

Ovation TV

Achieving deeper levels of audience engagement with a KickApps-powered online community

Executive Summary

Ovation TV, the only multi-platform network devoted to art and contemporary culture, chose KickApps to power its new online community for viewers in 2008, with the goal of allowing people who love art to participate with the brand. Members uploaded more than 60,000 works of art within the first 10 months of the OvationTV.com community, a place where members can not only share their creative endeavors, but also form interest groups, join discussions, start blogs, vote on programming, chat live and upload images, video and audio. The KickApps-driven online community allowed OvationTV.com to fulfill an important part of the networks overall mission, facilitating deeper levels of audience engagement with the Ovation TV brand. As a result, in less than a year, Ovation TV's online traffic shot up by 145 percent, page views jumped 311 percent, and the average time spent by users on the site quadrupled.



Ovation Profile

With a mission to “help people live a more artful life,” Ovation TV is a daily mash-up of art and contemporary culture. Since its re-launch to a national audience in 2007, it has built a subscriber base approaching 30 million. Ovation TV uses groundbreaking partnerships with cultural institutions and art education organizations to supplement its existing programming with high-caliber, locally relevant content.

“When you line KickApps up against all the competition, there really isn’t any competition. You have a huge smorgasbord of features and functionality, and you’re off to the races in three weeks.”

Aaron Wahle,
Director of
Digital Media,
Ovation TV

Situation

When Aaron Wahle joined Ovation TV as director of digital media in the fall of 2007, one of his first priorities was to drive website traffic and increase interaction with the brand. Ovation TV had a core viewership of art lovers, but their experience with OvationTV.com typically amounted to checking the programming schedule and leaving the site after a minute or two. With a small staff and limited budget, Aaron needed a way to increase his division’s value, for viewers and for the channel. It was his first key project in a new job. He turned to the KickApps social media platform to create an online community and viral applications such as widgets.

KickApps’ Solution

Ovation TV unveiled its community site in May of 2008, within just three short weeks of signing on with KickApps. The site’s features, which include media uploads, blogs and in-depth discussions, promote the exchange of art and ideas generated by community members.

KickApps functionality enabled Ovation TV’s audience to interact with the brand on a daily basis. Major figures such as choreographer Mark Morris and Chicago’s History Museum have taken a turn at “curating” the community’s front page. The homepage curator role was also awarded to one young artist who won a “My Art” competition via popular vote within the community.

Ovation TV promoted its new online community via on-air commercials and an online ad campaign. The channel focused on building quality over quantity in its membership, concerning itself less with volume, and more with loyalty and participation. “We try to lay off the marketing messages [to members] in the community,” Wahle says. “We want that to be their community.” This has also meant staying away from ads, to start. Now that the site is on solid ground, Ovation TV will begin testing ads and video overlays that make sense for the audience’s sensibility and demographic.

Results

The Ovation TV team built a loyal membership of more than 6,000 (and growing) art lovers, in under a year. After launching its KickApps-powered website, online traffic was up 145 percent, page views jumped 311 percent, and the average time spent by users on the site quadrupled. That growth “has everything to do with the social network.”

Within Ovation TV, the addition of the KickApps-powered community has boosted ad inventory, expanded the potential for direct sales, and enhanced the channel’s affiliate sales proposition. The benefits also extend to advertisers: Geico, for example, is sponsoring an online group inviting community members to create “15-minute masterpieces,” a tie-in with the insurer’s ad campaign. “That’s a much stronger sell and a better way to interact with that brand,” Wahle says. “It’s a great way to connect our advertisers with our viewers.” He adds that KickApps’ widgets make it easy to pass assets created on Ovation TV’s social network back to advertisers for their own sites. “We hand those out all the time,” he says.