Assignment 1: Multimedia Workflow Interview

I met over the telephone with Doreet Jehassi, Communications Project Manager at Symantec, on Wednesday, September, 2011, to discuss her most recent multimedia project. Our discussion was friendly and lively, and it spanned the entire hour of our scheduled meeting.

Background

Doreet graduated from college with a bachelor's degree in business administration and communication. She has been in her position at Symantec for over two years. She reports to a senior vice-president of software development in the Information Management Group (IMG). She receives assignments and takes work direction from a number of managers in IMG and also from her boss's boss, an executive vice-president (EVP), who reports to Symantec's chief executive officer.

Doreet says she was hired originally as a "PowerPoint guru," assisting managers with presentation content, layout, and technical issues. About a year ago, the EVP of IMG asked her to review a short video that was produced by an outside production company for another division of Symantec at a cost of about $10,000. Though she liked the video, she told the EVP that she felt that she could produce a similar product for much less. The EVP challenged her to create a video that contained a five-minute interview with him about a specific product announcement for IMG employees. The result was a well-received video that spawned requests for similar videos. Though she does not consider herself to be a multimedia professional, video creation now accounts for 30-40% of her time, and she expects that percentage to increase to at least 50% by the end of this year.

The Project

Doreet's most recent project is a five-minute video titled *NetBackup 7.5 Beta*. The purpose of the video is to summarize the efforts to release a Beta version of NetBackup, Symantec's enterprise-level backup-and-restore product. NetBackup's large development team includes engineers, testers, information developers, and product managers who are located in California, Minnesota, Florida, India, and China. The intended audience includes all IMG employees, as well as executives and employees from other divisions of the company. The content includes short interviews with key product stakeholders interspersed with products graphics, such as screen shots and report examples. "I also wanted to make [the video] to seem fun and communicate to all what the different sub-teams were doing to make this release happen," she added.

The Tools

Doreet's production tools are very modest: she uses a digital video camera for filming and iMovie and Final Cut Pro on an iMac computer for production. Her video projects are posted to

an internal Symantec web site. She uses Dreamweaver to edit the HTML code for posting to that web site.

The Process

At first, Doreet insisted that she doesn't really have a process for producing her video projects. However, with my prompting, we both saw that she did indeed follow a process, though it may not be formal.

The initial idea for this project came from the EVP. He suggested that she interview the leaders of the NetBackup 7.5 Beta development team to "show the faces of the team" and to describe new and improved features. She was given a list of contacts in Mountain View, California (her office location) and Roseville, Minnesota. (She was already scheduled to travel to Roseville for other company matters.)

Next, Doreet sent email messages to the contacts, and asked them for their participation. In the message she explained that the interviews would be very short, and that they should describe a particular product feature, team role, or development process phase.

In setting up interviews, several participants provided statements they wanted to use, as well as screen shots and architectural diagrams of the product features they would be discussing. Doreet began outlining the structure of the video at this point to organize the planned live interviews with the screen shots and the other graphics. (She did not use storyboarding, though she admitted at this point that perhaps she should have.) She said that the outline helped her to understand the different types of visuals she would have available to her, and in turn to request that graphics and screen shots be submitted with specific image resolutions so that they would appear uniform in the video.

Then, over the course of a month, Doreet filmed interviews with seven members of the development team. With each interview, she says she got new ideas for content, filming, and editing, and she was able to incorporate many of the ideas in the subsequent interviews.

After completing the interviews, Doreet had more than two hours of footage to work with. She began editing out the mistakes and redundant material, but then went back to her outline to help her focus on the messages she wanted to include. She said that her outline, along with the preliminary statements submitted by participants, helped her find the footage (I suggested the term "sound bites," and she agreed with it) that she needed. She was also able to pull captions and titles from the outline and statements. At this point, Doreet also made some adjustments to the order of the interviews to create a more logical flow to the information. Using Final Cut Pro, she then added the screen shots and graphics.

Next, she generated a very rough version of the video, posted it to an internal test web site, and reviewed it with the EVP and her boss. Though they were generally pleased, they suggested that she add music and some stock photos of the development locations. She worked with the

corporate public relations department to secure public domain music and photos of the cities and corporate buildings at the development locations. After adding music and photos, she again re-organized a bit of the content to improve the flow of information and images. She again posted a rough cut to the test web site, and this time asked the participants also review the video. Based on their feedback, she made some changes to update graphics.

Doreet then generated the final cut of the video and posted it to the official internal web site. After ensuring that the appropriate links worked and that the video played on PCs and Macs, Doreet announced the availability and location of the video to the IMG staff through an email message. After this announcement, she posted a similar announcement for all other Symantec employees in Symantec's daily bulletin on the corporate Intranet.

The Reactions

The audience reaction has so far been very favorable. Doreet said that people comment not only about new features of the release, but also about "meeting" some of the participants for the first time. She now has requests for similar videos from managers of other product teams within IMG.

Problems Encountered

Doreet claimed that the biggest problem she had was in scheduling the participants. She said that though the participants were enthusiastic, the interview was not their number one priority. She had to find two different participants because the originals were not available. She also had to reschedule most of the other interviews at last once because other issues conflicted with the originally scheduled time. Other problems she had were in filming; she is not a trained videographer, and she encountered some problems with lighting, sound, and setting up consistent shots for interviewees (backgrounds, where they focus their eyes, ambient sound).

Next Steps

We discussed a number of ways to improve her development of multimedia products. First, I offered to share the multimedia development process steps outlined in the article by Lin, et al. Next, we discussed using Adobe Captivate (a tool that I currently use) as a development tool when she is looking for more interaction with the viewer. Finally, she asked if I could review future videos, which I agreed to. I also suggested that she use a script or storyboards to help plan the video project, and that I would be available to review the scripts and storyboards.
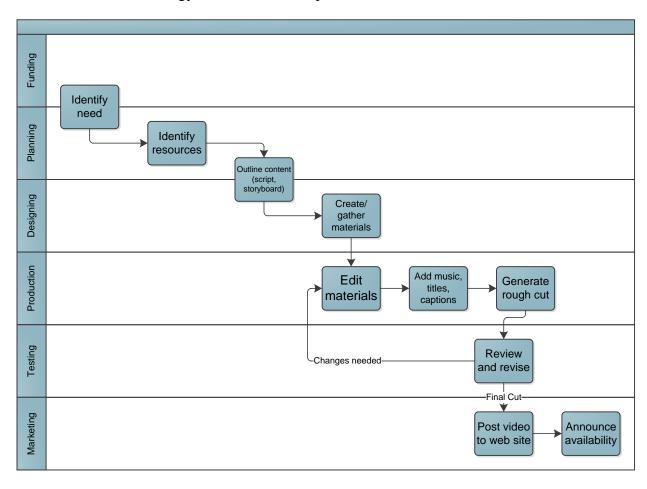
What I Learned

Though Doreet is just getting started with multimedia, it has become a major part of her job. I expect that my own role in information development will also become a bit more focused on multimedia. Doreet's experience has shown me that jumping in with enthusiasm and initiative has put her on exciting, highly visible projects. Establishing a more detailed, formal process can help to ensure that multimedia products are developed efficiently.

Workflow Diagram

This flowchart is a basic representation of Doreet's workflow for the *NetBackup 7.5 Beta* video. I overlaid her workflow on the process defined by Lin, et. al., to see how her steps fit into the more standard methodology of the multimedia professional.