

Brands And Users Benefiting From Online Video Contests

By Eric Franchi Monday, November 10, 2008



Eric Franchi was part of the team that launched Undertone Networks in 2002, and currently serves as senior vice president of business development. In this role, Eric oversees the company's business development initiatives, which include forging strategic relationships and developing new revenue generation programs, while working closely with the executive team on critical endeavors. He began his interactive career at About.com.

In 2006, Pepsi's Frito-Lay pushed the marketing envelope by challenging users to create an ad for the Super Bowl. The contest was successful beyond everyone's expectations, resulting in over a thousand submissions, millions of views and a hilarious winning commercial that won "best ad of 2006" honors. This occurred right around the time of Google's acquisition of YouTube. Many thought that this was the peak of the user-generated content (UGC) boom, but in many ways it was the beginning. UGC has continued to enjoy substantial growth via YouTube, blogs and other outlets that allow ease of content creation and distribution.

Two years later, brands are still finding value in putting marketing in the hands of the end user of the product. The value proposition is clear. Users are given the ability to express themselves creatively while having a chance for some notoriety and prizes. Brands receive incredible endorsement — real people expressing their enthusiasm for the product — and plenty of content to showcase. Right now, there are two UGC-based campaigns that are showcasing forward thinking by two of the largest companies in the world: Microsoft and Cisco.

Microsoft's "I'm a PC" campaign is fun and carries the theme of its latest celebrity-infused commercials into the real world. Users record a short clip saying "I'm a PC" and fill in the video blank, so to speak. Some of the submissions are downright hilarious, such as the guy who is a PC and "enjoys the slimming effects of a striped purple shirt" or the woman who "likes chasing zebras." The best submissions have a chance of making it onto Microsoft's TV or online display ads, and users are compensated with their 15 minutes of fame.

Cisco's Digital Cribbs campaign is an extension of its Web-based Digital Cribbs lifestyle series. Users can submit videos and either show off how wired and efficient their homes are, or are not. The winners, chosen on the basis of popularity of the submissions, will receive prizes of \$10,000. In contrast to Microsoft's short, fun clips, these are up to three minutes in length. Some of the submissions are not only impressive in showing how people are using consumer technology (of which Cisco is largely the backbone), but in production value and quality as well.

Contests like these are fun and rewarding for the consumer and of immeasurable value for the brands. With video becoming easier and cheaper to shoot, edit and transfer online, one has to wonder if it will become a staple in every brand's marketing strategy in the future.