

QUESTION & ANSWER

Marketing With YouTube

Q I've noticed that some deck builders are using video as a marketing tool — an article in the May/June issue (“Market Your Deck Business”; deckmagazine.com) had some information about it, and I've come across discussions about it in builder forums too. Is YouTube a good place to put videos for marketing a deck-building business?

A Todd Bairstow, co-founder of Keyword Connects, an online lead-generation company specializing in home-improvement markets, responds: I'm often asked whether companies should post videos on YouTube, Google's popular video-sharing website. Enormous doesn't begin to describe how big a phenomenon it's become, particularly with the younger demographic. To provide some perspective: YouTube has more viewers every day than the three major TV networks combined.

So should you use YouTube? Maybe. I sit squarely on the fence — there's a good case to be made for it, and a good case against it.

While YouTube is massively popular, and uploading material is free, begin with realistic expectations. Homeowners usually access YouTube for entertainment, not to find a home-improvement company, and I've seen little evidence that YouTube drives leads for most home-improvement companies. With many orga-

nizations cutting back on internal staff and overburdened by other marketing projects, YouTube falls low on the totem pole because it won't drive significant, immediate revenue.

If, however, your goal is to build brand recognition and, over time, engage your target audience, YouTube can help. A number of older, well-known home-improvement companies have fun, established brands built largely through advertising on radio and television. And chances are that if you're on television, someone will check you out on YouTube. The more known you are in your local market, the more likely you will be searched for on YouTube.

You need good video, though. YouTube is great if you have entertaining video material to share — most brand-centric companies have great video footage they can easily repurpose for YouTube — but nothing is worse than a bad YouTube video with shaky camera work, low visibility, and a general lack of professionalism. You may be able to get away with handheld camera work if you're providing instruction or giving valuable information away, but consumers who want their home to look spectacular won't be impressed by an unprofessional video from a home-improvement company.

Do not spend time and money on YouTube in place of proven lead-generation activities like home shows, paid search, and sell-furnish-install arrangements (where a sale made at a retailer includes installation by a contractor). YouTube — as big as it has become — is still in its infancy and remains an unproven tool for lead generation.

So use YouTube if you have time and some decent video, but don't bet your bank account on it. ❖

GOT A QUESTION FOR OUR EXPERTS?

Send it to *Professional Deck Builder*, 186 Allen Brook Lane, Williston, VT 05495; or e-mail it to prodeck@hanleywood.com.