



Excellence in Enterprise Video Awards

Profiles in Success: Barnes & Noble



BARNES & NOBLE
STUDIO



Produced by:

InterActive
Media Strategies

Nominated by:

The FeedRoom



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BACKGROUND

This Excellence in Enterprise Video Award case study features innovative efforts of the Barnes & Noble Studio at Barnes & Noble.com (<http://www.bn.com>) to leverage video across the bookseller's vast multimedia-enabled website. We examine many of the ways that video is deployed to help the company achieve its core business goals and objectives and provide an engaging user experience for visitors to the website.

The video platform through which videos are made accessible to the BN.com site's approximately 7 million viewers per month is the Barnes & Noble Studio, which was launched in March 2008. The site can be viewed at www.bn.com/studio (See screenshot in exhibit 1.)



"We're here to celebrate books as well as to sell them."

— Mike Skagerlind

Vice President and Head of
Digital Content & Community
Barnes & Noble.com

Exhibit 1 – Screenshot of Barnes & Noble Studio

Source: Barnes & Noble.com; www.bn.com/studio

Barnes & Noble.com is a wholly owned subsidiary of Barnes & Noble, Inc. and leverages the power of the Barnes & Noble brand to offer online customers the web's premier destination for books, music, DVD, video games, and related products and services.

NOMINATION FOR THE EXCELLENCE IN ENTERPRISE VIDEO AWARD

Barnes & Noble.com has been nominated for the Excellence in Enterprise Video Award by The FeedRoom, the company that has provided the video platform technology used on the BN.com website. The web-based video initiatives of the company have been recognized for the quality of content provided on the BN.com site, most recently by the New York Emmy Awards. BN.com received two awards, in the Advanced Media: Photography category and in the Advanced Media: Writer/Producer category. The awards recognize the quality of content provided as part of the Barnes & Noble.com video series, "Book Obsessed."

The awards were presented at the 2009 New York Emmy Awards Gala held on March 29 in New York City. Barnes & Noble is the only bookseller to win.

BUSINESS GOALS AND OBJECTIVES FOR USING VIDEO

Interactive Media Strategies had the opportunity to interview Mike Skagerlind, Vice President and Head of Digital Content & Community for Barnes & Noble.com as part of the Excellence in Enterprise Video Award program. Skagerlind said, "Our goal for the Barnes & Noble Studio is for it to become the premier online multimedia destination for book lovers and enthusiasts. We're here to



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celebrate books as well as to sell them.”

Skagerlind was brought in to help BN.com to grow their video initiatives and to expand the way multimedia is used to showcase books, authors and others who are a part of the book world. According to Skagerlind, “We wanted to superserve our customers in ways that they couldn’t experience anywhere else with an online destination solely dedicated to book lovers and enthusiasts.”

Prior to 2008, the company brought the stories of authors to the book buying public by sending production crews to Barnes & Noble stores across the country to interview authors and to post audio files of interviews online so site visitors could hear from writers themselves about things such as the inspiration for the story, the process of writing and publishing a book and what the author’s life is like.

Barnes & Noble Studio was then launched by Skagerlind and his team in March 2008 as a way to provide a unique and exciting experience for book lovers to become further engaged in the books, the content and the writers through an expansion of original and publisher-produced book-centric video. The Barnes & Noble Studio has indeed become a true destination for book lovers, by providing a wide range of multimedia offerings for readers, including audio and video content. The site now features audio and video content that ranges from writer interviews to video blogs from local store booksellers around the country, and even includes original series that focus on book lovers, as evidenced by the award-winning efforts of the “Book Obsessed” series that documents how obsessed readers have embraced books – and reading—into their lives. (See Exhibit 2)

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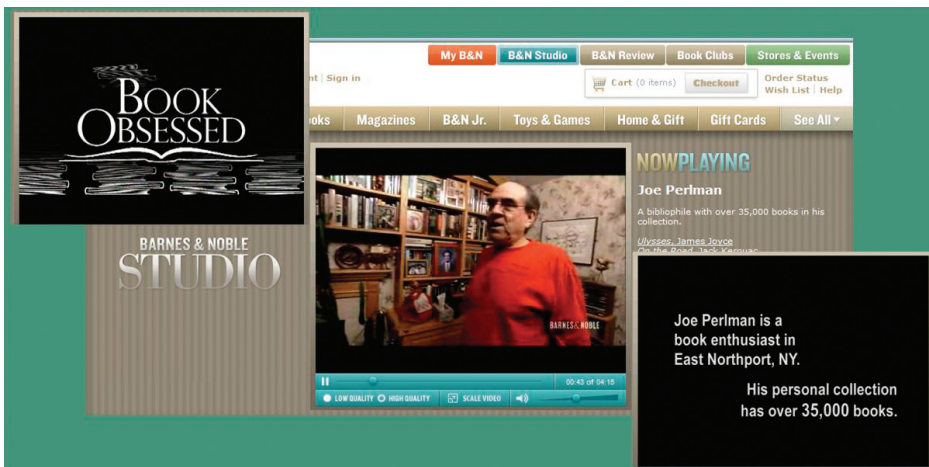


Exhibit 2 – Video featuring Joe Perlman as part of the “Book Obsessed” series.

Source: BarnesandNoble.com/studio, May 2009.

SOME OF THE VIDEO SERIES OFFERED IN THE BARNES & NOBLE STUDIO ARE:

- The “Barnes & Noble Tagged!” series, hosted by Molly Pesce in New York, the flagship weekly series that showcases unique author interviews as well as other features such as “Close Up” and “Molly’s Top Tags”;
- “Meet the Writers,” a weekly series hosted by Steve Bertrand in Chicago that features interviews - audio one week and video the next - of some of the most successful - and diverse - writers in the world;
- “Live at B&N” — performance and interview events recorded live at various Barnes & Noble stores around the country, including New York City, Seattle, and Los Angeles;
- “Why I Read,” a “vox pop” original video series shot in Los Angeles of actual book readers who share their thoughts on how books inspire, motivate, entertain, teach and keep them happy;
- “Cover Story” — a mini documentary series about book designers and illustrators;
- “Blogging Booksellers,” one of the most innovative video programs offered by the company;



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As part of the Blogging Booksellers program, BN.com purchased and distributed Flip portable video cameras to Barnes & Noble stores across the country. The Flip cameras allow specially selected local booksellers to easily create videos of events and author visits in their stores, such as videotaping visits by local authors and producing short video clips of themselves talking about the books and store events that are exciting them that week. (See Exhibit 3, page 3)

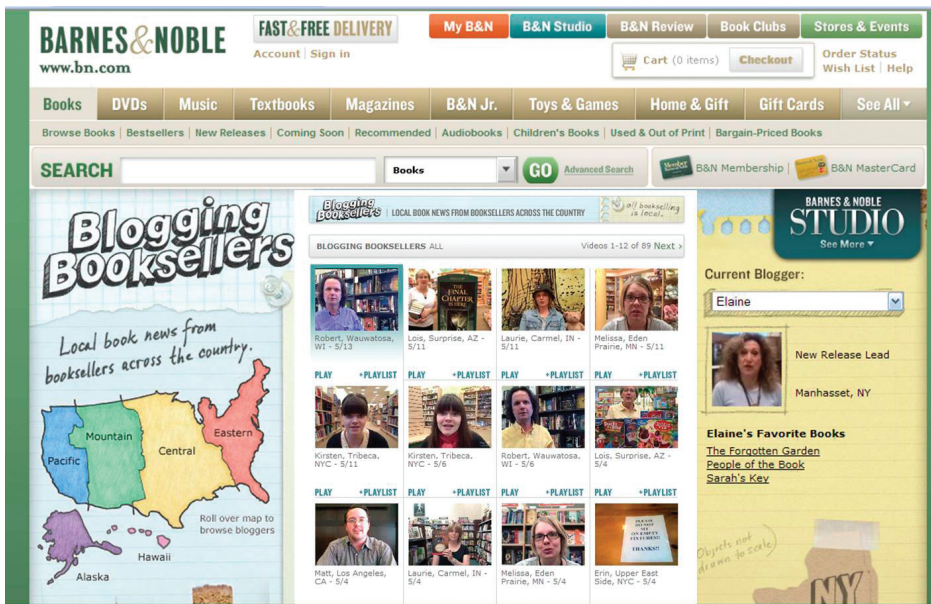


Exhibit 3 – “Blogging Booksellers” screenshot

Source: <http://www.barnesandnoble.com/bloggin-booksellers/>

The portable cameras have a flip out USB connection so booksellers can easily download videos to their desktops or laptops. The video files are then uploaded to the B&N Studio where the blogs are reviewed by the B&N Studio team before being posted to the BN.com website. Skagerlind says the goal for Blogging Booksellers is to have every state represented by the end of 2009 and to further expand local coverage into 2010.

IMPORTANT EVALUATION CRITERIA FOR VIDEO TECHNOLOGY

BN.com uses a wide range of video technology for content capture, publishing, management and distribution. The challenge with any IT project involving multiple technologies, services, solutions and vendors is finding the right technology that will integrate seamlessly across different pieces of hardware, software and user platforms.

For Barnes & Noble.com, finding the right technology meant ensuring a system was in place that could scale for thousands of videos presented on many different pages and sections of the website. It was also important that videos would all be presented in the highest quality with the smallest of load times, all while offering customers and site visitors the best possible user experience that would keep them coming back for more.

The approach to find the right technology seems to have worked. The company says that around 200 new videos are added to the site monthly (including videos created by publishers) and that video views are growing at a rate of 40% annually.

THE SOLUTION DEPLOYED

BN.com has been using the FeedRoom Enterprise Video Platform, which allows the company to manage the entire process of uploading videos to the various sections of the website, developing individual book genre channels, uploading additional content, creating different video players for

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different pages, ad serving and access from a centralized system, delivering video to users and providing detailed analytics and granular reporting on video use on an on-going basis.

BENEFITS ACHIEVED

Barnes & Noble.com has seen a range of benefits from their video efforts and the Barnes & Noble Studio initiative. The company hears regularly from book buyers that they love the opportunity to see and hear from authors about the books they are interested in, and many spend significant amounts of time on the site watching videos in the Barnes & Noble Studio. The company also knows that people who view content are more likely to spend more in terms of average purchases. The company has also started to generate revenue from banner ads on various pages and segments of the website. Now with the video offerings the company has experienced growth in advertising CPM rates for advertising surrounding the video content. Skagerlind is quick to point out that the company does not use pre, mid or post-roll ads in video, but does sell display space around them on the site pages.

EVA WINNING STRATEGIES FOR SUCCESS WITH VIDEO

- **Getting all Key Parties Involved in the Process** — Barnes & Noble.com has worked hard to involve authors, booksellers, publishers and company management in the process. Everyone seems to agree on the value of video. “Our senior management understands the benefits of offering video as a tool for creating an engaging online environment for book enthusiasts — it’s an analog for the unique Barnes & Noble store experience”, states Skagerlind. “That has inspired us to deploy the right solutions for providing a great user experience for visitors to our site.”
- **Creating Targeted Content for Specific Audiences** — Barnes & Noble.com has deployed successful strategies that have allowed it to effectively meet the needs of various constituent groups — authors, booksellers, book enthusiasts, and advertisers — and it has seen its business benefit as a result. By creating content specific and audience specific areas of the site, it not only helps to sell more books, but it can achieve higher advertising rates and provide the specific type of content of greatest interest to a range of user groups. Offering targeted content — such as the “MANFICTION” channel for guys, or the “Tagged” series hosted by Molly Pesce — provides targeted opportunities for advertisers looking to reach a specific audience of a particular demographic.
- **Working Collaboratively but Independently** — Managing the process of creating and capturing content that involves so many different groups might pose a challenge to other organizations. But such a balancing act has been the key to success for Barnes & Noble.com. A core driver for Skagerlind is to operate independently of, but collaboratively with, the company’s merchandising and marketing groups. This means decisions made with regard to content creation (and how, when and where content is presented) are made without any influence from publishers or advertisers — but are still relevant to users. It is a laser-beam focus on users and book enthusiasts that drives the B&N Studio team in all that they do. The intent has always been to provide an environment where the users can both celebrate books and reading, as well as purchase.
- **Focusing on the Customer Experience** — Barnes & Noble.com has found the right combination of creating a site that people want to visit and to return to often while ensuring the content is rich, engaging and easy to access. Further, the company offers an experience for its many customers and stakeholders. Everyone has the opportunity to participate, from the authors whose videos populate the site; to booksellers, who can provide custom content captured right in their own stores with portable video cameras; to book lovers, whose videos are featured in the “Book Obsessed” and “Why I Read” sections of the site.

“Creating user engagement across our site is very important to us,” said Skagerlind. “The Barnes & Noble Studio has become an award-winning destination that helps to achieve that. It’s now a place where book lovers come to watch videos and not just to buy books. That’s a new metric of success for our brand.”

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