

Putting the Craftsmanship back into Video Production: Renaissance Television and Film

When Chris Magid, founder of Dallas' Renaissance Television and Film, set out to start his own post-production company, he wanted to focus on client service. Instead of building a business based on high-volume projects, Chris and his team have a limited number of clients with whom they have long-term relationships, and they give these clients every ounce of attention they have – *insane* attention, in Magid's words.

Renaissance Television and Film's success has been built on longstanding relationships that help them focus on B2B marketing and corporate work, accented by commercials and broadcast programming.

Company profile:

- Workshop approach with 3 to 5 employees
- Solution driven post production facility; editors are also producers
- Typical clients include agencies and independent producers whose B2B clients include Mary Kay Cosmetics, Burlington Northern Santa Fe Railroad, Atmos Energy, IBM, Nokia, Serta and other Fortune 500 or Blue Chip firms



Corporate work is more profitable, but puts more stress on the infrastructure

After a number of years in serial broadcast television production, Chris Magid switched over to corporate and B2B work, and has been doing so for 11 years. He enjoys the corporate event support, trade show videos, internal communications, and marketing projects for organizations ranging from Fortune 500s to start-ups and non-profits.

"Corporate work tends to be well managed, because the goals are clearly stated from the beginning. Unlike entertainment work, organizations are trying to communicate clearly defined key messages," explains Magid, "and that helps the project stay focused."

Broadcast work has its appeal, of course. It can be fun and prestigious. But there's a bigger financial upside with corporate work: long-term relationships, contract based volume schedules and higher margins. When done right, corporate clients can use video for many projects over many years. Clients put a great deal of creative trust in editors who produce numerous pieces.

Trends in Corporate Video

In Magid's view, the biggest trends in corporate work aren't the creative kind – they have more to do with the decision making processes. Projects have significantly shorter lead time and tighter turn around times. Sometimes fewer decisions are made in advance of the editing process, so there is more source material to deal with. In the more traditional past, Magid's team would have a list of selects or a detailed blocked script from a client; today creating tends to be done on the fly.

These client shifts require technology that allows editors to share data, work tangentially and create a library of files that can be accessed today, tomorrow, or in three years. Recent advances in storage have made the Renaissance Television and Film team much more effective. “We realized we needed a shared storage system, so we turned to Facilis Technology and the TerraBlock as the most cost-effective unit on the market,” says Magid.

The Storage Solution

Storage has become a competitive advantage for RTVF. “It’s not that clients ask about storage per-se,” explains Magid, “but they can see our speed, see our flexibility and see that we can work on their project at the same time, in different rooms. That’s what counts to them.”

The investment in the TerraBlock helped Magid realize four key benefits:

1. Digitize source material into a library from which the editing team could pull. *This is especially important given that today’s projects use more source data; it was critical to manage projects on a company-level, not at the editing suite level. This lets us route data, not baseband video. Routing data is both less expensive and less risky.*
2. Divide and conquer. *This was important for our workflow – our editorial team now has the flexibility to work across editorial stations simultaneously, which maximizes productivity and results in a faster turn-around time for our clients. We can leave our data digitized for months or leave it and then come back to it. It is a more efficient process.*
3. Manage online/offline workflow. *Being online all the time, rather than switching back and forth, gives us a tremendous boost in output. Projects that took 7 days before, now take only 5; projects that took 16 hours before, now take less than 10. Clients are blown away by our turnaround time.*
4. Maximize other equipment in the network. *Before, our Xpress Pros had additional potential that we did not tap into because of the capabilities of our existing systems. Now that all our client footage is stored (and backed up) on the TerraBlock, we can push our smaller systems to do more. We also have less need to duplicate standard video gear from suite to suite.*

So what’s Magid’s lesson for other production facilities? “Know where your sweet spot is; for Renaissance Television and Film, it’s servicing a select group of clients like crazy, rather than going crazy servicing a lot of clients. Maximize workflow on a company level, don’t just manage workloads of the individual suites. And finally, remember that while glamour is great, helping companies communicate targeted messages can be fulfilling, rewarding, and profitable.”