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Published weekly by Access Intelligence, LLC 4 Choke Cherry Road, Rockville, MD 20850

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▶ How To...

Expertly Use a Flip Video Camera for PR

If you're looking for information online, you **Google** it. When you ask for a paper tissue, you request a Kleenex. When you photocopy something, you make a **Xerox**.

Just as those brands are synonymous with their product's purpose, Cisco's **Flip** has become a commonplace term for creating quick, inexpensive, high-def video for the Web.

Most would agree that video is an effective communications tool. If a photo is worth a thousand words, what's a video worth? People are not only more attracted to multimedia content—today, they expect it.

The good news is small, portable, high-definition video cameras like the Flip have practically removed the barrier to creating video content previously done with expensive, complicated equipment. Now all it takes is a couple hundred dollars and a few minutes and you've got HD video for the Web—from concept to shooting, editing and uploading to your Internet site. Like social media and blogging, the Flip has put more control in the hands of PR practitioners who choose to take the direct-to-audience approach with their messages. Here are some considerations for getting your Flip video groove on:

- 1. What's the Purpose?** Always start with the strategic reason for wanting and producing a video. Who is it for? What will it say? How will you distribute it? What do you want viewers to do after seeing it?
- 2. Be Creative.** "Will It Blend?" is **Blendtec's** award-winning entry on the **YouTube** marketing video stage. How can you profile your product or feature your unique selling proposition in a way that's not only informative, but entertaining?

3. Plan and Practice. Understand the greatest limitation in creating video with the Flip camera is audio. There's no way to record sound from far away and have it audible for viewers without advanced editing. Filming in a noisy environment will be just that, noisy. The Flip camera mic is fine for close-up interviews but not as impressive when the sound source is far away or there's background audio.

The zoom feature is also limited, and you should consider the impact of natural or unnatural light. So plan your shoot and do some trial runs. Upload the video to your computer, then watch and listen to it.

4. Say No to Overproduction. Thanks to reality TV and the abundance of video-enabled phones, people don't expect expensive, perfect online video. In some instances, editing and perfecting a video may be unnecessary, even inappropriate.

5. Learn FlipShare. FlipShare is the software that comes with the Flip video camera. It comfortably allows you to manage and share video files. It's pretty intuitive. Experiment with the software to understand what's available: creating movies combining several video clips, e-mailing links to view videos privately, taking snapshots from videos and recording video to DVD. This also teaches you what's not possible with FlipShare and may require more muscle like you'd get using Adobe Premier or Final Cut Pro (I wouldn't recommend that for Flip footage—it's overkill).

6. Editing. You can do some editing with FlipShare, but

it's limited to cutting out segments of videos, then splicing them together.

7. Don't Upload to Video Sites From FlipShare. If you're interested in controlling everything from your video file name to its description, you'll want to log in to a video site, like YouTube, and upload the video you've created from there. That way you're in control of all the settings. If you rely on the FlipShare online tool, you'll lose some of that control.

8. Understand Video Search Optimization. Unfortunately, search engines can't catalog the content of video on its own. They rely on values given to the file name, title, description and tags. Therefore, if you care about search placement for your video, it's imperative to understand your online keyword strategy and employ it when you provide descriptive text for your video.

9. Know How to Measure Success. If you've carefully identified the purpose for your video, you should understand the metrics for measuring whether or not you've succeeded. For example, it's not usually as much about views as purchases, votes or donations.

Video really is a powerful tool. The Flip video camera provides a quick and easy way to record and publish content online, supporting public relations goals and objectives.

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