Lights, Camera, Action! This familiar phrase sums up the most visible component of the Reinvest ASA Millennial Communications Project, which seeks to develop an integrated plan to actively highlight and encourage membership and engagement through the use of multimedia. The project focused on the undergraduate, graduate student, and early career professionals—the Millennial Generation.

The same demographics that are reshaping the workforce are also reshaping scientific societies. Along with this shift are constantly changing communications opportunities. Therefore, organizations must seize these opportunities to engage with their newest members (and future leaders) by ensuring that communications are targeted and delivered in ways that resonate. For ASA, this includes focusing on recruitment and retention of young members and encouraging their involvement with ASA.

Discovery: Focus Groups

To ensure communications and avenues were on point, three separate focus groups were conducted at the 2013 Annual Meeting—with undergraduates, graduate students, and early career members. The goal was to gather information on key communication points and best media vehicles to reach these audiences. Participants told us that videos are indeed effective for engaging younger audiences and should include personal stories about benefits, interesting visuals, corporate partners to show job opportunities, and demonstrate networking and collaboration in action.

From this information, the project task force defined key messages for each audience:

- Membership: Benefits, connections, and career opportunities
- Annual Meeting: Connections, networking, and career visibility (presenting)
- What’s Next (for undergrads): Career options and certification
- Science Policy (graduate students and early career): Get involved, influence policy, and expand

Development:

With this information, a request for proposal process was initiated, and the film/production crew, Agrilife Studios, based in Minneapolis, was chosen for their high quality work and focus on the agricultural market. Numerous calls were held to prepare for the meeting and filming as all of the footage would be gathered at the Annual Meeting in Long Beach. Agrilife guided us to determine the look, feel, and content of the videos ahead of time so that they could proactively ensure the footage included the content we eventually used.