

Fifteen Tips for the CEO - Clip and Save

- 1. Take time for excellence:** Your time is precious and a good video presentation can save you lots of it. Every minute invested in perfecting your presentation will pay hours of dividends as your video is replayed throughout your organization, often for months.
- 2. Trust your Director:** Anyone who has mastered his craft well enough to be supervising your presentation has probably excelled as far in his trade as you have in yours. Your director has a wide range of skills focused on making you look your best, feeling relaxed and focused on your presentation. If the Director is your own employee, appreciate the Indian's ancient query, "Why is the guru never respected in his home village?"
- 3. Use first names on the set:** Video studios are essentially an informal environment. With rare exceptions, directors and crews will be dressed casually and the command structure may not be apparent. Relax everyone by introducing yourself on a first name basis and treating the crew with equanimity.
- 4. Don't be a "Desk Jockey":** Ask your producer to think of a meaningful venue than your office; the assembly line at 2AM, a dealer's show room, the wordprocessing pool. Try to stage the shot so that you can move through it and look like you have a purpose in being there. Video is an audio and visual medium. Use both to maximum communicative advantage.
- 5. Consider yourself an actor:** Good CEO video presentations are more like acting than running a corporation. The best presentations are done by CEO's who have learned (or intuitively follow) good acting techniques. There is no dishonesty in playing a part well. A convincing performance may serve your ends better than the real you.
- 6. Cite specifics:** CEO's, by definition, deal in broad, general issues and strategies. Employees, individual investors and even some institutional viewers often misinterpret CEO's as being vague and disconnected. Try to cite specific issues and individuals in your company that exemplify your strategies and underscore your awareness of opportunities at all levels.
- 7. Maintain Eye Contact:** Do not allow your eyes to wander from the lens, except to direct the audience to something off-camera. Wandering eyes make you look "shifty eyed" and creates the disastrous impression that you are not to be trusted.
- 8. Sit on your coat tails:** Even the best tailored jacket looks best when pulled tightly down in back, thus avoiding a hump of fabric behind the neck. Stand up, pull your jacket tails down and sit on them, for a razor sharp shoulder line.
- 9. Wear the proper colors for television:** The color red tends to smear on television, so avoid it. Also avoid any thin stripes which tend to create annoying "moiré" effects as they interfere with the horizontal lines that compose a TV picture. The best colors to wear are solid blues. The ubiquitous white shirt should also be avoided in favor of a pastel since video is not kind to bright colorless contrasts.
- 10. Avoid noisy accessories:** Jangling jewelry, beeping wristwatches, cell phones, a squeaky chair (in fact any chair that swivels) should be avoided. Know where the microphone is and don't hit it while gesturing. Your normal level of speech will do fine, but don't bring along unwanted competition.
- 11. Never use cue cards:** Unless you have perfectly memorized your presentation, the best way to read your script on camera is with a **teleprompter**. A teleprompter places your script, in large letters, directly over the camera lens so that your eyes maintain perfect audience contact. Do not, under any circumstances, use cue cards, which will make you look walleyed.
- 12. Tell the crew what you look like:** You can save a lot of time on the set by sending a simple description of yourself and how you want to be staged, a day or so before the taping. Include a picture of yourself, if possible. Helpful items to note: Height, weight, hair color and/or baldness, eyeglasses, etc. and whether you prefer sitting, standing or both.
- 13. Wait for your cue:** When filming begins, you will hear the director say, "Roll tape." (if video) or "Camera" (if film). Don't take this as your cue to begin. You may then hear the technician say, "Speed," meaning the tape or film is running correctly. THEN, the director will say, "Action." or "Cue." **That's** your signal to start. Look directly at the camera and begin.
- 14. Take advantage of makeup:** A sweaty brow, a shiny bald spot, blemishes, bags under the eyes, can all disappear under the skillful ministrations of a good makeup and hair person. Welcome this costly luxury. No. Demand it!
- 15. Exterminate the Butterflies:** Lawrence Olivier learned from a Japanese Karate teacher how to avoid butterflies in the stomach. Take a deep breath, press the tips of your fingers into your abdomen, just under and following the arch of your ribs where they join at the sternum. Bend over slightly and count to ten. Straighten up and exhale. This may be the origin of the Japanese form of greeting. Oliver also used Valium.
- 16. Answer with short sentences:** In an interview situation, keep your sentences short and end with a full stop. This is called a good "bite," and allows the video editor maximum flexibility in fitting your statements into the length of his story. Long, rambling statements tend to get left on the editing room floor or, worse, edited into something which may not be what you intended.

Who is George Avgerakis and what does he do for a living? Time Warner, the world's largest communications and entertainment company call George Avgerakis and his staff at Avekta Productions, "the finest creative team we've ever worked with." Avekta has been making corporate profiles and other business video for the past 15 years. Mr. Avgerakis specializes in interviewing corporate leaders and assisting in communicating their ideas to employees, financial concerns and the general public.