



A Psychology Is Behind It

Online video and television were not created equal. Scripps Networks Interactive Senior Vice President Jim Sexton, who oversees HGTVPro.com, an online video network targeting building and remodeling professionals, describes the fundamental difference: "When watching TV, people relax and put their hands behind their heads. They want to be entertained. On the Web, people are sitting at a desk and leaning forward. They are task-oriented."

Accordingly, marketers need to be selective about how they use video. Bill Reinstein, president and CEO of Southborough, Mass.-based Accela Communications, a provider of on-demand rich media and other interactive marketing services, says ideal b-to-b applications are presentations of compelling case studies or research, product demonstrations, or explanations of complex information.

Sexton adds that marketers who want to reach business decision makers on the go should be mindful of when, where, why, and how people will access the information. For content that people may need to take with them to a meeting or other work site, use text. "Video is better for when the audience wants to delve deeper," he notes.

It's Not Right for Everybody

Online video is most apt to reach business customers who sit in front of a computer on a daily basis, says Robert Arena, vice president of interactive for Carton Donofrio Partners in Baltimore, Md. "If you're trying to reach people who are in the field regularly or aren't really sitting at their computer all the time, video might be a little bit harder," he adds.

Getting high-level decision makers, such as CEOs, to take time out to watch a video may also be unrealistic. Even if you do get them to watch, they will probably become sidetracked halfway through by phone calls, e-mail, or other tasks, says Johnson Cook, president and CEO of

Attracting Attention

Expert insights to make luring b-to-b customers with video-on-demand a less risky proposition

By Amy Syracuse

With headlines hyping online video-on-demand (VOD) as the next must-have medium, many b-to-b marketers are clamoring to post movies to their Web sites. But one thing past Internet innovations have proven is that there's no sense in adopting technology simply for the sake of being current. Quality matters. So does long-term vision and the ability to deliver a problem-free user experience. In other words, when your brand is at stake, it's better to be mainstream and well executed than cutting-edge and misguided. So before jumping on the VOD bandwagon, consider these expert ideas:

Media Trends

Impact Media Solutions in Smyrna, Ga. He recommends that online VOD content cater to lower-level employees, providing the information and angle they need to pitch a company's product or service to the boss. Cook suggests live webcasts when targeting the C-suite. They force busy execs to schedule the time for the presentation and offer immediate gratification, since participants can ask questions in real-time.

Flash Is Not a Cure-All

When using Flash, Reinstein advises, it's important to look for potential pitfalls. For example, if a key segment of the audience uses Firefox, make sure the vendor's delivery platform can be viewed in that browser. Reinstein also says companies that serve the Linux marketplace should ensure that their content can be viewed on that operating system. "From a PR perspective, you'd better walk the walk and talk the talk," he says.

Although the ubiquity of broadband Internet access and Adobe Flash player in the workplace has dramatically reduced complications previously associated with online video, experts suggest that marketers consider factors that will influence technical format selection, including the primary operating systems and Web browsers used by the intended audience and whether using multimedia is even necessary. Marketers using a third party to produce and deliver video content need not be experts on the technical side, as any good vendor will advise clients in that area.

Videos Are Not Inherently Interactive

Marketers can enhance interactivity by adding clickable rich media, including logos, graphics, charts, and animation, but video, by its nature, is not an interactive medium. Dennis Shiao, director of product management for webcasts at TechTarget, a Needham, Mass.-based publisher of online and offline media for enterprise information technology professionals, notes that his video clips often link to complementary content on the Web (primarily in-depth articles related to video topics) to further engage the viewer.

Pat Reardon, senior manager of corporate event marketing at San Jose, Calif.-based Cisco Systems, says marketers can supply "ask the expert" features, where a link on the program interface connects users to a technical expert with whom to chat in real-time. "Many VOD applications also have the ability to use a polling feature, where viewers can answer survey questions and view historical responses to product questions," Reardon adds.

Navigation tools determine whether or not the information users want is truly on-demand. If it isn't, experts say, you can expect most users to become frustrated and click away from your site. Many online video users do not watch in a linear

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fashion, Reinstein points out. "The whole point of delivering on-demand content is that the user can jump around and find what they're interested in as fast as possible," he says.

To accommodate this tendency, it's not enough to have play, pause, and stop. Reinstein recommends including a table of contents or agenda, the ability to search video content by keyword, and a transcript that users can peruse or print out as needed. Of course, when adding bells and whistles, the interface should remain easy to use. "If someone needs help files to operate your media player," Reinstein notes, "you're doing something wrong."

It's a Relationship Builder

A funny thing happened when EMM Group, a Kalamazoo, Mich.-based enterprise marketing management firm, introduced online video FAQs that featured company executives. In addition to referring clients to this information about

what the company does and how it operates, employees began using the clips as a way to "pre-introduce" themselves before meetings with new-business contacts. According to Trini Amador, the company's senior vice president of marketing, the video introductions were a fortuitous fringe benefit. "It puts you a half-step ahead going into that meeting," she says, "because [the prospect] had an opportunity to see your picture and mannerisms and to develop some affiliation ahead of time."

To maximize such relationship-building benefits of video, marketers should strive for a presentation that feels personal, not staged, says Arena, who headed the team that implemented EMM Group's video FAQs, which are a part of an overall Web site redesign. He notes that EMM Group's content was effective because the company replicated the experience of having a conversation. They shot the video in the context of an interview between featured executives and a PR person. Also, EMM Group made sure the questions were framed as a client would ask them, and though executives knew the questions in advance, none of their answers was scripted, says Amador.

Use VOD to Capture User Information

To understand the audience and drive program improvements, Reardon recommends including a program registration and post-video evaluation. This can be mandatory to access the video, or you can offer a quid pro quo. According to Reinstein, potential incentives to participate include offering access to case studies and white papers related to the video content, or entry into a contest.

However, when requiring registration to view the video, Cook cautions, you must deliver a high-quality presentation that's worth prospects' trading personal information for access to it. Otherwise, you risk alienating them altogether.

If you're repurposing video that wasn't originally shot for Web use, experts say, it's particularly important to consider how the shots will come across on a small

Iron Mountain Takes VOD to New Heights

Have you heard the story about the online b-to-b video campaign that went viral? It's no urban legend. Karen McPhillips, the vice president of marketing, digital, for Boston-based Iron Mountain, says it not only happened but raised her company's brand to a new level.

BACKGROUND: In December 2005, after acquiring Marlborough, Mass.-based LiveVault, Iron Mountain Digital sought to educate consumers about its expanded capabilities. LiveVault had previously created a marketing video designed to be the opposite of what IT professionals normally receive. "We thought putting humor in the limelight might be a good way to go," McPhillips says. So LiveVault produced "The Institute for Backup Trauma," a video starring John Cleese (right).

THE PLAN: The video was a great resource, but Iron Mountain wanted more. "The goal was to create a viral effect from the beginning," McPhillips notes. The Iron Mountain and LiveVault teams created a Web site to host the video (backuptrauma.com) and worked with Accela Communications to broadcast it via banner ads. They also enhanced the content by adding an educational video webinar starring Cleese, as well as outtakes. Users were asked to register to view the webinar so leads could be routed to sales staff. In addition, these names were flagged to receive marketing promotions.

THE RESULTS: Banner ads featuring "The Institute for Backup Trauma" video generated 156,553 banner impressions and 4,769 clickthroughs. The clickthrough

rate of 3 percent far surpassed the 0.2 percent industry average. Viewing times averaged more than four minutes, and word of mouth was strong. "After four months," McPhillips says, "we had 300,000 visitors to the video Web site on five continents. We also had 500 Web sites linking to the video, including blogs and trade sites." In addition, the video received numerous accolades, including a Telly Award for "Multimedia Film and Video, Non-broadcast Productions."

KEY TAKEAWAYS: The campaign was a "more significant budget allocation" than Iron Mountain had ever made in one campaign, says McPhillips, who cautions marketers to invest smartly if considering similar initiatives. "If you underinvest you'll fail, and if you overinvest, you jeopardize your ROI," she says. Marketers using video should also track their results and deploy some way to capture user information. "If you cannot measure and cannot capture information," she adds, "you cannot determine the impact on your pipeline and get to an ROI."



When asked if she would make any changes, McPhillips suggested she might make the video shorter, but she stands by Iron Mountain's risky strategy of introducing something radically different to the marketplace. "At least once, if not a few times a year, marketers should take a risk on something the data hasn't yet proved but that all indications suggest could be beneficial," she says. "They can garner more than ROI, capture buzz, and get the viral effect that most b-to-b companies don't think is possible." — A.S.

computer screen, as opposed to a normal-size television. Sexton, whose online videos for HGTVPro.com frequently feature product and technique demonstrations, notes that tight shots always work better. "If you have a panoramic, things look too small," he says.

Less Is More

It's the golden rule when it comes to online video. With all the media choices available, a prospect has only a limited amount of time, says Peter Koeppel, president of Koeppel Direct in Dallas.

Accordingly, marketers must capture their attention with content that is informative, and hold it with a presentation that is entertaining. And, Koeppel adds, they shouldn't push their luck when it comes to video length.

"I don't think anyone has found the Holy Grail," says Jim Spanfeller, president and CEO of New York-based Forbes.com, "but we all feel that longer is tougher." The business and lifestyle information Web site keeps most of its video clips to five minutes or less. "We do some [longer] programs, like *Street*

Talk, where we do a 40-minute show, but we cut it into five-minute segments so people can watch it back to back or they can watch one segment a day."

Other business marketers suggest that the magic number for video length is even shorter. EMM Group kept the answers for its video FAQs to one to three minutes. Sexton says HGTVPro.com's online videos average two to three minutes. "The level of impatience online is very strong," he says. "You have to get to the point quickly and not spend a lot of time giving background or a story line." ■