

## **Best Practices for Video Testimonials**

### *Content:*

- Practice beforehand – running through the questions you intend to ask your subject will make them more comfortable in front of a camera. You should also ask questions that are open-ended, instead of yes/no questions, this way your subject can take as long as they'd like to formulate their answer. Don't ask the person you're interviewing to read a script word-for-word – unless they are professional actors, it will be obvious that they are reading prepared remarks and it will be harder to get a video in a single take.
- Prepare your questions in a way that addresses issues specific to the campaign – if you want to make a video about seniority, don't just say "talk to me about seniority..." Ask your subject "how has seniority improved your workplace?" If you're making a video about safety, ask "How will a Teamster contract make your workplace safer?" By asking multiple questions all geared towards addressing specific issues, you can get multiple one-minute videos from a single interview that goes on for 10-15 minutes.
- Make sure your subject repeats the question in their answer – if, for example, you ask someone "why do you need a union?" make sure they start their answer with "We need a union because..." rather than just "Because..." This way the interview subject provides the context for the video and the individual giving the interview can be cut out during editing.
- Get crucial information – if you're interviewing someone that you just met, make sure that you get their name (ask them to spell the last name), job title, local union, employer, years of service and any other pertinent details.

### *Technique:*

- **NEVER SEND VIDEOS VIA TEXT MESSAGE** – this is the most important thing to remember when you make a video. Sending photos or videos via text message (SMS) compresses the file size and lowers the quality to the point where the video is no longer usable on any medium other than a mobile device. Always send videos or photos via email, Dropbox, Google Drive, or any other digital medium that doesn't compress file size during transfer.
- Good Lighting is Critical – Stable and steady lighting has a huge impact on smartphone and tablet cameras because they have smaller image sensors and lenses. Try as much as possible to shoot your video in brightly lit areas. This will help avoid unnecessary shadows and grainy areas in your video. Conversely, you also must be careful not to point the camera directly at bright light sources, which will cause unusable overexposed footage and lens flaring.

- Stay Steady – If you don't want your video footage to come out distorted, blurred, or affected by "rolling shutter" the best thing to do is to keep your phone steady while recording. Use both hands to hold your smartphone as close as possible to your body as you record the video. This can be a bit fatiguing in long takes or sequences, so if you're shooting something for a long time, be sure to bring a tripod or a stabilizer, or rest your phone on a flat surface like a desk or chair.
- The Audio Matters as Much as the Video – While you want your video to look good, the quality of your audio is more important than the video – so it should matter as much, if not more. It is very common to catch wind and unnecessary environmental noise that will compete with or drown out any important audio while shooting video outside, and it's impossible to edit this out post-production. It is advisable to shoot your video in a quiet place, preferably indoors when possible with less ambient noise. Make sure you have your back to a window, three to four feet away from the subject. If outside, shoot in the shade in a place with no external noise. Use an external microphone if possible; if not, stay as close to the audio source as you can. Staying close to your subject ensures better image quality, less digital noise, and better focus.
- Avoid Vertical Video Syndrome – Stop shooting vertical video! Many videographers who use of their smartphones for digital filmmaking often make the mistake of holding their phones vertically, that is to say up and down rather than sideways, while recording. Hold your phone horizontally so that videos played back on other screens will look fine.
- Be Prepared for the Shoot – Before you begin recording your videos, make sure that you have all of the gear, props, scripts, actors and shooting locations ready to go. Additionally, make sure your phone is in excellent condition and that you have enough available memory to store the footage – high definition (HD) video files can get large and will drain a battery quickly.