

GROWERTALKS

Features

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Online Influencing

Joe Dysart



While YouTube has emerged as a marketing juggernaut for greenhouse growers, many are also discovering the free video-sharing service has scores of other uses—all of which are also free for the taking.

Employee recruiting, client communications, product/service how-tos and dissemination of news are all increasing in popularity on YouTube, as growers and others transform the medium into a Swiss Army Knife of business communications.

Joseph Sbrocchi, GM, Ontario Greenhouse Vegetable Growers said that posting videos on YouTube is a good way for people who are looking for their business on search engines to find them. And Kara Badder, marketing manager for NatureFresh Farms, said that having a YouTube channel has garnered many inquiries from consumers who want to learn more about what they do, which “is invaluable.”

“YouTube is a platform where it is easy to give consumers a glance behind the glass,” she said. “We have posted a variety of types of videos on the platform, including—but not limited to—‘how we grow’ videos, company culture videos and recipe videos. It’s important for consumers to understand how their produce is grown, who grows it and how to implement it into their daily lives.”

Lee Stiles of the Lea Valley Growers Association has also had success using YouTube.

“We use YouTube to raise awareness of the Lea Valley growers and the association, which has increased interest in the produce grown and resulted in additional enquiries and orders,” he said.

A different way to watch

Michael Miller, author of “YouTube for Business,” said, “If you’ve never visited the YouTube website, you’ve missed out on the hottest thing on the Internet today.”

Unquestioningly, one of the major reasons people are flocking to YouTube is its runaway popularity. Just a blip on the web a decade ago, the video-sharing service has since rocketed to one of the most visited sites on the Internet.

In fact, YouTube currently boasts 1.9 billion users each month, according to Larry Page, CEO of Alphabet,

YouTube's parent company. More than 70% of the videos on YouTube are viewed on mobile phones. And the online video-sharing service has been localized in 91 countries and made available in 80 languages.

Indeed, among consumers 13 to 24, online video is now more popular than traditional TV, according to a recent study by Hunter Qualitative Research. The age group studied—roughly Generation Z—spends 11.3 hours per week watching free online video, as compared to 8.3 hours per week watching traditional TV.

Besides its unquestionable popularity with young people, YouTube's ease of entry and low cost also makes it hard for business people to resist. Virtually anyone with basic PC skills can upload a video to YouTube—for free—in a matter of minutes.

"It's an easy way to make a movie and publish it; there's no special skill required," says Michiel Verheul, owner of High Q Greenhouses, who also runs videos on YouTube.

And since YouTube's videos are generally viewed on small screen mobile phones, there's no reason for you to endure painfully large budgets for video production. In fact, the subtleties of high-end video production are generally lost on YouTube, said Michiel.

Plus, you're saving significant coin using YouTube by shifting hosting responsibilities for your company videos to the online video service. The rationale: Ordinarily, you would need to pay additional transmission charges anytime a website visitor views a video hosted on your business' website. But when that same video is uploaded to YouTube's servers, you need never pay transmission costs no matter how many times that video is viewed.

All told, it's a frothy mix of remarkable popularity, ease of entry and non-existent hosting costs that have the wheels of innovation spinning at countless greenhouse businesses.

How YouTube can help you

Here are the top uses for posting videos on your own YouTube channel:

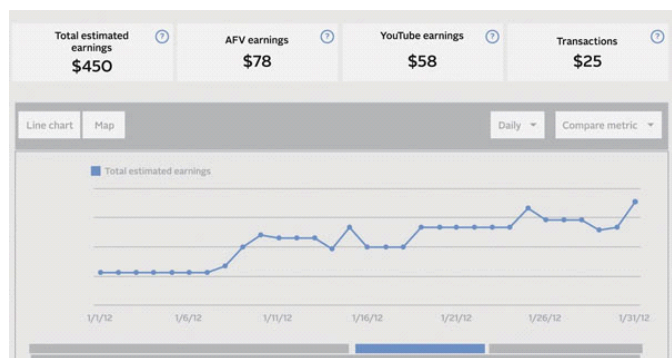
- **Marketing:** This is without a doubt the most popular business use of YouTube and can be wildly successful. Businesses with shoestring promotional budgets have become overnight stars on the service, often with zany and off-the-wall marketing pitches.

Besides using humor, you can also use the marketing side of YouTube to give video tours of your facilities or feature video interviews with key staff to reassure current and prospective customers that they're going to be doing business with a highly professional, highly people-friendly staff.

"Posts have their way of circling," said Michiel. "We get interest, questions and reactions from the most wonderful and interesting people."

- **Recruiting:** Given that many growers already have videos touting their businesses as inviting places to work, posting those same productions on YouTube is a no-brainer.

"Don't limit yourself to a single, long-puff video," Michiel says. "Produce separate videos for individual departments, as well as to illustrate company values, employee benefits, facilities and the like."



Pictured: YouTube offers a free analytics tool to help you access the marketing punch of your video.

- **Company video FAQs:** Anyone can leap well beyond the image of faceless, industry player with on-the-fly videos, which feature charming customer service people answering frequently asked questions. Sure, many businesses already have written FAQs on their websites, but there's something to be said for going the extra mile and offering the personal touch that's

inherent in the video medium.

- **News video clips:** The beauty of posting your greenhouse news to YouTube is that your information is not sliced, diced or in any other way whittled down to a mere shadow of its former glory. Plus, if you have a Facebook or Instagram page, you can cross-promote the two online presences by posting your news on Facebook with a link to your supporting video on YouTube.
- **Focus groups:** Many sophisticated users of YouTube are also using the service as a free testing ground for commercials they plan to run on cable and broadcast TV, and elsewhere on the web. Specifically, they use YouTube's free analytical tool, YouTube Analytics, to test the marketing punch of their commercials. The tool's metrics include the overall popularity of your video, who's viewing your video, where those viewers are coming from and what keywords they're using to find your video.
- **Customer communications:** When an email or friendly phone call simply doesn't cut it, many growers are posting videos to YouTube to connect in special ways with their customers.
- **Product/Service how-tos:** These videos can, of course, serve a dual purpose for your business—educating customers while subtly marketing your brand.
- **Employee training:** Any grower with multiple locations across town, across the U.S.—or even across the world—can immediately see the benefit of posting training videos on YouTube and having the appropriate staff dial in. And by using YouTube's "private broadcast" option, your business can ensure the training videos stay internal.

"Many companies find that YouTube is a fast and effective way to disseminate all kinds of employee information," said Michiel. "Done right, it gets information out there in near-real-time, with all the benefits of face-to-face communication."

- **Savings on business travel:** All the videos sent for staff use are also enabling many growers to rack up substantial savings on business travel. Granted, there are plenty of instances where true face-to-face interaction is irreplaceable, but in many other situations, a video overture via YouTube is a bulls-eye compromise between basic email and an all-expenses paid business trip for one or more employees. **GT**

Joe Dysart is an Internet speaker and business consultant based in Manhattan. He can be reached at: (631) 438-1142 or joe@dysartnewsmedia.com. dysartnewsfeatures.com.