



How to Videotape Your Next Religious Conference

A Checklist from Television Producer Phil Cooke

1) Check with the arena first.

Most conference planners and managers know this from experience, but it's even more important when it comes to television and video. *Extra electrical power, access for the equipment, special lighting and sound requirements, and insurance regulations are all considerations that vary from facility to facility.* In addition, whether the facility is a union facility will have a serious impact on your video budget. Therefore, if you think there is the slightest possibility of videotaping your conference, mention that possibility from your first discussions with a facility. Many facilities can be a great help in your videotaping and offer excellent advice and counsel.

2) Find an experienced video producer.

There are simply too many considerations to keep in mind when it comes to television. *What equipment do we need? What videotape format? What about union rules in the facility? Do we have adequate lighting? What about sound? Where do we find a crew?* You need the experienced help of a professional to guide you through the maze of questions and considerations. In our case, we have created a network of television and video crew members in cities across the United States. Therefore, when we videotapes conferences, we can hire mostly local people and save expensive travel and hotel arrangements.

Also, a qualified and experienced producer can help in the distribution and marketing of your final video product - after all, they will have a wealth of other similar projects under their belt and can often give you the pros and cons of different ideas and approaches.

3) Develop a marketing plan.

Perhaps you can afford to videotape your conference strictly for historical and archival purposes. But chances are, you will need to find a way to recoup your video costs as quickly as

possible. Can you sell a home video series of the conference to the attendees? Do you have a regular fundraising program, mailing list, or product catalog you can offer the videos to? Are you producing a religious television program that could benefit from the footage? Plan on some type of marketing effort. Remember - the impact of your conference can be greatly multiplied when it's extended many times over through videotape. Lives will be impacted and changed for years to come as they watch the video of your event after the actual event is over.

One such possibility is hiring a company who can make high speed copies of the event "as it happens" so that conference attendees can purchase copies within 24 hours of each session. They'll never be as excited about purchasing videotapes as they are at the conference, so that's the time to make your sale!

4) Get the proper permission.

Generally, at most religious conferences, there are a variety of speakers, musicians, performers, and other featured guests. Just because they appear at your conference, doesn't give you the rights to use their sermons, teaching, music, performance, or other ministry on video or audio. Don't forget to ask long before your final decision to videotape. I've seen conference sponsors spend a great deal of money videotaping an event, only to find out later that they weren't able to use most of the footage because they hadn't cleared the rights. I recommend a simple letter of agreement that gets their permission on paper for any possible use you may have for the video. And when it comes to music, check with the performers on the music clearances and copyrights - they can help you know what needs to be done. I recommend you seek professional help, such as a qualified attorney to deal with the legal aspects of such rights. It can save you a great deal of money later.

5) Make sure your video production crew is sensitive to the type of conference.

If you're sponsoring a religious conference, you don't want a camera crew to be disrespectful and distracting in front of the audience. Although I don't necessarily believe your crew has to adhere to your religious faith, I do believe it's critical to talk frankly with them beforehand, and without preaching or lecturing, make them realize the nature of the conference and let them know you expect them to *dress* appropriately and *act* appropriately - especially in front of the attendees. Generally speaking, professional video crews are very respectful and have lots of experience "fitting in" to whatever conference or event they're participating in, but it's important to discuss it ahead of time just in case.

Their behavior reflects on you and the conference, and crew members (*especially camera operators*) are seen by nearly everyone.

6) Make sure you work out the payment schedule ahead of time.

It is customary in the video and television industry for payment to be made at the time any master tapes are released to the client. Unless you've made other arrangements ahead of time, your inability to pay on schedule could result in the production company keeping your videotape masters until full payment can be made! That's especially difficult if you want to duplicate the videos quickly for a fast sale. Therefore, make sure the method of payment is clearly spelled out.

7) Fill the empty seats near the front.

Nothing looks worse on video or television than empty seats. For the video viewer, it doesn't matter that the other sections were full, if the seats near the television cameras are empty, the entire conference looks like no one came. Have the ushers be sure and fill the seats on the main floor, or the main part of the facility, in front of the cameras. Give the video or television audience the impression that the conference was packed and they should have been there!

8) Don't be afraid of video.

The fact is, videotaping religious conferences is a powerful and dynamic tool to promote and extend your organization. When people come to a special conference or convention, they arrive "charged up" and excited. They're in an attitude of expectancy, and that shows in their faces and in their attitudes. What better atmosphere to videotape? Notice how many religious television programs today are based on footage produced at conferences. In addition, some of the most successful secular infomercial marketers are now staging conferences and live events to promote their products - and videotaping those events to use on television.

Take it from experience - it's tough to find an audience as excited as the one at your conference.

Have you signed up for the Cooke Pictures e-mail newsletter? It's a monthly journal filled with media research, creative concepts, production resources, and great ideas. **Sign up today at <http://www.cookepictures.com/resources/newsletters/>**