

## **The 7 Elements of a Viral Video Campaign**

By Jerry Bader

The biggest problem most websites have is that they are instantly forgettable. They sell or say the same thing as hundreds or thousands of other sites; to an audience that is so quick to click-away that a large percentage of their traffic never appreciates why they should buy anything or listen to what's being said.

In order for a website or ad campaign to be interesting enough for visitors to stick-around, or clever enough to be viral, it must be compelling enough to prompt viewers to stay, absorb, and pass it onto friends and colleagues. This does not mean that the media presented has to be salacious or somehow socially inappropriate.

Common viral videos of silly people doing sophomoric things on fuzzy video maybe viral for people with too much time on their hands but it's viral without marketing or branding purpose.

Purposeful viral video websites and campaigns present meaningful theme-based messages within the context of an entertaining experience that is worth repeating and distributing. In other words, it must have both substance and style.

### **The 7 Viral Video Campaign Elements**

- 1. Engage:** Grab Attention.
- 2. Enlighten:** Provide Substance.
- 3. Stylize:** Create An Experience.
- 4. Focus:** Be Consistent.
- 5. Entertain:** Be Memorable.
- 6. Resonate:** Hit A Nerve.
- 7. Excite:** Compel Action.

**Corollary:** Actionable Ideas Prompt Brand Awareness and Leads.

### **Deconstructing The Case of Cache Closed**

For some it's a giant leap of faith to accept the idea that something can be entertaining and meaningful at the same time. Apple Computer is one company that gets the concept, and whether it's their Macintosh or iPod campaign, each demonstrates all seven elements

of a viral advertising initiative. And these videos work as well and maybe better on the Web as they do on television.

To turn a viral marketing concept into an effective campaign beyond a single one-off video you need **vision, guts, and great creative**. In order to demonstrate to clients how such a campaign works, we developed something called 'Cache Closed.'

The campaign is comprised of a website that contains a series of two-minute videos that do nothing but present ideas and concepts meant to help clients with their marketing and branding. No sales pitches. No asking for orders, or anything else, just ideas presented in an offbeat, some would say bizarre, entertaining manner.

Is it for everyone; absolutely not, but we have plenty of text-based material on our sites that people and search engines can read or index. But this campaign is aimed at more creatively enlightened business and marketing executives looking to turn **advertising into content, not content into advertising**.

### **Creating The Brand Hero and Back-Story**

Marshall McLuhan described television as a 'cold medium' and if that is true, the Web is a frozen glacier. But even the most barren landscape seems able to sustain some form of life, and video and audio provides that life force to the otherwise digital Internet void.

Isn't it time we put aside the bulleted-point slide shows, over-used royalty-free media, self-promoting ego presentations, hackneyed, dumb-downed messages, and insulting con-artist approaches with the classic 'but wait there's more ...' copy.

Whether it's a website, a marketing campaign or both, you need to start with a concept. In the case of 'Cache Closed' the concept is simple, the media is the message, and video delivered by a real person, presents your marketing story better than any other presentation format. So in order to tell the story effectively, we needed to create a storyteller: enter our hero, 'Cache Closed.'

### **Who Is Cache Closed?**

No matter what medium you work in, what engages an audience most is human contact, and the closest you can get to human contact on the Web is video of a real person. In this instance our professional actor actually portrays a binary creation, but by using a real person instead of an animation or avatar, we were able to instill some humanity and engage the audience on an emotional level.

Before we wrote the scripts we needed to invent the character. Below is the character back-story that was originally written as a voice-over introduction that was later eliminated, but the back-story informed the nature of the character as well as the press releases that were sent out when the campaign was introduced.

## **The Cache Closed Back-story**

"Meet Cache Closed, a digital construct, fabricated from the binary remains of lost and discarded data found in the ditch beside the information highway.

Do not be fooled by the manic manner and bizarre behaviour of this cyber wack-a-do, as he lacks the formal niceties and erudite-etiquette of his digitally-deficient disciples; but he does have the benefit of the accumulated knowledge gained from the free-flow of information passed-over and forgotten by surfer addicted Web-junkies and their associates.

Listen closely, because behind the mad ravings of this slightly out-of-phase demented pixelated-paranoid is the wisdom that will put you on the path to Web-marketing success."

## **How The 7 Viral Elements Informed The Campaign**

### **Engage The Audience**

Grab Attention. If you start with the idea that Web traffic is an audience, you stand a better chance of grabbing their attention and making a connection that will get them to stick around long enough to listen to your message.

Cache was portrayed by actor Sean Kaufmann, who has a great comic flair and during videoing we encouraged him to ad lib which resulted in a great line of dialogue that we decided to use in the opening introduction sequence to the campaign website, [www.cacheclosed.com](http://www.cacheclosed.com).

Upon entering the site visitors are presented with dramatic music and a series of warnings concerning the dangers of Internet viruses. The warnings are interrupted by an abrupt change of pace interjection by our hero with the line, "So, now I've invaded your hard drive. You heard of viral marketing, now let's see how it works." We grab our audience's attention, peak their interest, inform them of the content, and demonstrate the concept, all in forty-five seconds.

### **Enlighten And Inform**

Provide Substance. Despite all the non sequitur dialogue and oddball presentation techniques, each of the initial videos that comprise the website have a specific marketing or branding point.

We understand that not everyone is going to get all the references, but for those who do, the target audience, will be truly engaged by the presentation and informed by the content.

Cache Closed shows just how far you can push the concept of a talking head - they don't have to be boring. For Cache Closed the medium is as much the message as the actual information. It informs and enlightens for those open to making viral marketing both contagious and meaningful.

### **Stylize The Experience**

Create An Experience. Of course we could have presented the same basic content with a straightforward presentation in a clear and concise manner, but it would have been uninspiring and instantly forgettable. We've written many articles including this one about how to market your products and brand your company on the Web, but we know 70% of even interested people won't read it.

Every day I receive audio and video presentations done by companies both professionally and DIY, and as good as the actual information maybe, the presentation of it is undistinguished. In marketing, being forgettable is the first deadly sin. If you're not creating an experience for your audience you will never be remembered no matter how important, or potentially useful, your information.

The Cache Closed concept was a risk, but without risk there's no reward, and the reward in viral marketing is being remembered.

### **Focus**

Be Consistent. Marketing executives know that companies can't be all things to all people, but hammering away at the same message in the same manner can create a scenario where the audience feels they've heard it all before. The challenge is to keep your campaigns fresh and new while at the same time delivering a focused, consistent message. Don't change the message; just present it in new and exciting ways.

As bizarre as the Cache Closed campaign is, it is still firmly grounded in what we do and why. Whether we are developing campaigns for clients or ourselves, we always focus on the core concept that separates the client or ourselves from the competition.

### **Entertain**

Be Memorable. Be Bold. What Cache delivers is meaningful, marketing concepts that are worth the audience's time and attention because they inform and entertain at the same time: a simple idea that relies on creative implementation to make it memorable.

Anybody can shoot a video and put it up on their website, but how many can turn advertising into memorable content? That's the challenge.

For the Web to be an effective marketing environment it must be more than a digital corkboard where millions of businesses pushpin their flyers. The Web is a

communication environment and effective communication must be entertaining and enlightening.

### **Resonate**

Hit A Nerve. The flip side of entertaining is the necessity to connect to your audience. Your message and your style must hit a nerve and a light bulb must go off in your audience's head that says, 'I get it.'

It is not an accident that we used the light bulb metaphor to open each video segment. What makes the Web such a powerful marketing and branding tool is it's ability to communicate on a verbal, non-verbal, and metaphoric level. If your marketing presentations aren't communicating on all three levels then your missing opportunities to resonate and connect with your audience, and that means lost opportunity and business.

### **Excite**

Compel Action. We all understand the need for a call to action but how can you expect people to pick up the phone, email, or fill-in your contact form if they aren't turned-on by your presentation.

In recent years, Cadillac has lost much of it's luxury status to foreign imports, but its recent commercial featuring Kate Walsh driving a cherry red Caddy with the punch-line, "When you turn your car on, does it return the favour?" says it all, much more than the preceding list of features she recites. The commercial delivers both style and substance with hypnotically entertaining cross-gender appeal. Unfortunately GM presented this commercial as a one-off. No series, no follow-up, no campaign based on a terrific focused, differentiating concept.

The Web unlike television offers businesses both large and small the opportunity to create meaningful marketing campaigns that excite, entertain, and enlighten an audience looking for more. And that is what Cache Closed attempts to do. See for yourself at [www.cacheclosed.com](http://www.cacheclosed.com).

Jerry Bader is Senior Partner at MRPwebmedia, a website design firm that specializes in Web-audio and Web-video. Visit <http://www.mrpwebmedia.com/ads>, <http://www.136words.com>, and <http://www.sonicpersonality.com>. Contact at [info@mrpwebmedia.com](mailto:info@mrpwebmedia.com) or telephone (905) 764-1246.

### **About MRPwebmedia**

People ask, "What do you do?" You could say we inform, enlighten, innovate, and create; you could also say we deliver our clients' marketing messages in memorable ways using video, audio, webmedia campaigns and websites; all created in-house from concept to implementation, from graphic and motion design to Web-design, from script writing to video-production to post-production, from music composition to signature sound design.

What do we do? We motivate action by speaking to your audience's real needs. We tell your story so your brand, your message, embeds in the minds of your clients. We are corporate storytellers.