SECTION 4
Using video to target business buyers

I was out shopping a few weeks ago and during my wanderings I passed a well-known electrical retailer. As I did so, I suddenly recalled someone in the office talking about 3D televisions. Having a few minutes to kill and not knowing anything about this latest development in home entertainment, I ventured inside the store to take a look.

I followed the signage dangling from the ceiling and made my way past the laptops, printers and tablets to the relevant part of the shop floor. Once there I started browsing, squinting at the shelf labels and involuntarily wincing at the prices. While doing so, I happened to straighten a tent-card standing on one of the shelves. Now as far as I was concerned, I was just trying to get a better look at what it said. However, to the young salesman who had been silently and unobtrusively stalking me since I entered the store, I had done something highly significant. I had touched something. I had interacted with the shop. I had crossed the divide. I had instantly gone from being just another valueless browser to a bona fide prospect. I was ready to start a conversation, to commence a relationship and, ultimately, to open my wallet.

Of course, being nicely brought up, I responded to his opening offer of help with the standard "No, thanks. I'm just browsing," in the hope that he would understand that I really meant – "Go away and leave me alone". Unfortunately, he didn't. As I moved along the aisle, he pursued me, commenting on the benefits of each TV as we passed. He began asking me questions about my own home entertainment equipment. What TV did I have? How long had I had it? Had I heard of ambient lighting? Had I seen their 'today only' special offers that were only available for another few hours? Did I know how much I could save?

I ran. I ran past the laptops, the iPads, the tablets and the till and out onto the safety of the street. In his single-minded quest for a sale, the pushy sales assistant had ironically managed to achieve the exact opposite: He had pushed a potential customer out of the door. And all because he was too eager, too keen and too desperate. He had pushed the relationship too fast.

Now you are probably asking why I have chosen to start the section of this guide about video marketing with such a story. It's because its message underpins everything that follows: No matter how technology changes the way we access and consume information, no matter how complex and innovative the tools we have at our disposal to entice, track and monitor our prospects, you can't rush things. The customer, whether they are an individual or a representative of a company, must



Simon Fraser, creative director, DNX

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always be allowed to feel in control. Ultimately, they and they alone will be the ones who decide when to part with their hard-earned cash.

So, having stored that unimpeachable thought away somewhere safe, let's talk about technology.

From the moment they get up in the morning and instinctively reach for their iPhone or BlackBerry to check their emails, to the moment they plug it into the charger for another night, today's executives are living in a connected world. No matter where they go, the powerful and sophisticated devices in their pockets keep them plugged into the Internet. Within three years, 44 per cent of executives expect a smartphone or tablet to be their primary device for business use. They can access and consume content of every kind, no matter where they are – on average, they make seven mobile searches each day – and the content they currently prefer is video.

Executives like video. It's quick to download or stream, it's easy to watch and it takes less effort than reading. According to Google Think Insights, 83 per cent of executives watch more online video today than they did a year ago. Fifty two per cent of executives watch work-related videos on YouTube at least once a week. Seventy five per cent watch work-related video on business-related websites at least once a week. And if 'Mr Executive' likes video, you can be sure that the market will respond and give him more of it. It will do so with ease, because video is now wonderfully simple to produce.

Once the preserve of professional production companies, now anyone with a camera phone can create and post a video on the Internet in a matter of seconds. It may look and sound a bit raw, but it's possible. Just remember that the production values of your video will speak volumes about you. Keep things raw and you can create a more personable feel. Go for something more polished and it will feel more corporate. It's up to you.

Executives also like video because they are, like everyone these days, time poor. So, if there's a way for executives to absorb information quickly, they'll lap it up. That's why it makes sense to keep your videos short; two to two and a half minutes is the optimum length. In the early stages of prospect nurturing, keep things even shorter and remember – unlike our friend in the shop – don't push for a sale at every available opportunity.

There's another reason to keep your videos brief. Attention spans are falling. We're losing our ability to concentrate and it's the Internet's fault. In *The Shallows*, Nicholas Carr's 2010 warning to us all, he discusses how the tsunami of information available to us on the web is literally reshaping the way our brains work. We listen to a webinar, while we read a document, while check our emails. We are becoming increasingly easily distracted, and then distracted from the content that distracted us by

"The tsunami of information available to us on the web is literally reshaping the way our brains work"

other distractions. Our brains are rewiring themselves to cope with the new reality. If you've ever had a sudden involuntary urge to check your Amazon basket or look up some irrelevant fact on Wikipedia while you're supposed to be doing some work, you'll know what I'm talking about. We're losing the ability to deep think and if that's not a good reason to keep things concise, I don't know what is.

"It is imperative that your video has something interesting, relevant and engaging to say"

4.1 Content is king

There's more to video than brevity. Just because you've kept things nice and short, it doesn't mean you've got a winner on your hands. Executives are being bombarded with information. By necessity, they have to be selective about what they consume or they'd drown. It is therefore imperative that your video has something interesting, relevant and engaging to say. Unfortunately, creating content that meets everyone's needs at the same time is nigh on impossible. Individual members of your audience will be at different points of the buying cycle, the rules for which are well established. Those who are unfamiliar with your company may just require a soft introduction to what you have to offer. Those who have already taken the time to get better acquainted with you may be looking for more technical content. You must be ready to satisfy them all.

One thing your entire audience will share is a desire to self-educate.

4.2 Meet the self-educators

When was the last time you rang up a company for a sales brochure? Come to that, when was the last time you spoke to someone at a company in a quest for information? Thanks to the copious volume of information available on the web, you can now find out almost everything you need to know about a company, product or service without making direct contact. You can become a lifelong customer and never speak to a soul.

As a result, when a prospect contacts a company for the first time, you can be sure that they will have done their homework, discovered much of what they want to know and reassured themselves they are doing the right thing. As I said at the start of this chapter, people want to be in control. With video, they can self-serve, consuming information at their leisure.

This customer behaviour presents businesses with a problem; until that moment of first contact, there is no way of knowing what level of content an individual prospect wants. Businesses therefore have to cater for all simultaneously by providing a wide variety of material. By tracking the number of hits each piece of content receives, you will be able to determine its popularity and where best to site it.

4.3 Find me, find me

"Video should just be a part of the mix of content you make available to your audience"

This is where video and search meet. As we know, executives love video, so while you're likely to find them on video-sharing sites such as YouTube, you should remember that most videos are watched in social networking sites or blogs. It is also sensible to host your videos on your website – one per page – and on video-sharing sites for maximum exposure.

Of course, if anyone's going to watch one of your videos, they've got to be able to find it first. It is therefore vital that you tag your videos correctly with their title and description.

Similarly, search engines now include video in their search results, so it's vital to optimise the metadata attached to your video. The more you add, such as the page heading, a link to the page's anchor text and the surrounding content, the better your chances of being discovered.

And when prospects do find your video, you better be prepared. Sixty five per cent of them will visit your website once they've finished watching. Fifty three per cent will go searching for more information about you and 39 per cent will call a vendor, hopefully you.

4.4 Just a part of the mix

Although this guide is all about video, please don't make the mistake of putting all your eggs in one basket. Video should just be a part of the mix of content you make available to your audience for three reasons.

1. Technology is improving all the time, but there will be times when video cannot be accessed. Even if you regularly see five or six bars on your mobile, do remember that not everyone is so fortunate with their mobile coverage. In addition, Mintel estimates that only 28 per cent of the UK population currently own a smartphone.

2. If the only way you could find out any information about a company was by watching a video, you'd get irritated pretty quickly. As the Internet increasingly becomes a wall of moving images, a little static content can provide some welcome relief for the eyes.

3. To the best of my knowledge you can't print out a video. I'm often accused of being a bit of a Luddite, but paper's not dead yet and it's still pretty useful stuff.

4.5 A little interactivity goes a long way

Even though we can monitor the hits that our content receives, no one wants passive viewers; we want people to interact with us as often as possible. The inclusion of interactive content within videos not only improves the user experience and provides greater engagement – which will hopefully further nurture the prospect – it is also generates valuable data that can be used to move things forward.

With embedded interactive elements, individual videos can cater for many different audiences by providing a mix of top level and detailed content, some of which can be non-video. Interactivity also enables viewers to stop, rewind and revisit content whenever they wish. And with analytics, all such behaviour can be monitored and tracked.

4.6 Let's go viral

Let's hope your audience thinks your video is worth sharing. If they do, brilliant – you'll be saving time and money every time your video gets a new view. Fifty four per cent of executives say they share video with colleagues at least once a week. Sixty three per cent say they go searching for business information following word-of-mouth recommendations from colleagues, so it's always a possibility. Of course, you won't have any control over who is viewing your video – and many of the new viewers will be of little or no value to you – but at least your message is getting out there.

However, it may be that no one wants to share your video with colleagues or friends. If this is the case and your video fails to go viral organically, then don't worry. By developing relationships with appropriate bloggers, you can increase the chances of your video being seen; they may post them on their blogs. Alternatively, you can take an active role within popular forums and promote your video there. Consider these two points:

1. This takes time; so don't expect things to happen immediately.

2. Whatever you do, be upfront about it and be honest with those you are asking to help you. Subterfuge will do you no favours.

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4.7 At last, we have contact

"Marketing automation enables you to respond at the optimum time based on your prospects' past, current and predicted behaviour"

When a prospect finally does make contact with you, the balance of power finally shifts, but only slightly. Prospects must still be allowed to feel in control of the relationship, but you now have an opportunity to nurture them, to nudge things along a little faster. Remember that every relationship is based on quid pro quo, so every time you ask for something – even if it's just an opt-in – you must be prepared to give something in return. Don't ask for something every time; you will discourage the essential self-educating that's going on out there. Be content in the knowledge that self-education and social media are cutting sales' lead times across the board.

Until relatively recently, lead nurturing was a bit of a hit and miss affair. Large groups of prospects were simply bundled together and treated identically, all receiving the same email, mail pack or phone call at the same time. People either responded or they didn't. Responses were handled manually, which was a lengthy, labour intensive process. Hot leads went cold. Opportunities were missed on a daily, if not hourly, basis.

However, with the advent of marketing automation, prospect nurturing has become infinitely more sophisticated. Specialist technology companies such as Marketo and Eloqua now make it possible to treat every prospect as an individual by tracking, monitoring and scoring their digital behaviour, including the video content they watch and when they watch it. With careful analysis of the results, you can determine the optimum way to respond on an individual, personalised basis.

Don't forget to ask your prospects to help you. Even though audiences are self-educating and delaying the moment they get in touch with companies, they are usually more than happy to tell you how often they'd like to hear from you, what kind of content they're interested in and the media through which they prefer to be contacted. They just want to retain control of the relationship.

4.8 What's the secret of great marketing?

There are many answers to this question, but in this instance, we're talking about timing. As mentioned above, if you're slow off the mark responding to a prospect, the chances are they'll grow cold and the opportunity will be lost. Marketing automation enables you to respond at the optimum time based on your prospects' past, current and predicted behaviour.

4.9 Matching content to prospects

Now let's consider how you should approach creating video content that will help turn your prospects into buyers.

Fortunately, we don't have to look too far for guidance. The old mnemonic AIDA, much quoted by old-school copywriters when constructing direct marketing letters, tells you everything you need to know. Let's go step by step:

- **A is for attention**

When a prospect encounters your company, product or service for the first time, you've got to make a powerful impression fast. So, don't worry about detail. Make your content light, engaging and attention grabbing. Don't try and sell – keep things neutral.

Of course, it's these 'first layer' videos that have the best chance of going viral.

- **I is for interest**

Your prospect has seen your first video and their interest has been piqued. The next video you steer their way needs to give them a bit more meat to chew on. Now is the time to start talking about the advantages and benefits of your product or service. Don't get too technical – you don't want to scare anyone off.

Alternatively, you can offer some neutral non-sales content on a topical issue. If you wish to be considered a thought-leader in your field – and pretty much everyone does these days – this is a good stage to do so.

- **D is for desire**

For prospects that are digging for further information, we have desire. At this stage, the role of your video is to convince your prospects that your product or service really is the one they want. Leave them in no doubt that they will be totally satisfied. Product demonstrations are perfect at this stage.

- **A is for action**

The nurturing of any prospect should lead to one goal – a sale and the conversion into a customer. Your action videos are the last piece of the puzzle and should have what it takes to make your prospects take that final step.

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4.10 A call-to-action at every step?

"It [video] has the capacity to engage on every level and, as we've seen, business decision-makers simply love it"

Even though AIDA finishes with action, you do need to give some thought to how you want people to behave once they have viewed your video. Logically, this should align with your prospect nurturing strategy.

Initially, the simple provision of a URL should suffice. You're leaving the door open for further investigation without applying any pressure.

As the prospect's journey along the pipeline continues and the relationship between you and your prospect gets stronger, you can be more specific, steering them towards particular pieces of content. We've all seen 'recommendations' panels on Amazon and carousels marked 'customers who bought/viewed this item also bought/viewed'. They're comfortably non-threatening ways of encouraging further interaction which, of course, can be tracked and monitored.

4.11 Conclusion

Nurturing prospects and turning them into customers as quickly and cost-effectively as possible will never be an exact science. Each prospect is different and will inevitably behave in a unique way. While it is now possible to respond automatically on a one-to-one basis and deliver relevant content in a timely manner, it is still only by talking in person to a prospect or customer that it is possible to provide a totally personalised service.

However, mobile technology, the Internet and marketing automation have combined to create the next best thing; an environment in which businesses can exploit the power of video to deliver engaging, informative and tailored content to the eyes and ears of potential buyers wherever they choose to be.

With sound, vision and movement, video has everything. It has the capacity to engage on every level and, as we've seen, business decision-makers simply love it. Just make sure that everything else you do to nurture your prospects is equally adored.