

From DRTV to DROV

by Eric Franchi, Monday July 7, 2008



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I SPEND A CONSIDERABLE amount of time traveling for work, like many of you who read the Video Insider. Often, that means some insomnia from thinking about a packed schedule, being in a strange bed while in a different time zone. As a result, I often end up watching TV late at night or early in the morning. Lately, I have watched my fair share of DRTV ads -- those ads that run from 30 seconds to up to 30 minutes and are designed to elicit a product purchase rather than branding.

DRTV is art, science and business rolled into one. To be able to come up with 30 minutes of advertising that keeps viewers captivated enough to sit through it in its entirety, and then have a significant percent take action at the end, is pretty impressive in my book. Some success stories include items that have sold millions of units on the basis of a paid endorser, testimonials and a few well-worn calls to action.

Lately I have been thinking about these advertisers in the context of online video. Why have they not come up with a way to leverage the format the way they do on television? The fear of the big "close" button has certainly got to be a factor, but a TV viewer is always able to change the channel. Most big DRTV advertisers, if they are running online, usually dabble in display only.

Therefore, in the spirit of innovation and sparking conversation, I've listed a few ideas below that could help those DRTV marketers utilize their best assets online and help grow the online video category in the process:

Don't just focus on pre-roll. There are plenty of sites that run pre-roll, show the viewer's desired clip, and then go right into the next clip or just run another advertiser's spot. Inserting a sequential ad for the same advertiser in mid- and post-roll space could allow for more time for the marketer to convey the product benefits and requisite offer/call to action points to make the spend worthwhile. Episodic sponsorships are sold on many major portals, but I have yet to see a DR advertiser test this format out.

Experiment with time. Prime time on the Web is during the day. That is the time to reach the affluent, at-work audience who is in information mode and likely isn't ready to "buy right now, since supplies are limited(!)" Running DR spots during the evening/early morning hours may result in better results for the marketer, and increased renewals for the media provider due to better performance. It may also prove

to be a more tolerable time for longer-format pre-roll against appropriately long content spots.

Invest in creative and landing page design. This one is geared solely to the marketer. Telling your story -- product highlights, testimonials, appropriate call to action -- is not as easy in an online environment as it is with the sight/sound/motion and fixed timeframes of TV. The rules must be rewritten. However, there are advantages to online -- creative and landing pages can be A/B tested and optimized in real time, video spots and companion ads can be clickable -- that TV does not offer. It no doubt will take time, investment and experimentation, but the potential payoff is huge.

I am convinced that sooner rather than later, we will have a case study of a marketer that hits upon the right formula, and "DROV" -- direct response online video -- will become a reality. I wonder if it will be one of our favorite late-night TV offers, or one that originates online? Either one would be a major feather in the cap of online video.