

Video Seeding Case Study

Levi's - Guy Walks Across America

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Client: Levi Strauss & Co.

Brand: Levi's

Campaign: Guy Walks Across America

Agency: Feed Company (Video Seeding), Conscious Minds Productions (Creative)

Executive Summary

Levi Strauss & Co. hires Feed Company to seed a stop-motion video of a young man walking across America from New York to San Francisco. The video receives over 8 million views, is posted on over 100 major websites, and receives more than 150,000 online engagements. The success of the Levi's social video seeding campaign is driven by great creative and three major tactics executed by Feed Company:

- A rollout strategy that moved from micro-targets to mainstream
- Finding the right audience for the content and
- A creative reveal of the Levi's branding

Background

The Levi's "Guy Walks Across America" social video seeding campaign aimed to reach a general audience of 18-34 year olds on the social web. The video, more entertainment than commercial message, features very little Levi's branding. Feed Company's marketing outreach and video packaging plan reinforced the creative's minimal brand approach. We created a non-branded YouTube channel to host both the video and a "Behind-the-Scenes" video to explain how "Guy Walks Across America" was made. Our blog outreach initially did not mention Levi's. This approach was intentional so bloggers and online conversation could flourish about how the video was made, how cool the creative is, while debating Levi's possible involvement.

Insights

Brand Reveal

Feed Company has found that videos with "light branding" are shared 4x more than videos with "heavy branding" and 10x more than "call to action" videos. The only branding in the "Guy Walks Across America" video is the small Levi's tag on the back of the jeans in the final shot. Instead of uploading the video to Levi's preexisting channel on YouTube, Feed Company created a new channel, walkUSA, to celebrate the spirit of the creative and avoid a too obvious tie to Levi's. Yet viewers and bloggers overwhelmingly discussed Levi's connection to the video in comments and blog posts across the web. Levi's "Guy Walks Across America" is a great example that online audience's do not need overt branding for your brand message to be communicated effectively.

Rollout Strategy

Feed Company's rollout strategy for "Guy Walks Across America" was to start in small niche communities, like Photography and Tech, before moving to influencers and mainstream media. We believe it's important for social videos to get into the right hands and be given room to breathe. The progression from micro-targeting to mainstream is important for the brand reveal as well. A preemptive brand reveal would

have removed a key conversation point for online audiences, severely dampening the sharing and pass-along rates for “Guy Walks Across America.”

Contextual Timing

When you seed a social video, you must pay attention to the mood of online audiences and public at large. Online video is social, so people are able to express their opinions quickly and very publicly. The “Guy Walks Across America” creative satisfied an urge for audiences to celebrate the pioneering spirit of an idealized America. “Viral” video can only be earned when it latches onto something bigger, and the macroeconomic timing is lined up properly.

Engagement Capital

Engagement capital is the means by which a marketer exchanges compelling content for support or action by a user. Each brand video you develop creates a limited amount of engagement capital to spend with a viewer. This engagement capital can be spent on branding, call-to-action, or reach and engagement goals. With limited branding and no call-to-action, “Guy Walks Across America” was given room to spend its engagement capital on sharing and engagement, which resulted in a big success for Levi Strauss & Co.

Results

“Guy Walks Across America” reached nearly 1 million views on YouTube during the first week of the campaign. The second week produced another million views on YouTube, and 600,000 on Yahoo! Video. By the end of the third week, the video had reached nearly 8 million total views. Much of the conversation surrounding the video was about the Levi’s brand, causing a positive association between Levi’s and the video’s positive patriotic message.

Campaign Successes:

- 8,000,000 Views (2M YouTube, 1M Yahoo! Video, and 5M broadcast)
- 6,000 Video Comments
- 16,000 Ratings (98% Positive)
- 16,500 Favorites
- #3 Most Popular Video on YouTube (7/27)
- More than 100 Major Website Placements with 1,500 Comments including USA Today, TIME, CNN, and ABC.
- 68,000 Facebook shares and 9,000 Tweets

Conclusion

To increase sharing of your online video, consider lighter branding and a creative brand reveal. Content must match the target audience and align with the environmental factors surrounding the creative and your audience. Timing must also line up, and always consider how you will spend the engagement capital you create with your audience.