

Video Formats Used by Extension to Distribute Videotapes to Field Staff

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The Cooperative Extension Service has a long history in the use of electronic delivery systems. From its earliest beginnings, Extension has adopted information tools to extend its outreach.

Video is just one of the systems Extension has employed as an instructional tool. In fact, for at least three decades, Extension's use of video for delivering information in the classroom has provided an effective teaching aid for both state and field staffs.

During the most recent decade so many changes have occurred in the video industry that Extension may be in a dilemma as to what kind of video equipment will optimize its outreach. Three-quarter-inch video is being challenged by 1/2-inch video. In the 1/2-inch "family" the battle of formats—VHS vs. Beta—is still being waged. At the same time, there is a growing consumer video industry that has taken video production from the studio to the living room creating yet another sophistication in the standards Extension audiences use to evaluate TV. And all this is occurring in a climate of continual technological improvement.

Extension's use of video is a moot point. The real issue is: How has Extension adapted to such a rapidly changing video environment?

To help answer this question, Extension's video history was analyzed. It was asked of Extension, "What format do you use to distribute videotapes to field staff?"

The answers came from video representatives in the fifty U.S. offices of agricultural communications and information. Data was collected from this audience in 1983 and 1985.

This information was compared to data collected in 1980 from 28 U.S. offices of agricultural communications and infor-

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mation (Scott Fedale and Carl Breeden, *ACE Video Equipment Survey*, Moscow, Idaho; University of Idaho Department of Ag. Information, 1981, p. 6.).

TABLE 1
A Combined Format Comparison
Between the Two Respondent Groups

Video Formats	n = 28			n = 50	
	1980	1983	1985	1983	1985
3/4" format	23	14	12	22	18
Beta format	9	8	9	11	13
VHS format	4	8	20	20	34
Don't distribute videotapes		2	3	6	10

Findings

Table 1 is a combined comparison of the three major formats used by Extension to deliver video to field staffs. This table lists the responses collected in 1980, 1983 and 1985 from the Fedale/Breeden sample of 28 as well as the responses collected in 1983 and 1985 from the total population (n=50).

Table 2 provides a comparison of the changes occurring in video formats during the three data collection periods.

TABLE 2
Percent Changes in Combined Formats
Used by the Two Respondent Groups

Video Formats	1980-1983	1983-1985		1980-1985
	n = 28	n = 28	n = 50	n = 28
3/4" format	usage decreased 39.1%	usage decreased 14.3%	usage decreased 18.2%	usage decreased 47.8%
Beta format	usage decreased 11.1%	usage increased 12.5%	usage increased 18.2%	no change
VHS format	usage increased 100%	usage increased 150%	usage increased 70%	usage increased 400%
Don't distribute videotapes	—————	increased 50%	increased 66.7%	—————

In both tables 1 and 2, it is apparent that the use of 3/4-inch equipment is on the decline, but this decline has recently leveled off. The use of Beta equipment has remained essentially unchanged, although its use increased between 1983 and 1985 in both respondent groups. Change is most evident in the VHS format. Its usage has increased dramatically in all comparisons.

Also noteworthy is the fact there has been an increase in the number of locations that have stopped distributing videotapes to field staffs. In the Fedale/Breeden sample, fewer than 1 percent of the respondents stopped distribution in 1983. That number grew to 11 percent in 1985.

When looking at the total population, it is evident that 12 percent of the locations stopped distribution in 1983. That number increased to 20 percent by 1985.

Table 3 provides a comparison of the ways the two respondent groups used the various video formats: alone or in combination. In all comparisons, two changes are apparent.

TABLE 3
A Comparison Between the Two Respondent Groups
of the Formats Used to Distribute Videotapes

Video Formats	n = 28			n = 50	
	1980	1983	1985	1983	1985
3/4" only	17	11	1	15	2
Beta only	4	6	3	7	3
VHS only	1	5	8	14	16
3/4" & Beta	4	1	1	2	1
3/4" & VHS	2	2	7	4	9
Beta & VHS	0	1	2	1	3
3/4", Beta, VHS	0	0	3	1	6
Don't distribute		2	3	6	10

The most obvious change has been the steady decline in the use of a single format. The 28 respondents reported a 45 percent decline in the use of a single format between 1980 and 1985. Between 1983 and 1985, the total population (50 respondents) decreased its use of a single format by 40 percent.

The second change occurred in those locations where videotape is distributed in more than one format. In all comparisons, the pairing was generally 3/4 inch with VHS.

Table 4 shows the ways in which respondents changed over time. The data in this table shows that more format changes occurred between 1983 and 1985 than between 1980 and 1983.

TABLE 4
How the Two Respondent Groups Changed
Video Distribution Between 1980 and 1985

Type of Format Change	1980-1983	1983-1985	
	n = 28	n = 28	n = 50
No change	15	10	22
Changed from 1 format to 2	2	7	9
Replaced 1 format with another	5	5	6
Stopped distribution	2	1	5
Changed from 2 formats to 1	4	1	1
Changed from 1 format to 3	-	2	3
Changed from 2 formats to 3	-	1	2
Started distribution	-	-	1
Dropped 1 format & replaced with 2 formats	-	1	-
Had 2 formats. Dropped & replaced 1 of them	-	-	1

Table 5 shows the responses collected in 1980, 1983, and 1985.

Conclusions

In both the two-year and five-year studies, most growth has occurred in the use of VHS as a format for the distribution of videotapes to field staff. Though the data doesn't provide any reasons, one might speculate that VHS has been adopted for a number of reasons. It is less expensive than 3/4-inch, and VHS' preference over Beta is likely a reflection of the consumer video market in which VHS presently outsells Beta.

TABLE 5
 Formats Used by Extension to
 Distribute Videotapes to Field Staff*

STATE	FORMAT			
	3/4"	VHS	Beta	Don't distribute**
AL		▲ ■		
AK		▲ ■		
AZ	● ▲	■		
AR	● ▲ ■			
CA	● ▲	● ▲ ■		
CO	▲			■
CT	▲			■
DE	■			▲
FL	▲ ■	▲ ■		
GA	● ▲	■	●	
HI			▲	■
ID	●		● ▲ ■	
IL	▲ ■	■	▲ ■	
IN	● ■	● ▲ ■		
IA	● ▲ ■	▲ ■		
KS	●	▲ ■		
KY		▲ ■		
LA	● ▲	■		
ME	● ▲	■	● ■	
MD		▲ ■		
MA				▲ ■
MI	●			▲ ■
MN	■	▲ ■		
MS			● ▲ ■	
MO	● ▲ ■			

STATE	FORMAT			
	3/4"	VHS	Beta	Don't distribute**
MT		▲ ■		
NE	● ▲ ■	■	● ▲ ■	
NV	●			▲ ■
NH	● ▲			■
NJ				▲ ■
NM		▲ ■		
NY	▲ ■	▲ ■	▲ ■	
NC	●	▲ ■		
ND	●	▲ ■		
OH	■	▲ ■		■
OK	▲	■		
OR	■	● ▲ ■		
PA	● ■		▲ ■	
RI				▲ ■
SC			● ▲ ■	
SD	■	■	● ▲ ■	
TN	▲			■
TX	● ▲ ■	■		
UT		▲ ■	● ▲ ■	
VT	● ▲ ■	■		
VA	● ▲	■		
WA		■	▲	
WV	● ▲ ■	■	■	
WI	■	▲ ■	■	
WY		▲ ■		

Key: ● 1980 ▲ 1983 ■ 1985

* 1980 data represent a sample of 28 states.

1983 and 1985 date represent the total population of 50 states.

** Responses in this category were available only in 1983 and 1985.

What the numbers may tell is that the changes in video formats are more complex than simply adding or dropping a format. Extension has been responsive to changes in the video industry by adopting a 1/2-inch format that happens to coincide with the format chosen by its clientele. Given these conditions, Extension could use video much the same way it uses its publications—by making programs available for clientele to use in their own homes. Possibly this is a direction worthy of serious consideration.