

## Get the Attorneys' Edge | Choose the Right Documentary

There's an old saying in the TV News business that "anything can be a story." In reality, this is true, if you are creative enough to see drama even in the seemingly mundane.

It's also true that a good legal video company can turn any case into a settlement documentary, but it is not always wise to do so. Yes, a minor injury from a car accident may have affected your client's life, but it is simply not as dramatic as the soldier who survived two tours in Iraq only to have a badly placed stove fall from a forklift and leave him paraplegic.

In general, your best settlement documentary will be the one that is most visual. This will allow us to show how happy and healthy your client was prior to the accident through the use of home videos, family photo albums and testimony from family and friends.

We will then go into the tragic details that changed your client's life forever. If you wish, we will rely on expert interview from doctors, therapists, accident re-constructionists, life care planners and economists. Graphics and animation are also useful in re-creating the tragic event. We will also look for news video which supports your client's case.

Video is your most effective means of contrasting who your client was with the person he is today. It usually requires few words to show the defense the horrible damage caused to your client's life and the tragic effect on those around him or her.

While I say that the most visual cases will typically be your most effective, there are two areas where this does not apply. One is sexual harassment. This is a story which can be told very effectively through the victim's emotions, the victim's friends, company documentation and a well-constructed timeline which shows a pattern of company negligence.

The other instance are where you may not always have the best visuals to prove your case is traumatic brain injury. Still, it is quite possible to prove you client's damages through therapist testimony, the words of family and friends as well as visual clues which we usually find around the client's home - little post it notes, a family member who must now keep a diary of appointments. Your client's inability to follow through on a job which use to be easy for him. There are actually many visual signs of traumatic brain injury and an experienced producer will find them.

I have produced several traumatic brain injury documentaries and I will go into this subject more in depth in a future article.

What is most important, as I repeatedly say, is to hire a qualified team, preferably former TV News veterans who can tell an expert story. Never go with a company who

uses their business as a “training ground” for new talent. It is code for “hiring cheaply” and it can turn, what should be, a high quality video into a technical disaster.

The effect of the well-produced settlement documentary cannot be overstated. It is a very effect way to get the justice your client deserves.