



Video Marketing made simple!

Herman Chan is a Real Estate Agent by trade, but his claim to fame is that his hit video blog “Habitat For Hermanity” has in one year amassed over 12,000 combined followers on Twitter and Facebook. Samantha McLean spoke to Herman to get some of his best video marketing and blogging tips for Sold Magazine readers.

There is a wide spectrum of people that watch me too. I get housewives watching me, and real estate agents who watch me, and whether or not they convert into sales is not my main goal, and I think that’s where a lot of people go wrong. If they don’t get any leads in a month, they stop. They’re not doing it for the right reason I don’t think.

Do you use any print or any other advertising, or just video?

I don’t have to do any print advertising at all except for my business card. I’m more into saving trees. (I mean I went to Berkley, I’m sorry, save a tree!)

I think most people are online nowadays. We live in a very suspicious culture now, we’re all jaded, and when people see the old-school way of “telling” instead of “showing” – I think people get a little turned off frankly, especially younger people. And of course you can get around that with like websites; but things like blogging, tweeting, Facebooking. All those things, in my opinion, help remove that barrier of cynicism that consumers have, because allegedly they’re all about authenticity and being who you are. Those things ultimately get people on your side to want to work with you.

Do you need to spend big money on Video for it to be effective?

I used to spend heaps of time and money when I first started, I was booking out studio time, and green screen time and I was spending a small fortune. But these days with my new iPhone, I just shoot everything on it, and I edit on it too. I mean really you don’t need a lot of money and it keeps you more nimble and it cuts your costs down.

Herman, we are here to talk about video marketing today, but I’m told you are, in fact, a Real Estate Agent?

That’s what they tell me too! (Laughs). Actually my whole family is in real estate. I went to UC Berkley in California, I didn’t study real

estate because that’s not something you can “study” in US, I was a communications major. But when I graduated I guess I couldn’t fight that family gene, just gravitated back towards real estate!

I’ve been doing it for about seven or eight years now, so it’s been close to a decade almost. Although, I always tell my clients that I started in real estate, “when I was knee-high to a pig’s eye”, because I attended most of mum’s open houses on the weekends. I was the little kid doing my homework in the corner.

Why do you choose video as your preferred method of marketing property?

I actually thought video was something fun to do. And it just latched onto the public consciousness, and people in the

real estate business. As a medium, it has really taken off. It’s taken a while for various reasons, but as of May, research shows approximately 83% of Americans have viewed video within the month, so that’s phenomenally high. Now with the advent of cell phones, smart phones and the Internet just getting cheaper and faster, it’s only going to get more and more prevalent. And I just think people are really open to the idea of receiving information through this form.

To be honest, I also get bored really easily as well! When I look at my key strengths as a sales person I really rely on my personality – I’m not a numbers person, so I don’t do stats!! And some people do talk all the time about stats and sales records and all that stuff.

But when I video-blog, I know that people will watch my videos for months, and then I’ll get a call saying, “Oh, I’ve been watching you for a while”, and I know that by the time they call me, they already want to work with me, because they feel as though they know me. That’s the beauty. I don’t have to waste all this time and money other forms of advertising – because I know when a potential customer phones me they kind of already feel like I’m their friend in some ways.

I think with the popularity of YouTube – and all these “amateur-ey” – and I say that in a complimentary way – people doing video, I think that style resonates with consumers now, because it feels authentic and not so “staged” so to speak.

So you actually shoot the video on the iPhone and edit it on the same device?

There’s an App called iMovie, which is like \$5 US, so you can just add music, you can splice your clips together, it’s pretty amazing. I was very much a Blackberry person until very recently.

OK, so we don’t need to make a “big production” out of it; but give us some of your best tips.

Well, it’s just like photography – you want to have some standards, basically. You don’t want to have a baby crying in the background, you don’t want to have all your clutter and bathroom or pictures where the photographer is in the mirror themselves. I mean just standards people, standards! Keep your video very short; people have such short attention spans. I think some agents – especially “over-achievers” – go overboard and

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they ramble on and on, about stuff they can because they can. So two to three minutes tops.

Also, keep it nice and light. I think the whole point of doing video is to procure more business, so when you’re sitting there and speaking in monotones about the features of some three-bedroom house you have on the market, people just tune out right away. Just speak, have a conversation with them, bring them into your life a little bit.

Recently I’ve been doing some design and interior design staging interviews with various people. I basically went to someone’s house and I just shot their place with my iPhone, and did an interview with them. They sent me some images, and I just spliced it to the movie on the iPhone. It literally took me maybe 30 minutes to do, and it looked great. And, in fact, I posted a video blog about it last week, and someone from HGTV who’s appeared many times, said to me, “Oh, my God, I saw your video and can you please come down to LA and shoot my place?” They think it’s professionally done and it’s just on my iPhone.

What if I don’t have an iPhone?

Any video camera will do, you could just go and buy a Kodak play touch or a flip cam, which work well, and they are, like, less than a hundred dollars. You can start filming straight away, plug it into your computer, upload it and you’re done. But always start small.

What about video blogging, how do you find time for everything?

Video blogging is another outlet, in addition to some of the other things that I do. I have a lot of people who ask me, “Herman, how do you blog every single day, or every week, I don’t have time, I just to dip my toes into it”. And I say that’s fine. If you just want to have some video presence on your website, do a three minute introduction yourself. That’s all you really need. They just want to know who you are.

People nowadays are very nosy, people are looking at homes on their own for about six months before they even contact an agent, so while they’re looking at home, trust me they’re looking at realtor profiles too. So if you have a template website, they’re going to think

you’re a template agent. By putting yourself a video up there of yourself, or of listings, it gives them more content, and you need to give them a reason to come back to you.

What if I am really camera shy?

I tell people to be personable and try to imagine that you’re talking to a friend, especially to those poor people who feel sometimes like the camera is assaulting them by looking straight at them! So often I see people shrink back a little bit and they lose their chin, so always kind of push your head a little bit forward and just confront the camera! And also envision the people you’re talking to naked! (laughs).

Also, if it is your first time, I would rehearse it a couple of times. And the great thing about video, if you don’t like the way you look, just delete it and shoot it over again. Practice makes perfect. I’m not really a big fan of writing everything out and reading it, which some people do, it just sounds very stiff. And even for people who are trained actors, it just sounds silly. I just like thinking of four

bullet points you want to make, and just recite them as you go along, but in a very conversational way. And you know what, it’s actually okay to flub it once in a while, when you have a little ‘um’ or you have to rephrase something because that just makes you more real. It just makes them feel like they’re talking to you, and keep it short and sweet. And just be presentable!

Tough question Herman, but what if it’s a really “ugly” house? How do you approach that?

I think we have to appease the client to a certain degree. If they’re extremely adamant about having the really ugly bits included in the video, I think you should include it, but put it at the end of the video and make it really fast. No kidding, the buyers are going to see it eventually anyway, so you shouldn’t – you can’t hide it unless it’s some atrocious thing, but just kind of downplay it in the video if you can.

What’s the worst mistake for video marketing beginners?

Watch your shakiness and make sure your audio is clear!

Above all else, keep your camera steady. Shakiness is one of the worst things you can experience when watching a video. To stop this, you can use a tripod if you like, but if you insist on walking around and doing the guided tour just be aware that you need to hold the camera still. A little shakiness won’t hurt you overall, because people in general will put up with it because that’s just the whole reality TV type thing they’re kind of used to.

But with your audio, the second it goes out, it’s over. I mean if they have to strain to hear you, you’re toast. Make sure the audio is really pumped up and if you need to invest in a small external microphone then so be it.

Any last pieces of advice?

Smile, show the pearly whites. It’s actually more important to be a personable person I think on video, than to be an authority on a subject, because frankly when people turn off the video, they’re going to remember five per cent of what you said, they’re only going to remember the impression they got. So if they got bored or if you drowned them out with stats or something, they’re not going to remember any of that, they’ll only remember that you were boring, so just be happy in yourself.

Herman has some more tips in a special video blog post for Sold Magazine readers at www.sold-expo.com.au. For even more Herman, visit www.habitatforhermanity.com.