

Successful Online Video Marketing

Strategies for Today and into the Future

By Gerardo Dada and Mike Phillips

Once considered an accessory or convenience, online video has evolved into the fastest-growing content on the Web. YouTube alone attracts more than 72 million unique visitors per month, and every major online video portal is experiencing unheard-of growth. That's not even to mention the thousands upon thousands of smaller websites and blogs integrating video into their content every day.

In short, video has become a Web standard — organizations worldwide are expected to deliver video content to create vibrant and content-rich websites. But it's not just users that benefit from a more immersive Web experience. Savvy marketers and website owners can use video to increase time on site, attract new advertisers, interact with users, promote products and services, and more.

Defining Your Video Role

Often, website owners are hesitant to enter the online video market because they don't feel it is appropriate for their site or their audience. And that turns into a world of missed opportunities. Just about every company has a legitimate reason to include video on their site. For some, it might be simple interviews with key personnel. For others, it could be a video tutorial on how to best use a product. The key is thinking deep about your website, your business and its products and services.

For example, you might not think that T-shirts would make for compelling video. After all, it's a shirt — it doesn't do much of anything. But by thinking about the product and how it is used, a brilliant opportunity emerges. A video on YouTube demonstrating how to quickly fold a t-shirt initially garnered hundreds of thousands of views. It may not be a “selling” video, but it adds value to the website and enhances the overall experience for the user.

Any site that sells a product can benefit by including videos on proper usage, even unorthodox uses of the product. A website selling services could show customer testimonials, even offer a teaser of free information before enticing a user to purchase more services. And don't forget screencasts: any software that involves a learning curve (games included) can benefit by providing a video walkthrough.

Revisiting that T-shirt video, many spinoffs were made — one getting more than 1.1 million views as of this writing.

Marketing in Context and Video Implementation

Once you have decided on the right video content for your website, it's time to strategize. Think about what style of video your visitors would expect from your brand.

For example, if you run a site about auto mechanics, a garage would be an appropriate setting. But if you're discussing making money from the financial markets, think twice about a video filmed by a pool in your swimsuit, holding a daiquiri and a cigar. It lacks professionalism, and the user won't take you seriously.

The setting of your video can play an important marketing role as well. Think about including your logo in the background or cross-promoting another product within the video. ZunaVision has a product that lets you embed video within a video, on any surface such as the side of a building or on a wall within your

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video. Even something as simple as a little text can go a long way. Many of the video sharing sites let you annotate video, and some annotations are even clickable.

When it comes time to implement your video, the fastest and easiest way is to embed. Any of the Web's major video sharing sites will let you upload a video, then take code and embed the video into your page through a simple copy and paste. Most of the popular blog platforms also support easy video embedding through plugins or widgets. And don't forget to spread your video content. Sites like Digg.com, Stumbleupon, Delicious and Facebook are all integrated with video. And it's often easier to get exposure on these sites through a video than a regular blog post, because submissions are fewer.

When YouTube or a Flash Player is not Enough

If you have started embedding video from sites like YouTube, Dailymotion or Metacafe, you likely have seen its potential, and perhaps its limitations. The videos are not always the best quality (although HD video is slowly being worked in), and worse, it often leads to the user leaving your site and going to a portal with millions of other entertaining videos. Your visitor may forget about your videos altogether.

The next logical solution would be to host one or two dozen video clips yourself and add an inexpensive Flash video player. This lets you better control quality and can keep visitors from clicking through to another site. However, once you start adding

Some site owners might want a more professional look and feel,

without developing a custom video solution altogether. For that, better equipment may be necessary or even outsourcing your video content altogether. Several companies have emerged offering professional Web video services, including AdFare, Go 2 Productions, Webstorytellers and The Media Zoo. A sort of hybrid of do-it-yourself and professional solutions can be found with Vidego. This hosted system provides a way to upload, organize and publish your videos (using custom players), and analyze your video data.



Hit your audience:

Make sure your video hits the widest possible audience. Check out TubeMogul — this site lets you upload your video to many of the top viewing sites online, all in one stroke. Also provided are analytics on views and channels. Up to 100 deployments per month are free, but more is available through paid versions, including heightened functionality and deeper analytics.

different versions of the same video (length, resolution/quality, encoding, etc.) and register the challenge in managing them and their metadata, you will probably start considering alternative options.

Here are some signs that you should be looking at a better rich media management solution:

- You have large amounts of imagery or Flash on your site(s) and need to track and manage these Web assets efficiently.
- It's becoming difficult to deliver video in multiple encoded formats.
- You're looking to quickly add video capabilities to your site to create a truly video-centric Web experience.
- You are thinking about selling advertising on videos viewed on your site.
- You need to manage video in the context of additional pieces of content.

The key to developing a custom solution is to consider not only how you use video today, but how it will be leveraged by different groups within your company in the coming years. As an e-commerce website, it will be very important to show related products videos, or enable an "add to cart" functionality from within the video player, for example. The customer service department might want to enable video chat. You might want to auto-load a particular video at a specific point during a user's visit. Thinking long term about how video could integrate into your site will help you determine a vision and have more clarity around the business requirements for your custom video solution.

Common Mistakes with Video Content Implementation

Although many companies are realizing significant benefits of online video — such as increased traffic, user engagement and revenues — not all deployments can be considered successful. It's easy to get carried away, and you can end up alienating your visitors.

Keep usage consistent with what users expect from the site. If you run an e-commerce site, using video to sell and cross-sell products is appropriate and makes sense to the viewer. They are already on your site in a buying mode, so they are mentally prepared for a sales video. But if your site is more in the informational side, using video to sell an affiliate's product might be off-putting to your regular site visitors. Instead, you should be subtle with your video marketing. Consider offering subscriptions to your informational email newsletters, or requesting site registra-

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Producing Quality Website Video

by Greg McKinney

It's true, these days anyone can create video. But not everyone understands how to produce it in a way that is compelling, attention-getting, and powerful. We always recommend going to a trusted video production company that can show you numerous samples of their work, are willing to work with you and not just tell you what you need, and that doesn't try to make you believe that you should have to make a choice between your child's college education or your online video when it comes to price.

However, if you decide to produce video on your own, here are five things to keep in mind.

1. Relax! Always make sure the interview subject is relaxed and prepared for what's about to take place. Talk with the subject before the camera rolls and try to engage them in conversation about how simple the process is and how the interview is not an exam, but a simple conversation about a topic of which they are well-versed.

2. Take control of the interview. Go into the interview with the four or five bullet points that are essential and stay focused on those main points. If you notice the interviewee is starting to get off topic, try to get them back on track as soon as you can. The person conducting the interview needs to establish control and keep the interviewee focused and moving in the right direction.

3. Ask open-ended questions. For example, don't ask a CEO if his or her company is unique. Someone who is not that talkative or nervous will likely reply "yes" and then stop. Instead ask, "what makes your company unique?" This type of question will invite the subject to expand and give examples. This also achieves the ultimate goal, which is to engage in conversation with the interview subject, not make them feel like they're under the gun to give the "right" answer.

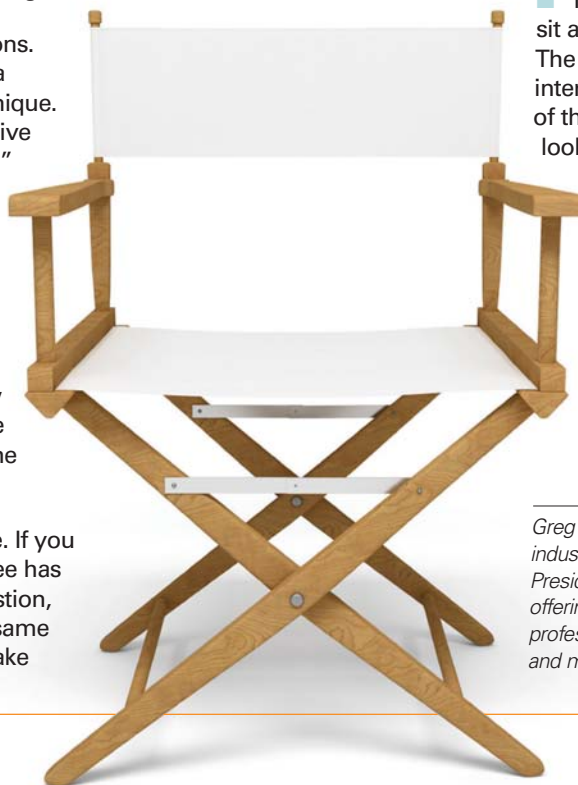
4. Listen to the interviewee. If you know that the interviewee has sufficiently answered your question, move on. If not, try asking the same question in a different way or take

the conversation in the direction you'd like it to go and have the person expand again on the topic. For example, the response to the "what makes your company unique" question might be something like, "We're innovative. We're always cutting edge and people like that." That's great, but you need more. Follow-up with a question like, "You said your company was innovative and that people appreciate that. Give me an example of a product or two that you offer that's cutting edge, and then give me a specific example of how another company benefited from your product."

5. Lights, Camera, Action! Poor lighting, bad sound, and an inappropriate background can kill all of your hard work.

- Make sure the person shooting the video uses a tripod (unless you're looking for the on-the-go look) for every shot.
- Limit panning; quality videographers often struggle with this. Amateurs think it is necessary — it's not.
- Use a lavalier microphone if you can. If not, use a hand-held, but try to keep it out of the shot.
- Don't shoot toward an open window, as it will leave shadows.
- In most cases, make sure the background is warm and inviting. Obviously, it depends on the topic, but as a general rule, "clutter" in the background is not good. Keep your background clean, simple, and non-intrusive. Plants, bookshelves, and other props can help.

■ The producer (or interviewer) should sit as close to the camera as possible. The interviewee should look at the interviewer, not the camera, 99 percent of the time. There are occasions where looking directly into the camera is a good thing, but the person needs to be a skilled speaker to do that. Also, looking at you, and not the camera, can take the pressure off your interview subject. Sitting right next to the camera will help eliminate bad profile shots and keep both sides of the interviewee's face well lit.



Greg McKinney spent 16 years in the TV news industry as an anchor and reporter and is now President of Webstorytellers, a commercial offering for Web video production including professional interviews, testimonials, advertising and more.

tion so that you can better serve them in the future. Video should be used to support your brand and deliver its message, not take your site in a new and confusing direction.

Another common mistake is to segregate video content within a separate section of the site. In most cases, users do not visit websites to only watch videos. They expect to read text, look at images and watch video on that topic, to be informed overall. Companies that do not tightly integrate video content with other, non-video content will most likely create a video environment inconsistent with the rest of the site experience. Or worse, the user might not watch your videos at all.

Similarly, companies need to consider the video player itself, should they decide to host their own video solution. A significant amount of money, resources and time can be spent considering issues such as user interaction, look, feel, branding and style. By placing a video player within a site without considering how the player should behave, companies risk creating one that sticks out like a sore thumb. Added functionality (such as rating and commenting) is a good idea, but features should always be viewed through the lens of user comfort. Be sure to test custom players before implementing them site-wide.

The Eight Principles of Video Content Integration

As you produce and aggregate video content for your visitors, how can you best organize, manage and deliver them? As previously mentioned, your business must have a solid plan for video in order to succeed, especially long-term.

While embedding videos is a good start, it's not the best solution for making your site a true player in the online video world. With custom solutions, you can tap video's real potential – sharing, tagging, related content, user interaction and much more. Here are eight simple principles to keep in mind as you craft your company's online video plans:

- 1. Treat video like another piece of content.** It needs to be tagged, enhanced with metadata, managed through a workflow and linked with related pieces of content. Video should be part of your search, tagging, rating and social strategies.
- 2. Integrate your video content with non-video content and vice versa.** Don't restrict yourself to display related video content to a video viewer, show visitors related articles, images and blogs. Users are interested and motivated by content, not just the medium with which the content is captured.
- 3. Deploy a powerful video player.** Customization and the ability to align with your brand are important, but so are advanced features like allowing visitors to splice video content, use texture strips and/or tag videos to allow visitors to easily seek and share clip portions based on preferences. This becomes especially important for longer video clips.

- 4. Consider adding a transcoding solution to automatically translate your video into multiple formats.** This will open extra channels to deliver your videos and makes it easier for a user to view using multiple assets (i.e. mobile phones). This also allows you to optimize the video content to these channels without multiplying the number of video files you need to manage.
- 5. Look for a video management solution that integrates well with your brand,** your content management system and your needs. More importantly, look for a solution that will be at the forefront while your needs evolve over the next several years.
- 6. Empower individual business owners.** Allow owners to upload their own content without relying on IT or having to go to the source for a version of the same video with different encoding.
- 7. Employ analytics.** As your video content evolves, you will need specialized video analytics. Knowing the number of videos played and the top-viewed videos is not enough. Advanced video players provide usage heat maps, metrics about sharing, ratings and social recommendations for related content based on metadata, tags and behavioral analysis of similar users.
- 8. Unify your video assets.** Jettison those separate silos of video assets. The silos lead to difficulties with managing video assets and create a lack of metadata, workflows, information about permissions or the ability to help determine when to retire a video. Start by making an inventory of current and short-term video assets and build a central process to get them published.

Video as a Social Media Tool

Two online phenomena have dominated the Web in the past few years and both show no signs of slowing down – online video and social media. And combining the two has the potential to revolutionize how users interact with companies and vice versa.

User-generated content gives website visitors a voice and a presence, while giving organizations more opportunities to interact and communicate with their visitors. Smart companies will align with users by allowing them to upload home-grown videos related to communications campaigns or products promotion, feedback or even testimonials. Imagine an unsolicited video testimonial from a real client, spread through that client's networks. That's powerful stuff.

Users are already becoming more familiar with video as a communication tool. YouTube users can upload video responses to any video they watch, and more than 150 million Facebook users have the ability to communicate and connect with each other through video. In both cases, and many others, businesses can use these resources too.

Video Success Stories

Let's look at a couple of interesting ways to use video. These examples shed light on how video is evolving and how companies are taking advantage of advanced video technologies to increase user engagement.

Broadcast Interactive Media (BIM) is an organization that truly lives up to the "Interactive" in its name. The company hosts websites for TV and radio broadcasters in more than 120 markets. BIM has harnessed user-generated video content to drive traffic, engagement and revenue. The company created YouNews, a program managed and hosted by BIM. It encourages people to record local news and events and upload the videos to their local news station website. Once uploaded, the video content is automatically transcoded and

organized into channels including news, sports and weather. Since its introduction, some local news websites have reported that these "citizen journalists" have driven more than 35 percent of their website traffic. Undaunted by claims that publishers can't make money on user-generated content, BIM has created meaningful new revenue streams for their customers by trafficking both national and local ads against the video content. In fact, in 2008 BIM announced the availability of YouNewsTV for on-air distribution in local markets, defining yet another way for stations to use and monetize video content.

Hanley Wood, a publishing company, recently kicked off a new initiative called Hanley WoodTV. Armed with hand-held cameras, Hanley Wood editors can quickly record, upload, edit and convert video content into multiple formats. The solution eliminates the hassle normally associated with managing video content, has empowered a broader set of internal contributors and has expanded the amount of creative content that Hanley Wood subscribers have come to expect. The next phase of the deployment will focus on empowering their website visitors, making use of a feature called texture strips. These strips provide visual clues as to what is occurring within the video being played, allowing the viewers to "thumb" through the video finding the portion that is of most interest. The company is also planning the roll-out of user-submitted capabilities.



If you think about video as content, it is easy to take the next step and think about video as a piece of content that can be shared, discussed, rated and tagged. In that way, video is no different than any other piece of content. That means it needs to be integrated into a larger content strategy — not isolated and treated discretely.

Your social strategy may endorse allowing people to upload video, or it may be focused on creating a conversation about your videos (or even better, making video part of a larger conversation.) Beyond sharing video segments or adding ratings and comments to video, the future is about a deep integration of video and social contributions where users can annotate, mash up, draw on top of a video, chat with video (and record and repurpose the chat), or simply share their favorite videos and yours... the possibilities are endless.

Whether it is content you own, that created by your customers or content you are licensed to distribute, it's clear that video is a key ingredient of a great online experience. If you have already embraced the idea of video content, take the next step. If you haven't, then it's time to get ready. 📹

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