BE A VIDEO STAR

More than six billion videos are watched on YouTube every month, and according to Nielsen, the site reaches more U.S. adults in the 18- to 34-year-old demographic than any cable network. Of those folks watching, 40 percent are doing so on their mobile phones.

These statistics point to a fantastic opportunity for you as a business owner to share your story with customers using this red-hot media. So what’s the hold up? Money? Time? Tech know-how? With video capturing so many eyes, it’s time to move it from your wish list to your to-do list. This month, we explore how florists can capture professional-quality video using just a smartphone, a few inexpensive apps and a small dose of shot-taking know-how to deliver the goods.

> Video Tool Kit Staples

Creating videos that speak to your brand and your target customer requires less cash than you may think. If you have an iPhone 4 (or a later version) or an Android purchased in the last year, you already have the ability to capture high-definition video at 1920x1080p (progressive scan) — more commonly called, simply, 1080p.

Unlike a cumbersome video cam, a smartphone is portable — great for capturing setup shots on-site or moving around your store. The on-screen software controls are simple. You can edit videos on the go, without a computer, and you can upload the videos directly to social media through your cellular or Wi-Fi connection.

No cameraman? No problem. Full tripods are bulky, so you may want to wrap your camera around a pole or handrail with a Joby Gorilla Pod ($20) attached to another gadget called an In Your Face tripod smartphone mount ($19).

One smartphone caveat: The phones usually have two cameras, and they aren’t created equal. The front camera is usually lower quality (best for videoconferencing and selfies). The back camera provides the 1080p quality.

Another caveat is storage space. Capturing video will gobble up precious megabytes, even gigabytes, on your smartphone. (One minute of footage will be about 160MB; a six-minute clip will be about a gigabyte.) If you’re due to purchase a new phone, get one with the largest capacity, 64GB or higher. On a regular basis, upload old photos and videos to your computer to clear space, and delete any unused apps.

Essential Video Apps

Once you’re comfortable capturing video on your phone, start exploring the many apps that can help you create share-worthy footage. Here are a few options:

- **Video Capture Software:** If you’re an iPhone fan, download Filmic Pro ($4.99) from the App Store. Filmic Pro gives you more control over variables such as white balance, exposure, focus and audio level. Filmmakers using Android can grab Cinema FV-5 ($4.99), which provides similar functionality, from the Google Play Store.

- **Video Editing Software:** Nothing beats Apple’s own iMovie for iOS ($4.99), which provides stylish templates and easy-to-use controls to make basic edits and insert transitions. The software’s best function is easy sharing to Facebook, YouTube and Vimeo straight from the app. Android fans should check out the free WeVideo, which matches iMovie features and exports to Facebook and YouTube.

Follow the Light

When capturing video, your primary concern is always lighting. At your shop or at a venue, try to find indirect daylight to light your subjects (direct light is too harsh, and industrial tube fluorescents or incandescent lighting will make footage appear yellow). If you’re inside, open every window shade or skylight and adapt the shots to use this light.

Regardless of available lighting, minimize bad video quality by setting the white balance and shooting your camera at a digital gray card; do this anytime the lighting changes (both Filmic Pro or Cinema FV-5 allow you to do this). Also, check out the Porta Brace White Balance card (about $6).

Content Capture Best Practices

To save time, edit out unusable footage while you capture. When you’re finalizing your video, remember that most people tolerate a two-minute video; 15 to 30 seconds is a good goal per clip. If you plan your shoot, you should have three to four great clips that you can piece together quickly.

Next month, we’ll dive deeper into video as we focus more on content, increasing the quality of video through better production techniques and even setting up a mini video (and photo) studio right in your shop for under $300.

Renato Sogueco is chief information officer for the Society of American Florists. rsogueco@safnow.org

ALL IN THE EDITING A video from Tiger Lily Florist in Charleston, S.C., follows two cardinal rules of video: Keep overall video length to about two minutes and individual shots to no more than 15 to 30 seconds.

**Follow the Light**

When capturing video, your primary concern is always lighting. At your shop or at a venue, try to find indirect daylight to light your subjects (direct light is too harsh, and industrial tube fluorescents or incandescent lighting will make footage appear yellow). If you’re inside, open every window shade or skylight and adapt the shots to use this light.

Regardless of available lighting, minimize bad video quality by setting the white balance and shooting your camera at a digital gray card; do this anytime the lighting changes (both Filmic Pro or Cinema FV-5 allow you to do this). Also, check out the Porta Brace White Balance card (about $6).

**Content Capture Best Practices**

To save time, edit out unusable footage while you capture. When you’re finalizing your video, remember that most people tolerate a two-minute video; 15 to 30 seconds is a good goal per clip. If you plan your shoot, you should have three to four great clips that you can piece together quickly.

Next month, we’ll dive deeper into video as we focus more on content, increasing the quality of video through better production techniques and even setting up a mini video (and photo) studio right in your shop for under $300. 

Renato Sogueco is chief information officer for the Society of American Florists. rsogueco@safnow.org