

Rich Media Best Practices

1. **Look to rich media as a way to enhance your customers' experience.** As online consumers are becoming more sophisticated, they are going to expect a richer user experience. Your competition may already be utilizing rich media to enhance their site and increase competitive advantage. Rich media technologies are both an online merchandising tool and a way to differentiate you as a trusted leader.
2. **Think carefully to find candidates for rich media.** Technologies such as AJAX, Flex, and Flash can make the user experience dynamic and engaging. However, these technologies must be used carefully and in the right places, so not to affect other critical functionality, such as SEO, website performance and data analytics.
3. **Rich media assets may need to be managed across your company.** Since digital assets can include commercials, demos, customer service presentations, etc., several departments may need to be involved. Digital asset management systems can be used.
4. **Rich media can be used effectively when selling complex products.** Product configuration applications can be used to guide the user through the customization process. These applications help the user select desired and valid options, while seeing their selections graphically represented. An example of this is selecting the color of a shirt and seeing it displayed in that color. Applications that help customers visualize their purchase will increase their confidence to buy. Configuration applications usually require some form of rich media technology to deliver this type of complex user experience.
5. **Add rich media online to increase offline purchases.** More users are researching products online before they purchase them in the store. Online brand messaging and comprehensive product details are becoming crucial in engaging customers and driving sales, online and offline. Rich media usages such as brand messaging, product commercials, high-res product images, video and audio will help influence the customer.
6. **Build your assets to use dynamic parameters.** Parameterized Flash movies are an effective way to dynamically change the content of Flash movies with configurable XML files and eliminate the need to rebuild the Flash asset. This technique will help reuse assets.
7. **Try to get video product tours built for your key products.** Video product tours help a site promote key products and sell them effectively by showing how the product performs, looks, uses, etc. If you can, try to add relevance to the videos by having well-known or celebrity customers demonstrate them (e.g., a professional photographer demonstrating a camera). Be sure to test the placement of this media on your site.
8. **Review the download speeds for your customers.** Rich media means the content is larger so the delivery of the content to the users must be optimized for the internet. Storage and bandwidth management must be able to scale to your users as broadband usage increases.