



## Digital Video Ads: We Can Do Better

By Ariff Quli

**New York, April 12, 2012** - Americans are downloading more video every day, and brands are putting more and more money into monetizing those views. Our continuing [shift to mobile](#) gives video an extra boost of accessibility. No longer are consumers tied to TVs and PCs -- they have video to go on their tablets and smartphones. Now, thanks to Apple, we can add more than [three million](#) new iPad owners to that pool.

So why aren't we making video really work for the industry?

As we speak, [91 percent](#) of video ad spending goes into pre-roll, the 2012 equivalent of a static banner ad. Sure -- pre-roll does its job to bring the sight, sound, and motion that display ads generally lack. But with one-dimensional targeting, forced view, and limited scale, it falls embarrassingly short of delivering on or advancing the true potential of digital video advertising: to take what's great about television -- the most engaging medium, hands-down, and add to it the targetability and measurement that advertisers desire and deserve.

### How do we get there from here?

First, we need to help the brands and agencies we support reach the audiences they need. But we can't do that until we move beyond basic demographic- and genre-based targeting. The most effective display advertising is contextually relevant to the content of a page, and the same holds true for video advertising. Until we can offer video ad targeting that leverages the full breadth of digital data, we're selling ourselves short.

### Finding the right content

I'm not talking about repurposing television spots that your brand happens to have overspent on. A hit television commercial does not an engaging online video make. Brands need to recognize the differentiated qualities of top-performing online video ads and tailor their creative to exploit the medium's advantages, by keeping video ads [short](#) (15 seconds max), sharp (engage me!), and simple (one brand message per spot, please).

### How the ad is delivered

As entertaining as a video might be, no user wants to be forced to watch it. And with pre-roll, mid-roll, or post-roll that's all we've got: forced-view advertising. If we want ads that can deliver qualified views to demonstrate real engagement, we need to put the user in the driver's seat. Even [pre-roll that offers choices to viewers](#) has been shown to increase ad effectiveness. Add to that the new video formats from Tremor Media and other firms that are bringing an immersive experience, and you've got video ads brands can bank on.

### Where's the ROI?

The beauty of digital, as we all know, is our ability to measure to our hearts' content. But pre-roll falls desperately short on this front, and all we get is a completion rate. It tells us that shorter ads fare better -- especially if they're [interactive](#) -- and that the content behind the ad is compelling to the viewer. But it reveals nothing about the effectiveness of the ad or the user's engagement with the brand advertised. We should be able to tell advertisers how long a user spent watching a video, what they did afterwards, whether they shared the ad, and what the impact was. As [Brian Mandelbaum](#) wrote recently: "It's time that the accountability and transparency of traditional broadcast buys find their equivalent in the online world."

**The issue of scale**

One reason that advertisers love TV is its mass reach. Because there's not a lot of video ad inventory, it's hard to reach scale right now with digital video campaigns. Brands often need to make a tough decision: Should we go for reach and compromise quality, or sacrifice scale to protect our brand experience? The problem is there's lots of demand for premium video advertising, but not enough premium content to meet that demand -- so ads end up on sites with low-quality, user-generated content that doesn't reflect well on the brand. For video to realize its full potential, the industry needs to make a more concerted effort to respond to the needs of agencies and marketers.

**Where do we go from here?**

We need to see video solutions that bring together the best of television and the best of digital: a targeted, relevant, measurable, brand-safe advertising experience. While we're at it, we also need to do a better job of educating brands about the potential of video advertising. So that when we build it, they will come.

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**About Vibrant**

Vibrant ([www.vibrantmedia.com](http://www.vibrantmedia.com)) is a world leader in contextual technology aligning billions of words across the Internet with relevant video, information, tools, and advertising. With over 6,500 premium publishers, reaching more than 250 million unique users per month (comScore, 2011), Vibrant gives top brand marketers the opportunity to deliver highly targeted advertisements within premium Web content and offers publishers premium editorial tools to re-circulate users throughout their websites. Vibrant works with top brand advertisers such as Microsoft, Unilever, Chrysler and AT&T. The company was founded in 2000 and has offices in London, New York, Boston, Detroit, Chicago, San Francisco, Los Angeles, Paris, Hamburg, Munich and Dusseldorf. For more information, [www.vibrantmedia.com](http://www.vibrantmedia.com) or [www.facebook.com/vibrantmedia](http://www.facebook.com/vibrantmedia) or <http://twitter.com/vibrantmedia>.

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