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The Live Event Streaming Producer Guide

The disruption of broadcast hardware, software, and traditional platforms in today's landscape has created a need for a new class of producers: human beings that possess a critical combination of high-level skills, laser focus on audience experience, and a passion for live streaming.

Traditionally, live broadcast producers were limited to the genre they worked in—sports, entertainment, news, etc.—primarily due to cost of infrastructure and a now-outdated status quo enforced by a gatekeeper system.

But today, many opportunities exist and continue to expand for good live streaming producers to succeed in the industry and innovate with superior quality output. Live X has compiled this Live Event Streaming Producer Guide to help producers focus on what matters, deliver excellent streams, and break through.

WHY STREAM LIVE?

Understanding the answer to what may seem like an obvious question is actually fundamental to the job. The

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best live producers in the world have an exceptional ability to step outside themselves and see an event from multiple perspectives in real time. *Who is the superfan for this event and what do they want to see?* Identify with the most basic premise of all who tune in: We watch events live because we wish we were actually there. Attending online is second to being there: *If I can't be there, I want to watch online.* Good producers constantly ask and answer: *How can I make it "feel" like I'm there?*

"They can't escape if you don't transport them."

For video, always make sure to shade and color match your cameras. Make sure to use the appropriate color temperature based on event lighting conditions. Human skin takes priority: it should always look real.

Check out Live X's guide for matching cameras with a multi-matrix feature at http://livex.tv/camera-profile/.

While this is much harder with prosumer gear and low budgets, it's not impossible and makes an enormous difference in the overall feel of the stream. Fundamental technical aspects impact the engagement of your online audience.

Finally, be where the superfan wants to be. Focus on the viewer experience. Seeing things from their perspective will allow you to have an authentic, more immediate motivation for camera angles and focal lengths. This mindset also helps you to readily identify and address distractors that might take the audience out of the moment, such as crew and gear in the shot, shaky cameras, and anything outside of the intended event experience.

RESPECT THE IN-HOUSE AUDIENCE

Exceptional live event coverage gives the online viewer a great experience without compromising that of viewers at the event. Support your client by contributing to the event's overall success, not just through your lens. Countless producers fail in this regard. Examples

TODAY'S AUDIENCE EXPECTS MORE

Start with great audio. Clean and consistent sound with no clipping goes a long way towards transporting your audience to the event. Don't be afraid to use a compressor/limiter. Aim to keep your audio output levels normalized (critical for playback on crappy little speakers in today's devices). Don't forget there's a left and right channel in stereo. Round out the aural experience by micing key locations for ambient sound to add atmosphere.

include obstructing too many viewpoints with lighting or cameras, blocking egress points, or inadvertently preventing or missing great coverage like a spontaneous moment in the audience. See the big picture. How you integrate and maximize your role will pay big dividends towards what you see and hear on camera.

UNDERSTAND THE FORMULA

Get familiar with formulas that work. Multi-camera production has been around since the early twentieth century. The three Electronicams plot first used in *The Honeymooners* in 1955 has applications for your three-camera show today.

It is important to understand *why* time-tested formulas work and to know how to use them. Start by evaluating what your particular event is going for, then do some research and emulate the very best of what similar events and shows have achieved. For example, when covering any type of live event, it helps to establish shots of the venue and to use those shots as beat, moment, and segment markers.

Allow moments to happen. Waiting to jump cut between breaths, at the end of thoughts, or on an "up" beat may all seem obviously simple and organic, yet very often this gets overlooked.

This is not a directive to stick to the status quo. Understanding why these concepts work will ultimately allow you to bring a new perspective. In short, learn the rules before you break them.

"Get a stream out. On time."

#NOFAIL MENTALITY

The job you are on is the most important one. "Live" means thinking in terms of primary and backup (and tertiary+, depending on budget) in every aspect of your show.

A backup encoder is a must. Not everyone can afford a backup switcher, but what's your Plan B camera (with program audio) to go into the encoder if it goes down? For every wireless microphone

location, do you have wired backup? Extra tripod screws can save a location, and sometimes a show.

Reputation is currency in the live streaming world. Make sure you know how to use, not just deploy, your Plan B, and make set-up and testing of backup—including switchovers—part of your workflow. Success means having a perfectly-synched show with clean audio and color-matched stream with no noticeable mistakes to the viewer.

Whether a show is for big budget, live broadcast TV or single-camera web streams, that one element of being live separates all of them from any other project. At Live X, there is no difference in how diligently we approach the official webcast for New Year's Eve in Times Square and any other live streaming job we help produce.

"There is no problem so bad that you can't make it worse."
—Col. Chris Hadfield, astronaut

VISUALIZING FAILURE

In "*An Astronaut's Guide to Life on Earth*", Canadian astronaut and author Col. Chris Hadfield writes of visualizing failure, *"So when you get there and things fail, as they always do, it isn't something that takes you to the end of your rope, you feel composed and optimistic about things."*

One of the critical steps for a live producer is creating a workflow diagram for every project. This helps visualize all the pieces, account for all the inputs

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their own team, their client, and sub-vendors, while also being ready to pivot at a moment's notice. Be honest with your client, but protect them from needless anxiety and unimportant information. You can be assertive *and* calm. One of the big balancing acts is creating a sense of urgency so you can deliver on time without adding undue stress. It is difficult to keep cool in the face of adversity, but if you can, the rewards are a better show experience as well as respect from your crew, talent and clients.

> *"The single biggest problem in communication is the illusion that it has occurred."*
> *—George Bernard Shaw*

Try to avoid falling into the trap of "over-promising." What you promise may sound good to the client, but will kill your credibility in the end if you cannot deliver.

CREATIVE TIPS

Some of the tricks of the trade are just as easy as they are effective. One of the most effective things you can do at an event to immediately make the stream look better is to give the event lighting designer a live program monitor. It's highly likely that the lighting designer or operator will immediately improve the look of the show once given this tool. Here are some other simple techniques and tips that will help elevate your show:

and outputs, clean and dirty records, transmission end-to-end, communication points, devices needed, and ensure every aspect of the project is planned even before focusing on script or rundown. It also helps you rehearse and run through backup plans.

Don't discount the effectiveness of a visual diagram. Not only will it help you see the fail points, but it will also serve as an important tool in communicating with your clients and your team.

ATTENTION TO DETAIL

As most people experienced with live events in general know, the details tend to change constantly right up to the show. Start troubleshooting in advance of any event by thoroughly scouting the location with your main client. Understand the locations, cable runs, and power and transmission points, and incorporate them into your workflow. The more details you can account for, the better grasp you will have to give the show the potential to be great. Perspective plays an enormous role in determining what details are important. Step into the shoes

of your client, crew, talent, and audience. Remember to keep the big picture of the event in the back of your mind so all details are working toward that one goal.

Some genre-specific examples:
- On the red carpet, prepare a briefing book with questions for possible guests for your host.
- For a live Q&A, have client-approved questions ahead of time in case the audience doesn't interact.
- For events with large crews, provide an all-purpose field producer's guide with event schedule, assignments, photos and bios of cast/organizers/VIPs, press releases, and location maps. Addressing these details is the difference between a good show and a great show.

COMMUNICATION AND DEMEANOR

Many events use multiple vendors and teams for the various aspects of the event. Your client is relying on you and your team to work together and accomplish goals with all of them. The best live producers communicate effectively to

- Try to *reveal* moments to the viewer. Rather than going to the action, allowing it to develop in front of the camera.
- Cut in the "up" beat or on the breath of a speaker.
- Use creative M/E overlays, video and graphics assets, and elements for slates ("Stay Tuned" and "Thanks for Watching"), lower thirds, logo bugs, and animated transitions.
- Bands and talent will only have time for a limited sound check—be ready for it.
- Suggest environmental lighting to create depth and interesting layers of light.
- Use a backlight to create separation between your set and the background.
- Try to limit lighting and exposure settings that blind talent or make them feel uncomfortable.
- Camera angle and placement tell a story.
- Get inspired by what superfans of the show would appreciate.
- Human faces should look "real" no matter what.
- Reset the event occasionally between beats by using wider establishing shots.

BACKTIMING AND END-TO-END

Backtiming is one of those skills that tends to be taken for granted. It is crucial on two fronts: backtiming to be ready to go live, and backtiming during the show.

Backtiming to go live means starting with the event stream "go time" and scheduling back everything required to get you to that moment, from audio and video setup, to load-in, to the original location scout. Backtiming during the show allows you to fluidly move between pre-recorded and live segments. A finalized show rundown and/or script are essential here. This complex skill requires practice; a stopwatch and spreadsheet time formulas are also helpful.

End-to-end means monitoring the experience viewers are receiving. As a live event streaming producer, you are responsible for what the viewer experiences. How does it look and sound to them? Testing end-to-end beforehand and monitoring during the event will help troubleshoot a host of issues including synch and normalization problems.

TO HELP YOU FURTHER

Of course, there is much more to producing great live event streams, including selecting your streaming platform and workflow, choosing the best-of-breed audio and video gear, and exploring the concepts and tricks that suit specific event genres. To help you further, Live X has created a producer page on our website: **http://livex.tv/ producerguide** with a producer checklist as well as other tips and links to help you stream your event.

ABOUT LIVE X
Live X is a full service design, production, and broadcast company based in New York City, specializing in live streaming for high-profile, large-scale live events across multiple genres. Co-founder Corey Behnke is the Lead Producer for the Official Times Square New Year's Eve webcast and has helped produce over 3,500 live streams to millions of viewers around the world. To learn more, visit livex.tv and @livexproduction on facebook and twitter.