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TECHNOLOGY MONTHLY

Web video streams a hot marketing tool

By Natalie Myers, PBN Staff Writer

As Web video sharing sites such as YouTube.com continue to grow in popularity, businesses are taking notice of streaming video as a relatively inexpensive marketing tool.



STILLS TAKEN FROM VIDEO ON TATTOOSTACKLE.COM

TATTOO'S TACKLE, a small fishing-lure maker in Portsmouth, is using video on its Web site to show customers how its lures are made and how they work.

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Mike Dauphin - owner of Tattoo's Tackle, a small fishing lure manufacturing company in Portsmouth - added videos to his company's redesigned Web site, www.tattoostackle.com, to show how its hand-crafted lures are made and how they work in the water.

The 5-year-old company sells primarily at wholesale to retailers in New England and beyond. Because it is a small business, Dauphin said, his marketing budget is small.

Advertising in trade magazines, which cost as much as \$700 per quarter-page, was consuming his budget, Dauphin said, and he wasn't seeing a return on the investment. Knowing that it can take seven to nine viewings for a print ad to be effective, Dauphin realized he would have to spend at least \$4,900 to have an impact - almost half his marketing budget.

"As I started to think, how can I push my business to the next level? ... I looked at the market," Dauphin said. "Everything is Web-based ... and looking across my industry, there was no one else doing anything like this."

He hired Laptew Productions, a Rhode Island-based underwater video production company, to shoot and produce the videos, which can be seen using Windows Media Player or Quicktime. Each shows the fishing lures in the water from a fish's point of view.

"You see the lure moving through the real-world habitat," Dauphin said. "You see how it works. It's a pretty powerful statement."

Perhaps more importantly, it's a statement that can be viewed 24 hours a day, 365 days per year, by anyone anywhere who wants to see it.

And it has a return Dauphin can measure. He said the Web site received about 6,000 hits during the first month after the redesign. That is six times the number of hits received per month the site before the redesign.

Being able to track the success of videos on the Internet per view or per hit is one major difference between streaming videos and television commercials, said Curt Worden, president of Tango Pix, a film production company in Providence.

By analyzing the viewers, a company can gather who is watching, where they are watching from, how long they are watching and when they are watching, Worden said. Then the company can use that data when developing new content for videos on its Web site.

In addition, online videos are not restricted to a certain time frame, so they can contain more information than would be seen in a 30-second commercial, he said.

Dauphin's videos, for example, range from one minute and 30 seconds to about two minutes.

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About 80 percent of Tango Pix customers ask the company to repurpose some portion of its video production for a Web application, Worden said. For example, Tango Pix has taken snippets from a cartoon series "Action Blast!" it produced for Hasbro Inc. and uploaded the streaming videos to the toy company's Web site.

"It's something that is demanded," he said.

Full-service advertising firms such as Advertising Ventures Inc. in Providence are seeing more and more requests for streaming video as well.

The company recently completed its first streaming video for a Massachusetts client, The First Years, which develops and markets products for babies and infants.

Advertising Ventures planned, scripted, shot and produced a one-and-a-half-minute infomercial on the client's Clean Air Odor Free Diaper Pail. There are links to the video from the Wal-Mart and Toys 'R' Us Web sites.

"What's truly driving interest in the past year, year and a half, is YouTube.com," said Tad Clarke, editorial director for the Warren-based marketing research firm MarketingSherpa Inc. "There are a lot of 'me too' factors going on."

And it doesn't cost hundreds of thousands of dollars, he said. With all the Web cams and video recorders, more mom-and-pop-type businesses are taking advantage of the technology for less than \$10,000.

Companies such as Tango Pix and Advertising Ventures, however, insist that business owners should seek professionals if they want quality productions.

"For Web streaming video, it isn't going to be radically different in price than any other video production," said Mary Sadlier, executive vice president of Advertising Ventures.

But, like a television commercial, the cost is driven by the scope of the production, Worden said. If it's a simple "talking head" type of production, it will incur simple production costs.

"It's a substantial amount of money to invest in the video," Dauphin said. "But if you take into account the return on investment you're going to get, it's worth it. ... It's an unlimited audience."

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