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Audio and Video Drive Action

Audio and video on the web are not new. Clips have been available on websites since the early days. But until recently, neither audio nor video was used much online because the content was difficult to locate and impossible to browse, and there was no easy way to get regular updates. And since much audio and video content was lengthy—as much as an hour or more—and people had no idea what was in these files without actually watching or listening to them, not many did.

The migration of audio and video from online backwaters to the forefront with valuable content happened because of sites like YouTube, Vimeo, and iTunes, with easy ways for people to view and listen. In addition, high-speed Internet connections became the norm, and the technology to create and upload audio and video became simple enough that anybody can do it (including you).

Create Goodwill with Customers

Videos use emotion to tell stories in ways that most other forms of marketing cannot. That's a technique that Tim Washer, senior manager of social media at Cisco Systems, uses all the time. The videos Tim creates are used to market to Cisco's service provider customers—large telecommunications companies like AT&T, Verizon, and Telstra. He uses both humor and drama in a series called “The Network Effect: Telecom's Socioeconomic Impact,” which markets the Cisco business in a subtle way.

“One way to create goodwill with service providers is to help their customers understand what service providers do . . . to make our customers heroes to their customers,” Washer says.

A five-minute mini-documentary in the video series titled *Developing Commerce in Africa: Phone Company in a Box*¹ has nearly 150,000 views on YouTube. To look at how telecom infrastructure works elsewhere in the developing world, Washer went to Costa Rica and conducted interviews, which he edited into a story. “We spoke to people who were service providers there and some folks in the government. So it has a global feel to it,” he says.

The video shows how telecom companies in developing countries, such as Telefonica in Guatemala, work within local infrastructure. “We’re very careful to make sure we had a visually interesting story to create awareness of the telecom network. One of the challenges that service providers have right now is that they’re providing the network for all these apps to be downloaded on your smartphone and for all this content to be purchased over the cable network. But service providers get very little attention from consumers.”

As true thought leadership content, the video never mentions Cisco products or features Cisco employees. “That’s what I think really separates it from most marketing,” Washer says. “We were careful not to include anybody from our company in the video. If you put someone from the company in there, particularly marketers and execs, they’re so trained to fit our speaking points in the interview. The objective was to make sure this is an interesting story that will connect with people. When you’re creating entertainment, you want the viewer to get lost in the story and just forget that they’re being marketed to.”

While there are no Cisco products or employees in the videos, Cisco generates tremendous value: The videos are hosted on the Cisco YouTube channel, promoted on Cisco websites and social networks, and sent to customers by Cisco salespeople.

And excellent videos are frequently shared by others. Such was the case with Cisco’s *Developing Commerce in Africa: Phone Company in a Box*. A *New York Times* reporter found the video and talked about it. The video launch on the Cisco Service Provider blog helped it win “best corporate blog” from *BtoB* magazine. And the president of ShortsTV liked the video and broadcast it on

¹ [youtube.com/watch?v=WHaQY2MIHV8](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WHaQY2MIHV8)

his TV network. These results certainly helped Cisco create positive buzz from its service provider customer base.

Many organizations create video to showcase their expertise and provide valuable information to buyers in an easy-to-understand medium. The interview format is very popular because it's so easy to interview guests and post the resulting video. Other common forms of online video include humor-based approaches (frequently used to try to garner many views and go viral), product overviews, and executive speeches. An added benefit of producing videos for your organization is that the media, bloggers, and others in a position to talk you up tend to like to watch videos to get story ideas. See Chapter 18 for more information on video and details about how to create your own.

What University Should I Attend?

Many marketers are reluctant to focus on video because they don't see how a video on YouTube or on their company website will lead to a sale. As I was writing this section of the book, I received an email from a student who attends the University of Pennsylvania. She explained that she chose to apply to the University of Pennsylvania because she saw a Penn video on YouTube² as she was researching universities and she fell in love with the school without even having a chance to visit. In the video, singer and five-time Grammy Award winner John Legend explains why he has a deep affection for the University of Pennsylvania, his alma mater.

This story is certainly not unique. People are looking for the products and services that you offer right now. They go to Google and the other search engines, and they ask their friends for advice. Frequently, what they find is a video. Will you be in it?

Many organizations encourage their customers or fans to produce videos for them. These customer-generated video efforts often take the form of contests and can be highly successful, especially for a product or service that has a visual impact. For example, Nalgene bottles are virtually indestructible. If you go to YouTube, you'll find hundreds of videos where people try to break them in creative ways, such as running them over with a lawn mower, throwing them out of buildings, and freezing water in them and then hitting

² youtube.com/watch?v=gNUiBIIMk1s

them with a hammer. For the makers of the Nalgene bottle, this is a valuable phenomenon, since the company does not have any part in the videos.

The Best Job in the World

I'm often asked: "How do I market a commodity product?" People seem to think that if their product is similar to others, then the new rules of marketing do not apply to them and the only way to sell is a function of lowest price or best distribution. If you've read this far in the book, you ought to be able to predict my answer: Create interesting information, and people will find it, share your ideas, and tell your stories. Yes, even if you market a commodity.

Sandy beaches in warm and sunny locations are a commodity product. This may come as a complete shock to people in tourism marketing, but it's true. The traditional approach of showing white beach sand with footprints near lovely blue water and a bikini or two just doesn't cut it, because that's what everybody does. How can you stand out?

Tourism Queensland³ created a fantastic video contest called The Best Job in the World.⁴ The winner was chosen as Caretaker of the Islands of the Great Barrier Reef. The caretaker position had a few minor tasks, but the main thing was to use social media to talk up the islands; the job of blogging and posting videos paid 150,000 Australian dollars for a six-month gig. The contest required each applicant to post a one-minute video explaining why he or she should be chosen as caretaker of Hamilton Island on the Great Barrier Reef. More than 30,000 people applied, and the videos were seen by millions. In addition, thousands of bloggers and media outlets (magazines, radio, television, and newspapers) wrote and broadcast about The Best Job in the World, producing even more buzz about not only the contest but also the location as a tourist destination.

Tourism Queensland created a huge phenomenon. When the contest was in full swing, I took a poll of the groups I visit as speaker. By a show of hands, I asked if they had heard of The Best Job in the World. In Washington, D.C., 20 percent of the room had (the lowest percentage). In Tartu, Estonia, a whopping 60 percent had (the highest). The average, over several thousand people in six countries, was more than 30 percent. Amazing! Imagine if

³ queenslandholidays.com.au

⁴ youtube.com/user/islandreefjob

30 percent of the world had heard of your product through videos people had created for you.

How did Queensland, Australia, get so much attention? I've been to Queensland and the Great Barrier Reef twice. Yes, it is beautiful. But so are many other sandy, beachy, sparkly, bikini-friendly places I've been to: Koh Samui, Santorini, Barbados, Puerto Vallarta, and on and on. The answer is simple: Tourism Queensland found a way to get people to share their ideas and tell their stories.

The Best Job in the World was conceived and created by the Brisbane, Australia-based advertising agency CumminsNitro. Tourism Queensland also worked with Quinn & Co.,⁵ a New York public relations firm that handled media relations. I spoke to John Frazier and Melissa Braverman, part of the Quinn & Co. team who worked on the Best Job in the World, to help understand this amazing success.

John Frazier says that the job announcement broke in Australia, and by breakfast time in London, the Associated Press was interviewing Tourism Queensland's UK director for a broadcast package that turned up later that day on the morning shows in the United States. Within two days, there were thousands of media pickups. Tourism Queensland had set a goal to get 400,000 new visitors to its website over the course of the one-year campaign. The website blew past that in about 30 hours and had a million hits on the second day.

"We learned that if you hit the sweet spot of the right story at the right time, it will travel like a tsunami all the way around the globe," says Melissa Braverman. "Traditional media (a Reuters exclusive) broke the story, which immediately went viral because it was a chance to have the coolest job in the world at a time when everyone else was getting laid off."

Because so many people saw the announcement about the job opening on both mainstream media and blogs, video applications for the job started to come in at a rapid clip. And because people were hearing about it all over the world, applicants represented many countries. Of course, all that attention also sparked interest and awareness of Queensland, Australia, as a tourist destination.

"You can't reheat a soufflé," says Frazier. "There were quickly a number of copycat campaigns that didn't quite take off in as big a way. My best advice is to try to develop an idea that resonates authentically in the lives of real

⁵ quinnandco.com

people and then find a way to mount it across as many platforms (such as traditional media, YouTube, Twitter, Facebook) as possible.”

Ben Southall from the United Kingdom was selected as the ideal candidate and won the job. But the real winner was Tourism Queensland. Frazier estimates there were 1,100 television placements of the story. The video contest for The Best Job in the World was a huge success in drawing attention to the islands of Australia’s Great Barrier Reef. At one point, the official Island Reef Job website was getting 4,000 hits per *second*.

According to Peter Lawlor, Queensland’s state tourism minister, preliminary results from a tourism campaign promoting Tropical North Queensland to U.S. tourists drew a 34 percent increase in flight bookings to Cairns, gateway to the area. “The campaign’s aim was to increase international visitation to Cairns and the Great Barrier Reef and to raise awareness of the region’s unique experiences and attractions. The results so far are outstanding, especially considering current economic difficulties.”

Have Fun with Your Videos

Is there anything more tediously boring than the air safety video on commercial airliners? Well, it doesn’t have to be that way. Video is a great format to use humor, especially when you take on a normally boring topic that the members of your buyer personas all know about. That’s what Air New Zealand did with a safety video produced with the New Zealand All Blacks rugby team for use on the airline’s Boeing 737 aircraft. The “Air New Zealand—Crazy about Rugby—Safety Video” was released on YouTube and quickly generated nearly a million views. That’s right: a million views for an airline safety video. So how did they do it?

In the video, the players, coaches, and commentators of the New Zealand All Blacks rugby team serve as actors, along with Air New Zealand staff. The plane is full of fans in crazy getups. There are even credits at the end. I watched it a bunch of times because I kept missing bits and pieces of the hilarious but often subtle humor. Air New Zealand also posted a companion behind-the-scenes video showing how they created the piece.

The timing of the video’s release was significant. The All Blacks had just beaten the South Africa Springboks, 29 to 22. In the riveting final five minutes, the team scored two tries to claim the Tri Nations crown. So the entire country was thinking about rugby!

Sometimes when I talk about using humor, people who work in serious firms like business-to-business (B2B) companies, nonprofits, and government agencies insist that they can't use humor. In particular, I'd like to challenge the assumption that B2B marketing must be dreadfully boring.

I think this attitude came about because B2B marketers hear the word *business* (twice) and think, "I am marketing to a business." This results in an overly serious tone. After all, marketing to, say, technology companies is different from consumer marketing, right?

Wrong.

The B2B marketers seem to forget that what all marketers need to do is communicate to *people*. People want to do business with people, and the B2B companies that understand that develop a following.

National Instruments is a B2B supplier of measurement and automation equipment used by engineers and scientists. The tried-and-true marketing strategy of companies like National Instruments is to focus on feeds and speeds, technical data sheets, specs, and so on. We're talking about the engineering community, right?

Yes, but while National Instruments does provide product specs, the company also realizes that buyers are human beings. "We've always had the motto, both internally and externally, that it's okay to have fun," says John M. Graff, vice president of marketing and customer operations at National Instruments. That fun-loving attitude has produced many ways to communicate with the technical audience that buys National Instruments' products.

For example, I'm a fan of a video blog produced by Todd Sierer, an engineer at National Instruments. It's called *An Engineering Mind*, and it is highly effective. In one episode, he talks about the meaning of the word *marketecture* in a humorous way. It's the sort of thing that an engineer would get a kick out of. Thus, it does exactly what good marketing should do—reach buyers.

"We first debuted these videos two years ago at our annual user conference held in Austin, Texas, where over 3,000 engineers and scientists gather to see and discuss latest technologies for measurement and automation," Graff says. "In addition to the usual technical product demonstrations, we also try to have some fun, including inviting an engineer from the Spike TV show *Deadliest Warriors* to the stage. We've found that our audience greatly appreciates this approach to communication, since they get plenty of examples of the drab, speeds-and-feeds technical fire hose. We believe it's greatly enhanced our reputation."

Are you a B2B marketer? Are you treating your buyers like human beings? Are you having some fun? Really, it's okay to have some fun. I dare you.

Audio Content Delivery through Podcasting

Moving now to the audio-only side of the spectrum, note that the transformation from static audio downloads to radio station–like podcasts, which are much more valuable to listeners (and also more valuable as marketing vehicles for organizations), occurred because of three developments. The first was the ability to add audio feeds and notifications to Rich Site Summary (RSS, often called really simple syndication). This enables listeners who subscribe to an audio feed to download new updates soon after they are released. When audio content was liberated from the need for one large download and went instead to being offered as a series of continuous audio clips, the concept of sequential or episodic shows took off.

Hosts modeled their shows on radio, producing content on specific subjects catering to distinct audiences. But the podcasting business model is very different from broadcast radio. Radio spectrums can support only a finite number of stations, and radio signals have limited geographic range. To support the technical infrastructure of radio, broadcasters need large audiences and lots of advertising to pay the bills (or donors, in the case of public radio). Contrast that with Internet audio podcasting, which is essentially free (except for minimal hosting fees and some cheap equipment). A podcast show reaches a potentially worldwide audience, allowing anyone both to listen to shows and to create them.

The second major development was the availability of those podcast feeds through iTunes, which has become the most important search engine for audio content. Now people can simply subscribe to a feed (usually at no cost), and then every time they plug their mobile device into their computer, the new shows from the feeds they subscribe to automatically download. People who commute and listen in the car or on the train, or who listen at the gym or around the house, suddenly have access to regularly updated shows from whatever cultural niches they specifically choose. With podcasting, people instantly liberate themselves from the tyranny of mainstream, hit-driven broadcast radio and can listen to shows based on their specific interests.

The third major change has been the rise of mobile listening applications for smartphones, like Stitcher and the Podcasts app that comes standard on iOS. Instead of having to subscribe to podcasts and sync to a mobile device, you just open the app and start listening to your favorite shows.

Before we continue, let's back up and talk about the name. The term *podcasting* can confuse people. A podcast is simply audio content, usually delivered through a feed service such as iTunes. The medium does not specially require iPods, although that's how the word was derived. As you've probably figured out by now, you can listen to a podcast on any MP3 player, on most smartphones, or directly from your computer—no iPod required.

***Hack the Entrepreneur* Podcast Delivers New Customers for Host's Business**

Podcasting has the potential to jump-start your growth. In just a few short months, Jon Nastor's *Hack the Entrepreneur* podcast has delivered a nearly 50 percent increase in sales for VelocityPage, his WordPress page-building tool. While Nastor knows his podcast is a huge driver of new business for his company, he never tries to sell from the podcast. Rather, the exposure from his podcast helps people to learn about his company. Many listeners then independently choose to learn more and perhaps do business with him.

"I live in Thunder Bay, Ontario, a very small town in Canada, and I love to talk business with people," Nastor says. "If I were to just call or email somebody and say, 'Would you like to jump on Skype for half an hour and talk business with me?' most people are too busy and won't do it. But if I'm hitting 'record,' they will. So I decided to launch *Hack the Entrepreneur*. I started by sending out five email requests and everyone agreed to be on the show." Nastor began recording interviews in July 2014 and soon had 22 episodes prerecorded for his September launch. His half-hour interview show airs three days a week.

"My shows are about 30 minutes each, because the average commute in North America is 29 and a half minutes," Nastor says. "I want to provide closure for people, so I try to get below that mark to give listeners a beginning, a middle, and an ending with a conclusion to take to work with them that day."

There are thousands of podcasts targeted at entrepreneurs. Nastor knew that for his show to succeed, he needed to be different. “Rather than talking about the how-to of business and the tactics, which most other shows do, I went strictly for the person,” he says. “That’s why *Hack the Entrepreneur* is about the entrepreneur. I have guests on because they are doing interesting, cool things, and I do not discuss their business once they’re on. We just talk about the person: the struggles, the battles, and the things they go through. I try to humanize the entrepreneur. I take them off the pedestal and bring them back down to earth to show other people who are struggling with business that all these other entrepreneurs have the same struggles and here is how they got through it. Maybe you can get a hack from there and implement that in your life.”

Nastor creates a wish list of people he wants to interview based on books he has read and businesses he is interested in. He has his assistant reach out to potential guests. “You have to be a certain type of personality to be on the show and make it a successful episode,” he says. “You have to have a level of confidence. I know what my audience wants, and I have to provide that for them or else they stop listening.”

While Nastor spends about an hour before each interview learning about the guest and formulating questions, he has a very conversational approach once the interview begins. Unlike many other podcasts, Nastor doesn’t just “stick to the script,” and that means he’s open to serendipity. This approach frequently allows the discussion to go in interesting, unplanned directions. Perhaps that’s why his new podcast has become successful so quickly. I’ve been a guest on *Hack the Entrepreneur*, and I can attest that Nastor is a great interviewer, making his guests feel comfortable as he asks probing questions.

Most people find the *Hack the Entrepreneur* podcast through the iTunes search engine. They are looking for the sort of content that Nastor is creating, and they take a chance on an episode. Many like this preview enough to subscribe.

Nastor is now selling advertising on *Hack the Entrepreneur* for more than a thousand dollars for a 30-second spot. How cool is that? He actually gets paid to do marketing for his company. But the real payoff comes from people who become Jon Nastor fans because of the show and naturally want to learn more about his day job. They find VelocityPage, and many choose to do business with the company. “At the end of January 2015, we calculated a 48 percent increase in sales from when I started the show in September 2014,”

he says. During that time frame, Nastor says nothing else had changed with his business.

“My mind is blown every day by the success of *Hack the Entrepreneur*,” Nastor says. “I will stand on the highest mountaintop and preach the power of podcasting, because the reach you can get from your home or office is absolutely astounding. I’ve had more than 200,000 people download my show in the last five months. I get emails every day from people who have been touched in some way by what I’m doing. Nothing I’ve ever done in the past has ever had this reach so quickly.”

Now marketers have a tool to efficiently create and deliver audio content to people who want to listen. Anyone can develop a show that targets their buyer personas, just like Nastor did. And anyone can regularly deliver updated content that is welcome and useful to their audience. Podcasting is important for organizations that want to reach buyers directly. For content that is best delivered via audio or for buyers who prefer to listen to content, podcasting is obviously essential. For example, many politicians and churches podcast, so that supporters can keep up with speeches and sermons when they can’t hear them live. You’ll learn more about podcasting, including tips for setting up your own podcast, in Chapter 18.

As a component of a larger content-marketing strategy, podcasting is also an increasingly important part of the marketing mix. For example, many customer service departments deliver how-to podcast series to keep users of their products informed. Companies that market to people who are frequently on the road (such as traveling salespeople) have had success reaching people with entertaining podcasts for all that car and airplane downtime. For many organizations, podcasting for marketing purposes is not an either-or decision. Instead, podcasting coexists with blogging, a great website, e-books, and other online marketing tools and programs in a cohesive marketing strategy.

Grammar Girl Podcast

Mignon Fogarty, creator of the Grammar Girl podcast and founder of the Quick and Dirty Tips podcast network, has been podcasting since 2006. Grammar Girl⁶ provides short, friendly tips to improve writing. Covering the grammar rules and word choice guidelines that can confound even the

⁶ grammar.quickanddirtytips.com

best writers, Grammar Girl makes complex grammar questions simple. I should know. I never know when I should use *whom*, so I try to avoid it altogether. However, this is exactly the sort of grammar problem the podcast solves.

“I get an overwhelming amount of feedback from my audience,” Fogarty says. “I had to hire a part-time assistant to help field my messages because they were taking all my time. I get a lot of grammar questions, which I try to answer; a lot of ‘I love you’ messages; and a lot of people disagreeing with my recommendations. Grammar can get pretty contentious, and people absolutely love it (in a gotcha kind of way) when I make a mistake or typo.”

Creating a podcast show is a great way to get your information into the market. Instead of hyping your products and services, an informational show brands you as someone worthy of doing business with. In Fogarty’s case, her sound ideas lead people to want to purchase her book, *Grammar Girl’s Quick and Dirty Tips for Better Writing*. The free podcast drives her book sales.

“The fan interaction is definitely different from offline marketing,” Fogarty says. “I feel weird even calling the people fans because they feel more like friends with the constant messages that go back and forth. (Someone on Facebook recently said I am ‘the most helpful person he doesn’t know.’) The immediacy of the feedback is also different from offline marketing. I hear within 24 hours (usually faster) if something I’m doing is working or not. If I post a link or a contest on Twitter, I can usually tell within five minutes whether it’s getting traction or not.”

When Fogarty was ready to release her book, the podcast and her participation in other social networking sites like Twitter and Facebook allowed her to launch the book to her existing fan base. “When I went out on my book tour, the crowds were much bigger than expected, and I believe it is at least in part because of all the groundwork I laid on social networks for over a year before the book came out,” she says. “During the first three or four stops on my book tour, bookstores ran out of books. In Atlanta, they ran out of books before I even arrived. A lot of the people who came out were people I had connected with on Twitter or Facebook, and I had posted messages about where I was going to be to both of those services multiple times.”

The Grammar Girl podcasts have now been downloaded more than 20 million times, and Fogarty has dispensed grammar tips on *Oprah* and appeared on the pages of the *New York Times*, the *Wall Street Journal*, and *USA Today*. *Grammar Girl’s Quick and Dirty Tips for Better Writing* is a

New York Times bestseller. “Having an established network of people is really valuable when you’re launching something new,” Fogarty says.

Podcasting and online video are great ways to connect with an audience and develop a following who will be eager to buy your products. Chapter 18 provides details on how to start a video or podcast series of your own.