



DOCUMENTARY STORYTELLING

PRODUCTION

“Marketing is no longer about the stuff that you make, but about the stories you tell.”

Seth Godin

2 PRODUCTION

Frame Rate

24 fps = 1/50th Shutter Speed

60 fps = 1/120th Shutter Speed

120 fps = 1/250th Shutter Speed

INTERVIEW



Interview Questions

- **Always have the interviewee say and spell their name**
- **Interview questions should follow a structure. See “Interview Questions PDF”**
- **Allow for God to show you unexpected elements to each story**
- **Don’t make any sounds of agreement or interjections**
- **Give a moment of silence after each answer**
- **Include part of the question in the answer**
 - **“The weather is sunny.” Rather than “Sunny.”**

Interview Translation

- **Always have a translator on scene**
- **Keep the translator just off camera but close enough for audio recording**
- **Translate each answer before the next question is asked**

Multiple Cameras

- **Two cameras are nice, but not necessary**
- **Helps provide options in editing**
- **Set primary camera with a medium shot and secondary camera with a close-up**
- **The closer the camera, the more intimate the shot**

SUPPORTING CONTENT

B-Roll

- **B-Roll creates visual appeal and dimension for the film**
- **Capture close, medium, and wide shots for each scene or action**
- **Capture the planned shots and those unplanned revealed in the interview**
- **Keep note of the unplanned shots during the interview**

“Drama” or Re-Creation Scenes

- **Primarily used in Docu-Drama films**
- **Can make filming process more complicated in ministry setting**
- **Can be expensive**
- **Can bring back difficult memories if you’re not using actors**
- **This is a great documentary style, but serious consideration is required**
- **There is no need to be literal with difficult scenes, even if you’re using actors**
 - **Get creative and abstract with difficult scenes**

Angles and Perspective

- **Check out our Advanced Photography class for in depth angles and perspective**
- **Close ups are powerful, but don't overuse them**
- **Always get permission to get in close**
- **Pay attention to the character in frame on the vertical axis**
- **Keep the camera at eye level unless you have a specific reason not to**
 - **Shoot up or down at your subject only when it makes sense for the story**

AUDIO

AUDIO

- **Get a mic for your camera if it fits your budget**
- **Try not to rely on your camera to pick up audio, use your phone if necessary**
- **A lavalier mic that plugs into your phone can create great audio**
- **Don't forget natural sounds ("Nat Sounds")**
- **If possible, record local music from local musicians**
 - **i.e. Kids singing worship, local musicians in the community, etc.**
 - **This will transport the viewer to the location and create cultural depth**

Documentary Storytelling Process

1

PRE-PRODUCTION

MAKE A PLAN

- Find the character
- Determine the story
- Define the pstoryline/plot
- Extract the theme/message
- Determine the audience
 - Specifically, where do they focus their attention?
- What is the Call to Action?
 - Pray, Volunteer, Give
 - Provide value by sharing a story of a transformed life.

OUTLINE A ROUGH SCRIPT

- How does the story roughly fit into **The Hero's Journey** story structure as an outline? There are two options to follow.

1. YOU

2. NEED

3. GO

4. SEARCH

5. FIND

6. TAKE

7. RETURN

8. CHANGE



OR

THE STORY SCRIPT

CHARACTER

PROBLEM

MENTOR (BRAND)

SOLUTION

CALL TO ACTION

RESULT / RETURN

PREPARE THE INTERVIEW

- Follow our Interview Questions PDF
- Plan your locations
- Outline the necessary gear

2

PRODUCTION

SHOOT THE INTERVIEW

- Find a location that matches your plan
 - Look for good light that is consistent and won't change
 - Look for depth and separation from the backdrop
 - Look for leading lines
 - Quiet scenes with slight movement increase interest
- Follow the interview questions PDF we've designed
- Set your interview up and shoot in one session
- * Have a translator on scene and translate along the way
- Shoot with multiple cameras when you can

SHOOT THE SUPPORTING CONTENT

- Shoot B-Roll (**Shoot close, medium, and wide**)
 - Shoot the shots you planned for
 - Shoot the shots that naturally arose out of the interview
- Shoot the "drama" scenes that arise out of the interview. These will be re-created and may require actors (**your character might tell a part of their story from childhood or their story might be too difficult to act out on their own due to trauma**)
- * As often as you can in both of the above situations, shoot close, medium, and wide shots

CAPTURE THE AUDIO

- Capture sound effects that will help bring your story to life
 - Capture natural sounds to help give context to location
 - Capture sounds from re-created scenes
- Capture audio from local songs or worship. If you have access to local musicians, local music can give your content an extra layer of contextual depth

3

POST-PRODUCTION

ASSEMBLE THE CONTENT

- Rough cut your interview footage and lay out the pieces on your chosen video editing timeline following **The Hero's Journey** outline from the pre-production stage
- Overlay the B-Roll footage and your "drama" or re-creation footage over the matching interview sections
- Rough match your audio sound effects and natural sounds to the matching pieces of footage
- Rough outline any music or songs you recorded in the production stage

EDITING

- Use close and medium shots in interview footage more often
- Balance close, medium, and wide shots in your B-Roll and "drama" footage
- Make editing cuts on action (when your character moves their hands for example)
- Make editing cuts on dialogue (words with strong pronunciation or the end of a sentence)
- Avoid jump cuts. You may have to remove mistakes in the interview, cover those up with B-Roll or "drama" scenes whenever possible
- Remove pieces that waster time and don't support the story, even if you don't get to use all of your favorite shots.
- Edit and color grade the film. You may want to darken the conflict scenes and add contrast, or brighten the hopeful scenes
- Get Creative! The edit is where the magic is, so have fun.

FEEDBACK AND CRITIQUE

- You've now got a full documentary. Export it and start sharing with close friends and family. Send it to other creatives and ask for critiques. This process can help polish the final product.

RELIANT.

Download

The Production Process - PDF

Resources

- **The Elements of Documentary Filmmaking** - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yx99KdAF1LI>
- **How to Make a Documentary** - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YmQfPHLCjdg>
- **Dan Harmon Story Cycle** - <https://youtu.be/-XGUVkOmPTA>
- **Jonah Sachs Story Wars** - <https://youtu.be/o69xW8wtBhk>
- **Start with Why** - <https://youtu.be/IPYeClXpxw>
- **Every Story is the Same** - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LuD2Aa0zFiA>
- **The Science of Story** - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cSxeDtwQnuY>

www.reliantcreative.org

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God is at work globally in powerful ways and those stories inspire action.
We partner with Christian ministries to tell engaging stories that mobilize the Church.*



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Thank You!