

Making an Educational Infomercial



The clock strikes twelve... Yes, Cinderella's coach may turn into a pumpkin, but something else happens as well for the late-night television watcher. The infomercials begin. A mutt at heart, the infomercial strikes a bargain between a commercial that tries to sell the product and an information session. Convincing through length and depth, an infomercial sells a product to those television watchers who want a storyline to the commercial, a reason why they should buy, and perhaps a little information on how this product will improve their lives. Make your own infomercial for a class project or just for fun.

Difficulty: Moderately Easy

Instructions:

1. Choose your product. Decide if you would like your product to exist in "real life" or if it will be as fake as your infomercial is. A product could be anything from a nut grinder to glass cleaner. Your "product" can also be a book, historical figure, a process - anything that your students could explain, demonstrate, persuade or sell to the viewer.
2. Obtain or make the product, depending on whether it really exists or your imagination produced it. If it is a historical person or process, gather and/or create images that will support the infomercial. You will have to be able to demonstrate and create visuals to promote the "product" to make a convincing infomercial.
3. Develop your script. Leave room for a demonstrations and explanations of your product. Devote time to this part of the process, as the script forms the foundation for your infomercial.
4. Make sure to leave some time for testimonials from "people off the street" who will sing the praises of your "product."
5. Gather your talent. Recruit a convincing personality for your main actor, and choose several people to give testimonials regarding how the product has altered their lives.
6. Choose your location for the infomercial shoot. Set the date and time for the shoot, and inform the talent and actors accordingly. You may wish to shoot your testimonials separately, or you could include them in the same shooting time as the main body of the infomercial.
7. Plan out and shoot the infomercial using close-ups, medium shots and long shots of the product, the main actor and the testimonial providers.

Things You'll Need:

- Video camera with a built-in microphone
- Actors
- Script
- "Product"
- Editing program of your choice (iMovie, Final Cut Pro, etc.)

8. Using an editing program of your choice, edit the shots together. Keep the story moving and the interest level up by including appropriate music and graphics.

Tips & Warnings:

- Obtain more shots than you think you'll need. When you edit, you'll be glad to have a variety to choose from.
- After you edit, run the infomercial by a person whose opinion you trust. Take the opinion into consideration and re-edit, if needed.

References:

Entrepreneur: "Infomercial"

<http://www.entrepreneur.com/encyclopedia/term/82232.html>

The Advanced Computing Center for the Arts and Design: "Storyboards"

<http://accad.osu.edu/womenandtech/Storyboard%20Resource/>

Photo Credit product image by Leticia Wilson from Fotolia.com;