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AUDIENCES, STORYTELLING TECHNIQUES EVOLVE IN ONLINE VIDEO



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I'd like to discuss some of the considerations that you should keep in mind when creating content for an online audience. In truth, I could probably write a book and still not cover this thoroughly!

For one, content creators in the online space are only beginning to tap this new medium's potential. Studies may be throwing out "best practices" from the latest research and surveys, but most of the online video landscape is a bit of a Wild West. Anything goes. And if it doesn't go -- even better!

The same advice applies for advertisers that want to create video driven brand content programs.

There are several considerations to keep in mind. Be aware of how both audiences and storytelling techniques are evolving within this new medium. Educate yourself by watching and interacting with successful video shows that have emerged in the last couple of years.

Understand Your Internet Audience: Without Them, You Have No Show

The most successful creators in the space -- whether nonfiction or fiction -- have one thing in common: they know their audience and what it wants.

This might sound like a big "duh," but more often than not I see people post a video on YouTube, or create a blog/Web site to house their video, and then expect an audience to show up. Sure, you might have hundreds of friends you can share it with, who can then share it with a hundred more friends, but that's likely not a sustainable audience base.

The Web allows you to get to know your audience even before you set out to create your video. Once you know who you want to appeal to, you can begin the dialogue with that audience across blogs,

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video portals, and communities. Find out what they love and hate. Read comments they post on the videos they're already watching. And even comment on their comments!

The Internet allows for interactivity and a direct connection with an audience that television doesn't. This has led to much more personal and intimate online video formats, such as video blogs and lifecasting. It's important to engage in these new formats to uncover what makes online audiences tick, as well as to understand evolving storytelling techniques.

Understanding online target audiences and their preferred emerging formats allows you to make informed decisions about the type of video show and the avenues to reach that audience.

Let Your Audience Drive Future Considerations

Once you have an audience interested in your video content or show, sit back and listen to what they want. I've yet to see a successful online show that has "comments turned off." Why? Because online audiences demand to have their opinions heard. If they don't want to be heard, they can turn on their TV!

And when thinking about the length of the video, the same rules apply. Sure, you can follow the latest claims and create a long-form video, or abide by the average current length of 2.7 minutes to start off. But in the end, size doesn't matter as much as what most appeals to the audience and the length of their attention span.

Today's audiences increasingly want to participate at deeper levels. While commenting may be a low-level engagement, passionate audience members are creating video responses -- and even complete sideline stories. An important consideration is deciding how to incorporate and make this content a part of your own.

Keep in mind, creating content for the masses is like editing a film by committee. You may lose the core idea that made your content great in the first place. The key is to be influenced and responsive to an audience, while at the same time holding true to the characteristics that make your work stand out from others.

In the end, it's about finding a balance. The content creator's unique perspective and creativity will originally draw an audience in, but it's his or her willingness to evolve with an audience that will make that experience and relationship last.