



# V-logging for Community Managers

 **SNAPSHOT**

**SPEAKERS**

Dina Vekaria (Pearson),  
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(TheCR)

**COMPETENCIES**

Strategy

**MATURITY PHASES**

CMM1, CMM2, CMM3,  
CMM4

## HIGHLIGHTS

1. **Interested in learning practical tips for v-logging?** Dina shared her 3 stages of production, which include 20 practical best practices.
2. **Looking for guidelines on how to present yourself on camera?** Dina offered 7 of her best tips.
3. **Want a high-level overview of questions to consider before creating a v-log?** Dina's 3 main questions will set you on the right track.

## OVERVIEW

- **Background.** Pearson is an educational company. In June of 2017, they implemented an advocate program. Everyone within Pearson is an advocate. There isn't an opt-in or assignment process. Dina wanted to put her stamp on this program and decided to try v-logging as a different and exciting way to bring together over 30,000 employees across 70 countries.
- **Video is an important medium.** A majority of people prefer watching something illustrative and/or visual over text. Video storytelling can be as simple as using your iPhone or Smartphone. The camera is simply a tool to tell your story.

## BEST PRACTICES

- **Questions to consider.** There are 3 main questions to consider:
  - **What is the purpose?** First and foremost, define your purpose.
    - **Story.** Understanding your purpose will help to formulate the story that you want to convey. It will also guide your creative direction.
    - **Emotion.** Consider the kinds of feelings or emotions that you want to evoke. A Cantasia-style tutorial doesn't require much emotion, but for the themed v-logs that Dina creates each month, evoking some kind of emotion is important because she wants her stories to resonate with people.
    - **Call-to-action.** There won't always be a call-to-action, but there will always be a message. So, what's your message from this video? What are you trying to get people to do or feel or say? That's the purpose side to creating a v-log.
  - **Who will view it?** It is imperative that you know your audience, i.e. will the audience be internal or customers or both? The type of video you create will depend on your audience.
  - **Who will be on camera?** Will you be featured alone or with a colleague? This will have an impact on what will be needed to put the video together. Consider inviting executives or other leaders depending on the type of message that you want to communicate.
  
- **Understand the stages of production.** Planning your video from start to finish involves 3 main stages:
  - **Pre-Production Stage.** This stage incorporates 7 steps:
    - **Topic.** Dina recommends monthly themes. She works 4-6 months in advance, which allows her to bank her videos. She can create her December video in September because she has a planned theme. If you are planning to v-log regularly, consider themes so that you can work in advance vs. having to think up a topic on the fly.
    - **Storyboard.** A storyboard guides the narrative of your story and keeps it concise.
    - **Script.** Have the script handy, but don't read it line-for-line. Use the script as a reminder of the points that you want to get across to your audience.
    - **Contributors.** Reach out to potential contributors from time-to-time so that you are not always solo in your videos. For example, Dina did a recent v-log about how Pearson employees make a social impact. She asked them to send her a video clip about where they've volunteered or traveled for charity, etc. If people want to participate, give them every tool to be successful, i.e. instructions for formatting, lighting, use of a tripod, etc.

## BEST PRACTICES, CONT.

- **Equipment.** Consider the equipment, resources, budget to allocate to your video. Community managers are usually a tiny team with a limited budget. If that's the case, you'll have to work with the equipment you have and a Smartphone works well. If you are lucky enough to be on a team with equipment – like a corporate communications team or marketing team – they will have a video camera or tripod that you can borrow.
- **Location.** Dina advises getting the proper permissions and forms completed for filming on location. Ask if it is necessary to get permission from facilities or landlords, etc.
- **Test your equipment.** Prior to filming, test all equipment and ensure that all batteries are charged.
- **Production Phase.** Dina offered 7 tips for presenting yourself on camera:
  - **Take 2, or 3:** Dina recommends filming your section of the video with at least 2 or 3 takes. With multiple takes you can edit your video using the best cuts.
  - **Dress to be comfortable.** A formal video will require you to dress to impress. However, think about what will appear on camera. If it's just a head shot, be formal from the waist up and comfortable from the waist down.
  - **Breathe.** If you're filming in sections, be sure to take a breath between takes and don't speak too fast. You can section your video by paragraphs. Film a section, breathe, re-familiarize yourself with the script, film your second section, repeat. In the editing mode, you can piece it together to look like one seamless clip.
  - **Script.** Again, be as natural and authentic as possible. Don't read the script.
  - **Quiet place.** Try to find a quiet room without a lot of background noise. If not, you can always lower the background noise by upping your voice in the post-production stage.
  - **Body language.** Be animated so that you aren't monotone, but don't over-use hand gestures as it can be very distracting. Authenticity comes from topic familiarity.
  - **Smile.** Be positive and smile. When you're on camera and you're smiling and speaking with conviction, it will resonate with your audience and increase viewership.
- **Post-Production.** Dina has broken this down into 5 steps:
  - **Technology.** Whether you use a PC or Mac, ensure you have a powerful processor. Dina uses an external hard drive solely for her videos to save on space.
  - **Training.** There are plenty of free online training course, such as lynda.com or YouTube. Dina learned everything she needed to know for editing from YouTube.
  - **Accessibility.** It's important to ensure that you are reaching everyone in your audience. Dina captions all her videos. Your script can be tweaked for this purpose.

## BEST PRACTICES, CONT.

- **Editing software.** Decide which editing software package is right for you. If you're using your Smartphone, there are some apps that you can use like iMovies or Power Director or JD Premier Clip for editing. You can use video/photo/audio stock footage, but Dina doesn't believe that it comes across as authentic. She prefers to use real Pearson staff and company location. If you do choose any stock footage, be mindful of your budget because these are usually paid subscriptions.
- **Sign-off.** Prior to posting your video, share it with a colleague or your manager first. They can watch it with a fresh set of eyes and catch anything you may have missed. This is especially important if the video will be posted externally for clients. You want to make sure it is of the highest quality as it is a representation of your company.
- **Post your video.** Whether you post to your community or YouTube or whatever you use, make sure you understand each platform's legalities and regulations. For example, if any stock music is posted on YouTube, it must be sourced for copyright laws.
  - **Templates.** Dina has created templates that she uses each month. She has a storyboard template, a script/captions template and a template description for YouTube and her community video description. The community version will have internal links and YouTube will be more high-level without internal links.

## LESSONS LEARNED

- A few participants explained that they have started using videos in place of long text. For example, a long email or for tips/guides.
- Dina cautioned that if you're using an iPhone, be sure to use landscape mode. If you film in portrait mode it will show with black lines when you go to edit your video.
- V-logs are a great way to showcase your company and/or your people. Dina shared that a new hire at Pearson joined the company because Dina's v-logs made Pearson look like a great place to work. It's a great way to showcase company culture. Highly regulated industries might not be as easy to showcase.
- Initially, Dina tried to keep her videos within 5 minutes in length. However, people asked her for more. She now will go as high as 15 minutes. That's because she's telling human stories, which people crave. A video that demonstrates a process might be worth keeping on the shorter end of the spectrum.
- Off-the-cuff videos are good to mix-in with your regular videos. Dina makes a concerted effort to keep the videos fresh. She changes it up to keep people guessing each month depending on the topic. Admittedly, Dina has it easier as she focuses on human storytelling. Process videos are very different.
- Dina was asked which type of v-log would be appropriate for a customer community where clients interact with a software product. Dina believes that a traditional v-log would be fine. However, you could also try a conversational style in which you talk about your software product with an expert who could answer questions. Dina has used this style with 2 cameras, one facing her as the interviewer and one facing the interviewee. In the post-production editing she will flip between the two to create a two-dimensional style video.
- Dina was asked how much time she devotes to her v-logs. Given that she plans her themes in advance, she knows what her storyboard and script will be ahead of time. She also uses templates, meaning the beginning and endings are fixed. Accordingly, she allows herself an hour or two to go through the storyboard and script, which is a loose script. If she uses contributors, that takes a little longer because you have to invite them to come to you and/or wait for their video clips. Dina has become good at filming, so that may take her 1-2 hours. The editing part takes time, but will get better as you get more experienced.

## LESSONS LEARNED, CONT.

- Dina initiates most of her contacts with contributors. Fortunately, the v-logs are well received and people want to be a part of them. She isn't a fan of open call as a method to reach out to contributors because mostly the same people volunteer. Reaching out personally to contributors ensures that you keep the content fresh.
- When it comes to measuring the performance of each video, Dina shared that they have decided as a group not to focus on the YouTube viewership because the viewership there is difficult to measure and is truly just a bonus. Instead they focus on the comments and likes received from their community. Dina tends to get over 200 likes a piece. If she can get that in the hundreds, she considers that a successful video.
- The best way to help connect people is through human stories. That has been a large part of the success behind Dina's videos. For example, the social impact piece was very successful, as was a video in December that asked people to highlight what they were most proud of for the year. In that piece, someone said that they wanted to work on virtual reality and someone working in that area reached out and a connection was made. Sometimes the topics don't always resonate, like a piece she did on augmented reality. That didn't work as well because the subject matter was more difficult. However, when you focus on the human side, people connect.
- If you can't always focus on human stories, focus on consistency. Dina posts her v-logs on the second Wednesday of every month. That's not to say you can't have a break. For example, this past August Dina was on holiday. Consequently, she filmed her holiday. It was well-received and a break from the normal routine. So, if you feel that your content is in a rut, ask your community what they'd like to see. Ask for feedback and suggestions.