

Telling Your Mission Story: Visuals and Audio Tips

Photography

Telling a story with a photo requires a few key elements:

- Main character(s)
- Setting – something that helps us understand where we are
- Action – should be mission-focused
- Branding - signage or T-shirts or something in the photo that helps tell the viewer what organization or group is involved; some strong photos don't need branding, but it is good to get here and there

This photo tells a story, with characters, a setting, and action (image courtesy JFNA):



Resolution and Aspect Ratio

Shoot photos and video at a high resolution—you can change the resolution under “settings” inside the camera app for your phone. Taking a lot of large photos or video may require you to add a chip or cloud storage to your phone for more space. If you have the option, always shoot 16x9 ratio (rather than 4:3). For video, always hold the phone sideways, so your image is horizontal. For photography, 3264x1836 is a good size for us to use at the GA.

Posed photos should be used less often than action shots, but when you have the opportunity, get a posed photo with branding to help tell your “why” story (courtesy Jewish Agency):



Mission-focused action shots are often the ones we use the most. Notice how the closer framed shot, below left, and the action-filled shot on the right feel more emotional than the one on the lower right where you do not see the faces. You can experiment with a variety of framing for your subject to see what works best.



Sometimes we need an action shot that shows what we are fighting AGAINST rather than for.



Videography

If you are unable to hire a professional videographer, shooting cell-phone video can help you tell your mission story. Be sure you get a steady shot and shoot several seconds of footage BEFORE and AFTER the main sequence you are trying to capture. That's because cell phones often delete some frames and cut off what you think you have filmed when the footage is transferred for editing. Try to shoot both a "wide shot" to establish a location (even better if you can get branded signage or logo on someone's T-shirt), and then pan or zoom in slowly to your main event/action.

While Instagram and Facebook reels use vertical setups, other social platforms, web, live event, and desktop screens use horizontal framing. It's worth shooting things twice if you really need something for both distribution formats, because a vertical video is losing a significant number of pixels (so you can't blow it up without it getting blurry).

You can use an inexpensive stabilizer to help you steady your shot:



Interviews

For photos and video, framing is important. Interviews should be framed to the shoulders. Keep interview subjects at least six feet away from any background—that is, don't put people right up against a wall or other surface that would be in too sharp focus and distract from the interview.

This is about the right framing for an interview, or a selfie:



Audio

Cellphones have very poor built-in microphones, so if you are conducting an interview, try whenever possible to put a separate microphone on your subject or use a digital external microphone. [Blue](#) makes decent mics at lower to mid-price points, which work well for podcasts. [Saramonic](#) also makes several small microphones such as the Blink 500 that can pair with your cellphone for better quality audio than the onboard mic. If you don't have an external mic for your cellphone video, remember to be as close to your subject as you can get while still creating a good image.

Names and Permissions

When interviewing, always get someone to tell you the proper spelling of their name on camera, and that you have permission to interview them for your organization, if you don't have a formal release form.