

With 'Inventions' GOOD's Digital Studio Steps Up

by **Marc Hustvedt** on September 4th, 2009

There's a lot to be said about making content for your audience. It's another to be able to sum that audience up in just six words.

FOR PEOPLE WHO GIVE A DAMN.

A magazine with a purpose. For the some 230,000 readers of the bi-monthly **GOOD Magazine** which launched back in 2006, it's been more than just cleverly designed explanations of the latest social and environmental issues, but a hub for actually doing something about them. And that starts with the subscription fee, with 100% of the \$20 annual subscription going one of the several non-profit orgs you have to choose from, like Room to Read, Teach for America or Kiva.

Now three years after its launch, GOOD has expanded beyond just a magazine, to a formidable online blogging presence, events and even venturing into film financing. The extension into web video content was also a natural move, lending its unique voice and highly crafted design touches to one of the fastest growing forms of online media.

That's where **GOOD Video** comes in. It serves as the company's video network with a number of original web series getting front billing—shows like *GOOD News*, *GOOD Business*, *Look*, *Transparency* and newcomer *Inventions* (see above with Atom.com regular Nick Thune). So far the video team has produced over 80 videos that together have racked up a non-trivial 18 million streams.

For the Los Angeles-based company, there's always been an interest in entertainment. Founder Ben Goldhirsh even spun out a sister company to GOOD, Reason Pictures, which backed a number of films including Sundance fave, *Son of Rambow* and a handful of documentaries like HBO's *Which Way Home* and upcoming *By the People: The Election of Barack Obama*. But late last year, the company realized it needed to focus on its core brand and merged its three independent units under one company, GOOD Worldwide.





I spoke to GOOD's President, Craig Shapiro, who says he sees an opportunity in creating content somewhere in between the highly-produced television content of Hulu and the lower-brow UGC fare on YouTube. As Shapiro puts it, "there's a gap in the middle."

Shapiro used to head up New Media for GOOD before the reorg put him at the top spot, perhaps a subtle sign of what's to come for GOOD Video. I asked him if

what they are building is essentially a digital content studio, and he agreed. He said that the company is shifting the resources it had earlier committed to the film financing arm into the digital studio.

It's easy to say you're building a digital studio, but it's another thing to just do it. GOOD has the unique position of already having the two hardest parts of the web content studio puzzle already shored up—a targeted, high-value audience and solid relationships with top-tier advertisers through its magazine. And there's the GOOD site itself which is distribution on its own with a non-shabby 2 million or so unique visitors a month.

For further distribution, Shapiro and GOOD team are still experimenting to find the models that work for them. "It's the million dollar question that everybody's trying not figure out—does super distribution work?," pondered Shapiro. They do have their own [YouTube channel](#) and a few deals here and there with other video sites, including a license deal with Babelgum on its [Our Earth channel](#).

"We're still in the experimentation phase and we're seeing a lot of interest from advertisers," added Shapiro. "It's still early." Those advertisers however, are buying into the video extension, with Delta faucets coming on board to back Inventions.

"I think Inventions as series does a wonderful job of bringing it down to a level of, 'I get it,' said Shapiro. "It's using your imagination to comes up with ways to push the world forward."

As they grow out their web series slate, in which Shapiro hinted that Inventions will play a key role, there's an opportunity for outside content creators looking to tap into GOOD's stable of pragmatic idealists. Some of the web series are externally shot and produced with just the post production being handled in-house to give the shows that signature GOOD design aesthetic.

For now, like many players in the web series scene, there's a lot of fluidity in the business models. Exclusive licensing deals or shotgun style "be everywhere" approaches can be debated back and forth. For GOOD, it means using video to further serve its informed and social media-savvy audience wherever they happen to be.