

„Marketing the Business Online with Youtube: The Future is Now”

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ABSTRACT

Developing a YouTube marketing strategy is similar to developing any marketing strategy. You need to focus on your customer (audience), your message, your products/services/brand, and the other elements of your marketing mix. Everything has to work together to bring your chosen message to your chosen customer, and generate the desired results. Beyond simple image, the YouTube videos need to carry the same or similar message that you use in your other advertising media. This message is critical to everything you do in your marketing efforts; it should grab your customers' attention, tell them how you can solve their problem/meet their needs, and convince them that you offer the best of all available solutions.

KEYWORDS: Customer support mix, advertising, retail promotion, employee communication, recruiting, promotional videos, channel traffic, infomercial, viral

JEL Classification: L81, L82, L86, M31, M37

Done effectively, a YouTube video can add a viral component to a company's web marketing strategy. You see, when you post a video to YouTube, that video takes on a life of its own. It will be viewed by thousands of YouTube users, posted to numerous websites and blogs, emailed around the Internet—you name it. Any user watching your video is now a potential customer—assuming that you include your website's address or other contact information in the video itself.

Not surprisingly, it appears that YouTube is replacing traditional television viewing for many users. According to Google, an average YouTube viewer spends 164 minutes online every day; in contrast, viewers spend just 130 minutes per day watching traditional television. The number of videos and users on the site continues to grow, which is great for businesses looking to take advantage of the opportunity. In fact, the growth has been nothing short of stratospheric; traffic to the site has doubled in just the past two years.

How Can YouTube be used to Market A Business?

Given the huge number of companies that embrace YouTube videos, it should come as no surprise that there are a lot of different ways to use the site. Every company has its own unique goals for their YouTube marketing. Some companies use YouTube to generate brand awareness. Some use YouTube to promote a particular product or drive sales to their retail store or website. Others incorporate YouTube as part of their product or customer support mix, use videos for product training, or even use YouTube for recruiting and employee communications. Anything you can say in person or to a group of people, you can say in a video and distribute via YouTube.

YouTube for Brand Awareness

Large national companies and major advertisers often use YouTube to enhance the awareness of their brands. Instead of focusing on individual products or services, these videos push the company's brand, often in the same fashion used in traditional television advertising.

In fact, online videos are better at imparting brand awareness than are traditional TV ads. A Millward Brown study found that online viewing led to 82% brand awareness and 77% product recall, compared to just 54% brand awareness and 18% product recall for similar television ads. Experts believe this is because online viewers are more engaged than television viewers; the Web is a more interactive medium than the passive viewing inherent with television. Brand awareness videos are typically entertaining, using a soft-sell approach to ingrain the brand's name and image in the minds of viewers. A good example is the series of videos produced by Old Spice, capitalizing on the popularity of its 2010 "The Man Your Man Could Smell Like" commercials.

YouTube for Product Advertising

If you can use YouTube to push an overall brand, you can use it to push individual products, too. This requires a more direct approach, although it's still important to make the video informative,

educational, or entertaining. To promote a product, you want to show the product in your advertising, as Nike does with its Bootcamp Drill videos, for example. You can show the product in action or used as part of a demonstration or tutorial. Just make sure you include lots of close-up product shots and link back to your own website—where more product information is available.

YouTube for Retail Promotion

You can also use YouTube to promote a company's retail stores. These videos can be general in nature (which gives the videos a long shelf life), or more specifically targeted to shorter-term promotions ("check out this weekend's specials!"). But a video that is nothing more than a store advertisement probably won't attract a lot of viewers. A better approach is to find a way to showcase the store without resorting to claims of 20% off and "this weekend only" specials. For example, you might want to record a short store tour or highlight individual departments or services within the store. You can even produce educational videos that demonstrate the products or services your store offers, like the ones for Home Depot.

YouTube for Employee Communications

You can use YouTube for all manner of company communications. Instead of holding a big company meeting just so that the big boss can give his yearly state of the company address, have him record the address and post it on a private channel on YouTube. Employees can watch the presenter say his thing from the comfort of their own desks, while they are on the road, or even at home. In fact, many companies find that YouTube is a fast and effective way to disseminate all kinds of employee information. Done right, it gets information out there in near-real-time, with all the benefit of face-to-face communication, which is a lot better than sending impersonal memos via email.

YouTube for Recruiting

Finally, don't underestimate YouTube as a recruitment tool for new employees. If you have a company welcome video, post it on YouTube and make it public. Think of this as a PR exercise to attract new talent to the company, which means doing it up right—it's as much a marketing project as it is something from the HR department. You can link to the video from all your recruiting materials, even from any traditional ads you place. Don't limit yourself to a single long puff video: Produce separate videos for individual departments, as well as to illustrate company values, employee benefits, facilities, and the like.

What Kinds of Promotional Videos Should a Company Produce

Let's narrow our focus specifically to promotional videos—those videos produced to market a company, its brands, or its products and services. What types of videos work best to get your

message across? While there's a lot of variety, depending on the type of business or product being marketed, the key is to offer a video that YouTube users actually want to watch. That means a video that has some sort of entertainment, educational, or informational value. In other words, your video needs to entertain, educate, or inform—or no one will watch it.

Informative Videos

One way to do this is to create the YouTube equivalent of an infomercial; that is, a video that provides useful information to the viewer. This information can be anything from a guided tour of a new product to a company spokesperson talking about larger industry trends. It's a newsy kind of approach, one that leaves the viewer more informed than he was before he started watching.

For example, if you're a travel agent, you can produce an informative video that provides a guided tour of one of your featured destinations. You could also take a more talking-head approach, and have one of your agents talk about travel trends in the coming season. Or maybe you put together some PowerPoint slides comparing travel costs to different destinations.

The key is to provide information that your current or potential customers find truly useful. This helps establish your company as the authority on this topic; when the customer wants to pull the trigger, he'll think of you because of the useful information you provided.

The key is to provide enough useful information to be of practical value to viewers, and then make it easy for those viewers to click through to your site for more information or to purchase what you have for sale. It can't be a straight advertisement; it has to be real information, presented in as straight a fashion as possible.

Entertaining Videos

Informing and educating are important, and you can draw in a fair number of YouTube viewers if you do these things right. But everybody likes to be entertained, which is why pure entertainment videos typically show up at the top of YouTube's lists of most-viewed videos. What's entertaining? It's impossible to say. Maybe you find some funny way to use your product or service. Maybe you put your president or CEO in a funny situation. Maybe you put together a product or industry overview that focuses on the lighter side of things. Or maybe you turn the creative work over to the pros and engage a creative agency to produce your videos. Whatever you do, it has to be something that viewers find interesting and at least a little humorous. It needs to bear up to repeat viewings, and it should be something that people might like to share with their friends. Viral videos are a result of people sharing links with each other—and people definitely like to share those videos they find most entertaining.

Conclusion

As you can see, there are lots of ways a company can make use of YouTube videos—from traditional brand and product marketing to customer support and employee communications. In almost all instances, you don't have to spend a fortune doing making videos for YouTube. And, of course, you don't have to give a penny to YouTube; everything you post on the YouTube site is completely free of charge. The key is to not overthink or overanalyze the opportunity.

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