

Everything You Want to Know About Us

- What is Brien Lee VideoStory?
- What are your core capabilities?
- Explain VideoStory.
- "How did you arrive at this point? What is the History of VideoStory?"
- "How should I determine what company should produce my next project?"
- What should I plan on budgeting for a project?
- "Yeah, but really, how much for say an eight-minute video that's pretty good and involves at least some location shooting?"
- How long does a project take?
- "How do we compare apples to oranges in this process? Say we meet with three different production companies?"
- "What can we expect from a working relationship? Do you take over, or do we have input? Who does the work? What do you need from us?"
- What are the steps to a production?
- What if I don't like the result?
- "There's a lot at risk here! Everyone wants this project to be a success, and I'm the one who will get the kudos or the blame. This whole process makes me nervous. "
- How do I choose which medium to tell my story in?
- "Okay. But how do I choose the primary method of distribution? Will my sales force, as an example, do better with DVD or CD-rom?"
- What about the web? Can you put video on my website?
- Can I expect overruns or changes to the budget?
- Why do you consider yourself a "mentor"?

What is Brien Lee VideoStory?

Brien Lee VideoStory is a New Jersey-based endeavor specializing in video-based communications and marketing projects for businesses, the arts, non-profits and broadcast. It is owned and operated by Brien Lee, a 40 year veteran of multimedia communications in all forms.

What are your core capabilities?

Writing. Visualization. Editing. Directing. Advising. Mentoring. Consulting. All involving the areas of multimedia communications. This includes video, web, meetings, dvd, ip-tv, and more.

Explain VideoStory.

Video is any medium that synchronizes sight and sound, not just "pure" video. It could be three videos on three screens in a big sales meeting, or a video stream on a web page (like on our web site). The key thing is it moves. But that's only half the story. The other half of the story is the story! We are Storytellers, always have been (see "History," below). We want to motivate audiences just like the movies do, with beginnings, middles, and ends, climaxes and denouements. We want the music to amplify emotions, and the pictures to encourage thought. Ask our clients-- an involved audience is a motivated one. They believe. They buy. They give.

"How did you arrive at this point? What is the History of VideoStory?"

Beginning with just two slide projectors, a fade and dissolve unit for the projectors, a stereo tape deck and a sync tone generator, Ric Sorgel and Brien Lee formed a business partnership when they graduated from Marquette University, eschewing regular employment for the risks of entrepreneurship. Based on trial experiences in college, they knew that good storytelling could succeed beyond the

Everything You Want to Know About Us

perceived bounds of a medium, when the tools were used within the framework of certain rules and when the medium was pushed to its fullest potential.

"Twin-dissolve" slide shows provided an affordable alternative to 16mm film and were a quantum leap above single tray "click-click" shows and filmstrips, and after producing their first show for just \$150, they began to ride word of mouth until they had produced important landmark presentations for The Milwaukee Rep, Milwaukee Symphony, The Milwaukee Art Museum, UPAF, Schlitz, The First Wisconsin Center, and eventually, nearly all the top corporations in the Milwaukee area.

Unlike other local production companies, the firm kept on staff a disproportionate number of scriptwriter/directors, who could maintain a creative vision from concept to completion. With experts in photography and audio, they completed the blueprint for what they termed a "holistic" approach to audio-visual communications.

With Sorgel-Lee fully vested in slide shows and multiple projector "multi-image" meeting production, Lee began to envision the emerging capabilities of industrial video being used for the same purposes, but with the addition of full motion, synchronous sound interviews, and animation.

After the company's most successful year in 1982, Lee left to form Brien Lee & Company, initially as a writing company to serve other producers, but soon thereafter, as a competing producer, but one with an emphasis on video.

In the 1980's Brien Lee & Company was the "go-to" firm for complete video stories, producing meetings, orientations histories and new product introduction for companies like Mercury Marine, The Milwaukee Journal, Briggs & Stratton, AT&T, PS&G, CUNA, Kohler, Johnson Controls, and others.

When he turned 40, Lee "retired for the first time" and sold the company assets to former employees, who serviced customers under the name of "Tri-Marq".

For the next two years, Lee worked on the technical side of the business, helping start a multimedia division for Video Images, Inc., in Chicago and Milwaukee, and selling and providing training for the unique TVL presentation system, which was the predecessor to PowerPoint and provided seamless wide-screen capabilities to meetings for the first time. This was a logical outgrowth of his capabilities in computing, as he had written dozens of columns on computers for "Audio-Visual / Video Communications" magazine.

In 1992 he returned to production, building a major meeting

Everything You Want to Know About Us

division for Visuals Plus, Inc., and landing projects with Walgreens, Inc., True Value, and Underwriters Labs, all in Chicago.

When the owner of Visuals Plus closed the business on July 4th, 1994, Lee was asked to continue working for Walgreens as an independent producer. In 1995, he formed Brien Lee Creative Solutions, which at first produced meeting modules and documentaries for diverse markets, and eventually morphed into a "we can do it all" company selling the technical media customers seemed to be buying-- PowerPoint, Flash, TVL, Director, DreamWeaver-- and moving into the web and e-learning worlds.

After eight years, the company refined its definition, ready to offer its own turnkey capabilities in storytelling for those who could tell the difference.

And Brien Lee VideoStory was born.

"How should I determine what company should produce my next project?"

We have to answer that with a number of our own questions-- things to consider before you start your search.

What kind of project is this? A complete project, a piece of one, finishing an existing script, etc? The Yellow Pages categories mix all kinds of video providers together, from wedding video people to High end producers.

To narrow things down, try to match the company to the kind of work you'll be doing.

Go to the web and search on keywords like video, multimedia, milwaukee, producer, production, etc. See who pops up. Look at the web site and see if you can determine the company's personality. If that passes muster, check out their capabilities. The web site will tell you what they're happy doing. Some will offer everything under the sun, and if you are asking them to provide just a piece of the pie then maybe they're worth calling. They make their money on bits and pieces. Others will indicate they like more responsibility and are willing to offer a bigger return-- our web site will

What should I plan on budgeting for a project?

There are two kinds of budgets. There's time and materials, where you pay as you go. In this kind of relationship, you are telling the production company what to do and they are doing it. The company takes no end-result responsibility other than for the technical craft they are offering. This is appropriate if you are just hiring, say, a shooter for an event.

The other kind, and in "turnkey" work this is more the norm, is the "quote" basis. The producer is taking a great deal of responsibility and is quoting a number for the end result. The producer estimates the time and materials needed to achieve your goals. He bases that on how much shooting, creative time, writing, editing, etc., will be involved, and on the final length of the production. Note: Shorter doesn't mean cheaper. The shooting days provide the core around which

Everything You Want to Know About Us

the quote is built. That will be the most important aspect, followed closely by the cost of certain production techniques, such as animations or 3-D. Hourly rates are dependent on the producers people, equipment and genveral overhead, and more technology heavy areas will bear higher hourly figures. However, also plan on paying slightly higher rates for good writing and overall direction. It's worth it.

"Yeah, but really, how much for say an eight-minute video that's pretty good and involves at least some location shooting?"

Where is the location? Do you need animations? (We can make recommendations.) Original music or library? How quickly do you need it?

There is a range, but it's a big range. We've done eight minutes for \$8K, and for \$80K. We've won awards and ongoing relationships at both ends of the spectrum.

How long does a project take?

Assuming we're talking about one piece of average length, and before we create menus on DVD or CD-ROM, or before we compress for the web, you can usually guess about two and a half to three months. Having said that, we've produced effective pieces in as few as three weeks... in fact, we've done that three times in the last three months!

"How do we compare apples to oranges in this process? Say we meet with three different production companies?"

Ask for a proposal. A company should offer you a demonstration of an understanding of your need, your market, and your presentation circumstances, and also offer you a plan for meeting those needs. A good proposal actually can become the working blueprint for the entire production.

"What can we expect from a working relationship? Do you take over, or do we have input? Who does the work? What do you need from us?"

It's our job to make you look good, and to make it painless as well. We are a turnkey producer, and we have writers on staff with marketing and production experience who know how to create for the medium, create for the audience and produce for the result.

That being said, we require input. Our goals are set by you, our information about you comes from you, and we offer you many chances to course-correct, have input, and sign-off so that the production can progress.

We also have had many successful production partnerships, especially with in-house corporate production departments. We can write for their production team, consult, or provide any or all elements over the course of a working relationship.

What are the steps to a production?

Research
Script (with pre-interviews if necessary)
Script Review
Second draft as necessary
Shotlist / Art Direction comp if necessary

Everything You Want to Know About Us

Videography
Logging & Transcribing
Rough Cut
Review
Final Cut
Review
Pre-Master for release medium

DVD and cd-rom distribution require additional flowchart, menu design, and authoring steps.

What if I don't like the result?

That doesn't happen, but that's why we work on paper first-- to provide you with the best representation we can of where we're going.

That being said, we will course correct and make changes to insure that our final product meets our joint vision. You must be satisfied.

"There's a lot at risk here! Everyone wants this project to be a success, and I'm the one who will get the kudos or the blame. This whole process makes me nervous. "

Don't be. That's where our experience comes in. We've made many people look good, thanks to our combined efforts. You set the goals and provide what we need (logos, flat art, information, people to talk to), and we'll do the rest. We have thirty years of experience telling us what works and what doesn't.

And like the rules of marketing and positioning, these basics don't change. We won't be learning on the job. We'll be doing what we do best-- making you look good!

How do I choose which medium to tell my story in?

Thanks to digital video, you don;t have to choose. You can tell your story in all media. Cd-rom, DVD, web video, wide screen video projection-- these are all media of distribution. Digital video "flows" into all of the media quite nicely. It's an excellent opportunity to amortize your initial investment.

"Okay. But how do I choose the primary method of distribution? Will my sales force, as an example, do better with DVD or CD-rom?"

You'll need to look at the potential universe of what your targets have the most of-- cd-rom, as an example, is pretty universally available on most computers, but sometimes has compatibility issues (video cards, speed issues, etc.) DVD is highly compatible-- a DVD will play on jut about any DVD player, but not ALL laptops in the corporate world have DVD-- they probably will once the next amortization cycle finishes.

But be aware of the hgrowing popularity of DVD-- just like the movies you watch at home on the weekends, DVD is taking over-- its higher quality, stores a lot more material, doesn't need to be played back in a tiny little window, and is easier to

Everything You Want to Know About Us
use than cd-rom.

What about the web? Can you put video on my website?

Yes. check out the videos on this website. They are being played back in flash, but we can make video available in Quicktime, Windows Media, Real Media, etc. In short, yes-- whatever your site or your IT department requires, we can accommodate.

Can I expect overruns or changes to the budget?

Not without your approval and prior notification. This would typically happen at script approval, or if additional shooting days are added because of new subject matter. We generally ask that clients set aside a 10% contingency to allow out-of-pocket expenses or to accommodate changes or additions that are not within the scope of the proposal and/or script.

Why do you consider yourself a "mentor"?

For 40 years, I have sought out and hired the brightest young prospects for my company. They leave as well equipped to produce media communications as I was when I was their age. I have taught at the University level, and run seminars and classes. I am at the age where I want to give back while still making a modest living. Mentoring gives me this opportunity.
