



Best Practices: Video

In Online Orientation

A COMEVO WHITE PAPER





Background

Comevo is the market leader in online orientation software: our Launch™ Online Orientation program is in use by over 150 colleges and universities throughout North America.

To support our clients and their student success programs, we periodically host educational webinars and publish papers such as this.

Overview

Not long ago, the idea of earning a degree online was unheard of. Today, there are dozens of online colleges and universities, and traditional institutions like Stanford and MIT have embraced e-learning for its ability to educate students anywhere, anytime.

Just a short time ago, colleges and universities required a written essay from prospective students. Today, many schools request video submissions as part of their application process.

Not too long ago, freshman orientation was only available came in the form of an in-person campus visit. Today, students are benefitting from online orientation programs that offer a more comprehensive, consistent introduction to campus resources and policies.



High Tech in Higher Ed

The use of video in higher education mirrors the use of video in our culture: it is prevalent, it is growing, and it is not going away. Video in the classrooms has helped augment instruction, improve standardization and reduce costs. It also enhances the quality of communication with an audience that grew up with video, responds to video, and has come to expect video. Millennials and Generation Z students consume, digest and retain video content, making it necessary for college and university staff to be more comfortable with – and skilled at – providing content in this format.

This paper outlines how the use of video can be used to expand and enrich your school's online orientation program. (For more information, be sure to consult [Best Practices for Online Orientation](#), published by Comevo in 2014.)

Think Video is a Fad?

Consider this: YouTube says that in 2017 users upload **300** hours of video to their site **each minute**. They have over **30 million** unique visitors each day. And, those visitors are watching nearly **5 billion** videos per day.

Using Video Wisely

Just because your students may spend more time on YouTube than they do in class does not mean every aspect of your orientation program needs to be on film. On the contrary, as efficient as technology is, it will never replace the immediacy and impact of human interactions. (Which explains why so many colleges and universities are transitioning toward orientation programs that are hybrid in nature, including both online and in-person orientation experiences.)

That said, your online orientation can be more effective if it ultimately integrates a diversity of resources, including audio, graphics, photos and video.

Since 1999, Comevo has worked with colleges and universities, helping them create customized online orientation programs for their incoming students. We've learned quite a bit collaborating with so many higher education professionals, so it's only natural to want to share some of the collective wisdom we've accrued over the years. Below are some fundamental recommendations for incorporating video into your campus's online orientation program.

Make a Plan

Look at your entire orientation outline and determine when and where video content can be most effective. Many schools use video for:

- Welcoming remarks from the school president and/or dean of students
- Introductions to various campus resources (such as the counseling center, health center, library, career center, financial aid and other key support departments)
- Words of wisdom from upperclassmen
- Exterior imagery of different facilities around campus, such as the student center, dining facilities and recreational areas
- B-roll to use with audio – video of students walking to class, cheering on the school's team, attending a lecture, etc.



Keep it Short

In this era of information overload and shrinking attention spans, it is critical that your scripts (and your videos) are boiled down to contain only the most important points. If you can say the same thing in fewer words, do it.

Keep it Real

Nothing will discourage an audience more than misinformation or false promises. If your dining hall serves better food than any restaurant in town, by all means tell that story proudly. But, if most students would rather go hungry than eat on campus, don't make false boasts. Your credibility matters, and incoming students are counting on you to provide accurate, truthful information.

Keep it Fresh

If you don't hire professional actors (and most schools don't), we strongly recommend that your online orientation feature a diversity of presenters. While it may make sense to have the same person provide the opening and closing remarks for your orientation, in between you should include a healthy, representative mix of faculty, staff and student presenters.

Write a Script

For each video included in your online orientation, it is strongly suggested that you prepare a script in advance. Why? Not only will the script help the speakers practice in advance (and thus appear natural and relaxed on camera,) but also because the more time your speakers spend preparing, the less time it will take to film and edit the video. If you're paying a professional videographer, time really is money.

Focus, Focus, Focus

“Be very clear about what you want the goal for each video to be. If you have too many goals for one video, that's probably a good sign that you should be making more individually focused videos instead of one video with scattershot goals.”

Chris Savage
Founder & CEO, Wistia



If you opt not to use scripts, consider interview questions as prompts: sometimes the most spontaneous responses are the most compelling!

Be Budget-Conscious

Because video is likely the most expensive portion of your budget, it makes good sense to only include video of only the most “permanent” campus features and resources. For example, it might not be prudent to mention your undefeated football team if you’re filming in the middle of the season.

Be Professional (or Hire One!)

If your campus doesn't have a capable audio-video department, we recommend you consider having our Content Production team manage all aspects of your video production. (Experience counts, and something as simple as bad lighting or a misplaced microphone can ruin even the simplest of videos.)

If you'd like our help, we'd be happy to provide an estimate of costs. Our services include everything you'll need: we coordinate schedules for actors (if needed), we provide script-writing, photography, still photos, aerial photos, ADA certification, closed captioning, and translation services (should you need another language or sub-titles.)

Educate Yourself

There are thousands of articles, how-to-videos, webinars and other resources online to help you understand the basics (and not-so-basics) about creating a quality video. A few of our favorite primers include:

- <http://edtechteacher.org/tools/multimedia/video-classroom/>
- <http://www.wikihow.com/Create-a-Good-Video>
- <http://www.vidyard.com/blog/how-to-make-your-video-production-budget-go-further>



Summary

With proper planning, knowledge, and the help of someone who's been there before, creating an effective, engaging video is an easily acquired skill.

We hope this paper has given you an overview of how to best employ video components within your online orientation program. While none of us expect to win Golden Globe awards for our work, the reward will be the countless students who learn and benefit from our efforts.

If there are any questions we can answer or points we can clarify, please don't hesitate to contact us.

Sources

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About Comevo

Based in San Luis Obispo, California, Comevo is a software company dedicated to cultivating technology that will serve the staff and students at colleges and universities throughout North America. Our definitive product is not software; it is helping staff create orientation programs that are more effective, which ultimately helps students succeed.