

The Essential Step-by-Step Guide

How to Pick the Right Video Production Company

A simple, easy-to-follow guide that
walks you through the entire process,
step by step, from finding candidates
to signing an agreement



DigiNovations

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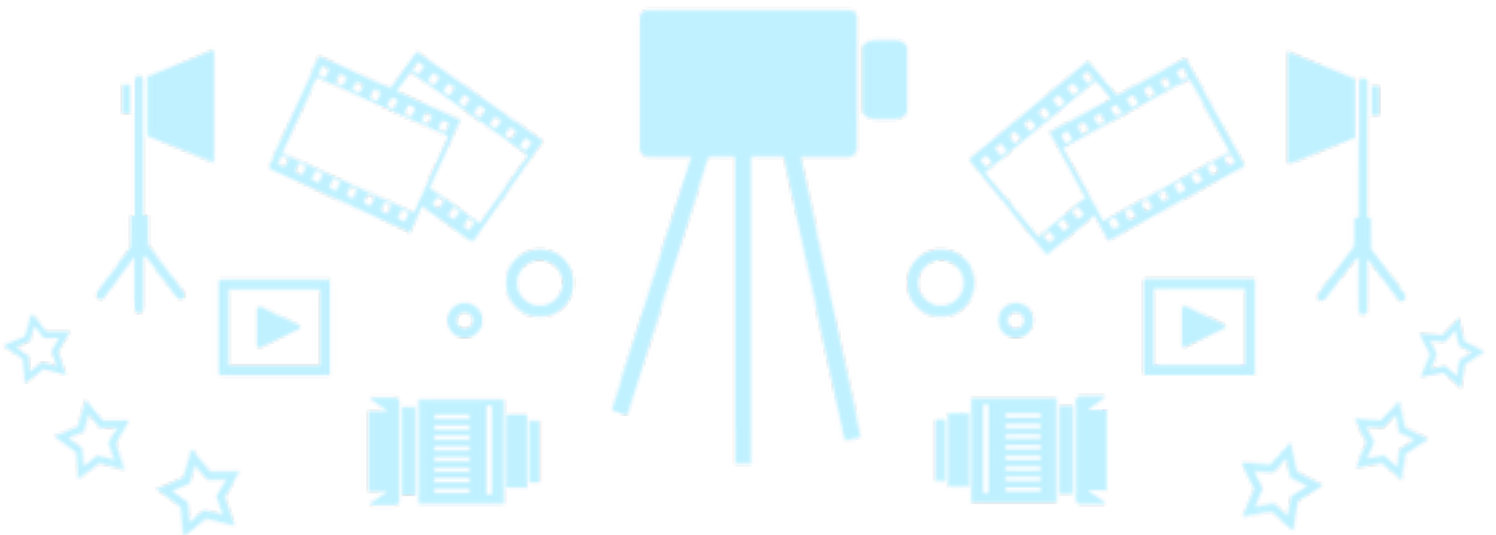
Introduction

Finding the right vendor for your video production needs can be a challenge.

Video is custom work that's both technical and creative, and lots can go wrong. You need a company that has experience, creative vision, a high level of professionalism, and the technical expertise to create videos that tell your story in the most effective way possible - while providing great ROI.

If you're reading this guide, you know you can't wing it. You need a process to find the best possible fit for your video needs. But you're a marketer, not a video professional. How do you know what to look for?

This guide gives you the straightforward process you need. From finding good candidates to asking the right questions to choosing your vendor, it's all here.



Step 1: Find Candidate Companies

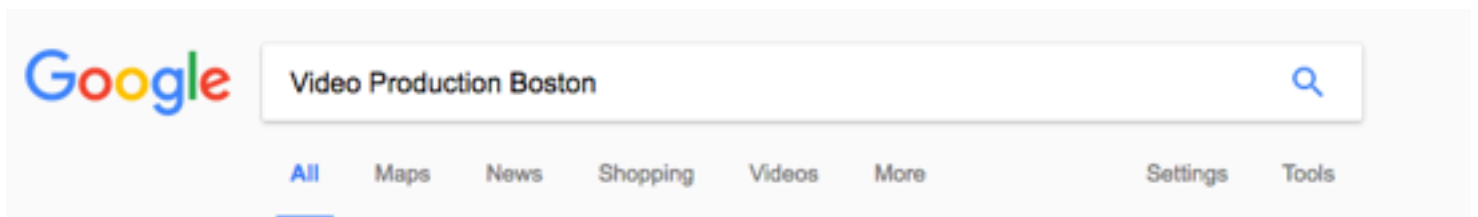
Your job is to start with a bunch of possible companies and then winnow them down until you're left with the best. So naturally, Step 1 is finding a bunch of companies.

There are lots of ways you can do this, but we suggest three:

- Google
- Recommendations
- LinkedIn

1 Start with Google: Organic and Ads

There are many different keyword phrases you can use to search for your candidates. Start by searching for “**video production**” or “**video production (your city)**.” This will give you a listing of general video production companies.



You can also use keywords that describe specifically what you're looking for, like this:

- nonprofit video production
- conference video
- animated explainer videos
- corporate video production Atlanta

What to do when you click

Your goal is to compile a list of **3 to 5 video production companies** that meet your quality standards, and that satisfy other relevant criteria.

To compile this list, you'll click on the companies you find on Google through organic listings and through ads so you can visit their websites.

You'll be able to eliminate some companies right away, based on their failure to meet two baseline quality criteria:

- An up-to-date, professional-looking website
- A demo reel and / or video examples that meet the level of quality you're looking for

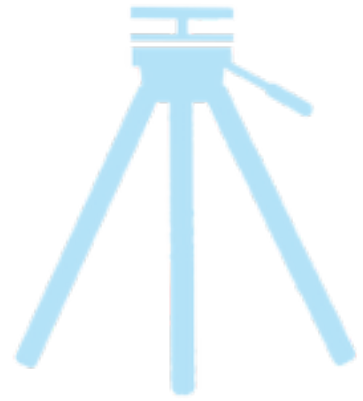
If you land on a website that doesn't meet both criteria, move on. Adding these companies to your list of candidates will waste your time - unless you're looking for lower-quality work.

How to drill down

When you land on a site that looks good, and the video you watch also looks good, you'll want to drill down a little further.

What you're looking for will depend on what kind of services you need:

- **Their video portfolio(s)** will show you their areas of expertise. Some video production companies provide services across a wide range of client needs, while others focus on a narrower niche.
- **Their client list** will show you the kinds of companies they work with.



- **Their About Us page** will help you understand their company culture, and whether they would be a good fit.
- **Their Services page** will tell you if they provide the specific services you need.
- **Their Blog** will tell you if they're thought leaders, and if they understand and can help you with video marketing along with video production - or whether they provide video production only.

Once you've explored a candidate's website and are convinced they're a good fit for the work you need, add them to your list.

Yes, you need to make a list

Create a document that will let you keep track of your candidates. Include company name, url, and space for comments.

Add a few comments like these:

- Focused on a narrow niche - short interview-based videos only
- Great visual quality for interviews and b-roll
- They've done lots of work that's just like what we need

Inside Tip

Use the form at the end of this ebook to keep track of companies, their answers to important questions, and any notes you want to make.



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Ask for Recommendations

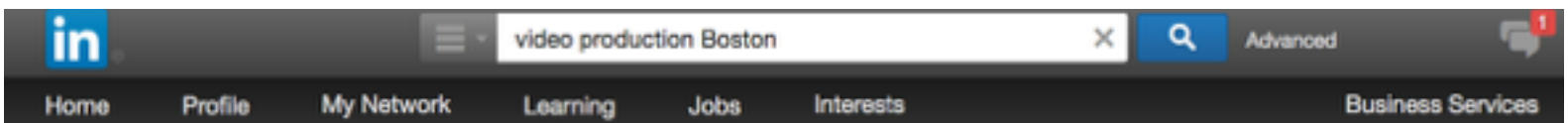
You can also find good candidates by asking your network if they have video production companies to recommend.

Once you've explored these website, *add the companies to your list if and only if they pass your quality check and meet your criteria.*

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LinkedIn

If you're having trouble populating your list, head over to LinkedIn and do a search there.



LinkedIn's primary focus is on people and jobs, so the first listings you'll see will be for people with your keyword in their job title. Scroll down to find the business listings:



The process on LinkedIn is the same: **explore their website, and if they meet your quality standards and criteria, add them to your list.**

Step 2: Interview Candidates

Now that you have a list of 3 to 5 qualified candidates, the next step is to contact them.

There are two approaches to this step

Approach #1: You'll give your candidates relevant information about the project, and then ask for a quote or a proposal.

Approach #2: You'll ask a series of questions that will help you learn more about them, so you can decide if they're a good fit for your project. Using this approach, *you'll only ask for proposals from companies you'd consider hiring.*



Approach #1: Ask for a quote or proposal

When you ask for a quote, you're asking for a price. When you ask for a proposal, you're asking for a document that has many elements besides price.

If your project is simple, you can ask for a quote

For a very simple project, the primary criteria for hiring can be a baseline quality level and the lowest price.

Here are some examples of small projects where hiring on price can work:

- You need a videographer to film a presentation, and hand over the raw video for your team to edit

- You need a videographer to film some b-roll of your building
- You have a holiday party you want filmed and turned into a quick 30 second social media video

During this phone call, you'll describe what you need, answer any questions, and ask for a price. You've already qualified the candidates to your baseline quality level, so in most cases you'll hire the one that offers the lowest price.

There may be another element besides price that comes up during the phone call, in which case you'll factor that in when you choose your vendor.



If your project is not simple, you'll ask for a proposal

For more complicated projects, your candidates will need more information from you so they can understand what you need, and what creating your video will require. They'll need some time to develop your proposal. - usually a day or two.

Inside Tip

During your phone call, you'll want to mention that you're talking to other vendors as well. This is a gentle reminder to your candidates to give you their best price.

After you explain your project, you'll want to pay attention to the questions they ask you.

- **If they only ask technical questions**, like "*How many cameras do you want,*" this can indicate a vendor who is only interested in cranking out videos.
- **If they ask about your business goals and your marketing plans**, they're interested not only in making a good-looking video, but also in making sure your video does what you need it to do, and provides great ROI.

You might also want to ask for more videos to look at. Sometimes companies don't put all their work on their website. They may have more relevant videos to show you. If they don't offer to show you more of their work, consider asking them directly: "Do you have any other relevant work you can show me?"

A note about creativity

Some video projects don't require much creativity, but for many, creativity is central. That's why it's critical that you also discuss creative options with your candidate companies. Each may have different suggestions or ideas, and you want to make sure their ideas are fresh and exciting, and fit what you're trying to achieve.



Approach #2: Ask questions to decide whether you'll ask for a proposal

If your project is very complex or very expensive, or if you just want to make sure you have enough information to select the best company, you can use your phone call to conduct an interview, to learn whether your companies are good candidates to do business with. You can then decide whether to ask them to submit a proposal.

Here are some questions you can ask:

- How long have you been in business?
- How many people do you have on staff?
- Do you hire contractors? Or is all your work done in-house?
- What kind of insurance coverage do you have?

- Does your company have experience in my industry?
- Have you done projects like this in the past?
- How long do you think it'll take to complete this project?
- What's your scripting process?
- What does the review process look like?
- How many rounds of edits will we have?
- Do you archive our media and our project materials?
- Will we have access to the raw video, for our archives?

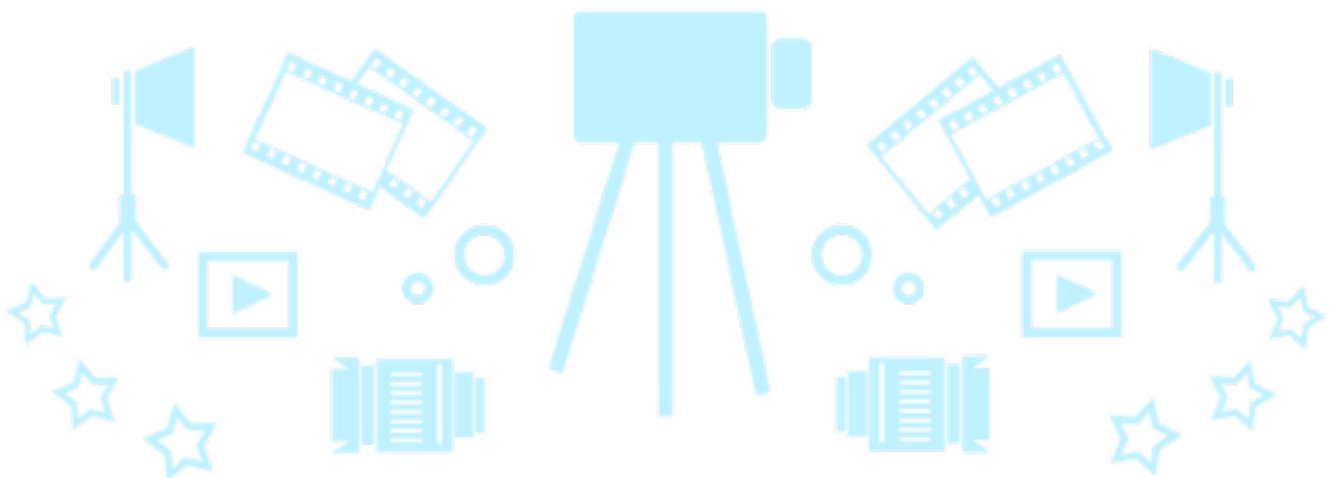
There are no right or wrong answers to the questions you'll ask. Instead, they'll help you understand how each candidate works, and what kind of relationship you can expect.

Inside Tip

The above questions are listed on the form at the end of this ebook.

If, based on your phone call, you decide a company is a viable candidate, you can ask them to submit a proposal.

If not, you can say you're still going through candidates, and will get back to them if you decide you'd like them to submit a proposal.



Step 3: Review Proposals

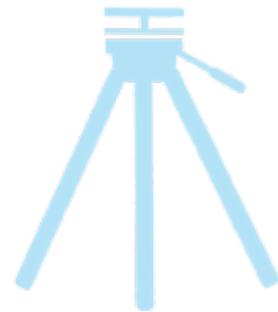
There is no standard format for proposals. Each one will be different - some will be short, while others will be more in-depth. Each can include components that others don't. **This is why a straight price comparison isn't wise.** It's critical to read each proposal carefully, so you understand exactly what's included and what's not.

Inside Tip

Feel free to call candidates to ask questions about their proposals. It's important to make sure you aren't making any assumptions about what's included in the price.

A proposal can include:

- A list of the goals you want your video to achieve
- A creative concept or vision
- A list of required equipment
- A list of equipment that will be rented
- A list of exactly what services are included in the price
- A line item price breakdown
- How many rounds of editing are included
- Whether project and media archiving are included
- What format(s) the video will be delivered in
- The price and payment terms
- Additional information about the company, such as testimonials



What you should look for in a proposal

The proposals you receive may be one page documents if your project is straightforward and relatively simple. If your project is complicated, your proposals will probably be multiple pages.

Either way, your proposals should contain some common elements:

- **An understanding of your needs.** During your phone conversation, you talked about what you were looking for. Each candidate had the opportunity to ask you questions, to clarify their understanding of your needs. In their proposal they might discuss the goal(s) you want your video to achieve, or they might state why you need a video. However they do it, they should clearly state their understanding of what you want and why.

Inside Tip

Be wary of candidates who propose to do something that's not what you discussed. You need a vendor who listens carefully to what you say, not one with a tendency to head off in their own direction.

- **A creative concept, if yours is a creative project.** Some video doesn't require much creativity (like recording conference speakers). But many video projects require a strong creative component. The proposal is where you want to see your candidates display their creative idea(s) for your video. While the concept may change during the script development process, an initial concept will provide you with an understanding of each vendor's creative capabilities.

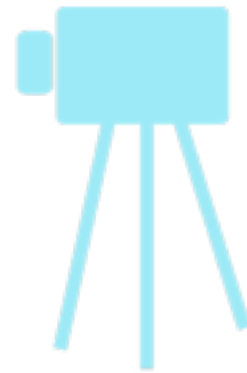
If you expressed a preference for a particular creative approach, this is the concept you should see in the proposal. If a different concept is presented, it may be a sign that the candidate has a tendency to disregard creative ideas that aren't theirs.

- **A clear listing of what's included in the price.** If a proposal only includes a very general description of services and deliverables, that's a warning sign. "A *3 minute marketing video*" can mean a video that does or doesn't include animation, that requires one, two or three cameras to film, that includes b-roll or not, etc.

The last thing you want is to sign an agreement and start working with a vendor, only to be told that the price is going up because you assumed an element was included in the price when it wasn't.

- If you discussed additional options, such as multiple versions, those options should either be included in the price, or shown as add-ons.

In a nutshell, the proposals you receive should demonstrate that your candidates listened carefully to what you need and will create the video you want for a reasonable price.



What if there's a wide variation in prices?

Your job will be easier if all the prices in your proposals were very close. But sometimes there's a lot of variation. Your job is to understand why.

Look carefully at the services that are included in each proposal. How are they different? What are you getting from the high candidate that you're not getting from the low candidate?

You always have the option of calling candidates to ask them to help you understand why their cost is higher - or lower - than the other proposals.

What if the price doesn't match your budget?

If all of your candidates come in above your budget, then your budget is too low. You have three options:

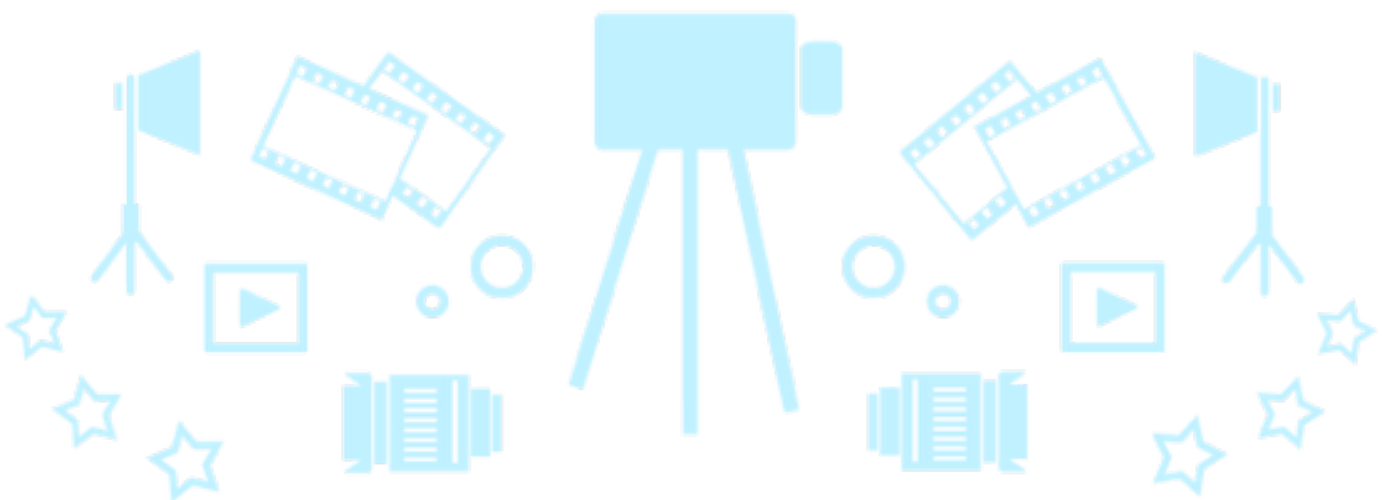
- You can increase your budget
- You can modify your requirements to bring the cost down
- You can reject all proposals and go back to candidates you previously rejected due to poor quality, to see if you can get them to do the job for less.

Options 1 and 2 are desirable

They'll give you a good quality product that will have a positive impact on your brand.

Option 3 is less desirable

By choosing to work with a vendor you've rejected due to poor quality, you're guaranteeing that your video will not meet your quality standards.



Step 4: Decision & Engagement

You're almost there, and the hard work is done. All you have to do now is decide which candidate is the best fit, and then ask them to send you an agreement.

How to choose your video vendor

After carefully evaluating all proposals, you'll probably know who you want to work with. You might base your decision only on price, or on a combination of price, concept, and the chemistry you feel with a particular candidate.

Once you've decided on the winner, you'll ask them for an agreement.

The agreement

When you receive the agreement, read the scope carefully to make sure it matches the proposal. You'll also want to read the boilerplate carefully, to make sure you're ok with all clauses and conditions.

If you come across something you don't understand, or something you don't agree with, feel free to ask questions or make changes and send the agreement back. You don't have to accept the agreement as submitted. You can work with your vendor until the agreement is acceptable to both parties.

Inside Tip

If there's a provision you're uncomfortable with in the agreement, you can propose new language that is more agreeable to you.

Congratulations

If you've followed this guide, you've found and hired the perfect video production company to create your video. You'll work with them on scripting and filming, you'll review drafts, and you'll receive a great video that will do exactly what you want it to do.

Awesome, you!



About DigiNovations

DigiNovations is a 10-person, award-winning video production company serving corporate, nonprofit and academic clients in Boston and around the world. We work with clients from Fortune 500s to small start-ups, and everything in between.

We're passionate about visual storytelling - and about helping our clients share their video stories in the most effective ways possible.



Don't forget your bonus material



12 Questions to Help You Pick the Right Video Production Company

Company name: _____

Phone call date: _____

How long have you been in business?

How many people do you currently have on staff?

Do you hire contractors? Or is all your work in-house?

What kind of insurance do you have?

Do you have experience in my industry?

Have you done projects like this in the recent past?

How long do you think it'll take to complete this project?

What is your scripting process?

What does the review process look like?

How many rounds of edits will we have?

Is archiving our media and project included in the price?

Will we have access to the raw video for our archives?

Notes