

Photojournalism, Editing, and Storytelling techniques for modern video journalism
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Chair: Jon Smith

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Abstract

For this capstone project in the Master of Arts program for Professional Communications at SUU, I have created a video tutorial focused on creative, deadline driven, storytelling techniques. The purpose of the video is to assist entry level photojournalists in ideas and techniques that they can implement in their professional work to turn compelling visual stories, even on very tight deadline constraints. The video tutorial consists of techniques I have learned over a 15-year professional photojournalism career. The tutorial is a direct to camera address, edited story segments, and first-person style instructional video.

Video Project: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LCmyTJyJw8w&t=485s>

Acknowledgments

Special thanks go to the professors in the Department of Communications at Southern Utah University. All the classes within the master's program have been tailored to my specific needs as a student and all the professors have been very understanding of my professional commitments and desires of what I wanted to get out of this program. Specifically, my chair for this capstone project, Jon Smith who has helped me navigate ideas, ultimately landing on this project that encapsulates the message that I want to deliver as an educator and professional in the broadcast field.

Special thanks go to the management of KSL-TV in Salt Lake City, UT. To Chuck Wing, my direct supervisor and friend who has supported me in this extra workload and helped me tailor SUU project ideas toward practical benefits of my management needs and the photography staff. To Leona Wood, my News Director and Tanya Veal, my General Manager for their financial support in my higher education endeavors and their support in projects for school that crossed paths with aspects of KSL operations.

Special thanks to the members of the National Press Photographers Association, without that organization and the people that create it I would lack the support system and experience necessary to create a project like this capstone. Additionally, knowing that the creation of new educational products like this project will have a supportive reception within the organization makes me inspired to keep advancing the message and information of beautiful photojournalism.

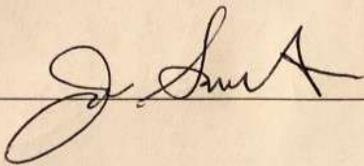
Thanks to the photographers in Lexington, KY and Salt Lake City who have inspired me daily over the last 15 years at WKYT and KSL. They are too numerous to name them all, but a

special thanks to my Chief Photographer at WKYT, Ken Harvener and my two Assistant Chiefs in Utah, Brandon Whitworth and Tanner Siegworth.

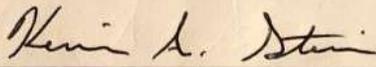
Finally, a special thanks to my parents Judy and Claude Wilson who have always supported me and inspired me to pursue higher education, and my wonderful wife Jessica who keeps me focused and stops me from procrastinating and always supports me in everything I do.

Signature Page

I certify that I have read this thesis and that, in my opinion, it is satisfactory in scope and quality as a project/thesis for the degree of Master of Professional Communication

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "Jon Smith", written over a horizontal line.

Jon Smith, Capstone Project Chair

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "Kevin Stein", written over a horizontal line.

Kevin Stein, MAPC Graduate Director

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Introduction

What is good storytelling? That is a question that may not have an objective correct answer. What makes a movie or novel great? It really is in the eye of the person consuming the story. As a short form documentary storyteller, I can tell you what types of stories seem to resonate with viewers on social media regarding likes and shares. As a former investigative producer, I can tell you the types of story promotions that draw the most television Nielsen ratings. You can find many articles online that try to define strong storytelling. Pixar (Peters, 2018) talks about universal themes and strong central characters. Yes, we discuss those same elements in our local news stories. (Weiland, 2018) discusses the importance of plot, theme, and character development. These are narrative tools that are showcased as important factors that the National Press Photographers Association (NPPA) teaches in their storytelling workshops. However, in a world of tight deadlines these storytelling goals often take a back seat to the ever-present real-world realities of making slot. Matt Pearl is a solo video journalist working at WXIA in Atlanta who also teaches at NPPA workshops and operates a blog discussing NPPA storytelling. He says, “As a solo video journalist, I must focus on every part of the reporting process: interviewing, researching, writing, shooting video, and editing” (Pearl, 2013.) This reality makes it difficult to always focus on the larger storytelling effort. A film director may have months or even years to contemplate the narrative techniques that he or she emphasizes in a film. A local news photojournalist may only have a few hours. When it is done properly however, it is noticeable and memorable.

While there are no hard and fast rules, there are basic universal tools and techniques that great storytellers of the past and present have shown to be successful. Those are the skills that I have showcased in this training video. Specifically focusing on some important elements learned

over a 15-year career to achieve larger storytelling goals by simplifying some of the things that traditionally create roadblocks in quick turn storytelling.

Literature Review

- **Fisher's Narrative Paradigm**

We as human beings by our very nature are creatures that communicate verbally with one another and are storytellers. It is the method we use to relay important information, share history, and grow intellectually. We hopefully learn from our mistakes and the mistakes of others by passing on these tales of warning and mishap to one another narratively. In journalism facts are what matters most, reporting objectively about provable, factual events is the cornerstone of what we do professionally. However, the art is in regurgitating these facts in a palatable way for public consumption. Anyone can collect a set of facts and repeat them in a cold and sterile manner to a group of people. That isn't how we as human beings choose to consume information however, Fisher (1985) says "any instance of discourse is always more than the individuated forms that may compose it." In journalism we must take information and facts and find "The human angle," "Characters," "Moments." It's not good enough to just know something is true we must be able to adequately tap into a story narratively to get people to watch and appreciate the message. This is the challenge that I focus on in this video project. All "storytelling" techniques are an effort to make the consumer of the story relate better to the message and therefore retain the message and share the knowledge with others. Nearly every aspect of journalism video production is geared toward this narrative paradigm. Yes, we can stand and stare into a camera and tell people that there is a wildfire raging in Piute county. We can regurgitate how many acres

are burned and how much of the fire is contained, that is our journalistic duty, and most of us take it seriously. The real impact, however, comes from the stories of the firefighters on the frontlines, and people trying to save their homes and personal belongings. That is what resonates with viewers because it is a personal narrative. They can put themselves into that situation in their mind and it creates empathy for their neighbors. One thing that is preached at nearly every journalism and storytelling workshop is that viewers will remember information more effectively if you make them feel something rather than just tell them something. This narrative paradigm is at the root of everything we do as storytelling journalists. Telling personal, impactful stories is the most effective way to relay a message with the people in our communities.

- **Modern storytelling landscape**

As a photojournalist I feel that the visual aspect of storytelling is crucial to showcasing emotion, character development, creating a setting, and illustrating turns or (reveals) in the story. Much like a cinematographer in a film may view their role in the storytelling process, the videographer on a news story has a vital role to play in creating a compelling story that is being consumed on an on-screen platform. “Most successful documentary or factual films are stories, and stories need this story arc if we are to be moved by their narrative drive” (Thirkell, 2010). What is effective storytelling? That is the essential question at hand. All storytelling is subjective and ultimately is in the eye of the viewer of how effective the story is. I am a lover of Martin Scorsese films; I certainly think he is an effective storyteller. My wife however doesn’t like violence on screen and thinks his films are too long. She isn’t wrong, that is her opinion and she would argue because he uses these techniques that for her he is not an effective storyteller. I may find a very popular novel as difficult to follow and while it is successful, for me it isn’t effective. There are however universal storytelling themes, photojournalism techniques and strategies that

have been proven successful. The tips in this training video is primarily focused on mastering those in addition to the challenge of working quickly. While some viewers may view traditional sit down head and shoulder interviews as more effective for their taste, the style I am advocating in this training reel is to teach the journalist how to do proven effective techniques paired with extreme time restraints to still produce what many industry professionals consider compelling and effective stories. The challenge for local news storytellers is to capture the proper compelling imagery and sound to adequately display the honest emotion of a scene. When that individual storyteller is also responsible for other crucial aspects of the storytelling process, such as writing and editing, it's more challenging to assemble all the necessary emotional points to tell a full compelling story. For this reason, workflow management is a crucial dynamic for the cultivation of high-level storytelling under tight deadline pressures. Regardless of whether you subscribe to all the techniques highlighted in this training video, it is imperative to establish a workflow that allows the storyteller to manage the multi-faceted world of deadline journalism. The *Writers College Times* (Nanda, 2013) pinpoints a number of these areas regarding time management, to-do lists, and organization. These tips are like the technical criteria that I have emphasized in the training video project. When faced with tight deadlines it's easy to allow the quality of the work to suffer unless you have prioritized some crucial elements that you value in storytelling that elevates your work. This video project allows me to reflect elements that I and other renowned photojournalist prioritize when they are constructing deadline stories. Since these photojournalists are most often rewarded in various news awards competitions, then there is inherent value in sharing these tips with younger journalists who are attempting to develop their own system and workflow in the field.

One example of this workflow in the video comes in the form of active interviewing and reframing interviews. The traditional method of sit-down interviews has long been a staple of the journalism industry. Often network production of stories consists of a primary head and shoulders sit down interview spliced together with B-roll. In local television journalism we also do this for several stories. However, in emphasizing the deadline story I focus on the technique of active interviewing and constantly reframing interviews. This is a personal style preference for my stories but in addition to that has practical benefits for deadline story production. If an interview is reframed constantly during the shooting process you inherently have many angles to work with in the editing process and can spend less time worrying about ugly jump cuts from interview to b-roll. Additionally, shooting active interviews, asking subjects questions while they are performing tasks allows you the same advantage in the editing process. This is an example of a stylistic choice that I stress in the video but has important real world practical applications for telling a compelling visual story on a tight deadline.

- **Corporate landscape**

“When we think about the concept of “goals,” we need to move far beyond the economic goals that are often assumed in discussions of the “bottom line” (Miller, 2009). It is a time in local news where corporate consolidation and cost cutting is the nature of the business (Littleton, 2017). Large media groups control a larger chunk of local stations than ever before and production costs have been cut nationwide (Stelter, 2012). This fact has also changed the demands of local journalists in the industry, specifically younger entry level video journalists. More stations now employ “one-man bands” or “multi-media journalists.” These are young journalists who are asked to do it all, shoot, write, edit and report information (Carr, 2018). There is also a greater demand than ever as many stations have added more newscasts (Papper,

2012) but have spread the work of filling those newscasts across fewer journalists. These dynamics are unlikely to change significantly soon. As profit margins decline and viewership transitions toward more digital platforms (Grabowicz, 2014). One area where newsrooms can increase revenue is by adding more newscasts, subsequently adding a greater workload across the same level of newsroom staffing. More newscasts equal more advertising space to sell for locally produced content. While viewers are slowly transitioning to digital consumption of local news, traditional over the air revenue still greatly outweighs that revenue that is generated from digital content (“Local TV News Fact Sheet”, 2019). It is also forecast to remain this way for the next few years. That landscape indicates that tight deadline driven storytelling is here to stay. There are only two ways to survive the challenge, either embrace it for long enough to move into a longform, special projects role that permits more time and softer deadlines or embrace it and thrive in it and learn to love deadline storytelling. Either way to survive in modern television storytelling and photojournalism, it is imperative that you develop some techniques to create quality, engaging storytelling within this challenging dynamic.

This corporate dynamic in the media landscape is an important discussion point for understanding the value of this video tutorial. Television stations must evolve with the times and think beyond the status quo. Beudet and Wihbey (2019) pose the question “Can you name the last time someone in your social network shared the entire front page of a newspaper with you as opposed to an individual story? I didn’t think so.” In 2019 the traditional newscast model is becoming less relevant. Viewers want content in an on-demand fashion and when they consume that content it is often on social media, according to Meyer and Tang (2015). Video content must have storytelling appeal to garner social media engagement. Stories must be able to strike an emotional chord with viewers to spark desired engagement (Nikolinakou & King, 2018). Stations

must balance a demand to fill newscasts with content but additionally need strong storytelling content to market in a digital landscape. These are two very different skillsets, but those individuals who can successfully fill both those needs in this new media landscape are very marketable to stations looking to fill both needs. The challenge facing young storytellers is from a training standpoint. Most newsrooms managers still predominantly value content creation and generation more than artful creative storytelling. Historically creative stories require more time, resources, and crafting and those are things that simply aren't readily available to an individual journalist in a modern newsroom. News managers often bring in consultants for training purposes (Rhew, 2017). These valuable budget line dollars are being spent on adding productivity and look to overall newscast initiatives and goals, but they are rarely focused on individual storyteller growth. For that information and training young photojournalists must rely on what little information they retained from college and from experienced coworkers. Several organizations provide valuable individualized training at conferences and workshops. The (NPPA) is a leader in this area for photojournalism but you also have IRE (Investigative Reporters and Editors), SRCCON, NABJ, (Blatchford, 2018) and many other acronym groups who are willing to train and inspire young journalists.

- **Educational opportunities**

The challenge for young journalists, especially those right out of college is that workshops are generally far away, require travel, and they can be relatively expensive. This education is crucial exposure early on in a career when workflow habits are being formed, especially in a high-pressure field where you often will lean on routine and habits formed. "Every single day, we execute a series of behaviors that take us from morning, through noon, and into night. Largely, these aren't well-considered actions; they're the result of repeated behaviors" (Adams,

2017). For years the messaging at some of these conferences was one of exclusivity. The attendees are the chosen few who get to drink from the cup of knowledge while those who can't attend the workshop are left out in the dark. The information however isn't proprietary, in fact it's basic good habit-forming tips. The purpose of this training video is to take my experience that I have garnered from these workshops and conferences and distribute it in a targeted manner toward the segment of the workforce that needs the structure the most. The young video storytellers who are working up against the clock every single day.

If the assumption is that the information is valid to educate young journalists, then the question is how best to get the information to them. In previous generations it was incumbent on the individual journalist to seek out and find the groups or organizations that supplied the information. There are stations who value these techniques, KSL prior to my arrival in 2014 as the Chief Photographer brought in Boyd Huppert and Jonathan Malat from KARE-TV in Minneapolis. Malat, a photojournalist, and Huppert a reporter are widely recognized as one of the best storytelling teams in the country. They have been honored regularly for their work by the NPPA and other organizations. "Together they have won numerous Emmys and Edward R. Murrow honors for their unique and trademark stories" ("NPPA's Sprague Award..." 2016). What I teach as a storytelling educator is an extension of what they teach. KSL hired me in my current role as a facilitation of the things they learned in the Huppert/Malat workshop in Salt Lake City. As a trained disciple of the NPPA and specifically Malat/Huppert storytelling I was a natural choice to promote the storytelling education that the organization and its top leaders teach. That however is an uncommon thing for most newsrooms. KSL is a well-funded organization that can afford to advocate for such education in-house. Most young journalists work at news operations who value organizational initiatives above individual training. This is a

fact especially in smaller market stations where young journalists are in high turnover roles. If a reporter/MMJ is going to only be in a small market for a couple of years and then move on to a medium size market, then management is less inclined to invest significantly in individual growth education strategies. This is the expected career growth model (McKay, 2019). It is true that if young reporters decide to remain in small/medium markets that individual education opportunities might present once management considers them more of a long-term investment. In my home market of Lexington, KY there are several talented reporters, MMJ's, and photojournalists who consider it home and have decided not to move into larger television markets. They have earned their stripes and have been given individual growth education as a result of proving their loyalty to the station and the market. Even in these circumstances however, the early years of their career are often shortchanged in individual storytelling education. Habits and techniques are established to survive the grind of local news without firmly developing a proven skillset that will benefit them early on in their development.

- **Digital transformation**

Educational scope has improved drastically in the internet age. 20 years ago, NPPA education was relegated to regional and national workshops and the annual release of VHS tapes containing winning stories from the national and regional contests. In the last decade the NPPA has become an online tool for young photojournalists. Since 2011 the NPPA Youtube channel has posted nearly 4,000 videos of winning stories with over 1.2 million views (“NPPA TV Quarterly...” 2011). This change in technology has allowed photojournalists in markets that weren't traditional storytelling hotbeds to have access to materials that otherwise may have been foreign to them. For me, this was the number one resource that I used to get indoctrinated into the NPPA storytelling culture. Without this online presence I would have had a vastly different

trajectory to my career as a photojournalist. Once I immersed myself in these videos, I also began to submit my own stories and fully participate in an NPPA quarterly story review process that I found very educational (“tv.nppa.org” n.d.). This new age of digital storytelling education is valuable for photojournalists outside of the traditional markets where this information is readily available. Much like the emergence of online higher education establishments this is a resource that is still relatively new. Online university classes have allowed students in regions away from brick and mortar universities to participate in those educational resources. In addition, online education allows students to participate in their own time and convenience (Simplicio, 2019). The same can be accomplished through informal professional growth education, especially when associated with organizations like NPPA.

- **Online potential**

The equivalent of online universities to working professionals may very well lie within these active online educational tools. While the propagation of online stories posted by the NPPA may have created an informal educational environment, there is opportunity for training in a structured form in the same realm. In 2011, about the same time my first stories were being published to the NPPA YouTube page, I took on the challenge of remodeling an old house. While I had some elementary knowledge of the general workings of electricity, plumbing, masonry, and wood working, I was overall a novice at this venture. Do it yourself remodeling is a big business with multiple television networks dedicated to the programming (Blas, 2016). Beyond the television distribution is a wide network of DiY videos on YouTube dedicated to very specific niche problems. One video online (Fix This Build That, 2019) about laying vinyl flooring has garnered nearly 7 million views on a channel with over 600 thousand subscribers. There are niche videos online for nearly every problem one might encounter in remodeling a

house. These clips range from low production value to high end sophisticated shooting and editing. The result is a vast arrangement of knowledge that previously would have required specialized training. In my own remodeling project, I utilized these videos to learn how to lay laminate flooring, frame up a new wall, hang drywall, remove a shower, the list goes on and on. I found myself as a visual learner able to repeat the acts I was watching on the screen. The technological possibilities obviously go well beyond having someone walk me through operating a wet saw. “Today it’s made and distributed in countless different ways, giving not just governments and institutions but nearly everyone with access to the Web the means to choose and shape his or her own culture, identity, tribal fidelities — and then spread this culture” (Kimmelman, 2010). It’s the economy of the specific, not the broad. Very niche instructional videos for an unfathomably narrow potential audience. Brought together by algorithms and search engines. “Online videos have many positive attributes. Students can play them multiple times and stop them at any point to process important information. This aspect of student control, or self-directed learning, adds time efficiency and convenience, both of which are critical for learning” (Lysaght & Bent, 2005). For these reasons there is value in the creation of these videos for purposes of training in a professional environment. The viewer of the video can consume the source material in a calm relaxed state. They can additionally re-watch the information as many times as necessary to create an understanding of the subtleties. “students appreciated the ability to repeatedly view video demonstrations. An average of six viewings per demonstration suggests students valued the opportunity to closely scrutinize each demonstration” (McAlister, 2014).

For these reasons, a fundamentally sound video highlighting a few key areas of photojournalism and storytelling is a valuable tool to create and offer up to young photojournalists. The video I have created hits several different aspects of photojournalism that

are easily repeatable and based in solid educational grounding to allow for a solid groundwork for a young photojournalist early in their career working on tight deadlines. The literature shows that video tutorials are very valuable to a segment of the audience that uses them. Most young student populations and millennials are well versed in these types of video tutorials and are primed to respond well to this type of educational presentation (“70% of Millennials...” 2017). Video tutorials are the most effective way to get information like this into the hands of those that need it most. Some of the techniques in the training video are skills that have been learned over time to help shave a few seconds here and there. They are variations of techniques and habits that have likely been picked up in other forms or fashion from the potential viewer in the course of their development. This video endeavors to reinforce some ideas while adding some additional skills to the conversation. These are all techniques that could be discussed in a workshop or in a one on one setting, however the value of the video comes in its ability to be disseminated broadly via social media or through other online channels. Additionally, the video’s individual value lives within what life it takes on regarding other videos from potential other sources. One broad based deadline storytelling video from a Chief Photographer in Salt Lake City could inspire a video from a well know photojournalist in Seattle to do a video focused on lighting, sports photography, or DSLR storytelling. While my passion is deadline storytelling, this style of education is repeatable and should be an ongoing effort in the storytelling community to inspire other similar training works. In the SUU Master’s program we studied a number of interesting theories on human communication, I particularly looked at Paul Ricoeur’s Theory of Distanciation in considering these types of training videos as “text that has meaning irrespective of the author’s original intention” (Littlejohn & Foss, 2011, p.132). The one technique that I may gloss over in this video might be the very thing that inspires someone else to construct a similar

message with alternate focus. While I focus a significant amount of time on shutter and filter, that may be commonplace to another viewer who may really want to explore a video that goes into more detail about natural sound collection. In this way the videos can create a life of their own well beyond this one video and even beyond me as a presenter of information. I could very easily see myself consuming a video like this in the future that is created by another photojournalist about a topic they are passionate about. Ricoeur refers to “the act of being open to the meanings of a text as appropriation (p.133).” In this way the project is well beyond the scope of one individual video. It is more the idea of this as a community text that inspires other works through the industry and allows ideas to be shared and evolve. This is a very similar process to what has occurred with the posting online of NPPA winning stories. Young photojournalists view those stories and create their own version of what they see. Similarly, the act of micro analyzing different storytellers’ techniques can establish a whole network of similar forms and ideas that help move our artform forward for years to come.

Method

In my experience with training videos like this it’s important to be as thorough as possible while maintaining a pacing necessary to hit all the desired points in a timely manner. The final length of this training video ended up at 21 minutes and 18 seconds total run time. My goal for this video was to be all encompassing on basic photojournalism musts for deadline storytelling as well as some specific tips for quick turn stories. The desired impact is that viewers of different skill levels can skip forward past parts that are already part of their natural workflow while still available to viewers who need this information. A series of shorter videos doing deeper dives into aspects of each segment would also be a strong addition to a series of training

videos. For purposes of this specific project however I chose to commit to an all-encompassing procedural tape to hit all important elements of this specific genre of storytelling. The end resulting goal is that if a young photojournalist followed all these techniques on every point, they could produce award winning deadline work. There certainly are more sophisticated storytelling techniques that photojournalists could and would engage in beyond what is mentioned in the video but the techniques I focus on are real world techniques that I think are necessary for telling compelling short form deadline stories.

The video starts with an introduction with a brief synopsis of my credentials for presenting this information. This is important if through the nature of internet tutorials, it was to land in the hands of someone not familiar with my work or NPPA training. I refer to television awards that are universally recognizable as credentials of success. I avoid delving into more specific photojournalism awards that aren't as ubiquitous to the casual viewers frame of reference. I also transition from this introductory stage of the video into a series of clips from stories that I have shot, written, and edited over the years. The purpose of these video clips is to either reinforce a point I have just made or to foreshadow a point I am about to make. Using these clips allows me to move the narrative along and allows viewers of the video to quickly grasp in actual storytelling examples what I am discussing if my words alone aren't enough to drive the information home for them.

At the 1:45 mark in the training video I transition into a segment on the biggest technical challenge I face in making the video. The fact is that in a potential online audience of many varied viewers I cannot make the video specific to one set of gear. I must make the information general enough in this portion of the project to allow viewers using degrees of technological advancement to understand the points being made. I attempt to simplify in this portion

specifically in the area of exposure by acknowledging this challenge and deferring specific camera questions for individual gear back toward training videos that are specifically directed toward that individual's camera. There is an assumption of a professional degree of sophistication operating camera equipment in this portion and throughout the entire video. This video, for that reason is intended for a viewer with a basic degree of operational acumen. The tips and techniques are primarily intended for a consumer who handles camera equipment everyday but may be struggling with maximizing its capabilities. Additionally, the tips I share in this video are ideally useful regardless of camera specifics.

At the 2:45 mark in the video I transition into the longest portion of the video. This is a basic lesson in shot exposure and how to properly manipulate camera filters, iris, and shutter to reach a desired level of sharpness and depth of field. From personal experience with young photojournalists I have noticed this as a challenge area. This portion of the video project could easily be its own separate breakout training video. For purposes of deadline storytelling, I wanted to hit all these crucial areas that can trip a storyteller up during that process. While most of the video is a direct address to the camera style, this portion of the video is more of a raw unedited process demonstration. I chose this style because you can see the differences in the shot as a cycle through shutter and filter settings. At 5:25 in the video project I change the shot and do a practical demonstration to illustrate the different settings I had previously discussed. This demonstration is used to highlight the importance of depth of field in shot composition. Camera setup is crucial to getting proper exposure and depth and this part of the project is key for walking young photojournalists through this setup. The number one issue I see in stories is generally regarding shot composition, and the number one issue I have noticed is soft focus and flat depth of field. When a photojournalist master's exposure their video pops of the screen

compared to their counterparts. In a deadline storytelling situation, often the stories can feel rushed and messy. This is a crucial area where photojournalists can have strong composition which displays a sense of professionalism.

At 7:06 in the video I transition from camera exposure to other aspects of composition, using a few story clips that display these elements. The first point of composition I discuss in this portion of the video is the “rule of thirds.” This is a set of guidelines more than “rules”. The discussion goes back to the 18th century with credit for its original documentation often going toward a painter, John Thomas Smith (Antunes, 2017). It’s a philosophy that I was taught in undergrad studies at Eastern Kentucky University and a composition strategy that I have adhered to throughout my career. Like any artform, photography composition can be debated forever and ultimately what looks good is in the eye of the person looking at it. My instruction throughout this video and especially in this portion is derived from partially what I have been taught, what I have seen be successful in video journalism competitions, and some universal trends that I have seen in video storytelling across all platforms of film and journalism. In this portion of the video I superimpose a “rule of thirds” grid over the video to highlight all the clips played when viewed through this scope of composition. Certainly, when I was shooting each individual image on screen I wasn’t thinking about the “rule of thirds” necessarily. It is more instinctual “your eye” as a photographer after a few years, but for a young photojournalist it is an element that I think is important to consider when framing up shots.

Next, I address “looking room” in relation to people speaking on camera. This is directly related to the “rule of thirds” especially in journalism because much of what we shoot is someone on camera speaking. This is the act of positioning a subject on the opposite third of the frame in which they are looking allowing them to look into the negative space within the frame.

At 8:24 I transition from composition into sequencing. Sequencing is the act of capturing repetitive action from multiple angles and cutting it together in editing to create a full picture of a scene. The challenge here is taking a process that has generally taken place over a prolonged period and editing it together to essentially speed up time. This also could be a very detailed stand-alone instructional video, but for purposes of deadline storytelling I decided to hit on it with a brief but important breakdown of its importance. A photojournalist who thinks like an editor always captures images for the edit. Sequencing is one of the most important elements of this. Very often the video we capture for a story is too long in duration to run in its entirety because of the short length of our deadline stories. Therefore, the art of taking a scene and shortening it through editing is crucial to the storytelling process. I focus primarily on changing angles, as I have found in tight deadline it is one of the most effective way to capture sequences and create obvious edit points of reference. Out of sequencing I move quickly into general “shot variety.” In relation to sequencing, the skill of gathering multiple angles with wide, medium, and tight shots allows you to construct sequences more effectively. Especially on deadline this is valuable in creating what I have coined “dirty sequences.” Cutting from a tight shot to a wide shot where it might not be a perfect sequence edit but on tight timeframes you don’t always have time to wait for the perfect shot or scrub video in editing for the perfect edit point. These instruction points are critical in giving yourself multiple options for quick edited compelling action sequences. For that reason, I stress here the importance of changing angels and focal length variety in shooting. In this section I also discuss a stylistic interview technique that is very specific to NPPA teaching. Reframing interviews after each answer and changing angles on interviews to create the illusion of a multiple camera interview shoot. This style has multiple purposes especially related to deadline storytelling. It allows you to gather multiple angles of

your subject during the actual interview which creates a strong variety of shots. It also allows you to easily b-roll your subject simply with interview angles in a tight crunch situation. A lot of our valuable time of quick turn stories is figuring out creative ways to gather b-roll of people we interview. Using this technique, you are constructing b-roll of your subject through multiple angles while you are also gathering sound for the story. This technique is extremely valuable on tight turn stories where you may only have 10-15 minutes total with an interview subject and that isn't enough time to gather meaningful b-roll. In that scenario if you only maintained one angle on the interview then you would be limited to that one single shot of your subject. By moving around during the interview and changing the composition and focal length you are also providing yourself with a variety of shots that can be used as b-roll of your subject. I specifically show a video clip of a run of the mill "boring" story that I shot where the bulk of our story was limited visually but because I had many angles of the police officer we were interviewing, I was able to make a fast turn story more visually appealing. This is one of the key areas where a video like this is productive. Young photojournalists and reporters may waste valuable time on a deadline story trying to construct b-roll when in fact they can use this method and save time while still gathering a variety of usable shots. This also makes the story edit together easier because it's easier to sequence multiple angles of an interview than it is to jump back and forth between a b-roll setting and an interview setting.

At 10:23 I bring back around the importance of having depth of field. This is a summary portion to help illustrate how the previous elements relate to the overall theme of "shot variety." If I could summarize quality deadline storytelling into one line it would be "shooting what you have available efficiently and from multiple angles and focal lengths." This use of shallow depth of field allows the photojournalist to maximize the visual elements within an environment and

create a compelling picture of the story. Its also extremely important in deadline stories where you may only have 20 to 30 minutes to edit and you can't be as selective in you video selection in the editing process.

At 11:07 I transition to some technical aspects of shooting video that help the photojournalist create this desired shot variety. I begin by discussing handheld video. One of the things that is tempting to do when you are on a tight deadline is to try and capture every element of the story quickly. The result I see from many young storytellers is a lot of handheld video. In this portion of the presentation I talk about when handheld video is appropriate and how to shoot handheld and still maintain strong composition techniques. I also discuss changing the eye level in this portion of the video. I regularly see stories that I am critiquing from young photojournalists where the entire story is shot from the same tripod height. This is again directly related to shot variety. If every shot is from a similar eye level, then you risk having too many shots that have a similar feel and composition. This becomes a challenge when editing because many of the edits might feel like jump cuts because they are medium composition from similar eye levels. Ultimately all these techniques are used for an editing purpose. When it comes to tight turn stories the biggest challenge is generally in the editing process because that is the final stage of the storytelling workflow. While I try to adhere to many of these rules on all of my stories it is extra important on deadline stories because I don't have time to be very picky in the editing process. I generally must edit the story together very quickly and if all my shots are similar focal length, framing, eye level, or handheld then it is nearly impossible to sequence together shot variety in the late editing stage.

At 13:24 I transition from composition techniques to broader storytelling elements. The focus of this portion of the training video is in collection of compelling sound. Deadline news

stories are inherently spot news in nature or active environments. In those types of stories, the most valuable thing you can capture are real organic moments. I do this by active interviewing and leaving the lavalier microphone on my story subject. At this juncture I play a series of clips from multiple stories of moments I have gathered. These are real, natural organic things that occur while shooting the story that I can only capture properly by leaving a wireless microphone on the story subject. These moments are beneficial in deadline stories for a variety of reasons. When you have moments like this on camera it obviously creates an urgency and timeliness to your story. It also provides you with a variety of b-roll opportunities beyond a stand-alone interview. There is tremendous value in what the NPPA teaches as “active interviewing.” Asking a few pointed questions in the moment while people are engaging in their normal behavior. Allowing the interview subject to remain in the natural moment and essentially verbalize what they are seeing, feeling, experiencing, and learning in that exact moment. These are some of the most compelling things you can capture. They also are crucial for me in the editing process which I get to later in the training video. Related to this is capturing natural sound. I consider gathering moments natural sound elements but there is a difference between someone speaking with a microphone on and the general natural sounds of the environment around them. These are the elements of a story that bring the viewer into the story as an experience rather than a simple reporting of information. Again, I use a montage of clips to highlight the types of things I try to gather in these moments. I do a demonstration at this point in the video where I am raking leaves. The point here is to highlight the difference between gathering natural sound with the on-board camera microphone and strategically collecting meaningful natural sound. Natural sound elements like this are fundamental in the editing process because they allow the photojournalist

to breathe life into the story but also extend sequences, bridge gaps, make transitions, and highlight points of reference.

At 15:45 I transition to the editing portion of the video. This certainly could be a series of tutorials just on editing tricks and tips. For purposes of this video I wanted to illustrate the fundamental technique I use for quickly incorporating moments and natural sound into a scripted story. The biggest challenge we face as deadline storytellers is almost always the editing process. The best photographer in the world can capture all the necessary elements on camera but if they cannot transition that onto a timeline then the skill is wasted. The focus of the editing portion here is a logging element more so than it is an actual editing tutorial. The assumption I am making here is that the viewer of this video is a working photojournalist who edits nonlinearly every day. For this reason, I am avoiding any specific editing tips and focusing exclusively on how to include crucial elements quickly on a deadline edit. The point of this exercise is to highlight the fact that on deadline you don't have time to scrub through video searching for something that you have shot. That process must take place prior to the final deadline edit. I focus exclusively on my style for doing this although there are other strong deadline editors who use shot marks on the raw clip to remember crucial clips and others who work of time code logs. All of these are practical ways to accomplish the same goal. For me the primary point to get across in this portion of the video is to make sure that the viewer is thinking critically about the logging process as part of their overall editing workflow.

To wrap up the video project I wanted to show a piece of work that encapsulates all the elements discussed in the training video. I chose a story from fall 2015 at KSL reported by Alex Cabrero called "Mom's Café." The story was about a small restaurant in Salina, Utah that had been in the community for generations. A vehicle had lost control and crashed through the front

window while people were inside eating. The community rallied to help rebuild quickly so the café could remain open. We began shooting around 2pm after making the long drive from Salt Lake to Salina. We shot for about 45 minutes in the restaurant and then spent another hour outside logging and writing the story. Alex then began driving back to Salt Lake City while I edited in the backseat. The story aired at 6pm, 4 hours from first frame of video to air. All the elements that I discussed in the training video are on display in this quick turn for air. The story won 1st place 4th qtr 2015 for Deadline News by the NPPA. It was awarded 3rd place overall nationally by the NPPA for best deadline story, 2015. It also won the regional EMMY for General Assignment Report. The point I wanted to illustrate by showing this story was simply that this is the type of story that any photojournalist could get assigned with a challenging deadline. It's not particularly vibrant visually, nor overly compelling in narrative. I simply used this skill set that had been crafted over a period to capture the elements quickly yet impactfully and was able to incorporate them into a story under challenging editing conditions. That is the overall purpose of this training video project. I was once told at a storytelling workshop that anyone can tell a great story great with time and resources. The real talent comes in overcoming obstacles to tell a compelling story. With proven techniques highlighted in this instructional video I believe young storytellers can focus on these crucial areas to tell strong deadline stories in an industry that demands it and values it when done well.

Results

In my role as Chief Photographer at KSL I have made a series of training videos for specific tasks. These videos have generally been related to processes that are necessary but not often required. One video tutorial is how to properly hook up a live shot through the fiber

connection at Vivant Smart Home Arena. Another video is how to hook up a court pool deck and feed out a signal to the other stations when only one camera is permitted in a trial. This video project is an entirely different thought process all together. The challenge largely comes down to the variables. How do you give instructions on a career and artform that changes literally every day? For those reasons I wanted to avoid technologically specific variables. I could have discussed use of drones, gopro cameras, file compression, or several other aspects to the process that would have bogged the video down. I wanted to highlight the critical areas of importance to getting a strong deadline story on the air. While this video certainly doesn't cover every aspect of storytelling, if one were to master the areas highlighted in the video, they would be very strong deadline story artists in a field where these stories can often be discounted and shortchanged. This is a lane of photojournalism and storytelling that is required, we all must do it unless we are dedicated special projects journalists. I was that very person for 3 years in Lexington, KY. From 2011 to 2014 I was a special projects producer who almost exclusively worked on long form stories and investigations. This is certainly a vastly different skill set. The one thing I realized working in that role is how much value there can be in hard, fast, deadline stories. I would sneak away occasionally and do a quick turn story just to remain sharp while I was in that special project's role. When I accepted the Chief Photographer job at KSL, I knew that I would be required to shoot day turn stories again. More importantly I would be managing 16 other photographers who did that type of work as their primary job function every day. So, for my last week in Lexington I threw myself back into the grind and worked off the assignment desk every day taking deadline assignments. It was a bit of a shock to the system for someone who was out of practice in this craft. I loved it! Sometimes I believe it takes looking at a situation through a different prism to truly appreciate the challenge and value in it. I believe the newsroom culture in

many places around the country views these types of stories as necessary evils. I arrived in Salt Lake City with the idea that we would build our name on the backs of telling the best deadline stories in the country. We have two years in a row been the NPPA West Top Station of the Year. A designation that is only earned by 3 stations each year competing in and Eastern, Central, and Western region. For years these same stories were discounted by the high-end artsy photojournalists and traditional powerhouse photojournalism stations. KSL burst onto the scene by embracing these challenging deadlines and creating power competitive stories in this area. I think the power that a video like this has is the chance that it can show photojournalists and one-man bands that there is a way to their goals via unlikely paths. So often we as a profession look for the adorable soft feature story to find our creativity, but everybody wants to do those stories and they have done them before you, and likely better than you. My hope is that this video can inspire some of those photojournalists to embrace a different path. The goal for me in creating this project was to establish that there is beauty and creativity that can come from challenging circumstances, if you are only willing to embrace the chaos!

I think once videos like this infuse the storytelling market that there is opportunity for more niche video that are beyond my scope of expertise. The real power in this project is for this to inspire that photojournalist out there who loves motion graphics to create a tutorial illustrating the implementation of those skills. As a former investigative photographer, I certainly would be inclined to do a series of videos myself focusing intricately on some of the aspects of that storytelling genre with tips on shooting documents and studio lighting. In the last two years since I began creating tutorials for run of the mill tasks it has been on my mind to tackle a project like this. While I believe it's pretty elementary in many ways for my current staff at KSL I can see myself showing this to all prospective interns and freelance photographers interested in this field.

I hope it inspires other prominent photojournalists to create video from their own niche passions within the field. That is ultimately the true value in creating something like this within a field that is small and ultimately very interconnected. TV news storytellers are a relatively small community but with new people popping up every day. It's a high turnover industry and inherently an industry that skews young. The old timers like me have generally burnt out and been replaced with new fresh faces who need to learn the proper skills from those of us in the industry with passion to pass along the specific details of things like this. Now it's difficult to really anticipate how a project like these manifests into other areas for me personally and for the industry. There is a small dedicated group of stations and individuals within those stations who are passionate about passing along skills of art not just skills of survival. Many times, in my career it has felt like the advice passed along has been driven toward how to make slot and how to work quick and dirty. Those are important lessons to learn but ultimately leave the employee unsatisfied and creatively deprived. In the process of making this video project I have been also in the early planning stages of a storytelling podcast. The goal would be a similar one to that of this video. To take the challenging aspects of the job and turn them into something to be proud of that garners respect. I think that messaging element is my biggest takeaway from this project. How best to infuse the passion I have for this craft into others who might not view it through the same light. The goal ultimately to draw the other passions out of others within the field to create a network of tutorials like this but also other unknown inspirational models to infuse life into those who have chosen photojournalism and storytelling as a career.

In the process of creating the final version of this video project I consulted with educational professionals Alan Neves (BYU) and Brian Champagne (USU). These two professors have both worked a long time as professional news photographers, and work with

students on the collegiate level. Their students are both focused on news photojournalism but are also looking toward careers outside of the local news industry. While the deadline driven aspects of the video are geared toward journalism students Neves says “I believe that students of all different skill levels can get a lot out of this video. These simple techniques are valuable for video production jobs in a variety of fields. It’s about efficiency in shooting and editing and that is one of the more difficult concepts for young storytellers to grasp.” Champagne says that many of these principals should be familiar to his students, saying “I teach a lot of the principles John put in his Storytelling Techniques video. Sometimes it’s hard to get the principle understood, but John’s visual methods show what I have been trying to say. If I could use his section about exposure with its over-driven chips creating a soft image, I could avoid the trial-and-error my students go through as they learn to use filters and shutter speed. In class I talk about using a wireless lavalier microphone to get better natural sound, but students pick up on the concept slowly. John’s simple demo with his backyard rake should convince students of the worth of this technique much faster. The same goes for the other techniques he demonstrates. My students take hours to edit a simple news package, and his screen video of his method should save them added time. I think video is the correct medium for teaching video techniques. John’s video is not all-inclusive, but should give my students, no matter which area of video they choose to pursue, valuable, easy-to-understand ideas.” These testimonials reinforce for me the value of a video tutorial tool like this for a process that has generally been taught more in a classroom or one on one setting. Someone who is interested in storytelling/journalism and of this modern YouTube generation, which is so familiar with online tutorials certainly might relate well to this particular style of instruction.

Conclusion

This video project teaches storytelling techniques that specifically can be captured and presented on tight deadline news stories. The video focuses on an entry level target audience but with sophisticated elements that will guide them toward industry standard award-winning storytelling. I specifically highlight techniques that are taught at industry workshops such as the National Press Photographers Association (NPPA). These skills are also highly sought out by industry hiring managers and rewarded by industry awards associations. I am qualified to deliver this message in a presentation because of years of photojournalism experience and recognition for my craft. Using these techniques, I have received 42 regional Emmy nominations and won 16 Emmy awards. I have received 3 regional Edward R. Murrow awards. I have been named NPPA regional photographer of the year; and in 2017 I was the director of the annual NPPA national video awards and storytelling workshop hosted in Salt Lake City. That workshop was an in-person experience focusing on some of these same techniques. This video will be the foundation of future presentations for similar educational opportunities. I have the intent of using this video as a tool to train young photojournalist by dispersing on (NPPA) focused social media outlets, sharing with local students/interns via connections at Utah universities. Specifically, connections with broadcast professors Alan Neves (BYU) and Brian Champagne (USU). And finally, presenting this video during future NPPA and other storytelling workshops targeted at young video journalists. Through these avenues this project has potential to reach photojournalists who are already doing or preparing for this type of deadline work and merely need a level of immersion into a mindset and way of thinking about the challenges they face in telling these stories and the techniques available to assist them in telling them better.

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