HIGHTAIL

HOW TO CREATE VIDEO AT THE SPEED OF SOCIAL

6 Ways to Get Video Produced Faster

DIVE BRANDSTUDIO

Creating powerful, effective video requires a significant amount of collaboration. Unfortunately, it is this creative collaboration that often gets undermined at every turn.

Email chains muddle feedback to creatives. Executives can't see previews on their smartphones. Nobody knows which version is the final one, much less whether it's approved.

All this happens amid increasing pressure to incorporate an ever increasing volume of compelling videos into social media campaigns and content projects. A recent survey of business-to-consumer marketers found that:

- **73 percent** expect to produce more original content in 2017.
- **60 percent** are using video in their programs.
- **34 percent** say video is one of their most critical channels.
- **65 percent** are distributing content on YouTube.
- **60 percent** say YouTube is their most important channel.[1]

Companies want to tap the power of video to drive sales and engage customers. But video requires a major investment of time, money and expertise. Costs pile up when video projects stall and desired revenue lift just gets pushed further into the future.

So, how do we unclog the video supply pipeline? For starters, identify the most common collaboration killers and find tools to streamline your collaboration process.

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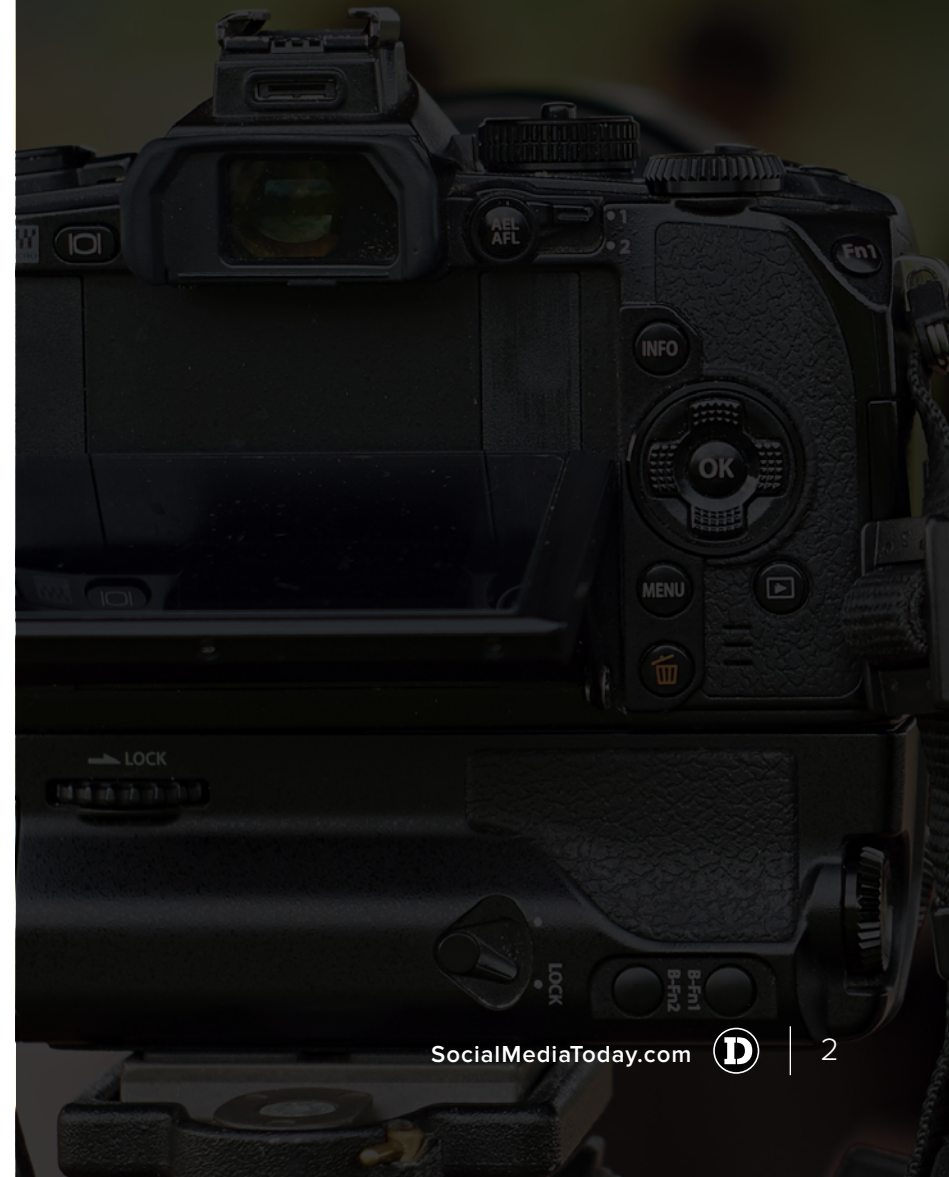
Part 1: The Worst Collaboration Killers that Stall Visual Projects

Byong Bark, creative director at Social Envi, a social media marketing agency in Los Angeles, describes a recent hiccup in a video project. Some people on the team thought the video was fine, but others suggested revising the titles and relocating the theme music. Time was running out.

"You have to have this video done by the end of the week and it's Thursday," Bark recalls, "and now they're saying 'we don't like this'." And because people are people, the feedback pours in at 4:59 p.m. the day before deadline.

Fortunately, Bark has good tools to help streamline collaborative quandaries. But for marketing teams without the right tools, navigating a collaboration minefield makes it much harder to get their work done — producing expensive delays.

These are the most pressing creative collaboration challenges:

Far-Flung Feedback

Marketing is one of the most feedback-intensive disciplines because multiple people have to weigh in at every stage of a process, from creative briefs to revisions to approvals to distributions. And feedback is all over the map — in emails, Word documents, Slack threads, Basecamp discussions — often breaking the connection to the visual it's based upon.

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"Typically, reviewers write their feedback in an email or a Word document, but it's out of context with the visuals they're providing the feedback on," says Deborah Holstein, vice president of marketing for Hightail, a creative collaboration solution specializing in video projects and all visual file types. This lack of context inevitably requires people to convene extra meetings to clarify everything. That then can delay timelines.

Timestamp Troubles
Revising a video requires identifying the exact moment when a problem crops up — whether video is moving at 15 frames a second or 30 or more, timestamps that identify fractions of a second on a video are crucial information.

Holstein recalls a story about a product marketing manager who always procrastinated reviewing and providing feedback on the videos she needed. Documenting each timestamp and noting each recommended revision on a 3-minute video is huge pile of tedious work -- it's no wonder she procrastinated. And her delay in providing feedback then delayed the video production team.

"You almost never have just one reviewer for any creative asset," Holstein says. You want a solution where each reviewer can give his/her precise feedback on the specific timestamped moment on the video — without requiring them to do all that documentation.

"If it's a struggle for the reviewer to actually open up the file to give feedback on it, **that delays everything and their frustration could even trickle into the tenor of their feedback.**"

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Version Aversion

Revisions create a morass of video versions, creating a wealth of opportunities for gumming up the creative collaborative process.

"There might be an updated version that's already been put out there for review," Holstein says, "but somebody might not be on the same page with that, and they're providing feedback on an earlier version, which then messes everybody up."

Creative collaboration collapses if people can't easily determine which version of a document is most up-to-date.

Preview Prevention

Creative people use specialized software that publish in a galaxy of file formats — many of which cannot be viewed by the reviewers who do not use those platforms.

"If it's a struggle for the reviewer to actually open up the file to give feedback on it, that delays everything and their frustration could even trickle into the tenor of their feedback," Holstein says.

Collaboration depends on everybody being able to see (and hear) the video being reviewed, making it easy for your reviewers. When everyone can review quickly and easily, you're far more likely to get a faster approval on the creative project.

Approval Ambiguity

It's not always obvious that a video has been approved for distribution.

A high-level manager posting "Looks good!" might be giving the green light, but maybe not. Questions linger …

"Are we still waiting on the CMO to give her feedback?"
"Is this person's approval enough?"

… creating potential delays and the risk of unfinished videos going out to the public.

"It's incredibly ambiguous and it tends to cause a lot of delays when nobody knows whether that is the actual approval," Holstein says.

Part 2: 6 Collaboration Cures that Speed up Visual Projects

Martin Pelham, manager of media services at LAIKA, an Oscar-nominated animation studio, recalls how messy his collaboration process was back when the company's video files were uploaded to an FTP site.

"It was the Wild West in there," Pelham says. "Often people would drop content in an FTP folder just because they happened to know the username and password. This meant that anyone else with access to that folder could view the files and we had a number of close calls on sensitive material almost getting sent to the wrong people."

Pelham and his colleagues had specific ideas in mind when they went looking for a partner to streamline their collaboration processes.

"A lot of our employees are novices when it comes to technology," he says. "And when we're dealing with external partners, they tend to be executives that may have a range of technical competence, but share the same low tolerance for problems."

Many companies are using online creative collaboration tools to limit cost overruns, accelerate video production and stick to their timelines. Here's what they should look for:

1. Intuitive Feedback
All collaborators should be able to look at a video and place their feedback directly on the file, says Liana Tallarico, senior marketing manager at Hightail.
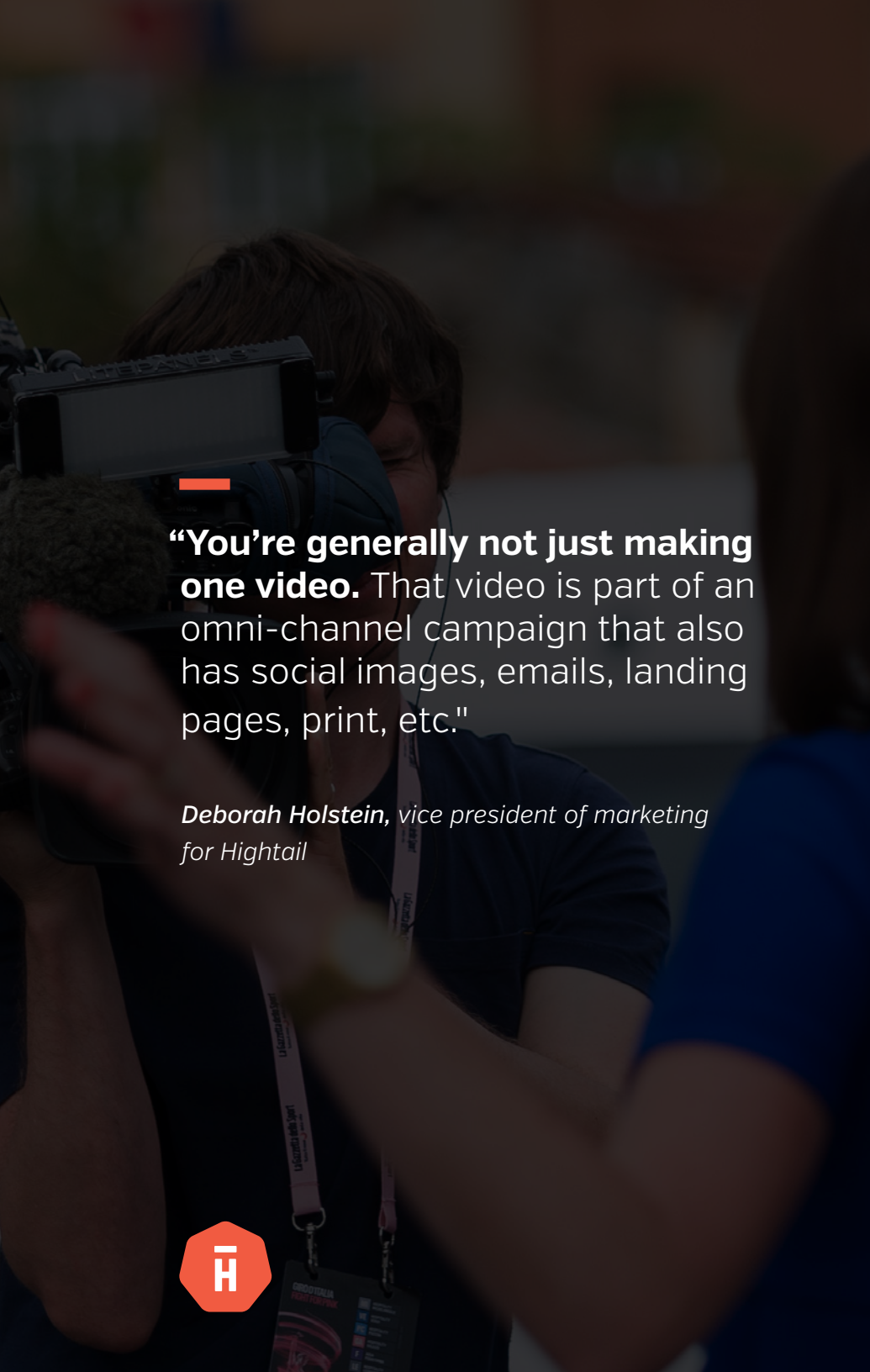
Email just doesn't cut it anymore, she says: "How can you expect to have a fruitful conversation around creative if there's confusion around what you're looking at?" Sure, people can view attachments, but it's too easy for a single line of crucial feedback to get lost in a long string of emails.

The solution is to attach all feedback to the actual video file in a dedicated creative collaboration tool — this unifies and standardizes people's comments and ensures everybody sees everything that's being said, so everyone is always on the same page.

2. Accurate Timestamp Tracking
Tallarico describes a common video revision challenge: Somebody in a video is wearing the wrong pair of eyeglasses and some footage needs to be swapped out. You need a solution that allows the reviewer to indicate his feedback at the exact point in the video timeline so the video editor can easily find it. And all collaborators can see this comment and can provide their precise feedback in the same way directly on the same video. Each reviewer can see what was said before, so no time gets wasted duplicating feedback and the editor has everything in one place.

"You're generally not just making one video. That video is part of an omni-channel campaign that also has social images, emails, landing pages, print, etc."

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"It really streamlines the time it takes to get feedback on any one video version," Tallarico says.

3. Tight Version Control

It's far too easy for collaborators to grab the wrong file version. That's why creative collaboration tools need to be able to provide the historical context and prevent version mix-ups. While having access to previous versions — and all of the related feedback — is helpful to communicate progress, it's also far too easy for collaborators to grab the wrong version.

"It's also helpful if you just need to reference what had happened in the past," Tallarico says. "Where did we start and where did we end up? What comment led to the changes in the current state?"

4. Previews of Every Major File Format

Collaborators need to be able to view any kind of file — video, text, still photography, graphics — in their browser without installing special software, Holstein says.

"You're generally not just making one video," Holstein says. "That video is part of an omni-channel campaign that also has social images, emails, landing pages, print, etc." A creative collaboration tool that allows the entire team to see, review and approve all of the different file types comprising a campaign ensures the campaign has a consistent look and feel.

5. Clear Guidance on Approvals

There's nothing worse than not knowing whether a finished video is actually ready to be distributed. It's not unusual for a video to require three or four people to sign off on it within a specific time frame. What happens if one of the approvers is running late? Is there a way to identify the laggards and make sure everybody on the team can see where the approval delay is happening?

"Make sure your tool has clear approvals," Holstein says. A well-designed tool makes it obvious who has signed off on the video — and who has not — and ensures the entire collaborative team always knows about a video's approval status.

6. A Purpose-Built Creative Collaboration Platform

Lots of creative collaborators have tried to use project management platforms that aren't well-suited to the creative process, Holstein says. Creativity doesn't necessarily happen on a fixed timeline — it happens when throughout the whole of the creative collaboration process. In addition, generic project management tools often have the same challenges as email — comments and feedback are not in context with the work itself.

By contrast, a platform built specifically for creative processes feels more comfortable and familiar to creative teams, so there is no issue with adoption and use. And it addresses the need for conversations to happen in the context of the visual project.

"When it's purpose-built around the creative work, you get the right level of project management without the overly structured overhead that can discourage creative people from embracing the platform," Holstein says.

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Picking the Right Creative Collaboration Tool

A recent survey found that **70 percent** of consumers said they had shared a brand's video, and that **72 percent** of businesses said videos improved their conversion rates.[2] Indeed, video is expected to account for three-quarters of all mobile traffic by 2020.[3]

These kinds of stats will encourage brands to demand more video — preferably at lower prices and on shorter timelines. Better collaboration tools can help make that happen, provided they account for the perspectives of video creators and their marketing partners.

The key is picking the right collaboration tool and having your whole team on board.

"When everyone's using it," Byong Bark of Social Envi says, it's a good sign. "It's just plain and simple. If it's really good at what it does, people will use it." Having a tool that works with all major file formats and allows for tight version control makes for a solution that works for all people in the creative process.

Key Takeaways

Look for these six factors when finding the right online creative collaboration tool to limit cost overruns, accelerate video production and stick to timelines:

1. Intuitive Feedback
Being able to attach real-time feedback from multiple reviewers to actual video files in a dedicated creative collaboration tool unifies feedback and ensures everyone is always on the same page.

2. Accurate Timestamp Tracking
Ideal solutions give reviewers the ability to put feedback at exact timestamps in a video timeline while allowing all reviewers to see that feedback.

3. Tight Version Control
Creative collaboration tools must provide historical context and prevent version mix-ups while also allowing reviewers to give feedback on the correct version.

Having a tool that works with all major file formats and allows for tight version control makes for **a solution that works for all people in the creative process.**

4. Previews of Every Major File Format
The ideal creative collaboration tool allows for viewing any file format without any special software.

5. Clear Guidance on Approvals
Is the video approved? A well-designed tool ensures the entire collaborative team always knows who has approved and who has not, eliminating ambiguity about a video's go-live status.

6. A Purpose-Built Creative Collaboration Platform
Creative teams have different needs. A platform that is intuitive and built specifically for the creative process can help teams adopt a new process faster so that businesses can begin to see the benefit.

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About Hightail

Hightail has helped creative professionals share multi-media files for more than a decade and aims to free the world's creativity by making creative collaboration more intuitive and accessible. Based in California, Hightail serves over 50 million users worldwide, including professionals at 98% of the Fortune 500. Learn more at **www.hightail.com**.

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Sources

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