

8 types of CEO videos that employees will want to watch

CEOs increasingly are using video to communicate internally and externally.

So how do you incorporate it into your toolkit—and move beyond the talking-head video?



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Everywhere you look, savvy executives are discovering the power of video, whether it's live-casts, highly polished memos or quick missives recorded on smartphones.

Wal-Mart Chief Executive Doug McMillon reaches internal and external audiences through [Facebook Live-casts](#). YouTube CEO Susan Wojcicki recently sat for a video interview [urging young people to learn coding](#). Accenture CEO Julie Sweet [outlawed the corporate memo](#) and now updates her staff through videos from locations such as an American Chamber of Commerce conference in [Frankfurt, Germany](#).

CEOs are using video to reach internal and external audiences, because videos humanize executives, says Elizabeth Cogswell Baskin, chief executive and executive creative director of [Tribe](#).

“They want to know the person behind the title,” she says. “They want to connect a face to the name. If you have a Fortune 100 company with a zillion employees, you can’t always be face to face with the CEO, but video helps that.”

So how to get your executives in front of the camera? Perhaps you can talk them into one of these types of videos that are taking off among organization leaders.

1. One-minute updates.

If recording a full video seems intimidating, how about offering a quick thought to your staff (or the public, given that these videos often live on YouTube, Facebook and other platforms). For staffers, this can be especially effective if you bring them along to an event.

Recently, General Electric vice chair Beth Comstock walked out of a Boston Book Festival panel event and paused on the steps of the city library to record a one-minute video. She had just joined several experts from institutions such as Harvard University and Massachusetts Institute of Technology in discussing the future of [robotics and artificial intelligence](#).

“The technology is just going to make us do what we need to do, only better,” Comstock says in the video. “The challenge is that we’re going to have to work to get there.”

These videos are a great way to highlight an issue, establish your expertise and leadership on a topic, or even give an elevator pitch, as Evernote’s former Chief Executive Phil Libin did in [a video for his business](#). Too salesy? Consider this: His video has drawn over 199,000 views. Somebody’s watching it.

2. Live-casts.

When [Wal-Mart](#) held a shareholders meeting in June, Chief Executive Doug McMillon addressed an arena full of shareholders in Fayetteville, Arkansas—most of them employees. That audience, however, represented but a tiny fraction of Wal-Mart’s 2.3 million associates worldwide.



To bring them in, McMillon live-cast a call-out to staffers on Facebook, enabling him to unite his workforce virtually and simultaneously.

“I’ve got some of your fellow associates here that want to say hello,” he told the online audience. “Turn that camera toward them.”

Live-casting can be as extensive as Wal-Mart’s boom-mounted camera production, or as simple as a handheld smartphone. (Check out T-Mobile CEO John Legere’s wobbly smartphone live-cast from [Times Square](#).)

That said, live video is different from highly produced and scripted production in that there can be room to expand, suggests Brad Parler, digital communications administrator at [Blinds.com](#). For example, Ban.Do founder [Jen Gotch drew 13,000 viewers](#) for a 42-minute Facebook Live Q&A in October.

“Letting the content breathe a bit allows for more audience to build up.” If what you are saying is resonating with people, Parler says, “they are likely to share your event and bring in their friends to watch with them.”

3. Senior leaders as journalists.

Comstock recently posted a [short interview video](#). She wasn’t the one being interviewed, though; she was asking the questions.

Comstock buttonholed Lorraine Bolsinger, vice president of GE Leadership Accelerator Program, in an interview that subtly highlighted women in leadership and the company’s executive training program.

“If someone taps you to do something,” Bolsinger says, “[and], really, you’re uncomfortable about it, maybe it’s because they see something in you that you don’t see in yourself. Be fearless. Say yes.”

At GE, nearly all executives use video, says Alaynah Boyd Tombridge, communications specialist. “Personalities come through a lot more, and it’s very visual,” she says.

4. The CEO learning a new job.

This type of video also uses your chief executive’s interview skills while featuring different business units. And employees love it.

At [Hamilton Health Sciences](#), a seven-hospital group serving south-central Ontario, President and CEO Rob MacIsaac has become an apprentice in a [Teach Rob Your Job](#) series for Vimeo. Communications records video as he learns about the occupations of individual medical specialists.



The videos show solidarity with the staff and demonstrate the boss's interest in their work. In one recent video, he learned about [occupational therapy](#). In another, he visited a [trauma center](#).

5. The boss as narrator.

When the humanitarian organization CARE released [a year-end video](#) featuring CEO Michelle Nunn, the organization didn't sit her at a desk to talk about her work.

CARE interviewed Nunn and used that as voiceover, cutting in and out between her and scenes of the charity's work. We see historical black-and-white footage, images of hurricanes and other disasters, and shots of people whom the organization had helped.

How about finding livelier footage to mix in with your CEO's interview?

6. Multi-executive videos: Shoot a year's worth of footage in a day.

One easy and cost-effective way to shoot video is to spend a day recording comments from multiple executives, Baskin says. Question each one about multiple topics. In a shoot for a Chicago company, Baskin's team spent 45 minutes with the CEO and 20 to 30 minutes for each of the other executives.

"We would say, 'OK, now we're going to talk about why reliability is important,'" Baskin says. "Now give me a few words on why being customer-centric is important. Now give me a few words on the value of curiosity."

The videos were edited and released over the course of the year, allowing Tribe to make changes to address business developments, such as an acquisition. [Here's an example](#) of a Tribe video involving multiple executives.

7. Lightening things up with an executive parody video.

Spoof and parody videos can be fun—if you have the right kind of leader and organization. Executives at [Home Instead Senior Care](#) are game to appear in funny internal videos, says Andrew E. Nelson, video creative manager. Check out this [Hitchcock parody](#) starring Chief Advocacy Officer Jisella Dolan and Government Affairs Director Matt Boever. There's even a crop-duster scene.

One year Home Instead made a five-part movie for its annual convention, using a James Bond spy-thriller theme. A Russian-born employee gamely agreed to play the villain.

"It was a huge hit," Nelson says.



8. Green-screen videos.

When you see politicians on TV yakking in front of the capitol building, chances are they aren't standing out on the front lawn. They're probably in a studio in front of a green screen, onto which the outdoor image is superimposed, as is the Las Vegas background at the start of [this CEO's promo video](#).

The same technology can jazz up your executive's videos, Baskin says. One caution: Sit your subject far enough from the screen so that he or she isn't bathed in reflected green light, turning your exec into Shrek.

The green screen provides an alternative to shooting your leader in a work environment, where buzzing saws, grinding assembly lines or banging hammers can destroy your audio. Either way, just don't saddle your subject—and your viewers—with a boring background.

"It's just the worst thing ever to shoot somebody in a chair against a beige wall," Baskin says.

Videos offer CEOs and other executives a wealth of ways to reach their audiences, whether it's quick shoots or highly professional live-casts. Execs can prove their expertise by interviewing other leaders or show humility by learning staffers' jobs. The important thing is to participate in the hottest form of communication today—and join the video revolution.

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