

The Truth About Broadband Video

Unleashing the Value of an Old Medium in a New Channel

insight

Jeff Lanctot | April, 2005



Getting Out of the Comfort Zone

The flavor of the month in internet marketing is broadband video- but at the moment it's popular for the wrong reason: Comfort.

AOL, Yahoo, MSN, Reuters, and ESPN, among others, have developed compelling products that have agencies and advertisers excited. And why not, after all broadband video can provide an engaging and emotive consumer experience; its accountability allows us to learn more about advertising impact than is possible in any other medium; and the ability to segment audiences and deliver customized content makes relevance a reality.

So this is why there is such enthusiasm for video online? Actually, no.

The truth is that we're clamoring for broadband video as our ad delivery mechanism because we're comfortable with it, because, not to put too fine a point on it, it's like TV on the web.

There is a value to having a format that is familiar to marketers. Television advertising has built brands, moved audiences and sold products. It makes sense to emulate that, and with television losing share, the chance to replicate that experience online is alluring. Not to mention that this it is easier, cheaper and reasonably effective to take an existing :30 spot and place it online.

But comfort will not engage consumers. It will not maximize sales. It will not help advertisers win. We need much more than a level of comfort for broadband video to captivate the audiences and become a marketer's killer app.

Content Is Still King

Even when web publishers have quality content it can be a game of hide and seek for consumers to find good video content. In a recent Online Publishers Association study, 53 percent of online respondents said they would be more likely to watch video if they could easily find content of interest. Advances in Video Search will help address this problem, but promotion would make the biggest difference. Media companies with compelling video content should be shouting from the rooftops.

Consumers want it and advertisers will support it. So let's promote it.

Publishers take note:

There is a serious lack of fresh and appealing video out there. Week-old news clips don't cut it. Rushed low-quality video makes a site look like a public access channel. Web sites must be committed either to producing high quality video or striking distribution deals that give them access to the same. A maniacal focus on quality and quantity must be maintained.

Grappling with a New Medium

We also need research to understand how consumers are interacting with video on their sites. What are the demographic profiles of the viewers? What is the optimal length of a spot? When are consumers most likely to view a long form ad? Accountability and insight must drive growth.

Marketers and their agencies need to consider that some of the cracks in the television foundation are caused by consumer dissatisfaction, and that there's really no point in re-creating that experience online. Informed respect for the new media consumer must be of innovations in the format this medium takes. Advertisers should be willing to develop :5, :10 and :15 spots made specifically for the Internet. Creatives should embrace the opportunity to make video ads that are relevant, interactive and engaging. Consumer control doesn't have to be a bad thing.

We must understand that broadband video won't cure what ails advertisers. Success in the digital world is not about a silver bullet, it's silver buckshot--a series of exposures and interactions that help marketers develop a relationship with consumers. The companies that get it right will have broken down the silos of media, creative, search and site development. Digital integration of strategy, message and data is mandatory.

The Internet is not a passive experience and it is not being used by a passive media consumer. What was a one-way conversation is now a dynamic discourse. It's time for marketers to start listening to and engaging with their customers in a completely different way. It may not be comfortable, but it is essential.

This article first appeared in April 2005 in Advertising Age where Jeff is a guest columnist.

About the Author



Jeff Lanctot serves as Avenue A | Razorfish's Vice President of Media and Client Services. Jeff joined Avenue A | Razorfish in 1999, and served as the agency's Media Director prior to his current role. The Avenue A | Razorfish Media team is the largest independent buyer of interactive media in the U.S. and the Avenue A | Razorfish Search division is the country's largest SEM. Jeff's current focus is on the integration of digital strategies including search, display media, video and emerging technologies. Prior to joining the agency, Jeff worked in direct marketing as vice president of Qualfund LLC. He began his career with the Deloitte Consulting Group, providing management consulting and business analysis for a host of Fortune 500 companies and government agencies. Jeff is a graduate of Washington State University.

About Avenue A | Razorfish

Avenue A | Razorfish (www.avenuea-razorfish.com) is the largest interactive agency and an operating unit of Seattle-based aQuantive, Inc. (NASDAQ: AQNT), a digital marketing services and technology company. Avenue A | Razorfish solutions are entrenched in deep technology, rigorous analytics and a rich understanding of customer needs, including award-winning online advertising media and creative, search marketing services, email marketing, and world-class design and implementation of websites and intranets/extranets. Avenue A | Razorfish operates three regions – East, West and Central – with 11 offices located in major U.S. markets. Clients include AstraZeneca, Best Buy, Kraft, Microsoft/MSN, Ralph Lauren, and Wells Fargo.

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