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Economic Developers Discover the Power of Video

Many ED groups find success through the medium.

By Michael Keating, Senior Research Editor

SUCCESS STORIES ABOUND FOR ED DIRECTORS WHO have used video in their community's marketing efforts. The St. Louis Regional Chamber & Growth Association (RCGA), for instance, uses a six-minute video that showcases business advantages, including quality of life, in St. Louis. The presentation includes testimonials from executives, new arrivals and residents.

"In 2006, the first year that the video was part of the integrated five-year economic development campaign, the RCGA concluded 13 successful deals, representing 1,481 new jobs, \$76 million in new payroll and \$492 million in new capital investments," said Thom Gross, vice president of Fleishman-Hillard (F-H), producers of the RCGA video. "The number of active prospects in the pipeline doubled. At year-end, the RCGA and its partners were actively working on 62 live deals."

F-H, which is a global communications and public affairs consulting firm, has also produced a two-minute Flash animation video that summarizes the St. Louis region's new brand.

Across the Atlantic, the North of England Inward Investment Agency (NEIIA) launched a short video/CD of what North England can offer businesses looking to expand.

"It's been well worth the effort," said Theresa Lindsay, head of marketing communications for NEIIA, a UK-government-sponsored agency responsible for promoting direct business investment from North America into Northern England. "Over the last year alone, we attracted more than 200 new projects, and 20 percent of foreign investment in the UK went to the North England region. What we learned is that if you want to attract investment, you must make an investment."

Economic developers need to rise above the noise, said Steve Brinson, senior producer at COMPRO Productions, a video production house in the Atlanta metro.

"Successfully promoting a community and attracting new businesses involves delivering a message that successfully competes with the myriad of messages and other stimuli already bombarding your targeted audiences," he said.

Find a pro, Brinson added.

"The quality of the message invariably is perceived as reflecting the quality of the organization that is sending it, and the success or failure of an image-building or promotional effort can frequently have high-stakes consequences," he pointed out. "Consequently, economic developers would be well-advised to seek the services of a professional video producer or production company to assist in such a task. It is especially helpful to seek professional help and advice as early in the process as possible — especially during the budgeting phase."

COMPRO has helped many blue-chip clients in their communications programs, including Coca Cola, Delta Airlines, IBM, AT&T and Jameson Inns.

"We hired a local production company to produce our "Balance" video, and were very pleased with the outcome," said Thomas A. Kucharski, president and CEO of Buffalo Niagara Enterprise, a regional marketing and business development organization committed to attracting jobs and investment to the eight counties of Western New York.

The "Balance" production portrays the Buffalo Niagara region's assets and quality of life, and can be viewed at <http://www.buffaloniagara.org/Home/Lifestyle/RelocationVideo>.

"For economic development organizations that can't outsource production due to budget constraints, we rec-

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commend using production students from local universities and colleges to produce quality video at minimum to no cost,” Kucharski said.

Local broadcast and cable outlets may be worth tapping for video, said Terry Holzheimer, director of Arlington Economic Development (AED), a division of Virginia’s Arlington County.

“One resource we’ve used is the public TV station in the Washington area, WETA, which is located in our community, and they have done special programs about Arlington, so they have footage that we are able to borrow for productions,” Holzheimer said.

Is your department operating on a video shoestring?

“Have a contest in your city or town, to see who can produce the best video selling the community,” said Emerson Smith, CEO of Metromark Market Research in Columbia, S.C. “Anyone can participate, including advertising and production companies. Have a community video festival in which the videos are screened.”

Metromark offers market assessment and business development tools to a variety of organizations, including manufacturers, healthcare institutions, utilities, property developers and service organizations.

Smith also suggested that Inside Economic Development readers have their initial video efforts appraised.

“Whether it’s a professional or amateur production, you should test the initial rough versions with people from outside your community to make sure that what you are producing is not going to be just pretty, ‘chamber’ stuff, but information that prospects say they want and need,” Smith said. “Have economic development professionals outside your state give you an evaluation of what they think about your production.”

“Absolutely hire a professional producer!” noted Shawne Duperon, a TV producer and media trainer in Detroit. “Having a video that rocks the house can catapult your organization. When you start pitching local news story ideas, you can use your video to show your level of expertise. You can also put it on your organization’s Web site. Plus, you can use it as a business card for your department. The key, though, is to have a video that is exquisite.”

COMPRO, the Atlanta video production team, issues a “Guidelines for Production” booklet that assists potential clients in gaining a more in-depth understanding of the production process. Go to COMPRO’s Web site, <http://www.compro-atl.com>, to find out how to get a copy.

Michael Keating is senior research editor for Expansion Management. He can be contacted at mkeating@penton.com and has a datasheet listing video resources and tools on the Web.

WORK FORCE FACTS

WORKING MOMS — A VITAL PART OF THE WORK FORCE

A HIGH PERCENTAGE OF MOTHERS IN the U.S. are employed — often at higher rates than moms in other countries. An “Employment Outlook” report from the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) shows that the United States has the highest percentage of employed mothers, compared with employment-population rates in eight other industrial countries.

For single moms, only Italy has a higher employment-population rate. For mothers in couple families, only the Netherlands has a higher employment-population rate.

More current data, from the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS), shows that the labor force participation rate for all mothers in the United States stood at 70.5 percent in 2005, and was unchanged from 2004 levels. The proportion of mothers in the labor force has been trending down since 2000, when it was 72.3 percent, reported the BLS.

The labor participation rate for married mothers, at 68.2 percent in 2005, was little changed from the previous year. That rate, likewise, has been trending down since 1997, when it was 70.7 percent.

The participation rate for unmarried mothers, those who were widowed, divorced, separated or never married, stood at 76.1 percent in 2005; it most recently peaked at 78.9 percent in 2002.

Among mothers with children younger than a year old, 53.8 percent were in the labor force, little changed from the prior year. Their participation rate remained about 4 percentage points lower than its peak in the late 1990s. The jobless rate for mothers of children under age 1 was 8 percent in 2005, unchanged from 2004 levels.

Note: the employment to population ratio data from the OECD differs slightly from the BLS’ estimates of labor participation rates. The OECD data removes those who are unemployed from the numerator of the participation rate, which is total labor force (employed and unemployed) in a specified age group, usually the working-age population, divided by the total number of people in that age group.

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MOMS IN INDUSTRIAL COUNTRIES

What Percent Are Working

Employment-population ratios of women in families with children under 6 years of age

Country	All mothers	Single mothers	Mothers in couple families*
United States	61.5	65.6	60.6
France	56.2	49	56.8
Germany	51.1	47.9	51.4
Ireland	44.4	34.1	45.5
Italy	45.7	69.5	44.9
Netherlands	60.7	37.5	62.3
Spain	41.8	61.5	41.5
Sweden	77.8	NA	NA
United Kingdom	55.8	34.2	61.3

** Couple families are married couples only. Except for Sweden, the data excludes families with members over 60 years. Source: “Employment Outlook,” Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development, 2001*