1) How does a time lapse project begin?

Assuming we've talked about the scope of work and what you want as a deliverable, (community outreach, new biz dev., fund raising, legacy, etc.) our next step is to scout the location and look for suitable places to install a weatherproof, solar-powered time-lapse system. Or two. Or three. Or four. From there we prepare a detailed proposal for your review.

2) When do cameras begin to record?

A proper time lapse tells a story. A proper story contains a beginning, middle and end. To service these three attributes, we suggest at least one camera begin to record several days prior to the beginning of your project and continue recording for several days after your project completes. This ensures that enough photography exists to create a complete and proper story.

3) What are the considerations when locating camera positions?

We take into account first and foremost, what camera position will provide the best vantage point for telling the story you want told. After that's settled, we look at the ease of installation, (will a custom camera platform have to be design and fabricated?) safety and security of the camera(s) and what will be the preferred power supply?

4) Power?

There are two ways to run a camera system, plug it in or use solar. Outdoor installations that run longer than a day require that the camera be placed inside a secured weatherproof housing. Inside that housing is the camera, lens, intervalometer, battery, a battery charger and a circuit board to manage the recharging process.

Whether indoors or out, we can usually plug in a system. When plugged in, the on board charger replenishes the battery, like what an alternator does for a car. If no electricity is available, (as it often is) then we attach a solar panel to recharge the battery.

5) What about indoors?

When installing indoors, depending on the situation, we've installed systems with and without a secure housing. In either case, the system is plugged in. A solar panel is ineffective indoors.

6) How long does the battery last?

We use custom made lithium ion batteries. Without recharging and depending on the interval

rate, (how many times a day the camera takes a photo) these batteries will run a system between 5 days and 30 days. The batteries themselves can last up to 6 years.

7) How many cameras are used?

It depends. If we're producing a straight documentary piece for you with little custom work, a single camera most likely would be placed. For narrative style time-lapse films, depending on the budget, we often place 2-4 fixed cameras. We make the recommendation after a site survey and as we work through the proposal.

8) What do you mean by "custom" work?

In my world there are two types of time lapse film making work: documentary and narrative.

Documentary style is just like it sounds, a straight forward documentation of a process. No bells. No whistles. Just a single camera recording whatever it's pointed at. We will of course include titling and music during the editing phase. And if appropriate, location sound effects to round out the experience. But all in all these are rather dull affairs and not likely to generate much in the way of viewership, (and more importantly) sharing.

Narrative style is as opposite as opposite can be. With this approach, we develop the story of whatever we're asked to record. You see every project has a beginning middle and end. And like any good story the narrative time lapse contains multiple view points, a journey through time and beautiful imagery, real or imagined. This is our preferred approach and why we recommend it over documentary style.

9) OK, so the narrative style sounds great. How do we go about this?

In addition to the main camera, (the master wide shot point of view) there may or may not be another weatherproof solar-powered camera system installed for the duration. However rover days will be scheduled. Rover days are when we go out into the field and place multiple cameras at various places throughout the site. The **"rover"** camera captures details the main camera(s) cannot see. These rover days are scheduled with your construction schedule in mind. We want to capture important and interesting aspects that help flesh out the story. We also employ motion control systems and drones for those one-of-a-kind visuals.

10) Is drone photography against the law?

Yes, if the pilot is FAA certified and insured. There are limits to where and when a drone can fly but generally it is doable.

11) What is motion control?

Motion control is the general term for putting a camera in motion as it records a time lapse sequence. We can pivot, pan, slide and otherwise move a camera in multiple directions simultaneously. The ability to move a camera during a time lapse sequence adds such a dynamic quality to the film that we use motion control as often as is possible. In the absence of location motion control we can "move" the camera while editing. Today's software is amazing in what it can accomplish.

12) How long does a rover camera record?

Depending on what it's recording and how it will be used, a rover can stay in one spot for as little as 10 minutes or as long as 8 hours.

13) Isn't that a lot of extra photographs?

Like Goldilocks it's yes, no or just the right amount. We stock way up on photographs during your construction phase. The editing process is where we breath life into the project and without enough photographs to manage your story…well let's just say that it's much better to have it and not need it then the other way around. To be fair, not all time lapse sequences make it into the final narrative. Some sequences are best used outside of the finished film: twitter and like.

14) How do I make an informed decision when evaluating a proposal?

Great question. But first ask what do I/we need this time-lapse for? Marketing? Social media? Legacy? Insurance purposes? Fund raising? Answer this question first and the other answers fall into place.

Spend time looking at previous work from each competitor. We suggest using four criteria for evaluating a proposal: visual comfort, watchability, reputation and cost. Visual comfort is further broken down by three sub-criteria: composition, color and contrast. In other words, are the pictures pretty? Simple answer but a powerful one. The photographs must be visually appealing. The subject matter is irrelevant. A professional will make the situation work with no excuses.

Watchability is also deceptively simple. Do you want to watch it again? Did you feel your time was well spent watching the time-lapse? Did you enjoy the story? Would you comment favorably if asked to do so? Watchability is comfort.

Reputation is important because often there is no prior relationship with the provider. I describe time-lapse films like this: months to shoot, hours to produce, seconds to watch. A time-lapse film is a sizable investment too. For these reasons, testimonials and/or face-to-face meetings will help

determine who is a good choice for you and your project.

Cost is last. If you spend ten dollars and don't like it you've spent too much. If you spend twenty and love it...need I say more?

15) Social media?

Exactly. Engaging stakeholders via social media is not to be taken lightly. Studies have shown that most people access the web via their portable devices. And they prefer video content. Bingo! We have that covered for you. We can prepare update clips for use on social media to keep your audience informed and engaged.

16) How long will my completed film be?

The motion picture business has done a great job telling their stories in less than 3 minutes. We've been trained by watching movie trailers. Or is it spoiled? Our goal is to tell your story in about the same time. There has to be a compelling reason to run longer, otherwise it's an indulgence. Your audience wants informative and entertaining content. And we will deliver it efficiently and quickly. There are too many cat videos to watch. Don't tax your audience for time. They'll appreciate it. And share.

17) Is it difficult to put together all the photos you take?

Great editing is crucial to the finished product but let's define some terms first. ***Assets*** are the pieces: photographs, video clips, sound effects and music. ***Editing*** combines these assets into a thoughtful, cohesive whole. It's important to have high-quality assets, but without great editing, great assets won't get the job done. Which is to tell your compelling story to your interested audience.

Editing separates the men from the boys so to speak. It's quite simple really but editing is often underdone and overlooked. We edit with vision, taste, passion and a feel for your story.

18) Sound design? What's that all about?

As stated previously, great editing is key to a successful outcome. Along with the visual component, sound is just as important to the overall viewer experience. You want to connect emotionally with your audience. It's the guaranteed way to engage them, to get your message across, and for them to act. When a visual story is cut to the beat and rhythm of appropriate music, the endorphins begin to flow. As an added feature I include construction sound effects like grinders, saws, hammers, voices, etc. When it's called for I'll add wind and water effects too. The sum total of all this is an immersive experience that connects your message to your target audience. Cool.

19) OK, I’m sold. How much does it cost?

We wish we could answer that with a simple direct answer but as you can see by this FAQ , a direct answer is not possible due to the issues we take into account: location logistics, duration of the construction process, number of cameras, number of rover days, how many outside contractors are needed, etc. But fear not! A detailed proposal is always prepared for your evaluation.

You’ll love our work. And you’ll love working with us. Contact us so we can begin:
818-422-0696

Thanks for reading.

Michael