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Understanding Plants! How to Create an Image Video

Field Research Fresh from the Press



Understanding plants is the IPB's new motto. You may have seen it recently in the form of [moving images](#) presented by the IPB. The Leibniz Institute of Plant Biology (IPB) embarked on an adventurous movie project bursting with insights. Juliane Stratschka initiated this project and offered her expert advice. She worked on this image video as part of her master's thesis titled *The Use of Videos in the Public Relations Work of Science Institutions*, and performed her thesis work during her studies in the Department of Information Design and Media Management at the University of Merseburg (Hochschule Merseburg, HoMe in Germany). The creation of appealing videos takes a lot of work, heart and soul. All involved in this video are eager to tell about it.

Right from the get-go, our public relations officers ([Sylvia Pieplow](#) and [Antje Hellmuth](#)) needed all their imagination and decisiveness to create consensus on the format, target groups and main content. The video project started in May of this year. We watched a few image videos before we decided on a rather loose manner of presentation. First and foremost, we wanted the video to draw in our audience. The target group for our image video was a little vague with our focus on the broad public, hardly a clearly defined but an inclusive group of people. The group includes students, people with aspirations to obtain academic degrees, politicians, interested persons from all walks of life and all media representatives. After taking some time to define our goals, we agreed on the three key messages our image video should convey.

First message: ***We understand plants.*** We are experts in our field.

Second message: ***We love our institute.*** We are happy to work here. The technical opportunities as well as the work environment at the IPB are ideal.

Third and final message: ***We are diverse*** – in the sense of an interdisciplinary and international institute.

In the next step, we conveyed the three messages with sufficient clarity to our video artist Juliane Stratschka. Then it was time to collect and shoot good illustrations and background images. In the beginning of June, our graduate students organized the [Plant Science Student Conference](#) (PSSC) at the IPB. This turned out to be a perfect opportunity for the pursuit of our video project. The conference would bring many young scientists from all corners of the world to the presentations and discussions. Of course, the persons captured in the image video (including uninvolved passersby) had to consent to appearing in the video. Therefore, we had to find a way to obtain their signed releases for the use of their images and voices. This taught us one important lesson: Making videos takes a lot of organization. Nevertheless, there is a solution for every problem.

During our first day of shooting in the beginning of June, we shot mostly illustrative images. However, we looked ahead and planned two more shooting days in July and August for interviews and additional sectional views. To show the international character of the IPB, we planned rendering our slogan *Understanding plants* in all languages, which we regularly hear within the walls of our laboratories. Therefore, we asked our foreign nationality associates to lend their faces and spoken words for use in the video. Not a single associate turned us down. On the contrary, our peers from abroad embraced the idea with great enthusiasm and resourcefulness.

However, before we were able to start shooting the image video, we had to tackle yet another very difficult task. According to Juliane Stratschka's strict specifications, we had to select no more than eight out of 180 associates for in-depth interviews featuring our key messages. In a multiple stage process, we selected protagonists who best represented our expertise as well as our personnel diversity. Many more people would have fit that target definition. However, our image video should not become a full-length feature film.

We coordinated the various video locations and participants, before we were ready for exciting video shoots. Especially our protagonists surprised us with relaxed attitudes and resourcefulness. Every single one of the protagonists acted with great joy and enthusiasm. They were cheerful without being silly, and they were serious without appearing stiff in front of the camera. In short, they acted as if they had performed in front of cameras all their lives. Our work with all main and supporting actors was pure delight! Every minute of collaboration on designing and staging scenes and on discussing issues was a joyful experience. Let us take off our hats to the participants for their splendid performances!

After the three shooting days, little was left to do for us PR professionals. Still, there was the matter of selecting the appropriate music for the video. Yet again, Juliane Stratschka had thought of it ahead of time and presented us with a very good music preselection. This made our music selection a breeze. All else, such as the choices of scenery and sequence as well as the use of aperture and sectional views, we left to our professional video artist. This was our great opportunity to capture a completely unbiased outsider view of the institute. We waited with excitement for the first preview of the image video. Did we get our points across? Had Juliane Stratschka been able to understand and convey our messages?

Yes, indeed! The result was stunning! All our cherished expectations of the image video, Juliane Stratschka had made them her own and had implemented them professionally. Even the first version of the image video earned our full approval in all aspects including the selection of scenes and format. No more than a few graphical elements and translations needed a polishing touch. Naturally, we were hoping that our judgment was not too rosy due to our intimate involvement and that others would approve our video as well. First and foremost, we were eager to win the approval of the participants but also of the directors and all associates who did not participate in making the video. In the following, we presented our work to an ever-expanding audience. So far, and to our great relief, we received only positive feedback, praise and enthusiasm.

We are happy to pass this praise on to Juliane Stratschka for her excellent work! With the proper pattern of organization mixed with creativity and pragmatism, she tackled the project and brought it to a successful finish. We plan to involve Juliane Stratschka in future videos. We also thank our protagonists for their courage and enthusiasm. Our gratitude also extends to our directors who trusted us with this terrific mission. Furthermore, we beg for leniency from all who were not included in creating this image video. There will be more videos and opportunities for you to showcase your talent, courage and professionalism in front of cameras.

Please see the image video on [our Internet pages](#) and also in the [IPB YouTube channel](#) and the [YouTube channel of the Leibniz Association](#). Please like and share on your social networks!



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More pictures about the making of can be found [here](#).

Have fun!
Sylvia Pieplow