

# Do's and Don'ts of Online Video Advertising

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Online video used to be defined by outrageous footage aimed at filling the idle time of 21-year-old males. It was raw, it was compelling, but it was definitely not the vehicle of choice for well-established brands trying to deliver their messages to a relevant, engaged audience.

However, over the course of the last year or so, Internet video has moved past the fad and up-and-coming technology phases and toward a more defined and promising place for both brand-savvy advertisers and information-seeking viewers. Today, online video advertising is one of the fastest growing advertising mediums—but also one of the toughest for marketers to grasp and effectively use.

<b>Top U.S. Online Video Properties* by Videos Viewed December 2008 Total U.S. – Home/Work/University Locations Source: comScore Video Metrix</b>		
<b>Property</b>	<b>Videos (000)</b>	<b>Share (%) of Videos</b>
<i>Total Internet</i>	<i>14,318,722</i>	<i>100.0</i>
Google Sites - Youtube	5,905,854	41.2
Fox Interactive Media	444,865	3.1
Yahoo! Sites	330,025	2.3
Viacom Digital	290,558	2.0
Microsoft Sites	247,903	1.7
Hulu.com	240,585	1.7
AOL LLC	197,135	1.4
Turner Network	183,948	1.3
Disney Online	148,434	1.0
ESPN	102,542	0.7

*\*Rankings based on video content sites; excludes video server networks. Online video includes both streaming and progressive download video.*

According to ComScore, more than three out of four Internet users watched video online in November 2007—and advertisers are quickly learning that professional, high-quality, low-cost video that speaks to viewers in a unique and authentic way is the best path to capturing the elusive goal of viewer engagement.

In order to thrive in the online video environment, advertisers need to keep a few basic principles in mind when creating and distributing online video advertisements:

- Awareness and credibility are the keys to reaching target audiences
- Videos must contain a compelling call to action
- Distribution channels should be used to maximize viewership

### **Why Use Online Video Advertising?**

Web video combines the branding power of traditional broadcast advertising with the direct response power of the Web, creating a compelling call to action that drives consumers unlike any other online advertising form. Companies now have the opportunity to distinguish themselves by providing an immersive brand experience tied to a strong call to action. Key benefits of Web video include:

**Branding** – Internet video continuously outperforms most forms of online marketing in terms of favorable consumer brand recall.

**Direct response** – Part of the power of the Web lies in consumers' ability to make instantaneous buying decisions based on visually-appealing marketing messages. Online video creates a compelling call to action that is immediately tied to purchase opportunities.

**Low production costs** – Traditional 30-second media spots can vary widely in cost and can run in excess of \$250,000 per spot for the creative alone. By keeping production costs low, businesses can create dozens of online video advertisements for the typical television ad investment.

**Differentiation** – Video is compelling, engaging and relevant, and it is distinctly different from other forms of content on the Web.

### **Who Can Take Advantage of Online Video Advertising?**

The cost structure of traditional production has kept video from being widely adopted by small businesses. Even large national brands have avoided online video due to the expenses of traditional broadcast advertising production, the comparatively smaller online audience reach, and the lack of success of cross-over video advertising formats (pre-roll, post-roll, etc.).

There is a new paradigm for Web video production today that meets the demands of a jaded online audience and the financial constraints of online advertisers—it's low-cost, high-quality video using a local one-man crew.

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This production shift not only resonates with online audiences but also makes video an attractive advertising option within the constraints of almost any budget. By using a documentary narrative format, which eschews over-production for realism, the video is aligned with the ethos of the Web, meeting the authentic, information-seeking needs of the typically skeptical audience.

### **Where Do Professional Services Fit In?**

At first glance, it seems that video is an ideal marketing medium for businesses such as restaurants, bars and tourist destinations, but is not as well suited for professional services. The misconception has kept a lot of professional services from taking advantage of an advertising medium that can help differentiate them from competitors in a way that they never could before. Lawyers, doctors and other service providers can leverage video as a powerful decision-making research tool by demonstrating excellence and competency—if they approach video from the right angle.

With authentic, narrative videos, service providers have an opportunity to develop trust through the emotional branding ability of video advertising. No other advertising format comes close to video in providing a personal, visceral connection that ultimately drives customers to a specific service provider.

### **What Works: The 'Do's' of Online Video Production**

People who seek information online are looking for authentic content they can trust and use to make educated decisions. This active "lean forward" method of searching, combined with infinite information choices and a low tolerance for disingenuous content, makes creating video that meets viewers' demands a challenge. To create engaging, call-to-action video, marketers must deliver:

**Authenticity** – People are tired of traditional advertising, and they seek out authenticity. Video featuring real people in real places builds trust in an advertiser's message.

**Compelling message** – Differentiation is difficult. Simply telling people about products and services doesn't satisfy their search to find the best provider for their needs. It's important to provide a compelling message that goes deeper and encourages action.

**Quality** – Videos with poor quality don't stand a chance of earning the attention of people who have plenty of content options. High-quality videos project the best image, while poor-quality videos ensures that most viewers will take away a negative impression of the business.

### **The Don'ts of Producing Compelling Online Video**

There are ways to make a bad online video. Here are some things to avoid:

**Uninformative sales pitches:** Traditional broadcast advertising is short on valuable content and long on hard sales pitches. This model fails to meet the authentic information needs that online video viewers demand from content on the Web.

**Lengthy video that loses attention:** Videos that take too long to deliver value squander the attention that viewers have granted them. Viewers lose interest quickly and abandon the video before its benefit and call to action are clearly communicated.

**Over-production:** Even with the increases in high-speed Internet access, adoption of the Web video format is still limited in terms of display and production value. Fancy camera tricks, expensive graphic packages and other production elements get lost on the smaller screen, resulting in wasted budget. Quality must be solid, but the message is key.

### **The Big Picture: Great Online Advertising is Authentic, Engaging and Actionable**

Web video is its own medium. Authenticity and information are a critical part of ensuring that viewers aren't disappointed in their decision to view the video. Video advertising with poor production quality or uninspiring content creates a negative brand experience. To make a video truly actionable it must emotionally engage viewers, building the trust and familiarity that forms the backbone of return on investment.