

The Rise of Rich Media for Direct Marketing

What is Rich Media?

Among online marketers, rich media is seen as the holy grail of interactive advertising. It is widely accepted as truth, and reinforced by countless studies and surveys, that there is no better way to engage with an audience than by using rich media. Rich media is defined as a broad-range of interactive digital media that exhibit dynamic motion, taking advantage of enhanced sensory features such as video, audio and animation. It is proven that the more sensory cues a method of communication involves, the more effective the communication will be.

How Can Rich Media Benefit Direct Marketers?

Static HTML marketing has seen a decline in response rates in recent years. Direct mail has become more expensive due to postal rate increases. Telemarketing has been restricted by federal Do Not Call regulations. All of these factors taken together create a challenging environment for direct marketing. Marketers are seeking a more effective way to create powerful connections online. Many companies are stepping up their email and Web-based direct marketing efforts to establish just that connection. The surge in web video and rich media usage and in marketers' need for more engaging, responsive and measurable marketing channels, coupled with the strong trend toward database and less expensive web/email based marketing is creating the opportunity for a powerful new direct marketing application, one which speaks to the very core of rich media marketing.

Why Aren't More Marketers Using Rich Media?

Traditionally, the costs associated with rich media marketing have been prohibitive for companies with smaller marketing and advertising budgets. In recent years, however, the costs and complexity of using rich media marketing and analytics technology have decreased substantially. The hardware and software needed to create and deploy rich media content is now affordable. The only reason that more marketers aren't taking full advantage of rich media for direct marketing is the perception of prohibitive-costs and complexity associated with the development, distribution and tracking/reporting for various marketing and sales applications. Direct

marketing and sales professionals want an affordable way to easily create and distribute engaging multimedia and audio visual collateral that can track and report detailed individual viewer interactions. This technology exists with Enhanced Interactive Rich Media.

The Emergence of Enhanced Interactive Rich Media

Enhanced Interactive Rich Media (EIRM) is rich media together with integrated analytics. It provides the ability to track, report and measure viewer engagement, responses and sharing by individual email address. Enhanced Interactive Rich Media is different from other types of rich media content since it not only tells you HOW viewers are interacting with your message but also WHO is interacting. Knowing WHO is critical to gathering direct marketing, sales and communications information for follow up purposes.

Enhanced Interactive Rich Media can be distributed through a variety of Internet delivery channels including email, search links, web sites, RSS feeds, podcasts, blogs Internet-enabled mobile devices and online video interactions. Viewer interactions with these messages are captured and stored in a database. Captured data may then be used for analytical purposes relating to the effectiveness of the message, for viewer feedback, and for lead generation purposes.

The Three Essential Elements for Successful Direct Marketing with Enhanced Interactive Rich Media are:

Interactivity: A true interactive message gives the viewer an immediate connection to a "call to action". EIRM allows for physical interaction by including links, buttons and forms each tied to a specific call to action. Audi-visual web content drives higher response rates than static text and images. According to DoubleClick studies conducted from 2004 – 2007, online viewers are 4 to 7 times more likely to engage with and respond to rich media Web advertising than to static text and graphic advertising.

Online Distribution: The ability to easily distribute or "push" the marketing message to target viewers

using online channels. These channels include, but are not limited to the following:

- Email
- Paid search
- Blogs
- Podcasts
- RSS feeds
- Mobile devices, etc.

Measurability: The ability to track specific details of user interaction – such as time spent viewing, video starts, videos watched to completion, links clicked, number of emails forwarded and to whom, etc. This is key to determining the return a campaign generates. Measurability is what makes EIRM intelligent. Marketing strategies are about building relationships with customers, and a marketing campaign that fails to identify a customer fails, in some respect, to build a relationship.

Critical Components of Effective Rich Media Direct Marketing

The implementation of EIRM reaches its highest potential when these five additional factors are incorporated in the campaign:

Engaging Content: The creation of engaging content goes well beyond video. It is the entirety of the content from video to graphics to text, centered on eliciting a response from an audience. Flash-based microsites are an excellent and engaging way to feature complimentary text and graphics alongside video. Audio, too, in the form of background music or voice-over, is another useful tool to engage an audience. Using text to accompany graphics is a great way to spell out for an audience all those things which the other media imply. A marketer can also use images to increase brand awareness.

Google and DoubleClick found that rich media with video increases brand awareness more than 14 times the level achieved by static media.

Portability and Universal Accessibility: It is important to understand how a user will receive the message. EIRM can be distributed through a number of channels – on screens of varying sizes and on devices of varying capabilities. The marketing message delivered to the viewer through EIRM, consists of a single compressed digital file that can exist as a stand-alone message without storage or support. Universal accessibility ensures that the message can be

easily displayed and viewed by a majority of viewers without proprietary software downloads or reliance on a specific operating system. Both portability and universal accessibility result in increased response rates for web video marketing messages.

Intuitive Viewer Controls: Easy to use controls such as pause and play buttons, a progress slider and volume controls will boost engagement and response rates.

Viral Capabilities: The successful implementation of EIRM allows marketers to track viral engagement, and to identify viral recipients in a way that is actionable. In other words, if John forwards an email to Jane, Jerry and Jimmy, all of whom watch the video and interact with the content, the marketers and salespeople will be able to treat Jane, Jerry and Jimmy as sales leads.

Ease of Use and Modification for Marketers: EIRM puts the marketer in control of their message, the distribution, and the analytics reporting. Marketers are also able to implement changes on a moments notice. Instead of waiting for the campaign to cycle out to make changes, the marketer can adapt his strategy and maximize engagement at any time.

Conclusion: Enhanced Interactive Rich Media is Here

Rich Media marketing isn't just for advertising anymore. It is for direct marketing and communications, creating intelligent sales and marketing materials that can track and report detailed viewer engagements, responses and viral forwarding activity by email address. This new technology enables users to create, distribute and measure effective campaigns without programming or advanced technical skills. Rich media marketing has created a whole new ballgame for direct marketers and communicators with an entirely different set of rules. This game is one that every online marketing, communications and sales professional needs to be playing in order to drive higher engagement and response rates with instantly measurable analytics and results.

To see sample case studies or to schedule a FREE consultation, call 800-356-4890 ext. 11 or email: bsnider@gridirect.com