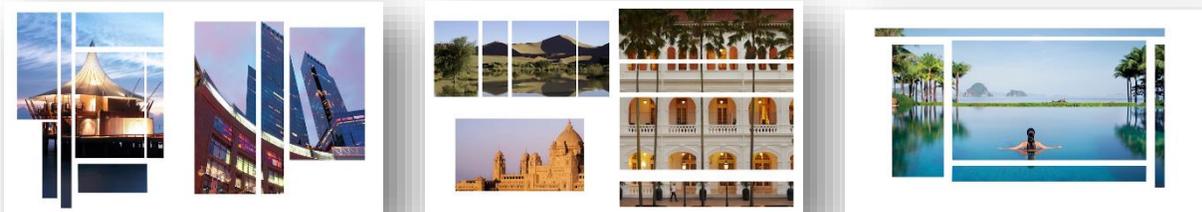
Many forward-thinking owners and managers of SMEs know that to grow their online presence, video is an ideal tool.

But today, just having one or two videos doesn't cut it. Content is king; new videos (or *Vodcasts*) need to be added regularly to keep Google happy and to give you more reasons to blog, tweet, post and email. Studies have shown that user-generated content alone really isn't effective and it certainly doesn't do your carefully-nurtured brand any favours!

So how do you regularly produce informative and effective video that looks like 'real TV' all on a low, fixed budget whilst keeping everything on-brand and on target?

In the summer of 2013, this was the challenge that was presented to SPL Communications by our Client ITC Luxury Travel.

ITC is one of the UK's leading independent luxury travel companies. This multi-award winning company offers the very best of inspirational luxury holiday experiences coupled with unrivalled levels of service. Based in Chester and currently celebrating their 40th anniversary, they regularly feature in the Sunday Times 'Best small company to work for' list. (www.itcluxurytravel.co.uk)



THE BRIEF

Even in today's competitive media scene, the cost of professionally shooting and editing large amounts of material can add up. And our client had some other requirements as well:

- A minimum of two new videos a month would be required, but quite probably more.
- They wanted to be able to film pieces at the drop of a hat - for instance, when suppliers came in they could be quickly interviewed making a pitch for their particular hotel or leisure activity.
- And they wanted some of the staff to be able to present their videos - and even operate the equipment.

After discussions it was agreed that realistically what would be needed would be effectively a 'half-way house' between traditional user-generated content (UGC) and full-blown professional production; certain compromises could be made – which in the context of the subject matter and style of presentation – would be understandable and totally acceptable to the viewer. In other words, it wouldn't be a 'turn off'. This is backed up by [recent research](#).

It was also decided from the outset that video editing would not be attempted in-house - poor editing being one of the obvious giveaways of conventional UGC. Also, a strong corporate look was vital, pulling all the Vodcasts together using the company's branding.

Lastly, a budget for the remainder of ITC's financial year had already been allocated!

So just like the holidays they plan, ITC were looking for a bespoke solution at a cost-effective, fixed price - and SPL Communications rose to the challenge!



SOLUTION

SPL's solution combined familiar 'kit' with inexpensive add-ons together with professional-standard post-production.

Alongside this, a programme of training was delivered for both 'presenters' and 'crew', and as ITC wanted a 'studio', we consulted on the conversion of a suitable area at their headquarters.

Lastly we produced a series of 'Top & Tails' using motion graphics to effectively link together all their Vodcasts and add that all-important branding.



In more detail:

SHOOTING

For familiarity, a Generation 4 iPod Touch was chosen. SPL already has experience of shooting on Apple devices with pleasing results (see [here](#)) but as this requirement was a little different, we researched and recommended a suitable filming app that would deliver better results than the device's native capability.

We also specified additional cost-effective equipment that makes a massive visible (and aural) difference, moving what's shot further away from UGC and more towards professionally-produced material. This included better microphones, a wide-angle lens, a special iPhone shooting rig with a tripod, and a video light.

TRAINING

Over the years we have trained many people for roles in TV – both for in front of and behind the camera. The presenting requirements for ITC were specific but, of necessity limited, so we trained for just that. We delivered a modular-based training programme with post-training analysis and an edit of the material captured in the sessions. For behind the camera, we devised an equally structured package.



STUDIO

ITC had allocated an area for this purpose and we recommended suitable lighting, décor and fitments to enable quick and controllable filming. However to ensure variety, not all pieces are shot in this area; other locations in the ITC building are also used.

IDENTS

Using stock shots from ITC's comprehensive stills library, SPL designed custom 'Tops and Tails' to create a cohesive visual identity for the Vodcasts. In addition, the use of different pieces of music helped scene-setting for different offers and target audiences.



WORKFLOW

After SPL delivered training in the autumn of 2013 (including developing a custom work-flow to deal with lip-sync iPhone video files) finished Vodcasts started being added to the ITC site in January 2014.

Depending on content and requirements, between two and four productions are made every month, each featuring a different facet of luxury travel relevant to ITC's client base. To date, this has included contributions from hotel owners, airlines, sports travel experts and ITC's own staff. Most but not all are for general consumption although a few have been used for specific travel trade messages.

Vodcasts are shot 'as and when' by ITC and sent by ftp to SPL for editing on a regular basis. Completed pieces are then scheduled and posted on the ITC site, social media and on YouTube.

RESULTS

The launch of the Vodcasts in January 2014 coincided with the re-launch of ITC's website.

Results to date have been very encouraging with extremely positive reactions from customers, staff and suppliers. The contract with SPL is ongoing and further developments are planned for future months.

Alexis Pendlington, ITC's Head of Marketing said: 'We came to Ian at SPL with a fixed budget and a long list of requirements, expecting high standards. We're delighted with what SPL has achieved and with what they continue to deliver every month as well as the support and guidance we receive to enable us to reach our objective of becoming the most authoritative website in the luxury travel industry.'

Marketing & E-commerce Executive Stephanie Edwards added: 'Never having made TV before I was rather apprehensive when we started but Ian's knowledge and enthusiasm helped enormously and gave me the confidence to film and put together the Vodcasts every week. We now use video as a regular part of our social media and online strategy and that won't change anytime soon.'

All ITC's Vodcasts can be found [here](#) and on their You Tube channel.

Also, a 'best of' compilation with short clips from many of the Vodcasts is [here](#).



WHAT SPL COULD DO FOR YOU

SPL Communications is headed up by Ian Sandall, a TV professional with 30 years of broadcast, commercials and corporate experience. SPL Communications offers full-service TV production packages ranging from budget web promos to national TV commercials.

Ian also offers a consultancy service to advertisers and content-owners on all aspects of video production and video asset management.

The system we devised, currently being successfully used by ITC Luxury Travel, is just one of the many ways your company can harness the power of video without the overpoweringly big bills.

So what could SPL do for *your* company? Getting your people involved with compiling and producing regular videos is more than just cost-saving – it's a great way of increasing staff 'buy-in' as well as involvement in your organization's latest initiatives or CSR.

And it doesn't just have to be Vodcasts – or even anything to do with sales (although that's what most people use these videos for.)

Working with us, staff can be given skills to make: process training videos, product 'explainers', safety programmes, as well as covering charity events, staff away-days and much more.

We can also tutor staff to write for the screen, operate cameras and microphones ... even put up lighting safely.

We'll then create a package for your company to include equipment, training, consultancy and broadcast-quality editing and graphics - with an agreed number of deliverables at a fixed price for any period of 12 months or more.



Then, wherever you are in the world for your filming, we'll be with you 'in spirit' (just a call away in fact) with solutions, ideas and feedback to help you make your films better, more quickly and at far less expense than you could imagine.

Now, high-quality video in large volume at an extraordinary unit price is perfectly possible, by combining the best cost-saving elements of user-generated content with the best of training and professional post-production - only through SPL.

For a no obligation consultation on what videos made this way could do for *your* business, contact Ian Sandall on +44 (0) 7831 255410.

SPL: T: +44 (0)161 850 6080; E: hello@spl-communications.co.uk; W: www.spl-communications.co.uk