

Crowd Sourcing: A Low Cost Way to Engage Your Audience

By Bill Goodwill

Prior to the raging popularity of YouTube, video crowd sourcing became a popular way for families and would-be cinematographers to get their moment of fame, shown on such popular TV shows as *America's Funniest Videos*. Once the broadband issue was resolved, allowing people to upload videos to the Internet, it opened the floodgates for video sharing, just one type of crowdsourcing.

Perceived benefits of crowdsourcing include:

- Problems can be explored at comparatively little cost, and often very quickly.
- Payments to the participants is by results or even omitted
- The organization can tap a wider range of talent than might be present in its own organization.
- By listening to the crowd, organizations gain first-hand insight on their audience desires and interests.
- The community may feel a brand-building kinship with the crowdsourcing organization, which is the result of an earned sense of ownership through contribution and collaboration.



Different Models

Enterprising organizations, faced with lower budgets and a desire for greater audience engagement, are encouraging amateur videographers to produce videos addressing important social issues. This has become a low-cost way to get high-quality videos produced, and one model is you pay for the video only if you use it. Another model is that you organize a contest to see who comes up with the best video, and then you give a prize to the contest winner.

Among many federal government agencies and some non-profits, the idea for video crowdsourcing has gone viral itself, via contests that pay a cash stipend to the best video idea.

The Environmental Protection Agency, for example, created a PSA contest to see who could produce the best PSA promoting ride-sharing.



The winner received \$2,500, and a chance for their PSA to be shown both online and at their annual conference. This was followed by another EPA PSA contest dedicated to water quality, which received over 200 entries. The PSA can be viewed at: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kiTh0OCCFgA>

The EPA saw this as an opportunity to lower production costs, get the public to participate in spreading their messages, and at the same time create messages which resonate with the public.

The Alliance to Save Energy, another environmental protection organization, staged a video contest that offered winners \$5,000, with private sector firms donating the cash, as well as other premium items, to leading entrants. See this PSA at: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=20ev_jv-hmY

Zoopa, the leading source of user-generated advertising and MatchingDonors.com, the world's largest living organ donor registry, teamed up to produce a terrific TV PSA encouraging people to sign up as living organ donors titled: *Everybody Can Save a Life*, which can be viewed at: www.youtube.com/watch?v=20ev_jv-hmY



Getting Greater Mileage

If there is any limitation to video contests, it's that most of the PSAs and video clips have a fairly limited audience, relying mostly on You Tube, where they must compete against hundreds of thousands of other video clips.

Since many of these video clips were produced as PSAs, or could be edited down to PSA lengths, they could be easily and inexpensively distributed to the media, thus getting much more mileage and exposure. One way to distribute them inexpensively is to use a "shared reel" distribution service such as CablePAK, which targets 500 major cable systems and networks.

Beyond videos, there are numerous other applications for crowdsourcing, such as enlisting volunteers, developing idea communities, and product/service testing. Some companies, such as WhyzeGroup specialize in delivering crowds, so that you can instantly tap into a pre-select group of people who want to participate in your idea or project.

One firm, Imaginatik, has developed something called IdeaCentral Mobile, which solicits ideas from employees and stakeholders that can be loaded to smartphones or other handheld devices with web browser capabilities.

This idea engages audiences on the move, allows them to keep abreast of new ideas, offer ideas of their own, and enjoy secure access.

“Despite the jargon name, crowdsourcing is a very real and important business idea,” says Jennifer Alsever, the author of *What is Crowdsourcing?*

“The idea is to tap into the collective intelligence of the public to complete tasks a company would normally either perform itself or outsource to a third-party provider. More importantly, it enables managers to expand the size of their talent pool while also gaining deeper insight into what stakeholders really want,” she said.



Resources:

Zoopa: (www.zooppa.com/en-us)

Imaginatik: <http://imaginatik.com/>

CablePAK: http://www.goodwillcommunications.com/CS_CablePak.aspx

Whyze Group: <http://whyzegroup.com/>