



DIY

DOCUMENTARY

11 TYPES OF DOCUMENTARY VIDEO YOU CAN USE TO PROMOTE YOUR WORK

CHRIS MARTIN
— STUDIOS —

1. YOUR ORIGIN STORY

I love origin stories. My favorite is probably IRON MAN or THE MATRIX. In IRON MAN, you see Tony Stark develop the technology to save his life, thus creating Iron Man. In THE MATRIX, you experience Neo's journey from being a biological slave and power source for the machine world, to being "The One."

You may not be Tony Stark or Neo, but you have a story of how you came into existence as a business or artist. It is a historical look focused on events that shaped you into who you are today.

Questions

What is your origin story?

Why did you begin doing what you do?

Why does it matter?

How did this make you into who you are today?

2. THE ARTIST STATEMENT

In the art world, an artist often writes a statement about his or her work. This statement answers the question: "Why do you do what you do?" An artist statement also addresses the meaning and purpose of an artist's work.

Instead of writing your artist statement, a documentary addresses the intent behind the work you do. It asks deep questions and brings the answers alive through interviews and compelling visuals of your work.

Questions

Why do you do what you do?

What is the meaning of your work?

How do your clients or patrons reflect the intent of your work back to you?

How can you visually express why you do what you do?

3. EPISODIC DOCUMENTARIES

I love episodic documentaries because they provide an extended glimpse of a topic. One of my favorites is SONIC HIGHWAYS, a series following the band Foo Fighters around the United States. During each episode they enter a different studio to record a song and let the musical history of that city impact the recording process.

You can create your own episodic documentary series by highlighting your team members, your customers, or your culture. Regardless of how long each episode is, you can follow a structure and create artwork that stays consistent through every episode.

Questions

What is special about your work or culture?

What themes are present in your work?

How many team stories could you tell?

How will you brand your episodic series?

4. BEFORE & AFTER

Emphasize your creative powers by showing what you started with and how you transformed it into something new and amazing. Before & After documentaries are generally about a specific project.

This is how designers and developers usually promote themselves. You can take it into new territories by telling the story of how you came to your solution, not just comparing the before and after images.

Questions

How are you capturing the before state of work?

What is the story behind your solution?

Which moments of the process will tell your story?

What was the client's reaction?

5. BEHIND THE SCENES

If a Before & After documentary is about the solution to a specific project, Behind the Scenes is a revelation into the process you go through for every project.

Some of my favorite documentaries are behind the scenes videos for feature films. Hollywood production companies often use the art of documentary to promote their films. It gives super fans a glimpse of how the film was made, which gets them generating buzz online.

A strong way to end these types of documentaries is with the presentation of the finished product.

Questions

- How can you visually show your process?
- What are the stages of your process?
- Who are the key players?
- What interactions can you plan for?

7. GET ANIMATED!

Animation is an engaging, powerful, and time-consuming medium for documentary filmmaking. While there are many types of animation styles—stop motion, 3D, hand-drawn, motion graphics, flip books—animated infographics are a great place to start.

Much like infographics you find on Facebook, animated infographics take a single concept and spread out the content through time. Combine voiceover narration along with music and well-timed animation, and your animated documentary will uniquely tell your story.

Questions

- What story do you want to tell in animated form?
- How will you combine documentary formats to create something unique?
- Which animation styles do you want to utilize for this project?
- What is your level of patience and focus?

6. THE REALITY SHOW

Some of my favorite reality shows are on Food Network. From CUTTHROAT KITCHEN to CHOPPED, the best reality shows mix scripted television with unscripted moments. They also combine the majority of documentary formats. Some industries and businesses naturally have more drama and excitement than others. If you are surrounded by characters or you are interesting enough, create a reality show. Give people a glimpse into your “unedited” life.

Questions

- Where is the most drama in your workplace?
- How does your work process allow for unscripted moments of spontaneity?
- What are you creating that could be documented with a reality show?
- How will you combine the different documentary formats to create something unique?

8. THE TESTIMONIAL

Building upon the documentary formats of Before & After and Behind The Scenes, The Testimonial adds the client’s voice into the telling of how you created their work. By interviewing the client on camera and mixing it with footage of you creating the work, The Testimonial is a powerful promotional element allowing the client the opportunity to give you praise.

If your client is shy to appear on camera, replace the client interview with animated type of their testimonial or a voiceover.

Questions

- How will your client present themselves on-screen?
- What project can you interview the client for in order to make a Testimonial documentary?
- What weight will the client’s viewpoint bring to your promotional work?

9. IMPACT & VALUE

It's easy for creative professionals to put together a page on their website or upload their work to a portfolio site and wait for comments to roll in. But great creative work doesn't exist in a vacuum. It's made for an audience. This type of documentary is similar to The Testimonial, but instead of the client driving the narrative, your audience or community does.

One example comes from FOOD NETWORK STAR. When chefs make food for a group of people, the show often captures a few moments of audience feedback. This level of feedback provides an additional perspective beyond the opinions of professional judges and mentors.

Questions

Who is your audience?

How will you capture the voice of your audience?

Do you value what your audience says about your work?

10. TEACH & INSPIRE

Documentaries are a great way to share your knowledge, passions, and interests. Are you a skilled designer with a unique work process and want to train others to adopt it? Film yourself talking about your process, but don't stop there. Show it in action!

From Khan Academy and Skillshare to TED and Fizzle, there are many great examples of using video as a medium for teaching anyone to do anything.

Questions

What do you know that you want to share with others?

What type of learner are you (visual, aural, experiential, etc.)?

How can you create a video that both promotes and instructs?

When were you able to teach and inspire others?

11. THE MOCKUMENTARY

Creating and promoting your work is serious business. Why not have a little fun? Try poking fun at yourself or your industry in a mockumentary. Combine all of the documentary types to create something silly. Instead of real interviews, you can create characters, fake projects, or stylized moments.

Need a little more to understand what a mockumentary is? Check out Christopher Guest's work including A MIGHTY WIND, WAITING FOR GUFFMAN, and BEST IN SHOW. How can I forget THIS IS SPINAL TAP, featuring Guest's infamous line about sustain?

Questions

How would you describe your sense of humor?

How much fun are you willing to have?

How could you poke fun at your industry?

How will it not affect your real work?

CONCLUSION

Whether you want to show your work, teach others about what you are an expert in, or give your client a platform for praising your work, documentary video is a fantastic and diverse medium to work in.

Regardless of what you do to promote your work, never forget to share with your audience and your customers what you do. If you don't, no one will ever know what you are capable of.

My challenge to you: pick one of these 11 types and make a short one-minute documentary about your work. Do something new and different. You might just discover a new way to look at your own work.

When it is done, share it.



• BUILD YOUR • PLATFORM

*A guide for entrepreneurs and creative professionals
to find your people, exercise your voice,
and launch your craft!*



CHRIS MARTIN
— STUDIOS —

HAVE A CRAFT!

It's hard to build an audience around ideas. It's easier to build an audience upon an experience of something you make. It is more affordable than ever before to create anything imaginable. But the challenge we all face: What do I make? When faced with the blank canvas, we doubt, tune out, lose time in distractions, and give up.

It doesn't matter what you do.

Make something.

Anything.

Even if it sucks.

EXERCISE YOUR VOICE!

As you learn your craft, you must find your voice. This is what sets you apart. Most people say the same things and do what everyone else is doing. I have done this for most of my career. Why? Because I was afraid to be me. I thought I wouldn't have anything new to add. I was afraid that no one would like me. Despite my fears, I started to speak up. People began to take notice and the response fueled me to keep creating. I don't do it for adulation and accolades, but because I can't not create. It is my voice. The more I embrace my own voice, the more impact I have.

ACTION PLAN!

Be curious and experiment!

Do something new. Watch a YouTube tutorial, read a blog post, ask someone already doing what you want to do how to get started. Then do it. Experiment and find connections between what you know and what you are learning. This is where innovation is found.

ACTION PLAN!

Go beyond your comfort zone; tell your unique story in as many mediums as possible!

I often feel I have nothing to offer the world, but I daily remind myself that I have a unique story, just like you. We will never know what resonates with others until we share what we have been through. Take selfies or have professional photos taken of you, write, speak, appear on video. Get comfortable in all the different ways to say who you are and what you do. It's time to get over yourself and share your story.

FIND YOUR PEOPLE!

For as long as I can remember, I wanted others to seek me out, validate my worth, and tell me what I should be doing. This desire has resulted in many failed relationships, disappointing career segues, and a lack of continuity in my work. But lately, I have been changing my focus and intentionally seeking others out. I have even been asking people for things: being a guest on my podcast, meeting for coffee, being a guest speaker in a class, or how to do something. I don't ask because I want to take advantage of them, but to establish a mutually beneficial relationship. In [*No Limits: Blow the CAP Off Your Capacity*](#), John C. Maxwell writes that: "intentional actions coupled with the desire to add value to people would make a difference and lead to a life of significance." This is my desire and what I look for in others.

DISCOVER NEW TOOLS TO TELL YOUR STORY!

Regardless of what you are making, there are an infinite number of tools at your disposal. You don't have to use the same tools that others use. Sometimes the tools you use make you look and sound like everyone else. For many years, I thought that having the right camera would help me stand apart from other people. But as I discovered new tools—lighting, microphones, and better questions—I realized that uniqueness is found in the infinite combination of different tools.

ACTION PLAN!

Reach out to people who inspire you and ask them for something!

We create the life and business we want by being intentional. The people you intentionally reach out to begin to form your tribe of people who will follow you wherever you go and buy into whatever you do. By asking, it's not about taking what they offer, but learning how you can add value to their life.

ACTION PLAN!

Use a platform, even if you don't consume content on the platform!

I love producing my podcast [*Getting Work To Work*](#) and here's the fun part: I don't actually listen to podcasts. I can't focus on my work with the words of others in my head. Often you hear that to be good at something, you must consume that medium. Great writers, read. Great filmmakers, watch film. Great photographers, study photographs and art. But guess what? Great writers, write. Great filmmakers, make films. Great photographers, take pictures.

BUILD A PRACTICE (HABIT)!

I'm a firm believer in process. You do something once and then you do it again. You learn, you improve, you evolve. Perfection is a fool's errand. There will always be something off, something not quite right. Building a practice is about habitually creating your work. It is finding a process that works for you, in a timeline that makes sense for what you are doing. Here are a few things I do on a daily, weekly, and monthly basis:

Daily: I spend time writing in my notebook and reading books. Julia Cameron calls this daily practice "Morning Pages" and Todd Henry calls this "Dailies." I have learned more about myself and my work since I started doing this.

Weekly: I do two things every week. First, I write an email newsletter for [The Curiosity Lab](#), and second, I release two podcast episodes for [Getting Work To Work](#). Even when it hurts or I feel I don't have the time.

Monthly: While I spend a lot of time in my daily and weekly pursuits, I also have monthly practices that I work on, such as meeting financial goals and releasing short documentaries.

SPEAKING OF WHICH, NEVER STOP SHARING!

Underlying everything you've read in this guide is the reality that you need to share with the world what you are doing. It's not being another voice shouting, "Hey, look at me." It's about sharing your story, inspiring other people to act, and helping them find their own voice. All because you dared to share.

ACTION PLAN!

Establish what you want to do and how often you'll do it, then never stop doing it!

Frequency is less important than consistency. This is about setting goals and investing in your future. Have you ever gone on a diet, lost a bunch of weight and then gained it all back? I have, way too many times, and here's why: because I stopped dieting and went back to my old habits. The same thing happens in our creative pursuits. When we stop, we revert to our old ways. And it gets harder to build that habit up again.

ACTION PLAN!

Share digitally, but never forget to share in person as well!

Pick a place to share and be consistent. That can be a newsletter, a website, a social network. Show up and be present. But never forget to spend time with others. When we are with other people, we remember what it means to be human, how to connect to the lives of others, and witness the impact of our work.

Building your platform to launch your craft is immensely valuable. It forces you to look at your work in a different way and pushes you into new and exciting venues. By approaching your craft in these six areas, you will hopefully overcome many of the problems I have struggled with over the past 11 years of running my own business.

This work isn't easy, and you'll need help from others. If you need someone to walk alongside with you as you build your platform, I encourage you to send me an email at chris@chrismartinstudios.com and ask. I'm here for you.



ABOUT CHRIS MARTIN

Never satisfied with just one label, Chris is a curiosity builder, filmmaker, podcaster, and educator obsessed with creativity, curiosity, and bands who can remember how to play songs over 25 minutes. He loves stories that are filled to the brim with heart, edge, and fearlessness and can't get enough of real people living their authentic and unique stories.

Check out his podcast *Getting Work To Work* online at gwtw.co or subscribe on Apple Podcasts, Spotify, and other podcast platforms by searching for "Getting Work To Work."

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