

Powerfully Funny October 2010 News from Kathy Klotz-Guest

I help companies innovate new products and services and then creatively market their innovations to the world. Innovation is essential to business survival, and it should be fun. If you're not having fun innovating or marketing your business, let's talk!

Hello all,

This month I focus on secrets of great video storytelling. Video - like all great marketing - is about telling a great story. While video can be daunting, it doesn't have to be. The technology is ubiquitous and affordable, and it can be a great way for prospects and clients to experience you. So lighten up and have fun with it. You can connect with people by being human, and fun is a part of the human experience! I'll be speaking on this exact topic at the 5th annual symposium for the Society for New Communications Research (SNCR.ORG) in November. To see what other fun and exciting things are percolating, check out my blog: <http://kathyklotzguest.wordpress.com> .

Here's to your good health, happiness, and humor in 2010.

Kathy

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Where in the World is Kathy Speaking Next?

Looking for a fun speaker on marketing, innovation, and humor? Interested in a workshop that uses improvisational techniques for fresh, creative solutions to business challenges? Book Kathy for your next event: Kathy@powerfullyfunny.com.

Kathy, a founding fellow for the Society for New Communications Research, will speaking about her research in the area of online video at the 5th annual SNCR.ORG symposium at Stanford November 4-5.

Feature: What's Your Online Video Story? Nine Keys to Successful Online Business Video

So you want to jump into online video for your business? In my research on best practices for online business video, I've had the privilege of interviewing marketers from Cisco, Ford, IBM, Goodwill and NetApp among other companies that have been using online video successfully, and in innovative ways. Below are nine common practices embraced by organizations that have raised the bar for great business video.

1. Find a compelling human story that connects. At the heart of every great marketing message is a great human story that connects with people at a visceral level. In a world obsessed with viral videos, companies that have been successful in their video efforts understand that a great video starts with a compelling story rather than worrying about how to go "viral." Your chances of going viral improve significantly if the story behind the video is powerful from a human "interest" perspective. Goodwill Industries International, for example, has some great videos that focus on changing lives. Product and service videos, for example, don't do as well when they are focused on the technology and features because the underlying story is lost. Even technology companies such as Cisco understand that the central message underlying everything they do is that of a human connection - the "human network."

2. Simplicity and brevity matter. Videos can't try to do too many things - you have mere seconds to grab attention. Companies that are successful focus on one key story / message per video. Moreover, great content must be simple. Simplicity, like humor, is the antidote to complexity. One great example is Cisco's Valentine's Day video. Ford also recognized this and encouraged devoted fans to create and submit their own 30-second videos focusing on their one favorite car feature and why they love it. Several interviewees stated videos should be two minutes or less; over two minutes, abandonment rates, the number of people that click out of a video, jump up. Keep it short and simple.

3. Humor works. While it's not necessary for a great video, humor works well when it makes sense for the story. Part of the "emotional" range of the human experience is humor, and it makes for a great connection - which is always the goal of marketing. Sometimes stories are funny, or even just "fun." Like simplicity, humor is also a great way to break down complexity and that's why humor can work

especially well in b2b. When the technology is complex, the message, too, can easily become convoluted. That's where a simple, fun story can cut through the layers of noise. Fun is a great wrapper, as long as the substance is there. Successful video focuses on disseminating the message and story first. But there is no reason the wrapper has to be boring. NetApp has a great example featuring a rap competition. Another great example is from Serena Software, called "Mash it."

4. Honor your brand personality and values. Authenticity matters. While "authenticity" is too often used as a thinly-veiled buzzword, it does factor into credibility for video. When humor works, for example, it is also because the companies using it are authentically fun. Humor must be part of the brand personalities of the products, and consistent with what people believe the company truly is. There should be no difference between who the company says it is and who it is perceived to be externally. Do you know any companies with poor brand images that can successfully pull fun off? Exactly. B2b companies including Cisco, Hubspot and NetApp have been successful with their humorous videos, in part, because fun is an authentic part of their culture. Recently a company came to me to review a video they created based on a fictional cartoon character. The video wasn't compelling. Why? It was inauthentic for the company and it wasn't based on a real customer. Cartoons are great - but audiences want real customer stories not fake ones. Even a video of a CEO talking to a Flip camera is OK, if it's sincere and not too scripted. Several years ago in response to JetBlue's service crisis, the CEO responded via videos that were very effective because they were direct, apologetic, and honest without the "BS" speak.

5. Let go of control. Empower the best storytellers. Successful organizations recognize that the best storytellers are most often not found in the C-suite. Executives and PR folks must empower the best storytellers who have the talent and are closest to the customer to tell those stories. Organizations that successfully use video go off PR-script; they rightly recognize that videos have nothing to do with PR talking points. Instead, they represent the voice of the customer and the employees closest to the customer. Videos also represent the voice of the social employee. Ford, for example, interviewed on video the design team behind the new Ford Explorer this past summer and it was compelling video - because it was real employees discussing their experiences. This also includes letting your best customers tell their stories through video. The best video testimonial can be of a customer saying how great you are. Ford did this with the Fiesta Movement: they gave 100 bloggers a Ford Fiesta for 100 days and asked them to video their experiences with the car. The results were creative, compelling and funny including this one about zombies. The point is Ford empowered other people to tell great stories in a way that Ford itself could not necessarily have done. Letting go and empowering others to tell the best stories requires big values and it's not so easy given the few companies actually doing it. This struggle to decentralize the company's "voice" has been a barrier to social media adoption, especially in B2Bs.

6. Take risks. Dare to be different. Innovative cultures are more likely to take risks in a variety of ways, including in the ways they tell stories. The risks don't have to bet the farm, but successful companies recognize that it's important to try lots of new things. They try, experiment, fail sometimes, and learn from those mistakes. Every company that experienced video success also talked about creating videos

that didn't work so well, but the downside of experimentation wasn't huge - they weren't betting the brand per se. Cisco, for example, vets its videos internally first to reduce some risk and to make sure everything it does fits with its message and its brand personality. Still, there are no guarantees and innovative companies accept that. Cisco has successfully taken some creative risks by releasing some of the b2b industry's funniest videos. Just as with other things, there is no way to be completely risk-free in marketing.

7. Forge your own template - then reinvent it. After the success of the Old Spice video, parodies proliferated across the Internet. There's nothing wrong with that. Cisco even did one - and while its target market loved it, many pundits didn't. Yet, the video was meant for its core audience. The point is marketing is an art, not a replicable science. There is no single template for video. What worked for Old Spice won't work for other brands. There are no guarantees; the lessons learned have to be earned because they are based on individual company experience. There are many templates to be written, and all the successful companies experiment with a variety of methods. They don't rely on trying to copy others (parody is an exception here); rather, these organizations are constantly trying a number of things to see what works for them.

8. Be "flexible" on ROI; focus on learning. All companies interviewed have multiple ways of measuring video "success" and these various metrics include views (the predominant measure), the number of people who watched the video, the amount of buzz and favorable comments the video generated, the conversation created with customers and prospects, and lead generation among the most common. Companies defined a video as "successful" when results surpassed their own expectations, and organizations all conceded that tying sales to video success is difficult. Still, innovative organizations recognize that they have to be both flexible in trying to measure ROI, and in allowing themselves freedom to experiment and learn what works without obsessing over how video efforts affect sales. Getting hung up on ROI before you even try video, according to these companies, can deter an organization from jumping in to social media at all. Social media strategies including video evolve with experience.

9. Consider Call to action and Community. For YouTube, add a strong call to action for your users such as including a "subscribe to my videos" link. Also, think about building videos that appeal to a specific community, and build up your YouTube channel subscribers by making sure you let them know about new videos as you release them. Make sure you promote your video across all your social media channels (Facebook, Twitter, etc.), and across your offline channels, too.

To find out more about how to create business video stories for organization, call Kathy.

Get Your Free white paper on Applying Improvisation to Business

Email Kathy@powerfullyfunny.com. Tell me what your greatest business innovation challenge is and how you are solving it. What's working and what's not?

Innovating a Better Customer Experience Starts with a Marketing Review

- How hard is it to reach a live person when a customer calls? Called your own voicemail? What's your turnaround time on email? Ordered from your own site?
- Is your marketing (website, collateral, etc.) consistent in tone, look, and message?
- Are your messages falling flat? Are sales?
- Do you know who your key target is? Do you need or have multiple targets?

Now is a great time for a marketing review. We'll review all the ways you touch your customer - website, voicemail, emails, direct mail, collateral, etc. - and make recommendations to improve your customers' experience and your bottom line! *Call 408.578.8040.*

Contact Kathy

email: Kathy@powerfullyfunny.com

Tel/Fax: +1.408.578.8040

web: <http://www.powerfullyfunny.com>

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