

## **Converting to Online Teaching<sup>1</sup>**

**A series of short guidance articles for educators and institutions**

### **Video Production Guidance<sup>2</sup>**

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#### **BOTTOM LINE UP-FRONT**

- **Make Short Videos (<6 minutes)**
  - 2 to 3 minutes must grab them
  - At 6 minutes you start to lose students
  - At 10 minutes they're all gone!
- **Start with a Point of Interest!**
  - Shocking Statistic
  - Remarkable Story or Case
  - Follow the “IDEA” paradigm for inquiry-based design
- **Speak Quickly and Enthusiastically!**
  - Don’t talk slowly...you’ll lose the audience
  - Show your love of the material!
  - Add a transcript / subtitles for accessibility

#### **BACKGROUND**

The effectiveness of our courses on edX and using short videos for a flipped active learning (blended) classroom is fundamentally based on two things: good content and learner engagement. Stipulating that our programs should be rich in content, this summary is focused on creating videos that are engaging for the learner. It is not about the technology side.

Phillip Guo, Juho Kim, and Rob Rubin (University of Rochester, MIT and edX, respectively) have researched 6.9 million video sessions on the edX platform. Their findings are presented in the paper *“How Video Production Affects Student Engagement: An Empirical Study of MOOC Videos.”* The guidance I present is a summary of key lessons they learned from their research, plus other readings.

<sup>1</sup>This series of articles by the Director of the University of Maryland’s Project Management Center for Excellence provides information and advice for converting from traditional in-person classes to online teaching, based on their experience before and during the Covid-19 pandemic of 2020. See Professor Cable’s background at the end of this article.

<sup>2</sup> How to cite this paper: Cable, J. H. (2020). Converting to Online Teaching: A series of short guidance articles for educators and institutions – Video Production Guidance, *PM World Journal*, Vol. IX, Issue XII, December.

## SHORTER VIDEOS ARE MORE ENGAGING

There is strong evidence that attention tends to drop off after 6 minutes. The recommendation is to invest in pre-production planning and segment videos into 6-minute chunks. I think it was Mark Twain who is quoted as having said after writing a friend a very long letter, “I would have written you a shorter letter, but I didn’t have time.” It takes a great deal of work to create a content-rich 6-minute video and the notion is that “it takes meticulous planning to explain a concept succinctly.”

## MAKING VIDEOS INTERESTING

Engaging the learners means we want the video to have personality. Apparently, Madison Avenue production not only does not matter but it gets in the way of an intimate & personal connection with the learner. There are three ways to start a video that get the learners’ attention. First, start by telling a story that illustrates why the topic is important and connects you with the topic. Second, begin with a stunning fact that gets attention. Last, ask a question … “Did you know…”

When designing the video, consider this inquiry-based design strategy using the “IDEA” paradigm for each module in your course:

- **Inquire** - compelling and engaging content
- **Discover** - discovering new ideas and connections from inquiry
- **Explain** - explaining how these connections work with science
- **Apply** - applying new knowledge through skill tests or challenges

Shooting video in your office or other individualized settings is a plus. Also, a combination of the instructor’s talking head with Khan-Style hand drawn illustrations is very appealing. Power Point can be used, but only when interspersed with video of the instructor and other illustrations. Power Point animations and transitions help to make a slide deck interesting + the fewer words the better. Graphic images ~ pictures are worth a thousand words! Voiceover PowerPoint is a quick technique that expedites the production process and can be combined with live video of the instructor in editing. Video of the instructor should begin and finish all videos with others inserted at opportune times.

A good instructor makes eye contact with the learner. So, look straight into the camera and speak just like you are discussing the material with the learner sitting in your office. This is also a new format. You are not talking one-to-many. You are talking one-to-one with the learner. So, speak to them earnestly like a friend explaining a concept you really care about. This is a personal connection opportunity, not a PR promo!

## SPEAKING RATE AFFECTS ENGAGEMENT

In the referenced paper “Students generally engaged more with videos where instructors spoke faster.” They noticed that “fast-speaking instructors conveyed more energy and enthusiasm.” “Whenever possible, edit in post-production to remove instances of “umm,” “uhh,” and other pauses and filler words.”

Note that this goes against the old belief in speaking more slowly and deliberately for an international audience. That's definitely not what's needed. Why? Students can slow you down, rewind your video, and they'll have transcripts to refer to during reading.

### THE BOTTOM LINE

Our goal is to have every one of the videos we develop 6 to 8 minutes but under no condition more than 20 minutes, be engaging, and convey not only energy and enthusiasm, but also love of the content. Of course, content is king and engaging videos are useless if the content is not rich!

### REFERENCES

*edX 2020 Impact Report*, edX.org

*How Video Production Affects Student Engagement: An Empirical Study of MOOC Videos*, Phillip Guo, University of Rochester; Juho Kim, MIT; Rob Rubin, edX

*Certified Professional in Training Management session*, Dr. Doug Harward

*How to Start a Speech*, by Conor Neill, Ted Talk <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=w82a1FT5o88>

### PREVIOUS ARTICLES IN THIS SERIES

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## About the Author



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**John Cable** is Director of the Project Management Center for Excellence in the A. James Clark School of Engineering at the University of Maryland, where he is also a professor and teacher of several graduate courses in project management. His program at the University of Maryland offers masters and PhD level programs focused on project management. With more than 1,300 seats filled annually with students from many countries, including more than 40 PhD students, the program is the largest graduate program in project management at a major university in the United States.

John Cable served in the newly formed U.S. Department of Energy in 1980, where he was involved with developing energy standards for buildings, methods for measuring energy consumption, and managing primary research in energy conservation. As an architect and builder, Mr. Cable founded and led John Cable Associates in 1984, a design build firm. In 1999 he was recruited by the University of Maryland's Department of Civil & Environmental Engineering to create and manage a graduate program in project management. In his role as founder and director of the Project Management Center for Excellence at Maryland, the program has grown to offer an undergraduate minor, master's degrees, and a doctoral program. Information about the Project Management Center for Project Management at the University of Maryland can be found at [www.pmd.umd.edu](http://www.pmd.umd.edu).

In 2002, PMI formed the Global Accreditation Center for Project Management Educational Programs (GAC). Mr. Cable was appointed to that inaugural board where he served as vice chair. In 2006, he was elected as chairman, a role he held through 2012. As Chair of the PMI GAC, John led the accreditation of 86 project management educational programs at 40 institutions in 15 countries in North America, Europe, the Middle East, Latin America and the Asia Pacific Region. John was awarded PMI's 2012 Distinguished Contribution Award for his leadership at the GAC. He can be contacted at [jcable@umd.edu](mailto:jcable@umd.edu).