

How Time Inc Produces 3x More Video With the Same Budget



Time Inc is the definition of a modern day content production workflow. With 13 offices across the world and multiple brand subsidiaries that require all kinds of video content, from food and living, to sports and lifestyle, it's a particular challenge to sync everyone's workflow and ensure that high quality video content gets delivered on time and to requirements.

From 2014 to 2016, Time Inc's Alabama office has shifted from 750 videos a year to over 2,000. Jason Keener, one of the producers at the Alabama campus, works with a number of Time Inc brands and provides support to their New York counterparts. With a budget that remains the same, finding efficiencies in their workflow is where they succeed and thrive.

In this case study we'll learn:

- How multiple video teams across the country work together to deliver high quality content
- What they do to manage a mixed team of fulltime and freelance employees and never skip a beat
- Why Time Inc uses Wipster and how it's become an integral part of their workflow
- How their workflow has evolved to become their competitive advantage
- How Time Inc harness the power of social media and immediate feedback from their audience to deliver even better content that is on trend.

Jason Keener is a producer at Time Inc Birmingham, Alabama, where they authorise, create and collaborate on content for some of the brands Time Inc has under its wing. Their primary brands include Southern Living and Cooking Light, while they also provide production and post-production support to other brands such as Time Magazine and Sports Illustrated, along with their clients such as Walgreens.

"We specialize in lifestyle content. We're based in Alabama, along with the Time Inc. Food Studios, so we have cost-efficiency incentives for brands to send food-themed video production and post-production to us. Birmingham has emerged as one of America's best foodie cities, so we're surrounded by a lot of genuine enthusiasm from the people we work with. I think that passion for the subject matters comes through in our work."

With a workflow that can change week to week depending on the number of brands who choose to use the Birmingham division, as well as the core brands that they produce for, the need for a flexible team is paramount.

“Our post production Supervisor sees our team of freelance editors and our workload determines how many editors we need. We could have as few as one and as many as seven editors in any given day.”

This means that day to day, hour to hour, their team of editors can be working on new content, new brands and new editing timelines. Flexibility is key - one day, an Editor might be working for People magazine, and the next day they're cutting the video for Food and Wine. Despite this changing editing environment, the entire team find it easy to collaborate closely together, with shared workspaces and edits being commonplace.



Not only do they create content for their own Time Inc brands, but the sales and marketing team will bring in their own advertising clients that require video content from the Alabama team.

“They’ll drum up business with Walgreens pharmacy who then become a client of ours. When we make a video for Walgreens the workflow is largely the same as if we were working with one of our own brands. Walgreens is appointed their designated review who’s in charge of looking at the video, reviewing it with their team and being the sole voice for changes.”

Complex Brand Needs = Complex Workflow Solutions

Time Inc's strength is their incredible ability to deal with rapidly changing content creation needs. This requires a robust workflow with the right people giving the right feedback at the right time. That's where Wipster came in.

"The Post Production Supervisor sends each version through Wipster, with his or her notes, to the brands designated reviewer who is in charge of making sure the video's style, mood and music conform to the brands guidelines. They put their notes in, which are visible to the editor, and it's straight to work on the next iteration until approval."

"Wipster has been a life changer in the feedback process."

It didn't always used to be this way. Before Wipster the Time INC team used Dropbox and a shared server paired with a Microsoft Word document. People from the Alabama studio would put notes in a document, then two or three brand representatives would add their notes. Then the Word document was locked and they'd end up with four or five different sets of notes which all conflicted with each other. "It was a mess," Jason admits.

"We had been looking for something like Wipster but Wipster didn't exist at the time." Jason and his team struggled with their mishmash of servers and Word documents until they stumbled across Wipster in a blog.

"Suddenly it was there. We signed up for the trial and it was love at first sight. We've been working with it ever since."

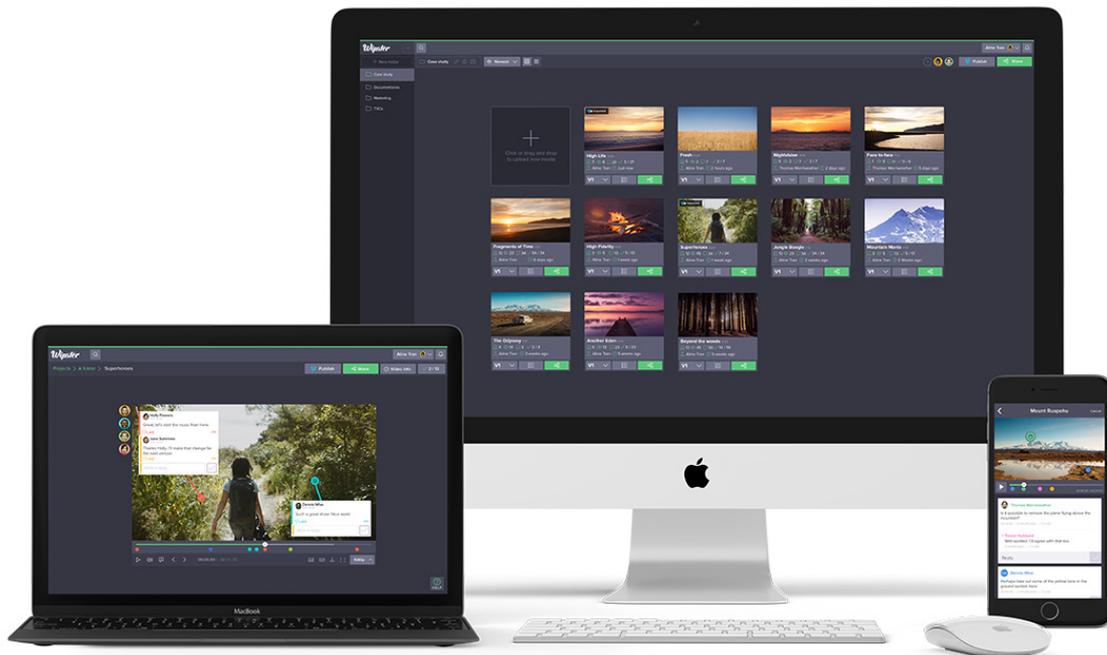
Long gone are the days of misinterpreted feedback and time-codes for Time Inc. With Wipster they can get back to doing the work they need to do - making rapid-paced, high quality content.

"From the moment we implemented Wipster it was a lot of choruses of hallelujah. There was no hesitation or struggle in getting everyone on board with Wipster. It was instant. Here's how we're doing videos now and everyone was like "Thank God." Just so much easier."

For Time Inc, a huge asset of Wipster is that there are no barriers for every stakeholder in the review and approval process to get on board.

"The user interface is so intuitive, it's friendly to anyone who is seeing it for the first time. We can share a Wipster link with brands or clients, you just throw them into the Wipster world and they get

it immediately. There's no 'how do you use this?', it's just understood. That's the biggest advantage of using it."



Now their workflow is a breeze. From their old server and Word document days to using Wipster for review and approval, it's like night and day for the Time Inc team.

They have a meeting each morning, and discuss what's due and what needs to be prioritised. Work is assigned to each editor and the videos are loaded onto Wipster.

"Once a video is in Wipster and off for review, editors can move on to the next project. Since all feedback and discussions are made in Wipster it makes it easy for any editor to pick up where the last version left off. It's a very fluid way of working."

Another part of their efficiency success is also their willingness to go the extra mile. "Everyone on our team will do anything. There's no ego," Jason shares. "I'm a Producer, but that doesn't preclude me from sweeping the floor if it needs to be swept. We're all focused on the same goal, and position titles don't stop anyone from doing work considered above or below their pay grade."

"I've been on larger productions and seen Producers who like to sit behind computer monitors and sip coffee while their P.A.s struggle to get a location reset. I'd rather help the team wrap cables or sweep the floor so we have more time to focus on the stuff that actually matters. I think ego gets in the way of productivity."

The Trends in Video for Time Inc

Now that workflow is not an issue for the Time Inc Alabama team, they can get back to making quality videos exactly when their brands need them. Going forward, Jason explains that their biggest audience is becoming a Facebook-based audience where engagement is strongest, as opposed to Youtube or other social media websites.

“The video may get one or two or 15 million views on Facebook and they get 500 views on YouTube. Part of our content’s goal is getting more likes on Facebook so that there’s greater chances for native advertising opportunities. If we post a video that’s a Cooking Light recipe, we then want the audience to click on that URL that will take you to Cooking Light website and show you how to make the recipe.”

With a workflow that is humming, creating content for digital audiences needs to be quick and responsive. Part of that is responding to trends that appeal to their audience, but it’s also about seeing where the interest lies and being able to pivot future video plans based on feedback.

“If we notice trends then it becomes the talk of “Hey, we need to schedule a bunch of cauliflower based recipes” because these are taking off right now. And that will run its course until it’s not hot anymore and people moved on to kale or whatever other ingredient is the star player at the time.”

Another great thing about the digital audience, Jason believes, is that they are brutally honest. They don’t hold back and call out something they don’t like.

“Then you can adjust, go from making 10 more of those videos to thinking maybe we shouldn’t. Maybe we should focus those efforts on something that is working.”

Jason is also seeing a trend of a more authentic, less commercialised video being delivered directly to the audience.

“We’ve noticed that the general audience was responding to something that was a little more stripped down and felt more approachable. They want something that could look like it was being done at home - something that looked realistic and the shots weren’t glossy.”

One trend Time Inc have embraced is the overhead camera look for recipes and crafts on their Southern Living brand. “It’s just having more of a feel of something you would make a home versus something that a television commercial would make. Content wise that’s been a substantial change this year.”

Conclusion

With teams, stakeholders and brands across the United States, Time Inc Alabama are able to keep their workflow in sync and deliver the goods thanks to their forward-thinking approach to a flexible video team.

In 2016 they produced almost 3x more video than in 2015 with the same budget because they focused on making efficiency their advantage. They leave their ego at the door and harness the power of Wipster to get productivity humming and more content out the door for their brands and audiences. They invested in their workflow by setting up designated client reviewers, and managing flexible teams of editors that can work on multiple projects through Wipster.

This allows them to iterate faster, change tactics if necessary, and deliver the right content at just the right time.

Time Inc is a perfect example of a modern video team that knows that content is king and video is the winner of content. We look forward to watching them continue to create exceptional timely video content for their audiences.



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