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DEVELOPING A DIVERSE BRAND STRATEGY



Christine Beardsell

Content Integration Director

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Over the past year I've often discussed online video advertising within the context of brand content. Mostly because the idea of creating a rich video entertainment program is much more appealing to me than repurposing interruptive spots for pre-roll, or creating one-off "viral" videos. Several people have asked me: "How does a brand start to generate enough online video content to become programmable, versus just being a campaign spot?"

My best answer (and the easiest comparison to make) is to think about brand content in the same way you think about your stocks: *Diversify your portfolio*. Just as you shouldn't put all of your money into one sector, your brand content strategy shouldn't be focused on just developing viral videos for YouTube.

In order to have a diverse (and affordable!) brand content strategy, there are four main categories that every content portfolio should consist of: original content, co-created content, curated content, and user-generated content.

Original Content

Every brand content strategy has to consist of some original content solely created and developed by the brand. Although this is by far the most expensive method of generating video content, the editorial control and targeting benefits of developing original content are key to keeping your overall content plan on strategy.

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Original content can consist of one or more of the following: viral videos, informational videos, brand-focused Webisodic entertainment, product reviews, video tutorials, and live event coverage to name a few.

Because creating original content is expensive, focus on specific needs of the brand's audience. For instance, if you're targeting teenagers, then creating five or six entertaining videos for YouTube might be one strategy. A more mature audience might be more interested in accessing informational live at forums or events relevant to their business.

Co-created Content

Once a strategy for original content is developed, the next best way to cost effectively broaden and diversify your content portfolio is to find content creators who are already developing content relevant to the brand's audience. This could be as small scale as reaching out to a star video blogger to co-develop content for the target audience, or as large scale as partnering with one of the new digital studios to develop an online video series. Either choice gets your brand in front of an aggregated audience in your target zone.

A lot of new talent is creating great online content without sufficient funding. They have the audience, but not the proper support. Brands are now in the position to seek out the talent relevant to their target and fund entertainment that is already reaching the audience they want to reach.

Although there's a lot less control when co-developing content than when creating original content, the benefits to having content with a built-in audience and a proven engagement and entertainment record is worth the trade off.

Curated Content

One of most affordable ways for a brand to expand its content is to license content from other publishers. Video content is being created faster than it's being consumed. Beyond just video portals, major online magazines, newspapers, and endless independent editorial sites are now producing video content. And everyone is looking for more eyeballs!

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Finding partnership opportunities where both the brand and content creator can benefit from a shared audience is key. And often, the licensing fee costs no more than doing a comparable media buy on that partner's site - a site you most likely already are advertising on (or should be!)

In a downturn economy, it's necessary to get more creative with how you spend your online media dollars. And deepening existing media partnerships by licensing video content they have is a great way to get more bang for your buck, as well as expand your brand content portfolio.

User-Generated Content

No brand content strategy is complete without participants. Once you have enough content to keep your video programming fresh and relevant for your brand audience, the next step is to make sure that audience has a way of being heard.

This is where social media strategies, promotions, and utilities become great tactics for activation and participation. Create a sweepstakes, a contest, a useful tool for sharing, or offer a chance at stardom.

Developing ongoing promotional campaigns around content will not only encourage and motivate people to generate their own content for the brand, but it becomes a way to update messaging, or to launch new products.