

Bombardier: Flexjet

BROADBAND STRATEGY

Strategic Film

When Lance Armstrong debuts this spring in a series of six, one-minute films on Flexjet.com, it will be the latest high-profile example of an emerging discipline that Douglas J. Sloan, founder of Icontent, a New York-based brand communications agency calls “strategic film content.”

Douglas says the discipline provides marketers with a strategy and a foundation for a whole range of other marketing tactics, including the web, direct mail, in-store, special events and, of course, broadcast television commercials. “From an ROI perspective, it’s arguably the most creative, versatile and efficient medium for a broadband world, says Douglas, adding: “Strategic film content is not about shooting footage for one-time use. It’s about customized messaging, seamless integration and cohesion across multiple platforms. It’s incredibly cost-efficient relative to a traditional television commercial or print ad.”

Noting that many companies today are having trouble differentiating themselves in a 30-second spot or in print ads, Douglas says marketers want to know how else can they engage their consumers in an intelligent way. “Ours is fast becoming

A new online campaign for Flexjet, featuring Lance Armstrong, exemplifies the new “starring role” of film in a growing broadband universe

a niche world and consumers are going to become increasingly selective about what information they choose to spend their valuable time with,” he says.

Although Douglas says “strategic film content” is relatively new to most marketers, it is an approach that he and his agency have been perfecting for the last 20 years, mostly for high-end luxury

brands including Condé Nast, Regent Luxury Group and Origins. We sat down recently with Douglas to learn more about Icontent’s approach, including the newly launched film series for Flexjet, called “Revealed and Revered,” and featuring Lance Armstrong.

Why should marketers care about “strategic film content”?

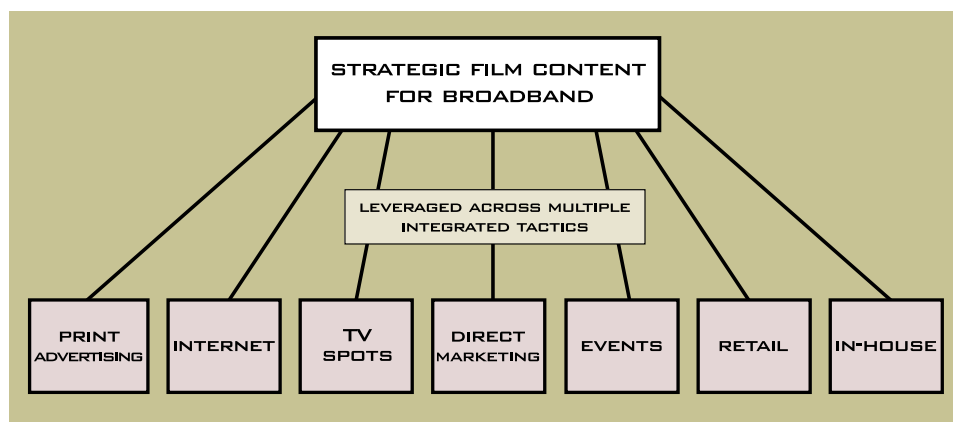
“Strategic film content” provides an opportunity to engage and tell a brand’s bigger story, a more in-depth story—a more specific story. Because broadband and wireless are proliferating, marketers have an unprecedented opportunity to benefit from this.

If you get consumers to watch a strategically intelligent film—be it a minute or five minutes long—you’ve engaged them with your brand. They come out the other side saying—“wow, thanks, I learned something.” Then that becomes fodder for cocktail conversation; they become viral brand advocates. The next time they go to buy something, you’ve automatically raised your standing in their consideration set.

When you respect the viewer’s time and intellect it can make the difference between a brand being viewed as a welcomed resource and ally as opposed to an interruption.

Why do you use the term “film” instead of “video”?

It’s a term that I much prefer because there’s an inherent sophistication to it, and it reinforces that we are working in filmic terms, in filmic language. Just because we have easy access to digital tools to create content quickly and cheaply doesn’t mean that’s the best way to go. For our clientele, which is mostly pres-





Condé Nast: *The Point of Passion*

Content

tige and luxury brands—brands that are very concerned with how they look and “feel”—we think it makes more sense to think of their brands in terms of film rather than video.

I come from an art and music background. Our staff and supporting people are artists and others who are not typical advertising people. In many ways, we view “strategic film content” as a way to further our own art and craft as much as to further the business objectives of our clients.

How did you arrive at this approach?

Twenty years ago, it was the beauty, fashion and publishing markets that were (and still are) looking for people who could create content in a freer, more creative fashion, and raise the aesthetic bar. In the early days, in the beauty and fashion world, we were just making pretty pictures and making it look cool and artsy. It really was the publishing world that challenged us because they needed us to tell a story with real intellect. So, the challenge was to incorporate really smart content in a beautiful film context.

What is Flexjet and why are they pursuing “strategic film content”?

Flexjet is a private jet company, a division of Bombardier, that offers fractional ownership of Challenger and Lear jets. They asked us to develop a strategy to use Lance Armstrong, who is their celebrity spokesperson, in an online advertising campaign. Rich film content was

the centerpiece for the campaign. Four of the spots are dedicated to talking specifically about the Challenger 300, and the two others feature Lance talking about what is meaningful in his life these days and how it feels to be the sports icon that he is.

The online campaign we conceived, entitled, “Revealed and Revered,” leverages the synergies between the Flexjet



(from left top) **Condé Nast:** Ellen DeGeneres; **Origins:** Dr. Andrew Weil; **Macy’s:** Wear & How, P. Diddy; **Condé Nast:** Hilary Swank.

brand and Armstrong, both in terms of performance standards (revered) and insightfulness about establishing and maintaining a leadership position (revealed).

Who else is taking this approach?

For Origins, we created a series of films from footage we shot on-location with Dr. Andrew Weil. And again—this was not direct product promotion but an opportunity to learn about Dr. Weil’s ideas for good health, courtesy of Origins. It’s being used on their website, in-store and at events when he’s not available for personal appearances.

We created seven different pieces for Condé Nast, featuring their celebrity editors and other personalities such as Ellen DeGeneres and Hilary Swank. We were responsible for the entire brand platform,

strategy and rationale, and the copy headline, “The Point of Passion.” That was the first time Condé Nast had ever branded the entire corporation.

Right now we’re creating a series of beautiful short films to introduce the re-branding of Radisson Seven Seas Cruises under the Regent name. The idea is to impart “the experience” and not just deliver a promotional pitch. We did something similar with Macy’s, where we created a film series featuring Donald Trump and P. Diddy, with tips on how to dress for success.

Your roots are in the luxury category, but how about others?

A lot of our clients are in that luxury category but it’s more about prestigious brands and brands that want to put out intelligent messaging in a way that has an emotional, experiential pull.

What we’ve been concentrating on for the last ten to fifteen years is how to merge filmmaking with strategic marketing. We feel we’ve arrived at that point. ■

Douglas Sloan is the founder of **Icontent**, (www.icontent.tv) a strategic brand communications agency with an emphasis on film, branded content and interactive. He began his career directing and producing film, videotape and multimedia productions. He started Icon Communications in 1980 to produce a variety of media for corporate clients. In 1987, he formed Icon Pictures to focus on television commercials and film production, before founding Icontent in 2000. Douglas is the recipient of more than 100 production awards for a diverse range of work, including 12 CINE Awards for directorial excellence in film. He may be reached at doug@icontent.tv or 212.462.0022.