

## THE CHALLENGE OF SOCIAL MEDIA CONTENT

Social media content has become increasingly important in recent years. This has led to the development of completely independent formats and versions which can quickly reach a three-figure sum per campaign. As a rule, social media content is commissioned in conjunction with a TV campaign. Admittedly, in the pitch phase the focus is often still on the TV campaign and there is no, or only very little, information about the number, type and contents of the social media formats. That is why, from a post-production perspective, realistic cost planning and scheduling is not possible at this juncture.

Despite this, clients want definitive costs and a binding timetable. This then often results in disputes over costs and timings during the post-production process. In order to prevent this, post-production has to assume the full financial risk, which is not advisable from a business perspective.

From the post-production viewpoint, there are three possible solutions to this:

- a. Calculation of the social media formats is taken out of the pitch phase and only calculated when all the relevant information about number, type and content is available. This means fixed costs can be given.
- b. In the pitch phase the social media formats are already clearly defined, making a calculation possible. This means definitive costs and a binding timescale can be given.
- c. Expenditure-based extra costs can be charged during post-production if the expenditure significantly increases compared with the original calculation. This means the financial risk is transferred from post-production to the client.

The individual problems are outlined in greater detail on the following pages.

## Technical challenges

- Quantity 50 → 350 and more
- Varying lengths and image formats (different aspect ratios)
- Most diverse compilation of contents ->see section on “cutdowns”
- In order to do justice to all formats, we rely on UHD, 6k, 8k cameras → large volumes of data
- There are no uniform standards/specifications for social media.
- To some extent, every client has different technical requirements.
- Post-production have to keep their workflows very flexible and dynamic, which is very time-consuming.

## The cutdown

By definition, a “cutdown” is a shorter editing which can be completely put together from master material which is already finished. The framing remains the same.

Therefore, the term “cutdown” needs to be redefined for social media formats.

In principle, there are three options for producing the different formats:

- a. Classic cutdown (including framing adjustments where applicable)
  - This means that only the finished master is used for the different formats.
  - 1:1, 4:5, 9:16 versions are created from these masters with very few additional costs.
- b. Mix of master material and rushes
  - Here, master material is partly used, but also new material from rushes, which of course needs to be graded and edited online.
  - This generates additional costs.
- c. Completely new content
  - A completely new advert is generated from the rushes, even when it is for a non-standard format.
  - This also generates additional costs.

## Pitch phase

“A modern post-production workflow stipulates that each scene is only finished once and these are then dynamically incorporated in all films (non-standard formats). In all different lengths and formats”.

This is why the following needs to be clear or queried, right from the calculation phase:

- How many versions need to be completed?
- Which formats are needed?
- Are they to be purely cutdowns, mixed versions or completely reconceptualised adverts?

If one of these three questions cannot be answered, then the decision needs to be made whether the calculation for non-standard formats – as noted above – should be removed from the pitch phase or calculated on the basis of assumptions with the option to charge for additional expenditure in post-production, in the event of deviations.

## Production

During the post-production phase, costs for post-production can be kept lower by placing the focus on the non-standard formats and not just on the TVC.

- Bear in mind with the choice of camera (camera technology) and framing that the material has to be supported by all formats from 16:9 to 9:16.
  - Framing which does not offer enough headroom to enable a desired framing and a sharp picture without extra expense in post-production.
  - Choose a camera with sufficient resolution (e.g. ARRI Alexa Mini -> Native no full UHD (no 1080x1920 portrait orientation possible).
  - Avoid anamorphic vintage lenses (they only have one central focal point and cannot be moved towards the image edges as it produces a fuzzy image).

Unfortunately, the solution to this is not always just to film in 4k, 6k or 8k. Often it seems that people do not stop to consider whether this is even necessary.

This means:

- an enormous and dynamic increase in data quantities in post-production.
- post-production still has to carry out the actual finishing part in full-frame.
- it results in a lot of additional costs in all stages of post-production.

## Post-production

Even in the editing the course needs to be set for smooth online use:

- The framings of the non-standard formats should be exclusively coordinated in the offline phase and approved during it. This prevents complex and expensive coordination processes in the online phase.
- Social media formats should not only be produced as an “additional feature”, but made an integral part of the actual post-production workflow. (This way non-standard formats are often created before the finished master, for example, and thus change from a cutdown into an independent production workflow. (see “cutdowns” section).
- Sufficient time needs to be planned in for the editing, otherwise the online and grading phases become a permanent job since new non-standard formats are continually approved during the offline phase and so new lengths and contents of the same film scenes need to be edit over and over. These then need to be manually compared and adjusted in all films.

## Conclusion / ideal scenario

- Delivery items, formats, contents and expectations need to be defined more clearly in the pitch phase.
- Film productions and agencies need to consider the non-standard formats and end use much more meticulously.
- Clear structure and planning of the offline phase.
- A change from “cutdown” to “mixed form” or even “stand-alone” because new image content is edit in, needs to be calculable at a later stage.

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