



Procter & Gamble and Deutsche Telekom are just two of the major brands to have executed highly successful viral marketing campaigns, but when it comes to the growing number of companies embracing viral video for recruitment purposes, a different approach is required. Barnaby Cook, Managing Director of Casual Films, which specialises in online video production and corporate film, explains how online video is a powerful tool – if handled correctly...



Casual Films was set up during the rise of YouTube, Facebook and the social media revolution. A new era of online communication was beginning to dawn and video was at the forefront. Since those early days, the digital social environment has changed dramatically. It's become so closely integrated with our everyday lives that for many people it's difficult to imagine a life without tweets, pokes and the solemn nod of approval bestowed by the 'Like' button. However, as these changes have been taking place it's become apparent that very few people fully understand the world of social media. This is particularly prominent when discussing that Holy Grail of online video, the viral.

Progressively more and more clients ask us to produce a 'viral' video. Viral's become the buzzword of the decade for online video content. Yet most clients that ask for it fail to connect with what actually constitutes a viral video.

Let's look at some YouTube stats so we can begin to understand what we're competing with. Nearly eight years of content is uploaded to YouTube everyday, over three billion videos are viewed a day on YouTube, nearly seventeen million people have connected their YouTube account to at least one social service (Facebook,

Twitter, Orkut, Buzz, etc.), one hundred million people take social action on YouTube (likes, shares, comments, etc.) every week and there are more than five hundred tweets per minute containing a YouTube link.

It's an impressive set of figures and goes a long way to explain why companies all over the world are clamouring to get in on the viral action. However, let's start things off by making something completely clear, you cannot intentionally produce a viral video, nor can you force a video to attain viral status. The Internet sharing that defines a viral video is largely an organic process. Whilst it is true that a video can be nudged in the right direction and that there have been numerous viral marketing campaigns, success stories are few and far between. YouTube's most watched videos are mainly music videos or consumer-shot, non-commercial and often accidental material.

So why did Cadbury Schweppes with their "Gorilla", Procter and Gamble with their "The Man Your Man Could Smell Like" and Deutsche Telekom with their "Life's For Sharing" opt for viral marketing campaigns? It's for one thing and one thing alone, indiscriminate brand exposure. Viral video by nature is not targeted - its distribution by the audience means that your



TALKING PICTURES

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message could reach anyone and everyone or no one at all. The demographic for YouTube users is between the ages eighteen and fifty-four. This scattergun approach is highly inefficient for something with such a narrow audience like graduate recruitment. As I mentioned before, it can be nudged in the right direction but the work and cost involved in doing so seems counter-intuitive when a highly targeted and focussed piece could be produced in the first place. Further to this, the decision to buy-in to a certain brand of chocolate or aftershave is not weighted equally to that of choosing where you want to start a career. A guy in a gorilla suit is all very well and good but what, if anything, would it say about your company?

Recruitment marketing requires a different method of execution and delivery to gain access to the audience's social space. It doesn't need to be boring or traditional, it just needs far more substance than you'd find in a commercial viral. We need to re-align our expectations for video's capabilities in this space. We should also remind ourselves of its purpose - to communicate with a very targeted audience and to attract the right talent for you as an employer. For example, we recently completed a project for Teach

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First based around a series of interviews with graduates currently on the program. Whilst the interview-led documentary format is not particularly groundbreaking, it is presented in a highly cinematic but believable way. It's not just an informative video, it's an emotive and quite personal film; and as a result received over 16,000 views.

It might sound easy to say but both the content of your video and the way it's delivered need to be relevant to the graduate audience. Think of all the videos, information and other media a typical university student would consume daily. It is distributed to them through services such as Twitter and a myriad of blogs. They choose which feeds interest them, anything else gets ignored. Your video will do more for you if its placing and content is relevant to its audience. Give them something interesting, informative and of value and they will pay attention.

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Macmillan Cancer Research understand the power video has to move, inform and encourage people. They have a website dedicated to people living with cancer and their families that offers them the chance to get involved with and organise fund raising initiatives, learn more about dealing with their illnesses and find support from the many members of their online community. Macmillan had over seven hundred pages worth of written content on this site and are now working with Casual Films to condense this plethora of information into a series of easy watching but highly informative videos. Since the move from text to video began time spent browsing the site has increased and positive feedback from users has been fantastic.

We have also recently worked with ASDA in conjunction with People People to develop their recruitment webpage with a collection of videos and 3D models. By choosing an interactive experience ASDA have reaped the rewards, both financially and in the administration of the recruitment process. This approach allows applicants to really understand what it's like to work at ASDA, the people, the roles, the environment and the day-to-day. It streamlined the process, driving down the cost per application - saving ASDA an estimated £2.6 million in the first six months since it was launched.

There's no doubt that video is still the most effective communication tool to gain access to an audience's social space; it's concise, attention grabbing, memorable, believable and, more so than any other medium, able to provoke emotional connections and empathy in its audience. Just don't expect it to amass the three million views that “Charlie bit my finger – again!” did. If it does you know something's gone wrong. Your video and the way it's distributed should only be relevant to a very small, targeted, audience.