

# Fishing the online stream

December 4 2009, By Bob Fernandez

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On West Lancaster Avenue in Wayne, Pa., local businessman Robert Lail runs what he calls "YouTube for business."

"Most people don't know how big the corporate [video](#) market is," said Lail, who sold corporate training videos in the 1970s and 1980s before launching a telemarketing firm, MarketMakers, for technical products. "I think it's bigger than traditional media. There are 13 million companies out there. Some of those companies have their own TV studios."

With that in mind, Lail developed eCorpTV.com with Philadelphia marketing consultant Chris Crafton in August 2008 and began soliciting corporate videos -- how-to videos, training videos, virtual tours of corporate facilities, and so on -- to post online.

That makes eCorpTV one of dozens, maybe hundreds, of new companies seeking to profit from the explosion of online video, according to Frost & Sullivan technology analyst Dan Rayburn. Experts refer to the companies as "online video platforms," or OVMs. Most don't earn profits, but are heavily supported by venture capitalists, Rayburn said.

YouTube, a cultural force, loses millions of dollars even with its popularity because it isn't attracting many advertisers and because of the costs to running the business, analysts say.

But hope for striking it big -- think Google -- bubbles persistently on the

Internet. And eCorpTV thinks it has a shot at success with its formula of screening videos before they're posted to create an environment that is the right blend of volume and quality, limiting its self-promotion, and eventually charging a modest subscription fee. "We're more confident than ever," Lail said.

He has invested his own money in the venture, along with three partners. The total is less than \$1 million, he said. Lail believes there are thousands of corporate videos that companies don't post online because they don't know how or don't have the technology.

And then there are millions of small businesses that lack the resources to take videos onto the Internet, he said.

On eCorpTV, there are no videos of wacky pet tricks, bootleg concert clips, or disgruntled employees -- such as one finds on YouTube.

"It's got to be about business, it's got to be G-rated, and it can't be a get-rich-quick scheme," said Lail on eCorpTV's video-posting philosophy. The company's headquarters is on the second floor of his accountant's office.

Edward Bogusz, eCorpTV's director of technology, screens videos that pop daily into the company's e-mail for posting. One day this month, Bogusz deleted videos for breast-enlargement services, a pyramid marketing scheme, and advice on how to cheaply purchase an iPhone.

Three of the most-viewed videos on eCorpTV were a virtual tour of Fastenal, an industrial supply company; a product discussion with two people at Vishay Intertechnology Inc., a Malvern company; and the three-minute video "How to Apply Knockdown Wall Texture."

Craig Hunter, director of Internet marketing for Vishay, said many

companies block employee access to YouTube and Facebook because the Web sites are considered social media and distractions. But employees have access to eCorpTV. So Vishay posts videos on eCorpTV and refers engineers and others to them. "We've had 10,000 video views (on eCorpTV), so that's a lot of customer face time," Hunter said.

In the early days, Lail and Crafton practically had to beg for videos.

Companies submitted about 50 videos in eCorpTV's first month, and eCorpTV posted maybe 10 of them. This month, 2,500 to 3,500 videos a week flowed into eCorpTV's e-mail, and the company, now more discriminating in its selection, is posting about 5 percent to 10 percent of them.

ECorpTV hopes to distinguish itself from the competition in several ways. The company has a director of social media, Ali Swiatkowski, who updates the company's Facebook fan page and Twitters about eCorpTV. Twitter helps connect the company with marketing professionals and bloggers, she said. Favorable posts from a popular blogger drives traffic to eCorpTV, she said.

ECorpTV doesn't heavily promote itself on the videos. It supports multiple video-streaming technologies and has relinquished ownership rights to the videos. It doesn't run "pre-roll" advertisements, Crafton said. These are advertisements a viewer will see first. Crafton said research has shown that people quickly click out of a video during pre-roll advertisements.

With eCorpTV approaching 5,000 videos, the company is considering charging companies a monthly subscription fee. "We will undercut the market. It will be a good value," Lail said of the fee. He said eCorpTV would grandfather the first 5,000 videos, and those companies won't have to pay the fee.

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Citation: Fishing the online stream (2009, December 4) retrieved 20 April 2024 from <https://phys.org/news/2009-12-fishing-online-stream.html>

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