

Instant Authority

The Art and Science of the Teleprompter



by
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for The Launch Video Course Pilot

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"Life is what happens while you're making other plans"
John Lennon

I was right in my wheelhouse...

When I was in high school I joined the Forensics team. By the way, back then Forensics was about public speaking, not crime scene analysis.

Anyway, I got assigned something called Oral Interpretation. Basically, you memorized a five-minute speech and delivered it to the judges in an empty classroom.

I studied and studied and memorized and drilled and studied some more. Weeks of this went by. Then on the day of the judging I entered the classroom as confident as I could be, got one paragraph into my speech and went completely blank.

As my clothes slowly became drenched from the sweaty effort to improvise something reasonable about dolphins, I inched my way into the rows of chairs at the back of the room, because I had left my speech sitting on one of those desks.

I actually thought that if I moved slowly enough, the judges might not notice that I was literally standing next to them. Such is what passes for logic in the panicked brain.

Anyway, somehow I got to the desk, convinced by this point that I was invisible, yet performing brilliantly, glanced down at the speech, and realized in horror that the speech was upside down.

I guess I didn't want anyone peeking at it. Oh, the irony...

And oh, what a disaster for the audience as they watched me painfully struggle for the words I'd spent weeks writing, inching backwards toward the front of the room.

I don't remember anything else about that day except waking up in the emergency room. OK, I think I'm exaggerating about that. Maybe.

Today the stakes are higher than high school

You've got enough to worry about in your business than spending weeks memorizing speeches. So if you want to use your time as wisely as possible, you'll employ the tool I wish I'd had back then.

However, there is probably no more maligned and misused tool in the video marketer's toolkit than the teleprompter.

The zeitgeist of our age has turned against it. Even though CEOs and presidents have been using it for 50 years, suddenly it has become a signifier that you have no thoughts of your own.

So that's the first belief I'd like you to look at, because when it comes to your business, you know that isn't true. After all, you write your own material. This isn't about being somebody's mouthpiece or puppet.

This is about saving time and building your credibility. And, as I'm about to show you, save a ton of money in the process.

Oh yes, and without a teleprompter you might as well forget about doing a successful launch with video.

There are so *many* reasons...

Each of your Pre-launch Education-based marketing videos is going to run around 20 minutes. That's 20 minutes of carefully edited material, where every word carries water for your business.

You need to be at your very best on camera as you deliver this material. That means you're feeling confident, clear and courageous during every minute of shooting. But what happens when you haven't got a clue as to what to say next?

Each video is around 20 minutes, including the sales video if you use one. That's almost an hour and a half of video. When was the last time you had to memorize 90 minutes of material? Five minutes of oral interpretation did me in. Well, now the stakes are much higher than high school.

What is your alternative?

But even if you don't try to memorize it, what are your other choices besides using a teleprompter? You could record in short segments of roughly memorized parts of the script. That will take days rather than hours. You can do that for a 5 minute Coach video, but not a 20 minute launch video. Life itself is too short for that!

But hey, on the other hand, when you have the right hardware and know how to use it, everything you do is transported to a whole new level of professionalism and “easy-to-watchness”.

The thing that surprised me so much about using the teleprompter was how strong the connection was with my audience. It gave me instant authority and made my video launches possible. And being able to launch something was a way to make my mission sustainable.

So it just makes sense to learn this skill. It might not win you any points with the “let it all hang out” crowd, but I promise your viewers will love you for it!

So let's get started. This training will be roughly divided into the technical and the personal. First we'll get your teleprompter set up, then we'll get you comfortable in front of the screen.

The Hardware

It's important to use the right hardware in the first place. Many people use over-the-lens or under-the-lens solutions in a futile attempt to save money. I think that's short-sighted. I would never in a million years recommend that to a client who was a non-professional, or a professional for that matter.

The entire purpose of a teleprompter is to make the communication of your script as seamless as it would be if you knew it cold. In fact, it can even be better than knowing it cold, because since you haven't memorized the script, there's an element of spontaneity that only a great actor could pull off. So basically, a teleprompter turns you into an award-worthy actor. Is that cool or what?

But if you waste your time on sub-standard solutions like those I mentioned above, you are essentially stepping over dollars to pick up pennies. I don't like to waste money either, but I'm not going to aim at the moon in a model rocket and expect anything but disappointment.

Here's the prompter I am recommending today:

The Caddy Buddy Teleprompter for iPads, Androids and Phones.

<http://caddiebuddy.com/teleprompter/>

You could spend more, but you don't have to. I spent \$1,500 on my first teleprompter and considered that I got quite a deal.

I cannot begin to tell you how important this little piece of hardware is. It's completely insane to me that you can get a teleprompter for less than \$160. Most of this type start at over \$500 and go to the moon.

By the way, if you lack the funds to buy one, you can substitute sweat equity. Quite a few DIY teleprompter schemes exist online today.

Here's one you can make for \$10 that works surprisingly well:

<http://www.instructables.com/id/10-DIY-Box-Teleprompter-That-Works-Great/>

Okay, so now that you have your hardware, you need to set it up in the right way. Do follow the manufacturer's instructions, but know that there are two main things that can go wrong at this stage.

1. The camera is misplaced on the stand. The lens of the camera should be at the middle of the teleprompter screen. That way it's easy for you to focus your attention. If you're looking for it elsewhere, you're losing the advantage of a teleprompter because you're looking somewhere other than at the lens.
2. The camera is too close to you. The rule of thumb is at least 18 inches away for every 12 square inches of screen space used by the teleprompter.

A typical example...

Let's say you're using an iPad 2 as the base of your teleprompter. The rough dimensions of an iPad 2 display are 9.5 x 7.5 inches. If we multiply those 2 numbers we get 71.25 square inches. That's roughly 6 feet. So we divide those 71 inches by 18 inches, we get about 4 feet. So we should stand at least 4 feet in front of the iPad 2 to be far enough away that we don't get that "shifty-eyed" look.

The Software

The teleprompter needs to have scrolling text. The software that controls the rate of that scroll is very important. It's got to be controllable by a pretty fine degree, especially if you have long sections of text to get through.

There's nothing worse in one of these sessions than having the text run ahead of you or lag behind. Though I will say that lagging behind is greatly to be preferred to running ahead. You can always improvise while you're waiting for the next bit of text to scroll up.

The other option is to have someone with you adjusting the rate of the scroll, so that the words are always centered in front of the lens. That requires software that allows you to change the rate on the fly. So if you choose this method, make sure that the software you select has this capability.

Here is everything the software should allow you to do in setup mode:

1. Change fonts and size
2. Change the margins
3. Change text without having to go into another module. You should be able to just stop the scroll and edit the text directly.

In performance mode, you should be able to easily change scroll speed or even stop the scroll, all on the fly.

The software I use is called Teleprompter. It's made for the Mac. I don't use this for Windows, but I hear that PromptDog is one of the best for that platform.

But wait. What if the software itself could follow your voice? What if it stopped scrolling when you stopped talking, or ran faster when you started talking faster? That's kind of the holy grail when it comes to teleprompters, especially for long launch-type videos.

It's because of this technology that you might want to consider using an iPad rather than a Windows tablet.

Incredibly, there are two such magical apps for Apple devices. Alas, there are none for Windows users.

(Actually, that's not exactly true. There is a Windows version. It just costs \$3,852. You can pick it up here:

http://www.bhphotovideo.com/c/product/443268-REG/Autoscript_WINPLUS_VAP_WinPlus_VAP_Module_Software.html)

So even if you hate Apple, you might want to invest in a used iPad just for this app. The time and money it will save you over hiring someone to run your teleprompter software alone would be worth it.

In fact, the first example is free. It's called Voice Prompt. It has a few in-app ads, which seems kind of counter-productive, but the ads don't come up when you're in production mode.

<https://itunes.apple.com/us/app/voice-prompt/id712391755?mt=8>

The second app is my favorite for you. It's called PromptSmart Pro:

<https://itunes.apple.com/us/app/promptsmart-pro-smartest-teleprompter/id894811756?mt=8>

And it's less than \$10. Just get it and be done with it. You'll save literally hours of fine-tuning the speed of the prompter and spacing of words on the page.

So now you have your hardware and your software. What next? Now comes the most important part of this event. You! You've got to get yourself ready to be in front of a camera and talk to a lens while you're trying to read at the same time.

Does that sound impossible to do without being as wooden as politician caught with his hand in the cookie jar?

It's not, I promise. You just have to rehearse it in the right way. Let's look at that now...

Getting You and Your Material Ready

Step 1: Format your script for the prompter. I use a 44 point non-serif font and generally stand about 6 feet from the lens. Just use a font you can read without squinting. If it's at all hard to read, this won't work.

Step 2: Rehearse the entire video once, stopping to change text along the way. It frequently happens that text you thought was written in the way you actually talk turns out to be more formal than you expected. That's why it's good to go through it on your feet first. Make the changes that make you feel more like you in that moment and move on.

Step 3: Stand up very tall and warm up your voice and body. Jump around for a few seconds, and do some tongue twisters like "Rubber Baby Buggy Bumpers" or "Unique New York". Now look at the lens and lower your chin. This will keep your spine erect.

When you start speaking, imagine that the person behind the lens you're speaking to is a little distracted, so you have to get their attention. The truth is, you need about twice as much energy on camera as off, or you can come off a little creepy. Yes, the video camera itself is a very absorbent energy sponge, so keep your energy up.

At this point, it would be great for you to check out the video in this series called "Being on Camera". It will help you understand what to do with your hands, how to manage the different shot sizes you'll use in your video, and how to get the right kind of energy for your videos.

You can click into that video from this link:

[How to Be On Camera](#)

Enjoy!

