

5 lessons you can learn from the viral success of dollar beard club

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If you work in marketing or branding, there are very few industries where a viral video wouldn't be ranked as an incredible accomplishment. Every time a video is uploaded, you likely obsessively check the view count for days or even weeks, while posting it to social media and sharing it as much as possible. More often than not, nothing happens -- but every so often, a branded video makes it big.

Dollar Beard Club has defied those expectations, and has steadily risen in the ranks of brands that have mastered the art of the video.

It gained mainstream attention in June of 2015, when the company . The ad drew from previous successful video campaigns from brands targeting similar audiences, with the addition of Dollar Beard Club's signature coarse humor and satirical tone.

The result is a piece that simultaneously built on and parodied familiar tropes seen in competitors' messaging. The video's view count has surpassed 10 million between YouTube and Facebook, and that count rises daily. The company has been steadily producing new pieces since then, with the total view count rising to more than 130 million, just in Dollar Beard Club's first year.

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Its is sure to be yet another hit. In this edition, " Doctor" Chris presents the company's supplements and grooming products that cure " scruffitosis" in the format of a pharmaceutical advertisement-- plus plenty of crass comments.

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I spoke with Chris Stoikos and Alex Brown, co-founders of Dollar Beard Club (both who are a part of my), to learn more about what goes into making a viral hit, and how they keep doing it again and again:

1. Stay true to your brand. Customers will be able to spot pandering.

" Dollar Beard Club is not the first project we've worked on together, and we've had some experience creating videos together before," Brown says. " We've found that the best method for making a viral hit is to create a video that *you* would share, and you could see your friends sharing."

Stoikos went on to explain their method: " We put our personality into our videos, focusing on creating content that was funny, manly and pushed the natural ingredients that we use. We aren't pushing specific products as much as trying to make people laugh -- and our consumers really appreciate that.

" We aren't trying to mimic other successful companies, or put on a non-genuine face, we're just being who we truly are. These videos work because our members feel that they're a part of something much bigger than themselves: the beard movement."

Don't think that your brand won't be able to rally consumers around a movement if your product isn't something that is as visual as full facial hair -- remember, this is the same principle that brought Apple, Nike and even Listerine to the spotlight. The Dollar Beard Club is one of the first to successfully translate that into viral videos, but there's plenty of space for your brand in this arena as well.

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2. Cater to a specific niche of people.

Brown describes the company's target market as men who are interested in taking care of themselves and investing in their appearance and health, but not at the risk of feeling high maintenance or fussy.

" There is a huge cultural awakening in the world right now. A look at the men's grooming market will show that they are warming up to the idea of taking care of themselves," he says. " If a man takes care of himself, he acknowledges he is worth taking care of. A man can be rugged and raw, yet take care of his body in ways that make him more confident and that his significant other can appreciate.

" We are also constantly making each other laugh, and we loved making videos that evoked joy in the viewer, so matching humor with this mission gave us such an incredible passion for this business it is almost unexplainable."

It's critical that you find out exactly what audience you want to speak to, and appeal not only to their sense of humor, but also their insecurities, needs and frustrations.

3. Balance brand messaging with timeliness.

A key to creating viral content that hits home again and again is to make each video a mix of brand messaging and timeliness. The Beard Club's newest video, " Make America Stronger," takes a few hilarious jabs at the American presidential election without specifically choosing sides.

By targeting topics that a large percentage of their audience is experiencing stress over, and making light of it in a way that compliments their brand message, they encourage viewers who enjoy the video to share it with like-minded individuals.

4. Build a team you trust.

“ We have a full time creative team with several hilarious and hard-working bearded legends who produce all of our email marketing, member on-boarding and member retention content,” Stoikos says. “ We do full-length videos, and tons of short pieces for social media. At any given time the creative team is working on multiple different ideas, concepts, and continually shooting great new material. It is very collaborative, and everyone is united in making people laugh.”

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5. One-off's rarely work.

“ The biggest piece of advice we can give here is not to look at video as a one-off, ‘ all in’ attempt at going viral to grow your company,” Brown says. “ Especially when talking about consumer brands, video content is something companies should prioritize as a continuous investment in driving sales and building a brand. We strongly encourage entrepreneurs to make the recruitment creative talent (either full time or on contract) a high priority, and to marry creativity into your brand and long-term strategy.”

Stoikos went on to offer the advice to be patient, as success does not always manifest immediately.

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“ It can be difficult to know whether a video has been a success, even after it’s been live for a while,” he says. “ We don’t always see an immediate jump in sales, but the steady rise in traffic from our videos, the increasing level of brand awareness, and the steady stream of positive customer feedback indicate that even the lower performing content serves to build our brand overall.”