

Six Secrets to Video Content Marketing

by: Mark Jolly, Founding Partner at Manic Media

“Content marketing” often gets described in variously convoluted ways. But it needn’t be a smokescreen of branding buzzwords. The craft of content marketing always comes down to one thing: storytelling

These days, video is the defining game changer in being able to tell those brand stories in new, dynamic and creative ways. And it better be: video will be [69% of all Internet traffic](#) by 2017.

Here are six keys to getting video storytelling right:

1. Make an emotional connection

Whether you’re representing a bank or a school or an automotive company, you need to be able to find a story and shape that story in ways that speak to people on a personal level. That means stories that inspire, stories that talk about real people and stories that add value to people’s lives. Like this [short film](#) about Bounty paper towels.

2. Be generous

The most successful branded videos don’t bang on about the brand. Instead of telling you how amazing their product or service is, the brand introduces itself in more of a “supporting role” that is part of a larger story. And that story is what positions the brand as central to people’s lives.

The reason the Bounty video works so well is because it's an authentic story about an artist in his 70s who has a special connection to the brand: he paints portraits on Bounty paper towels, which, he discovered, absorb the colors of his paint in just the right way.

We're already emotionally invested in his story before we even hear the brand name. So when the brand appears – one minute and forty seconds into the video – we're ready to welcome its presence because we understand how pivotal Bounty's paper towels are to this artist.

3. Spark conversations

If you tell stories that bring value to people's lives, they'll want to share those stories with others – which means you're both engaging your core audience and cultivating a new one. The genius of the Bounty video is that, yes, it's an engaging story about a unique artist, but it's also a story that leads back to the brand: when a viewer comes to share the narrative about who this guy is and what his art is all about, it's impossible to do so without talking about the brand. The two narratives are crystalized as one.

4. Use the power of personality

Another example where the “human narrative” and the “brand narrative” are woven together organically is the now [iconic Volvo commercial](#) in which Jean-Claude Van Damme performs a split between two trucks as they reverse, side by side.

Like the Bounty example, the Volvo video is anchored around a personality – a celebrity, yes, but whose story here is cast in the mold of someone who has struggled and has fought his way back from the margins. You'll notice that JCVD's voice-over is entirely about himself and his body, “crafted to perfection.” And yet, as we see from the visual impact of the stunt, it's also a story about the precision engineering of Volvo vehicles.

So when viewers share the video – online, through social networks and in person – they're sharing a visually compelling story about Van Damme and Volvo. The two are inseparable, even though Van Damme doesn't mention the brand once.

The power of his personality (and, of course, his physicality) is what drives the narrative. And it connects with viewers in a way that they feel they're not being sold to. In just four weeks, this video topped 60 million views and became the most viewed automotive commercial online. It's also the [most shared film](#) to date on YouTube.

5. Less is more

We've seen that the more human a story is, the more you can connect with your audience. But telling a good story is also about knowing what to leave out. If you can tease your audience with just a taste of the broader narrative, you can leave them wanting more. The series of videos produced for the [American Express "Passion Project"](#) exemplifies this approach with one concise story after another. And the stories? Ordinary people with extraordinary dreams and ambitions, like the [musician](#) who writes a song every day.

6. Content is king, but distribution is the ace

You can make the most amazing video content but unless you can get that content to the right audience, what good is it? From the earliest conceiving phase, it's paramount to think about distribution channels – does your story speak to a particular audience, how can you reach that audience, and can that audience spark a conversation?

These questions aren't rhetorical. They circle back to the very nature of what content marketing is all about – because if your video is "generous" and is driven by authentic human storytelling, you'll be more likely to get people talking about it and sharing it. And you'll be more likely to harness your targeted media partners to distribute it. ///

Mark Jolly is a founding partner at Manic Media, a digital media company whose branded video content has been honored multiple times by the Webby Awards.

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