



Online Video

How to Benefit from the Fastest-Growing Trend in Marketing



Online Video: The Fastest-Growing Trend in Marketing

BACKGROUND / CONTEXT

In the bad old days of ...oh, maybe 4-5 years ago, most people lacked broadband access, and online video was viewed with nearly the disdain reserved for spam. The quickest way to earn the wrath of dialup users was to send them a 2-minute video clip that tied up their line for 90+ minutes, just downloading into their inbox.

Today, with over 450 million broadband subscribers worldwide and nearly every business having a high-speed Internet connection, the old reservations have gone the way of the teletype. Now *more than 80% of Internet users* watch video regularly.

Since supply needs to match demand, you might guess that there's been a mini-explosion in video content on the Web ...and you'd be right. The larger companies with greater resources have led the way, of course; but dropping costs have enabled nearly every B-to-B to get in the game to some level.

SHOULD YOUR COMPANY BE USING ONLINE VIDEO?

In a word... *absolutely.*

There's more than just a germ of truth behind that old saying, "a picture is worth a thousand words." No one would question the greater grabbing and connecting power of television vs. radio ...never mind the newspaper. Research also supports the effectiveness of video: according to MarketingSherpa, online video is second only to word-of-mouth for its ability to influence decision makers in every stage of the purchase lifecycle.

There are few marketers who have not harbored a secret desire to utilize video in their programs; but in the past, delivering it to the prospect meant either buying costly TV time or shipping cassettes or DVDs. Now, with the advent of online video, distribution costs have dropped to near zero. So the only remaining barrier is production; and as many more producers enter the video arena, that cost is dropping as well.

On the other side of the coin, that 80% of Internet users are coming to your B-TO-B's website fully *expecting* to find some use of video. If they don't, your site is bound to disappoint them and seem ...well, maybe just a bit behind the times. Plus there are almost certainly aspects of your product that could have been better explained using video; so there's a definite opportunity cost in continuing to present them in a sub-optimal way.



HOW & WHERE TO USE ONLINE VIDEO

Video's power and range is such that you can find good use for it across the entire B-TO-B buying cycle.

Branding & awareness.

Since this is the purpose of many if not most TV commercials, it's an "obvious" for online video as well. Placement options might include...

- behind a button on your home or "About Us" page, where it can serve as an enticing introduction to your company and its product set;
- in lieu of static banner ads on sites likely to be visited by your prospects (and whose regulations allow video ads).

As a quick sampling of videos used this way (with no particular recommendation intended), you might check out www.storeto-door.com and www.bostonbowl.com.

Do your executives seek out speaking engagements at major industry conferences? Such non-product-focused sessions are great branding/awareness opportunities, with the implied halo of the conference organization attached to them. Why not extend their life and expand their viewership by "re-broadcasting" them in video on your website?

Interest & consideration.

Online video gives you a way to draw users into your content, bringing your products and services to life. One of the most popular types of video content is the on-demand product tour, that gives the visitor control of in-depth information. Beyond communicating the value proposition in indelible fashion, video product tours can utilize in-depth video analytics that can give you insight into which parts of your pitch are resonating the best with prospects.

In this stage, you also need to be educating your prospects; and there's nothing like video to elucidate deep features of your product, or to position it in the context of critical customer/industry problems.

You'll also want to keep in frequent touch with your prospects, via an email newsletter (which can also incorporate video elements as appropriate). Another great tool in this vein is the video podcast. Not only does this give your website a bit of Web2.0 cachet... it also gives your prospects a reason to *keep coming back* to your site. The implied promise of a new informative/valuable video next month is a great way to get bookmarked or get subscribed to in your prospect's RSS reader. All of which means that you've got someone who has your firm's name popping into their head on a regular basis.



Evaluation & decision.

Many of the tools developed for the earlier stages will find utility again here. Your prospect's chief decision-maker isn't going to repeat the research his people did; she will assume its accuracy, and instead look for less tangible aspects that convey your company's status as a reliable and desirable business partner. And that brings much of your image/branding and thought-leadership material back into play ...such as the video of your exec wowing the assembled multitude at NetWidget09, or your video showing how your load-management software is the key to a greener planet.

Coming soon – searchable video.

You may be thinking, "Gee, if I put up all this video in lieu of 'real' (i.e., text) content, won't that put my search-engine rankings at risk?" Well, one easy answer is that your video material should really be an adjunct to your existing content, not "in lieu of". Longer term, search is coming to video. Google Audio Indexing, or "GAudi" for short, automatically converts the audio tracks of videos to text so they can be searched. Results from a user searching on a keyword are ranked based on the spoken content of the video, its metadata and its freshness. At present, Google is concentrating on videos uploaded to YouTube's Politician channels; but there's little doubt that they're headed toward making this a much more general capability in time.

RESOURCE CONSIDERATIONS

We mentioned earlier that the only remaining cost of online video is production, and that is dropping; but that's not to say it's insignificant. Most smaller companies – which typically don't have an internal studio capability – will need to work with an external house for video development; which means that they'll need to prioritize the possible candidates for video treatment, and not let their zeal outrun their budget or proof of effectiveness. In general, starting with outsourced video production and slowly ramping internal video production capabilities will allow you to monitor ROI and carefully evaluate the success of your online video initiatives.

As your video deployment increases, you may want to consider an online video platform (OVP), which provides all the capability you need for managing, publishing, distributing and tracking online video. The online video platform you select should have the following capabilities:

- ❑ Upload and manage online video content easily
- ❑ Create and publish video players customized to the specific needs of your site
- ❑ Enable viral sharing and distribution to build community around your content
- ❑ Provide analytics that allow you to monitor and optimize video initiatives



- Deliver a high-quality user experience and highly reliable service

With an OVP (example: Brightcove), you can easily add a player to your website without worrying about complex back-end setup and video hosting requirements. Leading OVPs significantly cut start-up costs, reduce total cost of ownership, and accelerate time to market for your online video initiatives.

OK, SO MAYBE YOU COULD USE A LITTLE HELP...

Perhaps you would find a little guidance helpful ...in selecting the spots where video would provide the biggest bang, for example. You need a *competent partner* in this arena, just as you probably wouldn't write your own ERP application.

When it's time to choose one, we believe that your choice should be eMagine, for a number of reasons:

- ❖ Unlike many website development firms whose focus is primarily on design and winning awards, eMagine understands that your concern is for business *results* ...so that is our focus, too.
- ❖ Our 10+ years of experience developing Internet solutions for more than 500 companies has resulted in countless references willing to testify to our expertise.
- ❖ eMagine follows research-based industry best practices in all online marketing domains, taking a holistic approach that integrates creative design, usability and technology.
- ❖ Our Search Engine Marketing Department is staffed by highly experienced industry professionals. Our PPC consultants honed their skills in the very demanding business-to-consumer world; plus we are one of only 41 Google Adwords Qualified Companies in the US.
- ❖ Because everything in Web marketing touches everything else, you're always better off with a full-service Web consultancy – like eMagine – than with a niche SEO or PPC service provider.
- ❖ eMagine is profitable and is backed by a \$200 million New England corporation.

We can do everything from helping you think through your plan, to executing and measuring entire campaigns; we can help a little or a lot, as you choose. But working together, we'll definitely ensure that your B-to-B leverages all of the many powerful opportunities presented by online video.

However beautiful the strategy,
you should occasionally look at the results

Winston Churchill

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