

Chi Laughlin - Professional Writing Sample

IBM: Cognitive Bid Optimization - Video Script

This is a video production script for IBM Marketing, explaining their use of Cognitive Bid Optimization. Originally meant to accompany their nomination for an industry award, they found this video to be such an effective explanation of a very complex operation that they began sharing it widely.

Voice-over	Visuals
In the flood of data that surrounds us...	Looking down against a sea of black, glowing pieces of data—represented by ones and zeroes—fall like rain from behind the camera.
There's a story that not everyone can hear...	The pieces of data begin to gather in a concentrated spot, taking shape. The shape isn't specific, but it's definitely representative of something.
A picture that not everyone can see...	The camera swings around to the side of the gathered data, and from the new perspective, we clearly recognize the form of a human being...
A customer that not everyone can reach...	Holding a mobile phone.
Until now.	The camera circles around to reveal that the person is looking at an advertisement.
The advanced analytics team at IBM has collaborated with IBM Research to revolutionize programmatic paid media by creating IBM Cognitive Bid Optimization, a machine-learning model that improves programmatic paid media by reducing cost per conversion.	The image of the data-person transitions into a real, live-action human being, standing in a real world environment and looking at their phone.
Using advanced analytics, the model creates efficiencies in the bidding process by ingesting mass amounts of data and ascribing incremental value to an individual based on several dimensions—like time of day, browser, device and natural language.	We cut to another person, moving through their environment. Onscreen graphics single out examples of data picked up from the world around them—time of day, their phone, their location...
The model is cognitive in nature because it learns at scale. New dimensions are constantly added, each with a weighted value that can change over time.	More and more details are singled out with specificity.
It can be applied across dozens of dimensions in all campaigns. And it has the cognitive capability to reason...with purpose.	We cut to a wider shot of the city, with on screen graphics indicating an even wider range of data.

Across our campaigns, we've seen a 35% average improvement in efficiency over control, with some results as high as 42%...	
Targeting the right customer with the right message at the right time for the right price.	We cut to a group of others. Onscreen graphics indicate flashes of data for each person, one-by-one.
Joining 3 rd party data with IBM's first party data enables cross- and upselling to the individual, based on prior purchase history and propensity to buy – new dimensions that will be used to assess customer value and even more intelligent bid execution strategies.	
Which means a higher rate of conversion at a lower cost... and a clear competitive advantage.	Another person looks out the window....
Soon, IBM's customers could use this model to bid at the right amount, marketing apparel like rain gear, for example, to customers in areas expecting rain—before they even check the forecast.	Onscreen graphics indicate different bid amounts, ultimately landing on the right bid.
IBM makes programmatic advertising more exciting...	On a cellphone display, we see an advertisement for umbrellas. The owner clicks through on the advertisement.
Because more data and signal points give us a clearer picture of who you are,	We see our initial person from the beginning, walking down the street.
...and that lets us value you even more.	The person gradually dissolves back into the data figure we saw at the beginning.
IBM.	IBM logo.

Silicon Valley Bank Written Profile - Emily Leproust

This is a case study I did for Silicon Valley Bank, a written profile of one of their star clients, Emily Leproust.

How do you find solutions to big problems like cancer and world hunger? If you're Emily Leproust, co-founder and CEO of Twist Bioscience, you start by walking your dog on the beach. That's when she gets her best ideas. And while she may not be solving those problems herself, her company is making the DNA to help the people who will.

The past few years have seen tremendous development with DNA reading, but the process of DNA writing has remained slow and expensive, making it a considerable hindrance for the research and development that depends on it. Twist Bioscience is changing that. The company makes DNA from scratch, very quickly and of a very high quality, which, for Twist customers, is a major breakthrough.

Leproust is inspiring when she talks about the potential uses. "With DNA," she says, "you can make people much more healthy...you can create new antibiotics and win the war against bacteria. You can develop new vaccines. You can make chemicals like plastic and carpet in a way that's more sustainable."

She's well aware that this sort of innovation doesn't come without its share of problems. "The skill," she says, "is not avoiding the problem; the skill is in building the team that can troubleshoot the problem." Surrounding herself with the very best people gives her confidence, and the comfort of knowing that Twist can solve whatever problems may arise—a practice she feels also applies to starting a company.

Having cofounded Twist with partners Bill Banyai and Bill Peck, Leproust maintains that you should never start a company alone. "There's so much to do. And you want people that are different than you, with different strengths and different weaknesses."

One of her particular strengths—one she thinks is essential for a CEO—is a love of the sales process. "Every time, it's a high-stakes game, and you have to provide the information that will spark interest. And you have to make the case that what you're selling is what they need at the time, so there's an element of deep empathy for understanding the person's need."

Beyond that, she feels that she has one job as CEO: to create a vision and get investors and collaborators onboard, which isn't quite as simple as it may sound, especially when a company is just starting out.

Recalling her early meetings with investors, Leproust explains, "Zero percent give you money the first time you meet them, and 1% give you money the second time they meet you, and then

2% give you money the third time they meet you. And it really takes a while for people to decide to invest.”

With so many opportunities presented to them, investors are likelier to invest in someone they’ve built a relationship with. That’s why Leproust urges other entrepreneurs to develop relationships with everyone, early and often.

For Twist, one of those early relationships was with Silicon Valley Bank. “They understand the value of relationships. They wanted my business when Twist was nobody. We’ve been developing the relationship for the last three years, and now that we are bigger, I don’t want to take my business anywhere else.”

With SVB’s support, she’s been able to drive the company forward. “They are an accelerator. I’ve got my hands on the wheel and they help accelerate things. It’s a business where capital is important and capital enables things to go faster. And if you have a bank that’s there to assist you in all aspects of the capital management, you just go faster. And when you go faster, you surpass your competition.”

“Ever After High: Behind the Scenes”: Stop Motion Animation Script

This is a stop motion animation script for Mattel’s Ever After High, a small video aimed at a huge and devoted audience of pre-teen girls. The subject matter is about as far removed from IBM as possible, and the voices had to be authentic to the brand’s pre-established characters. It was an awful lot of fun to write.

FADE IN:

HOLLY TALKING HEAD

HOLLY brushes her hair as she addresses the camera. Behind her, DEXTER and HUNTER are putting up sets.

HOLLY

So, we wanted to spellebrate powerful princesses, and what better way than with a music video! It’s going to be hexcellent! Apple is directing it, Cedar is building some totally fableous sets, Dexter and Hunter are helping us build them...

We hear a crashing THUD.

Holly turns to look and sees that Dexter and Hunter have punched a hole in the set while trying to move a ladder. She turns back to the camera.

HOLLY (CONT’D)

(awkwardly)

It’s going to be hexcellent.

CEDAR TALKING HEAD

CEDAR

It’s going to be...

(fighting hard not to tell the truth)

...a royal disaster!

(now frantic)

We started out fine, but we only have one hour to finish everything, and honestly, I don’t think we’re going to make it.

INT. STAGE

RAVEN and Madeline stand onstage, helping to test the lights.

RAVEN

I always have to be in the spotlight. Can't somebody else do it for a change? This is going to be all over the mirrornet.

MADELINE

Raven, you're so much more courageous than you think. You'll be wonderific. Besides, we'll all be right there beside you.

RAVEN

Thanks, Maddy.

RAVEN/MADELINE

Lights!!

All of the lights at the front of the stage go out, leaving them in silhouette.

They SIGH.

DARLING TALKING HEAD

DARLING is surrounded by, and has her arms full of, dresses.

DARLING

I'm happy to be helping with the wardrobe, but I've got my hands full...looking out for Dexter and Hunter.

DEXTER/HUNTER (O.C.)

Watch out!

SMASH CUT TO:

INT. SET

The set is in a state of CHAOS. Everyone has stopped what they're doing. Dexter and Hunter have fallen to the floor, just beneath Darling, who has dropped the dresses to save them from a piece of falling set, which she now holds up.

ALL

(simultaneously)

What were you thinking?/This is terrible!/Is everybody okay?

APPLE (O.C)

Quiet on set!

APPLE steps forward into the group.

APPLE (CONT'D)

Come on, everybody. We can still make a great video if we all work together. Holly and I will help with wardrobe. And Darling, you can help Dexter and Hunter build the sets.

They all look at each other. She's right.

Madeline reaches into her hat and pulls out a piece of notebook paper.

MADELINE

We can use some parchment to cover the hole.

CEDAR

And with a little paint, it'll look perfect.

We see them all working together to bring the show to life.

INT. STAGE

Raven and Apple stand center stage.

APPLE

The only thing left now is the spotlight.

RAVEN

I've got this.

Raven raises her hands to cast a spell, and the stage goes DARK except for a perfect SPOTLIGHT on Raven and Apple.

HOLLY TALKING HEAD

HOLLY

I knew it would be hexcellent!

FADE OUT.