

ADVERTISING & MARKETING

Forethought needed to harness full power of online video

High-tech media

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INDUSTRIES & TAGS [Media & Marketing](#)**Kelli Newman**Special to Houston Business
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As electronic media dominates communication, we are becoming an increasingly “on-demand” audience — wanting to experience information on our terms, whenever and wherever we are.

Online video delivers a sensory advantage of hearing, seeing and even interacting with an organization’s messages, making it a critical component of any marketing and communications plan.

In 2008, The Nielson Co. released its first report comparing viewer activity on the three screens of television, Internet and mobile phones. From May 2007 to May 2008, viewership of on-demand television (delayed viewing using playback technology such as DVRs) increased by approximately 36 percent. For the Internet, nearly 119 million, or 73 percent, of all estimated users in the U.S., were viewing video online.

Those statistics were reflected during the last presidential election when online video assumed an unprecedented role in campaign strategies. According to the Pew Internet Project, three times the number of Americans watched online political videos during the last presidential race, as compared to 2004. Even Tina Fey’s “Saturday Night Live” imitation of Sarah Palin drew its greatest audience online. Integrated Media Measurement Inc. reported that only one-third of the people who saw the now-infamous skits viewed them for the first time on commercial television, while the majority tuned in online, marking a profound change in consumer behavior.

Today, using The Nielson Co.’s most recent first-quarter 2010 measurements, nearly 135 million Americans watch video on the Internet (with the largest number of viewers falling within the 35-49 age range) and another 20 million subscribers are watching video on their mobile phones. Watching video on the Internet is no longer a novelty, it is a well-established expectation, and one every organization should be delivering.

One of the greatest advantages online video offers an organization’s communication strategies is the experience factor. It makes a difference when targeted audiences can see, hear, even interact with messages.

To engage an audience is to motivate them to act, and online video is a powerful tool in doing that. But how do you successfully engage an audience and create a compelling experience? Here are four steps:

Identify desired results. As obvious as it may seem, this fundamental step is often overlooked. Many organizations want to jump right into formulating messages. But to achieve the highest impact from an online video, you must first identify who you want to motivate, what actions you want to inspire, how to measure results and how to define success.

1. Formulate key messages. Every communications specialist understands the importance of crafting priority messages. The trick is not giving in to the more-is-better syndrome and diluting your online video with too much information or too much length. Depending on the application, subject-specific videos should

stay well under two minutes, and we recommend keeping comprehensive organization videos as close to six minutes as possible. Consider: What makes your product or service unique? What successes are there to the community? What primary impression do you want your audience to take away?

2. Build multidimensional content. To be successful means more than just putting a lot of information in an electronic format. The goal is not to just create an electronic brochure. Multidimensional strategies involve getting inside an audience's head. What is important to them, and who is the best messenger for that information?
3. Use the power of emotion. Scientific research has determined that emotions are biologically indispensable to our ability to make decisions and retain information. But don't underestimate the need for expert navigation. Audiences can detect when they are being played — be careful that you only project genuine emotion.
4. Put a face to the subject. To whom will your audience best respond, and what perspectives will have the greatest impact and are the most important to capture?

Video is not limited to words. Fully utilize the visual dimension of communicating with your audience. Formulate specific goals to be achieved through projected images.

Address any misconceptions, sensitivities or opposition: Build in proactive strategies for correcting or diffusing issues related to your subject. Think about which third-party or trusted authority can best accomplish this.

It's important to incorporate emotion into every video subject, even when not obvious. Bringing an audience to tears is just one emotional reaction. So is pride in a job well done and enthusiasm for a problem solved.

Organizations today have the ability to virtually bypass traditional media and deliver their messages directly to targeted audiences. As program director of your own Internet television station, what you are doing to maximize the advantage today's technology not only makes possible, it's what audiences have come to expect.

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