Explaining the explainer video: how to write a good video script

By Tiffany Markman   6 May 2019

Explainer videos. Also known as whiteboard animations, illustrated stories, and fast-draw videos. They're either the best thing ever for your product, service or brand, helping you to unpack what you do quickly and compellingly. Or they're an expensive piece of website filler that few visitors watch, and almost no one views all the way to the end.

Photo by Jon Flobrant on Unsplash

If you get them right, that's a win because, according to Wyzowl (2019):

- 33% of people's online activity is spent watching video.
- Marketers who use video grow revenue 49% faster than non-video users.
- 64% of businesses believe that video has directly led to increased sales.
- 45% of businesses that use video have an explainer vid on their homepage.
- 83% say that their homepage explainer video is effective.

But a big chunk of the success of your explainer video is down to the script.

That's right: the *copy*.

Because your concept, storyboard, illustration, animation, voice-over and post-production can be spot-on, but if the words don't ring true, resonate with the visuals, and hold the viewer for as long as possible, sorry for you.

Crappy scripts suck, so…

Here are 10 tips from someone who writes explainer video scripts for a living:

1. In the planning stage, reduce the message of your entire video to one sentence and put that sentence somewhere in the first 30 seconds of the script.

2. When it comes to structure, try to create a narrative (story) arc, like this:

- Share problem: *Tiffany is feeling tired and sluggish.*
- Introduce solution: *She drinks a bottle of JuiceryBoo veggie juice.* Keep it brief. (State what it does, not how. That comes next.)
- Explain how JuiceryBoo works (all-natural, organic, cold-spun, etc.). Don't go longer than 60 seconds for this bit.
- Call the viewer to action: *Buy JuiceryBoo today at…*

3. Look for opportunities to place your viewer in the driver's seat. For instance, rather than following the antics of an on-screen character, you can address the viewer directly. When doing this, avoid third person (he/she/it). Speak to your viewers using second-person pronouns like "you" and "your".

4. Pro tip #1: Don't spend more time on the problem than on the solution. You want to leave your viewer fantasising about having your product or service make their lives better – not ruminating on the negatives.

5. Pro tip #2: Don't sell the category. Be specific about your product's unique selling points, otherwise you're just promoting veggie juices, not your one.

6. Pro tip #3: Change the music and visual style when you transition from problem to solution. The voiceover artist can also be directed to lift their tone.

7. Pro tip #4: When giving the solution, use your product's name at least twice.

8. When you think you're done, read the script aloud – more slowly than you speak – and time it with your phone. You can also calculate length by word count: 130 words per minute is a comfortable pace for most voiceovers.

9. The conclusion of your explainer video script should be simple, powerful and over in 10 seconds or less. Re-state the problem and your solution in one concise sentence. Give the product name, and show the logo on-screen.

10. Buuut, don't end with a final sell that's too hard, because this can unravel the subtler work of your explainer video. A gentle call to action will do nicely.

Keep in mind, also, that you have loads of options when it comes to choosing a style for your explainer vid. These include:

- *2D character animation*
- *2D motion graphics animation*
- *Whiteboard animation*
- *3D animation*
- *Live action*
- *Live action with track elements*
- *Stop motion*
- *Typography*
- *Screencast*

But whatever you select, the script had better be good. Words are the sales engine.

ABOUT TIFFANY MARKMAN

I spend 10 hours a day writing - and teaching others to write. I was South Africa's Freelance Copywriter of the Year in 2020 and one of the world's 'Top 50 Female Content Marketers' in 2021.
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