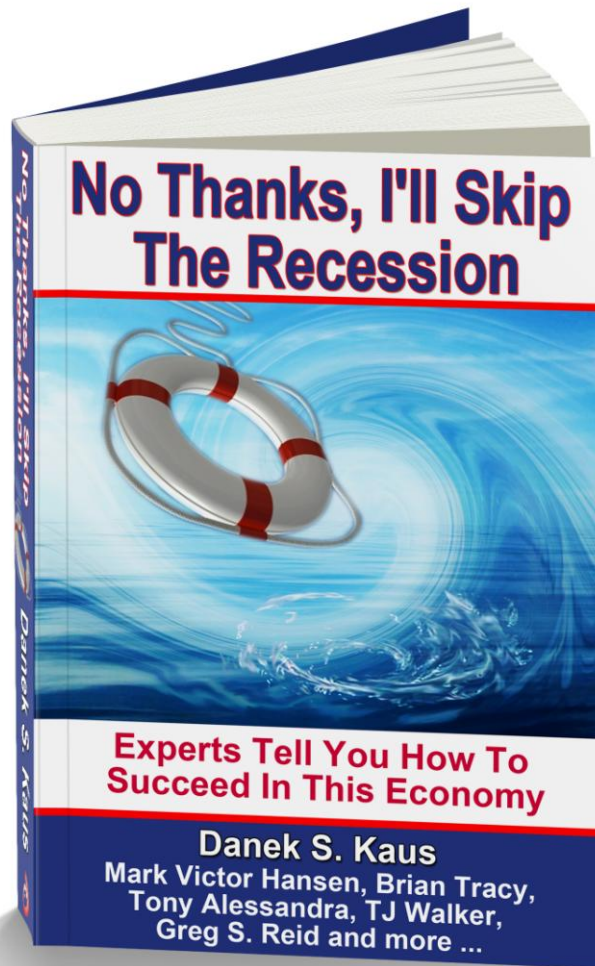


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9 Tips For Marketing Your Business Using Online Video and Social Media

By Steve Crow

Print, TV and banner advertising programs are giving way to a new form of marketing and promotion that people actually search for and *want* to watch.

Internet audiences love two things; watching online videos and interacting on social media sites like Facebook and Twitter. A carefully crafted online video marketing program integrates both.

A comScore study published in August 2009 reported 158 million Americans watched 21.4 billion online videos during the previous month. Not surprisingly, YouTube accounted for just under 42% of those views.

Repurposing Your Marketing Into a Public Service

Every small business owner is an expert in something. Furthermore, if you count hobbies and perhaps knowledge gained from prior careers there could even be multiple areas of expertise. For instance, I am thinking of the locksmith or barber that also happens to be very knowledgeable about photography or map making.

If you are willing to share this knowledge online, knowing that the majority of people seeing your content will never actually become customers, then you are ready to reap the financial and promotional rewards of literally turning your marketing into a public service.

By providing reliable, un-biased information to the Internet audience you'll be raising your professional profile while at the same time driving new business.

But hold on, you're not quite ready to grab a camera and microphone yet. Here are 9 tips that are going to save you lots of frustration and aggravation and get you headed in the right direction.

9 Tips For Getting Started With Online Video Marketing

1) Don't Try Creating A "Commercial"

Build your video strategy based on creating informative, educational content that actually helps people, not "commercials." Examples include "How To" or "FAQ" videos addressing typical questions asked by your customers.

Provide customer-centered tips and resources, explain service options, give your

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opinion on the industry issues of the day or maybe create a series of videos addressing common misconceptions about your field.

2) Shorter is Better

Keeping each video to under 3 minutes is ideal. Provide overviews - not detailed discussions. You can always break a more complex topic down into several videos if needed.

3) Sound is Key

Poor sound is the quickest way to guarantee your video will not be watched all the way through. Distracting background noises, echoes, inconsistent levels or a microphone placed too far away will lead to a quick click of the "stop" button.

4) Lighting

Practically all consumer level digital video cameras suffer from poor low-light performance. If you don't have a professional light kit, try and film in areas with outdoor facing windows and then use sheets of white poster board held off-camera to bounce the light where it is needed.

5) Scripts are for Actors

Don't try writing out a long, detailed script beforehand and delivering it word-for-word to camera. That is sure to backfire and result in a stiff, unnatural presentation that won't project the image of a caring, confident professional. Break your main points into 10-15 second sound bites and speak in a very conversational tone.

6) Don't Be A Talking Head

Using a variety of angles, mixing wide shots with medium and close-ups will help keep your viewers engaged.

Be sure to capture lots of atmospheric and location shots too. This adds visual interest and allows your video editor to cover up small mistakes while creating a smooth-flowing experience for the viewer.

7) Where To Present Your Video

Your own Web site or blog and YouTube are the minimum number of destinations to consider. Facebook, MySpace, iTunes and even Twitter are fantastic opportunities as well.

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Offline promotion is equally important. Do you have a newsletter or other mailing? Are you running any print advertising? Make sure you have a short URL you can add to those existing marketing pieces that will lead audiences directly to your videos.

Why not show your videos during workshops or other live events you may host?

Finally, if you have a retail business - consider turning your sales floor into a video showroom. For as little as \$400 you can purchase a flat panel screen with an integrated DVD player and have a series of short videos running on a continuous loop. Set up the screen where customers can view it while browsing in your store.

8) Brand with a Call To Action

Every video you produce should be branded with your business name and contact information and conclude with a call to action to telephone the office or visit your Web site. It's constantly surprising how many people forget to do this simple step.

9) Online Video In The Living Room

A variety of devices already allow Internet-based videos to be watched on living room TV's, with not much effort your videos could easily be one of them. This trend will grow to have a huge impact on your marketing opportunities in the coming years.

Mobile video is another area you can't afford to ignore. The Apple iPad and similar devices are going to have a huge impact on business marketing and they are ideal for presenting video.

Many cell phones and portable music players also play video. We take these devices everywhere with us - even to the movies! Think creatively about what kind of content you could create that might be used by a person "on location" in the exact moment of need?

Perhaps you are a Sports or Massage Therapist who could create videos to help athletes experiencing problems while still on the field!

Budgeting For Your Video Marketing Program

While it's difficult to provide exact figures, hiring a video professional to produce a short segment is possible with budgets starting as low as \$850. Only a few years ago video production budgets were around \$10,000 to film and distribute your content.

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For the “Do It Yourselfer” a basic video production package costs \$3,000 to \$4,000 plus the time needed to learn how to use your new gear.

Another great option is to film the content yourself and then hire a video editor to create the finished program for you.

Conclusion

Engaging and informative business profile videos, FAQ segments, and even multi-episode online video “shows” are just the tip of the iceberg when it comes to the potential of this medium. Social media sites like Facebook and YouTube offer a great opportunity to use online videos to reach and interact with whole new groups of potential customers while at the same time providing a valuable public service.

Steve Crow is the owner and Executive Producer of Crow Digital Media (www.CrowDigitalMedia.com) of Palo, Alto California, a social media and online video production agency providing turnkey, on-location service to customers across the United States. He can be reached by email at Steve@CrowDigitalMedia.com