



PSA CONTESTS:

How to Engage Youth Audiences in Your Educational Efforts

By Bill Goodwill

It may have started with the phenomenal popularity of You Tube, which has spawned the creation of over 200 other online video sites for posting video content. It could have started with the advent of high-quality, low-cost video cameras and increasingly powerful editing software that can turn out professional looking videos. Or it may have tapped into the natural creative imagination of today's youth who have grown up on video games, IPODs and entertainment software.

Whatever the influences, these trends have morphed into one of the fastest growing communications techniques to embrace the non-profit world – PSA contests. For example, a Google search on “PSA Contests” results in 631,000 references.



psa contests

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From ultra-conservative government agencies, such as the Centers for Disease Control, to bare-bones non-profit organizations and everything in between, they are reaching out to their target audiences to engage them in a meaningful way.

For would-be videographers, they are also using PSA contests to connect with some of the topical social issues of the day, and earning money along the way.

A Checklist for Contests

Like any other communications tactic, PSA contests must have a structure and an implementation plan that will result in the desired outcome – a win-win situation that benefits both the contest sponsor and the applicants.

Following are the requirements for launching a successful PSA contest:

- A dedicated part of the sponsoring organization's website, for posting rules, compensation, creative guidelines, talent release forms and other details which will result in meaningful submissions

- A widget (video player) to show the winning entrant and runner-up
- A committee of judges to select the winning entrants
- The benefits to the winning entrant beyond just a financial stipend, i.e.
- a statuette, showing the winning video at conferences, publicity, etc.
- Promotional plan to connect the sponsoring organization with the amateur videographer community
- An entry form to provide the guidelines and to capture the details of each applicant (see sample in Appendix)
- Legal clearance that permits the sponsor compete and total use of the winning video for its own promotional purposes (see sample in Appendix)
- Talent clearance to ensure there are no claims against the sponsoring organization for using visual images of the individuals shown in the PSA

Rules

The next thing to create is a list of rules or guidelines which will govern the entries and the format for submissions. Some sample rules:

- Only currently enrolled high school students (grades 9 to 12) who attend high school or are members of sponsoring organizations can submit entries for consideration, and participants must be legal residents of the United States.
- PSAs must be submitted as a full-quality/full-frame (720 x 480 pixel) NTSC, recorded on DVD. Entries should be between :30 to :60 seconds in length.
- Producers must submit talent release forms for all persons used in the PSA, whether it is their image, or their voice and all participants must agree to appear in the PSA by completing and signing Talent Release Forms. Sample Talent Release Forms can be found at: <https://www.premiumbeat.com/blog/free-talent-release-form-film-video-productions/> and must be submitted for each person shown in the PSA.
- Entries must include a script and can be submitted via postal mail, or electronically by going to [website URL] and uploading the files in H.264 format.
- All entries must be submitted by the deadline or cannot be considered.
- Entries will be judged by a panel of qualified individuals, including professionals in the media and broadcast industry. Winning entries will be notified by the chairman of the selection committee personally and via email. The winning entry and a runner-up will be displayed on the (enter URL for the website).
- Entries must contain all original material (including music, images, etc.).

- No trademarked, copyrighted, or otherwise branded materials, logos, products, etc. may be used without express written permission from the owner, business, and/or organization. This can include logos on t-shirts, trademarked brands on products, etc.
- If entries contain copyrighted, branded, and/or trademarked materials without proper permission, those entries will be disqualified.
- Entries become the property of [name of the sponsoring organization] which may use them for future promotional efforts..
- There is no charge for submitting an entry to [name of the contest]
- Participants may submit two entries per contest.
- Entries will be disqualified if:
 - They contain vulgar or inappropriate content
 - Are not turned in with all proper paperwork; have postmarks later than the specified due date; or use copyrighted material. No trademarked, copyrighted, or otherwise branded materials, logos, products, etc. may be used without express written permission from the owner, business, and/or organization. This can include logos on t-shirts, trademarked brands on products, etc.
- Adults may assist with production, but they are limited to only verbal guidance. Adults are allowed to be actors, but not content contributors.
- There is no limit on the number of students who can work on a PSA. The PSA must be entered under one name, and there will only be one prize awarded for the winning PSA. Participants can choose to divide the prize on their own terms if applicable.
- The deadline is [enter date].
- Entries should include an application and talent release form.
- Flash videos, can be used but it must play in a stand-alone format (.swf) without the use of a Web browser. Also, with Flash send the .fla file so it can be showcased on the Web at its most optimum level of performance.

Prizes

The guidelines should provide as much detail as possible on what and who gets prizes. For example, “The winning entrant will receive a cash stipend of \$2,500 with the runner-up receiving \$1,000.00. Additionally, the winner will be introduced at [enter name of the organization’s national conference, and will be featured in extensive promotional efforts.”

Entrant Benefits

- Typically the stipend given to PSA contest winners is \$2,500 with the runner-up getting \$1,000, but it is probably not the financial reward that will motivate high-quality submissions...it is the bragging rights. Here are some ways that contest winners could be promoted:

- The PSA could be shown at the sponsoring organization's national conference and a plaque or statuette given to the winning producer who would be introduced at the conference.
- A press release could be released via any of the online distribution services that permit the PSA to be embedded such as PR Web
- The PSA would be posted on the sponsoring organization's website
- Posting to *You Tube* and some 200 other online video sites