



## Web Video Worth Watching

***A veteran director offers five tips for improving the videos on your website.***

Now that you can hold an HD camera in one hand and upload your file to the web with the other, an increasing number of nonprofits are adding video to their sites. The process is inexpensive, easy to learn, and breathtakingly fast, but that doesn't guarantee a watchable end product. In fact, in many cases the smooth path is more of a slippery slope. Good causes, meet bad videos.

Having joined the video revolution, your organization may be prone to the same mistakes everyone else has been making - i.e., web videos that are too long, badly shot, and generally impossible to watch from



Steve Stockman with Sally Field on the set of *Two Weeks*, which he directed.

start to finish. So take a moment and meet Steve Stockman, who has directed a feature film, numerous television shows and music videos, and over 200 commercials.

Stockman is currently writing *Why Bad Video Happens to Good*

*People (and how to keep it from happening to you)*, due this fall from Workman Publishing. The book is filled with practical advice on how to produce videos especially for viewing on the web, and as an exclusive sneak preview, we offer five of Stockman's tips here along with sample videos that happily follow (or sadly ignore) these tips:

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### Web Video Worth Watching

5 tips to improve video on your site

### Seeking Master Storytellers

Advanced storytelling classes begin 1/15/10

### Meet with Less Pain, More Gain

Invest 2 hours to improve your meetings



## About Us

*free-range thinking* is written by Andy Goodman and edited by Lori Matsumoto. To read back issues, download free publications, and to learn more about our work, please visit

### Tell a story.

Sutter Health, a network of hospitals and physicians in Northern California, uses video on its site to tell the story of Caitlyn Barker, who was diagnosed with scoliosis at age 14. The video does many things well, Stockman says, but above all it succeeds by telling a compelling story in ninety seconds. "The components I look for are a hero, along with a beginning, middle and end," he says.



"Sutter Health is conveying the fact that they helped this 14 year old girl, but the video tells a story and makes me *feel* something for her that goes beyond the mere fact."

### Make one point.



PATH, an international nonprofit focused on health, offers the video "From Innovation to Impact" as an overview of its work in India. The video profiles half a dozen programs in roughly seven minutes, and while the production value is high, it's difficult to watch all the way through. PATH does extraordinary work, but in trying to cover too much ground, the nonprofit overstays its welcome with the viewer. "You shouldn't expect a short piece of video to convey more

than one point," says Stockman. "This video jumps from topic to topic when it would be better to focus on just one."

### Get to the point quickly.

The Student Conservation Association, which puts kids to work preserving and protecting the environment, posted this video on YouTube as an overview of its approach. "The video suffers from over-introductionitis," says Stockman.

"You have establishing shots in the wild, the kids introduce themselves, and for 40 seconds you *still* don't know why you're watching. And if you don't know why you're watching,



you're gone." Website visitors are notoriously impatient, so if you have something to say - in video or otherwise - waste no time saying it.

### Always make your star look good.

"Even if you're catching someone on the fly," Stockman says, "clip a lavalier microphone on them so they can be heard clearly and pay attention to what's around them." The Comic Book Legal Defense Fund would have done well to heed this advice when recording a testimonial from cartoonist Jeff Smith. Smith is poorly lit, must compete with background noise to be heard, and looks silly thanks to a background that makes it appear his head has



sprouted wings.

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The Sierra Club does only marginally better with a video introducing president Allison Chin. While she is sufficiently well lit and can be heard clearly, "there is no visual interest in this video at all," says Stockman. Chin is situated dead center, the least interesting part of the frame, and looks off to the left, which has the odd effect of drawing attention to the books behind her left shoulder.



For contrast, Stockman points to "Success is Right There in Front of Us," a video featured on Good Shepherd Services' website. The speakers in this series of testimonials are lit more dramatically, and by situating them on the right side of the frame and having them look to the left, the viewer's eyes are drawn back to their faces.



### **Video is for motion and emotion.**

AchieveKids, which works with special needs students, recorded a series of testimonials from students and staff, clearly constrained by a tight budget. The video must be downloaded from the home page - a time-consuming step that can reduce viewership - but it succeeds where many others fail because it conveys authentic emotions. "The camera lets you capture motion, which is attractive to the eye, and can tell a story, which reaches the heart. If you don't have motion or emotion," Stockman concludes, "don't use video."



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## **Seeking Master Storytellers**

***Take your storytelling skills to the next level with The Master Storytellers Workshop.***

If you've completed one of my storytelling workshops and want to learn more about narrative nonfiction writing, the "Master Storytellers Workshop" is for you.



In three one-hour classes (with two weeks between each class), you'll have the opportunity to write up to three stories and receive personalized feedback from both your classmates and me. We'll also explore topics not covered in previous storytelling workshops, including:

- How to craft scenes that make your story come alive
- How to find stories in abstract work
- Different techniques for opening and closing a story

The workshop will be limited to just 10 students, so each online session will be highly interactive with plenty of time

to discuss your work. And each student will have the option of scheduling one-on-one consulting sessions between classes.

The next session will run on January 15, January 29 and February 12 (9-10a PT each day). Tuition is \$375 per student, and discounts are available to organizations that register three or more. To download a complete course curriculum and register online, [click here](#).

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## Meet with Less Pain, More Gain

***Invest two hours in January to improve your meetings in 2010.***

Your organization probably invests countless hours in meetings every week, so why not invest two hours to make sure they actually accomplish something.



***Meetings: Less Pain, More Gain*** is an interactive and fun webinar that has already helped numerous public interest groups, businesses, and schools. Our next classes will be held January 26th and 28th (9-10a PT) and tuition is \$250 per student. To learn more and register online, [click here](#).

If you hold meetings or trainings online - and you'd like to improve these, too - join us on January 22nd (11a-12n PT) for ***The Webinar on Webinars***. In an engaging and fast-paced hour, we'll show you:

- How to keep participants engaged from beginning to end
- How to use your two assets (voices and visuals) to maximum advantage
- What we learned from talk radio that makes webinars work



Tuition is \$125 per student and discounts are available when you register 3 students or more. To learn more and register online, [click here](#).

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