



# Connecting with the Online Health Video Consumer

A high-quality online video experience can create a valuable learning environment for consumers that also drives results for advertisers.

By Tony Estrella and John Piccone

We've pressed play on our VCRs and DVD players for almost 25 years, and now pressing play to watch videos online is the next wave of video watching. A recent study by Horowitz Associates shows that six out of 10 high-speed Internet users watch or download online video content at least once a week, and 86 percent do this on a monthly basis. And this activity is increasing at an exponential pace.

According to comScore, there were 35 billion videos viewed online in 2007, with 10 billion of those views in December alone. And it's not just your kids on YouTube who are watching. Older generations are flocking online to watch video, also. Advertising.com's 2007 Video Study reported that 69 percent of consumers 35 and older are watching online video. This explosive use of online video creates great opportunities for marketers who embrace the changing usage style of Internet users who now expect the best of TV to be served up on the Web.

What is the effect of online video viewing for pharmaceutical advertisers? And how do you take advantage of this trend and communicate effectively with consumers who are watching online health video? Following are a few ideas to consider once you understand how online video is viewed in the Web 2.0 world.

## The two types of video syndication paths

An important component of Web 2.0 is the ability to bring content to the consumer instead of asking the consumer to find your content at a single destination portal. By expanding beyond the one-size-fits-all portal approach, consumers are now choosing their own path across a variety of Web sites as they explore a subject. In the area of healthcare, this means consumers are more focused in the way they seek information related to a condition or disease state. Thanks to the latest advances in video syndication technology, video can be placed within relevant destinations to complement text-based sites.

There are two fundamental types of video syndication paths for content owners to choose: viral syndication and managed syndication. Viral syndication allows any consumer to pull content into any page irrespective of the surrounding context or brand affinity. This includes consumers grabbing YouTube players, and often leads to one-hit wonders that leave their mark on the reader's mind as stand alone contributions. This may be a problem for pharma brands who are concerned about placing their brands next to other content that may be in conflict with brand messaging.

Managed syndication means video is delivered in a more controlled manner, where the content and the advertising within it are only delivered by sites who carefully manage their editorial voice and content. In this more structured approach, reach and audience is built through formal partnership agreements, where both partners focus on careful content selection, rather than simply allowing any content to be included. In this approach, the relevance of the audience can lead to better conversion of views to new patient acquisition – in short, better conversion to revenue for an advertiser.

While models for online video viewing continue to evolve, what is clear is that syndication is now the standard way for consumers to interact with online health video. Advertisers must balance the benefits and drawbacks of viral and managed syndicated video based on online brand objectives. Now that the basics of syndication are understood, here are some key items that need to be taken into consideration when using video as part of your media plan:

- You don't need video creative to get great results: The online video experience is not only about what video you are running against, but also how your ads can be integrated in the environment around the video. While pre-rolls are easy to implement in many advertising categories, they are only one tactic of messaging – typically for unbranded campaigns based on video length. Banner units that can be delivered alongside the video as companions, and better yet, remain persistent, through the video viewing experience that showcases your brand for minutes rather than the 30 seconds they will be seen alongside a pre-roll.

According to HealthiNation campaign data, there is no significant improvement in click through rates on companion ads with or without pre-roll. So if you have a clear call to action, well-designed banners placed within the video window can drive click through rates that are 20 to 50 times higher than typical page banners. Lastly, the benefit of a standardized advertising experience will be consistent metrics across your entire online video campaign.

- Produce with flexibility: Because the online video experience includes both a video window and surrounding player environment, your consumer messaging does not have to be constrained by one standard length. For example, some advertisers are using companion banners to deliver fair balance messaging while the video creative focuses on brand attributes. This can lead video formats that are less than 60 seconds in length. Partnering with a production firm with experience in thinking of the online video ecosystem can be an important differentiator in delivering impactful consumer messaging tactics.
- Protect your brand: Because consumers are seeking health information on many sites, reach is important. But think about the quality of the total experience that

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surrounds your campaign, because video can boost your brand or reduce its value. If you've ever watched local cable, you know that Coca-Cola ads are not running against low-quality content. Find high quality experiences that meet your audience's expectations and you'll be part of the conversation and your brand will be better for it.

- Build a bridge with video: While it is widely accepted that consumers actively seek health information online (80+ percent of Internet users), their information gathering approach is spread across different paths, including search, health destination sites, news sites and social communities. In fact, 72 percent of health seekers visited two or more sites during their last health information session. Not all consumers are going to be ready to click on your ad the first time they see it. Video can allow your customer to get connected with your brand. Video can be used within sites that are trusted to begin building the relationship, by sharing a patient experience for example, which gives the user value that can be a bridge to your brand's Web site. Ultimately this gives your audience the path to connect with your brand, often leading to quality engagement.

## Getting to higher quality conversions

Watching video may be a new activity on the Web, but it has been one of the most persuasive and engaging forms of communication since the first silent movie. The explosive growth of online video viewing means that if you're not making it part of your media mix, you aren't learning key insights that will inform strategy in the next year. Focus on flexible creative and work closely with content companies to understand the capabilities of the medium. In the end, you will be rewarded by giving your audience an experience they appreciate, which will translate into greater brand value and higher quality conversions. ■

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