



Getting the most out of Youtube

This is an extract of a proposal I was recently putting together for Surrey University about the benefits of having a video produced for use on their website and for Youtube.

Youtube

Many prospective students will rely heavily on the Internet to research Universities and courses which is why your website is so important and why thousands of pounds are spent building, developing and maintaining it. Searching through UCAS or even just Google, students will come across thousands of courses at hundreds of institutes and if they don't like what they see they'll quickly move onto the next one. Obviously you don't want to fill up your website with too much text because it's not going to be read but you need to grab the viewer's attention and keep it. A video can be a useful tool by which to do this. It is surely one of the best ways to get across a lot of data in one go due to the diverse ways in which you are able to inform the viewer. A simple, yet well constructed five minute video can contain interviews, lectures, demonstrations, a voice over, music, as well as on screen text and graphics all of which can help maintain a viewer's attention. Video, however, shouldn't be restricted to your website, by uploading videos to Youtube, you're opening yourselves up to the widest possible audience and the same people who are using the Internet to research undergraduate courses are using Youtube for entertainment.

Echo Video Productions' Youtube channel can be found via our website or at: <http://www.youtube.com/user/EchoVideoProductions>

Since being opened to the public in November 2005 Youtube has attracted millions of viewers and thousands of hours of video from home made handy-cam videos to fully professional viral marketing videos. It is free to set up an account and upload a video that within hours can be seen across the world. As a stage for advertising it can be incredibly powerful and could be a great way to show case the courses and facilities on offer at Surrey University. Once you have set up a Youtube Channel it can feature a number of different videos as well as a blog, text about the University or course, your logo and colours as well as contact details. In addition every video you upload can have a direct link back to the University website which could help increase traffic to the site and push it further up the Google rankings, making it more accessible and easier to find.

In the last few months Youtube have started testing the use of HD video on the site. Any videos uploaded in 1280x720 resolution will provide the user with the opportunity to watch the standard quality video or the high quality. Echo's equipment now includes a JVC HDV progressive scan camera which means that a video produced for Surrey University can be of the highest visual quality and will be guaranteed to look its best on Youtube.

Monitoring

Once uploaded, It is important to keep track of your videos and gauge their success. If one video has attracted a high number of views and another is much lower over the same time scale then in the future you will want to upload videos more like the first and less like the second. Youtube have recently introduced a tool called Insight that works in the same way as Google Analytics allowing you to view detailed statistics on each of your videos. Details such as the age, gender or location of the people viewing your videos can help in tailoring your videos towards a specific market. For an Undergraduate Course you're ideally looking at an age range of 16 – 18 year old viewers from Britain but do you need to be attracting more foreign or mature students? Using Insight can tell you a lot about your audience. For example Echo Video Productions produced a 90 second online promotional video for the company Gamercize. It is a globally marketed product aimed towards young video gamers as a way to keep fit whilst playing on a console. Insight allowed us to see whether it has been a success or not:

To date it has attracted 3,830 viewers since being uploaded in Summer 2008. The viewers are 87% male 13% female. Of the total number of people that have seen the video, 22% were aged 13 – 17 years, 16% were 18 – 24 years old with the rest aged 25 or older. Of the 3,814 views worldwide 510 have come from the UK, 1,200 from the USA and of that number, 260 were from California. Two thirds of the viewers found the video by searching in Youtube, whilst only 3% found it by searching in Google.

Since the video has been uploaded 44 people have clicked through to visit our website and ... have visited the company's website.

Video Content

Producing a video for use on the University's website as well as Youtube allows prospective students to get a feel for the University without having to travel to the campus. It can be far more effective than text and still images as you can infuse it with an energy that websites can often be devoid of.

For example, at present the Surrey University website states, amongst other things, that the Music course features:

- A friendly Department with excellent teaching, resources and student support
- Regular guest lectures by distinguished visiting scholars, composers and performers, who discuss their work with students
- We hold masterclasses and workshops in performance and composition

This could be far more actively demonstrated in a video. It could feature testimonials from the students praising the teaching, footage of the guest lecturers and a brief insight into some of the workshops. Obviously this is specifically tailored to one degree but a broader video covering an entire department could be just as effective. Additional videos could be produced to show off the University accommodation and campus, the available facilities as well as the town of Guildford.

The most important thing, however, is to get noticed. At the end of the day the content isn't vitally important. For example, why not film the Dance students performing Michael Jackson's Thriller or get the Music students performing Bach's Air on the G String in their underwear? The students get footage of themselves performing and you'll be guaranteed thousands of views on Youtube. As long as somewhere it says Surrey University, immediately you're raising the profile of the University and making people aware that you have undergraduate Dance & Music degrees.

Andy Gray (Feb 2009)