

YouTube a valuable marketing tool

Do you YouTube?

I thought people used YouTube for posting personal videos. You know, like using it to espouse your love of Britney Spears. Or showing friends and family the funny tricks your dog can do.

But I've seen the light, and I now realize it could be a great tool for drawing attention to a business or community. Turns out local folks are way ahead of me because they're already using it for just that purpose.

Car dealerships, startups and real estate agents are just a sampling of our neighbors who are using this social media tool to sell their products and services, recruit talent and build their reputation.

InEnTec in Richland has received nearly 7,000 hits on its YouTube video, and people have posted positive comments about it.

I like Areva's animated commercial set to the music *Funkytown*. It has received more

than 13,000 hits, and it didn't cost the company a dime to post a video on the free YouTube site.

As with any kind of marketing, businesses should consider what would appeal to their audience before producing and posting a video. Audience enjoyment or interest leads to spreading the word about a particular product, idea — whatever.

If a YouTube video is awesome and entertaining, viewers will forward it, turning it into a "viral" marketing tool that increases visibility for the subject. Comments posted to the video can be viewed as a bonus — free consumer feedback. And if viewers continuously forward the video, it could go viral, increasing visibility of the video subject.

I think one of the reasons that YouTube is popular is because there are no rules. The video doesn't have to be polished. In fact, I'd argue that the amateur stuff often gets the most attention.

When I searched for Richland, Washington, the skate park videos were the ones with thousands of hits. They were amateur videos, for sure, but they also had constant action and were set to music. We should consider using the same tactics to attract

different age groups to this area, either to visit or live.

For example, use video to sell a major tourism asset — our rivers. Film a wakeboarder doing tricks on the Columbia. We tout "300 days of sunshine per year," so let's show people what we do when it's out.

Similar things can be done to showcase our wine industry. How about some video of grape crushing *Dirty Jobs*-style?

The Kenmore Team, husband and wife real estate agents in the Tri-Cities, post regular videos on YouTube. Lance Kenmore, in a suit or sweatshirt, provides updates on the local housing market, including available properties. Recently the Kenmores went out on a limb and held a 45-day challenge. They aimed to list and sell 20 properties within 45 days — a marketing tactic that enticed me to search for video updates to see if they reached their goal.

So come on local businesses and economic development office — show us your stuff!

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