



Optimizing Your YouTube Channel

by Emily Reeves 9.2013

Overview

Video content is increasingly becoming important to brands trying to be seen online and engage with customers beyond the point-of-sale. YouTube is the second most used search engine behind Google, which happens to own YouTube. This digital whitepaper will provide guidance for optimizing your YouTube channel and leveraging your video content to drive engagement with your target audiences.

Why

Nearly 180 million U.S. Internet users (about 74 percent of the U.S. Internet audience) watched over 36 billion videos online in January 2013 alone, according to comScore.

Google Search. Any web property owned by Google means that content on those properties are going to get a higher ranking in Google search, the most popular search engine in use. Google disputes this claim, but if you are serious about getting your videos indexed with Google, there is no reason to risk not going to YouTube and optimizing your videos.

Internal Search. YouTube has a sophisticated internal search algorithm, so participants can rank for specific keywords or phrases just like they would within a regular search engine. This means there are things you can do to optimize your videos within YouTube.

Use. When you think about online videos, where do you think about going? YouTube. According to YouTube, they have hundreds of millions of users from around the world using their video platform. That's a lot of users—and potential customers.

Valued Content. YouTube says that up to 72 hours of video are uploaded every minute to their platform, resulting in nearly 12 years of content that's uploaded every day. Either that's a lot of cat, bacon and twerking videos, or users find real value in using this service. It also speaks to the popularity of video media in general: people like YouTube and they expect brands to have videos.

Video increases time spent on pages. Images tells stories more effectively than words given the short attention spans of audiences these days and people prefer videos over reading. Video encourages longer view times and more engaged site visitors, which will boost your analytics. "Length of visits" is an indication of relevancy. Longer visits via highly engaging video content can yield higher conversions. This varies across industries but the search statistics show that viewers are 64 to 85 percent more likely to buy after watching a product video.

How

The more relevant the video is for users, the higher the rankings will be for those pages. Relevance is crucial for effectiveness and search data. Be sure your video is of high quality and rich with content that engages viewers, encourages longer page visits, and becomes a linkable or shareable asset to your brand (depending on your audience).

The first 48 hours are critical to your ranking success. Engagement metrics such as views, comments, likes, searches, shares, and even press coverage create cross-channel buzz, video virality, and search virility.

Embedded video links create more relevance about your site to users. This will catch Google's attention and reward your site in Google Search. Embedding video presents a great opportunity to build your site's authority, your brand's digital footprint, and your business.

Tips

Taking the time to optimize your video on the YouTube platform will save you some on-page optimization time, so make sure you get this right the first time.

If you don't already have a YouTube account, start with Google+. Google has now linked all of their web properties through Google+, so it is just easier and cleaner to start with Google+ and build out from there. If you already had a YouTube account, backtrack to link it to the proper Google+ account and get all of your accounts set up BEFORE you start with any of the optimization recommendations. Otherwise, you will end up doing them multiple times and you will get confused by your multiple accounts.

Title:

Do some keyword research around your video's content, then craft a title that incorporates relevant keyword usage, program name, product, and/or brand mention. Choose a catchy, relevant title, and make sure it's not keyword stuffed (Google will punish you for this).

Description:

Craft a description that illustrates both the purpose of the video, as well as the desired result after the user watches it. Giving these directives is your chance to place a call to action on your video to generate popularity around your video and to provide a link to a particular portion of your product offering or simply to related information on your site. Some examples include:

- Share
- Comment and/or Like
- Visit a particular portion of the website

Category:

Pick an appropriate category for the video that correlates to its subject matter. Categories are shown within the video module, so users can see this when they watch a video. This is also used for YouTube's internal search, so make sure you are accurate.

Tags:

Make sure to create tags for each video. YouTube uses these tags for internal video search. Note: this has recently changed – viewers used to be able to see these tags.

Increase site relevance and links through social media: Social media is the fastest way to drive interaction and site authority. Varied, regularly updated, creative social media content will boost engagement, return visits, and viral sharing. In January 2013, Facebook streamed more than 425 million videos, according to comScore. Link to your social channels on your YouTube channel and video descriptions and share your videos on your social channels.

COMMUNITY

Build your community and engage with them. Remember, on the web it is not a “build it and they will come” opportunity. You need to make the effort to drive people to your content, then give them an experience that will encourage them to come back and bring others with them. As with all other social media channels, YouTube takes time and effort to build, cultivate and manage. Be sure to budget for this time and effort.

Online video is social. People are drawn to online video and web series because they can interact with the channel in ways that they can't with television. The ability for creators to interact with their viewers is key to the medium. So, speak to your audience, and listen to what they say. If you actively engage with your audience through your channel, it will pay off in the long run. Your fans will become your social advocates – empower them to grow awareness about your brand and spread the word.

- Think of the communities you're involved in: maybe it is a book club, a sports team, or your college alumni group. What **qualities of these communities** make you want to be a member? Can you recreate some of those same qualities in your YouTube community?
- Give viewers a **reason to support your cause**. Why? Well, there are a lot of other things your viewers could be doing instead of watching your videos. What value does your channel and the content you create provide?
- Once someone has visited your channel once, **why should they come back for more?**
- **Define a mission for your community.** Think of this as your channel's mission statement. Create a channel trailer to communicate this “mission” and feature it on your YouTube channel.
- **Make sure your community has a leader.** It can be a literal host, a group with a consistent voice, or just a figurative brand/authority.
- **Develop relationships with top contributors.** Think of each viewer as an individual. Respond to frequent commenters, and take a genuine interest in them. Respond to comments in the first few hours after you publish a video. These first commenters are your loyal community members, so keep them engaged. Your own comments on your uploaded videos get pinned to show up at the top of the comments section, prominently featuring your engagement with the fans.

- **Recognize the contributions of individuals in the community.** People love to be recognized; responding to first-time contributors is a way to encourage ongoing engagement. Consider recognizing your community through in-video shout outs, or by offering other rewards like fan merchandise or exclusive content shared through unlisted videos.
- **Create content about your community.** Whenever possible, include your community in the video content itself. Shout them out by name, acknowledge that you're reading their comments, or even let viewers choose the direction of a special feature. Many creators find ways to work-in their fans, letting the whole community know how much they appreciate their viewership.
- **Spur conversation.** Create relevant content that generates conversation among your community. Ask for their opinions and feedback. Remember, good debates are a part of a healthy community; only remove / flag hateful comments targeted at an individual or group.
- **Use off-platform social tools to engage with your community.** Do some research and figure out which social platforms your community is actively involved in. Jump into the conversation on those social networks. There are many social networks that YouTubers use as part of their social strategy. Some popular platforms include Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, Pinterest, Reddit, and Google+.

Interested in learning more?

Contact Emily Reeves at ereeves@stoneward.com for help planning your brand's digital engagements.

About Stone Ward

Stone Ward is a full-service ad agency. Established in 1984 by Larry Stone and Millie Ward, today the agency employs 52, with capitalized billings exceeding \$40 million. The agency's offices are in Chicago and Little Rock.

About Emily Reeves, Director of Digital Innovation & Insight Planning

As the agency's digital champion, Emily Reeves proves that Stone Ward has the offerings, expertise and alliances to bring sound, measurable digital innovation to our clients' marketing efforts. A seasoned communications strategist with a passion for all things digital, Emily has distinguished herself as an avid blogger, social media speaker, industry observer and moderator. In her role as digital thought leader for Stone Ward, Emily collaborates with our team of agency leaders in creative, brand management, public relations, media, digital technology and video production to create relevant ways to tell our clients' stories in the digital space and to provide meaningful measurement and analytics as a tool for calculating our efforts. Emily's focus on measurement extends to her duties as the agency's research leader, where she works with Stone Ward clients to develop and execute research plans that inform integrated client marketing efforts.

Sources

[YouTube Optimization Series](#)

[Ultimate YouTube Guide](#)

[YouTube Video Optimization For Dummies](#)

[Optimizing Videos For Search: A Complete Guide](#)

[YouTube Keyword Tool](#)

[YouTube Optimization Checklist](#)

[YouTube Help](#)