The Role of Video

in the Digital Transformation of Government

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Digital technologies are revolutionizing the way organizations of all kinds do business, solve problems, and create connections. This digital transformation promises to create new opportunities for governments of all levels to operate more efficiently, increase citizen engagement and build new alliances by embracing the digital tools and technologies people use in everyday life.

One of the most effective of these new technologies is video—a format that's three times easier to understand than text. In a growing number of locations worldwide, the online video transformation in government is a key to creating new digital ecosystems that serve citizens, communities, and the world.

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The Tools and Technologies of Digital Transformation

Digital transformation takes many forms, depending on existing circumstances and the goals and needs of a particular organization. In government, digital transformation has been broadly defined as "the ongoing application of modern technology to improve government performance… and deliver government services and programs more efficiently, transparently, and cost-effectively."

The increase in usage of video to communicate with citizens is one example of digital transformation in government. Departments are finding that complex topics such as changing tax regulations or public health orders can best be explained through the medium of video.

Video Drives Digital Transformation

Among the many tools available to governments seeking better ways to create a citizen-forward model of delivering services and support, live and on-demand video streaming stands out as the most effective format for audience engagement. For government bodies investing in a future defined by the technology, livestream and on-demand video is the linchpin of a modern digital strategy.

In 2021, the average Internet user spends approximately 100 minutes per day watching online videos. Whether for shopping, entertainment or information, video tops the list of ways to increase audience engagement across all sectors—and it soundly beats text for delivering messages audiences need to hear.

Recent statistics reveal that the comprehension rate for video is 74% higher than text, and the retention rate for information delivered via video is 95%, compared to just 10 percent for text-based information. Along with that, time spent on a web page jumps by nearly 250% when the page contains a video.

Because video is a ubiquitous part of nearly every Internet user's life, it's also rapidly becoming the optimum tool not only for delivering government services but also for improving internal operations in government organizations.

Key Trends Shape Video Strategies

Video has evolved beyond a component within an organization's social media strategy to playing a central role in effective digital communication and digital services delivery plans. Now, government bodies need to look beyond simply posting content to the popular social media sites citizens typically use. Developing a viable video strategy for delivering government services depends on understanding key trends in the constantly developing world of video content.

- Public social video platforms are largely unsuited to delivering integrated, online video through corporate websites, intranets, or enterprise applications, and these platforms are limited in their ability to direct the user experience.

- Increasingly sophisticated digital marketing has made capturing and retaining social audiences more challenging, with most video content having less than three seconds to grab a viewer's attention.

- More engaging, interactive video formats are replacing the passive viewing model, providing a far more rewarding experience for the viewer, and the opportunity for agencies to provide and derive value from their audiences.

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The Right Tools and Platforms Support Video Delivery

With these trends in mind, government agencies need to rethink their online video platforms in terms of reputational risk, brand perception, security, and accessibility in order to ensure that they have the right tools to support a positive user experience, which may not be social media.

Integration of streaming video into online service portals has been shown to dramatically increase their usability and reduce instances in which frustrated viewers turn to Google, YouTube, or a customer contact center to complete a task or find an answer.

- Contextually relevant video integrated into core digital channels supports transactional online services and enhances digital service delivery.

- Interactive video now makes it possible for individuals to "choose their own adventure" through clickable video content, chapters, and searchable video captions.

- Progressive organizations are leveraging cloud-based software and infrastructure solutions to integrate video with existing applications to minimize IT investment and maximize user experience.

Video Streaming Drives Engagement

Video streaming is transforming stakeholder and community engagement, enabling government agencies in all arenas of service to connect more meaningfully and cost-effectively with audiences both locally and nationally, and gain insight from viewers to inform policy, program, and service delivery models.

- Live video is a highly compelling format. Combined with real-time interaction, it provides an ability to significantly extend the reach and impact of any agency's stakeholder engagement activity.

- Cost efficiencies in community consultation and engagement are being driven by live streams with online Q&A, providing an opportunity to inform, engage, and understand audiences everywhere.

- Deeper understanding of how content is consumed is driving a more effective messaging strategy through analytics data that provides insight beyond the traditional "number of plays" metric to determine success at an individual engagement level.

Because people consume video content every day, this format is familiar and attention-grabbing. Images, music, live-action, and commentary make information delivered via video more memorable, easier to understand than complex text, and accessible to a much larger audience than a written text might be.

The applications of video are virtually unlimited, so video content can be used for in-house purposes such as employee orientation and training, live streaming essential meetings and presentations, as well as consumer-facing uses that include public health messages, emergency alerts and warnings, and instructions on how to access government services and programs.

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Viewers Expect
a Quality Experience

The increasing interest in video for government purposes comes as a growing number of government institutions and agencies are recognizing that, in order to deliver services effectively to the widest possible audience, they need to provide an experience that equals the quality users expect from the businesses and brands they regularly encounter online. With engaging content and ease of use, video can be a powerful tool for engaging individuals and communities, promoting public safety, and more.

For internal purposes, live streaming and on-demand video can be an effective way to orient new employees, provide ongoing training, and keep all stakeholders informed about events and issues. For the community, video content can be displayed on sites viewers already visit as well as government sites to provide essential information, help with accessing services, and keep citizens informed about the issues that concern them.

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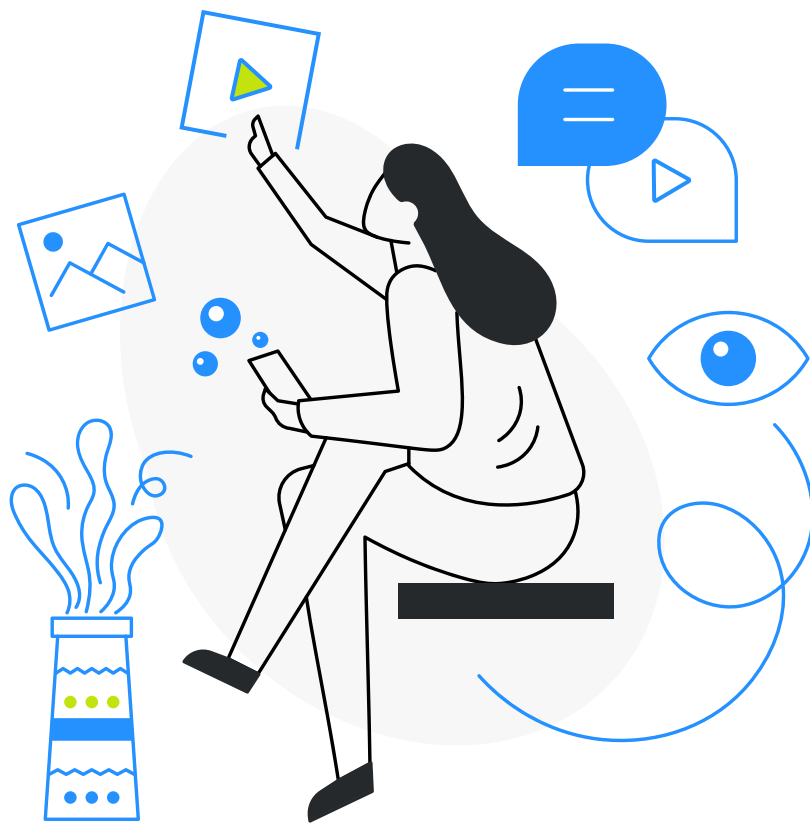
How Does Video Benefit Governments?

Some research suggests that one minute of video conveys the same amount of information of more than a million words of text. While text-based content remains a key part of any government's strategies for educating and informing citizens, video offers a range of additional benefits that make it an essential tool for government organizations of all kinds.

Video Reaches Wide Audiences

Because of its highly visual nature, video can ensure that a message reaches the widest possible audience – an essential factor for government messaging about important issues and events. For example, public service videos typically contain limited text, relying on narration and animation that nearly everyone can understand.

Video can also be quickly adapted to meet changing circumstances or to reach a different audience, such as speakers of another language or dialect. Likewise, video content can be widely shared on multiple platforms including popular social media sites, government websites and other outlets.
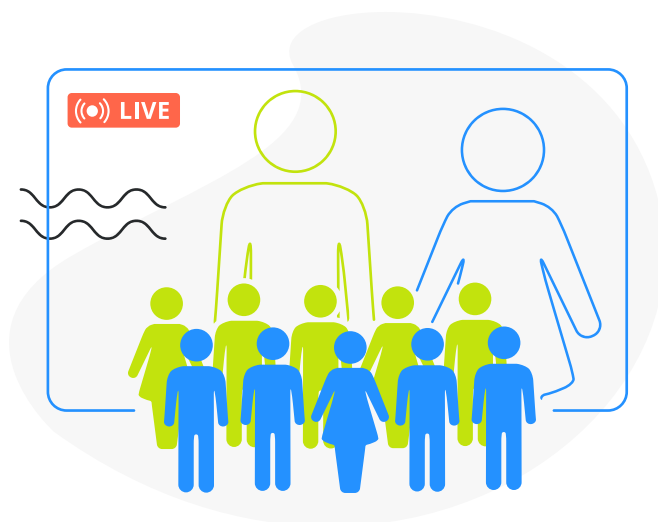
Video Content is Multidimensional

Video can be a vital tool for communication, both local and international since it captures not only information but also context and nuance. From Zoom meetings to live stream presentations, talks, and training, video captures body language, intonation, and eye contact, and orients viewers as to place and time. A video showing an official speaking from behind an office desk might feel more formal than one showing that official chatting with people in a public park.

For those reasons, video has emerged as an effective tool for engaging citizens with government initiatives, and a way for multinational organizations like NATO and the World Bank to communicate across borders and language barriers.

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Video Content is Both Immediate and Evergreen

Like text-based content, video can be evergreen. Most video content can be viewed on demand from anywhere, on any device, and live streamed content can exist indefinitely in archives or video libraries for future reference. That quality makes video an invaluable tool for educating and informing citizens, who can easily find help, answers, and guides whenever they need them.

But video can also be immediate, capable of capturing the events of a moment and conveying information with an urgency unequaled by text. Live streaming captures events as they happen so that viewers can view presentations, meetings, classes in real-time. For both public-facing and internal training purposes, video content can be timeless, or very timely.

Video Content Engages Viewers

Research reveals that video content boosts webpage engagement by more than 200 percent, and viewers retain 95 percent more of a message when they view it in a video than when they read it in a document. Because video can deliver its message in a multitude of ways, it offers more opportunities to engage viewers' interest—and for governments, that can be essential for getting citizens committed to new initiatives such as digital service portals, or drawing attention to an emerging issue or crisis.

To reach as many people as possible and boost community engagement, governments can apply the same strategies and techniques that viewers encounter on the video platforms they use every day.

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How Governments are Using Video

Both local and national government entities around the world are using video in innovative ways to connect with their counterparts in other cities and countries, operate more efficiently, and nurture a more engaged, informed population. Here are a few examples of what they're doing, and why it's working.

Reaching Out to Citizens and Workers

In 2015, the Australian government embarked upon "an ambitious, challenging but necessary agenda to improve the way services are delivered to the Australian public." That agenda of transformation has been advanced by entities such as the Australian Tax Office. The ATO identified video as a powerful way to support digital transformation and launched its own branded video portal to leverage the power of rich media content across all its internal and external digital channels. Now the ATO is rolling out help videos in online tax forms, providing integrated, contextually relevant support to enhance completions.

The Department of Communications also employs live video streaming to deliver interactive briefings to a geographically dispersed workforce. Staff anywhere can watch presentations live, submit their questions in real-time, and access on-demand recordings that build a rich content resource accessible from their computer or mobile devices. Presenters can see who participated and understand how effectively their communication programs are at reaching remote workers across the country.

CALGARY, CANADA

A Digital Portal for Everyone

The city of Calgary has implemented a digital portal for accessing a wide range of government services and programs, and it uses video to educate citizens about the portal and how to use it. With support from the Canadian government on the national level, the city of Calgary has produced a series of short, animated videos that introduce viewers to the portal and show how it can benefit them. Friendly, humorous, and easy to understand, the video series also showcases some of Calgary's "smart city" features, such as customized route updates and traffic and parking advisories. The videos are hosted on Calgary's city government site and can be accessed on any device.

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Using the Water Web

The city of Cleveland uses video to inform citizens about services such as its new Water Web—a digital portal for paying water and other utility bills. The city's municipal government site offers several informative videos that demonstrate how to use the platform as well as other city services. The interactive Water Web portal also provides information on water conservation, the area's natural resources, and more. Because the Water Web videos are promoted on social media sites and local networks, they reach a wide audience of potential users.

NIGERIA

Navigating Crises With Video

Nigeria's Federal Ministry of Health uses video content in both English and Nigerian to inform citizens about local and national emergencies, public health concerns, and other issues related to community welfare. Most recently, the FMH has produced a series of videos promoting steps to combat the COVID-19 pandemic, such as mask-wearing and social distancing. Featuring music, celebrity appearances, and other strategies to attract interest, the Ministry's library of videos are widely shown on television throughout the country as well as on social media sites such as Twitter.
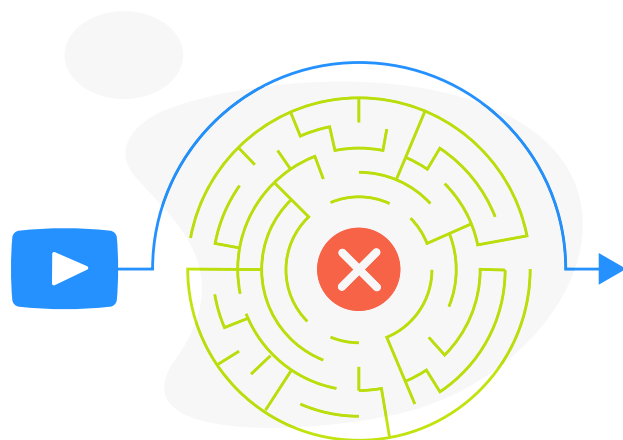
NORTHWEST BOROUGHS, UK

Raising Awareness With Video

With support from the UK's National Health Service, Northwest Boroughs in northern England has produced an extensive series of videos aimed at raising awareness about mental health and other issues. These short, animated videos depict a variety of mental health challenges, such as loneliness and addiction, and provide resources for getting help. Shown on television and on social media, the video series is tailored to specific regions of the country and features local speakers.

The NHS also uses live-action video spots to inform residents about accessing online health resources, as well as specific issues that affect community health, such as the importance of safety protocols during the COVID-19 pandemic.

THE CITY OF LONDON

Employee Training for Better Service

The City of London Corporation uses in-house video to train city workers who have direct contact with citizens in public service departments and other settings. The city has produced a series of short, animated videos for internal departmental use that depict a variety of customer interactions and model appropriate behaviors in each. The series reminds workers that everyone can be a customer and encourages politeness in every encounter. Other videos produced by the City of London for training its workforce target topics such as harassment and cultural awareness.

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Using Social Media for Better Public Health

Wisconsin's Department of Public Health regularly posts public health updates, stories about state health initiatives and projects, and profiles of people and teams working in public health and safety on popular social media sites, including its own Facebook page. Using both animation and live action, the Department's short videos also incorporate sign language and other tools for accessibility in order to reach the widest possible audience. Recent videos include a public service announcement about the potential presence of radon in Wisconsin homes, and information videos challenging misinformation about COVID-19 vaccines.

ESTONIA

The World's First E-State

Estonia is the world's most advanced digital government, with 99 percent of its services and programs available entirely online. Estonian citizens can conduct virtually all business without ever entering a government office, and the government makes extensive use of video to show them how to get things done.

Estonia's digital portals use video to inform citizens about new services and programs, warn them about public health issues such as COVID-19 and weather events, and keep all areas of the country current on changes to laws, policies, and services. Estonia has been called the world's first real e-state, and it has become a model for others in creating a true digital ecosystem on the national level.

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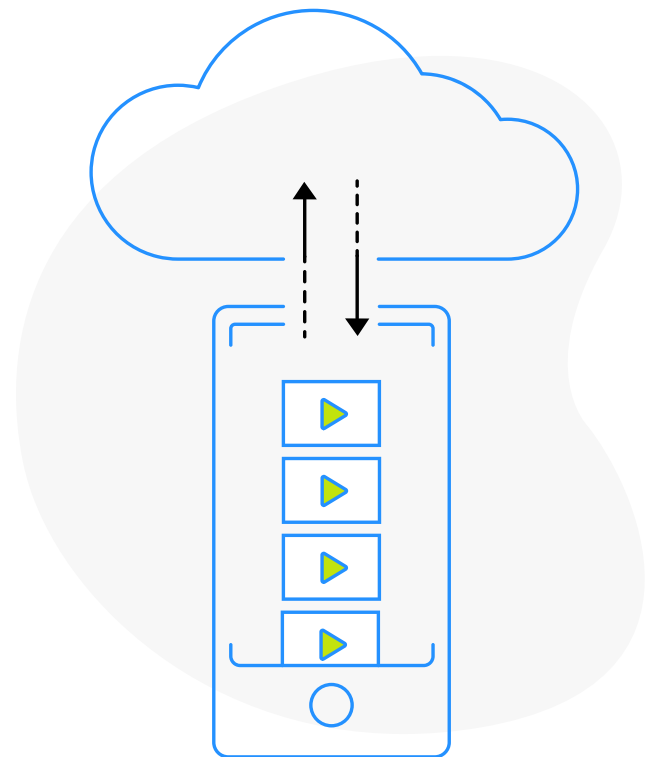
Multinational Organizations Support Governments with Video

Along with individual governments, a number of multinational organizations with a global reach are also leveraging the power of video technologies to promote cooperation and connection among countries and communities all over the world.

NATO

Better Communication With a Global Community

Governments of 28 European countries and two North American ones unite under the umbrella of NATO—the North Atlantic Treaty Organization. While NATO is not in itself a government entity, this military alliance employs a number of video-based strategies for training staff and communicating with its members and others around the world.

NATO makes intensive use of videoconferencing, livestreaming meetings and presentations, and video libraries for training and orienting staff. The organization makes video a priority because it can communicate not only informational content, but also voice inflections and nonverbal cues such as body language and eye contact, which can be crucial when dealing with other cultures and languages.

THE WORLD BANK

The GovTech Global Initiative

In 2019, the World Bank, an international financial institution that provides funding to low-income countries, launched the GovTech Global Initiative. This project aims to help government bodies to provide a level of digital service that equals the standards of service in the private sector.

The GovTech Global Initiative is a key element of an emerging Digital Economy Framework, which uses video as an essential tool for creating and sustaining digital ecosystems in countries around the world. Both live streaming and on-demand video content allow the World Bank to educate and inform governments about its services and funding opportunities, and to help all participants connect and share experiences and ideas.

Video Content That Works

Governments choosing to make video a core part of digital transformation can choose from a wide range of styles and approaches for the most effective messaging. Video content can range from text-heavy slideshow-style presentations to live streamed talks, and the most effective video content may be a combination of multiple strategies.

Music Enhances Mood and Memory

Music adds a second sensory experience to a video, increasing both viewer enjoyment and content retention. Whether a video features a chart-topping hit, a catchy tune, or mood-setting background music, video marketers understand the power of music to drive home a point and keep that point fresh in viewers' minds. Governments can and do apply the power of music in public service and instructional videos, as well as longer videos designed for employee training and promotions.

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Music plays a major role in directing emotional responses from viewers, and matching music to the message can be a powerful way to boost engagement with the content and encourage the desired outcome. For example, public service messages featuring music from popular recording artists might be an effective way to reach younger audiences who enjoy their music in other settings.

Animation Engages Attention

Animated videos are for everyone, not just children. Animation is one of today's most popular video styles, and it lends itself to a wide range of public service and educational government content such as the UK's National Health Service videos on mental health and Calgary's informational videos about its new digital portal (mentioned above).

Animations can be created in a range of styles from cartoon-esque to realistic and can include music, narration, text, and even live-action segments. Typical examples include cartoon mascots acting out a safety announcement, such as what to do in a lightning storm. With eye-catching visuals that tell a clear story, animated videos can transcend the barriers of language and culture, and they can easily be edited to target messages to specific audiences.

Shorter Content Has Greater Impact

Live streamed video content can be lengthy. Government bodies often stream full meetings, hearings, and presentations that can last for hours. But for public-facing messaging, shorter videos that last around 2 to 3 minutes are typically more impactful. This time frame allows for a simple narrative, essential information, and some memorable visuals that convey a single important message. Videos designed to offer specific answers or to help viewers solve a single problem can be even shorter.

Multiple Platforms Increase Viewership

Governments that use video successfully are creative about finding ways to place content in front of viewers. Video content intended for internal consumption such as employee orientation and training videos, or presentations made by senior staff, typically remains on an organization's own site, accessible to qualified users. But many other kinds of government-sponsored videos are also hosted on government sites, such as the "how-to" videos that help users navigate Estonia's digital portals and Cleveland's Water Web.

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Hosting both live and on-demand video on a government site gives video creators full control over both content and viewership. A private video host can do the same. But for maximum reach, government entities can also turn to social media platforms, with a presence on LinkedIn, Twitter or Facebook, where links to videos can be placed. Content on these sites is subject to the terms and conditions of the host, and the message can be compromised by advertising or inappropriate recommendations for other videos, but because many people use these platforms every day, they can help to spread the word about a wide range of government-sponsored information.

Some governments are taking videos to the people in other innovative ways, such as placing kiosks in high-traffic areas like transit centers, shopping complexes, or parks, where users can tap a screen and view informative video content on topics like how to navigate city bus routes or where to find needed services.

Distributing video assets across the many platforms people use every day boosts message visibility and increases public awareness and engagement. But managing individual accounts on multiple platforms can consume resources and pose significant security risks. Managing all video assets from a single, secure location provided by a private hosting service can give video creators control over content, save time and money, and keep videos safe from hacking and other cybersecurity concerns.

Conclusion

With video as with other kinds of content, creators need to tailor the medium to the message, and governments working to make video a key part of their digital strategy need to leverage a mix of content styles and formats for maximum impact. To fully leverage the power of video for both internal and public-facing messaging, governments need to invest in a wide-ranging digital ecosystem that supports video as a major tool for achieving four key purposes:

- Creating a "citizen-centric" model for providing government services and programs

- Encouraging and sustaining citizen engagement with the community and with government

- Making government operations more efficient, cost-effective, and transparent

- Enhancing communication among government bodies, the communities they serve, and individual citizens in those communities

For international organizations like the World Bank that support government efforts to achieve those purposes, video can provide ways to communicate, collaborate and brainstorm ways to solve problems on both local and national levels. Connecting through video can enhance person-to-person connections and reduce the risk of misunderstanding. For these organizations as well as governments both large and small, the visual properties of video can overcome language and education obstacles that limit access to information provided only by text.

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In many other parts of the world, digital tools are transforming the way governments manage daily operations and deliver services -and video is a key component of any organization's digital strategy. Getting the right video technologies in place now will provide organizations of all sizes with a platform for success, and ensure that agencies looking to realize the potential for better digital service delivery are well-positioned to benefit from interactive online video.

To improve user experience and maximize the engagement value of video, communications teams must arm themselves with the right tools and knowledge to collaborate with digital delivery support services to develop a video strategy that advances the goals of organizations at every level of government.

Viostream is a leading video production platform for businesses and government organizations. When you're ready to use the power of video to transform your communication strategy, contact our support team to learn more about our exceptional live streaming and video on demand solutions.

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