Video Pre-Production Planning Worksheet

Before you start, you should have already answered the most important overarching questions:

1. *Who is the audience for your production?*
2. *What is the message (information) you're trying to share?*
3. *What imagery and/or audio will best convey that message?*

If you're not able to clearly answer these questions, you're very likely not ready for the planning process.

____ Create a script and/or outline

Prepare either a script (for a fiction-type video) or an outline (for non-fiction, documentary-type work). The script/outline should include all the following elements

1. All dialog/spoken words and who is going to speak them. For non-fiction, use a clear, specific description of the information you want from each person/shot, such as 'Dr Smith explains how the elbow flexes.' Be specific, because this will avoid discovering gaps when it comes time to edit (and too late to gather new material).
2. All visual elements, matched to the spoken words. These should be a description which identifies the speaker(s) on screen, the visual elements in the shot, and the location, such as "Medium shot of Dr Smith sitting at his desk."

____ Make a shot list and breakdown

Using your script or outline, make a list of each shot you need, with a reference back to the script. A shot is anytime the camera starts and stops, so shot one would be the first in your planned script, etc. Then, for each shot break down all the elements needed to get that shot, including:

1. On-screen people, whether actors, interview subjects, etc.
2. The location for the shot.
3. Any props, costumes, clothing, hairstyles, furniture, or things seen on camera.
4. Video needs, such as camera(s), tripod,
5. Lighting needs, such as sunlight, lights, or reflectors.
6. Audio needs, such as microphones.
7. Crew (off-camera people) needs.

____ List all the elements you need

Using the shot list and breakdown you made assemble a master list of elements, including on-screen talent, video, audio, and lighting equipment, and crew. If you have used a spreadsheet to make your breakdown this may be as easy as sorting and removing duplicates.

____ Create a production time-line

Determine when the final product needs to be done. Work backwards to assign time for editing, and shooting. Think of the time-line as a list of daily or weekly goals. The specifics will be in the schedules.

____ Create a shooting schedule

Determine the availability of the required people, locations, and equipment. Begin with the days you will be

shooting, then allot time for set-up, each shot you will accomplish, breaks, and putting everything away.

Use the rough estimate of 10 minutes of shooting for 1 minute of final product to start, but only if it makes sense for your project. Try to realistically estimate how long it will take to get each shot. Some shots will be trickier than others, so it might help if you label them in your shot list as an 'easy', 'medium' or 'difficult' shot. You can then assign more time for difficult shots and less for easy ones.

Double check that your schedule includes every shot from your shot list and the elements needed for each day/location. And allow time at the end of your schedule to 'pick-up' extra shots or re-do mistakes that were made.

____ Create an editing schedule

This will vary greatly depending on the complexity of your project. You'll need to allot time for the following tasks:

1. Reviewing (and possibly logging) all of the footage you shot
2. Selecting shots
3. Creating added visuals such as slides and keys.
4. Selecting music
5. Putting it all together, often starting with a 'rough' edit followed by a final cut.

____ Plan how you will know if your project is done.

While this sounds obvious, you might need to get final approval for your project. If you are working with a team who gets the final say?

____ Plan how you will get your project out into the world.

This could be as simple as uploading to YouTube or as complex as shipping hundreds of DVDs. Even the simple plan needs to be thought about: Whose video channel is it going on? Can you upload the file yourself?