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## THE NUTS AND BOLTS OF PRODUCING AN ONLINE VIDEO AD



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In my column, "Taking the Next Steps in Video Advertising," I touched upon the need to shift dollars from television into online spend for video advertising to realize its full cross-channel storytelling potential.

Since then, several people have asked me to expand on the issue and outline production considerations and cost implications in creating an online video campaign.

Before I do that, let's challenge the idea of what a "campaign" online really is. To go beyond traditional media and bring an online video concept to life, we first need to stop thinking about the three-month campaign timeline, and start thinking of video content ideas that can sustain ongoing engagement way beyond the usual timeframe and way beyond the single destination experience. And even beyond the single screen!

Once that idea is bigger than the one-off "spot" and further reaching than the highly playful (though forgettable) microsite housing that spot, then the real planning for online video can begin.

### **Shoot in HD, Don't Sell Your Project Short**

There's a common misconception that online video doesn't need to be shot in a high-quality format. Sure, it may get compressed to death by the time the online viewer gets to see it, but that's exactly the reason why it's important to start out with a higher-quality picture. Even after compression, there's a huge noticeable difference between shooting with a MiniDV camera versus shooting with a HD camera -- it's sharper, has richer colors, and is able to handle the brightest lights and darkest shadows better.

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In addition, a number of integrated online video experiences need to be shot using a chroma key. Post-production keying demands the highest resolution and sharpest picture quality to keep the edges around subjects clean. With standard or MiniDV quality, you'd be looking at painfully long hours to fix the jagged edges that result from lower quality.

Lastly, HD is getting less expensive. There are a number of prosumer models out there that do the job just as well as high-end pricey models. And in the end, shooting in this format will not only save you from potential pricey post-production retouching costs, but it'll also allow your content to be more easily cropped, enlarged, and manipulated for other screen formats and purposes.

Remember, it's easy to degrade quality later, but impossible to make the quality any better than the format in which it's shot.

## **Plan for Creative Media Solutions**

Once an idea goes beyond the :30 spot and the single destination microsite, the real challenge is in planning for the multiple formats, locations, and potential screens on which your video content will live.

The new creativity that's demanded for such an experience requires full collaboration between media planners, creative directors, and technologists in a project's early pre-production phase. Deciding how an idea will translate within a cross-channel experience involves a range of expertise.

How will that video integrate into a site experience versus a banner ad versus a syndicated player unit? Is it a media buy that drives traffic back to a destination site, or one that further syndicates the video content out into other destinations? And within each media placement, do you tell the same story and message, or does each new touch point extend the story? On top of that, what technologies will make that creative execution seamless and innovative within each new space it resides?

These questions (and more) now have to be asked before a proper production can be scoped and planned. That means more scripts written, elements shot, formats to be filled -- and a bigger budget to make it possible.

Although you may not be spending money online in the same way you spend money for a :30 spot, in the end, the same money is needed in order to create the kind of content that the online space requires and demands. Sure, it'll be slightly cheaper to shoot HD digital video over film. And yes, the

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high costs needed to prepare video and audio for television may have disappeared. But now, many new considerations come into play that will easily eat up those saved costs.

Big ideas in the online space deserve to have at least the same budgets as a television spot. After all, the Internet is where all of the real engagement happens.

Do you have an online video advertising issue that keeps you up at night? Do you need a technical or strategic question answered, or just want advice and a POV? I want to hear what's on your mind and write about it. Please e-mail me and I'll feature questions and answers in coming weeks.