Meet the ScreenFlow-er:
Aaron Nace of Phlearn

ScreenFlow for Professional Online Tutorials

Aaron Nace is the President & CCO of an online Photoshop tutorial website called Phlearn. He has used ScreenFlow to record over 400 episodes and tutorials for Phlearn, helping people to become better photographers. He's got some great tips and insights into how to create effective online tutorials.

How long have you been working on Phlearn?
I founded Phlearn in March of 2011 and have been working on the project full time ever since. It was started out of my house in North Carolina as something I thought could benefit the photography community. The company is now located in Chicago with a studio, full time employees, and over 250,000 people watching every month.

Prior to this, what was your experience with making video or screencasts?
Before Phlearn I used other programs like Camtasia to create screen recordings, but was never happy with the result. I really wanted to add better audio and a dedicated video camera. ScreenFlow is the best option out there when it comes to making professional screen recordings.

How do you go about creating a tutorial screencast? What's your process or workflow?
Our process of making screen recordings has changed a number of times over the past year, and right now we have a solution we are very happy with. Our screen recordings are relatively complex, as we record separate audio and video on external devices and sync everything in the editor. We use a Sony NEX-5N to record video of my talking during the ScreenFlow which gives the audience someone they can relate to. Audio is recorded via an Audio Technica AT831b lavalier microphone into a Zoom H4n Audio recorder. Before making a screen recording, I change the resolution of my 15" Macbook Pro screen to 1280 x 800. This is very close to the 1280 x 720 common HD size that we output.

telestream

When we are ready to create a screen recording all of the devices are turned to record at about the same time. This way it is very easy to sync in the editor. The Sony NEX-5N camera and the Zoom H4n Audio recorder both record to SD cards, while ScreenFlow records directly to the hard drive of the computer. Once the episode is done, we stop recording on all of the devices and import the media from the SD Cards. The screen recording shows up in the editor window, and we bring the video and audio clips into the ScreenFlow editor. Lining up all of the clips by using the visible sound wavelengths is very easy, and from there we trim and edit the entire video.

For some time we were using a USB condenser microphone to capture audio which required one less step of sync in post, but having a giant microphone (AT 2020) in the frame was less than optimal. That is why we switched to using a lavalier microphone and with it comes a separate audio recorder. If I was not visible in the episodes, the AT-2020 USB would have been a perfect solution.

The Setup

to trip over your words and sometimes you are just not feeling it. Staying entertaining and on point over and over again is the hardest thing we do. We have found that it helps a lot to just be yourself and laugh if you make a mistake.

What kind of equipment or set up do you have?
For recording we use a 15" Macbook PRO, Sony NEX-5N camera, Zoom H4n Audio recorder, Audio Technica AT831b Lavalier Mic, a Wacom Intuos tablet for Photoshop, and Lowel Omni lights for lighting the presenter.

What advice would you give to someone just starting out creating tutorial screencasts?
First decide if you want to be seen in the video or not. If not your job is going to be made a lot easier. Be yourself and be entertaining, the world does not need another dry boring screen recording. Figure out a way to add some life into what you are doing and your audience will reward you. In our screen recordings we minimize the window of the person talking during the demonstration, but you can always see them.

> ### "ScreenFlow is the best option out there when it comes to making professional screen recordings."

In your opinion, what are the most important elements of a tutorial screencast/video?
For Phlearn we have found that it is very important for people to be able to see who is making the recording. It is very easy to dismiss someone they can't see, but once they can see the face of the person talking it becomes very hard for them to ignore.

Having great audio is also very important, and I would highly recommend getting an external microphone.

What do you find to be the most challenging aspect of creating your tutorials?
Because we create so many episodes (we have created over 400) it is very important that everything be streamlined. Recording an episode more than once is a huge waste of time. We try to nail every episode in one take, and that can be tough. Sometimes you are going

What's the stupidest mistake you've made when creating a screencast?
I once recorded an entire episode with the setting to record the computer audio on. There was music playing on the computer, and even though the speakers were muted, ScreenFlow recorded the music. It was so loud you couldn't hear what anyone was saying. Needless to say we had to remake that episode.