

# 11 Cost-Effective Tips for Using Online Video to Build Engagement With Your Brand

By PR News Editors

If you read a prognosticator who didn't think online video would take off in 2016, congratulations, you might be the only one.

In one of social's least-surprising developments, video is booming. Consumers are engaging with brands' video at unprecedented levels. And with online video having an estimated ad revenue of \$10 billion in the U.S. market, even **Instagram**, created to highlight still photos, added a whopping, by its standards, 45 seconds to its stingy 15-second video limit for non-brands; brands were granted a full minute early in 2016 to preview Super Bowl ads.

**Facebook's** Mark Zuckerberg, Instagram's owner, charged up much of the buzz about video during a Q4 earnings call early in 2016. He reported Facebook's 1.59 billion monthly active users and 1.44 billion mobile monthly active users were logging 8+ billion video views daily, or 100 million hours of video (it was discovered later, in Sept. 2016, that this statistic may have been highly inflated due to an error in methodology). Not a surprise then that Zuckerberg, a bit later, said Facebook was considering a spot solely for video viewing. After that Zuckerberg said he'd not be surprised to find most Facebook content within five years to be video. The cherry on top was a subsequent move making the Facebook Live video service available to everyone in the U.S. via iPhone.

**Twitter** finally acknowledged reality, unveiling Twitter Engage June 21, a mobile

app for Apple iOS devices designed to make it easier for creators to post videos to the previously word-laden platform. Twitter's game clock also was eased—starting June 28 all Twitter users could post videos of 140 seconds (gotta love it, 140 characters, 140 seconds), up from 30 seconds. Twitter chief Jack Dorsey, whose speechwriter must be clairvoyant, said, "Video is becoming increasingly central to...Twitter. We're investing heavily in videos and creators. We want to be the best place for creators and influencers to build an audience..." Earlier, on June 15, **YouTube**, the veritable granddaddy of Internet video, whose growth in watch time has jumped 50% year to year, unveiled YouTube Director, intended to make it easier "for every business" to create or obtain video ads. Indeed, Tod Plotkin, principal, **Green Buzz Agency**, says YouTube Director will be ideal for budget-conscious communicators. Of Twitter Engage, he said, "This app is the perfect response, making it quick and easy for marketers to create and track their video tweets."

For Patricia Garofalo, communications strategy leader, **Soteryx**, the measurement pieces are exciting. "Not only do tools like this lower video production costs...they help gather important statistics that communicators need to effectively measure the success of videos. This is the most important step in content creation and most communicators struggle with how to effectively measure their material."

Imagine the gall of Zuckerberg, stealing

Twitter's and YouTube's thunder with news that leaked in the *Wall Street Journal* June 21 that Facebook is paying 140 media outlets, such as *The New York Times*, **BuzzFeed**, **Huffington Post**, **Mashable** and **CNN**, and celebrities like comedian Kevin Hart and noted auteur/ **Seattle Seahawks** QB Russell Wilson to stream videos for its Live service. Facebook had indicated it was paying celebrities to use Live, but the specifics, such as \$3 million each to BuzzFeed and the Times for 12-month Live deals, show the magnitude of Facebook's wager and the depth of its pockets.

\$3 million contracts aside, we asked PR pros with extensive video experience how brands can be effective video players using more reasonable budgets.

### **My Kingdom for Video? Not Necessarily**

Plotkin admits social video can be an expensive proposition for brands, yet its price is falling tremendously. In fact, Plotkin's says brands can shoot video on an iPhone using a tripod or unipod (see # 9 below) "and it will look fine...it will be good enough for most corporate videos....With new technology closing the gap between corporate video and the TV/film industry, marketers can create videos that look like big-budget entertainment. That's why it's so important for communications pros to be aware of the techniques filmmakers use to create high-quality productions." There are, he says, numerous factors determining video price, including how turnaround time, style, complexity of concept and editing, length and goals. Oh, yes, know your business goals before you begin thinking about a video.

### **Point A, Story First**

Moving beyond cost, what should brands think about when getting started?

1. Is That Your Final Platform? The loca-

tion of your video should be determined by where it will perform best, Plotkin says. Questions to ask, he says, include: Who is the primary audience for it and how familiar is this group with my brand?

2. 3 Stages of Video: For Garofalo, who previously ran communications for GE Water, "Communicators need to keep in mind that the three steps in a video lifecycle—creation, distribution and measurement—are intertwined. You can't do one without thinking about the others." To find topics for video Garofalo met every two weeks with GE's sales teams. Other content tips: Comb your intranet for content; utilize your team—she held two-hour brainstorming sessions each month where everyone had to come in with an idea. The team then riffed off the various ideas, which eventually led to concepts for videos. A trade article about a world without water led to a GE-sponsored video contest for university students about a waterless world.

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### **Your video can go viral, but fail to adequately tell your brand's story.**

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3. Story, Story, Story: Ask what major themes do I want my video to cover? Plotkin says. Garofalo agrees, saying that having an understanding of the video's goal is critical. "Do I want to raise awareness for a brand or an issue? Explain something technical, tell an emotional story, educate the market about a trend? And don't forget your call to action," she says. A common mistake for brands when dealing with video

- is trying to present too many themes, Plotkin notes. Choose one to three themes, he advises, and concentrate on what makes your brand unique. Your video can go viral, but fail to adequately tell your brand's story, he warns.
4. **Distribution=Evaluation:** Decide whether or not your video content is interesting and will it have longevity, Garofalo says. Can it be repurposed to suit multiple channels or audiences? She challenged her team to use one piece of content on five channels. "This maximizes the budget," she says. In addition, you want to touch people at various times of the sales cycle to reinforce your message, so having content live on various platforms is critical, Garofalo says.
  5. **What's Your Storytelling Style?** Narrative, documentary, motion graphics, animation, scripted voiceover, a blend of several of the above? Incidentally, the scripted voiceover is the most budget friendly, she says, since you can take existing footage and pair it with voiceover that you craft. Also note it's critical to capture viewers' attention quickly, perhaps without sound. Hyperlapse photography, which allows you to present scenes much faster than in real time, and so is excellent for short, online videos, is "blowing up" on social.
  6. **Timeframe:** The typical production cycle for a brand video is 4 to 6 weeks, which largely is devoted to planning to shoot footage and post-production. "Focus on the story first," he says, deal with music, which can be surprisingly costly, and other details afterward.
  7. **Aw, Shoot:** A typical shoot is one day. Another option is the half-day shoot, though not all video companies offer it, "It's rare to do more than 2 days of shooting," he says. Have your subjects look slightly off camera, Plotkin adds.
  8. **That's Sweet:** Don't forget about budgeting time and money for editing and post-production, including color correction (in brand videos you usually will want a warm hue) and audio sweetening (adjusting sound for things like background noises and air conditioning). For Plotkin learning to edit is akin to acquiring a foreign language: you must work at the basics first. He recommends **Adobe** Premiere and iMovie editing apps. Typically 70-80% of a project's costs are devoted to post-production. Of course, there's a possibility that your brand can tell its story effectively on video without sound.
  9. **Speed Costs:** You want to avoid 60 frames/second as it looks too raw for brand video. Opt for 30 frames/second, which is standard for movies. The biggest difference between television/movies and corporate videos is camera movement: The camera moves constantly in television and cinema, and little in brand videos. Purchase a monopod like **DJI** Osmo (\$400-\$1000)
  10. **Up Ahead:** Using drones to film used to cost \$25K- \$35K, pilot included, but today you can do it for \$1500. The next jump in film quality beyond high definition (HD) is 4K, but it won't be akin to the huge jump from standard definition to HD, although you'll notice the difference, he says.
  11. **Measure:** Make sure the written introductions to your videos are optimized, Garofalo says. And capture leads from your videos (she uses **Marketo**) to prove ROI. Garofalo's team found technical videos worked well on **LinkedIn**, but lighter topics did better on Twitter. "If we hadn't been tracking, we wouldn't have known that," she says.