

User-Generated Advertising:
Five Reasons to Start Your
Crowdsourced Ad Campaign Today

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At the end of 2006, Time Magazine recognized You as the Person of the Year. It attributed the selection to “community and collaboration on a scale never seen before.” The web was now a tool that brought together “the small contributions of millions of people and making them matter.” Web 2.0 was a revolutionary platform that gave birth to interactive sites such as Wikipedia, YouTube, Facebook and MySpace.¹ In short, the proliferation of user-generated content (UGC) had made its mark.

At the same time, marketers were spending more on online advertising, specifically banner ads, sponsored links, adwords and other pay-per-click advertising. Although, some referred to this as interactive advertising, it was similar to traditional marketing. The advertiser controlled the context, message, format and delivery. The primary difference was giving the consumer the option to click on the ads.

Social Media Changes Marketing Landscape

With the advent of social media websites such as Facebook, YouTube, Twitter and Yelp, consumers took on a truly interactive role. They created dialogs and began sharing information about themselves and opinions on every topic. They valued what others had to say, especially on products and services, because they viewed their friends’ opinions as more objective and authentic.

The role of the consumer has changed from a one-dimensional buyer who was the recipient of information to a multi-dimensional participant: communicator, commentator, collaborator and creator. With a flattened playing field, advertisers have to make key adjustments in order to stay relevant to their consumers.

Today, most brands have their own Facebook page, Twitter account and blog. They use these tools to promote a new product or event. However, the content is fairly standard and ordinary. Increasingly, marketers are tasking their teams and agencies to create innovative content to keep consumers engaged and to ignite viral marketing campaigns.

Trends with UGC & Video Ads

The trend for user-generated content creation and consumption is on the rise. It’s estimated that the number of creators will reach 114 million and the number of consumers will reach 154 million by 2013 (see Table A).² This means approximately half of the population will participating in user-generated content in one form or another.

Moreover, by 2013, online video ads is estimated to account for 11% of the online advertising budget and 5.5% of the TV ad spend.³

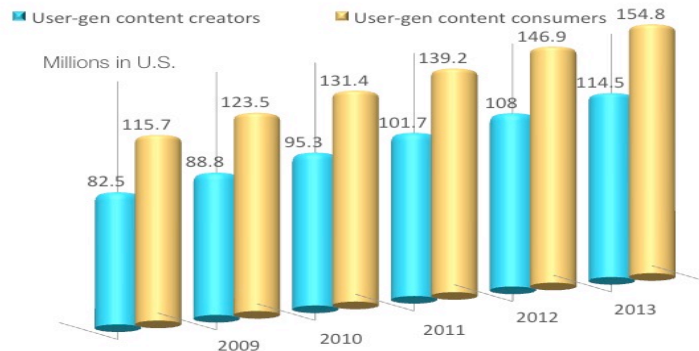
¹ Grossman, Lev. “Time’s Person of the Year: You.” Time Magazine. <http://www.time.com/time/magazine/article/0,9171,1569514,00.html>, 13 December 2006.

² Verna, Paul. “User-Generated Content: More Popular Than Profitable”, eMarketer, January 2009.

³ eMarketer. “The Online Video Advertising Picture Clears Up.” 11 August 2009.

Combine the two: user-generated content and video ads and you get a winning formula of engaging content that people want to see.

Table A



Five Reasons to Integrate User-Generated Ads into Your Marketing Mix

1. A Proactive Approach Wins the Race

People are talking about your product or service regardless of whether you're involved. Instead of reacting to a conversation outside of your realm, create a platform for one of your own. Conducting a user-generated ad creation program is an effective way to produce relevant ads. You can control the process as well as information by providing a creative brief with key messages. In addition, you can build an attractive reward structure, which aligns your goals with those of your participants. Finally, create a system to monitor content so you can easily remove ads that are off message or inappropriate.

2. The Power of Numbers

Inviting people to produce ads allows you to tap an enormous pool of creative talent. Not only will you get content from seasoned art directors, photographers and filmmakers, but you'll also reach students and enthusiastic individuals who are looking for opportunities to express their creativity.

3. Perception is Reality

Through a user-generated campaign, you'll receive an impressive amount of fresh, authentic and original creative. These ads can be used in a myriad of ways, including content for websites or social networking sites as well as online, print or TV advertisements. The ad concepts might inspire ideas for future campaigns.

The ads also give marketers insight into consumers' perceptions of the brand. The way they interpret the brand promise, positioning and personality helps

marketers understand how consumers think about their products and services, which may reinforce beliefs or reveal something new.

4. The Brand Ambassador Effect

In order to create an effective ad, participants must invest time and energy to understand the brand. As they become intimate with the product, they build a deeper connection and develop an affinity for the brand through a sense of ownership through their contribution and collaboration.

Moreover, they tell their social networks about their creation, which creates a positive word-of-mouth campaign. This may generate more submissions or greater participation, especially if there are various calls to action (e.g., rating ads or making comments).

5. A Bang for Your Buck

These days every marketing activity, especially higher cost items, is under greater scrutiny. The good news is that a user-generated ad campaign is a fraction of the cost of traditional marketing activities. A competition for the best ad may produce over a thousand original content submissions—generating a lot more for a lot less.

Winning User-Generated Ad Programs

Frito Lay surprised SuperBowl viewers with two Doritos ads that were created by individuals who submitted video ads for a contest for amateurs. One of the ads, titled “Free Doritos!” beat the pros and won USA Today’s exclusive Super Bowl Ad Meter—real-time consumer testing of how much they liked the ads as they aired.⁴ This was a great example of a viral marketing success. YouTube reported that its Ad Blitz program showcasing the Best Super Bowl ads generated more than 2.6 million votes and also named “Free Doritos!” as the best ad.⁵

Etsy, an online consignment crafts marketplace, ran a contest for short video ads from their community. Ad Age called the results remarkable and gave a thumbs up to user-generated ads. The 10 final ads were “better thought-out and realized than any 10 random commercial running on TV anywhere in the world. And a whole lot more charming.”⁶ This is a first-rate example of a community that embraced the essence of the brand and produced high quality ads.

Webtel.mobi, a low cost mobile calling and texting service, held a contest for video, print and banner ads to launch its business. During the eight-week campaign, Webtel.mobi videos generated over 800,000 views. The number of news articles, blog

⁴ Horovitz, Bruce. “Two Nobodies from Nowhere Craft Winning Super Bowl Ad.” USA Today. <http://www.usatoday.com/money/advertising/admeter/2009admeter.htm>, 4 February 2009.

⁵ YouTube. “Doritos Wins Top Super Bowl Ad on YouTube.” 5 February 2009.

⁶ Garfield, Bob. “How Etsy Made Us Rethink Consumer-Generated Ads.” Ad Age, 21 September 2009.

entries, and social media site mentions for the Webtel. mobi brand increased 1,400% during the campaign over the previous month.⁷ This was a prime example of a successful brand awareness campaign and consumer engagement. Webtel.mobi's CEO Stuart Sterzel was extremely impressed with the quality of the ads and commented that the community proved that they had "the talent and ability to compete with the highest quality productions and agencies in the world".

It's no longer a question about whether or not to include UGC in marketing strategies, but when and how. Ads created by consumers, for consumers, are a powerful instrument. The overall result is a deeper, more meaningful connection with your target audience.

About Wil Merritt

Wil Merritt is the CEO of Zooppa, where he leads the company's mission to be the leading user-generated ad provider for premium brands. Wil has built a career around the intersection of media and technology. He served as a Senior Vice President for Corbis Corporation—Bill Gates' wholly owned private digital media company for four years. Wil also spent eighteen years at Time–Warner, Inc. in posts around the globe including President for Europe/Middle East/Africa for the Time and Fortune Publishing Division.

About Zooppa

Zooppa has built the leading social media platform for crowdsourcing brand engagement. Zooppa connects brands with our fast-growing, dynamic creative community of advertising professionals and enthusiasts by hosting contests to generate fresh, relevant ads for your brand.

Zooppa has worked with more than 70 companies to build brand awareness, protect brand equity and launch a new product or business, including: Google, Nike, Microsoft, Mini Cooper, Nestle, Best Western, ING, Capitol Records, Sony, Sun Microsystems, Jones Soda, Hasbro, Wired, HTC, TomTom and the CMO Council.

For more information, contact us at sales.usa@zooppa.com.

⁷ "Webtel.mobi Online Video Campaign." Zooppa. 10 July 2009.