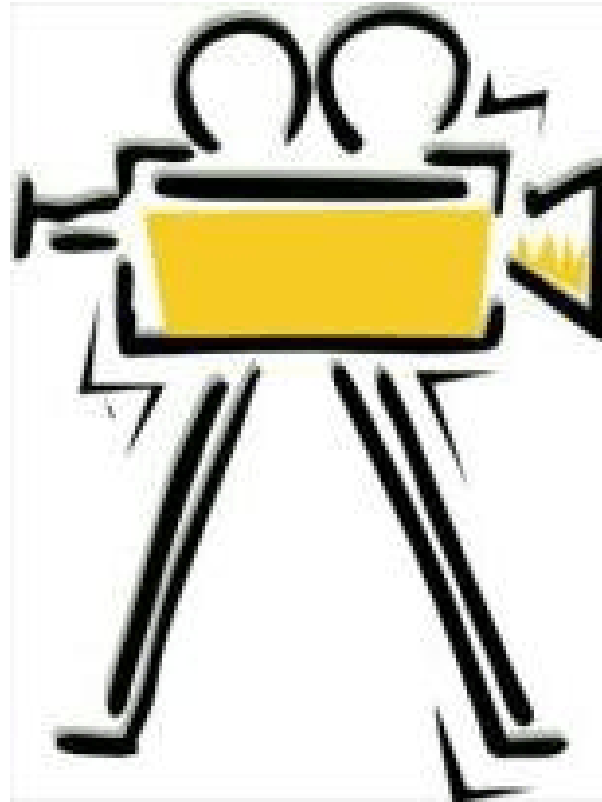


# The New Rules of Online Video for Businesses

How to create online video to help businesses grow



By Eric Putkonen

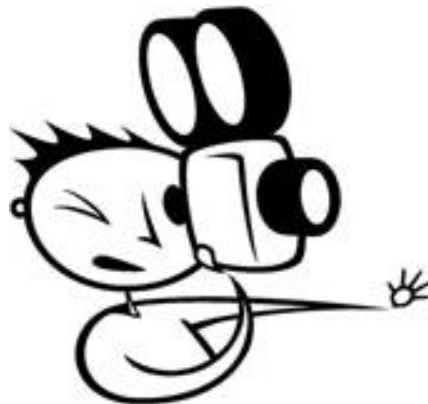
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THANK YOU.



## **The New Rules of Online Video for Business**

How to create online video to help businesses grow

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YouTube has changed the way people watch video. There are a lot of entertaining and informative video available online today...for free with no commercials! Many of these are not “broadcast-quality”, like you see on TV, but home studio shows or just around the home, in the car, etc.

Kevin Nalts is one such example. He has his own YouTube Channel doing short comedy and parody - <http://www.youtube.com/nalts>. He has over 115,000 subscribers to his channel...all watching his videos.

Another example is William Sledd - <http://www.youtube.com/williamsledd>. I became aware of him when he started being covered by the mass media - he still is in the top 100 all-time most popular shows on YouTube. The show is about beauty and fashion...by a flamboyantly gay man with the catch phrase, “Hey Bitches!” He also has over 115,000 subscribers to his show.

With the entry of Tivo and websites that allow you to watch TV shows online without commercials, viewers are increasingly likely to avoid or skip commercials and other blatant advertising. With the passing of the CAN SPAM Act and development of permission-based marketing, viewers are increasingly critical of receiving anything or being forced to view anything they don't want to.

The rules have changed and what worked for broadcast TV does not work online. It is not like the old days when there were 3 channels to choose from and you were more or less trapped. Now with the internet, there are millions of channels...many available on demand, so the viewers watch it when it is convenient for them. The internet is a place filled with people with short attention spans. This is channel surfing magnified many times over. If what is being watched does not hold the viewers interest, there are millions of other things they could watch instead and they will turn the channel quicker than ever.

What should we keep in mind when thinking about having a video produced for our business?

Stay tuned.

## It's Not About You!

This is the first and foremost rule of online video for businesses...it's not about you, it's about who is watching the video. Focus on the viewer. If you try to make it about you by making a commercial, your viewers will quickly abandon the show and go onto something that is important to them. People are on the internet for their interests, their needs, their entertainment, their goals, etc...not to hear about what you have to sell.

People want to be educated, entertained, and informed...basically, "what's in it for me" (WIIFM). If you can get one of these elements into the video, it will likely have some degree of success. Get more than one, and it could be a hit.

For example, have you ever heard of Blendtec? How about a series of short online videos called "Will It Blend?" - <http://www.willitblend.com/>.



Blendtec blenders and mixers are in some of the best restaurants, juice bars, ice-cream parlors and gyms all over the world. As the popularity of these products has grown, customers have inquired how they can get "Total Blenders" for their home. The company's growing consumer focus inspired its entry into YouTube marketing. Blendtec got the idea for its videos from actual destructive testing that has been going on at the company for years. The Marketing Director saw the owner feeding a 2" X 2" wooden board into a blender as part of a destructive test and found it fascinating. The Marketing Director thought others might get a kick out of watching the process, and the idea of creating a video was born.

- Within the first week of posting the first five videos on YouTube, the company's videos had 6 million views...a truly viral video.
- "Total Blender" sales have increased 500% in 2007.
- As of May 2008, Blendtec has 64 videos online, and they are attracting 200 million views a month.
- They even have a place for visitors to suggest what else to try to blend to engage viewers. The videos have a huge fan base.

You can watch him blend glass marbles, golf balls, downhill skis, an iPhone, and much more. Sure, the idea is to sell more blenders to consumers, but the video has nothing to do with selling the product or the company. That is why it is so successful.

Imagine if they just did a commercial about how great their blenders were. Imagine if they added a sales pitch..."you too can own one of these fabulous blenders for \$599, but call now and get the Total Blender for \$399.95." You wouldn't have seen the same kind of turnout or success. It would not have been shared (which makes a viral video). It is primarily a fun video (entertaining) that secondarily also demonstrates how good the blenders are (informative).

If the video is not entertaining, then the underlying principle is that if the video has value to the viewer, it will be watched. How does the video make their life better? How does the video solve their problems and ease their pain? What are the benefits for the viewer? You must have empathy for the viewers - understand their concerns, problems, and needs. Care about your viewers and figure out what they would like to hear about or experience (that has some connection with your business).

Don't talk at viewers - engage them. The video is a conversation...a form of relationship. Don't try to sell them. The more salesy and commercial-like a video becomes, the more of a turnoff it is to those watching the video. People don't like commercials. The popularity of Tivo is proof of that. People don't really believe commercials anymore. I saw a video on OxyClean...as I knew it was a commercial/infomercial designed to sell me, I could not trust it - so I was unconvinced by the ad. Many people are the same way, we no longer believe what companies tell us.

The more focus on what is in it for the viewer and engaging them...the more successful your video will be.

## Tell Me a Story

Children love stories. Being told stories is something we have enjoyed since we were very young. It hasn't changed, now that we are adults.

In fact, we not only love to hear stories, but we also tell ourselves stories all the time. When you buy “organic” whatever, “baked not fried” potato chips, “free range” meats, or any other “healthy” food...you are not buying the food. You are telling yourself a story how this food will make you healthier.

Our car is not just a car. When you buy a car, the kind of car very much depends on the stories that are important to you and you tell yourself. Some people will not be caught dead buying certain kinds of cars...why? Because of the story they are telling themselves about that vehicle. If it were not for the stories, any car would do...it gets you from point A to point B.

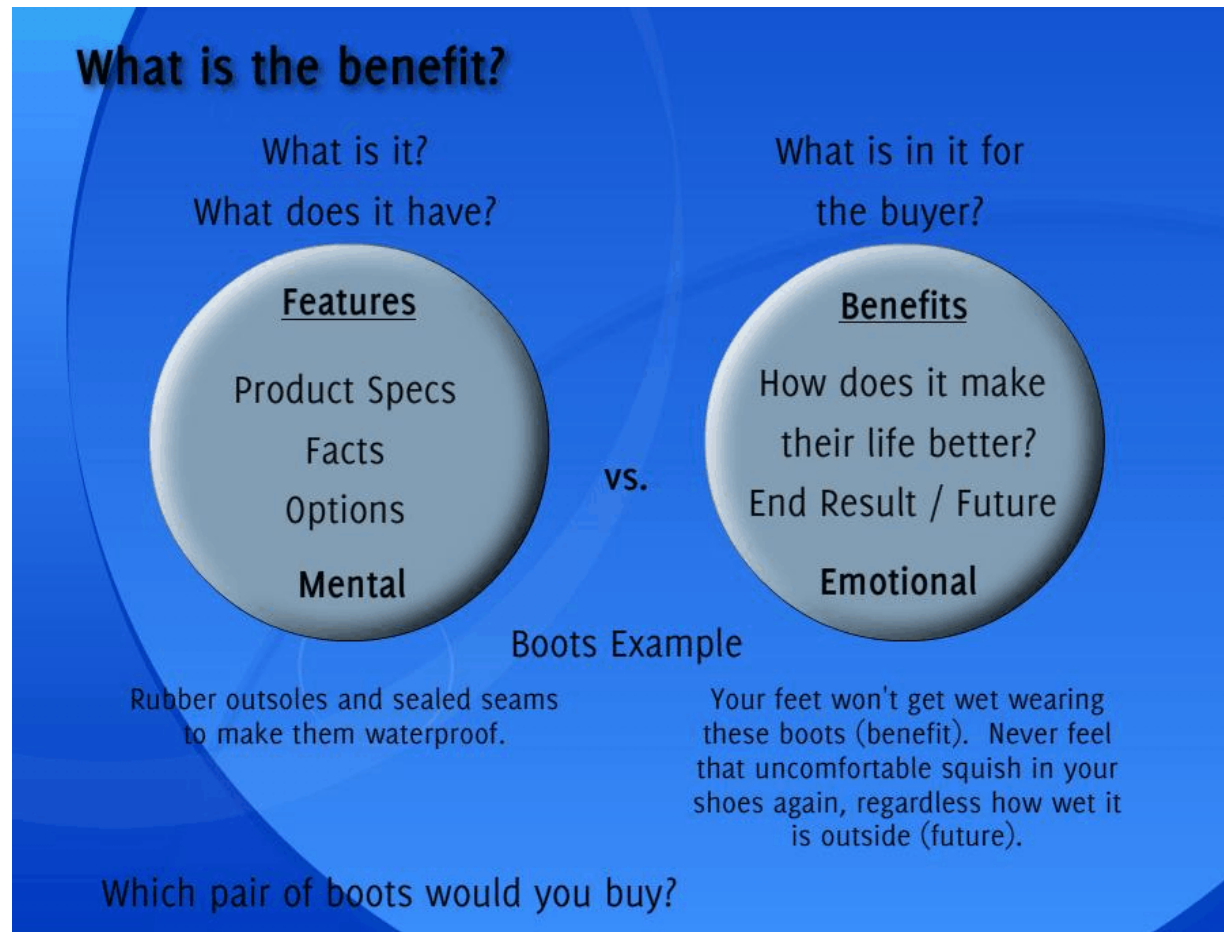
People do not buy products or services, they buy stories. The most effective online videos tell stories...and the best of those tell stories that the customers tell themselves.

The stories we tell must have some connection with our products and services to be really effective. Relational anchors must be present or what may happen is that people remember the video, but they don't remember the company at all.



Engage the viewer. Help them see themselves using your products or services. Ever notice that the best stories are the ones you can almost see yourself in...it hooks you into the story? You are engaged. Online videos must engage their viewers...make them a part of the story and conversation.

You can use benefits to engage viewers and tell a story to them. Too often companies focus on the features of their products and services and not on the benefits. Instead of saying what it is and what it has, we should be focusing on what is in it for the buyer and how does it make their life better.



## Transparency

Viewers want an open and honest view. Transparency is a growing issue. Instead of being sold to, viewers want to be educated and informed...and the internet has been merciless against those who try to hide details and cheat.

For example, there was a couple who traveled in an RV and chronicled their experiences through blogging. They parked nightly in lots next to Walmarts around the country...and blogged about the retailer's employees and customers as part of the blog. This became a marketing disaster when it was found out that the vehicle, meals, and all other expenses were paid for by Walmart. Later representatives apologized for its failure to be transparent. Yes, I know this is blogging and not video, but the principle applies for online video as well.

If you fake a video or parts of a video, and it is not really typical - the internet population will figure it out and it will turn into bad press and mistrust of everything you do going forward. Don't even try to hide anything or be sneaky.

Everyone and everything has its flaws and negatives. Viewers understand this. So if a weakness or flaw is mentioned in the video...or during the filming there is a stutter or such flaw in speech...and you leave it in the final video, the rest of the video is more believable. I'm not saying every video should show a flaw or negative, but there is no need to be perfect. Just be honest.

This is why I am so against scripting. We are not making a movie...we don't need a script. One of the first videos I produced when I started Peek Productions was for a nonprofit. I was interviewing volunteers with questions that were prepared ahead of time (unknown to the volunteers). These were questions about why they became a volunteer, what good have they seen, their favorite event, etc. After completing one of my interviews, we decided to film that segment again.

The second filming was really unusable. The volunteer had heard all the questions before and thought of answers already, so all the emotion that she was showing in the first take was pretty much absent in the second take. She was no longer remembering the situation and the feeling it had...she was remembering her answer. Her answers were shorter

too, with far less detail. I could plainly see the difference between the first take and the second take. Those who try to act it out in some way usually feel fake and the video no longer seems credible or trustworthy.

Back in August 2006, I saw an article in BusinessWeek called “Online Video Dos and Don’ts”. I was very pleased to see “Don’t Fake it” and “Don’t Script it” on the list.

One of the first posts on my blog (Peek Into Productions) was about Google’s recruiting video. I didn’t like that in the first 10 seconds of the video, they had a totally faked “interruption” - with a comment of “we’re making a movie” and a look of surprise. As if the lights, camera, and crew were not an immediate giveaway. The interruption felt fake and scripted, and that really diminished the overall affect of the video. That faked bit will always be in the back of the viewers’ minds - “what else is faked or too good to be true?”

Be open and honest...and give viewers a transparent and true peek into your company.

## Differentiate or Die

One of the best “starter” videos for companies who want their first online video is the “about us” type of video. The story is your company and products/services. Ideally, this video should tell your story in terms of your Unique Selling Proposition (USP).

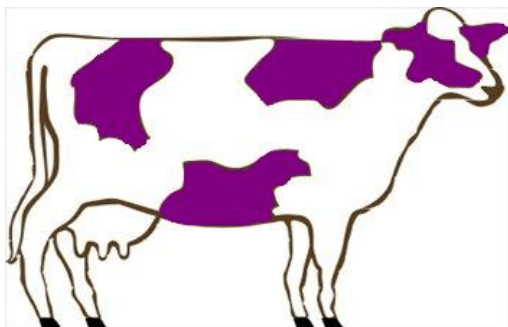
Some may ask, what is a USP? Basically, what makes you different...and why would a customer buy from you instead of your competitor across the street. There are things that make your company unique...and if there isn't anything, you better find something fast because you are heading for disaster.



It is the USP...what makes you unique and different...that is a part of your story and makes a pretty good video. Now this video can be used on your website, blog, emails, and online directories/maps like Google Local Business (which is a free listing that allows up to 5 videos to be attached to your profile for free). It is a kind of universal video that can be used anywhere, which means it may not be as specific as it should be to sell specific products and services (if you offer many).

Another thing to remember is that people do not buy from businesses, they buy from people. In particular, people they know, like, and trust. So online videos should be personal. Let them see you and get to know you.

This is not the time to keep up barriers and walls for anonymity. This is the time to have a face, name, and personality. This is not the time to be like everyone else. This is the time to stand alone because you are different.



The ideal is to be remarkable...something able to be remarked about. Like Seth Godin's Purple Cow...who wouldn't mention a purple cow that they saw? In today's world, with the overload of data on the internet and commercials we are subjected to everyday, to be ordinary is to be invisible. No one forwards an un-remarkable video. No one remembers an un-remarkable product/service or company. In the new marketplace of today, you have to stand out...or you will be invisible.

If you are like everyone else, it comes down to price...as all commodities are sold. I never buy bed sheets in stores anymore, I always go online. I haven't found anyplace else where you can buy 1000 count cotton sheet sets for \$80 (normal retail about \$250). It is a commodity. I don't care where I buy them or from whom, just give me high thread count in standard colors at the cheapest price possible. Stores in the malls could never convince me to go into their stores for bed sheets...they can't match the price.

The same applies for gas...as I am driving, I go to the cheapest place possible. Whatever your products or services are, you have to find out what makes them different. It is not like everyone else...your product or service is not a commodity. People can only get it here...at your company.

Think of dentistry. A dentist is a dentist..right? I heard of a dentist who made their office look like something out of Star Trek. Now going to the dentist is an experience, which is another secret of marketing. People don't buy products and services, but experiences. Yes, this is akin to stories. So if your video can illustrate what the experience will be...all the better. If it is remarkable, like a Star Trekked dentist office, then you have a winner and will receive lots of free word of mouth and your videos will be passed around.

Lastly, also related to people buying experiences, is that people buy emotionally...not with the head. If you can touch them in some way, the video will be all the more effective. So as you are thinking about how your company is different, keep in mind the feelings and experiences. Remember, be different...be remarkable.

## Short is Better

Online videos should be direct, focused on a single topic, and focused on one target market. Also, under 5 minutes in length. This is my rule of thumb.

On my blog, I wrote about Sleepy's, The Mattress Professional's recruiting video. It was nearly 10 minutes long! After the first couple of people that spoke, I found myself sleepy. It was too generic and covered too many topics. I think it could have been four distinct videos.

I have heard it said that the average length of online video viewing (before going elsewhere) is three minutes, with the average viewing time of recruiting videos being two and half minutes. With a video ten minutes long, how many will make it to the end? And if you cover several topics, who will stop watching the long video before reaching the information they could have most used? Videos don't come with outlines, so people don't know what is coming up in a video or even if what they want to hear about is on the video at all.

I don't recommend putting outlines in your videos, just split them up into shorter videos. Then listing them together. That way a viewer can view or not view whatever portions of the video they like. These days the power lies with the viewers and public...don't try to force them to see a whole long video. They are far more likely to watch a short video and then continue onto the next short video you offer than watch one long video to the end.

There is something called video snacking. People like watching short, interesting videos. Producing videos into "snack sized" portions will increase the likelihood of the video being watched...and being watched to the end.

## Don't Say How Great You Are Yourself

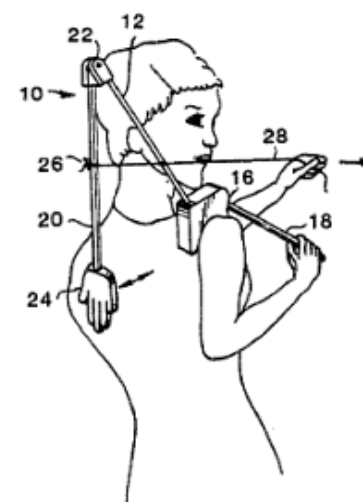
Commercials have always focused on saying ‘we are great and you should use us!’ Such self aggrandizing is pretty much ignored these days. A company who says their products and services are great or the best is just not believed...because everyone else does this too. We are used to companies pitching their own stuff and making it sound like it is great.

That is why online videos in which your clients and customers mention your greatness are so effective. When clients and customers tell your story, it is far more believable and credible than if you said it yourself.

When you speak on an online video, talk about what you do, why you do it, how it helps them, and what it means to them...talk about why you are different. Avoid, as much as possible, self aggrandizing and selling the viewer. Ask your clients and customers to be a part of your video and let them talk about the success they had in using your products or services. Let them say how great you are.

Testimonials are a very powerful tool, and every business should have testimonials on their website, brochure, direct mail, etc, etc...but video testimonials are even more powerful. There just is no replacement for seeing who is giving the referral...hearing the tone of their voice, seeing the feeling they have, and hearing their story straight from their own lips.

Another way to “prove it” is to show it in the video. Remember Blendtec’s “Will It Blend” campaign? You watch these blenders reduce downhill skis to dust and more. It is persuasive in showing its effectiveness at blending and chopping.



**Ralph R. Piro**  
**Patent #4,608,967**

**Sep 2, 1986**



People want proof, not B.S. Anything said yourself will be considered B.S., and what is said by clients and customers is more likely to be taken as proof. Also, anything plainly seen working or doing what is promised on the video will be taken as proof that it really does what is said about it.

Anytime you can foresee someone (perhaps from Missouri) saying “show me,” think about how you might capture it on film to literally show them. That is one of the great things about this medium, you have full access to all the potential of words (both spoken and written) and pictures (still and motion). Video is versatile and flexible.

## A Call to Action

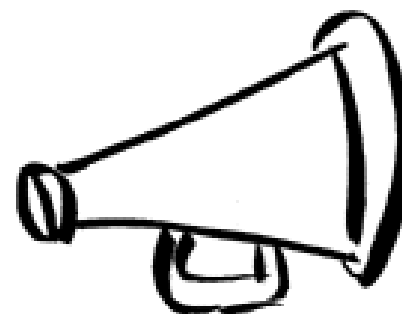
All online videos should list your website address at a minimum. There have been so many videos I have found through Google or YouTube searches that don't list an address, phone number, email, or a website address. I have no idea how to contact this company after watching the video. I had to do another search for the company online to find them. Don't make potential clients and customers do this...make it easy for them.

Just listing your phone number, email, and web address is not enough. Too much of advertising today is about saying who you are and how great you are and just listing contact information. As if saying, if you are interested...here is how to contact us. This is mediocre marketing at best.

What do you want them to do? Give the viewer something to do. You could offer a free consultation, a free e-book or white paper, a free newsletter, etc. Offer something of value to the viewer and give them a reason to contact you or go to your website.

This is akin to the marketing idea of making an irresistible offer and a call to action. "CALL NOW and receive a FREE e-book about..." Do you see how this would increase the number of conversions, thereby increasing new clients and sales?

There was a "bow maintenance" video I critiqued on my blog for Archery Country. They opened the video with their name and website address, but there was nothing at the end of the video. After watching the entire video, a viewer could be sold and want to contact them, but there is no address given...the viewer has to go to the beginning of the video to get the contact information. Video should definitely end with the company name, logo, and web address...and location if you are bound by location.



There was also no call to action in Archery Country's video. They mentioned that strings go bad, a couple of products that will help maintain strings, and the rest of the bow. Why not close the video with..."If your strings went bad or you need maintenance products, visit our website and get 10% off your order by using coupon code #XXX9". Now there is some kind of call to action...with a way to track it through the coupon code. I see someone could then get 10% off any order, so maybe you will offer a maintenance package with a free set of strings. Or offer a free subscription to a newsletter with tips year round....whatever. Make an offer that is applicable to the viewer as a way to prompt them to take the next step.

If you are producing a video to promote your business and increase sales, don't drop the ball at the end because of being timid or not wanting to sound pushy. You don't have to be overly aggressive and in the viewer's face, but you can simply ask them to take the next step and say what the next step is.

## **Make It Available**

Some companies produce an online video and then just have it on their website. They don't want it on YouTube or other sites...they just want it on their company website and so they host it. They don't allow others to embed the code in their websites or blogs...they actually try to hide the true location of the video. Why?

I don't know about you, but I want as many people as possible to see the video. I am going to distribute the video on many video sharing sites...I am definitely going to put it on YouTube, especially since Google indexes these videos and they appear near the top on searches people make on Google. I am going to allow others access to the embedded code and share the video. Pass it around. Please!

I may use an html link to the video in my emails. I embed the video in my blog. I will link to it in newsletters. I push it out there and make it easy for others to push it out to their friends and family. That is how online videos go viral.

You don't need control over who, where, and how this video is seen or distributed.

## Videos Have a Lifespan

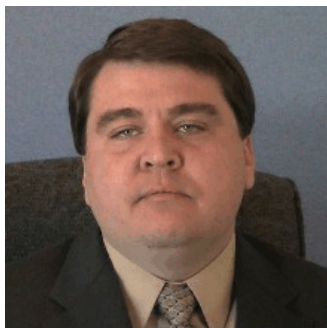
Don't think you can have a video produced and use it forever...or even for years. Online videos have about a one year lifespan. The internet populace craves what is new.



If a video is seen to be a year old (the publish date, hair styles, computers/technology, etc.), it is not as interesting as something recent. Furthermore, there is always the question...what has changed?

Things change. Online videos should show who you are, but next year your focus could be different and you are not really the same as you were anyway. The video needs to be re-done to show a closer image of who you are today.

## About the Author



Eric Putkonen is a video producer, internet marketing geek, entrepreneur, and owner of Peek Productions in Mound, MN (on the west side of the Twin Cities). Eric has lived and worked in the Twin Cities area since 1997. He spent a decade in marketing and recruiting before starting his own business with his passion for video production. He loves marketing and recruiting, and so he specializes in online videos for marketing and recruiting to sell products, services, and positions to viewers.

Check out his business, Peek Productions, at <http://www.peakproductionsvideo.com>

Check out his blog, Peek into Productions, at <http://blog.peakproductionsvideo.com>

Follow him on Twitter at <http://twitter.com/eputkonen>

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