

Your Video Pricing Guide

A Video Pricing Guide for Agency Owners



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As a busy agency owner, you know video is an incredible way to scale your business and boost revenue. Your clients are asking for video and, if you don't sell it to them, someone else will. Not to mention that your standard mark-up would be easy money for you – no additional hires, tools, or headaches on your end.

Well, that is if you can find the right creative studio partner.

How often have your clients come to you and say, "Can you shoot some videos for the new product category our business is hinging an entire quarter's revenue goals on? How much business can you net us? How much will it cost?"

Oh, the challenge! Oh, the possibilities! Oh, the expense!

Been there, done that.

As a creative, your juices overflow with ideas, and you're excited to create something amazing for your client. But, as an agency owner, you're worried about how to create a great video when it is not in your agency's wheelhouse.

But that's not all.



You are even more concerned about the difference between how much an awesome video will cost you and how much your client is willing to spend.

Of course, you want to give the client what they want so they stay with your agency, but you also don't want to create an expectation you can't deliver affordably.

You don't have to tackle this challenge alone. Nor should you. Accurate budgeting for video production comes with experience. The more videos you create, the easier it will be to cost them out. It's challenging to template something as customizable as a video. Custom work calls for a custom budget. Having a video studio like Emberscout on your team offers you the experience and the vendor contacts to budget and guide video projects for your clients quickly and accurately.

How would Emberscout budget a video project, you ask? There are several factors we consider when pricing a video project.

Creative Development & Strategy



Impactful and empathetic video is created with a clear strategy in mind. That strategy should include an understanding of the target audience and the goals for the piece or campaign. It's also essential to clearly establish the video's intended message and production value. These pieces are the first foundations of budgeting a video project.

But first, let's define an important term: Production **value** is often shorthand for the overall quality of a video or film. It's the sum of the creative factors used to create it. For a more polished look, you will need more creative elements. And the more bells and whistles you need for your video, the more expenses will be incurred. Let's look at an example.



Say your client asks for a brand story video that involves these elements:

- Extended creative and ideation time
- Extended planning and storyboarding time
- Multiple shooting locations over several days
- Cinematic/more controlled lighting
- Cinematic cameras and lenses
- Large location crew
- Scripted message
- Cohesive props, set dressing, and other production design
- Additional visual effects or other animations
- Motion graphics
- Color correction
- Custom-composed music, either using digital samples or recorded in a studio
- Experienced talent



This project may cost about \$100,000 or more (plus travel expenses), resulting in a stylized, movie-worthy commercial video.

Or your client may want a brand story video with minimal elements, such as:

- One or two days of ideation/planning
- One day of shooting at one location
- Exclusively natural lighting
- On-hand cameras and equipment
- Client as the subject, no professional talent
- No script, conversational, or storytelling-style message
- Few post-production elements like animation, custom music, or extensive color correction



This kind of project may cost in the range of \$18,000 plus travel expenses and will result in a more documentary-style, functional video.

You can see how the expenses vary from project to project and how these costs can change the end result. Both end results have merit, depending on your brand, audience, and goals.

When budgeting a video project, it's important to understand what elements are driving the costs of a video before committing to them. Let's look at some of these elements a little closer.

Video Genre or Style

This is a crucial first step in planning a video. Deciding on the general genre for a video during the strategic planning process will help create a more targeted budget for your client. The genre is your video's overall look and feel (or style). Some potential genre examples include:

- Testimonial/Impact story
- Commercial
- Product/Service explainer
- Branded content
- Social content

When you decide on a genre, you are also making decisions on your needs for location, talent, equipment, scripts, distribution channels, and more. So, naturally, all of these decisions will affect your budget.



Creative Planning

Almost anyone can produce a video with the right experience. But the creative planning, ideation, concepting, and storytelling that happens before the camera rolls are those critical details that will produce a product that differentiates your clients from their competition. That's why smart agency owners work with a video partner with deep experience - and build that into the budget.



The cost will depend on how significant the partner's role is in the creative planning of your video. For example, at one end of the spectrum, you could hand the business/marketing objective for the video over to the studio, and they do the discovery, research, brainstorming, and ideation to give you the best creative ideas to choose from.

On the other end, you do the planning and ideation and hand over the creative plan (often in the form of scripts and storyboards) to the video partner to execute.

Either way, the planning process costs you and your client valuable resources (time versus budget).

Pre-Production & Production

Once you've decided on a creative plan for your client's video, pre-production covers all of the other planning needed to produce the video. These tasks can be very time-consuming and detail-oriented. Having a professional handle them for you and your client can save you headaches and resources. These pre-production tasks (and subsequent budget items) include:

- **THE CONCEPT:** It is important in the pre-production process to verify with your client the concept for the video, the planned number of scenes, the number of people in the video, and the length of the video based on the creative plan. This will affect a number of the other decisions that need to be made.
- **THE CREW:** Your video partner will involve one or more creative professionals in the planning and production of your video, depending on your needs. These professionals could include additional producers, casting directors, lighting technicians, set designers, and even catering.
- **THE PRODUCTION DESIGN:** Higher production value projects often spend a lot of time and energy building the sets, buying props, and creating the right “world” for the story to live in.
- **THE EQUIPMENT:** The genre and creative plans will determine the equipment needed. This process involves finding the necessary camera, lighting, and sound equipment and crew to service them, including gimbals, drones, car-mounts, and more.

- **THE LOCATION(S):** The number of sites increases your cost and will add more days to your shooting schedule. In general, you will need at least one day per location. There will be an expense to procuring each location and making travel arrangements for the client, talent, crew, and others.
- **THE TALENT:** The creative plan may call for paid talent such as adult or child actors or even animals. The expectations (speaking vs. background) for paid talent will affect your client's cost. Also, make sure you are clear on whether or not the talent needs to be union, which can be more expensive. Your video studio will likely have good connections in finding talent, or your client can do that on their own.
- **THE TRAVEL:** The more locations you have, the more travel expenses you'll incur. You may have to pay for a crew to travel to each city. At a minimum, a crew typically gets paid a half day for travel. But a full day should be paid if other work must be done on arrival, such as prepping cameras or location scouting. It's definitely possible to hire local on-location crews to shoot. But sometimes, it makes more sense to bring a crew you trust because you know they will get the job done quickly, efficiently, and with a big smile on their face.

These pre-production details are critical to making production days as efficient and productive as possible. So, remember to budget for the planning process and all the time and people it takes to lock in all these details. The more complicated the details, the higher the budget needs will be.





Post-Production

As we mentioned at the start of this pricing guide, the elements of post-production that may affect your video budget depend on the genre of video you are creating. Here are a few to consider.

- **The editing process:**
 - **Runtime:** There is no simple one-to-one correlation between your intended video length and the cost - but it does matter. Longer videos take longer to edit.
 - **Hours of footage:** Often, editorial time (and cost!) is driven by the total hours of raw footage. The more hours of footage, the more complicated editing can get.
 - **Content at scale:** However, with more footage, you'll have more opportunities for creative content. Creating a whole campaign typically decreases the overall per-unit price. The overall cost of a package of one 4-minute main video and 60, 30, 15, and 6 -second cutdown videos may seem high, but the per-video price is very reasonable.
 - **Raw footage and files:** If your client wants the video studio to supply all the raw footage and project files, many studios charge an additional fee.

- **The music:** Music matters in a video. Our emotional responses to images are often triggered by music. Your client could use stock music from an online library, which is low cost and works well for certain marketing videos. Or, your client may choose to use custom-composed music for a more bespoke video. To create a custom piece of music, your client should plan to budget for one day of work for a composer using digital tools to thousands of dollars for multiple days of composing and recording the piece with multiple live musicians in a studio.
- **The animation:** If the video requires animation, the cost will depend on the style of animation (hand-drawn versus digital, etc.) and the length of the animation.
- **Visual effects:** These enhancements to the video could include digital set extensions, screen replacement, explosions in the distance, etc. The cost varies depending on the specific effect that the story calls for and can become very expensive and time-consuming. A visual effects-heavy video would need a special budget conversation with your client after the creative planning is complete.





Distribution

Don't forget to plan and budget for how you and your client will use the video once it's complete. Some production or post-production resources scale in price based on distribution, so you'll want to have an idea of where the video is going even from the start.

But more importantly, factor in the budget you will need to use your video in digital and broadcast advertising or other forms of distribution. Your budget will vary depending on the channel you use, the length of your video, the intended audience, and the length of your ad campaigns.



Pulling It All Together

There are many variables to consider when planning and budgeting a marketing video project. If you've done some strategic planning for a video, the best place to start is to create a list of all of the elements we've discussed in this pricing guide and identify where on the production value scale your client's video will fall on. That will give you a general idea of the cost factors.

But we've also made an easy-to-use [video budget calculator](#) that can help you and your clients get a quick range of budget possibilities.

If you are starting from scratch, it can seem daunting to know where to start, even for an agency owner well-versed in marketing strategy like yourself. **Use this guide as a starting point and then consider how an expert video team like Emberscout could be a strategic addition to your team.**

We know how to do video. It's all we do. We live and breathe it. And we love to partner with innovative and creative marketing agencies to create incredible video content for your clients. We'll never steal your clients because, honestly, we don't want them. You tackle the marketing, and we'll tackle the video. **Let us be your video guide.**

We'll guide you and your clients through the wild and wooly expedition of video production from start to finish. Even if the final destination is unknown when you come to us, we know the path to take and obstacles to avoid. We'll get you there, even if you don't know where there is. Let us be your video guide. Want to know more? **[Let's schedule a discovery call today.](#)**

