



Make the Most of Video

Article by Roxanne Hawn

Video allows you to share the veterinary experience with pet lovers in your community and beyond. Some veterinarians have even parlayed their success with videos into TV gigs—“Hanging with the Hendersons” and “Evan Goes Wild.” Television or becoming internet famous may not be your goal, but video provides a heartfelt connection that other forms of marketing and communication do not.

Certain styles of videos tend to produce good results for veterinary practices:

- Videos by veterinarians with strong personalities, good comedic stylings and unusual passions
- Demonstration or educational videos that teach people about pet care and veterinary medicine
- Behind-the-scenes videos that give pet lovers an inside look at how you do things in your practice
- Videos that tell heartwarming case stories
- Short clips of exceptionally cute patients

Especially as more clients balk at their pets being taken to the back or ask about staying with pets right up to the

moment of surgery, behind-the-scenes videos can help lift the perceived veil of secrecy, build client confidence and forge stronger bonds.

Video on your website

Many businesses have ditched deep websites with many pages and a lot of information in favor of one that essentially serves as an elaborate business card. Others have abandoned a stand-alone website altogether in favor of a Facebook business page only. Yes, maintaining a more complex website takes work, but it's a place that you control (not some social media giant that could change the rules or deliberately limit your access to your customers on a whim).

If you're going to keep a website presence, consider having at least one video on the home page. Videos in this important location have been shown to increase conversion rates by 20 percent or more. So, if someone is trying to decide to call your practice, video can help.



Not just younger people

It's easy to fall into ageist tropes that tell us older people don't use certain online platforms as much as younger people. Sure, 96 percent of Americans 18–24 years old use YouTube, but more than half of people over age 75 use YouTube as well. And, according to Hootsuite's blog, YouTube's stats for users of all ages are better than Facebook's.

Here are a few ways to make the most of your YouTube presence, if you decide to have one:

- Use images and colors in your channel header that match your practice's branding and image.
- Promote a key video to the featured video spot on your channel. It may be one evergreen video that you feel represents your practice well, or you might rotate this featured spot based on the season or your current marketing goals.
- Sort your videos into topic playlists (cat videos, dog videos, how-to videos, funny videos, etc.)
- Use important keywords in your video titles and

descriptions. As much as it's a video platform, YouTube (which is owned by Google) is also the second most powerful and important search engine in the world. Good keywords make your videos easier to find.

Live versus recorded video (Facebook example)

In the early days of online video, all footage was recorded, then uploaded. Even if it was done live-ish and not edited at all, giving the video a raw and real feel, the recording still was not truly live in the same way we've now come to expect.

Once social media platforms gave users the opportunity to go live with video, viewership and video performance stats started to shift. Between August 2016 and June 2017, the percentage of Facebook videos done live by the top 400-plus brands jumped more than 300 percent.

People may feel that live video is somehow more important, like breaking news, even if it's scheduled strategically on

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“...96 percent of Americans 18–24 years old use YouTube, but more than half of people over age 75 use YouTube as well.”⁷”

days of the week and times of the day when these brands know their fans and followers are most active.

Some social media watchers also hypothesize that live Facebook videos result in better engagement and reach than uploaded videos, photos or link posts about the same topic. The folks at Social Media Lab experimented with this idea on two of their pages (Agorapulse and Geeks Life), where they compared the results from 15 uploaded videos and seven live videos and 16 uploaded videos and seven live videos respectively. Here is what they found:

Agorapulse Facebook Live Video Results Compared to Uploaded Video

- Reactions: 431% higher
- Comments: 7,044% higher
- Shares: 2,538% higher

Geeks Live Facebook Live Video Results Compared to Uploaded Video

- Reactions: 146% higher
- Comments: 976% higher
- Shares: 91% higher

The lab admits that they couldn't quite prove that their results were statistically significant—perhaps because of the small live video sample size. However, Social Media Lab's Scott Ayres concludes, “That being said, I'm still 100 percent confident that Facebook live video will get you not only more reach, but more engagement than uploading a video to your business page. Due to Facebook's focus on live video, your business should make it a priority to go live, even if just once per week.”

Case study: Fox Hollow Animal Hospital, Lakewood, Colorado

In April 2017, Fox Hollow Animal Hospital posted a 45-second video to Facebook of its Dr. Ross Henderson playing a guitar and singing Elvis's “Can't Help Falling in Love” to a canine patient. It went viral. As of late March 2019, this short video tallies impressive stats:

- 853K views
- 9.5K reactions
- 1.8K comments
- Nearly 10K shares

Fast-forward two years, and you may have seen “Hanging with the Hendersons” debut on Animal Planet in early 2019.

Asked to describe their video content strategies, Fox Hollow's practice manager Darcy Holloway explains, “I think we use video to give people an inside look at what's happening in our hospital behind the scenes, more than a picture can do.”

She admits that the hospital does not use video much for client education. “There is a place for educational posts and videos and things like that,” she says, “but there is so much of that. We prefer to give medical advice in person and share heartfelt things on our Facebook page, mainly. Every once in a while, we'll do something educational but, in general, people really like to see things that make them feel good. They want to see things that connect them with us, and that's what we focus on for our videos.”

While Fox Hollow shares more photos than videos, the videos do get a lot of attention. “We try to highlight the incredible people we have working here. We have incredible doctors and amazing staff,” Holloway says, “so we like to show people that behind the scenes these are the people that are working with your animals and get to see how they are cared for when you're not around.”

As for results, Holloway explains that she pays more attention to engagement stats [also see article in this issue, “An Engagement!” on page 12] than straight video views. Video success isn't limited, however, to social media performance data. It shows up in other practice metrics as well. “We definitely saw an increase in new clients right around the time of April 2017, for sure,” she says. “I would say like 20 percent, 15 percent [month to month].”

She has seen a similar bump in new clients recently when the TV show first aired.

Video cautions

Sure, only a handful of veterinary practices end up with their own TV show, but that doesn't mean video can't be an important tool for you.

Each practice needs to decide if video is the right medium for client and community outreach. Some personalities and practice brands are more suited for video than others.

If you decide to give video a try, be careful about graphic or even slightly icky medical content. I've seen video commenters go ballistic about sterile fields, unprofessionalism, and other mean questions when veterinary practices have posted videos meant to be heartwarming of things such as puppies from an emergency C-section or quick intervention needed for a badly hurt pet.

References:

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⁵Agorapulse.com: <https://www.agorapulse.com/social-media-lab/engagement-facebook-live>

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Getting Started with Video

If you're feeling overwhelmed about adding video to your marketing and social media mix, start small. Even one kind of funny or cute video that's only 15 seconds long is a good place to start.

How often?

Start with one video per month.

How long?

In most cases, less than two minutes, but if you're going live, people need time to realize you're live and participate, so those often run longer and more freeform.

Camera orientation?

Professionals shoot video landscape orientation, not portrait, but the ubiquity of smart phones has made portrait orientation more common.

Audio quality and lighting?

Typical ambient lighting can come off as too dark in video, so open the blinds and turn on more lights than you think you need. And, slow down your pace of speaking and speak up so that the audio quality is good enough not to frustrate viewers.