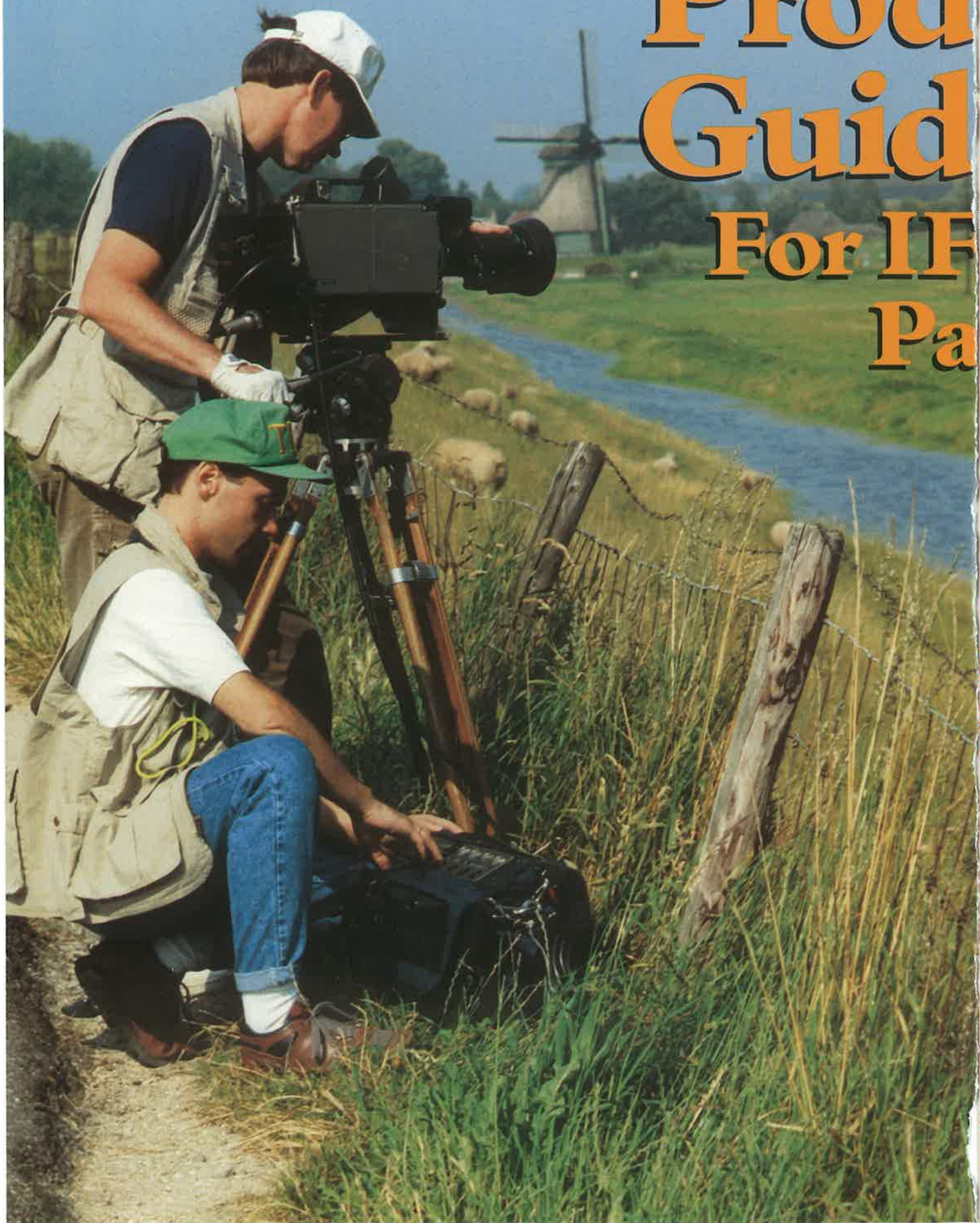


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Production Airlines and Video Part II

by Nels Anderson &
Steve Brinson

Part I of this article that appeared in the 1st Quarter edition of AVION explored the entire scope of video production including Planning, Pre-production, Production, and Post-production.

Part II is an extension of the process and delves specifically into the problems and requirements related to the production of videos in and around the aircraft environment.

OVERVIEW

The process of producing video programs for the airline industry involves a substantial number of logistical difficulties that can easily create havoc with time and financial budgets. The time and expense of the production process itself is frequently overshadowed by the additional costs absorbed by the airline in providing personnel, facilities, and aircraft.

The complexity of an airline's operations generally requires the involvement of many different departments during the video production process. These various departments necessarily have their own regular priorities to satisfy and frequently do not have a full understanding of what may be required of them during the production process.

Very few airlines are fortunate enough to have a single individual who is both sufficiently knowledgeable about airline operations and video production and also in the position of having enough authority or inter-departmental influence to ensure that production logistics and schedules can be accomplished without difficulty. More will be said about this in other sections of this document.

The keys to a successful and cost-effective video production effort involve appropriate planning, scheduling, and timely delivery of the needed personnel, equipment, services, and aircraft. Minor delays can create a domino effect that can rapidly build to very expensive proportions. Proper advance planning and an understood need for cooperative scheduling among the various airline departments can dramatically improve the potential for having the production accomplished on-schedule and, consequently, on-budget.

GENERAL UNDERSTANDING

Video or Film Production on or around aircraft involves substantial expense. The sum of the costs involved for the production crew and equipment as well as for the airline's personnel, equipment, aircraft, and facilities can be formidable.

When the "expense clock" on all of these elements is running, TIME becomes one of the most precious commodities. The most expeditious and effective use of the scheduled time is what will ensure that these formidable expenses achieve cost-effective results.

Seemingly minor oversights and delays can rapidly accumulate to disastrous proportions. It is almost impossible to overstate this fact. Everyone involved in the production process—regardless of how mundane their individual task may seem—needs to understand the extreme importance of being at the right place at the right time, with the right materials at hand.

Hopefully, the program or programs being produced will have a reasonably long service life. Because they will be seen over and over again and because they will be a representation of the attitude and effectiveness of the airline, it is important to capture the best image possible. Flaws or problems that might be considered acceptable during normal day-to-day operations become "cast in stone" for years when they are evident in a video program. The condition and appearance of anything and everything (and everyone) that will be captured by the camera needs to be examined with a very sensitive and critical eye. The intent should be to present the airline in the best light possible, within the time and budget constraints established by the project's shooting schedule.

At a time in history when virtually everyone has encountered someone using a consumer-grade "cam-corder" video camera, there is an unfortunate tendency for the uninitiated person to equate video production with shooting home video... "only bigger." Most people who haven't already been involved in professional production inevitably underestimate what is going to be involved. The process involves more people, time, equipment, and planning than they would ever imagine. Each scene involves careful planning and placement of lighting, subjects, and camera. The timing and coordination of specific actions may require numerous repetitions to get all of the elements exactly right. The delivery of lines by on-camera talent may require numerous takes to get the correct inflection or pronunciation. These are all "known" parts of the normal production process. Adequate planning and handling of the myriad "known" factors that can affect production schedules will help minimize the disruptive impact of "unknown" problems that might be encountered.

OVERALL COORDINATION

The airline must have a designated individual who has overall responsibility for the project. This individual needs to have a good working knowledge of the airline's internal structure and should have rapid access to the various persons in authority who can provide the necessary impetus to get things done in a timely manner. The Coordinator should exert the necessary diplomatic efforts - in advance - to enlist the cooperation of the various department heads, managers, or supervisors while also preparing them for the eventuality of a quick call for help during production.

It might even be helpful to acquire a signed memo from each of the various department heads that can be used to substantiate their

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cooperation and interest in the production project to the various members of their departments that may become involved.

Each department will have its own concerns about how various things under its purview will be portrayed in the video program. The Coordinator needs to be cognizant of those concerns and needs to provide a timely method of having materials and procedures checked and approved by the appropriate authorities. The time to catch concerns or problems is BEFORE they are immortalized on videotape.

Be aware of any necessary considerations relative to regular work schedules, meal periods, or break schedules that may be required for any of the support personnel and anticipate how those situations need to be covered. Shift changes, etc. shouldn't result in the shooting activity having to come to a halt.

SCRIPTING

The Shooting Script serves as the blueprint for the project. It should contain all of the necessary information that is to be included in the program, and it should also have a fairly complete description of how this information is being conveyed visually and aurally. Any concerns or problems

with script content should be addressed and worked out PRIOR to the beginning of actual production work. It may be helpful to send copies of the script to the appropriate supervisors or managers in order to have it checked and approved. They should understand the need to "really read" the script, with close attention to content. This is an important document that—after production starts—cannot be altered without the risk of incurring substantial additional time and expense. The time for input and possible changes is before production begins.

Shooting sequences and schedules will be determined based upon the completed and approved script. It is frequently advantageous to shoot material out-of-sequence from the way it will appear in the completed program.

Transitions, screen directions, and other items related to the "continuity" of the final program will be calculated and planned, based upon the approved script. Last-minute changes to the script can easily disrupt this process and may obviate the use of material that has already been shot. Each shot sequence will have its own set of planned and scheduled logistics that are coordinated to maximize time efficiency. Last-minute changes can create a chain-reaction that can have disastrous results.

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Shooting in Japan for the Delta Air Lines' boarding video series.

AIRCRAFT AVAILABILITY & ACCESS

A competent Production Company should appreciate the value of aircraft and fully understand the ramifications of having an aircraft not involved in revenue service. During a production effort, it should do everything possible to make the most efficient use of the time available with the aircraft provided. It follows that the correct type of aircraft needs to be where it is needed ...when it is needed there.

The location determined for an aircraft during on-board shooting should be worked out well in advance. A number of things are considered from a production standpoint. These include (but are not limited to):

1. The availability and type of electrical power for lighting equipment. The usual requirement is 240 Volts (two 120-volt legs) with Neutral and Ground. That includes electrical service that will provide 80 to 100 Amps on each 110 volt leg.
2. The facility for getting production crew, support personnel and on-camera talent to and from...as well as on and off...the aircraft. This includes good and bad weather considerations.
3. The direction and intensity of sunlight.
4. Sources of noise that may interfere with or affect the recording of sound.

OTHER CONSIDERATIONS FOR ON-AIRCRAFT LOGISTICS

1. Food & Beverage Service for production crew, talent and support personnel, as well as for service depicted on-camera.
2. Air Conditioning and control.
3. Aircraft Lighting and control.
4. Communications with support providers, walkie-talkies, cellular phone, etc.

NOTE: Beverage and snack service for the production crew must necessarily be on the aircraft. A tight production schedule doesn't afford the luxury of having crew personnel leave the aircraft for a cool drink. Production is hard work. The environment near production equipment is frequently hot. Continued intake of fluids and energy-replenishing snacks is extremely important. Additionally, beverages for the crew should include liberal quantities of water and fruit juices. An occasional soft drink is all right, but consuming the needed quantities of fluids in the form of soft drinks can result in a crew that feels ill. Good snack foods include fresh fruit (apples, bananas, plums, etc.), fresh vegetables (carrots, broccoli, cauliflower, etc.), dried fruits, nuts, and perhaps some candy (M&M's, Snickers, etc.), bagels, crackers, and pretzels.

AVIONICS / MAINTENANCE / MECHANICS

There is a need for personnel committed to the duration of the shoot...on-aircraft, who can operate the various aircraft systems on-call as needed. This may include controlling lighted signs and signals, turning air-conditioning on and off,



Nels Anderson adjusts lighting for a Hawaiian Airlines safety video, shot in the American Airlines maintenance facility in Tulsa, OK.

turning cabin lighting systems on and off, opening and closing doors, controlling the APU as needed, and being able to shut down any noise-causing systems that might interfere with the recording of sound. (The transformers and power units for some cabin lighting systems create a terrific whine.)

It may seem obvious, but it is necessary to check to make sure that anything that is going to be used, shown, or demonstrated during the program must not only be present - but must also look good and work properly. For instance, if an oxygen mask-drop is going to be shown, make sure the masks will drop. This is not a facetious comment. Years of shooting mask-drops have demonstrated that they almost never work without difficulty. It's best to have a couple of spare units standing-by so any completely recalcitrant units can be replaced. The current record for awaiting a successful mask drop is 3-1/2 hours. That kind of delay can impact a finely-tuned shooting schedule.

Have a procedure established (and tested) to make sure that ONLY the desired masks will drop. Mask-drops are usually scheduled as the last item in an on-aircraft shoot. The follow-up in restoring the appearance of the aircraft cabin is time-consuming and can easily render an aircraft unusable for shooting for hours.

If illuminated signs are going to be shown on-camera, make sure they don't have burned-out bulbs.

Often there is a need to remove seats from various parts of the cabin in order to clear shot-positions or to provide room for the camera or lighting equipment. The person or persons assigned to the shoot should also have necessary communications to quickly acquire additional help for moving seats when and if that becomes necessary.

BUILDING MAINTENANCE / ENGINEERING

Personnel need to be aware of the electrical requirements mentioned earlier. The person or persons assisting in setting up the electrical service for the production's lighting requirements needs to safeguard several important concerns. They need to be aware of what other demands may be made upon the designated supply circuits. They also need to ascertain where else these circuits might be interrupted and make arrangements to prevent any interruption.

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CABIN SERVICES

Cabin Services needs personnel committed to the duration of the shoot. This person(s) needs to be on the aircraft to handle cleaning, vacuuming, etc. with the necessary supplies and equipment (including functional vacuum cleaners and extension cords) at hand.

Special care and attention are given to the way things look on-camera. Items seen in a close-up shot may exhibit problems with smudges, fingerprints, dust, etc., that under normal circumstances would be overlooked. Any item captured on video that is dirty or in poor repair will become a major aggravation (and embarrassment) over the extended service-life of a video program. A critical evaluation should be made of the condition of such things as seat covers, armrests, tray-tables, window shades, carpeting, etc. with enough lead-time to correct any problems before shooting begins.

The cabin needs to be equipped with any items that will be utilized in the video program. If demonstrations are to be done with blankets or pillows...or if food or beverages are to be served on camera, it is extremely important that needed items are not only available, but they should be examined to determine their appearance is appropriate. This would include not only the items being served, but would also include the trays, utensils, glasses, etc. that are serving them. If different styles of glassware, cups, trays, etc. are used in different cabin sections ... they should be properly coordinated.

LifeVest demonstrations require a good supply of clean, functional life vests. It is advisable to acquire vests specifically for the demos rather than relying on units that may have been in-service on the aircraft for an extended period of time.

If a restroom will appear in the video, it should be checked to make sure it is cleaned and properly stocked. Restrooms to be used as on-camera subject material should be designated...and then marked so they are not used by cast, crew, and support personnel.

A supply of pristine Aircraft Safety Information cards and magazines, etc. that may be shown on-camera need to be on-hand.

GROUND SERVICES

The aircraft needs to be positioned at whatever has been previously determined as the proper location. Consideration will have been given to sun direction, noise sources, electrical supply connections, etc.

Proper equipment for moving the aircraft needs to be available, and the aircraft needs to be in-position at the designated time. The people involved in the video project need easy access to the interior of the aircraft. This will usually involve the use of one or two stair units which need to be dedicated to the video project for its entire duration.

Controlling of light, both natural and electrical, frequently involves the need to position or move lighting instruments and/or colored light-control media (gelatin) on the outside



L-R: Steve Brinson, Eric Thornton, and Marty Boyd set up a shot of Milan's Duomo for the Continental Airlines' Arrival/Destination series.

of the aircraft windows. This task usually requires the use of one or two scissor lifts (and operators). Again, lifts and operators need to be dedicated to the duration of the production work. The need to apply or change any of this material may occur at any time. Lift operators need to remain close at hand. If any shooting is being done on the flight deck of the aircraft, the scissor lifts will need adequate clearance to access the front windscreen and windows of the flight deck. The use of scissor lifts can also greatly expedite getting production equipment loaded into and out of the aircraft.

Equipment assigned to the production work should be thoroughly checked before the shoot day arrives. Lifts, stair units, generators, trucks, tugs, etc. that may be used need to be functionally checked. This should include checking the fuel supply, the charged state of batteries, hydraulic fluid levels, tire pressures, etc., etc. During the shoot schedule is not a time to discover that lifts won't lift, or that engines won't start, or that batteries are dead, or that stair units won't maintain pressure.

INFLIGHT

Inflight should have already approved the shooting script.

They should have a representative dedicated to the duration of the shoot who can approve such things as flight attendant's uniform, hairstyle, makeup, and serve as an authoritative

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source relative to any on-camera delivery of announcements, as well as to any techniques or procedures being demonstrated. This individual needs to maintain close communication with the director and should position themselves where they can give close scrutiny to the video monitors. The Inflight representative frequently has the best knowledge of the on-camera people...including flight attendants and those others who may be serving as passengers. In this capacity the Inflight person will usually serve as the primary "wrangler" of these people. It certainly helps if they can call them by name. It's easier to direct someone with "Jim, please move two seats to your right," rather than "hey you...the guy in the blue shirt...no, not you...the other guy in the blue shirt..."

Another tip to the people "wrangler." Airplanes are confined spaces. Production work, equipment, and crew need to work at a rapid pace and are frequently having to move cables, hot lights, and other equipment. These tasks can be difficult under ideal conditions and can be daunting in the confines of an aircraft. On-camera "talent" and other support people (who may be unfamiliar with the production process) frequently like to stand around and talk...in the aisles. Inevitably these people stand in the exact spot where equipment needs to be positioned or moved.

Setup for a shot sequence grinds to a slow pace whenever movement of equipment must wait for groups of people to clear the aisles. Electrical supply cables are moved frequently, and they are especially difficult to move when people are standing on them.

The Inflight Coordinator should confer with the Director beforehand to determine what sections of the aircraft will be used in the shots. Before these various people get on the aircraft, they should be told where and in which cabin they should stage their belongings and themselves.

They should be informed of the importance of not settling in the parts of the aircraft being used on-camera until their presence is requested, and they should be asked to be diligent in staying "out of the way" of the production crew. The prime considerations are safety and efficiency.

PERSONNEL SELECTION AND SCHEDULING

If the program being produced for your airline will utilize an on-camera spokesperson (i.e. a flight attendant), you might wish to consider having 2 or 3 candidates. If you have the opportunity to conduct an on-camera casting session - even using a home video camera - so much the better. Don't forget to record audio, and listen for intelligibility. That will provide you with a better idea of how the person will react on camera. If time permits, send us a copy of the tape so we might be able to make some suggestions.

Consider what uniform pieces will work best with each individual. Make sure the various pieces of the uniform they will be wearing really do fit them well. Look critically at their makeup technique. Most flight attendants are skillful at applying their own makeup...but success in this area should never be assumed. If help is going to be needed,

plan for it in advance.

If your program will include a life vest demonstration, consider in advance who will be selected to do it. Consider the hairstyle of the individual. How easily can it be repaired after multiple attempts donning a life vest? Consider the subject's body contour and how it may affect the ease of performing the demo. Have the person practice the approved procedure ahead of time. If the demonstration will involve the actual inflation of a vest, have that done as part of the practice sessions. Some people have become intimidated by the noise and the confining pressure of an inflating vest. The time to become accustomed to the noise isn't while standing in front of the camera.

Keep jewelry to a minimum, especially avoiding anything that might interfere with performing the demonstration (i.e. large earrings, bracelets, multiple rings, etc.). Such articles can be distracting, especially if they are flashing or glinting.

For the Seatbelt Demo, it is preferable to use a female passenger wearing a sheath skirt. The seatbelt demo frequently involves medium close-up views of the lower torso and upper legs. It is best to avoid dresses that are too shape-revealing. Experience has shown it is best to avoid trying to use either a male passenger or a female passenger in slacks, for the seatbelt demo.

We suggest avoiding wardrobe items with large patterns and again caution against large or flashy jewelry. Pay close attention to the hands of the person selected to do the seatbelt demo. Extremely long, styled fingernails make operating seatbelt buckles appear difficult and can make the hands look unappealing in a close-up shot.

Airlines frequently wish to portray a group of on-camera people that accurately mirror their normal passenger groups. As you select your candidates, consider the various types you may need...(sex, nationality, appearance, etc.)

Provide instruction on the type of wardrobe they will need. If they will be involved in a multiple-day shooting schedule, inform them of the potential need to wear the same clothes for the duration. If the shoot day is going to be fairly long, you might suggest that male talent bring along an electric razor, especially any who may have problems with heavy beards.

If such things will be shown, have the passengers bring carry-on luggage items...also any other appropriate props. Since they may spend a substantial time waiting...suggest they bring along a good book. Make sure they understand the length of time they will be required. If children are going to be involved, discuss their part of the schedule with the Director in advance, so plans can be made to minimize the impact on the youngsters.

This shared information is the product of our knowledge from shooting almost 300 Inflight Safety Programs, Duty-Free presentations, Arrival/Destination Programs, Boarding videos, etc. that have run on over seventeen airlines throughout the world. We are pleased to share it with the readers of AVION in the hope of furthering the quality and professionalism for which we all strive in our IFE industry.

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**STEVE BRINSON - PRODUCER/
DIRECTOR-CAMERAMAN**

Steve Brinson's organizational talents as a Producer and his creative talents as a Director-Cameraman have earned him domestic and international kudos. His reel includes projects for Coca-Cola, The Mead Corporation, Delta Air Lines, AGCO, IBM, The Ford Motor Company, Continental Airlines, and others. His computer-assisted, down-to-the-

minute planning has facilitated projects ranging from multi-camera live television broadcasts to hopscooting two full film crews through an incredible number of off-hour setups in a major international airport.

His camera work has regularly been seen on all major television networks in the US, as well as such European networks as the BBC, ITN, ZDF, ARD and Dutch Dream TV. Steve also handles many special photographic needs including Steadicam and Underwater cinematography. An Emmy and Telly Award winner, Steve was the Chief Cameraman for WXIA-TV, the former ABC affiliate in Atlanta, prior to being a founding partner of COMPRO where he now serves as Vice President.

Steve has gained 35 years of experience in the various aspects of film and video production following graduating in Broadcast Journalism from Florida State University in 1965 and a tour of duty as Technical Director for the 3rd US Army Soldier Show.



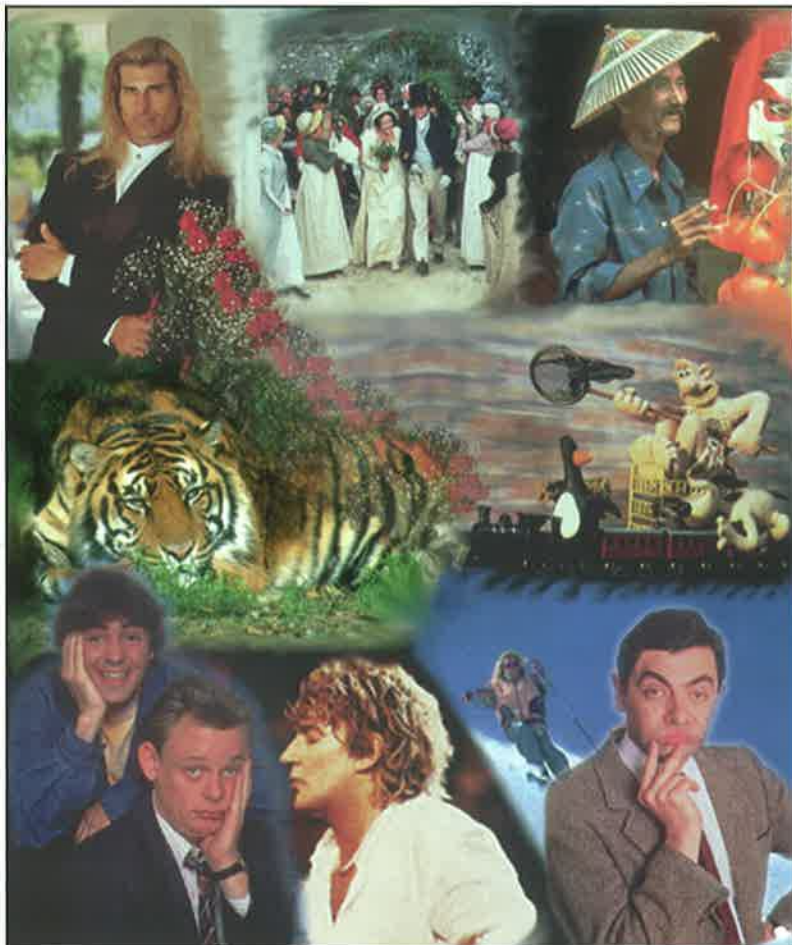
**NELS ANDERSON -
DIRECTOR/CAMERAMAN**

Nels Anderson is an Emmy-Award-winning Director/Cameraman. His artistry as an image maker and his long list of awards have earned industry-wide respect both in the United States and abroad. Coca-Cola, Delta Air Lines, The Ford Motor Company, Georgia Pacific, and IBM are among the many Fortune 1000 companies that have

utilized Mr. Anderson's tremendous knowledge and talents for their corporate communication projects.

In addition, his directorial and camera expertise involving broadcast syndication, commercials and feature films has garnered cinematographic credits on ABC, NBC and CBS, as well as the BBC, ITN and French, German, and Australian television.

Nels' 30 years of experience in film and video production is predicated on his stint as an advertising agency Art Director. After fourteen years as Chief Cinematographer for WSB-TV, then the NBC affiliate in Atlanta, Nels helped launch COMPRO Productions, and he now serves as President of that firm.



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The Old School Stoneham Parva
Stowmarket Suffolk England IP14 5JL
tel: +44 1449 711011 fax: 44 1449 711680

Pictures courtesy of: Wallace and Gromit, Pride & Prejudice - BBC
Hollywood Men - CTE, Men behaving badly, Mr Bean - Thames