

The eLearning Coach Podcast #5 How to Stop Making Boring Videos with Jonathan Halls

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Connie Malamed: Welcome to The eLearning Coach podcast, online at thelearningcoach.com. I'm Connie Malamed, bringing you ideas and tips for success with creating online and mobile learning experiences.

Hello learning people! As professionals who design learning experiences, we need to understand what's involved in all types of media design and production. In this episode we're going to focus on video. I'm thrilled to speak with Jonathan Halls, a media generalist and author of the excellent book, *Rapid Video Development for Trainers*.

Jonathan has loads of experience; he's been a learning executive at the BBC, is an adjunct professor at George Washington University, and has taught media workshops to thousands of media professionals. I know you're going to get a lot out of this interview, so let's get started.

Hi Jonathan, thanks for being on the podcast.

Jonathan Halls: My pleasure.

Connie: I know you've written a book, *Rapid Video Development for Trainers*, and I do think it's excellent. I do have some video questions that I would like to get answered. First of all, when do you think it's best to use video for learning?

Jonathan: I think video is best used for learning when you kind of check off a couple of boxes. The first box you check off probably sounds funny because it has absolutely nothing to do with any intellectual integrity whatsoever; it's, first of all, if you've got the money and the time. Video is intensive and you've got to have good quality equipment to make it work and you actually need a lot of time to do it. Usually, when you produce video, it takes a lot longer than you expect it to take; part of the money, important.

However, from an educational perspective, I think video is very good when you're actually showing action; I think video is very lousy when there's no action to show. We know that for a fact. If I'm sitting on my front deck and I'm reading the newspaper one Saturday morning, you hear this sound of somebody turning on their lawnmower; you hear that ripcord being ripped. I look up and I see the person starts mowing their lawn, my neighbor. The fact is, after about,

maybe, five or ten seconds, I'm going to go back to my newspaper because there's nothing more to see except him going up and down with his lawnmower cutting the grass.

Whereas, if he hits a rock, obviously, I'm going to look up from my newspaper and I'm going to go, "Uh oh, he just blunted his blade," or something like that; or if a car drives by. The thing is, unless we've got lots of action in our video, that means real stuff to watch is constantly changing. People get bored real quick and I think if we don't have the action on the screen to keep people's attention, we shouldn't be using video. Another reason to use video is if you've actually got some motor skill or action to show. If I'm showing somebody how to change a tire, video is an excellent way of doing it because I can actually get in close, I can do close-ups, I can do freeze frames, I can do slow motion; just to really break down the learning because it's a lot easier for people to actually see.

However, if I'm doing HR policy, legal compliance, or something like that, it's boring and it's all heavy detail; it actually won't work for video. Really, I would say that video is only good for learning when you've got some actual visual shots to show. It might be like a motor skill, how to change a tire; it might be a role play in management training, how to use body language to convey communicative messages, or something like that.

At the end of the day, it really has to be active and it has to be seen. If you've got abstract information, it doesn't work very well on video; video needs to be very, very simple. The more complex, the more detail it is, the less powerful it is. That's why when we watch television, we usually forget the weather forecast. We remember the satellite pictures but, almost always, we forget what the weather forecast has actually said; it's because it needs to be visual and details don't work so well. I look at the forecast to see where the clouds are coming but I won't remember what the temperature's going to be in Frederick or what the temperature's going to be in Chicago or somewhere in Arkansas.

Really it has to be visual, it has to be simple, and it can't be complex, it can't be abstract. That kind of information belongs in other platforms, like, audio podcasts or text or graphic job aids, that sort of thing.

Connie: That brings me to a predicament that instructional designers and training people often find themselves in and that is we have clients, who at the beginning of an eLearning course, insists on putting a talking head video at the front. It's the video of a leader, a president of a company, or a thought leader and they believe that it will influence people to want to take up learning.

I'm pretty sure that people simply just skip over it, although I have no research to show that. Is there any way to make a talking head video interesting?

Jonathan: No. Nope. People ask me that all the time, Connie, because they say, "Well, Jonathan, tell me how I can make my talking head video look more interesting." Either they're shooting a seminar or something. It's impossible; the only thing you can do to make it slightly less boring – okay, so there are things you can do to make it less boring but you'll never make it interesting. The tip that I kind of share with people – the first thing is, try and shoot it on two cameras. One as a wide shot and another one could be a camera that you keep moving around to do interesting angles.

You can cut between those two shots and all of a sudden there's something changing on screen. If it's a lecture or seminar, or something like that, I would be using the PowerPoint slide as well so you're constantly changing what people see. If it's a talking head shot, I mean, for a Chief Executive Officer – and I've got clients who've done this, this is just horrible, it really is and you really need to talk them into doing only thirty seconds – I think, generally speaking, that people start to lose interest in a talking head shot between eight and twelve seconds.

Once you hit that mark, they're going to lose you. Certainly in television productions you can see this pretty clearly. As an example, people who don't watch CSPAN because it's boring press conferences and announces but people will watch CNN, MSNBC, FOX, ABC, whatever, because when it comes to press conferences, they do a shot of the politician behind the podium. Then, while the politician's talking, they usually cut back to another shot; maybe a journalist writing something in their notepad, maybe a close-up of them. Maybe it's a new shot of a camera operator adjusting the focus on the lens which, of course, we know is not taken during the press conference itself; it was just added later on to make it look more interesting.

Therefore, if you've got a talking head shot, you really need to be thinking about B-roll actuality, as we call it at the BBC. You want to be thinking about what other shots can either explain what they're talking about or at least kind of keep people vaguely interested. This is why news channels have so many graphics popping up. I think that was influenced partly by the interfaces of web; lots of tickers and rolling text and graphical information. We know that if you didn't have that, people will get very, very bored.

At the end of the day, you've got a talking head, my first job, when I do it, is I try to talk to clients and say, "Hey, don't do it. You're actually turning people off; you're actually counteracting any benefit." Sometimes they like the look of themselves on camera or they feel it's fancy, sexy, or glamorous to have a talking head shot on T.V., kind of on the web, or

whatever. As long as I say, “Look, my honest opinion is not going to do you much good,” I’ll shoot it for them. Otherwise, it’s really important to avoid that.

Connie: I think your suggestions could really help. Can you explain to those members of the audience that might not know what B-roll is – can you just explain that term?

Jonathan: B-roll really came back from the old days of television when we’d do editing by videotape. What you would see is – you would have an A-roll, a tape of what we’d call an A-tape, which would be actual important stuff; somebody talking. Then you’d always have a backup roll, or B-roll, which you would cut to, to kind of help cover up what’s called jump cuts. It’s hard to explain via audio; it’s easier to show. What would often happen is if you cut some action, say you go to a twenty second piece, somebody’s walking down the alley way and you want to cut that from twenty-five seconds down to five seconds. You’d actually see a jump between the two cuts; so you’d use B-roll, which might be a shot of the person’s feet walking along, to kind of cover up the fact that you’ve done that cut.

This is a technique used in television interviewing. B-roll is really used to cover up edits and it is also used to show what the person’s actually talking about. I remember, when we were sort of doing our learning at BBC T.V. directors course, they kept saying, “Think about the cutaway. Think about cutaways.” If somebody is talking about changing a tire, cut away to a shot of changing a tire. If somebody is talking about using an ATM machine, cutaway to that shot. That’s what we’re talking about with B-roll. B-roll has two purposes, to cover up edits and also just to illustrate what people are talking about.

Connie: Right. It really is good to be able to get some alternative footage for your cutaways.

Jonathan: If you’re interviewing someone about safety in a factory, after you’ve interviewed them, make sure you go down with your camera and get some shots of the machines that look dangerous. Get some shots of people doing it properly; if you see anyone doing it improperly, get some shots of that and then label it, “this is how you shouldn’t do it.” With all that extra B-roll, you can now create a picture story. Video is all about pictures. People think and spend a lot of time thinking about what they say. People forget what you say on video but they remember what they see.

Really, the investment and time needs to always be on the pictures before you start thinking about the words.

Connie: Good advice. In terms of video being about pictures, I know that there are learning professionals who write video scripts but they often fail to use the full visual language video has

to offer, because lack of training. Video is often not taught in your typical instructional design curriculums and a lot of people just kind of fall in this career anyway.

Can you talk a little bit about the elements of the visual language that's part of video?

Jonathan: Absolutely. In some ways it's incredibly complex but then in other ways it's very simple. I think when it comes to the visual language, we need to remember that – well, first of all, let's be cheesy. Every picture tells a thousand words, right? We know that. Probably video tells fifteen hundred words. When we shoot video we're using pictures to convey a message. The way we're doing it, we're literally taking our viewer and putting them in the middle of the action.

We often think of the camera as being our tool for production. We need to forget that it's a camera and start thinking this is a person. We need to be able to construct our visuals in a way that's going to be what a person would look for when they're looking. Let me give you an example. I'm going to a cocktail party; the first thing, I open the door and I can see a big room with lots of people clinking champagne flutes and chatting away and all that kind of stuff.

That sets the context; the first thing I see is everybody. I don't see any individual and that's like a wide shot or an extreme wide shot. I use that to kind of set the scene. When I walk up to somebody and get close enough to talk to them, generally I'm going to see them from kind of their belly button upwards. That's kind of as close as I'm going to get to someone comfortably. That's what I'm going to see. All of a sudden, when I think about visuals, I need to think about, if I'm going to show somebody, how would that person watching want to see it? Where would they actually be?

That's where the visual language starts coming in. There are all sorts of rules that we use; they call it visual grammar. We think about shot size; wide shot, which is when we're far away. A close-up is, obviously, when we're really close. They basically help us determine the difference between context and then intimacy, or personal, space. If I want to give the context, I'm going to use a wide shot. If I want to be kind of close and personal, I'm going to use a close-up; I get to see emotion. If I want to show body language, I might use a mid-shot or something like that.

Another tool we have is camera angles. Camera angles help define the power and the relationship. Is the viewer in control, do they have the power in the relationship? Or is it, in fact, the subject or the object? The classic low-angle shot gives power to the object or to the person. I used to love watching the T.V. show "The A-Team". Whenever they had the big truck, or the A-Team, come around the corner, they always had a low-angle shot looking up at the

truck. If you look at the wheels on the A-Team truck, they're tiny wheels but they made them look a lot bigger than they really were; it made that truck feel bigger.

By using camera angles we can kind of create more interest and we can actually help that carry along that story. Obviously, from an arch perspective, the old, old, old rule, such as the rule of thirds – we want to create that almost unfinished picture to keep people's attention. Once again, using the intersecting lines after the rule of thirds creates a more beautiful shot and it makes it more attractive to watch; we want to watch it more.

The language is really, really important; I think that's what separates amateurs from professionals. The amateurs are struggling just to get a picture. The professionals don't struggle to get a picture; they struggle to compose a picture and they struggle to use all these techniques in a way that you never notice them. I often tell participants at my workshops, "If people notice your technique, you've failed because you don't want people talking about your technique. You want people talking about your message; about your content."

If you're doing a low angle shot, you don't want to do an exaggerated low angle shot because people are going to say, "Ha! What's that?" We want to do it so subtly that it just gently tells me that the power is in the object or the subject.

Connie: I like the way you show the different angles in your book. That really helps because you do show that kind of subtle low angle. Really, what you're saying is that we should think of the camera as a person essentially; as the viewpoint of another person.

Jonathan: Absolutely, the camera is your viewer's eye.

Connie: I noticed in your book you recommend creating a storyboard prior to writing the script. I like to do that too but I know a lot of people are so hesitant to sketch, to make little thumbnails; I'd like to try to convince people of this. What are the benefits of storyboarding prior to scripting?

Jonathan: Can I just say I'm a lousy drawer, so my storyboards look horrible. The storyboard is something I really bang on about because it will speed up production and it will end up in better looking video. The primary purpose of that is to force people to think visually about what they're going to shoot. It actually trains our brain to think visually. We're all taught at school to write; we weren't taught to draw. We weren't taught to visualize things. After ten, fifteen, twenty years of writing reports, if you work for the government, writing stories or book manuals, whatever.

We look at communicating by putting words into sentences. When it comes to video, we don't use words in sentences; our primary storytelling message layer is the picture itself, the video. People remember the video, they don't remember everything else. What we need to be doing is thinking in the video version of words and sentences. When we think of a sentence in the written language, in video it's the sequence. The sequence, like a sentence, is made up of lots of words; a sequence is made up of lots of little shots. Until we start thinking about those shots, we're actually not going to understand how those pictures play together.

I often say to people, "Really, if you're a master storyteller, using the video medium, you'll use hardly any words whatsoever." In fact, Alfred Hitchcock said that a silent picture was the purest form of cinema, for that very reason, because it's all about visuals. I think the storyboard needs to be there to help train our brains. It also needs to force us to think about exactly what we're shooting.

The other thing about it is, I always say; write your script after you've drawn a storyboard. That is because the way I see video is it's a series of message layers. We start with a picture and if we can't tell or convey the entire message with a picture, we then add another layer, which might be some music. If I can't say it was a sad day, based on the pictures, I might place some sad music. To clarify exactly why it was sad, I might add some spoken word; which might be, "Oh, he lost his cell phone," or something crazy like that.

What I'm doing is I'm doing these different layers of – different message layers – of telling my story. Video is always going to start with that visual message layer and that's why storyboards are just absolutely paramount. The spinoff is it will save you time because, if you've got a storyboard, it means you'll go out and you'll only spend the time shooting what you need. You might get some extra shots but you won't waste time shooting lots and lots of footage that you don't actually need. Storyboard will save you time; it will also ensure that you don't over-egg the pudding, so to speak, when it comes to writing the script. You do not want to write, in your script, what's obvious in the picture.

If I've got a picture of traffic on the 495, it's gridlock, it would be silly to write commentary, "This is a traffic jam." No, what I'd say is, "This is 495 at 6 p.m." We want to invest all the powers we can in the pictures. Once we've got that, we use all the other different message layers to add on top of that.

Connie: Okay, how complex or how well drawn are your storyboards?

Jonathan: We always draw the storyboards to the best of our ability. I use stick figures; I divide a piece of paper up so it's, like, six squares on it and each square is an individual shot. I will

draw the perspective but I'll do stick figures, I'll do blocks, I'll do circles; it won't look as detailed as it should, perhaps if it was a Hollywood film. Underneath it I'll describe it as well. Underneath the box I'll put a description, "Wide shot 495 traffic jam." Then I might also put down underneath, "Commentary includes the time of the day," or something like that. Then I'll move onto the next one, "Close-up, driver hitting steering wheel." Then I'll draw a picture of the steering wheel.

The storyboard needs to show where in the shot I want the steering wheel. Most people just think, "Oh yeah, just do a picture of a steering wheel." Do I want the steering wheel on the right hand side or on the left hand side? If I follow the rule of thirds, how will I balance that picture by the position I put the steering wheel? That's the detail if you've got the creativity skills to make storyboards look really good. You'd be selling yourself short to follow my approach of stick figures. For me, that's the best I can do. At the end of the day, it's about focusing on our brains; when we do go and shoot, we're not spending all of our time on the camera trying to figure out how to set the frame up. We're actually spending our time making sure it's in focus, the lighting is good, and the white balance is correct and stuff like that.

Connie: That's so important. The whole point is that the visualization of a storyboard is actually you thinking things through.

Jonathan: Absolutely. You know what's interesting? When I started my training as a radio broadcaster, I was really fortunate to have a mentor at the ABC, the Australian Broadcasting Corporations. Kind of like the BBC, only it's in Australia. There was a broadcaster who my mentor used to produce; he said she would sit up in her office from seven o'clock in the morning until about quarter to ten; she went on air at ten o'clock. She'd write her script for the whole program; it was a two hour show every morning. Then at quarter to ten, she'd put her script into a nice little pile and leave it on her desk, then go downstairs and present her radio program.

I thought how powerful that is because what she's doing, she's thinking it through; she's structuring it, she's working it, she's actually – it's like playing with Plasticine, she formulates it. Now she's got the preparation to go out there and be creative. The storyboard is very much like that; it forces us to think about what our structures are, what we're trying to achieve. One of the other things I often say to people is, when you do a learning video, don't do anything until you've worked out what your learning objective is. If you don't have a learning objective before you do your video, you can't go through and look at every single shot and say, am I achieving what I set out to achieve?

You can't look at the music and say, is this helping me achieve my learning objective? I really think it's so important for us to be really focused on what our objective and purpose is. Once again, once we've got that, we can be creative, like the jazz musician. The jazz musician doesn't improvise outside of the chord structure; they always improvise within the chord structure.

Connie: Alright, that's basic instruction on design, but people might forget it. Especially, if a video is not a medium that someone feels comfortable in; they might almost get lost, let the point get lost. That's a good reminder that we should always keep our learning objectives in mind in training and educational videos.

Storyboarding is one way to plan for a video shoot. What are some of the biggest mistakes that you might see beginners, or your students, make when they're planning a video shoot?

Jonathan: Mistake number one; oh I don't need to do a storyboard, I'm fine. It'll take them three times as long to produce that video and I can prove it. I've proved it over and over again with clients. A storyboard, not doing that first, is the number one problem.

Number two problem; thinking they should write the script before the story. Once again, it goes back to the whole idea of video is about pictures; it's not about the script. The script is there to support the pictures; think about those pictures first. Writing the script first, that's another big mistake.

Another one is trying to jam too much content into a video; instructional designers are very familiar with the term cognitive load and we need to keep that light. I always suggest to people, don't put more than one learning objective into one video; keep your videos nice and short. Three, four five minutes. Basically, people say, how long should my video be? The answer to that is as short as it possibly can be. The more we say, the more they forget. If we can actually cut out as much of crap as we can, to focus on the core message, that will make our video far tighter.

This is not new stuff. Like you're saying with learning objectives, it's basic instructional design. When it comes to video, a mistake I see is people try and put too much. They try and do five learning objectives in one four minute video. That just means someone's going to watch it fifteen times; we don't want to do that. One learning objective. If you've got a terminal learning objective and a series of enabling learning objectives, one video for the terminal objective; giving it a nice little overview and then video for each of those enabling learning objectives. Once again, good practice, keep referencing each of those enabling learning objectives into the context of that terminal learning objective.

Connie: Usually the answer to how long should something be is as long as it needs to be. What you're saying is, as short as it can be.

Jonathan: Oh yeah.

Connie: In terms of creating the short video clips, which we often drop into eLearning courses, what are some of the best way to grab the viewer's attention from the start?

Jonathan: I think the first thing would be to show something that puts everything into perspective. The viewer needs to know that what they're about to watch is relevant and will help them. This is now going back to learning theory in the 70s and the 80s, Malcom Knowles in the 60s, you know, Carl Rogers and people like that. They say that adult learners work well when they're motivated by things. If they don't see a need to learn, they're not going to want to learn. We need to make sure that every ninety second piece of learning, the first four or five seconds explains how this is going to help the learner.

That's got to be the first thing to grab their attention. I don't think it's worth grabbing their attention if the contents not relevant. The best way to do it is to make sure that relevancy is really clear up front. Then keep changing the shot; if you're holding the shot for more than fifteen, twenty seconds, there's a good chance you're going to lose their interest.

Connie: Do you have a rule of thumb for how frequently you should change the shot?

Jonathan: I don't want to be an authority on that. My rule of thumb, personally, is eight to twelve seconds, unless it's really compelling. I know some artists, for example, will argue there's nothing wrong with thirty seconds worth. My feeling is that we live in an ADD culture and the web exacerbates that. While the way the web exacerbates that, our life and work culture also makes that even more of a pressure. I would be trying to change the stuff that I do every twelve seconds; if I'm not, I'd want to have a good reason. There's always reasons to break the rules, that's fine but, as a general rule, probably twelve seconds.

Connie: That sounds about right because training videos are very famous for being boring. We're not talking about great art here; we're talking about trying to convey a message in a pretty interesting way. I think eight to twelve seconds is a good rule of thumb. Of course, people might need to break it in one direction or another; make it faster paced or slower.

Jonathan: Absolutely. You know when I talk about changing, having a change of shot, it doesn't mean going to a totally different scene. It just means shooting it from a different angle. One of the shows that my wife and I have had a lot of fun watching is *White Collar*. I sat down there one day watching it and in the space of about twelve seconds, they changed the shot during

this conversation about five times but they did it so well that we wouldn't notice. I think that comes down to the more experience you have, the more seamless our shot changes will be.

Connie: That's part of what creates the ADD culture. Is that people are used to seeing shots change very quickly and they expect it.

Jonathan: Yeah, I'm not sure if I agree with that yet. I'm still trying to form my opinion on that because we go into that world of the media is dumbing everybody down. Then the media argues back saying, no we're only giving them what they want. I haven't yet formed my opinion but I'm leaning towards believing it's the transition we're in from an industrial to a post-industrial workplace and lifestyle that's probably making it go this way.

Connie: That is an interesting argument, good point. Why don't we move onto using social media for learning in video. Have you seen any good examples of how people are using video to promote learning through social media?

Jonathan: Not that I get really excited by. Here's what I think about social media; I look at social media and I think, well, really what's going to make good social media is actually exploiting everything that the medium has to offer. That is interactivity; that is said authorship, which is a little bit more sophisticated than user generated content; it is nonlinear storytelling, or nonlinear messaging, whatever.

Therefore, when I look at social media, what I'd be looking for is content that is both created by the broadcaster and created by the user themselves, in very much a Wiki style. I don't think we've gotten there yet. I think there are some fantastic websites. I'm a big fan of Video Jug; they're full of how-to videos. There's loads of other good sites that do that; I think YouTube is a great example of social media but there's so much stuff that's crap on it there as well. It's not very well curated, perhaps. Some of the nasty stuff should be put on the shelf out the back, rather than easy to find.

I guess my jury is out before I get real excited about anything. I think there's some really good stuff coming along but I'm not sure we've fully exploited it yet.

Connie: One thing I've seen is an app or repair people, where they can go out in the field and record something, then bring it back and make a report or show other people what's wrong. For example, an inspector might see something that's wrong with a house; they might record that and send it back to the people at the office so they can see, oh, this is what it looks like when a foundation is cracking, something like that. That would be an example of the user generated.

Jonathan: Absolutely and, in fact, I did some workshops in New York for the Energy Association and they're doing a very similar thing. Their job is to help people seal up their homes for winterization and they're looking at using exactly the same process; getting shots of where air leaks are in houses, how to identify them so they can share those among people. I think that's a great example. That's exactly what it's about.

I think the challenge going forward is going to be for organizations to say, well, yes we've got instructional designers who need to be able to create good looking video that's not embarrassing but we also need to now train up our staff on the street front to be collecting the media assets as well. I think that's going to be the challenge because everyone's going to do it slightly differently, which adds a little bit of flavor but that won't be quite the most efficient way; trying to find a work flow that works for everybody. I think video is the flip chart of the future because that's where we're going to put our information for people to consume.

Connie: I also think you've got something there when you're talking about how it hasn't been curated yet. I think that will be another role; the LND department will curate best videos to teach their communities of practice.

Jonathan: Yeah and particularly given stuff that involves safety and compliance; that's where it's going to be really critical.

Connie: Okay, let's move onto mobile; people are starting to talk a lot about mobile learning and mobile performance support. Some people are already creating it. Can you talk a little about the considerations for shooting video that will be viewed on a smart phone, on a small device? On a tablet, it's one thing; it's not as big a leap but when you're shooting for a small device, what are some things we should take into consideration?

Jonathan: This is really funny because this reminds me back of about 2001, when video started coming on the web. It used to be a tiny, tiny little square and it used to look really blurry. We used to call it postage stamp video and we learned pretty fast that, actually, you've got to shoot for the medium. I think the first thing we need to learn is, on these small mobile devices, we cannot assume the techniques we're using for web video and television, which shouldn't be used for video on the web, we can't just apply those.

I think that stuff that's shot for the smart phone needs to be shot specifically for it. I would be suggesting close-ups; I would be suggesting to people, when they shoot, set their camera to wide and do everything as a close-up. Anything like a wide shot on the smaller phones is not going to be that clean. Yes, I know we've got nice screens these days but we don't want people to have to use binoculars to have to see what's on those screens. I think close-ups, I think also

that we want to make sure that the content is very short; even shorter than it is for standard web because people don't have a lot of chance to watch it.

Another thing we need to think about carefully – I don't know the answer to this – we don't know where the people – we assume people will watch the video in wide screen, or landscape, whichever way you want to describe it. What if people don't turn their phone on the side to get that nice, lovely, big picture and they're watching it vertically? All of a sudden, we're losing all of the detail. I think if you need detail, mobile is probably not the best place to put that detail. I haven't come to a fixed, this is the only way to do it, conclusion but I know these are the problems that we face when it comes to mobile. You just can't really have a lot of movement because it's just going to be blurry.

Connie: Those are great things to take into consideration, thank you. Especially, shooting for the format; shooting for the device because many organizations want to take their eLearning – and this is a big debate – and put it on the phone for mLearning; you just can't do that. I think it's important to know that you also can't shoot your video the same way.

Jonathan: First of all, we need to work out what our message is. If it's a factual message, with lots of facts and details, video is usually going to be bad for it. We really should be looking at graphics or text, where people can look at it and hold it in front of their face for a little while, to make sense of it. If it's narrative, then what I would be inclined to do is go for a podcast because you get the warmth of the voice, the accent, you get the pauses, the emotion; it's all very, very clear.

If it's a cycle motor skill, I go for video. We need to be thinking very carefully but then we need to look at each individual one of those platforms and say, well, what's the differences between those? If I'm going to the cinema to watch a movie, I'm going to move my head to left to right because the screens so big. If I'm watching video on television, it's on the other side of my room; it's probably ten, fifteen feet away. I'll move my eyes left and right but I'm not going to move my head to see the whole screen.

If I'm watching video on the screen, I'm actually not going to move anything; I'm just going to be so close to the picture. If I'm watching it on the mobile, I'm going to be moving my head. I think the better we understand the physical relationship, the easier it is for us to formulate what the best way is for packaging video content.

I like to be open to the fact that we probably don't actually know; we haven't had that long to work this stuff out. I think it's more important at this time to have questions rather than answers, in terms of how to do things. I think the questions, as much as I would say you keep

the close-ups and all of that, I think it's more important for us to be constantly asking, how do I affect the picture for the mobile relationship? How do I affect the picture for the web relationship?

Bear in mind that in a few years time, that might radically change.

Connie: Yeah, it's really still evolving and we're writing the playbook; or at least asking the questions for the playbook. Jonathan, why don't we wrap it up with a question about equipment? I know a lot of people have a budget and if someone, let's say, has to buy a video camera that's under around five hundred dollars – I know you can't really tell us a brand because that's going to change over time – what kind of qualities in a camera are we looking for?

Jonathan: There are four levels of camera that you want to consider getting. There's the cigarette packet camera; the little flip ones that are the size of a cigarette packet. Then you've got the consumer camera; then you've got the prosumer camera; and then the professional camera. The prosumer is half professional, half consumer. The difference between one end and the other end is that the professional cameras have got lots of manual functionality. The consumer cameras have got lots of automatic functions. If you want a lot of control, which you should want in an ideal world, you don't want automatic function because you don't want the camera making up your mind for you.

If you've got four people standing in front of you, you want to tell the camera who to focus on; you don't want to make the camera guess that for you because it could get it wrong. It really depends on what level you want to engage in. I would actually say, if you want to do cheap and cheerful, you could get away with a hundred and twenty bucks. If you set it on wide and you use it correctly, you could get away with decent shots that will work perfectly well on the internet. All you need is a tripod so you can screw it in the tripod and, if you want to spend a few extra dollars, I recommend getting an external mic. That's at entry-level and the key is those real cheap and cheerful cameras, set it on wide, and actually move the camera close to the action.

Generally speaking, you can get away with some good stuff. I've used these and it's worked okay but probably, if you're a small training department, I would suggest you go for entry-level consumer camera. You need to buy a camera that's got these five things - first of all, must have an external microphone socket, so you can plug in an external microphone. On board microphones are horrible and if you don't have good audio in your video, it will always sound unprofessional. I suggest you get a camera with an external microphone and you buy a nice shotgun microphone to go with that. You can buy them for fifty bucks.

You want a camera that's got these four manual functions: manual functionality for wipeouts, manual functionality for exposure, manual functionality for focus so you focus the shot, not the camera, and then manual functionality for audio so you can actually adjust the audio to work the way you wanted to do it. If you've got all that functionality, you've basically got all the control you need. Anything more a camera offers – some of these cameras have so many functions, that it will even make a cup of coffee for you; you don't want that. That's just all gimmickry you don't want.

You can get a camera – the cheapest camera with those functions, I actually went and bought one, a Canon Vixia, it's three hundred bucks. The problem is, all the controls are touch screen controls on the view finder. Whereas on a professional camera, you've got all the dials externally but basically, you've got everything you need to actually shoot good quality video and adjust all that manual functionality.

You're talking three hundred bucks, maybe three hundred and fifty dollars. Got to get a tripod, otherwise it is shaky cam and I know some people like shaky cam because it's an effect; they want to be rustic and real. I just think it distracts from the message. There you've got a nice little camera with a tripod, external microphone, and it's all under five hundred bucks. The key is you want to use manual functions all the time.

The prosumer cameras will have manual functions and they won't be accessed through view finder, they'll actually be on the side of the camera. That's really what you want to go for but, if you want to get away with under five hundred dollars, it's great. You can edit using Windows Movie Maker or iMovie. People think, oh, but Jonathan, Premier. You've got to use Premier or Final Cut or Sony Vegas. At the end of the day, video does not look good because it's been edited on a particular software package. Video looks good because it's been cut together, the right shots have been chosen, and the right shots have been taken. It doesn't look obvious at all; it all feels natural. If you want to spend two thousand dollars, that's when you start getting really good cameras that give you all that functionality you like.

The bottom line is, under five hundred bucks, it's down to how you shoot and plan your video that's going to determine whether it looks good.

Connie: Wow, you make it sound so hopeful that everyone can build a reasonable small studio, if they have a decent budget.

Jonathan: You know where it goes wrong, Connie? People want to be fancy. At the end of the day, it's all about using as little as you possibly can and having that core functionality. The green screen is another classic diversion. People think, wow, I can shoot in front of a green screen and

drop my own backdrop. Apart from the fact that it takes a lot more time for the computer to render that when it writes it; more often it's quicker and cheaper and more realistic not to use green screen. Green screen has to be lit so carefully, not to get hot spots, that people waste time trying to make it work.

I think it's always best to be basic; don't go for this fancy equipment.

Connie: Well, Jonathan, thank you so much for all that you've offered us. It was a pleasure speaking with you today.

Jonathan: Likewise, I'm a big fan of your book. Getting an invitation to be on your podcast is a real treat for me.

Connie: Once again, there were lots of practical tips and guidelines. I loved the way Jonathan was able to cover so many topics in a thoughtful way. As always, thanks for listening. I hope to see you around thelearningcoach.com.