

TECHNOLOGY IN MARKETING

YouTube for Lawyers 101

By Joshua Fruchter

There is no question that online video has become one of the hottest mediums on the Web. For example, a recent Accustream iMedia study found that user-generated video captured 22 billion page views in 2007.

Importantly, the interest in online video is not limited to young viewers, but is also shared by a significant and growing audience of older, more educated, and more affluent viewers. For example, a recent BurstMedia survey determined that more than seven out of 10 adult U.S. Internet users have viewed online video content, and that a majority of all age segments have watched online videos, including more than half of respondents aged 65 and older. Similarly, a recent demographic profile of visitors to video-sharing sites such as YouTube by the Pew Internet & American Life Project found that, for example, 14% of visitors were age 30-49; 33% had some college or graduate school education; and 35% had a household income of \$50,000 or greater. More details of these and other surveys can be accessed on eMarketer.com.

WHAT DOES THIS MEAN TO YOU?

Given the popularity of online video, law firms and individual attorneys should be thinking how they can best leverage this new technology for marketing and business development. As an example, one ideal marketing use of online video for law firms is the client testimonial.

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Video client testimonials are effective because they help visitors to a law firm website "self-qualify," that is, after seeing others like themselves express satisfaction with the firm, they feel more comfortable hiring the firm for their own legal matters. The same logic would apply to using online video as a recruiting tool (see, for example, Pepper Hamilton LLP's Careers PodCenter designed by eLawMarketing at <http://www.permalinkcareers.com/>).

Some attorneys have already begun to capitalize on the popularity

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of online video by uploading videos to YouTube. But that's only the beginning of the story. The purpose of this article is to share the basics and "best practices" of creating quality online videos suitable to attract clients (and not just entertain friends and family), promoting those videos through YouTube and other video sharing sites, and hosting and displaying online videos on your law firm's own Web site using a branded video player.

GETTING STARTED WITH YOUTUBE

As the most popular video-sharing site, YouTube is naturally the place to launch and promote your online video effort. Getting started is easy. First, activate an account on YouTube dedicated exclusively to professional use (that is, separate from your personal account). For your professional account, register with a username that includes your firm name, or some other indication that you are an attorney.

Once logged in, you'll want to configure your "channel" — which is essentially your "homepage" on YouTube through which you organize your videos and make them available to the public. Use the "description" field in your channel to provide a short, but compelling description of your law practice and legal experience. You can also configure communication options for your channel, including the ability for viewers to post comments, email you, subscribe to your channel, or — most importantly from a viral marketing standpoint — share your video with friends and colleagues by embedding your video on their Web sites and blogs or in an e-mail. Once your channel is configured, you are ready to upload videos.

QUALITY VIDEO PRODUCTION

While homemade video works for friends and family, law firms and individual attorneys seeking to attract new clients should create videos employing high-quality, professional production techniques (for example, for the highest quality, it is best to use a broadcast quality videotaping format known as BETA SP — the same format used by most TV stations). While such videos cost considerably more to create, in the long run, they will be far more effective at conveying expertise and authority to your target audience. If you consider that securing even one or two new clients from an online video can cover the entire cost of video production, the ROI begins to make sense. On the flip side, poor video quality resulting from using cheap equipment and amateur staging, lighting and sound techniques makes your firm look cheap and amateurish, which could hurt your brand far more than it helps.

Creating professional videos means partnering with a professional video production team. Typically, the most important member of the team will be the director, who is

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responsible for overseeing the creative and artistic aspects of the video such as content, staging, graphics, inserts, and the overall flow of the presentation (eLawMarketing recently partnered with Odyssey Productions). For example, if your firm wishes to create a video of client testimonials, the director should be someone who can create compelling scripts, screen your clients for appropriate subjects, and then once on the set, put your clients at ease, and coach them on how to sit and talk naturally into the camera (note: based on these criteria, one should be wary of using wedding videographers who are unaccustomed to controlling video shoots, and instead operate in a more spontaneous environment).

A video production company can also field a professional production crew consisting of one or more cameramen, and sound and lighting technicians. Ideally, the camera, sound and lighting crew will be supervised by a cinematographer responsible for making the technical decisions necessary to achieve the artistic and creative effects identified by the director. However, to keep costs down, you can find directors who are also able to supervise the production crew.

For maximum quality, online videos should be shot in production studios, which provides access to professional sets, top notch camera equipment, and “bells and whistles” such as teleprompters (which displays scripts to participants in a way that makes it easy for them to read without appearing distracted). However, to keep costs down, a good production team can also work at a client’s location.

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Development Framework and assist partners in developing the skills described in the Framework.

To support the firm’s senior lawyers in their skill progression, as outlined in the Framework, Baker & McKenzie

Once a video is shot, good editing skills are critical. For example, clients who are interviewed may ramble at times, as well as inserting “ums” and “uhs,” or experiencing awkward pauses. There is also a need to cut during the video from different speakers as well as different visuals, to maintain interest, and to add visuals such as titles (identifying a speaker, for example) and musical scoring. An experienced video production company can address all of these needs resulting in the reduction of accumulated footage down to a polished presentation of appropriate duration (for example, a well-done video clip featuring client testimonials will typically hold viewers’ interest for approximately 3–4 minutes). The finished video file can be then converted to a format for display on the Web (a process called digital encoding) (note: YouTube accepts a wide range of video file formats such as .WMV, .AVI, .MOV, and .MPG transferred from most digital cameras, camcorders, and cell phones; so, if you shoot video yourself, you don’t have to worry about the conversion step).

ONLINE VIDEO PROMOTION

As noted, from a promotional standpoint, the first place to upload a video would be your YouTube channel, due to the site’s popularity. When uploading a video to YouTube, make sure to populate the “tag” field with appropriate keywords that identify the subject of the video and thus make it more likely to appear in searches run by potentially interested viewers.

However, YouTube is not the only site to which a firm should upload videos. Other sites to consider include blip.tv and Metacafe. Additionally, to track the performance of your videos

also implemented a program for senior associates and partners called the Client Development Institute (CDI). About 17 lawyer applicants are chosen annually to participate in the course, which focuses on learning and utilizing the tools to support successful client development, while balancing billable time demands.

on video sharing sites, consider TubeMogul, a free service that offers automated upload of video to the Web’s top video sharing sites, and analytic technology that aggregates video-viewing data from multiple sources to provide an improved understanding of when, where and how often videos are watched; compare what’s hot and what’s not; measure the impact of marketing campaigns; gather competitive intelligence; and share data with colleagues or friends.

DISPLAYING VIDEO ON YOUR WEB SITE

Finally, after investing in quality video production, you’ll also want to display your online videos directly on your Web site. For this objective, embedding the code provided by YouTube may not be the best hosting option, since you won’t have any control over how the video player displays on your Web site, resulting in a loss of branding and marketing opportunities. You are also giving free advertising to YouTube when you use their player. Instead, for display of online video on your Web site, consider a video hosting service such as WebVideoZone or Screencast.

Over time, you can aggregate all of your videos into a library accessible to your target audience.

FURTHER RESOURCES

For further reading, helpful websites offering articles and other resources related to online video include WebVideoUniverse.com and WilsonWeb’s “video and audio on Web site” section.

So there you have it — the basics of online video for lawyers and law firms.



BUY-IN FROM THE TOP

Bluestein says it’s buy-in from the executive and management levels of the firm that make for a successful professional development program. To do this, the partners need to understand PD spending from a business standpoint.

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