

Interactive video is the most important element of your new media tool kit – more important than blogging, podcasting, or mobile devices. And it's not just for amateur entertainers or TV broadcasters. Understanding video's potential for creating interactive, immersive experiences for the digital consumer is the key to unlocking its value for you. Let's take a closer look.

Why You Should Care

First, a reality check: why should you care about interactive video? Quite simply, digital consumers want it. According to the Online Publishers Association, 24 percent of the U.S. internet population watches online videos at least once a week, and nearly half do so at least once a month. And about seven out of 10 digital consumers have viewed an online video advertisement, with 31 percent of them subsequently visiting the advertiser's website.

There are three reasons for this growth. First, broadband continues to take hold. Two-thirds U.S. web users now use broadband (per Nielsen//NetRatings), which is the essential ingredient to enjoying rich video content. Second, major publishers and bellwethers like Google and Apple continue to make significant investments in online video, joining the phenomenally popular video sites like YouTube and iFilm.

But the most important reason why you should care about interactive video – based on what our clients have told us – is that video helps facilitate a basic consumer craving for immersion and interactivity. As more of us escape the limitations of dial-up access, consumers are becoming online gamers, social networkers, and brand enthusiasts. We don't just tell our friends we like Oreos, we upload our self-made commercials. And we want to have a little fun, too. We want to customize the look and feel of an automobile using a rich media auto configurator, not just stare at a bunch of static pages online.

Our clients are consumers, too – and they're asking Avenue A | Razorfish to build more experiential, interactive websites and online advertisements. Increasingly, those experiences entail interactive video. After all, video applies across the entire digital channel, and video takes immersion and interactivity to another level.

Watch Me Blow up a Ferrari on YouTube!

If you've spent time on YouTube or iFilm, you can be forgiven for believing that interactive video is turning us into a nation of amateur entertainers uploading movies we're too guilty to admit we enjoy watching. Indeed, one of the most popular entertainers in the digital world is a character dubbed "David Elsewhere," an amateur dancer and student who catapulted to fame after a video of his surreal dancing performance at a talent show was distributed widely on the internet.

But big enterprises are embracing interactive video, too, as shown by some recent Avenue A | Razorfish client experiences. For instance, Red Bull has applied interactive video to inject its redbullusa.com brand site with a shot of vitality and excitement. Redbullusa.com captures the essence of the high-energy performance-driven brand by employing streaming video to immerse you into the world of extreme sports stars. For example, the Lindsey Kildow Media Collection allows you to make your own movie of this alpine skier and send it to a friend. You can even add pre-cut soundtrack effects.

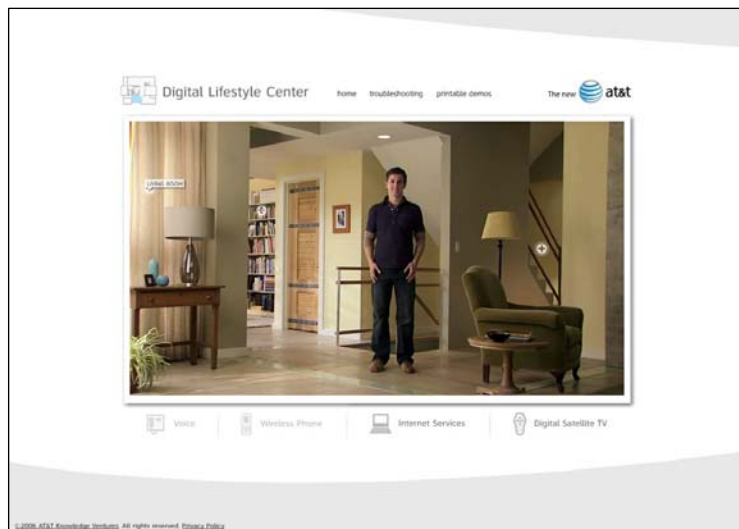
Red Bull creates an emotional bond with its brand aficionados, who identify with the extreme-sports lifestyle. And, the use of cutting edge streaming media is important because the site needs to match Red Bull's high-energy personality. Static, flat images just won't suffice.



By contrast, AT&T uses interactive video to teach broadband-enabled consumers how to use AT&T products and services. The AT&T Digital Lifestyle (att.com/dlc) is an online world that uses a tour of a home to show how to use AT&T products and services as part of consumers' everyday lives. For example, a tour guide in the virtual home office shows you how to set up your home internet network using AT&T Yahoo! high-speed internet.

The website employs high-definition, streaming video extensively. You can navigate the site using pull down menus or by following the home layout, room by room, depending on one's preference. Visitors may also pause and replay video snippets if they want to review an instruction.

Upon launch in July 2006, AT&T Digital Lifestyle has helped AT&T refresh its brand as a consumer entertainment provider. Daily page views and visits have skyrocketed in weeks.



Red Bull shows how interactive media combined with the right content can create an immersive brand experience tailored to consumers' lifestyles. AT&T shows how interactive video helps solve a business challenge: in this case, we're helping AT&T encourage self-service for its customers by explaining a complex topic

How to Get Started

By no means do Red Bull and AT&T provide the only two ways you can embrace interactive video. In fact, it's impossible to keep up with the inventive ways companies are combining video with viral marketing and consumer-generated content to build their brands. But the two companies do illustrate two important principles for employing interactive video regardless of your specific situation:

- Success hinges on knowing the end game for your customers. In a way, interactive video isn't about video – it's all about understanding your customers better and how to reach them. If you've not been using personas – or composite profiles of your customers' wants and needs – it's important you do so now. Is your customer coming to your site to learn something? To have a little fun? To celebrate your brand? You can't really employ interactive video until you know.
- Think interactivity. There's a huge difference between an online video and an interactive video. An online video is just a TV commercial dropped into the digital world – creating a passive viewing experience that fails to take advantage of the benefits the web has to offer. An interactive video gives consumers the chance to play with your brand – assembling their own movies, and controlling the pace and flow of content.

Think you're not ready for interactive video? Then check out your customers. They're ready and waiting for you to get involved.

About the Author



David Deal is part of the Avenue A | Razorfish marketing team. Previously, David was a marketing executive for Lante, and before that, he founded and directed Andersen Consulting's global industry analyst program. David also worked as an editor in the book publishing industry and helped develop a book about rock singer Jim Morrison. David's personal passions are his family and teaching at his church. He holds a bachelor of science in journalism from the University of Illinois.

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About Avenue A | Razorfish

Avenue A | Razorfish (avenuea-razorfish.com) is the largest interactive marketing and technology services firm in the U.S., and an operating unit of Seattle-based aQuantive, Inc. (NASDAQ: AQNT). Avenue A | Razorfish solutions are entrenched in deep technology, rigorous analytics and a rich understanding of customer needs, including award-winning web media &



creative, search marketing services, email marketing/eCRM, and world-class creative, design and implementation of customer websites and intranets/extranets. Avenue A | Razorfish operates three regions in the U.S. – East, West and Central – with offices located in major markets. In addition, the firm’s first international presence was established through the acquisition of U.K.-based full-service interactive agency DNA. Clients include AstraZeneca, Best Buy, Ford Motor Company, Kraft, Microsoft and Nike. aQuantive, Inc. and all of its operating units are committed to Internet privacy.

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