

The Rich Media Revolution:

Why the Path to Engagement Begins and Ends with Online Video

By Allen Bonde

Highlights

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Demand for video content continues to grow

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Create stories that inform, connect, and motivate

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Use rich content to drive SEO and meaningful engagement

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Build a repeatable, highly efficient content factory

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Executive Summary

We are in the midst of a rich media revolution. Yet in a social and mobile world, the broadcast model no longer works. And neither does a traditional approach to web publishing, as brands increasingly need to think like media companies and consider the whole lifecycle of content creation, distribution, syndication, and measurement – for every digital channel and audience they wish to reach. The path to customer engagement is rapidly changing, especially when we can produce and deliver video content at a price point (and with the level of personalization) that was previously reserved for plain old web content.

In this paper we'll examine the essence of “new” engagement, especially when targeting increasingly distracted business-to-business (B2B) buyers and influencers. We'll look at the power of digital storytelling and the new formula for engaging in the rich media world, and then lay out the business case for investing in video marketing. We'll consider the steps to thinking more like a news organization and review some examples of successful online video marketing campaigns that resulted in significant social sharing and meaningful engagement. Finally, we'll outline the key building blocks for creating an end-to-end rich media “factory” for scaling a video-driven engagement strategy, including content strategy (creation, reuse, management), delivery options, and measurement.

The Challenges of Reaching and Engaging Buyers

Buyers are easily distracted these days. With new social channels and apps such as Vine and Snapchat, second-screen apps, and a myriad of networked devices, it seems that everyone is multitasking.¹ Yet even with more and more “screens” in play, consumers are still finding time to consume an increasing amount of video and other rich content. In fact, as Nielsen reports in its ongoing cross-platform research, while “nothing is growing faster than the adoption of portable devices and the consumption of content on these devices,” traditional TV still “remains vibrant and continues to thrive.”²

Against this backdrop, it’s easy to see why video continues to be top of mind when it comes to cutting through the clutter, telling a story and informing your audience. But what may be more surprising are the types of stories and target audiences (e.g., influencers vs. buyers), channels (online vs. broadcast), and formats (short-form vs. long-form) that are emerging to play a key role in the modern marketer’s toolbox. This is especially the case in B2B, given the length of sales cycles; the complexity of many B2B products (and buying decisions); and the role of influencers, channel partners, and even service providers.³ As many of us have seen, B2B marketing is a lot less about discrete campaigns and more about continuous marketing and relationship building.

Put another way, we are *selling ideas rather than simply selling products* and need to do so by providing useful content, tools, and expertise along with our product information. This means creating and telling stories that connect and motivate viewers to take action, whether that’s simply sharing or adding a comment or actually signing up for a demo or event.

So, how do we frame our stories so they capture our audience’s attention and create meaningful engagement? That’s what we’ll tackle next.

Harnessing the power of digital storytelling

The best campaigns (and companies) start with a memorable story. When thinking about telling our story with online video, we first need to capture the audience’s attention. This means positioning our content to reach our target viewers and thinking about how we will grab and keep their interest. Then once they are hooked, what would we like them to do next? Cutting through the digital clutter is one part art (a great lead or clever concept) and one part science (effective tagging and targeting; picking the right format, platform, and syndication strategy; etc.). But all of this starts with the key elements of telling a story: the lead, the purpose or plot, and the payoff. Our lead needs to stand out and grab the audience, then the story and

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twists need to *make them care* and take them on a (short) journey to want to learn more and be part of the outcome.

To truly be engaging – especially to digital audiences – we should also aim to make our story *about the audience*. Shared interests or experiences create powerful connections and increase the likelihood that viewers will want to comment and share with their friends. Make it easy for viewers to identify with the characters or setting and tie into current memes, events, or topics. Deliver the final product via a personalized webpage or email to complete the experience.

Finally, make your story portable. With the explosion of mobile devices and digital channels, we need to deliver the “good parts” where and when our audience needs them.

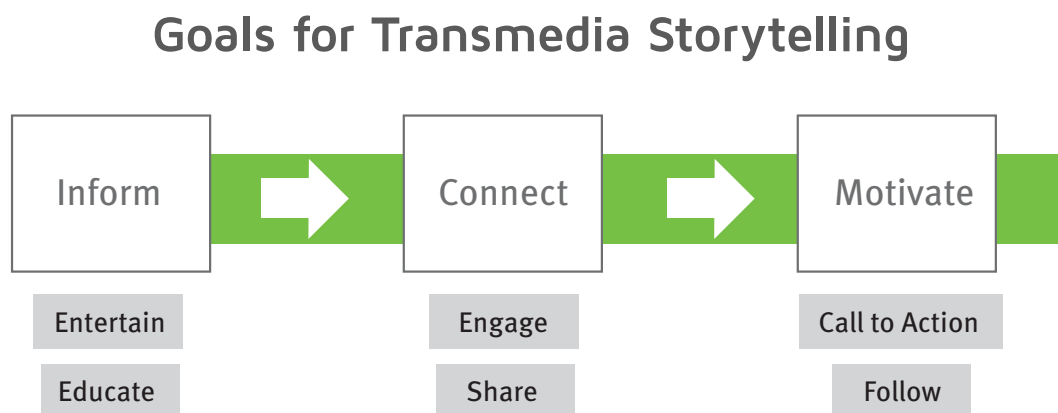
Ultimately, the formula for driving engagement with rich media is to create and deliver the *right content, with the right connections, in the right context*.⁴ As

marketers, our goals should be to use our story to inform, connect, and motivate our audience. To do so effectively means we are considering and addressing the following areas:

- **Inform.** Am I entertaining and informing our audience? Am I meeting a need or saying something useful or unique?
- **Connect.** Am I building an emotional or practical (or topical) connection? Can viewers easily share my story? Will they have a reason to come back?
- **Motivate.** Am I making it easy to take action? Am I using annotations and links in each piece of content to get to the next part or episode? Is there a clear payoff for participating and following along?

With these questions as a foundation, we can look at how to bring our story to life – and more efficiently reach and engage our target audiences via the power of online video.

Figure 1



The Case for Video Marketing

Whether your goal is reaching new audiences, driving a higher level of engagement, or cutting through the clutter of competing messages or offers, there's a lot to like about online video. In fact, Aberdeen Group has found that top-performing companies outpace others in the use of rich media content, especially video and web-based events.⁵

At the same time, video content delivers two key advantages when compared with traditional web content:

- **Superior SEO performance.** SEO remains a key foundation for effective content delivery and inbound marketing. Video content is more likely to be on Google's first page, while emails with embedded video content are more likely to be opened and clicked.⁶
- **Higher levels of meaningful engagement.** Beyond views and shares, video content motivates online visitors to stick around and follow up with your call to action. In fact, people stay on websites five times longer with video, while viewing product videos makes consumers more likely to buy.⁷

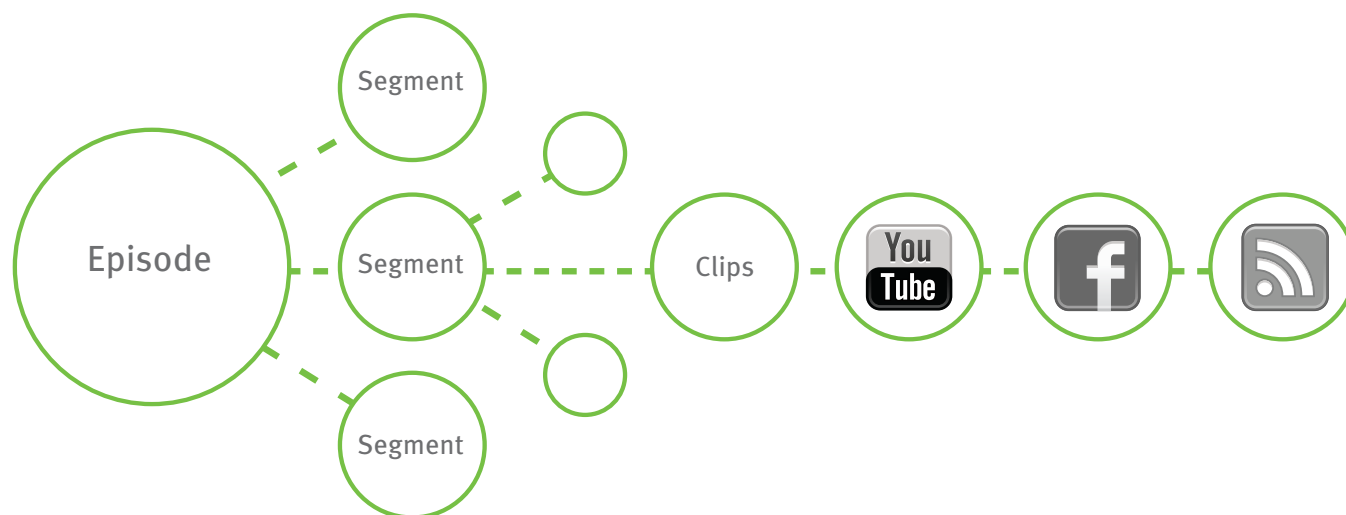
When it comes to digital storytelling, video blogs and animated infographics are a great way to tell your story and engage B2B buyers and executives. On the consumer front, innovative brands are thinking mobile first and constructing social campaigns around their portable video content to leverage the reach and native social sharing capabilities of Facebook and Twitter. On the production side, the video creation process can also be structured so one shoot produces multiple segments, which can each be post-produced into formats for YouTube, Facebook, podcasts, etc.

Thinking in terms of multipart features, segments, and even talk show-type formats versus traditional corporate video is a great way to stand out from other B2B brands and start to think like a *news organization* when it comes to sourcing, creating, and producing regular, targeted content. Tying in a social component and recruiting noteworthy guests or other industry personalities as co-hosts or commentators can also amplify your reach by tapping their expertise and social graph.

“Video blogs and animated infographics are a great way to tell your story and engage B2B buyers and executives.”

Figure 2

Re-purpose Episodes into Segments, Clips, and Channel-specific Formats



Some standout video campaigns

While there is no shortage of outstanding online video campaigns, a few stand out because they were either the first to bring B2B messages to social channels or uniquely tie in rich content, word of mouth, and social sharing. Two campaigns that are worth exploring include:

Corning Inc.’s *A Day Made of Glass*. Widely considered the most viewed corporate video with over 22 millions views, this short feature, developed by Doremus for Corning, actually has a big-screen feel even though it was created for an online audience. It has been expanded into a series of videos, including a companion piece, a 90-second montage, a sequel, and

even a version that includes commentary from high school students.⁸

Water is Life’s *Hashtag Killer*. A great example of storytelling, cause marketing, and social integration, this campaign from DDB New York and Water is Life “newsjacks” the #firstworldproblems meme (and selected tweeters) and turns the tables by having everyday people in Haiti respond to these “problems” via personalized videos to draw attention to real issues facing those in the developing world.⁹


Ready to get started? Our final section provides a summary and checklist for creating your own rich media revolution.

Conclusion: Taking Action

Once you've made your business case and selected initial topics or guests, scaling your rich media strategy into a repeatable, highly efficient content factory involves careful mapping of the *people, processes, platform, tools, and metrics* needed to drive consistent engagement with online video. Here's how to start this journey:

- **People.** Identify industry experts/personalities, connectors, and producers for each of your target audiences. These are the people who will provide talent both in front of and behind the camera. They will inform your initial mix of created (original) versus curated content, and also determine what additional resources are needed for content delivery, promotion, and syndication.
- **Processes.** Set aside time to experiment with various formats and topics. Once you have an initial set of content, you'll need to build a library for storing and serving up clips according to your content calendar and production process (in most cases this won't be YouTube!). Look at capturing content from live events and think small in terms of short-form clips, video infographics, and mobile-ready content.¹⁰
- **Platform.** Build a management and delivery platform to streamline delivery and storage at scale. Make sure your web content management and personalization solution is rich-media-ready to help with the targeting and promotion of video assets. Consider an all-in-one content delivery, transcoding, and storage service to optimize reach across web, mobile, and social channels – as well as popular search engines.
- **Tools.** Look for easy-to-use tools that balance control and flexibility with a quick learning curve. Must-haves include an automated back end (marketers don't want to think about the technology for conversions, among other things), custom metadata support (make it easy to find, catalog, secure assets), and built-in video analytics so everyone can see results and be smarter about what content/connections/context combinations drive meaningful engagement.

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- **Metrics.** Plan to measure and refine your content and distribution mix. Start with basic analytics — what subjects/messages/guests generate the most views, clicks, shares, and sign ups? As your audience grows, think about when you should promote the next episode and how to introduce additional formats such as shorter clips or exclusive long-form content.

Finally, always keep the end goal in mind: conversions. Are my rich media assets leading to new customers? What channels are most efficient? Am I effectively informing, connecting, and motivating my target audience?

The path to meaningful engagement starts with interest but ends with action. For B2B brands, online video can have a meaningful impact on both ends of this journey.

Endnotes

- 1 See: “Tapping the Potential of Rich Media for B-to-B Marketing,” Digital Clarity Group Brief (May 2013).
- 2 For a sample of Nielsen’s perspectives on media consumption see: “The Cross-Platform Report: A Look Across Screens,” (June 2013): <http://www.nielsen.com/us/en/reports/2013/the-cross-platform-report-a-look-across-screens.html>.
- 3 “A Playbook for Sustainable B2B Social Marketing,” Allen Bonde, Digital Clarity Group Blog (June 2013): <http://www.digitalclaritygroup.com/blog/playbook-for-sustainable-b2b-social-marketing/>.
- 4 I first shared and socialized this approach in my keynote talk at the #IMS13 event in San Francisco. View my slides here: <http://www.slideshare.net/AllenBonde/allen-ims-sf-keynote-v2>.
- 5 These stats and others were presented by Aberdeen analyst Trip Kucera at the recent #IMS13 event I chaired
- 6 Google ranking stat from Forrester and a number of recent case studies show significant increases in clickthrough rate when video was incorporated. See for example this post from Hubspot: “How to Improve Email Clickthrough Rate” (March 2013): <http://blog.hubspot.com/blog/tabid/6307/bid/34132/How-to-Improve-Email-Clickthrough-Rate-by-583.aspx>.
- 7 See Digiday (www.digiday.com) and Internet Retailer article: <http://www.internetretailer.com/2010/03/31/inside-search>
- 8 Links to the whole series of Corning videos are available here: <http://www.corning.com/ADayMadeofGlass/Videos/index.aspx>.
- 9 Watch the Water is Life Hashtag Killer story here: http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=lwGAOW-6XjE&feature=share&list=PLQU7muFsisdG_8NaCENTJKSETMUel_Pzy.
- 10 For perspectives on thinking small and the power of “small data,” see the Small Data Group blog: <http://www.smalldatagroup.com>.



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