

Hopkinton firm upgrades marketing with Web video software

By Bob Tremblay | Daily News staff

Most e-mail marketing messages look as dynamic as a mud flat. Text, graphics, photographs - all very static.

Flimp Media Inc. (FMI) prefers working with rich or flash media, which adds an audiovisual component to the picture, literally. It also has taken that picture and advanced its broadcasting capabilities.

The Hopkinton company recently launched a software platform that quickly creates and distributes self-tracking rich media microsites called FLIMPs - Flash Interactive Marketing Platforms - and does so without any Web programming or technical skills required.

This patent-pending technology was first released in October with its marketing campaign begun this month.

"This is different from any technology available on the market," says Richard DiBona, FMI's co-founder and chief technology officer. "We have developed an entirely new architecture for creating and tracking rich media Web content."

Adds FMI co-founder and CEO Wayne Wall, "This is the first rich media marketing platform developed for online direct marketing, sales and communications - not advertising." Wall calls the platform's distribution, reporting and analytical features "mindblowing."

Then there's the technology's ease and quickness. "We have college interns creating and deploying quality video microsite marketing



Flimp Media Inc. founders Wayne Wall, left, and Richard DiBona play a client's Web video that uses their software platform.

campaigns in a couple of hours," says Wall.

The importance of more engaging content in the \$170 billion direct marketing industry can't be stressed enough, FMI's founders state. What good is a campaign if no one - or not enough people - pays attention to it?

"With this overload of static e-mail, response rates are going down," says Wall. "So people are looking for 'Hey, what's that new thing?' to generate higher response rates."

At FMI, that new thing is FLIMP.

"Studies done by DoubleClick, Google and AOL have shown that rich media compared to static Web content drives four to seven times higher response rates in marketing," Wall continues.

To test the response to FLIMP, FMI last fall conducted 36 pilot e-mail campaigns featuring companies in a wide variety of markets.

"Forty-seven percent of the people who opened their e-mail clicked on the rich media microsite because they wanted to see video. The e-mail marketing industry average is 5.4 percent," says Wall. "Of those people who opened the FLIMPs, 98 percent were able to view it. That's because flash (media) is everywhere. You don't need a proprietary downloaded software. Then, 53 percent of the viewers watched the FLIMPs to completion, and the average video time was 2 minutes and 16 seconds. Those are huge engagement rates, especially when you're dealing with relevancy for audiences, and that's what we're all about. Finally, 34 percent of the

viewers who watched these rich messages clicked a response link.”

That means they could be interested. The industry average for direct mail marketing response rates is only 1 percent to 2 percent, Wall points out.

FLIMP users have this same comprehensive viewer tracking capability.

“We built in automated tracking and measuring so within the course of a half-hour, we can create an audiovisual rich media Web site, push it out to 100,000 people via the platform and get their data back in real time by individual e-mail address,” says Wall. “We’re providing what nobody else provides - which is actionable data. ... We give you data by individual so it’s meaningful, and that’s really the key to direct marketing.”

The Hopkinton resident provides an example of how FLIMP can work. “Let’s say I had a sales organization and I’m selling pharmaceuticals to doctors,” he says. “I create these rich media presentations about my drugs. Then my salespeople push them out to the doctors they’re going to meet. Then the salespeople can see if the doctors engaged with the message, how many times they watched it and what action links they clicked. ... So when (the salespeople) call the doctors back, they know if they watched it, were really engaged or sent it on, and if they did, we can track that, too.”

FMI has already signed on 24 customers in a variety of fields such as entertainment, event marketing, fund raising, product sales, travel marketing, sports marketing, real estate and financial services.

Clients include luxury real estate brokers, commercial banks, corporate sponsors of PGA tour events and women’s tennis events, corporate speakers, authors, comedians and nonprofit organizations such as the Nature

Conservancy and Give Us Your Poor.

In April, FMI will offer FLIMP to insurance companies and large corporations for employee benefits and internal communications. Pilot campaigns are taking place now. “Here, the technology creates, delivers and tracks employee benefits communications instead of using print,” says Wall. “It’s a faster, cheaper and more responsive way of doing it. ... We met with 22 large insurance entities and all but or two were very interested in this technology.”

***“Studies done by
DoubleClick, Google
and AOL have shown
that rich media
compared to static
Web content drives
four to seven times
higher response rates
in marketing.”***

In addition to offering FLIMP, FMI provides managed services for Web video marketing campaigns as well as technical support to clients. What it doesn’t provide is the content.

Wall notes that the markets FMI gravitates toward, such as travel, sports and event marketing, typically have audiovisual content.

But they’re not using it to the best of its marketing ability, adds DiBona. “What they’re doing is hoping people will visit their Web site,” says the Watertown resident. “People have to visit so many Web sites and you’re not going to visit them every day. (FLIMP) allows you to push your video content out to your subscriber list” in a multimedia format.

The price is also right, according to Wall.

“(FLIMP) allows you to do things that normally an agency would charge you \$30,000 to \$50,000 for - creating the rich media, deploying it and integrating database tracking, which they don’t do themselves. They have to get outside people for that,” he says. “You have about six to seven different moving parts, and it takes weeks to do it well. We can do it in a day and get data instantly.”

FMI charges as little as \$2,000 for a 12-month FLIMP license. This enables the client to create, reuse and track multiple microsites. The cost goes higher depending on the services required and the amount of usage involved. There’s also a \$250 monthly hosting fee that pays for content delivery and viewer analytics. The average annual cost, including hosting fees, ranges from \$5,000 to \$10,000.

FMI was started in February 2006 to create a new category of audiovisual direct marketing using the Internet. The company represents the latest business venture for Wall, who describes himself as a serial entrepreneur. DiBona is a veteran computer program developer who has worked with 10 Fortune 500 companies.

For people who want to know more about FLIMP, FMI conducts “webinars” on its Web site every Tuesday afternoon at 2. ■

FLIMP MEDIA INC. Founders: Wayne Wall and Richard DiBona.
Employees: Six.
Industry: Online marketing and communications.
Company background: Based in Hopkinton, Fimp Media Inc. develops software platforms for Web video and rich media direct marketing, sales and communications.
Its Web site is www.fлимп.net.