

## Retail Video Testimonials



**AN INTERVIEW WITH:**

**David Rubinstein**  
**Senior Vice President, Sales , Expo**  
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ExpoTV is an online video platform where actual consumers share their experiences—in the form of user-generated videos—with products ranging from chain saws and key chains to hair sprays and baby seats. The results are, to say the least, varied and often compelling. The aim is to heighten engagement between consumers and brands. David Rubenstein leads Expo's national sales efforts.

Prior to joining Expo, Mr. Rubinstein was senior category director at Yahoo!, where he supervised company engagements with top technology and telecom advertisers such as HP, Dell and ATT, and identified opportunities to drive category revenue growth.

At Yahoo!, Mr. Rubinstein released a number of studies on the impact of online advertising on offline sales. He also met regularly with Fortune 100 advertisers to understand online initiatives, competitive landscape and online success metrics.

**eMarketer:** How do you approach online marketing?

**David Rubinstein:** As you look at our site, ExpoTV.com, you'll see it's really a place where consumers come to talk about products they own. We have over 274,000 videos on every product you can imagine. People are talking about their shampoo, their peanut butter, their stroller, their car, their TV, their vacuum cleaner. Every product you can imagine is found on our site.

**eMarketer:** Does the site lend itself better to some products than others?

**Mr. Rubinstein:** The products that are the best for video are those where seeing it is most helpful. So a lot of times electronics tends to do very well—when you can show the device.

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We started with just product reviews. But where we're going, because we have access to all these consumers who are doing these product reviews, we provide them with assignments or ask them specific questions that aren't product-related. That starts to move toward lifestyle.

**eMarketer:** Do they incorporate that into their videos?

**Mr. Rubinstein:** We have a traditional part of our site, which we refer to as video opinions, which are video product reviews. That's the standard format. People talk for a minute to a minute and a half about products they own.

The consumers choose what products they want to talk about. We're not telling them what product to do. It's important to understand, and our model is a little bit different. We do compensate for the videos.

**eMarketer:** You pay your video reviewers.

**Mr. Rubinstein:** Yes, that does three things for us. People don't get rich off of making these videos. They do get some recognition.

**eMarketer:** And penny a click?

**Mr. Rubinstein:** Yeah. It's a penny every time it's played. On average, you might make between \$2.00 and \$5.00 for each video you upload. And the quality tends to be higher. That's obviously an advantage. As a result of the fact that we're providing a check, the information consumers provide tends to be accurate—the demographic information. They are opting in to an ongoing conversation with us.

The third thing that does is, once the check is cashed, we own the content.

**eMarketer:** I see.

**Mr. Rubinstein:** All the videos on our site are unbiased. We don't ask anyone to say anything specific, good or bad, about a product.

**"We don't ask anyone to say anything specific, good or bad, about a product."**

But manufacturers—and even some retailers—are starting to come to the site and going, "Wow! These are real authentic user reviews of a product. A lot of this content could be very compelling, living elsewhere on the Web."

For P&G, we built what we call a "brand expo." It's an area dedicated to the brand within Expo, designed to generate content—video assets. We look across our site and, of our 274,000 videos, more than 4,000 of them are Procter & Gamble products. We didn't ask for those videos. Those are just videos and products that consumers chose to talk about.

If we can get 4,000 videos without asking, can you imagine how much content we could generate for you if we asked?

Building out this area on our site is our version of asking. It's a fun area. If you click on shampoo, it will list the

Herbal Essences shampoos, and those are all video product reviews from consumers.

**eMarketer:** How are you encouraging people to submit ads for Procter & Gamble products to build up that area?

**Mr. Rubinstein:** We promote it on our site. We have a mailing list of people who are creating videos. We can reach out to people that are a desirable demographic for a brand. Or we can go broader.

We get a lot of pick-up within the blogosphere at the vertical level. So for sites that might be more CPG-focused, someone might post, "Hey, I just uploaded a video on Expo. Check it out." And they put a link to it. A lot of that is what's happening.

Where it starts to get really interesting is when brands look at this and say, "This is a really safe place where consumers are talking about products." Because it's all video-based and it's less about people adding comments and more about the video focus, it's authentic. People are putting their faces out there.

**"Typically about 85% of the reviews on our site are positive, 10% are neutral, 5% are negative."**

Typically about 85% of the reviews on our site are positive, 10% are neutral, 5% are negative. Even the ones that could be classified as negative are constructive.

Our site isn't focused on entertainment per se. So people aren't lighting the product on fire. They're not running over it with their car.

Manufacturers are starting to say, "You know what? This is a great place to send my passionate consumers. And have *them* create videos."

**eMarketer:** I'm still not sure how you get additional demographic or lifestyle information?

**Mr. Rubinstein:** When someone uploads a video to our site, they have a profile. And they're also getting paid. As a result of getting paid, we're getting a real name to make the check out to and an address, and a host of other information.

We can also start to build a profile based on the products that they own, because people aren't just reviewing one product, they're reviewing many products. We start to understand a little bit more about the individuals.

**eMarketer:** Do you have any concern about people that may be uploading videos of products that they don't own—or have no experience with?

**Mr. Rubinstein:** It's a great question. One of the requirements we have for all the uploads is you have to show the product in the video.

Even with travel videos—sometimes people will review an amusement park like Six Flags. What the people will actually do to prove that they were at the amusement park is they'll actually pull out photographs of them at the amusement park and they'll hold them up to the camera. We have people who review movies. When people review movies, we make them hold the ticket stub up to the camera so we know that they actually saw it.

We do our best to make sure that the people actually own the products.

**eMarketer:** Have you encountered any problems from people who have an ax to grind and as a result upload scathing videos?

**Mr. Rubinstein:** We haven't run into the scathing kind of nonthoughtful review. There certainly have been reviews that were not overly positive. But again, you're putting your face on camera. The way people respond when they're on a camera, versus the anonymity of just a text-based review, is very different.

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People are choosing the products they're reviewing. The natural thing is to pick up a product that you're passionate about.

**eMarketer:** We're assuming that you see the person is in the video. But do people do videos of a product without appearing?

**Mr. Rubinstein:** We do ask that the person appears in the video. I think sometimes there are videos where it may be hard to fit both in the screen—based on the size of the product. But we ask that the consumer is in the video. We feel like it adds to the authenticity. We want to get people talking in a tangible way about their brands.

**eMarketer:** What is the main source of your income? You've talked about relationships you have with brands. I also saw some advertising on the site. What are the main revenue streams?

**Mr. Rubinstein:** It's a combination.

The first thing is the one a "brand expo" for P&G that's up. We have another P&G brand that will be going live. Then we have a major consumer electronics firm going up in the next few weeks, as well. We should have, by the end of next year, about 50 "brand expos" up.

We're getting demand from brands who love the idea that they can then take these videos and put them on Facebook, MySpace, YouTube. You could put these within a banner ad on Yahoo. You could put them on the manufacturer's Website.

**eMarketer:** I'm not sure you've answered my question about your source of revenue. Is it those brands?

**Mr. Rubinstein:** Those brand areas on our site *and* the ability to leverage the content. That's the core of our revenue.

We feel as more manufacturers point people to come to our site to upload videos, they'll explore, they'll consume more pages. It should monetize for us well. There is an advertising component, there's a content component.

**"There is an advertising component, there's a content component."**

There's also another area that we're exploring, which is the idea of leveraging us as a research platform.

**eMarketer:** In the future, do you see ExpoTV becoming a town hall for consumers and brands to have a discussion?

**Mr. Rubinstein:** Brands are interested in talking with these consumers. They've been very clear with us about

that. Some of the conversations they want to have, they want to make private.

For instance, we've got a whole host of videos that consumers uploaded just to share with other consumers on how they do their hair. The brand says, "That's great content to be associated with. There's limited risk and we're comfortable with that." But what a brand might say in private is, "Can you tell us what you think of this particular concept? If we sent you a product, can you provide us your feedback of that product?"

**eMarketer:** Is quality of the videos that users upload to your site ever an issue?

**Mr. Rubinstein:** As you watch a few of these videos, you'll see the background—you see the authenticity, you see the dog running around in the driveway or the baby crying in the background.

If you think about what makes Wikipedia successful, you've got a bunch of people who do the lion's share of the editing. Then you have contributions from lots of different people, but you have a core group that really keeps the thing going. What we find is a similar phenomenon on our site.

We've identified a strong core group who are coming to our site on a regular basis. They're uploading videos. The quality is very good. We call the people who are uploading videos creators.

**"We call the people who are uploading videos creators."**

When someone new is thinking about creating on Expo, traditionally what they do is watch a few videos from other people. We feel like the model is very good in terms of teaching others. Because the videos that are up on our site, for the most part, are constructive and thoughtful. So people who are uploading the videos say, "Okay, that's the format that I need to follow."

As a result, that's why manufacturers are increasingly starting to say, "This is a great place to send my passionate consumers—because these people are talking in a friendly and safe way about my brand."