

Hiring a Videographer For Your Balint Intensive and Getting Good Results

You are hiring a videographer for meeting documentation that will be used to train group leaders. The following suggestions will help you find and use the right person. To find someone to interview, word of mouth recommendations can be very useful, but even the phone book can work. A company is better than an individual freelancer, because it will have backup staff (if flu hits, for example) and backup equipment (if a cable fails, for example). To hire someone ask:

1. Has the person behind the camera done **educational filming or filming for documentation** before. If not, look elsewhere. It's okay to ask the videographer for the name of someone who does do such work. If your Intensive is associated with a university, they often have in-house videographers with lots of experience. Even if those folks are too expensive (when hired through the university) they may be available on a freelance basis – this is the exception to the film company over freelancer rule of thumb above.
2. Can they supply a sample for you to view or references for you to consult? If not, look elsewhere.
3. Find out about their equipment. Simpler is better, e.g. one camera and one microphone. If someone suggests an in-camera mike, tell them this will not work well enough with current technology. They must have **a camera and a good freestanding microphone**.
4. Arrange a **site visit** with them unless they are familiar with your venue. If they charge for a site visit and you have not hosted an Intensive before, this is probably worth paying for.
5. **ON SITE**: walk through where and how the tapes will be made and then used. This can be very concrete – set up the chairs as you plan to have them and find out where the camera and microphone will go. Listen for ambient noise/sounds and discuss making sure speech will be clear on the tape. **Clear audio is the single most important element**.
6. Show the videographer a schedule of the filming day. Rates are usually for a full day or a half day. They should be able to figure out with you how to charge you for just a half day.
7. Look at all playback equipment at the venue with the videographer.
 - a. Will it work with what his or her camera will produce?
 - b. Will the faculty have remote ability to pause, play, rewind and replay the videos?
 - c. Can the camera operator **test each completed video and each piece of playback equipment on the day of taping?**

- d. When?
 - e. If the videographer is supplying playback equipment, make clear how many players are needed, and where.
 - f. How will these be returned to the videographer and when?
8. If you are confident that your videographer is practical and competent, emphasize once more that this is documentation, not art. You do not care about color or lighting. You care very much about **being able to hear speakers and being able to see the group leaders who are being trained.**
9. **Document everything** you've talked to them about – email will do. Get a written estimate/invoice from them. **Be sure you have a way to get in touch with the boss on the day of taping** (a hireling may well run the camera), just in case.

A few more rules of thumb: stay away from art school students, unless you know they have experience filming seminars. This is not art. It is not uncommon to be asked for a deposit, particularly if they have not done business with you before. For a job like this industry standard is to be paid in full the day of the filming unless you have made other arrangements. Do not film in HD. It is not worth the expense. Listen to the questions the person is asking you before you hire. If they are sensible and specific, the outcome is likely to be good.

On the day of taping plan to meet the videographer at your venue in time to help set up. If the camera operator is someone you have not met, **make sure they know the purpose of the filming and how the tapes will be used.** Reiterate the importance of being able to see the leaders of the group and being able to hear whoever is speaking. See if your cameraman has any experience with confidentiality (if they have done corporate documentation, they may be familiar with nondisclosure statements and the like). If not, explain it briefly. Before any taping has begun, be sure they know the places where they will test completed videos for audio and visual acceptability. Be clear that this test needs to include the remote stop/rewind/play capacity of each machine with the video it will play. Give the camera operator a copy of the schedule and review the payment/end of filming arrangements.