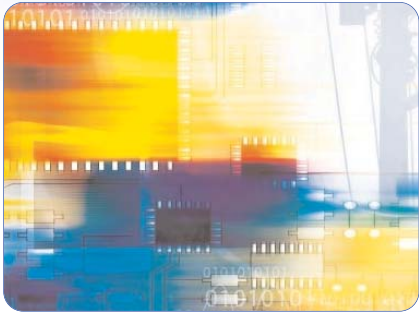




A Guide to Developing Effective Online Video Communications



Bring Your B2B Web Site
to Life With On-Demand
Rich Media!



Executive Summary

Making the Case for Online Video

Savvy marketers are looking for ways to effectively incorporate video into their web sites -- and with good reason. In March of 2006, users averaged 100 minutes of Web-based video content consumption and by August, the streaming audience had increased to 64% of the total U.S. Internet audience (comScore). Another recent B-to-B study found that 78% of respondents believe video makes online content more compelling (KnowledgeStorm/Universal McCann). These consumption patterns indicate that consumers and business professionals alike find great value in video as a means of learning more about companies and products.

Video is blossoming on the web in many shapes and forms, from user-generated content, to expert presentations, healthcare education and strategic company overviews. User generated video content can be amusing and fun, but a program geared toward business users should be compelling, succinct and optimized for web delivery. There is a lot to learn about online video production, and many marketers are now being tasked with incorporating video and other multimedia into their corporate web sites to take advantage of sight and sound to engage visitors at a whole new level.

The use of video on the web has dominated the headlines the past few months with companies like Google, Yahoo, NBC and Apple incorporating video like never before. As reported recently in the Wall Street Journal, this trend is expanding into B-to-B markets. Video is not only an effective tool to educate your internal and external customers, but it can also enhance brands and underscore the value of products. According to Dynamic Logic's MarketNorms Q2/2006 survey, aided brand awareness doubled when using video online.

Producing and delivering multimedia that matches your communications style introduces a whole new set of challenges and technologies. For many marketers, developing multimedia content is a foreign process. How do you create something that adds new dimension and life to your products and company? How will the user behave while watching your program? What do you want them to do? What comes first, the script or the storyboard? These are just a few of the issues that are addressed in this guide.



Script Writing

At the root of an engaging rich media program is a good story. A well-written script provides the foundation needed to produce a program smoothly. Adapting your core messages into a clear and concise script that is tailored for the unique medium of online communication will make the taping and production of your program flow beautifully with emphasis in the right places. One of the decision points you will need to cover is whether the script is developed internally or by your rich media provider, or a combination of both. If you decide to tackle the initial draft, be aware that script content is usually more concise than what you would present in written form. For example, in a presentation-style script, even though you may not be the actual presenter, as you write, speak your words out loud and time it against a clock. Be sure to speak slowly enough so your message can be easily absorbed, and to allow time for displaying complementary Flash animations to reinforce the core points.

During the script writing process, think “non-linear” and prepare each segment as a standalone element, allowing viewers to navigate the program in a way that allows them to get the information they need quickly, while giving them control over the process. With on-demand rich media, viewers can jump around so don't expect that they'll follow the program in a linear path from beginning to end. For many communication professionals, it may be a natural inclination to start with what you want to say, however mapping the flow of the program first, will insure that you include all of the right elements in your script and result in a more effective production.

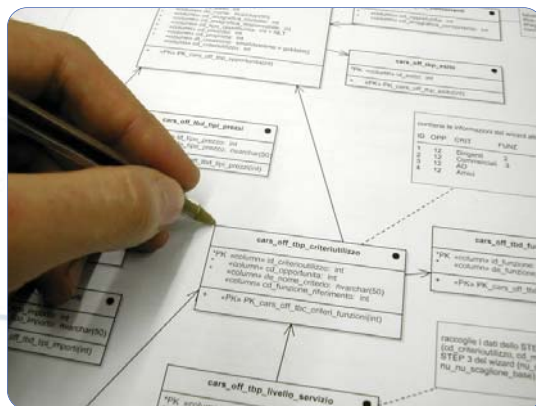
Chances are that if you segment your program appropriately, and give viewers the ability to jump to the section they're most interested in, the overall view time will exceed that of a program produced in a simple linear format. With linear programs, viewers really only have one choice to make: how long do they watch before they navigate away from your program.

Storyboard Creation & Review

Next is the storyboard creation and review process. The storyboard is the “blue-print” that communicates the visual direction of the final production and because it is integral to that process, is usually created by your rich media provider. Derived from the script, it specifically illustrates the flow of information, timing and key points to be articulated in both spoken and visual formats. Special attention should be paid to how the functionality of the platform you are using supports and highlights the content being delivered. For example, additional elements to incorporate in a storyboard are dynamic hyperlinks for relevant resources and data acquisition forms.

The level of storyboard development can span a broad range depending on your need for detail and pre-visual information prior to production. From a simple text document that describes the program as it unfolds, to a graphically-rich series of images with fully designed layouts of key program frames, the storyboard will give you a preliminary view of the final program, enabling you to confidently proceed into production.

Quality pre-production creative is an essential component of a successful rich media web program, and if prepared in advance can reduce your overall cost, since the design elements are already established.



Flash Creative Development

Depending upon your objectives, you may or may not need to use creative services to develop multimedia assets for your program. In some cases, a very basic program with audio and slides may be adequate for your goals, in which case all you'll need to do is develop a script and a slide presentation. If you do choose to create something that requires videography or Flash creative, you'll need to consider whether you have the internal resources to create this content, or whether you need to work with external service provider.

Communicating abstract and complex concepts with web-based rich media requires carefully designed graphic imagery. Imagery that is clear, concise, and artfully rendered contributes immensely to the success of a rich media program. In some cases a full service platform provider will offer these service to you, or you can work with an independent agency. Before you begin work, you'll need to be clear about what the specifications of platform provider are since the assets will need to be integrated with their publishing system.

When our clients require Flash development, our creative services group provides those services to them because it simplifies many aspects of the project from branding, to integration and theme development. Using 2D & 3D animation, Flash, special effects and video composition, we design sophisticated graphic imagery that supports the messaging of the program. Ranging from animated product renderings to virtual video sets, our creative "paint box" is expansive enough to create the right images with highest impact for your program.

If you are not ready to invest in creative services for your entire production, you may select specific segments that you'd like enhanced – what we call segment detailing. One candidate for this service is the introduction to your program – the pivotal point when people are making a decision about whether they want to invest their time to watch your program. By creating a really compelling and tightly paced introduction, you'll reap the benefits by getting your viewers to take the leap and, if required, complete your registration form to continue viewing.

Video Production

If you plan to incorporate video into your program, it can come from existing assets, or be newly acquired. If you need to capture new content, this can be accomplished in a studio setting, or if the taping is a single headshot and only one camera is required, this can be done at virtually any office location. *Before you set up a taping, think about how to shoot the media so you can redistribute it in multiple venues to increase the value of the content, as well as return on investment.*

For example, you may decide to tape video of one executive for other purposes beyond the core program, such as a welcome message for your homepage, or you can even excerpt parts of the program for distribution via an in-banner unit. You may also decide to have a different introduction that appears on another web site, such as a channel partner. An experienced rich media producer should be able to walk you through the various taping options, so you can identify ways to produce the video assets so they can be repurposed for other uses.

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Alternatively, many customers have video assets that have been acquired from a number of settings and for a range of purposes. It's smart to think of ways to repurpose valuable content through other distribution mechanisms to get that content in front of a larger audience. While many companies recognize that they have a great asset in the video, repurposing video to create an experience that is appropriate for the context has its challenges.

Simply transferring one medium's content directly to another might not be effective and could compromise the integrity of a brand. It's wise to consider a few things when deciding how to reuse video. For example, the real estate for online video is typically far smaller than other

mediums. How close are the subjects in the video and what will it look like at 320 x 240 pixels?

If you do have existing video assets, you'll also need to determine whether it can be edited or not. Video that is not editable is not a candidate for repurposing online because it won't offer a good user experience. Video formats that can be edited if needed include Beta SP, DVCAM, miniDV, DVD, and DV. Video that cannot be easily edited includes VHS, AVI, Quicktime, MPEG, MPEG4, and WMV.

If you are considering using video from an upcoming live presentation, use the on-site production crew to tape additional "close-up" segments either before or after the event, to provide additional footage that is optimized for online delivery. This can then be used as an introduction, or woven throughout the program.

Platform/Vendor Selection

Without question, one of the most important decisions you'll make when producing a rich media program is who your platform/services provider will be and whether the program will be delivered live or produced for on-demand delivery. *Over time the term "Webcasting" has become ambiguous, as different production options have emerged. Webcasting is traditionally associated with an event, whereas many providers have evolved and are offering greatly expanded creative and production services much like a specialized interactive marketing services firm.* This type of program is referred to as on-demand rich media, because it has been enhanced with animation or video, resulting in increased interactivity with the user and is much more visually stimulating than a con-

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ventional Webcast. Information can also be more easily absorbed when the visual components are emphasized.

On the lowest end of the scale is the Application Service Provider (ASP) model, where you have to do everything yourself to produce and publish a program. This requires a seriously dedicated resource with a range of skills from content development, to production and project management. The platform provider is rarely involved in the production, and is merely a technology provider. An ASP will typically require a long-term service agreement.

A basic webcast platform provider can inexpensively produce a program incorporating video or audio, combined with slides that include little or no animation. The player layout is usually "fixed" in terms of the look and feel, and may require a pop up window, or play in a separate location from your web site, making it difficult for the viewer to navigate back to your site.

On higher end of the scale, you could engage an interactive agency to create a multimedia program and player from scratch. However, this can be an expensive proposition and could cost anywhere between 10K to 15K per finished minute. While the look and feel is completely customized, the production timeframe will be longer and



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there is usually little database functionality, reporting or data collection underpinning the program.

The AccelaCast on-demand rich media platform is between the two ends of the spectrum. Being Flash-based, the platform is optimized for the presentation and delivery of on-demand rich media. It has been developed and stress-tested to a point where the layouts are highly flexible; many different design motifs are supported simply by adjusting a few settings within the system. The navigation allows viewers to control their interactive viewing experience and the controls are synchronized through a proprietary media synchronization agent. This agent coordinates and connects all of the program elements - video, animations, transcript, and agenda - regardless of the order in which the viewer has elected to engage the program.

Additionally, interest-based branching or outcome-based branching, triggered by question or test score results, can be used to build robust training and continuing professional education programs with testing, scoring and certificate delivery. To support ROI and

other outcome assessments, the platform has a built-in web response management system, allowing 24x7 access to reporting on all facets of demographics and marketing sources and includes a mechanism for automated classification and routing of registration data. From individual media click-through, to registrations by source, yield, segment view time and the number of actions taken during a program, a complete range of tracking metrics are available.



Embedding Your Program

Companies invest significant time, creative energy, and resources developing multimedia content that showcases their expertise, products, or services. The corporate Web site is the perfect place to showcase this content, but many platforms require visitors to leave a company's Web site to view a program. After all the effort and time spent to attract a visitor to a web site, sending them off to another location is a very ineffective means of establishing a relationship. In some cases, visitors are required to launch two separate windows to watch a program, which also happens to be siloed from the rest of the associated content on that site – resulting in a poor user experience.

By contrast, programs that are embedded and displayed in multiple independent locations - within the corporate Web site, on channel partners' sites, on a publisher's site - offer increased branding control and exposure for the program. Your brand, navigational elements, and other resources that complement the topic of the program surround your program, allowing visitors to really explore the topic within the confines of your site. Embedding your program directly into yours or other sites also brings the very valuable benefit of not needing to worry about viewer pop-up blockers.

How does embedding work? Typically, a snippet of Java HTML code will be supplied to you by your rich media service provider, which can then be added to a standard web page template. If the rich media platform you are using is Flash-based, it should be possible to reconfigure the player to fit into any web page. When published, the program loads directly into the web page and is served by the rich media service provider's Content Delivery

Network (CDN). This also means that the host web site does not need to be technically equipped to serve and monitor streaming media performance – that is the responsibility of the service provider. In this scenario, the impact on the web site that acts as the conduit for the program is negligible.

Streaming media performance considerations

Rich media programs can be prone to performance issues – security protocols, a network glitch or congestion can result in poor video and audio quality. Video buffering is no longer acceptable to web-savvy viewers who watch more and more video content on a daily basis. Most rich media service providers will use a CDN, such as Akamai to deliver the best possible streaming media experience. Accela Communications happens to use a combination of our own streaming server technology and the Akamai network to take advantage of the strengths that each has to offer when determining the best route to a customer. For example, the Akamai network uses sophisticated caching techniques to move the content as close as possible to the end user. AccelaCast has a patent-pending technology that determines the best protocol for delivering multimedia to a given user, taking into consideration the network, security, or firewall protocols in place and will then identify the best data center to serve that content from. In addition, the AccelaCast player continuously monitors user bandwidth and when necessary automatically downshifts to a slower streaming speed to maintain uninterrupted viewing, without requiring the viewer to restart or wait for buffering.

Having your program produced and delivered by a rich media service provider that can monitor and manage the performance will eliminate the need for making significant investments in streaming media infrastructure and at the same time, allow you to focus on what matters most – the content!



Measurement and reporting

Producing something that looks good and is optimized for web delivery is one thing, but in today's environment, you've got to be able to measure the impact and performance in order to justify the real ROI. Aside from the accountability that it offers content owners, measurement data will help you assess the appeal of various program formats, and types of interactions with your program content so you can create better, more effective programs moving forward. For example, what was the average drop-off point, or how many viewers asked a question or answered a poll? Being able to gather and make sense of this data is equally as important as the production itself, to evolve the quality of your program format and content.

So, what are the appropriate metrics to consider and measure for B-to-B video initiatives? What kind of data can or should be generated to reinforce communications and lead generation objectives? There is a lot of debate about what the correct standards are and that's healthy for interactive marketing, but at this stage there are so many different program formats, lengths, and distribution mechanisms, it's hard to categorize on-demand rich media. Despite the various formats, one thing is clear -- "engagement" is the new media mantra.

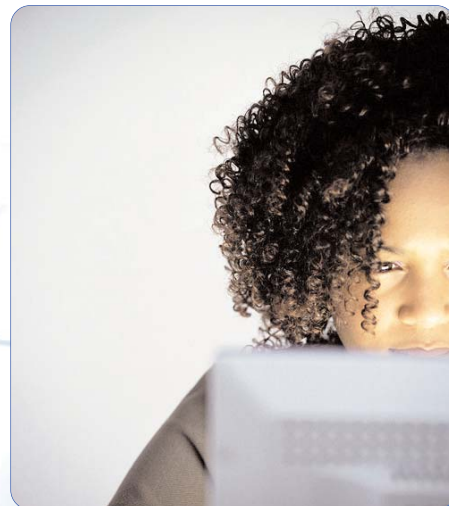
The good news is there are delivery platforms that offer accountability and each program should be evaluated based on its own unique goals, whether it's registered or anonymous view time, lead generation total, download activity, platform interactions, or polling feedback. All of these can feed into an engagement formula.

In the AccelaCast platform, telemetry points automatically capture data every 15 seconds to monitor user activity like total viewers, quality of service for the stream, search activity, time to connect, and protocols used, etc. Segment view times are also recorded within the platform database, providing intelligence about what sections of the program viewers are most interested in, as well as the path that they took while navigating throughout the program. When appropriate, this information can be used to help guide follow-up conversations with program regis-

trants. The number of downloads that occur during a program is another way to measure interaction and identify registrants that are interested enough to browse beyond the program content. *This type of engagement data goes way beyond the measurement information that would be available to you when producing a live program, since user navigation is restricted for the duration of the program.*

User supplied data is another analysis opportunity. For instance, if you have included some form of registration in your program, you may want to apply a classification status against the registrant pool using form response criteria. For example, you could classify registrants by Job Function, Purchase intent, or Geography. Junk records should be filtered and removed from the qualified reporting pool. Demographic data for registrants is then reported in aggregate, based on the questions asked in any form throughout the program, providing an audience profile for analysis.

Lastly, a survey tool will enable you to ask for feedback on program content, format, or presenters. This information can be used to evaluate success and provides input for future program planning.



Viewer Data Collection

While the incentive to produce video content is clear, making a decision about what interface you use is a little more complex. The choice about what platform to use should be underpinned by what you can learn from the project in terms of the impact on viewers. The value of your reporting and measurement metrics is often dictated by the incoming data. There are many different approaches to collecting data from viewers, enabling marketers to select what will work best for meeting a program's particular goals. For example, gradually gathering information from viewers is less intrusive and typically delivers a richer, more complete profile into the sales pipeline.

Following are a few different approaches to consider when building the storyboard for your program:

No registration: When awareness and brand building are paramount, marketers want to maximize the number of viewers and therefore do not want to impose any limitations on the ability to view. In this case, date, time and duration along with information on the sources leading viewers to a program can be captured and analyzed. Segment timing data is another way to learn what content is most appealing to viewers, with or without registration barriers.

Optional registration: To maximize "eyeballs" and at the same time give viewers the ability to receive additional information, an optional registration form can be introduced at any point during a program. An incentive to complete the optional registration form, such as a white paper or other deliverable, will increase response. In this case, viewers would have the option to watch the program in its entirety without supplying any registration information.

Up-front registration: Traditional, up-front registration can be used when the program has high-value content and lead generation is the primary goal. Viewers must complete the registration form before viewing any part of the program.

Delayed registration: In this scenario, the viewer is given a taste of the program, which may include an introduction by a high-profile speaker, but then must complete the registration request to continue. Typically, a delayed registration form will be presented within the first few minutes of the program. A powerful introduction and high-value content offer is key.

Polling: Poll questions can be delivered at any point in the program, directly through the player window. The poll typically includes a question directly related to the content. Cumulative results are then displayed to the viewer, which also further encourages participation and response. This is an unobtrusive way to collect viewer data throughout the program. Data collected in this manner is stored in the viewer's record and can also be used to pre-qualify sales leads.

Q&A: This feature enables viewers to ask a question, which is stored in a web response management system and automatically sent to the presenters via e-mail. The presenters can then respond and continue the dialogue with a known entity rather than an anonymous caller.

Exit survey: An exit survey is used to collect information at the close of the program to solicit feedback on program content, request additional demographics, or determine follow-up actions and deliverables.



In Summary

Using sight and sound is a smart way to present information, enhance retention, and build relationships with your audience. That's precisely why so many marketers are now being tasked with creating multimedia programs to be showcased on their corporate web sites.

As you might expect, producing and delivering multimedia that matches your communications style introduces a whole new set of skills and technologies. Choosing a service provider that has experience and can guide you through the process of creating a rich media program that meets your goals and reflects the style of your company is critical. The best programming and platforms harness the strength of the Web and the smartest companies are partnering with existing service providers for speed and effectiveness.

When the time comes to create compelling on-demand rich media content that's integrated into your web site, rely on a platform that's flexible, robust and available now. Taking this approach will allow you to concentrate on creative customization, and enable you to produce something at a fraction of the cost of hiring an interactive agency to develop a custom application.

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About Accela Communications

Accela Communications is an interactive marketing services firm that provides a collection of tools and services to produce, deliver and manage web communications across a wide range of industries including information technology, healthcare, and financial services and other market sectors. We generate actionable results through the use of **on-demand rich media, web response management tools**, and innovative web content. We've been in the business of creating multimedia communications from the earliest stages of use on the internet with our AccelaCast™ on-demand rich media platform. AccelaCast is designed based on the philosophy that a platform should encourage exploration and interaction with program content in order to deliver a lasting impact that reinforces your message and your brand. For more information please visit, www.accelacommunications.com.

