



How to make online video work for your business

Video marketing for the web works, but there are a few things to consider making sure you get the most out of it. Lee Walker of Blue Chew Digital explains how.

It's a digital world

From the web, to TV, to mobile phones, the digital age is here to stay, and businesses are increasingly realising its potential to reach not just a wider audience, but any audience at all. With research showing that over 90% of us use the internet to research products or services before we commit to buy – with a growing percentage of this from mobile technologies – it's essential for businesses to make use of the opportunities offered by digital media.

Online marketing spend has tipped the scales and overtaken print. It's something many experts predicted but not quite so soon, with the rise of online tools to make marketing your company quick, easy, and most importantly, cost effective.

This increase in online advertising brings competition with companies dreaming up new and inventive ways to engage an audience – and with digital media, almost anything is possible.

The YouTube black hole

Video is often seen as expensive, time consuming and hard to get right. Many think of huge TV budgets, but it ain't necessarily so. Video for web is growing at an incredible speed. As many as 150,000 and 200,000 videos are uploaded to YouTube every day, with the UK the second highest uploading nation (6.9% of global uploads – beaten only by the US at 34.5%). It would take you over 400 years to view all the content on YouTube alone, but it proves the popularity of online video.

But (and there's a huge 'but') this is not the case for businesses. Just because you upload a video to YouTube doesn't necessarily mean it will get viewed, and more importantly by the right audience. Clients often ask us to produce a video for the web, saying they plan to "put it on YouTube". That'll be one among 200,000 on any given day – not great odds for getting it seen, unless you've really got something worth seeing. But a strong idea, well executed, can rise above the online video mire and reach out to capture an audience for your brand.

Going viral

Viral video has become a term used loosely for an online video. But here's the thing, something has to BECOME viral. If somebody passes your content from one computer or mobile phone to another, or talks about your content via the web, your content has become viral. But creating a successful viral campaign relies on a number of factors, most of which tend to be based on 'hard work' or 'big budgets'.

Most of you probably have a Facebook or LinkedIn account. You'll have 'friends' or

'contacts', and like you'll be involved in the ever-popular race to see who has the most 'friends'. We've all received an invite from an old school mate that we barely spoke to then, and don't see why we should now. Ah, but your 300 or so 'friends' may well have another 300 or so 'friends', and they may have 300 'friends' more, and so on. Soon you can get into some pretty big numbers.

Now, let's say you get a video produced and you ask your 300 'friends' to pass it on to their 300 'friends'. If they like it, they will, and you can start to get a viral message that people will be happy to pass on for you – all for the cost of a single video.

Viral video can have a terrific effect if you're selling consumable goods, but what about 'business to business'? Well, that's the really clever bit.

The seed

There are companies that offer 'viral seeding'. This basically means that they will guarantee that your video gets a certain amount of views. Basically, there are two types of seeding. Firstly, 'Natural Seeding', which is similar to the Facebook 'tell your friends' approach. The second is through 'Media Placement', which you can do yourself or employ a viral seeding specialist to do it for you.

If you decide to do this yourself, you'll need to identify the media your target audience is most likely to be using, negotiate media buying and drive traffic through to the content that's to become viral.

A viral seeding company will either offer you 'Natural Seeding', 'Media Placement Seeding' or both. But this is where you need to be careful. Contracting an agency to do any kind of marketing can have its risks. These are mainly based around an understanding of your offering and its target audience. Viral seeding companies tend not to be industry specific and will therefore take on any job. This can be very costly and sometimes quite damaging to a brand if your marketing isn't effectively targeted.

The third option is to contract a digital/advertising agency and make sure they have an understanding of you and your requirements. They'll be able to offer you options one and two, but also add to that a myriad of targeted media solutions that are quantifiable and results driven.

Get your customers talking about you

Most companies now have a website, and most use the web to either sell their products and services or promote them. Video is a great way to engage an audience. The single most powerful way of promoting your company is through testimonials, using the opinions of real people that have worked with you before and are happy to tell the world how great you are.

Most companies use this form of marketing as soon as they get a happy client. They add a case study and publish both on their site, along with other forms of collateral. To be effective, they need to be well written, short and to the point. However, most are not, meaning the person that reads them turns off after a short while – this is where video takes over.

Video content is engaging. There's an old saying that 'people need to talk to people', and it's true. What you have written over six pages of A4, you can get across in less than a minute with minimal involvement from your potential customer. This can be hosted on your website and include any number of calls to action. It's also very useful as a demonstration for your products – just glance through YouTube to find demonstrations

of everything from turning on a vacuum cleaner to how to build a nuclear bunker.

Video and online

Video is also used very effectively in online advertising. How many times have you visited a website to see a video MPU (Multi Positional Unit) running on the page? It grabs your attention almost immediately, and here's where we start to see how this works for B2B.

Most businesses use the web to research information about their industry. Most of these will probably advertise in their print versions, with little knowledge of how many people have seen their advertisement. Sure we have the ABC and PPA audits, but does a publisher know if John Smith has read his free circulated publication? No, but they'll know if he's looked at their website and clicked to view a video.

Video MPUs on an industry-specific website, where viewers will be from a certain industry and in a work mindset, are perfectly targeted pieces of marketing. They can even be placed in a dedicated 'channel' – so your accountancy software is placed in the 'accountancy' tab on a business website, for example – ensuring that your audience is most likely thinking about researching, upgrading or buying what you're selling.

Now imagine if your video MPU greeted your potential customers as they hit that page – a person talking to a person. Clever video marketing is always about engagement. How do I engage my audience as quickly as possible and make them listen to what I have to say? What would make me watch and take notice? What would make me click on the video for more information? These are questions that a specialist marketing consultancy should talk through with you for any form of marketing, and it's the same with video.

The PowerPoint presentation - yawn!

Video also replaces presentations. How many meetings have you been to, where you have either endured or had to present a 30-page PowerPoint presentation? Ever switched off or noticed your client slowly die of boredom before your very eyes? Video can enliven any presentation and help get your point across in an engaging and entertaining way. It can run through any part of the offering, in stages, and even be interacted with by the sales person. And it's so flexible – it's easy to view, it can be left with the client on a USB key, and also hosted on your site. It can even be used at exhibitions and conferences.

Mix this format with some intelligent digital marketing and you have a marketing medium that not only delivers results, but is trackable, controllable and engaging.

Choosing a video production company

With a sharp increase in video for web comes a sharp increase in video production companies. Type 'video for web' into a search bar and see just how many companies are available. Three years ago there were just a few of us, now every Tom, Dick and Hitchcock who knows how to point a camera and use a cheap editing suite will try to convince you of their 'creativity' and what's more, just how little you need to spend.

Now here's the thing. You have spectrums: the expensive, the competitive and the super competitive. If you care about your brand, you should certainly avoid a company that offers you a video for the price of a chocolate bar and a can of pop. We have often been called in to reshoot work for companies who have fallen foul of the 'too good to

be true' trap.

At the other end of the scale are the expensive video production companies. They can produce something close to Hollywood standard, but will leave you very little budget to help market it. Or you go straight down the middle and get TV and film trained crews, directors and editors, who know all the tricks of the trade to get you a TV quality video for a snip of the price.

The key here is to do your research and vet the company. All of which should have a showreel to display their work, but take a look at the individual pieces, as a cleverly put together showreel can mask a whole heap of bad work with quick edits and foot tapping music. Listen to sound and framing. Look to see if the production makes sense or whether the messaging has been blurred by the director's 'creative vision'!

Actors

To save on costs, most companies will offer their staff's services for the video shoot rather than have the production company pay for talent. Normally there's a budding actor or two flying around the office and normally he or she is the MD. "I'll be fine" they say, "I've presented to hundreds at seminars and conferences". But the fact is that most melt once we turn on the lights, cameras and prompt them to 'act'.

Not only does this waste the crew's time and the client's money, it also results in a poor product. But, if you are to use staff, brief them well in advance. We have turned up to a shoot and the 'actors' have been told that same morning that they were starring in a video and had two hours to learn 40 lines of text! The client then wonders why the production looks a little false!

For the sake of a few hundred pounds, you really should consider actors when shooting anything that involves people.

High definition and web quality video

HD (high definition) sounds like a great idea. But most people do not have the capability to view High Definition footage at work. So why pay more to have your production filmed in this format? Yes, it means you are effectively future proofing your video, but in most cases if you have a video produced for a product, service or even as a corporate message, these will soon become obsolete as your products and services develop.

Don't be fooled into thinking that if somebody does have the capability to view your content in HD, they will be more likely to respond. The fact is that the only thing they will think about is 'what's in it for them' and your offering. HD is a great format for TV, but have you noticed that High Definition picks up even more information, and how it can exaggerate mistakes?

While most people associate video with TV budgets, many think if a video is produced for the web, it should be cheap as chips. Unfortunately, it's not. Shooting a video for web uses the same processes as a TV commercial, with a few different elements to consider, that can sometimes make the production even more difficult than a standard TV production.

For example, let's say you produce a video that carries drama or suspense, the footage is normally mixed with a soundscape. Let's take a heartbeat for example. This will not be heard through a laptop or PC speaker, because of its low frequency, hence sapping the video of its effect straight away. Most work PCs don't even have sound, so most videos for web should be treated as a silent movie. And if you do add sound, back it up

with subtitles or at least make the storyline understandable in a silent context, so that you get maximum impact from your investment.

Free advice and great ROI

These are just a few things to consider when we talk about video marketing and video for web. Blue Chew Digital offers free advice to those wishing to take a leap of faith and market their company through video. From creative ideas to production and marketing, Blue Chew Digital makes the process simple, enjoyable and offers a great return on investment.

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