

Managers embrace a new, cinematic form of investor relations

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Two men in business attire slowly walk into a black & white framed scene with New York City as the backdrop. It may look like the opening scene of a Hollywood film, but it's actually a new style of virtual introductions that investors can expect to see more of going forward.

Matt Novello, who recently relocated from Los Angeles, is now at New Jersey-based FLX Media, a new division of FLX Distribution, where he has created a series of manager videos using the same equipment he used for years in Hollywood and on set for various action series and documentaries.

"We are a resource and media platform that is revolutionizing the way wealth and asset managers communicate and exchange ideas," he said in a recent exclusive *Alternatives Watch* interview.

The medium helps to showcase a firm's nuanced differences, and Novello said he has shot thousands of interviews over the years. His approach is to ask founders the types of questions that elicit a personal response, and the videos are done in a conversational way that's not staged or forced, he adds. In his view, it boils down to transparency and trust, and creating confidence with the investors.

Last month, FLX Distribution added seven new firms to its Resource and Asset Management Platform (RAMP), which offers a range of distribution services, including media and PR. The new clients are: 180 Degree Capital Corp.; Advocate Capital Management; ARB; Astor; GoodHaven Capital Management; WBI; and Wilshire Phoenix.



FLX Distribution CEO Brian Moran

FLX Distribution now represents 40 asset managers and has over \$221 billion in assets under service, experiencing tremendous growth since launching two years ago. Its virtual B2B platform delivers services ranging from distribution to investment consulting to business solutions such as media and PR, alongside unique offerings such as FLX Intelligence, a centralized multimedia hub connecting content providers with consumers.

Managers have become increasingly comfortable with video as a communication medium and COVID ramped up the adoption of virtual introductions as part of comprehensive investor due diligence. And while some managers on the FLX Distribution platform already have produced their own videos, others are only now getting a good start.

A two-to-three-minute video is a great introduction, according to Novello. That time frame makes it possible to provide the right amount of information to tap into a feeling and an emotion. There are many ways to get the heart of the story, but for Novello, seeing the manager's personality and philosophy come to life via video is a way for investors to see who is delivering the message in an authentic way.

Novello is developing a new genre of storytelling as he asks managers about their background, what choices led them down the road of asset management and what other passions they have outside of managing investment portfolios. He also highlights the firm's offices and tries to make the setting itself into a character. "Every city has its own personality and heartbeat," he added.

Novello believes reaching as many eyeballs as possible should be the foundation of a manager's content strategy, and that just because the message needs to adhere to regulatory compliance that doesn't mean it needs to be boring. FLX Media in his view has had some success in reworking the narrative in a way that is not only compelling, but also entertaining.



Advocate Capital's Scott Peng

"Talking head, bar graph, office desk, attorney-written financial advisor-asset manager videos simply don't cut it anymore," Novello says. "Today's audiences of financial advisors and investors are savvy video content consumers --they expect more and managers need to deliver."

While manager introductions can be made public on the FLX platform or via social media, more in-depth videos may be made available exclusively to certain current and prospective investors behind a paywall. Besides introductory videos, FLX Media is also able to handle longer form content that then can be formed into podcasts and conversations offering a deep dive on a certain product, the history of the firm or the strategy in which the firm invests.

And after working in film and television for two decades, Novello is perfectly content to shoot in managers' offices in Manhattan, Boston, Ohio or anywhere in between. While he may not have the stunts, cranes, movie lights and explosions he is used to, that doesn't mean the stories are any less compelling.

