

INTRODUCTION

When speaking of viral marketing for brands and businesses, the two questions heard most frequently are :

“How much do online videos or viral videos cost?” & “What are the steps involved?”

Pricing can vary depending on quite a few factors and there really is no set standard. Lets start by going over the 4 key elements and then look into the pricing.

A successful viral video is one that begs to be shared again and again. As opposed to traditional paid for media like TV and radio, where once you stop paying the advert or spot stops playing. Viral and social media marketing are often referred to as *earned media*, in the sense that content remains on the web for a long time at no additional cost and continues to be shared even after the initial campaign push is over. Getting lots of views is easy, but how accurately your video is focused to reach your target demographic and how far that video spreads (how well your message resonates) depends on either careful planning or a lot of luck. The latter does not typically go down well with most heads of marketing!

Creating, producing and launching a successful branded video, (web series or viral video) involves more than thinking up a funny idea and grabbing a camera. The first thing to look at is how do is how the overall steps and costs break down:

GOALS AND STRATEGY

CREATIVE APPROACH

VIDEO PRODUCTION

MARKETING & SEEDING

The success of your campaign will depend on how productively you focus on each of these categories. Leaving one out or failing to address the need of each step in the process will undermine the overall outcome of your campaign.

GOALS AND STRATEGY

The most effective approach is to establish your goal(s) and define your strategy before developing the creative concept(s). This will ensure you have clearly defined the objectives in mind, by the time you create, produce and launch your video campaign. This also helps marketing directors, brand managers, PR and social media directors (and others responsible for the success of the video) quantify their return on investment (ROI) at the end of the campaign when the results are measured against the goals.

First, establish the end result for the viral video and define the key strategic steps along the way. What do you want to happen as a result of the campaign and how will you get there?

- **Goals:** What are the Campaign goals to be achieved? These may include product and brand awareness, measurable engagement, overall product sentiment, sales and traffic.
- **Conversions:** What action do you want viewers to take immediately after watching the video? Share the video with a friend, visit a website, watch more videos (related), visit a *buy now* page or visit a shop?
- **Integration:** Is the video part of a larger campaign accompanied by PR or other marketing initiatives that could help spread your message? Working with other departments to achieve as wider coverage as possible is another way to ensure ROI for a project.
- **Marketing:** Define your demographic, influences, social media networks and target verticals.

The responsibility falls squarely upon the creative agency or the video production company to ask the right questions of the in-house marketing team, to help determine the goals and viral video strategies to be employed to ensure a successful campaign.

Depending on how you prepare this phase, the costs involved could vary from a couple of thousand to several thousand pounds. This phase may also be included as added value to the overall viral marketing process.

CREATIVE

As an approach, using content as entertainment is often the most effective for viral marketing and focuses on creating videos that go light on the message and heavy on the entertainment value. Even as viewers realise there is a brand message, they often don't care because they are trading their time and attention for being entertained. Genres include humour, the unexpected, shock value, cute, clever tricks or crazy stunts, informative or quirky - but they will all have one thing in common - that they beg to be passed on (ie: a *you must see this* quality).

If you work with a creative agency, fees and pricing strategies can vary greatly, but for our purposes let's lay out a range from a couple of thousand to several thousand pounds depending on the scope of the project, the fees and billing structure.

PRODUCTION

Viral [video production](#) quality and costs are largely driven by the creative concept and depend on many factors including:

Pre Production

- Scripting or concept development (treatments).
- Casting and talent (actor) fees, trained animals, stunts etc.
- Location scouting, stage, studio or location fees, where the video will be shot?

Production

- The number of videos; are you shooting one video or a series? Often multiple (short) videos shot within the same shoot day and budget will require more time in post production (editing & effects).
- Live-action vs animation; using live actors on location or animation or combining both!
- The equipment required; does the creative dictate that the project can be shot on a small consumer camera or do you need a professional crew with high-end cameras and lighting?

NOTE: Don't assume that all viral video is shot on consumer cameras, it may look that way sometimes but this can be down to effects applied to the image after filming. You may not want your video to look like it's been shot on a small cheap camera after all!

- Live visual effects, makeup effects (smoke, pyrotechnics special rigs such as cranes)
- Wardrobe, props and sets

Post Production

- Editing (picture and sound)
- Computer graphics (CGI) and visual effects
- Music composition, recording or licensing
- Formatting or encoding for it's end use (web, TV broadcast or other)

Some viral videos can be produced for just a few thousand pounds, while others approach broadcast commercial production ranges of over £100,000. The best thing to do is weigh your budget against your goals and arrive at a creative solution that is effective for your budget. BALLISTIC can advise on how a creative idea can effect the video production budget.

Ballpark Cost: £25,000 – £35,000

VIRAL VIDEO MARKETING & SEEDING

Viral [video marketing](#) starts with **identifying your primary demographic** and pinpointing the ideal viewer you are trying to reach. These are the people most likely to buy your product or service and engage your brand online and in person. Your secondary demographic should include influencers. These are a group or groups of viewers that are most likely to interact with and influence your primary demographic on different levels of interest.

Next, **identify** relevant blogs, bloggers, websites, writers and social network **influencers** where you want your video “seeded.” Create lists of bloggers, publication writers and key influencers across social networking sites that have contact with and influence your target demographic.

Elements of a successful viral video marketing campaign include:

- **Messaging:** Digital messaging for outreach to blogs and online publications.
- **Social Networking:** Target communities and influencers on Facebook, Twitter, Bebo, Myspace, LinkedIn, Flickr etc
- **Sharing:** make it easy and including instructions for sharing with friends/colleagues etc.
- **Outreach:** reach hundreds of top blogs and publications and encourage them to talk about, feature and embed the video(s).
- **Going where the party is:** by developing relationships (if they don't already exist) with key influencers already engaged with your target demographic and establishing a presence in that space.
- **Video Search Optimization (VSEO):** you must include video titles, tags, descriptions and narrative back-story. Tagging videos with an array of relevant topics is a must.
- **Reporting and analysis:** weekly and monthly to help determine ROI and make course corrections mid campaign, if needed.

Seeding a video can cost anywhere from a few pence per view to several pounds per view (depending on your set-up and if you're using a dedicated agency to facilitate this). At first glance, this may seem expensive until you consider the way viral marketing works. For each properly targeted paid view, there will be additional views, online conversation (about the video), blog embeds (the video added to other sites/blog pages), article mentions, social networking referral and valuable engagement that add to the value of that view. As the video spreads, you build interest and excitement around the video, the product or service and your brand. By executing the appropriate viral video marketing strategy your video will far exceed the guaranteed number of views serving to lower the total cost per view. For example, if you are aiming for 500,000 guaranteed views for .20 per view, once that video hits 1,00,000 views you have cut the cost per view to .10 per view.

Ballpark: £30,000 for 250,000 views

SUMMARY

The objective of viral video marketing is not to pay for every single view but to pay enough to get your video noticed by influencers (people) who enjoy the video enough to recommend and keep recommending it. This way the views begin to pour in organically and the video becomes established as a *must see* recommendation between viewers. The way to do that is to ensure your content is the best it can be, which is where BALLISTIC can make the difference - quality is king!

Why should we use a professional video production company, what's to stop us shooting it ourselves, surely we can save money that way?

The answer is of course yes, you can shoot it yourselves and you can save money, in the short term - but before you pick-up a video camera ask yourself this: How much **don't** we know about making a video?

To make a big difference to your next online video campaign, get in touch with Ballistic. We can help you create and realise the content you need to make your campaign a success:

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