



Cut! Print!

I wrote a few weeks ago about making a travel program with the Japanese broadcaster NHK, and today we're also talking about making video, but there's no NHK involved this time; this is strictly do-it-yourself stuff!

I'm talking about YouTube videos of course. These days, anybody whose occupation involves selling things, as mine does, has to have a presence both on the internet, and in the various social media that have become ever present there. I have had a face on the internet for a great many years, opening my first web site back in 1996.

But I cannot claim to have been so quick on the uptake when it came to working with video. When YouTube first came to our attention I scoffed at it - "Free video? No way is this going to last long!" I of course couldn't have been more wrong, and I kept on being wrong as the years went by. I just couldn't see how such a thing could survive.

I didn't ignore video altogether, and created some small explanatory pieces for my own web site, but honestly didn't see much point in it, and didn't make the effort to 'do it properly'.

So earlier this year when American illustrator Jed Henry and I were preparing our Kickstarter campaign, I wasn't initially very cooperative with his request to produce some video for the project. It's a basic rule of any Kickstarter campaign though, that the sponsors create a video introducing both themselves and their proposed project, so I had to come up with something. I set up a camera, read a few words from a simple script about the project, and sent the result over to Jed for inclusion.

It turned out that Jed himself had hired a professional video company to produce the video, and when these people saw my bit, they got their scissors out and trimmed it down to the barest minimum possible, actually just a few seconds.

When the video was ready and I saw how poor my contribution looked in comparison to Jed's presentation I realized that I would have to 'up my game'. So after the campaign opened, at the end of the first day when it became necessary for me to create an update message, I tried a different approach. I went out to my balcony where there was plenty of light, positioned the camera up fairly close, and while looking directly into the lens, said a short piece about my feelings on the project so far. I used no script, and simply tried to imagine that I was speaking directly to somebody in front of me. I then put it up on YouTube where the backers of our Kickstarter project could see it.

And that combination - close presence, non-scripted, direct communication, and ... YouTube - made all the difference. We're now a couple of months down the road, my YouTube channel has upwards of 130,000 views, and the comments there are a steady stream of encouragement and compliments.

I produced a number of similar update videos during the course of the campaign, and Jed and I are both convinced that they played an important part in our success (we ran some 3000% past our original goal!)

So it seems that making YouTube videos has become a necessary part of my work routine, something else that will force me away from the workbenches and towards the computer screen. This evening I will again spend a few hours wrestling with video editing software preparing the next update on the current print job.

Not exactly the kind of "Cut! Print!" I should be doing!

David Bull
Seseragi Studio
Nagabuchi 8-4-5 Ome City
Tokyo Japan 198-0052
<http://astoryaweek.com>