



# A Recipe for Video Success

*Animation and Live Action Demonstrate Products to Increase Retail Sales*

By Eric Erwin

Senior Vice President of Marketing and Product Development, Wilton Enterprises

**Video** is an excellent means of demonstrating a product to a large audience, especially a multi-step project like building a gingerbread house or using a cookie press to make cookies. A point-of-purchase (POP) video can be easily duplicated, is much more cost-efficient than using live trained professionals for in-store demonstrations, and requires only the space of a video player in an in-store display. More importantly, it's a fantastic way to draw people to a specific product from around the store with video and music.

**Only** upon launching our first video project did we discover the additional value of applying certain production and formatting styles presented by our video production house. Specifically, we found that by using a unique combination of animation and live action we could attract and motivate consumers and retailers alike to purchase our products.

**Wilton** Enterprises, a Woodridge, Ill.-based kitchen ware and food crafting consumer products company, wanted to differentiate our products in the retail environment, and maintain our position as the number one preferred brand name in baking and cake decorating products. And to secure every inch of shelf space we could for our products, we assumed we needed to demonstrate them physically – we knew from experience the value in demonstrating their ease-of-use and unique designs.

**Even** though our products were easy to use, many consumers perceived them as difficult and messy. Somehow we needed to show the benefits and break through these misconceptions. We also wanted to use video as a competitive edge, to make our products “jump off the shelves into consumers’ carts” – and all the while breaking through the overwhelming promotional clutter that abounds in every retail environment.

**We** soon realized that while a video solution would allow us to show our products in real situations, those real situations might not properly characterize our products. For instance, The Cookie Pro™ cookie press squeezes dough through a steel cylinder to form cookies on the pan, but the metal cylinder makes it impossible to see the ease in which the dough is loaded into and pushed out of the press. Animation could solve that problem by allowing us to “break apart” the pieces to see inside, around and up and down the cylinder. But we also wanted to make sure we had credible endorsements from real people.

**We** partnered with Production Craft, a video communication and multimedia solutions company based in Chicago. We had used video before, but not in a retail environment, so their previous experience with POP video proved valuable to us as they guided us through each step.

**Our** first video project was a POP video for our gingerbread house kit, and from our standpoint the process was virtually painless. We were impressed with Production Craft’s creativity, but also with their professionalism. They approached the project from a business standpoint, considered all options and arrived at the best method to increase our success using video to market our product. We had a fundamental idea of what we wanted, but their consultative approach helped us make it that much better.

**The** end result was a three-minute video that combined animation, live action video and a customer testimonial. The program opened with a fully animated 33-second segment that showed gingerbread construction workers building a gingerbread house, just as it’s done with our kit. The gingerbread men first connect the walls together, and then “whistle” for the roof to be lowered on the house by an “off-camera” crane. The icing is added to hold the pieces together and to trim the house, and then candy decorations bounce and roll onto the scene to add more color. The scene ends with a splotch of icing morphing into the Wilton logo.

**The** video used powerful animation, music and narration that drew shoppers from around the store to watch. A live-action “slice of life” scenario follows the animation, with a mom and two children showing how fun and easy it is to make the gingerbread house together as a wholesome family activity.

**We** originally expected to use the video in the retail environment. We found, though, that the finished project had many more uses, simply because of the high quality and the details in the close-up shots of the product. We also saw an unexpected increase in wholesale sales – we were so impressed with the videos that we decided to use them with our channel partners, who loved them and requested more products to sell. We showed the video at trade shows, which drew more people to our booth and further increased our wholesale sales, and showed it off to our board of directors, who immediately saw the value. And of course, our salespeople also found great success showing it to retailers.

**The** real payoff came with the increase in sales following the distribution of the video.

Retailers scrambled to get the videos for their stores, and stocked up on the kits as they saw immediately how they could leverage the POP video to move more product. Consumers saw the video and came to our website to find other Wilton products. After a short time, we were convinced that video was going to provide us with an excellent return on investment of our marketing dollars – we immediately began moving forward with other video projects.

In total we used this type of program for six of our products, including our Cookie Pro and Cookie Pro Ultra cookie presses, where video was especially useful in demonstrating the superior features of these products, such as the folding mechanism and the cookie dough being squeezed onto the pan. We’re also currently working with Production Craft on a video for our ice cream maker, which we expect to be in stores this fall, ready for the holiday shopping season.

**We** could not be more pleased with the results. The videos are superb products that not only attract consumers' attention, but also help sell our products in a way that traditional in-store displays and product packaging can't.

**Both** in the final videos and in the results of each campaign, we definitely received a lot of value for our money. The videos helped us correctly position our products with consumers and resulted in sales that met our very aggressive plan. Production Craft exceeded our expectations with their quality, professionalism and attentiveness to detail, and as a marketing expense the results were truly worth the modest expenditure.