



Center for Social Media

Impact Outside of the Box: Assessing How Digital Video Can Engage and Influence Publics

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Joshua Berg

INTRODUCTION

An irate Congresswoman stands before the United States House of Representatives. Striking the air, she bawls:

So why should any American citizen be kicked out of their homes in this cold weather? In Ohio it is going to be 10 or 20 below zero. Don't leave your home . . . So I say to the American people, you be squatters in your own homes. Don't you leave. In Ohio and Michigan and Indiana and Illinois and all these other places our people are being treated like chattel . . .

Representative Marcy Kaptur (D-OH) delivered this speech in mid-January 2009 but its appearance in Michael Moore's film, "*Capitalism: A Love Story*" gave it renewed resonance. At the close of the film, Moore asks the audience: "Please join me. And, please . . . Speed it up."

The issue is how. *Rolling Stone* columnist Matt Taibbi muses, "I thought that was really strange and I had no idea what the hell he meant. How do I join Michael Moore in this movement?" (2009). The New York Times' Manohla Dargis echoes this sentiment: "In the end, what is to be done? After watching *Capitalism*, it beats me" (2009). Katur's speech lacks an explicit call to action for those who are not in danger of immediate eviction. While her speech may solicit the desire to act, most viewers are at a loss as to where to begin.

PBS's Economy Widget, however, changes this dynamic. Part of the CPB-funded Digital Collaboration on the Economic Crisis, it aims to: a) aggregate relevant local and national coverage and b) stream this content in the widget's window, providing "added context to each piece of content through specially curated links" (Haggerty 2009).

On its own, the Economy Widget solves the fundamental problem with broadcast television. If, after watching Rep. Marcy Kaptur appear on *Bill Moyers Journal*, I want to know more about the film she was featured in, I can easily find a link to Michael Moore's appearance on *Tavis Smiley*. To see how Americans are dealing with foreclosure, I might be directed to KCPT's "Weathering the Financial Storm." If I don't fully understand the economic collapse, I can scan the video offerings until I find *Frontline*'s "Inside the Meltdown." Dan Haggerty, the project's curator, thinks the widget will encourage people to "understand the connections between different pieces of news."¹ Scholars call this *knowledge integration*, the ability to connect disparate pieces of information.

Of course, the curated links point to more than just video. When integrated with two other Digital Collaboration projects, *NewsHour*'s Patchwork Nation and Capitol News Connection's Ask Your Lawmaker Widget, the true genius of the widget shines through. Patchwork Nation "features an interactive map and companion blog that pairs in-depth local stories with expansive visual data" (Haggerty 2009). The Ask Your Lawmaker Widget allows citizens to collectively ask their lawmakers questions (indirectly through CNC reporters).

Consider this: I watch Kaptur's speech again. But this time, instead of leaving the theater with an unrealized sense of indignation, I forward the video to friends of mine. I spend some time learning more about the facts that inform her invective. I use the Patchwork Nation map to find out information specific to my county. I am still indignant, but now I use the Ask Your Lawmaker Widget to take action. Same video. Different context. Different result.

The Economy Widget is emblematic of a shift in the delivery and consumption of video. But what is driving this shift? How this shift is changing the way political engagement is conceptualized? How are organizations and people are exploiting this shift? And lastly, what other shifts are on the horizon?

Trends in Usage

More people are watching. As of April 2009, 62 percent of adult internet users have watched a video on a video-sharing site, compared to 33 percent in December 2006 (Madden 2009).

According to Comscore, frequent viewers consumed an average 273.1 minutes of online video content per month in 2008, up from 195 minutes the prior year (LiveRail 2009). The percentage of Internet users who say they use video sharing sites on a typical day has also increased, and long-form video is gaining in popularity (Ibid).

Not surprisingly, rising broadband adoption is the most evident cause of increased online video viewing. Broadband adoption will likely continue to grow. As enacted, the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA) includes \$7.2 billion to accelerate the growth of broadband (Ibid).

¹ All unattributed quotes come from conversations with the individual.

Wireless connectivity is also strong predictor of online video viewing. “Seventy-one percent of those with wireless connectivity watch videos on video sharing sites compared with just 38 percent of those who do not access the internet wirelessly” (Ibid). Fully 56 percent of Americans have accessed the Internet wirelessly (Ibid). Considering the sharp uptick in use of the internet on mobile devices— from 24 percent in December 2007 to 32 percent in April 2009 —overall wireless connectivity will likely grow as well. The recession, perhaps counterintuitively, has seemed to accelerate online video viewing. While 22 percent of Americans have cut back on telephone or cable services, only nine percent have cut back on Internet service. Those who reduce their cable and TV services are more likely to “reroute” their online video watching to their television screen (Ibid).

More and more citizens view such a connection as “very important” to their lives and community (Smith et al. 2009). As young people— the “defining users” of new media —grow older, the question of civic engagement on the Internet is likely to gain prominence.

Civic Engagement on the Internet

Currently, Internet engagement more or less mimics offline participation, with disproportionate participation from the wealthy and well-educated (Ibid). For example, Joseph Graf writes about “Poli-fluentials”, an especially active group of people in the 2008 election who tended to be older, and better educated, with higher-income levels (Darr and Graf 2007).

There is, however, a caveat. While older individuals who use the Internet are more likely (relative to others in their age demographic) to engage in political activity online than young people, there are simply more young people online. And they use the Internet differently. According to Pew’s *Civic Engagement on the Internet*, “those under age 35 represent 28% of the respondents in our survey but make up fully 72% of those who make political use of social networking sites, and 55% of those who post comments or visual material about politics on the Web” (51).

Will these new forms of interaction encourage civic engagement? The scholarship here is less definitive, but suggests it may. Pew found that “those who use blogs and social networking sites as an outlet for civic engagement are far more active in traditional realms of political and nonpolitical participation than are other internet users” (7). Nielsen/NetRatings tells us MySpace users of voting age are three times more likely than non-users to interact online with politicians, 42 percent more likely to watch politically oriented videos online, and 35 percent more likely to use the Internet to research candidates (Balz, Cillizza, and Vargas 2007). Similarly, a poll by media scholar Henry Jenkins found that 53 percent of MySpace users (ages 18-24) had voted for a candidate for public office, compared to 21 percent of users who voted for an American Idol contestant (Kann et al., 2007). Indeed, the connection between use of these tools and political engagement is so strong that some scholars have questioned the distinction between political and apolitical uses (Bennett 2008; Kann et al.

2007; Montgomery 2008).

The fundamental question here is one of impact. What impact will the Internet have on civic engagement? On knowledge? To understand the Internet's degree of impact, we need to understand how impact is conceptualized and measured. Scholars conceptualize impact measurement in various ways. Impact can be conceived of in terms of increased attention to, or awareness of, a topic. Media may also be thought to impact affect and emotion— by triggering trust or belief in efficacy, amongst other emotions. They can shape, or strengthen, feelings of social or political identity. They can shape attitudes, preferences, and stereotypes. Media can also affect personal and/or collective behavior. Assessing impact should also take into account the "the composition of participants, given the social, economic, political, and ethnic divides of the society" (Clarke and Aufderheide, 2009, 31).

Miel and Faris (2008) state, "We know far too little about how changes in the delivery and consumption of news are affecting public awareness, opinion and civic engagement" (2). DiMaggio (2001) urges scholars to "understand the circumstances under which different effects are produced" (319). This study aims to bridge this gap by examining how the makers of political online video are conceptualizing and assessing the impact of their work.

INTERVIEWS WITH LEADERS IN THE FIELD

In order to determine trends in online video, as well as the ideas surrounding and driving those trends, I conducted in-depth interviews with leaders in this emerging field. The interviews were structured in order to address two fundamental problems: how can online video be used effectively and how can effectiveness be measured? (See Appendix A for a list of interview questions.)

The individuals I interviewed represented both themselves and large organizations, including for-profit and not-for-profit. Ideologically, they leaned left— a finding consistent with general trends in new media (Winograd and Hais 2008) —but there were exceptions. In all cases, online video played a significant or singular role in the campaigns they worked on. Below is a brief description of the interviewees and their affiliations.

Interviewees

Daniel Alert, Executive Producer, See3 Communications

See3 Communications focuses on producing media for non-profits, creating compelling narratives to strengthen the connection between organizations and their stakeholders. Its vast client list includes Amnesty International, NARAL Pro-Choice America, and Sierra Club. In addition to working with See3, Alpert is "a producer, director and editor whose films have been nominated for Academy and national Emmy Awards, and have aired on PBS, HBO, A&E and at festivals around the world" (See3 website). He also helps develop messaging for nonprofits and helps repurpose video assets for Internet distribution.

Maximilian Duke, Video Manager, Station Products and Services, PBS Interactive

Duke works at PBS Interactive to help affiliate stations develop strategy around their online video experiences, or help them implement projects like PBS's Comprehensive Online Video Ecosystem (COVE), an online video player tailored to public media's unique needs. Prior to joining PBS Interactive, Duke worked for eight years as a Webmaster with WPBT Channel 2 in Miami, where he developed the station's Interactive Department.

Joseph Graf, Professor, American University School of Communication

The former research director of the Institute for Politics, Democracy and the Internet at George Washington University, Graf's current interest focuses on the intersection of civic involvement and Internet communication. His 2004 report, *Political Influentials Online in the 2004 Campaign*, broke down the preconceptions regarding the online community, establishing them as a significantly more powerful group than was previously envisioned. *Political Influentials: The New Political Kingmakers* (2007) follows this research, providing more extensive, up-to-date information about this demographic.

Hank Green, Editor in Chief and Founder, EcoGeek.org

Hank Green founded EcoGeek.org because he was "tired of arguing about the problems our planet faces, and instead became immensely excited about the solutions."² The blog receives over half a million views each month. A video he produced called "Eating Man Meat" was the number one most commented upon video in YouTube's "Nonprofit and Activism" community in March 2009.

Glenn Greenstein, Producer and Editor, Mean Green Media

Greenstein creates video for political and social campaigns. Recently, he partnered with GMMB, a progressive public affairs firm, in producing video for the Obama campaign. He produces video for the Internet, as well as traditional outlets. He is an expert in political media strategy.

Michael Hoffman, Chief Executive Officer, See3 Communications

In addition to working with See3 Communications (described above), Hoffman is a nationally sought-after consultant on online cause marketing, Web video, and Web 2.0 for social change.

Frank Kanach, Director of Interactive Media, EFX Media

EFX is a media communications company, offering marketing and interactive media services. It also produces television commercials for sales promotion and corporate films for public relations campaigns, corporate events, employee training, internal communications, and issue advocacy. Additionally, it runs Tactical TV, a custom and managed Internet video platform. Some of its clients include America Online, ExxonMobil, and Habitat for Humanity.

² www.hankgreen.com

Kristin Koch, Deputy Director of Communications for Online Advocacy, NARAL Pro-Choice America

For over thirty years, NARAL Pro-Choice America has been the leading voice in the battle for the right to choose. *Fortune* Magazine named NARAL as “one of the top 10 advocacy groups in America” (NARAL website). NARAL is on the forefront of new media, butting heads in 2007 with Verizon over its mobile outreach program. It recently launched a new campaign aimed at courting youth: “Free.Will.Power.” It had prolific online video output during the 2008 election, and maintains semi-regular video updates through its blog.

Aaron Mushro - Brand Manager, Interactive Marketing - truth[®]

truth[®] is the largest youth smoking prevention campaign in the country. Spawned from a successful youth-driven campaign in Florida, it employs a model based on commercial marketing to teens. A study by the American Journal of Preventative Medicine (AJPM) estimates that, from 2000-2002, the truth[®] campaign reduced teen and children smokers by 300,000. truth[®] uses television advertising, social networking sites and grassroots efforts.

The interviews revealed consensus among stakeholders in three areas: the advantages of online video, the disadvantages of online video, and impact measurements. These categories are described in more detail below.

Advantages of online video

One-on-one (visceral) appeal

“There is no more powerful message than video, when you’re stating your cause,” says PBS’s Max Duke. Daniel Alpert, of See3, stresses video’s emotional pull. “The most effective appeal is in-person,” he says. “Video can emulate this.” Hank Green, of EcoGeek, says, “We get an order of magnitude great response if we put it in the video because . . . it’s a more personal appeal when you’re face-to-face . . . Talking to your viewer as if they are your friend because they sort of are.”

Glenn Greenstein, who produced video for the Obama campaign, echoes this assertion, noting that “one-on-one conversation” is the most effective in changing minds. Video activates right-brain activity, says Frank Kanach of EFX Media. As a piece, he says, it is emotional. It is striking. And it is personal. Kanach cites Obama’s communication style as an example of a visceral pull.

A recent psychological study by University of California-Berkeley’s Dacher Keltner provides substantiation for this viewpoint. Focusing on the emotions of uplift, Keltner studied subjects watching Barack Obama’s victory speech. The result? “Autonomic nervous systems go into a swoon” (Yoffe 2008, ¶1). Jonathan Haidt coined the term “elevation” to describe this emotion. Elevation “does appear to change people cognitively; it opens hearts and minds to new possibilities” (Ibid, ¶5). This phenomenon was crucial for Obama.

We see further evidence of this one-one-one, visceral appeal in the race for political office. Seven of the 16 candidates who ran for the presidency in 2008 announced their candidacies on YouTube. CitizenTube, a YouTube partner, features a number of appeals, including one by Massachusetts Governor Deval Patrick attempting to block a sales tax increase. It is addressed directly to his constituents. Recently, San Francisco Mayor Gavin Newsom “took to the new media to formally announce he’s running for governor— by directly addressing hundreds of thousands of supporters simultaneously via YouTube, Facebook and Twitter” (Marinucci 2009).

Low barriers to entry

One of the oft-cited benefits of online video is low barriers to entry, with regard to both production and dissemination. “If you can go out to eat once a month,” says EcoGeek.org’s Editor in Chief Hank Green, “You can be a content provider.” Frank Kanach, Director of Interactive Media for EFX Media, echoes this point, noting its minimal cost. Michael Hoffman, See3 Communication’s CEO, believes accessibility separates online video from traditional television: “Anybody can produce for the Internet.”

Glenn Greenstein mentions the “I Got a Crush . . . on Obama” video as evidence of this phenomenon. The low-budget music video, produced by Barely Political, garnered more than 13 million YouTube views— twice as many as any of the campaign’s official videos (Stelter 2009). Shifting the Debate—a website dedicated to tracking the movement of ideas through social networks —ranked “I Got a Crush . . . on Obama” as the third most impactful video of the 2008 election, based on its presence on blogs outside the candidate’s base.

Before joining PBS Interactive, Max Duke helped develop a similar program for Miami’s WPBT Channel 2. One of WPBT’s crucial sources of content were local social service and non-profit organizations. “Non-profits do not have an overabundance of resources,” he says. WPBT’s interactive program lowered the cost of entry for these organizations, allowing them to access this new dynamic for reaching their audience.

Low barriers to entry should encourage amateur content creation. This is substantiated by findings by the Pew Internet and American Life Project. In July 2007, they reported that 13 percent of the online video audience —a “motivated minority” —has uploaded video (Madden iii). The number is significantly higher for the 18-29 demographic, 25 percent of whom upload video.

There is, however, one caveat. The above Pew report finds that 62 percent of online video viewers say their favorite videos are professionally produced. This echoes an observation by Joseph Graf, author of the groundbreaking report *Political Influentials Online in the 2004 Campaign*. “Production values still matter,” he notes. “There are still barriers to entry.” He cites the “Yes We Can – Barack Obama Music video,” Shifting the Debate’s singularly most impactful video of the 2008 election. Directed by Jesse Dylan (Bob Dylan’s son), it features 30-odd Obama-supporting celebrities, rounded up in the span of two days, by will.i.am. It received 14,379,890 views, nearly two million more than the “I Got a Crush . . . on Obama”

video, as well as 293 nonliberal/conservative blog posts, compared to 164 for “I Got a Crush . . . on Obama.”

NARAL Pro-Choice America’s YouTube channel presents both professional and celebrity approaches. Out of the top fifteen videos (by views) three — numbers 4, 7, and 14 — are part of the Free.Will.Power campaign, professionally produced by See3 Communications. The video “Get Out the Vote: Obama for Pro-Choice America,” featured actors Jack Black, Ed Harris, Amy Madigan, Harold Ramis, and Suzanne Whang. It ranks seventh with 10,863 views. “Having some stars really . . . helped get it seen,” says NARAL’s Kristin Koch.

Ability to hyperlink

Online video differentiates itself by utilizing one of the most fundamental attributes of the Internet: the hyperlink. Web video can link users directly to an action, Daniel Alpert says, thereby shortening reaction times. Frank Kanach elaborates, saying “You can place charts, graphs, information, PDFs . . . on the side of the video. If these are important, online video allows for elaboration unavailable on broadcast.”

For political campaign use, Joseph Graf notes that campaign managers can use online video and Web campaigning to their advantage, attaching petitions and the like on the campaign’s website for supporters to download.

Glenn Greenstein stresses the importance of the *micro-site*, an auxiliary website with a more specific focus than its parent site. If the video is just on the website, he says, people aren’t inclined to donate. Danny Alpert is also “a big believer in the micro-site.” The micro-site is directed toward a specific action. A micro-site is especially important, says PBS’s Max Duke, “if the most important thing is your site experience, or the message you are trying to get across.” During his time with WPBT, Duke created a micro-site, uVu, to distance the initiative from the PBS brand.

For NARAL Pro-Choice America, See3 produced the Free.Will.Power micro-site. With video as the centerpiece, the micro-site offers opportunities for users to take action (by signing a petition), sign up for one of NARAL’s social networks (Facebook, MySpace, or Twitter), or let a friend know about Free.Will.Power. The Democratic Party established a very comprehensive micro-site, celebrating “100 Days of No” (a jab at the Republicans’ supposed obstructionism during the President Obama’s first hundred days). Its highlight is the “100 Days of No” video, but offers its users the opportunity to watch other videos, as well as the opportunity to take action (donate, organizing, etc.).

Timeshifting

A few of the respondents mentioned the ever-present nature of online video. Users can watch online video on their own terms, says truth[®]’s Aaron Mushro. It is not time or location specific, says Max Duke, “It is on-demand.” A broadcast is only there during the broadcast, says Frank Kanach of EFX. Online video, by contrast, is always there. (This capability, known as “timeshifting,” was made famous by the landmark court case Sony Corp. of

America v. Universal City Studios, Inc., where Sony argued that the use of Betamax did not violate copyrights of content owners.)

Peer influence

A Pew report found that “fully 57% of online video viewers share links to the videos they find online with others” (Madden 2007, ii). This ability, to seize upon users’ existing social groups, was commonly cited as a distinct benefit of online video. “Web 2.0 is all about P2P,” says Alpert, referring to the peer-to-peer sharing phenomenon. When a user is exposed to a video via a blog or on a social network they are more likely to watch, because they trust the source. If a friend sends you a video, says Mushro, you’re much more likely to watch it. Michael Hoffman, in his “Guide to Online Video,” stresses that “one of the characteristics of online video is portability. You need to make it easy for your constituents to take your message and take into their own communities” (See3 website). Mentions See3’s Alpert: “That’s why we do blog outreach. They are the people who ‘move the needle.’”

Crucial to campaigning, according to Glenn Greenstein, is finding key supporters and providing them with what they need. Joseph Graf’s work attempts to determine the characteristics of these supporters. His report *Political Influentials in the 2004 Election* broke the stereotypes previously associated with online supporters/activists. The dominant conversation had denigrated the online community, he reflects. The “kid in his parents’ basement image predominated the popular imagination.” Graf’s report, however, aimed to change all that. “Those people who forwarded video,” he said, “were regularly and heavily involved in their communities. They are smarter and more powerful.” Graf’s 2007 follow-up, *Poli-fluentials: The New Political Kingmakers*, reinforces this viewpoint.

Some respondents, however, believe this portability can also be a liability. The following section will explore the disadvantages and limitations of online video.

Disadvantages of online video

All media have potential drawbacks, and online video is no exception. Regarding its disadvantages, or limitations, respondents tended to focus on two main aspects: control, and noise.

Loss of Control

EcoGeek’s Hank Green does not believe we have seen the limitations of online video yet. Aaron Mushro, of the truth® campaign, echoes this viewpoint, but admits that by placing video on the Internet, you cede control, opening it up to criticism. This is a possible disadvantage, he says. Max Duke stresses “if that content doesn’t serve your message or site goals when it’s taken outside of the context of a site, it no longer becomes beneficial for you to put it out there.” In response to a YouTube posting by Representative Joe Barton, Shifting the Debate comments: “While all press might be good press, all social media exposure is not good social media exposure” (Deutsch 2009).

Kristin Koch agrees. Confrontation can turn people off of an issue, she says. “That’s why people don’t like politics *per se*.” Graf mentions that, while campaign managers are excited by the possibility of extending reach— increased numbers, eyeballs —they are notoriously resistant to relinquish control. “They are conservative [with campaigning tactics],” he says. “Most campaigns do everything in their power,” says Joe Trippi, “to control every element of the candidate’s image and message” (Trippi 2004). From the respondent’s concerns, it seems advocacy groups are no different.

Noise

Noise is a fundamental attribute of the Internet, says PBS’s Duke; he sees a trend similar to what evolved with 24-hour news. “There’s a lot of crap out there,” says See3’s Danny Alpert. “We are in a world of complete information overload,” says Michael Hoffman, on See3’s “Guide to Online Video” (See3 Website). Regarding YouTube, Frank Kanach muses: “There are many juvenile videos, and many competitors’ videos. “I am not a big fan of YouTube,” says Alpert. “It’s a lot of stupid hat tricks.” With more content created, Hank Green concedes, viewing will become more self-selective.

IMPACT MEASUREMENT

How can we measure the impact of online video? Michael Hoffman, of See3, believes that targets depend on goals. When his Executive Producer, Danny Alpert, meets with a potential client, he first asks whom it is they want to target. “What are you trying to do? Where are you trying to move the needle to?” EFX’s Frank Kanach similarly inquires. For EFX Media, their benchmarks “tend to be campaign demographic driven.”

Amnesty International’s “America I Believe In” campaign (produced by See3) is a great example of a goal-oriented video campaign. “Our goal was to increase public awareness about extraordinary rendition — a very technical term that not a lot of people understood,” says Steve Daigneault, AI’s Director of Internet Communications. “We wanted to use video and put it into really simple terms and show exactly what it is” (See3’s website). See3 designed short, dark comedies, hosted by a Second City comic, turning the discussion of torture on its head. The result? AI broke their list-building record for a single month, and broke their fund raising record for a non-December month. They also generated a “significant amount of actions in a very short period of time: 50,000 emails and 5,000 calls in 3 weeks” (Ibid). For this campaign, success was gauged by the goals of the organization, not merely views.

For many organizations, these goals are informed by demographic targeting. The truth[®] campaign, which aims to curb youth smoking, explicitly targets those 12 to 17 years of age. Races for political office, similarly, tend to micro-target demographically. According to Joseph Graf, campaigns use the Internet (and online video) to activate the base, rather than to win new converts. We see this in the *Poli-fluentials report*: “Some Poli-fluentials are so partisan that they are useless and even counterproductive in certain situations. These Poli-fluentials are best utilized by candidates, political parties and issue advocacy groups to shore up the base, not to win converts to the other side (Darr and Graf 2007). Glenn Greenstein echoes this:

“with [online video] you are speaking to the converted . . . but they can talk to their friends and family and” — in Greenstein’s case — “explain what Obama is all about.”

Although the interviewees universally agreed on the need for thoughtful demographic targets, whether Internet users themselves constituted a demographic was a point of contention. Michael Hoffman, of See3, believes it is a mistake to think of the Web as a niche. PBS Interactive’s Max Duke disagrees. He believes that we are undergoing a cultural shift right now. With online video, organizations “can tap into [a] completely new culture, new audience—because online video is part of this shift.” These viewers, he says, are additive. EcoGeek’s Hank Green tends to agree. YouTube, he says, comes with a built-in community.

Danny Alpert thinks online campaigning is different. One thing that makes online campaigning unique is the focus on sustained communication. “Online relationship is not about click-throughs. It’s long-term, about the people you’re engaging with. About cultivating relationships.”

For certain campaigns, the goal is simply to draw the most number of eyes. There are “some instances where I think allowing content to go anywhere—putting it where the people are—is smart,” says Max Duke. EcoGeek is one of these instances. Hank Green, its editor in chief, says he measures success in terms of views, and against past videos. “First 1,000 views. Then 100,000. Maybe 1,000,000.” Aaron Mushro, of truth[®], also employs a variant of this measurement, comparing his campaigns against the “infect truth” campaign, the most successful to date in terms of views.

EMERGING TRENDS

The interviews revealed some insight into emerging trends in the field, including changing production values and the growth of mobile technologies.

Production

Glenn Greenstein, of Mean Green Media, remembers producing a high-definition video, intended for viewing on a television screen. It ended up, however, being placed on the Internet, on a pop-out screen roughly the size of a credit card. Watching video on the Internet is, inherently, a much different viewing experience, one that necessitates, or allows for, changes in production. Danny Alpert, a documentary filmmaker by trade, believes the one of the drawbacks to online video is a “matter of depth.” To retain viewers’ interest, a video cannot be longer than three minutes, he believes. Michael Hoffman, also of See3, disagrees with assertion. Sites like Hulu, he believes, are challenging this limitation. He says the most popular videos during the election were full speeches. In fact, according to the website *Shifting the Debate*, the fifth most impactful video of the 2008 election was *American Stories, American Solutions: 30 Minute Special*. (The other four, however, were under three minutes.) In their July 2009 report *The Audience for Online Video-Sharing Sites Shoots Up*, the Pew Internet & American Life Project noted that “more than a third of Internet users (35%)

now say that they have viewed a television show or movie online,” suggesting a move toward longer-form content (4).

Greenstein mentions that the Internet can remove the time barriers placed on video appeals by broadcast television. Appeals no longer have to be 30 seconds. NARAL’s Kristin Koch echoes this. “You are not limited by time,” she says. Production for TV, the Web, and mobile are different, Hoffman says. Center shots (referring to head placement), for example, work on mobile, but not on TV. Hank Green, of EcoGeek, also mentioned head placement. It used to be that the head needed to take up the entire video frame. As the screen gets bigger, he says, this trend might reverse itself.

Michael Hoffman also mentions how videos are becoming more simplified. Music videos, he believes, are on the cutting-edge, citing Beyonce’s “Single Ladies” video as an example.³ The immensely popular video employed simply backgrounds, ideal for viewing online. It quickly became an Internet sensation, spawning a litany of parodies.

Mobile

As technology changes, and as Internet adoption becomes more pervasive, the online video landscape will change. Across the board, respondents cited mobile video as an inevitability. The use of mobile is clearly increasing: The Pew Internet & American Life Project’s report, *The Audience for Online Video Sharing Sites Shoots Up* found that 14 percent of cell phone users watch video on their phones, and 19 percent have used their phones to record video.

Joseph Graf, of American University’s SOC, believes that the 2012 election will see a surge in the use of mobile technology. Aaron Mushro echoes this point, believing we will soon stream television on our cell phones. We see this happening now: ABC News, CNN, Discovery, and TV.com (CBS) already have iPhone video apps. Michael Hoffman believes mobile is already big, with “smart phones” such as the Google phone and the iPhone. As the ability to watch video increases, so will this trend. “It’s about where you access video,” says Kristin Koch.

“Hardware is natural follower to delivery and software,” says Max Duke. “As online video becomes more ubiquitous message distribution method, hardware solutions trying to address this will emerge.” Danny Alpert, of See3, believes with time, we will see further convergence between television and the Internet. There will be a big increase in reach. With that increase will come a consequent increase in noise.

Hank Green of EcoGeek, anticipates a somewhat different direction. With time, the audience for online video content (and television content migrated online) will grow. When this happens, and people see there is money to be made, video (including UGC) will become more professional.

³ As Kanye West famously said at the 2009 MTV Music Awards, "I'm sorry, but Beyoncé had one of the best videos of all time!"

CONCLUSION

My conversations with leaders in the field of political video production reveal that, while such videos can be powerful tools for disseminating information, engaging users in political campaigns, and convening publics, the norms and techniques for measuring their impact are still stabilizing.

Clearly, additional research is required in order to fully understand the relationship between online video, engagement, and impact measurements. In his book, *The Revolution Will Not Be Televised: Democracy, the Internet, and the Overthrow of Everything*, Joe Trippi tells us: “From here, the world changes faster than you can imagine. This is where it gets good, where it gets thrilling, frightening, inevitable. Best of all, this is a fresh start. We get another shot at this. It’s 1956 again and we just got the box in the house” (201).

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APPENDIX A

Interview Questions

- 1.) What is online video effective at?
- 2.) How can it be effective in combination with other new media projects?
- 3.) How is it limited?
- 4.) How do you measure its success?
- 5.) Once gauged, what do you do with the measurement? Feed into new campaigns? Justify more funding? Keep for future use?
- 6.) When starting an online video campaign, what is (typically) your primary goal? Do you model it on other campaigns?
- 7.) What are some obstacles to its implementation?
- 8.) Is there a demographic you tend to target more than others?
- 9.) What do you see as the emerging or future trends and innovations in online video?

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