Television News Packages: Concept to Completion

Step 1: Concept

Find the story. If the story you find is about an issue or event, find out how that issue or event AFFECTS PEOPLE. After you learn that, find those people and build the story around them, not around the issue or event. The issue or event is simply the jumping off point, the reason you are telling the viewers about this PERSON.

Find your focus. Don't try to include too much. If you try to tell me everything in a television news story, you end up telling me nothing, because I will get lost. Be clear and focused about what you really want me to know. You should be able to sum this up in a very short phrase.

Step 2: Shoot STEADY, SEQUENCED VIDEO and COMPELLING NATURAL SOUND

Set up interviews and plan your shooting of b-roll. Who can you get who can help you tell the story. And just as importantly, what video do you need to cover your reporter tracks. Make sure you shoot everything you think you could possibly need when you're in the field, because chances are, you will need it. Especially when you're just starting out, it's better to shoot too much than not enough. In the words of Mark Anderson "if you think it, get it." In other words, while you're in the field, if it occurs to you that you might need a shot of (fill in the blank) get the shot. It will only take a few seconds, and may save your package.

Shoot interviews and b-roll (cover video): Again, this is the one time, at least when you're starting out, that more is better. But do your best to continue with your focus. Make sure everything you go after fits into your focus.

Step 3: View what you've shot

LOG BITES AND VIDEO: This is important. The first thing you need to do when you come back from the shoot is to sit down with a pen and paper, or a blank Word document and choose your sound bites. That means writing down the time code of exactly when it starts and ends, how many seconds it runs, and verbatim of what the person says. Also look for good natural sound that you can use in the package and powerful or telling shots that you can write specifically to (something cute, funny, strange, whatever)

Step 4: Write

Write your script: Now you get to craft your story. Think of all the sound bites, video and natural sound as a pile of Lego blocks. It's your job to make something really cool with all those pieces. The important thing to remember is that YOU WON'T USE

THEM ALL. Just because you write down a sound bite, that doesn't mean that you have to use it. The same is true for video and natural sound. Use what works and don't be afraid to cut what's getting in the way.

Step 5: Track

        Cut Reporter Track: After you've written your script, you need to create one last assortment of Lego blocks; your voice track. Use your reporter track the same as you use sound bites in your package.

Step 6: Edit

        Lay you're A-Roll: A-Roll is a term to describe all of your primary sound. This includes reporter track, sound bites and natural sound breaks. When you're done with this your timeline should only have video where there is a sound bite, but the audio channels should be full. In other words, if you close your eyes and listen to your package, it should make complete sense.

VOICE TRACK (NO VIDEO)//SOUND BITE (VIDEO)//VOICE TRACK (NO VIDEO)///SOUND BITE (VIDEO OF PERSON TALKING)…. And on and on

        Fill in video: Now you need to go back in and fit the pictures to match the words that are being said. When you do that, don't be afraid to cover some of the interviews with video. Once we have seen the person who is talking and can match a voice with a face, we don't need to see that person again, so cover them up with video.

Step 7: Completion

        Watch the finished product.. look for pacing (does one thing flow into the next), make sure video matches words, look for flash frames and fix them, smooth out audio and make sure it's all at the same level. This is your chance to POLISH. Every story can use polishing. Don't be afraid to re-write phrases to help your sound bites and track hold hands. Simply re-track them and drop them into your time line.

        You're done!!