



Finding Streaming Gear - Should Be Simple!



Written by Robert Vaughn

As technology improves and video becomes the primary and most practical way to communicate, equipment and software manufacturers increase their effort to sell simple to use products that cost less and are purchased by large number of "Users". This old/new marketing concept has its roots in the software industry: today, software companies call their products "Apps" and measure success by the number of "downloads". Apps are sold for \$1.99 to \$34.99 on virtual online stores, generating millions of downloads worldwide. At the end the consumer wins: the new economy increased competition, lowered the cost of software production, and shorten the life span of new product release forcing companies to compete on market share. The very same trend is seen among video equipment manufacturers such as [Blackmagic Design](#), [Roland](#), [Teradek](#), [Matrox](#), and many others. They all reduced price and offer more features for less money. Broadcast equipment today can process 1080p or 4K quality video at a fraction of the cost similar equipment was sold before 10-15 years.

In the very near future university professors will analyze how the new digital economy changed and affected our lives. Let's stop and see how this really affects our day to day business? What all these changes mean to you and me when we want to capture video and post it online?

In the past, when I wanted to buy a video camera, I walked to the local Mall, talk to a sales person, and got recommendations for few Sony, Panasonic, or JVC cameras (based on features I wanted, or my budget). These days are over! Today, camera or electronic shops can't keep up with the number of new products flooding the market. They can't stock them all, and their staff does not have the training and experience to use this new technology. Ask in a camera store if they heard about the new [PTZOptics](#) robotic cameras that can stream live video? Large department stores no longer sell technology, and private electronic shops in large cities stock and offer only very basic equipment, targeting novice inexperienced consumers.

Since video equipment today offers much more than auto focus, Start, and Stop features, how will you know what or where to buy?

Here is an example of something that happens everywhere hundreds of times per day worldwide: your company decided to use video to record the company meetings. Your boss gave you an assignment to find the equipment and produce the content. Where do you start? You can Google few keywords such as “video camera” or “video mixer”, or “video encoder”, follow the links to websites that sell cameras and equipment to [produce video](#), but how you will know what camera or mixer to buy? How to convert the video to streaming format? What options you have besides streaming to [YouTube](#) or [Facebook](#)? You could read manuals, watch YouTube product unwrapping or video reviews. But that still doesn't help. You will need to spend lot of time comparing the different options. There are so many choices out there! I put myself in the shoes of this imaginary employee and google these keywords. As suspected, I found many online stores that sell cameras and video equipment. One of the websites caught my attention: [streamingstore.com](#). This site sells video production gear designed especially for streaming media. The site gave me a tremendous amount of free information: if all I needed was a [video capture card](#) – it listed many options broken down by the connection type (standard definition, HDMI, or SDI), by manufacture name (if I knew a specific card I wanted), or by price range. The [video production](#) section lists equipment by its function in the production workflow: [cameras](#), [monitors](#), [mixers](#), [disc recorders](#), [streaming encoders](#) and [turnkey mixers/streaming appliances](#). Each product had its own page with clear description of what you can do with the equipment. Most product pages had video tutorial or 3rd party video overviews, and customers who bought equipment post their personal reviews. Customers who work for an [educational or government](#) agency get also special discount prices. They even have a “[rent before you buy](#)” option that is a great way to get your hands on a product before spending lot of money to buy it, but this service is only good if you live in the United States or Canada. An interesting part of the site is dedicated to different industries. This section offers [productive workflow](#) solutions to start streaming when you work in one of the most common sectors (Corporate, Education, Government, House of Worship, etc.). I spent a good hour browsing through the site and found it very informative. After I bookmarked the site I kept coming back, and even called and had a chat with their staff to ask what they recommend for one scenario or the other. They took the time to speak with me, compared products, and recommended what to buy - something many other online stores simply don't do.

The best advice I received from one of the sales representative at the [Streaming Store](#) was that technology keep changing, and one should not spend too much time or money getting what they need. Here is one more example: I wanted to know what it will take to stream live video to Facebook, YouTube, and Livestream. I contacted 3 online stores: [Videoguys.com](#), [Sweetwater.com](#), and [Streamingstore.com](#). The first two told me I need 3 encoders to stream to 3 separate providers. The Streaming Store gave me two options: all I need is 1 encoder. I

could use a [capture card](#) + a software program like [Telestream Wirecast](#) on a Mac or Windows computer, or I could buy a \$699 [Teradek Vidiu](#) encoder (no computer needed). If I get the Teradek Vidiu I will send 1 stream to a cloud service like [Videolink](#), and that service (at the cost of \$1 per hour) will stream my 3 streams out to Facebook, YouTube, and Livestream. The [streaming video](#) industry matured to a level it can offer equipment that produce crisp video signal at HD quality. Streaming providers can deliver HD quality video, and very large part of the population in most countries can receive good quality video on their computers and mobile devices. Online video is a commodity everyone use, and we should no longer get frustrated finding the right equipment or streaming service. Today we can stream live video from our phones, from anywhere. Finding a capture and streaming equipment should not be so difficult, or cost a fortune. Let's continue keeping all this simple!

Robert Vaughn is an independent consultant who likes to write about technology.