



FY 20 BUDGET MEMO # 36

DATE: May 7, 2019

TO: The Honorable Mayor and Members of the City Council

THROUGH: Robert A. Stalzer, City Manager *RA Stalzer*

FROM: Michael McCarthy, Communications and Marketing Director;
Chris Bruno, Economic Development Director

SUBJECT: Council Member Yi: City Video Production/Cost + ROI

Value and Ubiquity of Video

Twenty years ago, video content was a luxury that most websites and content publishers didn't worry about. When the top speed for home internet service was 56k, a grainy, 60-second video would take 10 minutes to download and require every bit of bandwidth.

Now, content producers can show full-screen, HD video in real time without even stopping to buffer. These conditions have led to a rise in the consumption of video content, and data suggests it's already leading to a huge shift in the way people use engage with the digital world (especially mobile).

The takeaway: Cisco's Visual Networking Index, which forecasts IP traffic and service adoption based upon independent analyst forecasts and real-world mobile data usage studies, notes that online video will account for 80 percent of all web traffic in 2019, up from 67 percent in 2014.

Why Online Video is an Effective Marketing Tool

Marketing and design firm Diode Digital recently found that online video is a 600% more effective marketing tool than print and direct mail combined.

- **75 Million people** in the U.S. watch online videos every day.
- Nearly 50% of all video is watched on a **mobile device**.
- Social video generates **1,200% more shares** than text and images combined.
- Videos on Facebook pages **increase end-user engagement by 33%**.
- Marketers who use video **grow revenue 49% faster** than non-video users
- Videos **up to 2 minutes long** get the most engagement.

Shift in How Fairfax City Produces and Broadcasts Videos

With the creation of a Communications and Marketing department last year, the revised mission is simple: to serve as an **in-house content agency** to help each department with its communication needs — all with the goal of **providing more (and a higher volume) of branded, engaging information for residents, businesses, regional residents and prospective developers/businesses.**

Because our audience demographics are so broad, **video is often complemented with identical information across multiple platforms** — including print, email and web.

The paradigm shift has included:

- Creating much shorter videos (1-3 minutes)
- Focus on broadcasting videos on city's social media (Facebook + Twitter + Website)
- Embedding videos on each of these platforms instead of providing links to external sources (thus, keeping the viewer on your platform longer and creating better engagement with other content)
- Focus on storytelling (city programs, residents, city schools, local merchants, etc.)
- Posting at prime engagement times (8-9 am and/or 5-6 pm)

Cost of Video Production

The overall cost of producing a video is baked into employee salaries: For the videos produced in the past year, all have been done in-house.

Key points:

Volume and speed: 90% of the videos we produce, such as the Fairfax City Minute, are created within a few hours. (For the Fairfax City Minute, the Communications/Marketing Director writes the script on a Wednesday night; it is produced on Thursday morning and ready for broadcast by noon, airing at 5 pm on social media). Other videos that require sophisticated graphics and animation — making up roughly 10% of the videos we produce — require more time.

Outside video help at no cost: Last fall, the Communications and Marketing Director formed a partnership with George Mason University's Film & Video Studies department and created a new for-credit internship program. The interns work 150 hours for the City of Fairfax per semester; they shoot mini documentaries called "City Flix" about our residents, programs and schools; they shoot B roll for upcoming events; and they work in the TV control room during the council, school board and planning commission meetings.

Music and video templates are affordable: We will spend less than \$400 on video templates and royalty-free music in FY20.

New equipment purchases: Any new equipment we buy for video production (cameras, etc.) is purchased with funds provided by the cable-company fees to the city.

Move away from live or truck shoots. While we will continue our mission to provide live broadcasts of council, school board and planning commission meetings on Channel 12, we have dramatically reduced the number of live/recorded broadcasts of events around town. It's not cost-effective or a wise use of city funds. **Because we are going where the audience is (i.e., social media), we are moving away from using our truck for live shoots** (freelance costs will go away); for one or two "sacred cow" live events like the Fourth of July Parade, we are exploring options for simply streaming them.

Video ROI/City Engagement in Past 12 Months

Since launching the new approach to video production, the department has produced a range of short videos over the past year that have:

- Showcased city programs and services
- Conveyed information about our schools
- Provided a snapshot of what it's like to do business in the city
- Offered an ongoing narrative about living here and our values

Some examples and the traffic they produced:

“Fairfax City Minute”



Purpose: Provide quick hits of information weekly (airs on Thursday evening)

Impact/ROI: 1-minute video has now become a weekly staple, dramatically increasing attendance at events and promoting the city’s dynamic programming and services. (NOTE: This program earned the city’s first Virginia Communications Innovation Award last year from VML.)

“Because We Are”



Purpose: Response to vandalism at Jewish Community Center

Impact/ROI: 12,000 views within 24 hours; nearly 300 shares across social media; awareness of who we are and what we stand for as a community; garnered countless goodwill. (NOTE: The video was imagined, scripted, filmed, produced and released within 24 hours.)

“Renaissance Housing Corporation”



Purpose: Introduce residents to an underutilized program

Impact/ROI: 1,000 views in first week; immediate increase in applications

“Lanier Middle Greenest School in the Country”



Purpose: To showcase how innovative our award-winning schools truly are

Impact/ROI: 2,000 views within 24 hours, countless shares on social media

“Doc Nix Goes to Practice”



Purpose: A radically different approach to Try Transit Week, this video incorporated the Mason community (Doc Nix and the entire Green Machine).

Impact/ROI: 16,000 views within 24 hours; increase in awareness among Mason students and community about the FREE service.

“Meet Wendy”



Purpose: Garner community feedback about major VDOT-funded road projects, encourage people to attend community meetings AND introduce the community to city’s Transportation Director — making her a real, viable, helpful person who has the city’s best interests in mind ... instead of a faceless municipal worker.

Impact/ROI: 1,500 views; strong community attendance at May 2018 meetings; positive dialogue with our Transportation Director.

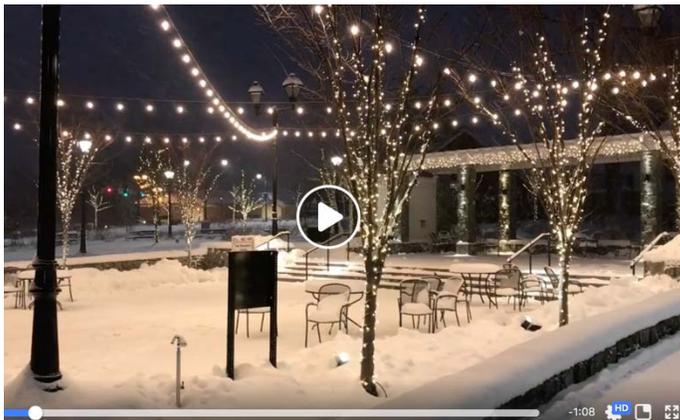
“Invasive Species” (Mason student video series)



Purpose: Introduce city residents to the very real problem of invasive species in our urban forests ... while spotlighting those in the community who are combatting it weekly. (The issue is an important agenda item/goal for the city’s Sustainability Committee.)

Impact/ROI: 1,500 views; 150 shares; raised awareness in community for the issue, and organizers received a significant bump in volunteers for future efforts.

“Snow Day: Video Postcard from Fairfax City”



Purpose: Reveal the magic of Fairfax City during its first snow

Impact/ROI: Nearly 7,000 views within 24 hours and 110 shares; the entire video was shot in 2 hours by the Communications Director; edited by the Communications Director in 30 minutes (including music) and added to social media feeds. This type of “postcard” sells our small city to those who live here and those thinking about moving here or doing business in Fairfax City.

Other impactful videos, all produced quickly and in-house include — all had positive impact on views and/or participation/attendance:

Small Business Saturday (Economic Development)
Holiday Safety Tips (Public Safety/PD)
Holiday Security: Take, Lock Hide (Public Safety)
Fill the Boot (Fire Department's fundraising for Muscular Dystrophy)
Composting Rollout (Sustainability)
Chocolate Lovers Festival (Parks/Rec)
Rock the Block (Parks/Rec)

PART 2

Responding directly to questions by council member Yi related to EDA-funded videos.

Program Overview:

The FY2019 pilot program recognizes the importance of strategic content marketing via video when complemented by other media (website, email marketing, print). The businesses featured were strategically selected; each has made a unique contribution and highlight a different aspect of the business community. The videos are not intended as advertisements for individual businesses, but instead created to tell the Fairfax City business story.

The common theme throughout these videos is that there's economic activity in the city and why Fairfax City is the best place to start, grow and expand a business. This program represents an initiative of the Economic Development Authority in partnership with the Marketing and Communications Office (as a result of its subject matter expertise).

Costs for freelance videographer/editor, FY19*:

- \$4,998.76 total costs this FY
- 5 videos produced this FY
- \$999.75 cost per video

*Going forward, EDA is exploring alternative cost sources and program parameters. Generally speaking, the city-business community promotion videos have been well received and have gained notoriety by prospective and new businesses throughout the city.

ROI/Marketing Value of Videos Among Business Prospects:

Content marketing via video provides an effective way to promote testimonials, which, in turn, offer a series of quick snapshots of our business environment that can be easily viewed and shared by prospects.

Our website data show that our video Testimonials page is among our top 3 most visited pages on FairfaxCityConnected.com.

Even businesses that are new to the city have taken notice:

“The videos provide a window into the vibrant business and cultural community that Fairfax City is building. They offer visibility into the growth and opportunity in the city at a very personal level based on the business interviews. We not only find them informative, but also exciting because they show where the city is heading.”

— Adam McNair, COO, Highlight (200+ employee tech company; moved to Fairfax City in early 2019)