



PROFILE

Rohan Mehra is a journalist and broadcaster from London. He has created content for the BBC, National Geographic, London Science Museum, New Scientist and more. His aim in communicating science is to make it exciting so that everyone will want to learn more.

Sharing Science - Make the most out of multimedia

In this science communication (scicom) series, members of the Division for Strategic Public Relations suggest ways UTokyo researchers can share their expertise beyond their professional circle. Today we're going to explore how audio and visual (AV) content helps bring your research to new audiences in fun and exciting ways.

After a long hard day of lectures and seminars, I bet you love to settle down with your device and watch or listen to something interesting. Maybe online videos, perhaps a documentary or podcast on some topic that fascinates you? AV platforms are powerful tools for communication as they allow content creators to interact directly with your primary senses. They are especially useful for research communication as AV provides a window into a world otherwise unseen by most people and, with the inclusion of interviews, can create a more personal connection than an academic paper ever could. Not only that but AV lends itself to shareable, bite-size pieces of educational entertainment, and I think you can make use of this too. Here are some things to think about if you want to make a podcast or video.

Audience - who is this media creation for?

The intended audience will affect what you create and how you create it. It's a lot like writing, public speaking, or even general conversation. The less formal the audience, the looser it should feel. The interviews should be presented with enthusiasm and the information can be quite general. The editing will be snappier and all aesthetic aspects of the production more playful. A more formal audience and you'll want the look, feel, and content to reflect that. Such an audience would also want more detailed information.

Purpose - what is it meant to do? (It can have more than one)

Inform - To raise awareness of a subject, field, institution, or person

Educate - To explain a subject or present a point of view

Entertain - To amuse viewers to prompt them to share something

Confide - To familiarize viewers with people and places to instill trust in them

Entice - Encourage action from the

viewer, for example, participation or recruitment

Boost SEO - Google loves video and bumps up search scores for sites with video content

With a purpose in mind you can then decide what kind of content you need to focus on.

What to include

PEOPLE - Who are the storytellers, who are the characters, and what are they telling us?

Places - Where are these people? How is the place important, relevant, or interesting?

Particulars - What things can we see or hear to explain or expand on the story?

"Flavor" - Music, sound effects, text, graphics, maps, and animation can add appeal

Interviews - let the people speak

I wrote PEOPLE in capital letters because PEOPLE, sorry, people, are the most important thing when it comes to AV content. By including informative and engaging interviews, you will leave a positive mark on your audience, whoever they may be. In many cases,

especially in your early projects, the primary voice may well be yourself. But if your piece is focused on a broad topic, then it's a good idea to feature multiple voices for different angles on that topic. And a diverse range of participants will appeal to a broad, diverse audience.

There are different ways to present an interview, but I like to encourage budding journalists to treat interviews like real conversations, and not the artificial games of question and answer you see in the news and variety shows. This way the audience should feel more like someone is talking to them and less like they are listening into someone else's conversation.

The trick to doing this is to edit your piece so the viewer can easily understand the content with the answers from the interviewee only, without the questions from the interviewer. As such, you will need to make sure their responses are full and complete sentences by asking open questions. "What is your favorite color?" might just result in the answer "Purple," which isn't too useful. But "Tell me about your favorite color, and why it is that" might get you a response like, "My favorite color is purple because it reminds me of *satsumaimo*, which is my favorite snack food." See what a difference that can make?

Putting it all together

The technical side of content creation is a far grander subject than we could possibly hope to cover in this article. But here's an overview with some ideas to

get you started. After all, you're all bright, enthusiastic problem solvers. The internet will help you find the right tool for your purpose and hardware.

If you want to make something that looks and sounds professional, then do your homework and watch some content you find interesting and would like to replicate. Pay attention to the use of audio and visual elements, the way the camera is held, the sizes and positions of things on screen, and the use of sound effects and music.

Then do what all great artists do: Borrow their ideas! (You know *Star Wars* is essentially a remake of Akira Kurosawa's *The Hidden Fortress*, but set in space, right?). No, really. AV content creation is a lot like a language, you learn it through mimicry, before understanding. Try and use ideas you find appealing to tell your story, and with time you will find your own style.

Useful FREE apps

Audacity - Open source audio and podcast creator for Mac OS and Windows PCs

iMovie - Entry level video editor for iOS devices

PowerDirector - Entry level video editor for Android devices

DaVinci Resolve - High-end video editor for Mac OS and Windows PCs

Training courses

Did you know that Rohan offers free training courses on video production and editing? Contact the Division for Strategic Public Relations (we're more exciting than our name suggests) to find out more! Rohan.mehra@mail.u-tokyo.ac.jp



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