

For newcomers and seasoned TV advertisers alike, the process of having a TV ad produced may be a little overwhelming. In most cases, you have a lot riding on the success of the commercial; both financially and emotionally.

The best results come from clients who ask questions, make suggestions and collaborate early in the process, then allow the team to carry out the vision. Make sure you get the most out of your production dollars by following these tips as you prepare for the creation of your advertisement.

### 1. Pre-production planning

Overall, the success of your commercial is less about what happens during the taping and more about what happens in the planning. A well written script is crucial to the success of your advertising and will keep the production process on track and on budget. Recognizing that being good at what you do doesn't necessarily mean you are good at *marketing* what you do, Digital Bard includes a marketing consultation and script writing in our production packages.

Your script should focus on a marketing message that will attract new customers, is true to your business and gives prospects a reason to take the next step in giving you their business. Be sure you let them know what that next step is: call, visit the store, visit the website, etc. (If you need help with this, see our report on "Four Questions You Should Ask Yourself Before You Start Any Marketing Campaign.")

### 2. Production Time

This is the "lights, camera, action!" part most people think about when they picture making a commercial. When shooting in your business location, turn a fresh eye toward what a new customer might see. Make a good impression by minimizing the clutter, turning on lights and presenting a clean, professional environment. The camera's eye is more sensitive to a crowded space than the human eye is and you don't want a viewer distracted. Try to be intentional about what is seen, and what isn't.

Go over any questions you or your staff may have with your director ahead of time so when shoot day arrives, everyone can focus on making the most of your time and budget. Expect about a 20-30 minute set-up of lights, camera, microphone checks, etc. before taping begins. Certain elements may be reset during shooting to ensure a consistent look and quality. Be patient and you'll probably have fun with the process.

### 3. Post-production

This is where the planning and raw materials come together, get edited, enhanced and end up as your new marketing masterpiece. Make sure the team has any supporting materials (assets) they'll need.

If you've asked for your logo in the spot, have it ready and available. Certificates, awards, testimonials – collect all of the relevant materials together to give to the production team. Digital copies of assets should be in high resolution formats.

Typically, you'll first see the commercial in draft form, with all the footage in the proper place and a sample audio track laid down for timing purposes. This first look is intentionally a little rough around

the edges because we want to make any content corrections early, before the technical magic starts. Pay close attention to any text elements at this stage and make spelling or phrasing corrections here.

A professional voice-over, music, color sweetening and the fancy graphics come in at the next step. Then you'll see it again for approval before it is mastered and delivered to your broadcast outlet or webmaster.

When clear pre-planning meets with editing proficiency, you've got a good commercial. When it's enhanced by creative wizardry like sharp copy and visual pop, you've got a great commercial. Just know that the production team is sweating the details so you don't have to.

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