

Video Production Manual

Lionel Hartley, PhD

(USA Edition)

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Video Production Manual (United States of America Edition)

Lionel Hartley, PhD

With contributions from other technicians and specialists, specifically from
NBN Television, Newcastle, NSW

Illustrated by Lionel Hartley, PhD

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Chapter 1

Introduction to Video and Television

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Chapter 2

How a Video Camera Works

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Chapter 3

Using a Video Camera

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Chapter 4

HOW TO FILM AND EDIT VIDEOS

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Chapter 5

HOW TO START AND OPERATE YOUR OWN VIDEO TAPING SERVICE

This is a fabulously profitable business that's still in it's infancy. And for sure, if you want a business that takes no special training, expensive office set-up or large investment -yet is capable of showing almost immediate profits - this is it!

Now is the ideal time to get started with your own Video Taping Service. Purchasing and learning how to operate, as well as maintain the necessary equipment is easy. The technological improvements built into the equipment, and the operating procedures have been so simplified that almost anyone with the ability to read, can study a video instruction manual for a couple of hours and immediately produce professional quality, highly marketable video tapes. Without a doubt, video tape technology has replaced Super 8 home movies as the most-desired memory-saving system.

One- and two-person video taping services around the country are reporting gross earnings of \$50,000 to \$100,000 per year. One operation we looked into, reported an income figure of \$800,000 during the preceding 12-month period. They were accepting taping jobs from all quarters and keeping 4-hired teams busy.

Marketing imagination, organization, and attention to detail are the keys to success in operating this business. Ideas and requests for new things or events to tape and preserve for later playback/viewing, are coming in faster than one can list. Then, there are so many things to remember and minor details to take care of, that the only way to operate

successfully is with a series of checklists... for the person selling the service as well as the man or woman on the recording camera.

But don't let mentioning of details to remember, scare you off. On the contrary, you'll find video equipment easy and inexpensive to practice on, especially when compared to attaining a comparable degree of expertise with film. You can use the same tape over and over again, and this is definitely a business where the phrase "practice leads to perfection," applies without qualifications or reservations.

To start a video taping service, you'll need a video "porta-pack" recorder, and at least a half dozen tapes. Check around in your area. Start by "reading up" on all the available equipment used for video taping. A trip to your public library and a few hours browsing through the periodicals on video equipment should give you added interest and a basic indoctrination. Next, check out the suppliers listed in the yellow pages of your telephone directory. A few phone calls to those places listed, plus a few in-person visits, should supply you with enough catalogs and "idea material" to keep you plenty busy for a week or more. These elementary learning steps are necessary as the foundation of your business.

You should be able to buy a good quality video porta-pack recorder for about \$850, with blank tapes for \$20 or less. When you buy, always dicker with the dealer - explaining to him that you're in the process of establishing a video taping service, and if he will include a supply of tapes with the recorder, or at least give you an especially good price on them, you'll probably buy all your tapes from him. It may not be your regular way of buying things, but when you're starting a business, every dollar counts, so always shop around for the best prices.

Once you have your video recorder, take it home and start practicing with it.

Think of yourself as being on a job for a homeowner or an insurance company, taking a photographic inventory of the house and/or the occupant's possessions. Practice by making a tape record of your own household furnishings. Make a tape, then play it back and critique your work. Then do it again, and again, until you have a tape you can use in sales presentations to homeowners and insurance companies. Video tape recordings of this kind are becoming extremely popular with homeowners and insurance companies alike.

Then, look through your weekend newspaper and make a note of the girls

announcing wedding dates. Open your telephone directory and call these girls on the phone. Ask them if they'd mind if you came to their wedding and made a video tape of it, without any obligation to them of course.

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So you go to the wedding, introduce yourself and practice making a video tape of the wedding ceremony. Take the tape home and critique it. Keep this up until you have a tape you're reasonably proud of, and then call the bride. Ask to come over and let her see the tape. Explain to her that you're just getting started in the business, and you simply want her comments and suggestions. Chances are, when she sees the tape, she'll want to buy it.

While you're in this learning phase of your new business, visit an apartment building and arrange with the manager to make a video tape of her showing the apartment to you as a potential renter.

Contact a couple of property management and real estate firms, and do the same thing with condominiums and houses for sale.

You might want to listen in on the police radio frequency, and make tapes of auto accidents, particularly those involving injuries. Another idea might be the taping of golfers practicing at the local driving ranges. Other ideas include any kind of sports practice session, birthday parties, special anniversaries, baptisms, bar mitzvah's, publicity stories, sales presentations, and "fireside chats" by company presidents or general managers.

These are just a few idea suggestions you might want to pursue. You may find a certain kind of video taping assignment especially enjoyable and want to specialize in that area. Or you may want to leave the door open for any kind of assignment and handle each as the opportunity presents itself.

Whatever you decide, there are a few “sure success” points to keep in mind as you begin to sell your services. Remember, the idea of having a video cassette system in one’s home, is gaining in popularity every day. There are already some two-million video cassette recorders in homes, with an estimated 100,000 being sold to new customers

every month. Further estimates indicate that by 1990, at least one half of all households will own either a videocassette recorder or a videodisc player. All of this means your market is growing and is expected to continue growing through the end of this decade.

Virtually everyone would like to see himself as a star in a home movie. Thus, when you show him a video tape of himself in the starring role, he'll either buy the tape on the spot or want you to make a similar tape for him. Regardless of false modesty, everyone likes to show pictures of himself, and explain to his friends the different highlights of his or her life. With this understanding about

your prospect in mind when you make a sales presentation, your closing rate should be quite close to 100 percent.

The best way to sell your services is to run a regular ad in your area newspapers. Such an ad might be similar to this one:

VIDEO TAPING SERVICES...

Whatever your idea or assignment, we can handle it for you! No job too large or too small! We're experts at taping weddings, anniversaries, birthday parties and other special occasions. Commercial assignments also welcomed. Your satisfaction is guaranteed, so give us a call - 123-4567, right now!

When you receive calls in response to this ad, your objective will be two-fold: Find out what kind of taping job they have in mind, and set up an appointment to show them an example of the kinds of tapes you can produce for them. Show them an example of your work. Once you've met with them, and shown them a demonstration tape, you should have the sale in your pocket.

Never meet with a prospect in a selling situation without some sort of demonstration tape to show him. Try to match the tape you show them, as closely to their wants and needs as possible. Wedding tapes you have made for prospective wedding clients, and shots of

golf practice or instruction to golfing prospects.

Besides an ad in the newspaper, and the yellow pages of your telephone directory, make copies of the ad and get it up on the bulletin boards in your market area. Send news and publicity releases to all the media in your area, definitely whenever you've got an unusual or special kind of assignment.

Have some impressive business cards printed, and hand them out to whomever, and as often as you can. The slogan on your business card might read: Have Video Tape Recorder - Available for ANY kind of assignment - You name it and I'll tape it...

Radio and/or television advertising will probably be more expensive than the resulting job assignments will sustain, so be very cautious when considering this type of advertising. However, it will very definitely be advantageous for you to pursue guest interviews on just about any kind of broadcast talk show. Talk show appearances and free write-ups about your business in your local newspapers are promotional angles to reach for at every opportunity. Always be on the lookout for promotional ideas and gimmicks that will result in area-wide publicity for your services.

The bottom line is simply this: Don't be adverse to creating a story or set of

circumstances if it results in a talk show appearance or newspaper write-up for you.

How much should you charge for your services? Basically, the going rate in most large metropolitan areas is about \$50 per hour you spend on the assignment. Thus, you're going to have to learn to estimate pretty accurately just how long each job is going to take you to produce a quality recording. It's always a good idea to check out what other video taping services in your area, or in a comparably sized city in your neighboring states are charging.

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Newsletters and trade publications serving businesses of this type are available, however, we don't know of any that have attained national prominence as of the date of this report. Check with your equipment supplier on any that he might know of...

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Success with a business of this kind does not require an office set-up or any special education or training. You can start it on a part-time basis from your home, and parlay it into a full time, very high profit profession. The prestige this business will afford you is similar to that of a doctor.

Starting with a young couple's wedding, if you follow up on each sale properly, you'll probably end up making tapes for the birthdays of each of their children, school graduations, anniversaries, more birthdays, family histories, last wills & testaments, and into a whole new cycle with each generation.

You will need imagination, an affinity for people and selling moxie. Imagination is important because in many instances, you'll have to suggest an idea for your taping services. Although just about everybody would like to have a taped record of some event or part of their life to pass along to future

generations of their family, most will not be able to decide what to tape until you suggest something to them. You'll also find that almost no one is aware of even half your capabilities until you make suggestions.

Taking pictures of people requires an ability to get along well with people - get them to relax, and immediately feel comfortable in your presence. You've got to be persuasive while exercising a great deal of tact and diplomacy. Make friends easily and quickly. Be aware of, and understanding of wants, desires and ambitions.

Actually, selling and getting along with

people, are almost synonymous. Life is an on-going program of selling yourself to achieve your own wants and ambitions. Read a few good books on the art of selling, such as: *How to Sell Yourself* by Steve Girard; and *How to Sell anything to Anybody* by Tom Hopkins. Remember, selling is really just a matter of recognizing someone's needs and then satisfying those needs with a product or service.

Your customers will automatically accept it as fact, that you have the professional knowledge and equipment to fulfill their needs. All you have to do is reassure them, listen to their reasons for these needs, and in closing the sale, become a good friend to them.

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And that's it - the plan that can enable you to get started with your own Video Taping Service. By following our suggestions, and with a bit of energy as well as persistence, you should be able to begin with very little start-up investment and quickly begin to realize the fruits of your own profitable business.

If you have any questions, or run into special problems, please feel free to call me or drop me a line. Having laid it all out for you, the rest is up to you - Your future is in your own hands...

Chapter 6

Producing How-to-Videos

A Florida video-grapher produced a How -To wedding planner tape and sold over \$250,000 worth of videos in just 12 months. Think about it: If you sell your video for \$25, all you need to do is sell around 80 videos a week, or 325 videos a month to gross \$100,000 a year.

A typical “small” production can sell as much as 1,500 videos a month, or 18,000 units a year, at \$25 each.

It's the Topic: If there is one single factor that makes or breaks a How to video, its the choice of topic. Another factor to consider is the length of the material. To remain interesting the average how to video must be fast paced and relatively short not exceeding 45 minutes. More successful videos are no more than 30 minutes long as this is a tolerable length by which a video can effectively cover a topic and remain interesting.

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Duplication cost

The length of your video also affects your duplication cost.

Following is a rate structure for duplication charges based on set quantities for a factory-load VHS tape:

<i>Length</i>	<i>1000</i>	<i>2500</i>
10 min	\$1.50	\$1.15
20 min	\$2.10	\$1.80
30 min	\$2.50	\$2.00

The shoot

Who's going to do the shooting? If you decide to do it yourself, where will you get the camera? What format are you going to shoot it in? The average cost of renting a 3/4 inch U-Matic camera, with

wireless mics, and standard lighting equipment is around \$495 a day. A camera person with an assistant will cost an extra \$250.

The Editing

Once you've shot all the footage you need, you edit the work, assembling the footage in an orderly and coherent fashion that will effectively deliver the thought. Depending on how you shot your footage, editing can take 20 to 50 times the estimated finished length of your video. This means a 10 minute video may take 4 to 5 hours to edit, and so on. Studio time ranges from \$40 to as much as \$100 an hour, depending on the special effects you want to have available

for your editing project.

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Packaging

Full color printed sleeves start at around 40 cents a piece if you order 1,000 or more. You also need face labels on your tapes, as well as shrink wrapping for protection.

Chapter 7

HOW TO MAKE MONEY PRODUCING SPECIAL EVENT VIDEOS

Special event videos are much simpler and a lot less worry than videotaping a wedding ceremony. In many cases, you'll only need one camera, one microphone, and little or no editing. You'll charge less, of course, but your profit margin will be higher.

You can provide this service to any professional person or group - attorneys,

salespeople, financial advisors, professional speakers _ anyone who must give a talk, presentation or lecture before a group of people. Workshops, meetings, conferences, reunions, all are potential jobs for you.

As with weddings, meet beforehand with the person or persons you will be taping, both to get their permission to tape them, if necessary, and to get a feel for what they specifically want on tape.

If all they want is a tape of their speech, then all you'll need is one camera (two if you want a spare in case of problems), one microphone and a tripod. Set your equipment up well ahead of time, to

allow for testing. Be sure to have the subject of the tape do a test of part of their speech, so you can be sure the microphone is set right. It's important to have clear sound for event taping.

For panel discussions, meetings and other group events, you'll want to have a camera pointed at every person, or possibly at every two people, as well as one at the whole group. Make sure every person can be picked up by your microphones.

When you edit the tapes together, try to have the speaking person on screen as they speak, unless that would mean too many rapid changes, which can be

disorienting to the viewer.

If taping an interview, the subject of the interview is more important than the interviewer. While it's good to cut in a reaction shot of the interviewer from time to time, keep the focus of your tape on the person being interviewed.

Unless you need to use multiple cameras and heavy editing, you should charge less for event taping than you would for wedding taping. There are a few reasons for this.

First, you will spend far less time on an event tape.

Second, you have a higher potential for return business. If you do a good job,

you have a good chance of being called in again for the next meeting or conference.

Finally, there is always the possibility of selling copies of the tape to targeted customers. This can either be done for the subject of the tape, with you getting a cut, or the subject can pay you a license fee for each that he or she sells.

An up-and-coming event to tape is the high school or college class reunion. Offer your services to tape the reunion as a keepsake for those who attended, or those who couldn't attend. If you price your service right, you may be able to work a deal where each attendee would

get a copy of the tape as part of their registration fee, with a cut going to you.

You'll make less for each tape, but you'll be make up on quantity. You should be able to make \$10 to \$15 per tape just for copying the master onto a blank. Set up your VCRs, start the copying, and grab a good book. Sounds like easy money to me!

If you tape a reunion, try to get a class list so you can send a personalized letter and brochure to those who didn't attend. They are a good market for copies of the tape. You will need to work out details with the planning committee of the reunion, as they will probably want a cut

of the profits, which is fair. But, you are entitled to the lion's share, since you did the work.

When taping a reunion, make sure to get a good group shot of the attendees, possibly panning across the group for clear face shots.

Be sure to tape any and all speeches, important class members like the valedictorian, class leaders, sports figures, and any class member(s) who have become local or national celebrities. Be sure to get plenty of candid material, too, which can be edited in.

You'll want to make sure your skills are

good when holding the camera for an event like this.

Other events you may want to consider would be family events, like birthdays, bar/bat mitzvahs, holiday get-togethers, as well as business and school parties, award ceremonies, etc. You'll get these jobs primarily from referrals, which means your marketing expenses for these occasional events will be little or none.

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Scan your newspaper periodically for local publicity events like hot air balloon races, boat races or shows, trade shows, scouting events, or other events that appeal to a specialized crowd. Get permission to tape these events, then work out one of these deals:

- * Sell the tape to the sponsor of the event;

- * Keep the rights to the tape and give the sponsor a royalty fee for each tape sold.

Also, you could tape a group of similar events and edit them together into a compilation tape that could be sold to

targeted customers. There are many potential profit areas in event taping, if you keep your eyes open!

Chapter 8

HOW TO MAKE MONEY VIDEOTAPING WEDDINGS

There is a huge potential market for wedding videos. Just look in your local paper any summer week and see how many weddings there were.

Since almost every household in the country has a VCR, you can bet that almost every wedding has a video. Keep in mind, though, that there is also big competition in this field. If you want to make it, you'll have be sure of two things: you have the skills necessary, and that you

can offer more in your area.

There's more to taping a wedding than just setting up a camera and turning it on. If you're married and had a video taken at your wedding, I'm sure you'll agree. You, the photographer, can expect to be dropped into an environment of potential conflict. Last minute spats between the bride and groom, conflicts between family members, still photographers, all can be a source of headaches for you.

The best way to prevent problems is to set up a meeting with the bride, groom, close family members, and, if possible, any other photographers that will be at the service/reception. This way, you can

find out exactly what the family wants, any special shots they will want, any unusual parts to the ceremony that they may want on tape, how many people will be involved, and other issues. Keep in mind, the family will be paying you, so they will probably want to TELL you what you can or can't do. If what they want is reasonable, don't fight it. That makes your job easier. But, if what they want is unreasonable, be honest with them, but, by all means, be tactful.

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If you can meet with the other photographer(s), discuss where they need to be to get their best shots, so you and your camera won't be in the way. Also, this will help you with your planning so they won't be in your video, and you won't show up in the photos. This brings up the subject of planning.

Planning is all important when it comes to wedding videos. You will be producing something that the couple will want to view over and over, that their family and friends will be seeing. It's your best advertisement. So, you will want it to be the best it can be.

If you know what the ceremony will be like ahead of time, and what special shots the couple and family will want, you've got the ball in your court. Be sure to attend the rehearsal, so you can set your equipment up and plan your camera angles. Since you've planned your work, all you have to do is work your plan.

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Here's an idea of the equipment a well-stocked wedding videographer should have or have access to:

- > At least two VHS camcorders with high-quality low-light functions
- > At least one VHS VCR for editing and dubbing
- > At least one free-standing light for each camera
- > A tripod for each camera, preferably ones with a large range of heights
- > At least two twelve hours of batteries for the camera
- > The best quality wireless microphone you can afford (one for each camera)
- > All necessary cables, with spares
- > Extra tapes, the best quality available.

Don't let this list scare you off. If you don't own all this, you don't have to rush out and empty your bank account. You can either rent what you need, or barter your services with someone who has the equipment. Then, pick up the stuff you need piece by piece. Also, keep your eyes open for good quality used equipment.

Other equipment you may want to consider would include a good video editor deck, for putting your finished product together; a film-to-tape camera attachment (can be used to create a montage of scenes from old home movies of the couple when they were kids - a great service to offer and a unique

marketing point to offer!); and a graphics/title generator.

So, you may have wondered, why would you need more than one camera? If you have two cameras set up, you: can have different angles of the action, instead of the standard wedding video, which has a half-hour of a still camera; and you're covered if one of the cameras messes up or lighting is bad.

Make sure your videos are special, different from the run-of-the-mill wedding videos. Try to get a camera aimed toward the faces of the couple, so you can capture them during the vows, and at other points. This will also

provide close-up footage to edit in at slow points. Try to have a camera at the end of the aisle, so you can catch the exit of the bride and groom. This camera could also be used to show the bride from the back, entering the ceremony, an angle that you rarely see in a wedding video. If possible, get or draw up a floor plan of the location of the ceremony. It will help you plan your camera placement and shots.

Position your microphones where they'll do the most good. If possible, get either the bride or the groom to wear one, and get the minister or celebrant to wear one. This way, you'll have crisp, clear sound. Just remember to warn the bride and

groom not to whisper anything they wouldn't want the microphone to pick up! (You can always edit out any unwanted sound.)

Other places you may want a camera would be (with the couple in the 12 o'clock position): 10:00 or 2:00. Use the camera to get views of the crowd, the parents of the couple (edit a shot of them in during the vows - catch the emotion of the ceremony), and the entrance of the attendants.

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If the ceremony is a specialized ethnic ceremony (becoming more popular, especially with Greek couples) or unusual, you should look for points of interest to capture on tape which will show the special meanings and emotions of the ceremony. If the couple and family can watch your tape and feel the same emotions they had during the actual ceremony, your tape is a winner!

Technical skills are important, but they can be learned. The most crucial skills are smooth panning and zooming.

Before you ever do your first PAID wedding, practice with another event - for free. Practice makes for fluency.

The worst wedding video is the most common: one stationary camera, no zooms, never moving. People look around when they're at a wedding, and so should the camera, within reason. Practice a slow, smooth pan that keep the subject in the frame of the camera. Practice smooth zooms that aren't jerky, and aren't too close or too far from the subject.

You've probably figured that you'll need a helper for the actual taping. Unless the only camera that will pan and zoom is the one you're operating, and the others are stationary, you'll need someone. Be sure your helper is well-trained, with skills up to par with yourself.

Ideas:

A friend who also has a videocamera (here's a way to save on equipment costs); a college or high-school kid with video experience (they're becoming more common, as more and more schools add video classes to their curriculum); or a free-lancer (possibly a crew member from the public access channel at your cable station).

At the reception, it's important to get the "traditional" events: the garter/ bouquet toss, cutting the cake, toasts, etc. Use the same guidelines as before: keep in mind what's important to have in the frame, and try to tape it smoothly. A good idea may be to talk to the relatives of the

couple and see if some of them would want to say a few words about the couple on tape (try to do this early in the reception, before a lot of drinks have been served!).

If your videos are special and well-produced, you should be able to charge fees that are toward the top range in your area. Premium wedding videographers in large areas should be able to get \$750 to \$1000 for a wedding. Discretely call other videographers in your area to get an idea of what the range is.

Marketing ideas:

(1) Scan your newspaper for engagement announcements.

Then, use your computer's word processor to print out personalized letters detailing your services. Use your library's city directory to find the addresses you need. Send the letters and a brochure to the lucky couples.

(2) Set up a referral network with florists, formalwear shops, printers, and other wedding-related retailers in your area.

You could offer them a set commission fee each time a referral leads to a taping job.

(3) Find a wedding photographer in your area who doesn't currently offer video. Set up a deal where your photo and video services could be offered as a package.

(4) Participate in local bridal shows. These are attended by people who will be marrying soon, qualified prospects for your services. Have plenty of your brochures and marketing materials handy, so you don't run out. A good idea is to have one of your best videos playing on a monitor at the show (get permission from the couple on tape first, maybe offer them a discount in exchange for letting you use their tape for marketing purposes).

(5) Advertise in your newspaper's wedding supplement. Most newspapers publish at least one a year.

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If your taping was simple, with only one camera, you may be able to deliver the tape to the couple at the end of the wedding. If more extensive editing needs to be done, make sure you give the couple a realistic date when they can expect the tape. Don't give them a time that will leave you rushed. If you don't have your own editing equipment, check ahead with your local cable station. Many times, they have facilities for their public access station which can be rented. Many also offer short courses in video editing which are worth checking into.

Chapter 9

HOW TO MAKE MONEY PRODUCING CABLE TV SPOTS

If you have cable, you've no doubt seen local advertising on most of the channels. There are three ways a local business could produce a commercial.

One, they could do it themselves (and we all know what that looks like); two, they could have the local cable business do it for them (which can also look quite amateurish); or they can have an outside

individual do the production. This is where you come in.

If your video skills are top-notch, you can produce excellent commercials for local businesses at agreeable prices. If you have marketing skills, so much the better, but it's not an absolute requirement. As long as you can clearly answer the "4 W" questions (who, what, where and why), your commercial will be good.

The only drawback to this business is that you should use 3/4 inch broadcast format video, which is incompatible with a home videocamera. A camera for this type of videotape usually costs around

\$3000, less if it's used. There is a way around this expense, though.

Most cable stations have what is called a “public access” channel. This channel is designed so that individuals and groups from the community can produce their own shows, to be aired on the channel. Contact your local cable company and find out if they have such a channel.

You should be able to rent time on their equipment. This is a real boon when it comes to editing a tape, as they will have the equipment necessary to make your tape look professional. They usually offer short courses on using the equipment, too.

Market your services directly to the small businesses in your area. Good prospects are auto dealerships, restaurants, retailers such as video, book, and computer dealers, and, in election years, local political candidates (hope they get elected - you can expect a return customer!).

Your quality production, coupled with a reasonable price, should entice prospects to become customers.

Most commercials will be either thirty-seconds or one minute, and will be shot on location at the customer's facilities. If they provide the copy for the commercial, you only have to direct the commercial.

Run through the script with whomever will be reading it, to make sure that it will fit the time without sounding rushed.

You want to aim for a relaxed, natural sound (unless, of course, you're working with your local crazy car dealer, in which case they may want an auctioneer sound!). Above all, make sure the script tells who the advertiser is, what they do, where they are, and why people should give them their business. This is what the customer needs to hear.

Likewise, make sure your customer is happy with the result. After shooting the video, edit it (you should be able to ask someone at the cable company to help

you), then review it with your customer. As long as you've presented the advertiser in a good light, you'll be in good shape.

The first few times you produce a commercial, you may feel like you're flying by the seat of your pants. Just relax, use good common sense, and always remember that the job of the commercial is to convince the skeptical customer to spend his or her hard earned money with your client.

You should expect to spend a few hours during the shoot, to get enough takes for editing. Get four or five good takes. That way, any bad parts that you find

when reviewing your taping can be replaced with a good take.

A 30-second or 1-minute spot can be shot and edited in one day. The first one or two may take a bit longer, but that's okay. It's better to take your time when learning the ropes, rather than rush through and end up with substandard results.

Because your overhead will be low (if renting equipment, instead of purchasing), you should be able to undercut your competition. In a decent size city, you can expect to charge between \$500 and \$1,000. Longer commercials are more negotiable,

depending upon whether or not you will be asked to write the script. The half-hour long “infomercials” have become a bonanza for many advertisers, and they are a goal you can work up to, as your skills grow.

Watch commercials and listen to them. Keep mental notes about how the advertiser is presented, what message the commercial gives, and if you feel the commercial is successful. Incorporate the best elements of the commercials you see into your own shoots!

Chapter 10

YOUR OWN HOME SHOPPING SHOW

TV marketing is the new dominant form of distributing products from the source directly to the end user. It's the new electronic mall that brings the retail stores right to your living room.

LONG-FORMATS

Half-hour shows that hawk products from screwdrivers and shampoos to exercise equipment and how-to programs is not at all a new concept. After all, during its infancy, advertising was what television

was all about. These long-form ads, now commonly called Infomercials, has fast become the new growth area in mail order marketing.

Catalog Format

Unlike infomercials that sell only a single product throughout the 30-minute show, the new twist in TV retailing is the catalogue format. Here, the producer of the infomercial offers products from different sources.

Independent producers are now putting together halfhour shows that showcase “theme” products as in a catalog. There are shows that feature jewelry, audio

CDs, electronic items, clothing, etc.

The idea is to present uncommon products that appeal to your target market. These products may be from different manufacturers or importers who will give you the exclusive rights to market their products on television.

Charging a Base Fee

You can charge these manufacturers a base fee for featuring their products on your Home Shopping Show. Considering that their exposure on TV will give their products visibility that can help their regular retail and other marketing efforts, a base fee for their participation is

essential and reasonable.

This fee can offset the cost of your production. For example, if you have 15 products that will pay you \$750 each, you'll make \$11,250. This basic fee can more than pay for a simple broadcast-quality production finished on 3/4-inch U-Matic video system.

Percentage of Sale

In addition to the basic fee, you can structure your pricing wherein you can collect anywhere from 10% to as much as 25% of the gross sales for each and every product you feature in your show. Ideally, whatever percentage you charge

as your margin should pay for your
airtime cost plus give you a decent profit.

The order taking can be done by an
independent service which you must hire.
Orders received are forwarded to the
respective manufacturers who drop-ship
the merchandise to the buyer.

Chapter 11

VIDEO YEARBOOKS

These are growing in popularity. They usually consist of short scenes of important high school events, such as sports, clubs, candid “people scenes,” still photo montages, and other memorable items for the students. A well-edited hour-long video should be able to be sold for \$15 to \$30, depending upon the editing complexity of the video and the size of the school.

The larger the school, the more you can expect to sell. You should first contact

the school administration with this idea. Put together a good presentation for them, explaining your services and how your video yearbook will work with the regular yearbook as an added remembrance.

A good idea is to offer to donate a portion, \$2 for example, per tape sold to a school fund or student-supported charity.

After the administration, you will probably need to speak to the school board, principals, and school yearbook sponsors. This work will be worth it, though.

Try to include in your tape, from time to time, current events or subjects which

will remind the viewers about what was going on at the time they were in school.

One caution, though. Be careful about including copyrighted items, such as popular songs, in your tape. You will need to get permission from the copyright holders or risk legal action.

The best way to sell your tape is to obtain permission to distribute a flyer to the students in the school at the same time as the regular yearbook information is distributed.

Then, follow up later in the year, giving those who haven't ordered yet another opportunity. Finally, give another chance

at the end of the school year.

From time to time, go to the school and shoot material. Get sporting events, clubs, quiz bowl tournaments, science fairs, special events, pep rallies, ordinary day-to-day video, and, of course, graduation.

If you're ambitious, do a video yearbook for each class! That way, students can end their high school years with a four-video set, documenting that time of their lives from start to finish!

Chapter 12

DUBBING AND DUPLICATION

Here's an easy service to offer. With a film-to-video transfer device, commonly available for under \$100, and a movie projector, you can put customer's old home movies on video tape. There are a few different types of transfer devices available. The best place to check would be your local quality camera shop.

You should be able to charge around \$20 per hour of film for this service. A good idea is to add background music to the

home movies. Copyright-free music is widely available on CD. Check advertising and marketing magazines such as Advertising Age for ads.

You can also offer a duplicating service for customer's home videos, so they can give relatives (or America's Funniest Home Videos) a copy. You can usually charge a flat fee for this service, depending upon the length of the tape. Editing together still photos is also a good service to offer, particularly to people who travel frequently.

There are many other areas just starting to be tapped: video resumes, video postcards, even video wills. If you come

up with a good original idea, research the market for it. If you find a reasonable amount of people will be interested in your new service, you may just have a winner on your hands!

Chapter 13

HOW TO MAKE MONEY PROVIDING “INVENTORY VIDEO TAPING” SERVICE

This is, in my opinion, THE business to get into with your videocamera.

You only need one camera, decent video skills, little expenses and supplies, and, if done right, very low marketing expenses. Besides your videocamera, you'll need an instant camera and an engraving tool, which together should be able to be found for under \$100.

Here's the business in a nutshell: You videotape household and business inventory and valuables for insurance purposes. Then, if a robbery occurs, the owner has a video documentation of the missing valuables for law enforcement and insurance agents. Your primary prospects for this service will be upper-income families and businesses that specialize in high-ticket items or have a high investment in equipment.

The first step you should take to run a property inventory taping service is to meet with your area law enforcement agencies to find out what regulations, if any, they have.

Remember, you will be going into other people's houses and will have full knowledge of their valuables.

If you have endorsement from the law, your customers can feel comfortable that you won't use this knowledge for the wrong purposes. The person you want to meet with would be the one in charge of neighborhood watches or community services.

Normally, police agencies are enthusiastic supporters of services like this, as it makes their job easier. Others to meet with include insurance agents, private detectives, fire officials and attorneys.

Not only will you gain valuable information from them, you will be building up a network for referrals. Be sure to keep a good record of who you meet with so you can send them business cards, brochures and periodic reminders of your services.

While meeting with insurance agents, take care of your insurance requirements. You should carry liability insurance, and you should also get bonded. The extra expense is worth it, as it will both help to get business and will protect you and your customer.

Your service will be ripe for publicity, so prepare a good press release. You should

be able to find a good book or two on publicity releases at your library. Get these releases to every daily and weekly newspaper in your area, as well as local business magazines and television stations.

When your service gets written up in the papers, keep a clipping of each article to use in your marketing materials. Send a copy to all the insurance agents, attorneys, private detectives and law enforcement agencies in your area. You **WILL** get referrals from this!

Another idea for publicity is to set up a booth at local home and garden shows, preferably in the home protection areas

(alarms, etc.). This will establish your name in the minds of consumers. If you don't mind public speaking, offer to give a short seminar on home inventory protection and how your service can help prevent theft. You can prepare one presentation that can be given numerous times at different community-related functions and locations, such as country clubs.

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Now for the meat of the service. When you set up an appointment with a customer, make sure they know you will be charging by the hour, so it will be to their advantage to have things such as jewelry, china or antiques laid out and ready to be taped. Take your videocamera with extra tape and batteries, an instant camera with plenty of film, your engraver, forms for listing valuables, and a three-ring binder for the forms.

When taping valuables, be sure to get a clear picture of them, including any distinguishing characteristics. Be sure to fill out your forms completely, listing special features or characteristics,

such as type and weight of gems, etc.

Jewelry is probably best photographed with your instant camera, as is any small valuables. Large antiques and other primary household items are easily videotaped. Be sure to get any brand names and model numbers clearly taped.

After taping the individual items, walk through the house. Be sure to get any computer and video equipment, phones, TVs, art and other items that would be tempting to thieves.

Engrave the client's social security or driver's license number on the back or bottom of items that won't be damaged

by doing so. Record all this on the forms, including the location of the engraving and all serial numbers. If the home is burglarized and police recover the stolen goods, this will help the client get his or her valuables back quickly and easily.

Don't forget to tape the outside of the house, including patios, walkways and landscaping. This can help the client establish value in case of vandalism.

In businesses, videotape the office equipment, as well as the offices themselves, inside and out. In specialized businesses, be sure to tape any special equipment.

A good idea is to provide window stickers for your clients that tell potential thieves that items in the house have been marked and recorded. These stickers can be purchased or printed. Your local law enforcement agencies may even be able to provide these to you at a low cost.

When through taping, give the tape a quick run-through to be sure everything's OK, then give it to your client, along with the binder. Encourage them to store these in a safe deposit box, in case of fire.

How much should you charge? A typical mid-sized to large home should take two hours, at most, to tape, if the owner has

prepared everything ahead of time. You can charge anywhere from \$50 to \$150 per hour, depending upon what your local market will bear, with \$75 per hour a good figure to start with. You should be able to see how this business can add up!

In your marketing materials, stress the fact this your charge is a small price to pay, considering it is a crime deterrent and will result in far less stress and time on the customer's part if a mishap does occur. You can feel good that you are providing a service which will help people in bad times. Remember to be professional while in the client's home, don't make any comments which could be construed in bad ways, and be

assuring about the safety and reliability
of yourself and your service.

Chapter 14

HOW TO START A VIDEO LIBRARY

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Chapter 15

HOW TO SET UP AND OPERATE YOUR OWN VIDEOTAPE RENTAL STORE

One of the newest, and most profitable retail business opportunities available today is the Videotape Store. Profits from rental of videotapes movies have doubled each year over the past several years, and industry experts claim this is only the beginning.

Not long ago videotape recorders (now widely referred to as video-cassette recorders) were being bought at a rate of one million units per year. Five years later, the sales rate had climbed to 12 million recorders per year, and sales are still increasing. Analysts say that within a few years there will be as many recorders in use as television sets. It follows that all these videocassette recorders are in need of tapes, just as an automobile requires gasoline.

Generally speaking, the average Videotape Store can be set up with an investment or line of credit in the neighborhood of \$50,000. Utilizing good management techniques, and taking

advantage of natural promotional opportunities, such a store will gross \$250,000 per year. Some stores are realizing a net profit of 35 to 45 percent with these income figures.

The secret to achieving and maintaining these kinds of profits is in establishing and properly running a video club that offers really outstanding benefits to club members. These benefits should include special discounts on tape rentals and purchases; a regular catalog or newsletter that tells your members about the new tapes available; special workshops; get-togethers, and even outings.

Think about the potentials:
videocassette recorders are now within the price range of just about everyone in the country; new technology, better performance and greater development of the market will reduce the cost even further.

More and more people are switching from costly evenings out to the comforts of home and videotape entertainment; market surveys profile the typical VCR owner as between 25 and 50 years of age with an income of \$20,000 or more.

That typical customer will provide about 70% of your income, with the remaining 30% coming from blue-collar

workers, college students, and singles of both sexes. It's important that you be "in tune" with what the VCR owners in your area want, and fulfill those wants.

In selecting a location, look for a storefront in an area surrounded by stores the typical VCR owner is likely to shop in. Six hundred to nine hundred square feet should meet your needs at first, but plan ahead for future expansion.

The ideal location would be on a corner, affording visibility of your shop from several directions. The street fronting your store should ideally be four lanes with no median dividers, but with a posted speed limit of 35 M.P.H. or less.

And by all means, make sure there's plenty of parking space available.

The layout of your store should be planned with maximum efficiency in mind. Basically, a glass-topped sales and display counter across the front, separating the customers from the sales area, while at the same time conveying a feeling of openness, works best.

Glass counters with shelves may be purchased at tremendous savings by contacting the rental fixture suppliers and used equipment dealers in your area. Check the yellow pages of your telephone and business directories for names and addresses of suppliers.

You should strive to make the customer space in front of the counter comfortable and relaxing. There should be an overall atmosphere of friendliness. Place a couple of chairs or stools in front of the counter so that your customers can sit and browse through your catalogs. You might want a coffee table, free coffee, and catalogs on everything from VCR's to equipment accessories to special order movies.

One of the important secrets to success will be the way your store is perceived by the customers. You and your salespeople can dress casually and project an overall relaxed manner of doing business; taking care of each

customer individually, using their first names (if appropriate), and relating to what's happening in their lives. With this approach you will get to know them, and will establish long-term customer loyalty faster than by any drum-beating promotions.

The best idea for the display seems to be on wooden shelves lining the walls of the sales area behind the customer counter. These shelves can be built by a local handy man and either painted or stained. It's important, however, that they be strong, because the weight of the videotapes can amount to 50 to 100 pounds per shelf, depending on the length of the shelf.

Arrange the videotapes on the shelves, in book fashion. Stand them upright with the title art on the boxes clearly visible to the customers. It's important that you not allow your customers to browse through your inventory, as they do with books on the shelves at the public library. In other words, your inventory of tapes is money to you and should be seen, but not touched, by your customers until they either want to rent or buy.

An arrangement that works well with many stores is to remove the tapes from the jackets, and display the empty jackets in the viewing area for customers. Many of the jackets carry descriptive sales literature, which entices the prospect to

either buy or rent. The tapes themselves, which do not carry any outside printed message, should be kept behind your counters, in an area accessible only to your people.

You can locate your manager's desk and files in front of the inventory shelves. Space partitioned off in the back of the store will be quite adequate for storage, packaging and/or whatever minor repairs might be necessary.

Our suggestion would be to allocate 60% of your store for the display-sales office area; 20% for the reception or customer area; and 20% for storage/work area. Check out a store. You should be

able to assess the entire arrangement in a few visits, and pattern yours after it, or consider improvisations or changes you would make.

Use your imagination and utilize your in-store decorating as well as merchandising ideas to move your product. For help in decorating your store, talk to a few students in the art classes at your local college, or to the set designers for the local Little Theater group. Be sure to explain the mood you want to create. The customers will be coming into your store to rent or buy movies and associated equipment. Keep this in mind, and decorate your store to make them feel as if they're a

part of the Hollywood scene. You can even be flamboyant with the use of poster-sheets relating to the movies you have available. These are actually called “one-sheets” and you can get them free or for a very small charge from your local theaters . If you run into any problems, simply write to the studios, get the names of the movies’ distributors, and ask for the ones you need. Colorful “billboard” posters, along with light colored walls, floor covering, and inventory storage shelves, will definitely help create a “Hollywood Mood,” and on the bottom line, sell more tapes for you. Remember, you’re wanting to create a mood conducive to persuading your customers to rent or buy your products.

Some of the imaginative tape rental store owners have even gone so far as putting in a miniature movie marquee that lights up; spotlights and theater-style track lighting overhead. Another idea might be the use of old film reels, glossy pictures of movie stars and pictures, newspaper clippings or other memorabilia from original premiers.

Your display equipment should include one of the better brand name color TV sets and a videotape recorder. It's generally best to go with a VHS system, because over the long haul, you'll find most of your customers preferring this system because it has a longer playing time than the Beta system equipment.

You'll need this minimum equipment in order to test your tapes and give your customers an instant preview of the movies they are interested in renting or buying.

You should also plan to get a good typewriter that will accommodate several different styles and sizes of type. This will be your key to the make-up of new pages for your catalogs and the preparation of your newsletter.

Be sure to organize yourself with a bank in order to handle at least the major charge cards. Simple advertising of the fact that you accept credit card purchases will almost double your volume. Since

most of your sales transactions will be by charge card or check, you won't need a fancy cash register. A simple metal cash box, available at most office supply outlets, will work very well for the first few months, and you can evaluate any needed change later.

You should either hire a person to be your store manager from the start, or else select a person you can train to take over your duties as store manager. The person you select needn't be an electronics wizard, because there will really be no need to be an expert in the technical workings of the equipment. However, he should have a creative flair for retail management, sales promotions and

selling.

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In addition to yourself and a manager or manager trainee, you'll need a part-time sales person to help out during your busy times. A manager trainee is paid about \$14,000 per year, with commissions on gross sales once he becomes your manager in fact. You should expect to pay your sales people a bit above the prevailing minimum wage,

with an opportunity for them to increase their earnings via commissions on all sales over a certain dollar amount each month.

It will be to your benefit if you and your employees keep yourselves up to date on the industry by reading everything possible relating to videotapes, movies and the associated equipment. This means advertising; brochures, newsletters, trade papers and magazines from every available source. Armed with this wealth of information, you'll be more knowledgeable than 99 percent of your customers, and be able to recommend movies according to preferences of the individual customer.

As videotape rental outlets increase in number, the industry as a whole will become more competitive. To beat out the competition, the enterprising entrepreneur will develop a list of loyal customers, and pamper them with the benefits of an exclusive club membership. Word-of-mouth advertising from this select group will follow as a matter of course.

The basic benefits to the members will be first rights to rent or buy new tapes, plus nice discounts on all rentals or purchases. Generally, club member discounts range from 30 to 50 percent compared to prices charged to non-members.

First-time membership fees range from \$50 to \$100 the first year, with renewal costs about half as much. Basically, club membership fees are predicated upon the benefits available to members, the need for cash within the business, and the pressure of the competition. You will also want to research the membership fee structure of other stores in your area, and be guided by current policies.

Each member should get a current catalog of tapes available, a numbered membership card, a listing of club benefits, and perhaps a special VCR accessory or free rental. You can expand your market to statewide, nationwide, or even worldwide proportions simply by

placing display ads in publications serving the markets you want to reach. When operating by mail you'll need a set of rules (you might call it a contract) setting forth your policies. You'll also want to factor shipping costs and any insurance charges into your "by mail" rates.

By all means have a sign made up for your show window inviting people to join your club. Display a similar sign on the customer counter, just to remind them. Have some flyers or circulars made up reiterating the invitation to join your club . Keep a stack of these handy on the customer counter, and make sure everyone who comes into your store gets

one, perhaps by putting it into each bag/package that leaves the store.

Regardless of the popularity of videotapes, the local demand, and whatever competition you have, you'll have to promote your store's special features and advertise skillfully. Plan to spend at least two-thirds of your initial investment money on advertising during your first six months in business.

Your most effective advertising medium will be your local news papers. Regular display ads on the entertainment pages on Thursdays, Fridays and Saturdays will go a long way toward making your store known, and creating

the traffic into your store that you want and need. In these ads you should stress the money-saving features, special membership benefits, and advantages of belonging to your videotape club.

A relatively low cost idea for the on-going promotion of your club might be to have a free-lance designer develop a special logo for you. Make patches out of this logo and have one of the advertising cap makers supply you with sports caps personalized with your videotape club's logo. Your club membership might then be called elite, because you club members will be the only ones able to get the caps. The people they associate with will ask about them

and growth of your club will be assured. Another promotional idea is simply to place a TV in your show window, running continuous showings of the video movies most in demand in your area.

The general idea is to be as “traffic-stopping” and creative as your local zoning laws will allow you to be with your storefront and outside signs. Sandwich boards plastered with movie “billboard” poster signs; bikini-clad girls “picketing” in front of your store (you might want to check this out with local regulations); simulated movie production scenes, are all attention-grabbing ideas that will cause people to notice your store, stop, come inside, and find what’s

going on - what you have available.

Mission accomplished!

Think of your business as being part of the entertainment field, which it actually is, and gear your promotions accordingly. Be as creative and imaginative as you can. Take advantage of every promotional opportunity that comes along.

Get news releases off to all facets of the media in your area.

Keep sending them in, and keep dreaming up new angles for staging something the public will notice.

Work with the TV and VCR equipment dealers if they will hand out advertising circulars to new cassette recorder owners

to join your club, in exchange for which you will send new equipment customers to them.

Store hours for most video stores are 9:30 a.m. to 7:00 p.m., Monday through Saturday. These hours will cover the demands of your customers, with your busiest days being Thursday, Friday and Saturday. These are usually the days when people are committing themselves to entertainment plans for the weekend. Some may choose to close during Sabbath hours.

Daily operations usually entail signing up new members, taking care of those who want to rent tapes, and selling tapes

to walk-in buyers. You may want to make “special order services” available, perhaps even a reservation list for especially popular films that may seem to customers to be always out on rental.

Determining how many copies of a film to stock will be a judgment decision based upon what you know about your customers. However, we feel it is better to have extra copies in stock than a waiting list more than three names deep.

Whenever you have to put a customer’s name on a waiting list, you should always try to interest him in an other film. In other words, try never to let a customer leave your store without a tape

in hand - a good one, even if it's not the one he originally sought.

Keeping track of your inventory on a daily basis will be necessary in order to know what the people are buying or renting, and which of your tapes are not moving. Ideally, you would want to have 50 to 60 percent of your inventory rented out.

Each time a tape is rented, a rental agreement should be filled out, and the rental fee collected in advance. You file the rental agreement in a "one-to-thirty-one" file under the date the tape is to be returned. Using this system, you look at the rental agreements filed under any

given date, and know immediately which tapes are due for re turn. This facilitates dealing fairly with your waiting list, by the way.

Usually, tapes are rented from 2:00 p.m. one day through 2:00 p.m. the next day. If a film is not returned by 2:30 on the date due, you should have one of your salespeople start calling on those customers who are overdue, theoretically to remind him that the tape is due, but in such a manner that he can rent the tape for another day if he wants (unless, with the most popular films, you put a limit on rental time).

Sometimes even the best customer will

forget that a tape is due. Probably the best way to handle this is not to make a big deal out of it, and if he gets it in promptly, don't charge him an extra day's rent (if he gets it in later in the afternoon). If this is a good customer, or a regular customer, you want to keep him.

Outright theft is very rare, but when a customer does lose or steal a tape, bill his charge card number, and flag the rental agreement in his file. On all first-time renters, or people who aren't members of your rental club, always collect a deposit on the rental, equal to the value of the tape. Another thing: Don't rent out more than one tape at a time until you get to

know the customer.

Your business income will be derived from several different sources. Stores operating rental clubs generally average about two new members per day. At \$75 per member, this could amount to \$3,000 per month. (Again, research the “going” membership fees in your area.)

By and large, revenue from tape rental will be your biggest source of income. This money will be from club members and non-members, but your club members will be the biggest spenders by far. Rental revenues average anywhere from \$3,000 to \$ 15,000 per month.

You can probably count on another \$1,000 per month in tape sales to walk-in customers, as well as to your club members who want to buy tapes of certain favorite movies. The sale of blank tapes, editing machines, enhancers, stabilizers and other accessories will pretty much depend on how much you promote them.

Success will come from offering a wide variety of movies for your customers. How heavy you stock up on movies in any one category will depend mostly on your customers' preferences. In other words, if your store caters mostly to families with children, then you would stock up heavily on family-type

films. Checking out several successful videotape stores and seeing their stock will give you an idea, and you will alter your own stock as requests dictate.

Most stores open with at least 300 titles in stock, with an average of seven copies of each title. How many copies of each title you stock should be determined by the demand in your area for each movie title.

Whenever you realize you've got a "loser" in stock, you can either mark the price down and offer it on sale, or treat it as a 'freebie' for joining the rental club. You'll avoid getting stuck with real disasters by keeping yourself abreast of

what's happening else where via regular reading of all the trade publications.

Whether or not to sell VCR's to your customers is a personal decision, but if you do so, it will add to your income. Work with the area distributors. They will supply you with literally tons of sales materials and a display model. Then when a customer wants to buy one through you, you simply "special order" it for him.

Keep your systems simple, and make it easy for your customers to shop in your store. Rent your tapes at say, \$3 for one day, \$5 for two days, or \$15 for a full week. About the only licenses you'll

need will be a local business license plus whatever state or city sales tax permits are required in your area. Check with your city and county clerks for information in these areas.

You'll need standard business insurance. And because videotapes are hot-selling items on the black market, you should back up your insurance with a good security protection system.

There are a number of companies selling franchised videotape Stores. It really isn't necessary for you to spend the extra money for a franchised operation. The main value of a franchise program is in the assistance they provide in getting

better prices on the tapes you want to inventory. However, you can contact the suppliers directly and negotiate your own deals if you want to take the time to do it.

An alternative to the franchise operation is the “affiliate” program offered by Video Station, Inc., 12021 Wilshire Blvd, West Los Angeles, CA 90025. Founded by industry pioneer George Atkinson, the videotape stores belonging to this group retain their independence and pay no royalties. Yet, because they are a large group affiliated with one buying association, they can procure inventory purchases at tremendous savings for members.

The video market is beginning to really boom. If you're imaginative, organized and enjoy individual selling, this could be the vehicle to make you rich. You've got the plan, and if you've got the ambition, all that's missing is the action on our part. Get with it, and the best of luck to you!

Chapter 16

MARKETING FOR SUCCESS

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Afterword

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