

It's Just Video...

Until a Storyteller Creates an Experience

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- 1. Find focus.** Carpenters don't pound nails without a blueprint, nor should storytellers pound computer keys without a focus. Effective visual storytellers identify characters, emotions and concepts that will tie together otherwise disconnected elements of a story. Focus helps storytellers determine how stories will open, close and transition between points.
- 2. Maximize the surprise.** Surprises are the "gold coins" that reward viewers for investing time in a story. Effective storytellers identify their surprises *before* writing and editing. They understand that reporters are responsible for the set-up, while the punch line (a revealing sound bite, picture or pop of natural sound) belongs to the photographer/editor.
- 3. Pace yourself.** For good or for bad, every story has a pace. Effective storytellers use the tools at their disposal to control their story's throttle. Want to convey urgency? Use quick pops of natural sound, brief bites and shorter tracks. Trying to create a more somber mood? Slow down your read, lengthen tracks and bites and let natural sound breathe.
- 4. Keep interviews active.** Conduct fewer interviews during your shoots and have more conversations. Use wireless microphones and talk to people while they are involved in their activities. Change focal lengths and framing often. Effective storytellers know that an interview becomes stale if the shot never changes.
- 5. Develop characters.** The subjects of our interviews can only become characters if we use our skills to develop them. Effective storytellers search for emotions, motivations and details that will help define their characters. First impressions are important; look for the "handshake" shot that gives viewers some insight into a character's personality the first time he or she appears on screen.
- 6. Action needs reaction.** If a tree falls in your story, does it make a sound? Not a very loud one unless someone is there to react to it. Effective storytellers understand the real energy isn't in the flames, but in the people who gather to watch the fire.
- 7. Find the layers.** Good stories don't dump on viewers all at once; they reveal themselves one important detail at a time. Effective storytellers identify the layers of their stories then write and shoot the transitions that will carry viewers from one level to the next.