



YOUTUBE SEO

A PRACTICAL GUIDE ON OPTIMIZING
YOUR VIDEOS FOR SEARCH

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CHAPTER ONE

WHAT YOUTUBE IS LOOKING FOR

YOUTUBE'S GOALS

AND HOW TO MAKE THEM WORK FOR YOU

If there's only one thing you take away from this ebook, let it be this:
YouTube is an advertising platform.

As such, YouTube's primary goals are to get its users to:

1. Watch more videos
2. Engage with those videos
3. Stick around on YouTube as long as possible

The more videos that are watched on YouTube, the more advertising revenue YouTube earns.

Makes sense, right?

But what you may not realize is that YouTube's search and recommendation algorithms are designed to achieve those same objectives.

That means it's in your best interest to align your video strategy with YouTube's goals.

This ebook explains how to do just that by digging into the most important factors that help your videos rank in YouTube and Google search results.

First, we'll look at how YouTube evaluates and ranks videos, in addition to sharing some tips you can put into place **right away** to help your content rank highly.

HOW DOES YOUTUBE DETERMINE WHICH VIDEOS DESERVE TO RANK FOR A GIVEN KEYWORD?

Getting your content to rank in YouTube search results is a two-step process.

First, YouTube needs to know what your video is about. YouTube then determines if your content is worthy of ranking for that keyword.

The focus of this ebook is to help you understand how to use YouTube's rules as effectively and efficiently as possible to achieve your marketing goals.

WHAT WE'LL COVER IN THIS EBOOK

Chapter 2 offers tips for crafting compelling video titles and provides formulas you can use to create your own click-worthy headlines.

In Chapter 3, you'll discover how to write killer YouTube descriptions that not only increase your **search rank**, but also your **click-through rate** from search results.

Chapter 4 is about Tags, an effective but underused YouTube ranking factor. There's more nuance to these than most people expect, so don't skip this chapter!

Chapter 5 explains how YouTube "reads" your audio and how you can upload transcriptions so YouTube can find keywords you should be ranking for.

Finally, Chapter 6 examines some of YouTube's more complicated ranking factors, in addition to strategies you can use to improve your position in SERPs (search engine results pages).



FIRST, YOUTUBE NEEDS TO KNOW WHAT YOUR VIDEO IS ABOUT. YOUTUBE THEN DETERMINES IF YOUR VIDEO IS WORTHY OF RANKING FOR THAT TOPIC.

CHAPTER TWO

**IT STARTS WITH
GREAT TITLES**

VIDEO TITLES

THE MOST IMPORTANT FACTOR IN YOUR VIDEO'S SUCCESS

If you want your videos to perform well on YouTube, invest time writing a great title.

The viral blog Upworthy [credits their rapid growth](#) to their policy of creating at least 25 titles for each video they post. Then, they test those titles and settle on the highest performing variation.

Now, Upworthy reaches more than 50 MILLION people each month!

While you may not see the same type of viewership in your niche, the principle still holds true: you need great titles if you want your YouTube channel to grow.

Great titles serve two essential functions:

1. They tell YouTube/Google what your video is about
2. They entice potential viewers to click and watch your video

Let's examine each of these functions one at a time.

TITLING YOUR VIDEOS FOR SEO

Creating titles for YouTube videos is similar to writing headlines for articles on your website.

Below you'll learn about the essential elements you should take into consideration when writing a title for your next video project.

RELEVANCE

Relevance is the most important element when deciding on a title for your video. If your title isn't relevant, you may get lots of low-quality views, which sends a signal to YouTube that your video doesn't deserve to rank.

EXACT PHRASE-MATCHING

This is related to relevance, but it's also helpful from a keyword perspective.

Whenever possible, include in your title the **exact phrase** that your ideal viewer would type into Google or YouTube's search field.

While this isn't always possible, it is a powerful way to rank highly for your selected key phrase.

SEMANTICS

Semantic search is relatively new, but it's fast becoming an important factor in YouTube SEO. Basically, YouTube and Google are becoming better at understanding what your audience is **actually** looking for when they type in a search query.

For that reason, using synonyms can be very effective, even if you're not targeting that **exact** keyword, provided that it makes your title more clickable.

For example, your target keyword may be "Grow YouTube Traffic," but "grow" is not very compelling. But if you title your video "Boost YouTube Traffic," YouTube will likely treat those two phrases as rough equivalents from a keyword perspective. But because "Boost" will generally get more clickthroughs, you should use that word in your title.

Make sense?



RELEVANCE IS THE MOST IMPORTANT ELEMENT WHEN DECIDING ON A TITLE FOR YOUR VIDEO. IF YOUR TITLE ISN'T RELEVANT, YOU MAY GET LOTS OF LOW-QUALITY VIEWS, WHICH SENDS A SIGNAL TO YOUTUBE THAT YOUR VIDEO DOESN'T DESERVE TO RANK.

KEYWORD PLACEMENT

All else being equal, a title with the keyword/phrase in the beginning will perform better than a title where the keyword is in the middle or end of the title.

For example, consider the two titles below:

1. How to Get More YouTube Traffic
2. Get More YouTube Traffic: How To Boost Viewership

While both titles are reasonably good, if all else were equal, the second title would rank more highly for the key phrase “Get more YouTube traffic.”

However if the first title has a higher clickthrough rate (CTR), then it would likely rank higher than the second. Although this is a best practice, you should be comfortable using your best judgment and break this rule when it makes sense to do so.

CLICK-THROUGH RATE

This lesser-known factor affects your video’s rankings on YouTube. Here’s why it’s important:

Say your video ranks #9 for the key phrase “Get more YouTube traffic.”

With a great title, your video may get more click-throughs than the 8th-ranked video – a strong indicator to YouTube that your video deserves a higher rank (all else being equal).

But be aware that “click-baiting” simply won’t work. **Your video must be relevant.**



ALL ELSE BEING EQUAL, A TITLE WITH THE KEYWORD/PHRASE IN THE BEGINNING WILL PERFORM BETTER THAN A TITLE WHERE THE KEYWORD IS IN THE MIDDLE OR END OF THE TITLE.

PROVEN HEADLINE FORMULAS THAT GET CLICKED

One of the most difficult things about writing great titles is that most people don't know what they look like . . . until they see one.

So to help get you started, here are a few proven headline formulas you can use to write click-worthy titles for your videos.

FORMULA 1: LIST HEADLINES

[NUMBER] + [ADJECTIVE] + [TARGET KEYWORD] + [PROMISE]

Example: "7 Simple YouTube Hacks That Will Generate More Subscribers"

FORMULA 2: HOW-TO HEADLINES

[HOW TO] + [TARGET KEYWORD]

Example: "How to Write Great Video Titles"

FORMULA 3: LITTLE KNOWN WAYS TO... HEADLINES

[NUMBER] + [LITTLE KNOWN WAYS TO] + [TARGET KEYWORD]

Example: "3 Little Known Ways To Get More YouTube Subscribers"

For more great headline formulas, just search Google for "headline formulas." Several great copywriters have already compiled large lists of proven headline formulas you can start using right away.



FOR MORE GREAT HEADLINE FORMULAS, JUST SEARCH GOOGLE FOR "HEADLINE FORMULAS." SEVERAL GREAT COPYWRITERS HAVE ALREADY COMPILED LARGE LISTS OF PROVEN HEADLINE FORMULAS YOU CAN START USING RIGHT AWAY.

CHOOSING “VIDEO KEYWORDS”

One final word on titling: Video Keywords.

Certain “special” video keywords will help your video rank on Google, in addition to YouTube.

Although this should not be your primary focus, keep in mind that Google favors YouTube videos that include the following words:

- “How to” keywords (“How to Write a Killer YouTube Title”)
- Tutorial keywords (“Tutorial: Writing Great YouTube Titles”)
- Review keywords (“TrueView Advertising Reviews”)
- Funny keywords (“Epic YouTube Fails,” or “Funny Cat Videos”)
- Video keywords (Video: How to Write Killer YouTube Titles)

To confirm that your selected keyword has video results, type it into Google.

If you see YouTube videos in the results, it’s a keyword that could get you onto Google’s first page.

While these special video keywords can help you rank your content on Google, it’s still no guarantee. Your videos **must have value** independent of your Google SEO strategy.

Remember, even though Google is the top search engine, YouTube is #2.

Keep these special words in mind when writing to get added exposure. Just don’t break your title to do so.



TO CONFIRM THAT YOUR SELECTED KEYWORD HAS VIDEO RESULTS, TYPE IT INTO GOOGLE. IF YOU SEE YOUTUBE VIDEOS IN THE RESULTS, IT’S A KEYWORD THAT COULD GET YOU ONTO GOOGLE’S FIRST PAGE.

CHAPTER THREE

CREATING COMPELLING DESCRIPTIONS

VIDEO DESCRIPTIONS

THE BIGGEST MISSED OPPORTUNITY ON YOUTUBE

Aside from the video's title, your description is YouTube's best clue about which search terms you want to rank for.

Contrary to popular belief, using YouTube does not mean you can get out of writing. In fact, YouTube still relies heavily on the words you use to determine what your video is about.

And just like website content, the more words you use to describe your video, the better search engines like Google and YouTube can index it.

THE BENEFITS OF KILLER YOUTUBE DESCRIPTIONS

YouTube descriptions have three primary benefits:

1. Encouraging click-throughs from search engine result pages
2. Telling search engines what your video is about
3. Adding extra value to your viewers

First, include relevant keywords/phrases that you want your video to rank for. Write it like a 300-500 word blog post and include your target keyword, as well as synonyms or supporting keywords you may want to target.

Keep in mind that the first 150 characters of your description will appear as your video's meta description in Google SERPs. To encourage more clickthroughs and improve your search rank, ensure your description starts strong and includes your target keyword.

For those first 150 characters, try using the [Problem > Agitate > Solution](#) or [Before - After - Bridge](#) frameworks. They both create a “knowledge gap” that people find irresistibly clickable.

Finally, descriptions can be used to provide extra value to your viewers. So in addition to discussing the topic, consider linking to related content or a landing page on your website.

If you reference anything in the video, be sure to link to the source. This is both a common courtesy, as well as a promotion opportunity (if you email the source and mention you linked to them).

THE ANATOMY OF A KILLER YOUTUBE DESCRIPTION

Conventional wisdom suggests that your YouTube description be structured as follows:

Lines 1-2: Curiosity-invoking description that includes your target keyword

Line 3: Link to landing page on your website (use offers, or “[lead magnets](#),” to collect emails)

Line 4-End: 300-500 words on the subject in the video, with any additional sources included as links.

USE BULLETS IN YOUR DESCRIPTION

As with all forms of copywriting, [using bullets](#) creates visual space that makes it easier for your readers (or viewers, in this case) to get the main ideas.

Plus, you may be able to include all your target keywords in a bulleted list, which is really helpful if you don’t have much to write about.



IF YOU REFERENCE ANYTHING IN THE VIDEO, BE SURE TO LINK TO THE SOURCE. THIS IS BOTH A COMMON COURTESY, AS WELL AS A PROMOTION OPPORTUNITY.

- MARCUS KRIEG, WIREBUZZ

SAMPLE DESCRIPTION FROM REELSEO

Published on Sep 18, 2014

<http://www.reelseo.com/3-metrics-yout...>

How do you know if your channel is above or below average with how many comments you're getting, how many likes your videos get, or even how many of your subscribers are watching your videos? Dane Golden has studied many channels and have come up with some rough averages to help you determine whether or not your channel is performing above average or below average. We look at 3 YouTube ratios:

1. Comments to Views
2. Likes to Views
3. Views to Subscribers

Check out <http://www.octoly.com>

Tube Talk on iTunes:

<https://itunes.apple.com/us/podcast/r...>

VISIT REELSEO.com FOR TONS MORE VIDEO NEWS & TIPS

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<https://itunes.apple.com/us/podcast/r...>

SUBSCRIBE TO OUR EMAIL LIST!

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Twitter ► <http://twitter.com/reelseo>

Linkedin ► <http://linkedin.com/today/reelseo.com>

ReelSEO ► <http://www.reelseo.com>

Category Howto & Style

License Standard YouTube License

SHOW LESS

ReelSEO's Descriptions: ReelSEO follows most of the best practices I've shared in this ebook. They do a couple things differently based on their own testing, but overall they follow a similar structure to what we recommend.

Takeaway: Know the rules, but always be testing so you know when to break them.

ALWAYS TEST ASSUMPTIONS

Best practices are great when you're getting started, because you'll land close to the mark. But as with all "best practices," it's important to test your assumptions when you have enough viewers to get valid data.

DON'T FORGET TO ASK!

Most YouTubers won't click on your description if they don't know there's something worthwhile there.

Too often, brands will produce a video without considering the optimization elements. This is a huge missed opportunity to "cook optimization" into the video.

For example, verbally invite your viewers to click on the links in your description and explain what they can expect if they do (free download, coupon, greater details on a related topic, etc).

Alternatively, you may want users to click on a subscribe annotation in the video player itself.

The act of asking increases the amount of engagement you'll get on your videos.

To get even more out of this, tell people why they should subscribe. Consider telling your viewers what your next video is about and encourage them to subscribe to make sure they get it.

Or you may want to host a giveaway to get more subscriptions. However you do it, it's essential that you ask verbally in the video.



**REMEMBER TO VERBALLY INVITE VIEWERS TO
CLICK ON THE LINKS IN YOUR DESCRIPTION
AND EXPLAIN WHAT THEY CAN EXPECT.**

CHAPTER FOUR

HOW TO USE META TAGS

YOUTUBE TAGS

DON'T IGNORE THESE

YouTube's tags don't get much love, but they're more important than their reputation would suggest.

The reason they're ignored in the YouTube community is that they don't have a significant impact on your search ranking. This makes sense since YouTube cares more about what your audience thinks of the video than the specific words you use to describe it.

However, tags do present YouTube creators an opportunity to generate additional views and even steal audience from your competitors.

THE BENEFITS OF YOUTUBE TAGS

YouTube tags have two primary benefits:

1. Telling YouTube what keywords your video should rank for
2. Generating clickthroughs from related videos (including your competitor's)

Any time you have an opportunity to include relevant keywords/phrases, use it, but don't get carried away and start keyword stuffing (that's still a no-no!).

However, optimizing for discovery in the related videos section of YouTube is a lesser-known benefit of YouTube tagging.

Related videos appear in two places: on the YouTube sidebar and at the very end of YouTube videos.

Interestingly, many brands won't use YouTube for fear they'll introduce their viewers to the competition.

However, this is not as big a deal as you may think. In fact, more often, the inverse is true; YouTube recommendations can quickly account for a large percentage of your organic views...if you use tags properly.

WHAT TO INCLUDE IN YOUR YOUTUBE TAGS

Naturally, you'll want to include your target keyword or key phrase, as well as any synonyms, in your tags.

You only have around 120 characters for the tags section, but use as many tags as possible. Usually, this falls somewhere around 10 or so.

In addition to your target keywords, you may also consider choosing keywords for closely-related topics. The reason is that, if your video and another video have similar tags, your video is likely to show as a "recommended" video for their viewers to watch next.

USING TAGS TO TARGET YOUR COMPETITOR'S AUDIENCE

If you know that your competitor has some popular videos, consider creating several videos around the same topic and use your tags strategically to try and rank as "recommended videos" for their viewers.

Currently, YouTube reserves the top 4 slots in the sidebar for related content from the creator's YouTube channel, but you could quickly fill up the remaining related video slots by creating videos on that topic and tagging them strategically.



YOUTUBE RECOMMENDATIONS CAN QUICKLY ACCOUNT FOR A LARGE PERCENTAGE OF YOUR ORGANIC VIEWS...IF YOU USE TAGS PROPERLY.

- MARCUS KRIEG, WIREBUZZ

SUGGESTED VIDEO VIEWS ARE SIGNIFICANT & HIGH QUALITY

One of the YouTube channels we manage at WireBuzz is in the ultra-competitive breast cancer industry. At the time of writing it earns over 60,000 organic views each month.

Of those views, about 22% come from YouTube's suggested video feature, a testament to the power of tagging.

Plus, the value of a recommended view is much greater than those from other sources. They get an average view duration that is 9 seconds longer than the next highest-quality traffic source. (Our #2 traffic source is embedded videos on 3rd party sites, if you were curious.)

Since view duration is also one of the top two SEO ranking signals, this source of traffic can really help improve your video's search rank.

It also suggests that recommendations from YouTube carry a fairly strong social proof component, so people trust the video because YouTube recommended it.

Another possibility is that viewers who just watched a video about your topic are in a research mindset, so they may be more patient when trying to find the answer to their question.

SOME TRICKY DETAILS THAT AREN'T EXACTLY INTUITIVE

Tags are definitely valuable when used effectively.

That said, there are a couple non-intuitive elements to keep in mind.



PLUS, THE VALUE OF A RECOMMENDED VIEW IS MUCH GREATER THAN THOSE FROM OTHER SOURCES. THEY GET AN AVERAGE VIEW DURATION THAT IS 9 SECONDS LONGER THAN THE NEXT HIGHEST-QUALITY TRAFFIC SOURCE (EMBEDDED PLAYERS).

One of the biggest mistakes brands make is using only long-tail keywords in their YouTube tags.

YouTube tags are “exact-match,” meaning the tag is EXACTLY what you type in – all the words together and in the same order.

The following example illustrates what this means in practice:

Say you’re trying to rank for the key phrase “Advanced YouTube SEO.”

It wouldn’t be wrong to include that key phrase as one of your tags, but don’t forget to break that key phrase up in your tags too.

In this example, you should include these tags as well:

- “YouTube SEO”
- “Advanced SEO”
- “Video SEO”
- “Advanced video seo”
- “YouTube”
- “SEO”
- “Search Engine Optimization”

Ultimately, this ensures that you rank for closely-related search terms in addition to your target search term. Use synonyms, fragments and other related terms to cover your bases.

Also, YouTube’s tags are plural and tense-sensitive.

This means the words “video” and “videos” would be treated differently, as would “have” and “had.” Make sure you’re precise and use the right words in your tags.



TAGS ARE EXACT-MATCH, SO BE PRECISE IN YOUR TAGS

- MARCUS KRIEG, WIREBUZZ

CHAPTER FIVE

TRANSCRIPTIONS FOR SEO

VIDEO TRANSCRIPTIONS

MAKE IT EASY FOR GOOGLE TO READ YOUR VIDEO

It's a myth that YouTube can't read audio from your videos.

However, YouTube is really bad at reading audio, so you should upload video transcriptions into YouTube's closed captioning system to make sure it's right.

This is easily the simplest thing you can do to improve your video's search rank.

WHY YOU NEED TRANSCRIPTIONS

You're probably starting to see a recurring theme: you must make it easy for YouTube to understand what your video is really about.

In each of the preceding chapters, we've discussed ways to provide YouTube with enough context to rank your video for your target keyword.

Transcriptions are no different.

But if YouTube can read your audio, why do you need to upload transcriptions?

Consider the following example from one of our recent video strategy reviews (names omitted to protect our client's identity).

What YouTube Reads:

00:03	candidly	Censored	///
00:05	and		///
00:07	and your your doctor to help you had to do you think		///
00:10	i'm very excited because we are joined by a new lend a hand basket asking acl		///
00:15	emergency medicine doctors and alone thirteen recently published a book not		///
00:19	recently and		///
00:21	blanchett and however i'd like to take a		///

What The Video ACTUALLY Says:

“Good evening everybody, I’m _____.

I am content and programming manager here at Best Doctors and I’m also your host this evening.

I’m very excited because we’re joined by Leana _____ and Josh _____, two

emergency medicine doctors and two authors who’ve recently published a book called...”

As you can see, YouTube does read audio, it just does so VERY poorly.

Look at the two images and notice how all the verbs and nouns are off.

Consider the effect that could have on your target and auxiliary keywords.

That's why you should upload word-for-word transcriptions with your video.

HOW TO GET YOUR VIDEOS TRANSCRIBED

After you upload a video, but before making it "Public," hire a freelancer to transcribe your video.

[Speechpad](#) is a popular option right now. They provide fast and accurate human-generated captions for your videos. Plus, it currently costs about \$1 per minute of video.

At WireBuzz, we've found that it typically takes about 20 minutes to transcribe a 3-minute video yourself.

So while you certainly can transcribe it yourself, the time saved is well worth the \$3 it costs to have someone else transcribe it for you.

Even though you're paying someone, odds are you're actually **SAVING** money by outsourcing; assuming, of course, that you earn more than \$9/hour, which seems likely.

THE BEST WAY TO TRANSCRIBE VIDEOS YOURSELF

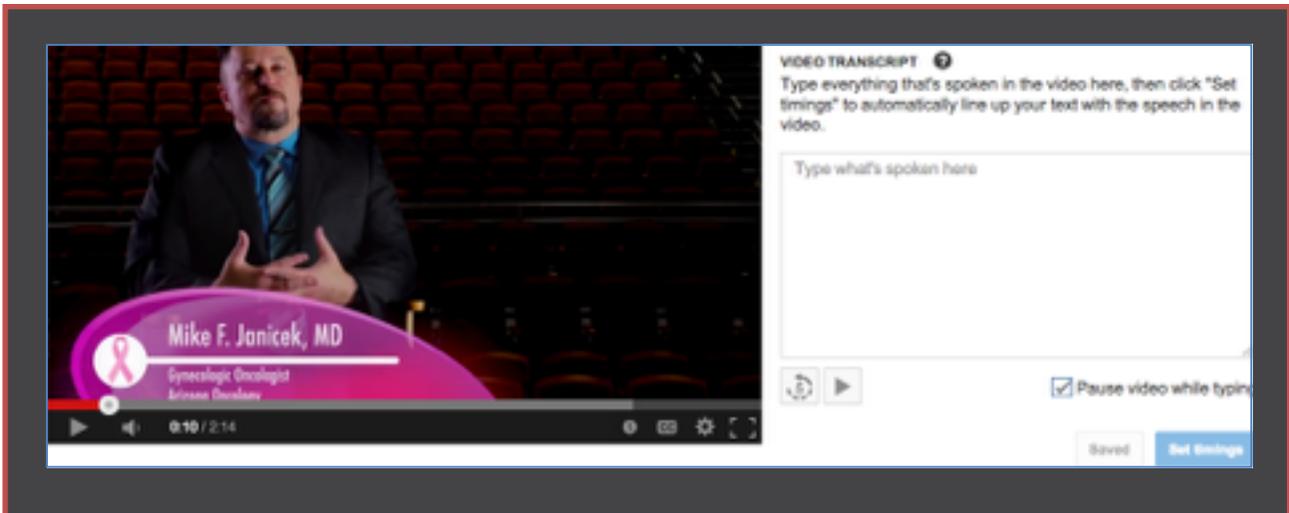
If you do decide to transcribe the video yourself, YouTube has a neat feature which eliminates the need to continually rewind the video as you're transcribing.



YOUTUBE DOES READ AUDIO; IT JUST DOES SO VERY POORLY.

Simply find the video you want to transcribe in your Video Manager, then click the CC (closed captions) button below your video.

Next, click on “Add subtitles or CC” and select the language for your video.



See the little checkbox that says “Pause video while typing?” That’s a huge help, so keep that box checked.

Then, whenever you type, the video stops playing. And when you stop typing, the video resumes playing. This saves you the time and frustration of rewinding the video over and over again.

Whether you decide to transcribe it yourself or pay someone to do it, the important thing is that it gets done before making the video visible to the public.

YouTube’s best indicator for what your video is about is the video itself. Help YouTube read your video correctly and watch your search ranks soar.



YOUTUBE’S BEST INDICATOR FOR WHAT YOUR VIDEO IS ABOUT IS THE VIDEO ITSELF. HELP YOUTUBE READ YOUR VIDEO CORRECTLY AND WATCH YOUR SEARCH RANKS SOAR.

IMPORTANT NOTE

Using your target keyword multiple times in the videos themselves is essential.

Remember: YouTube wants to ensure your video is relevant for the search terms your targeting.

So if your videos don't include your keywords, it will be more difficult to get a high search rank.

Plus, if your keywords aren't repeated in your videos, transcriptions are of little value anyway.

For that reason, it's important develop a strategy BEFORE you produce your video so you can include your keyword and any supporting keywords multiple times to build the context needed for YouTube to rank your video.

KEY TAKEAWAY

Uploading transcriptions is one of the easiest and most effective things you can do to improve your video's search rank.

1. Tell YouTube what keywords your video should rank for
2. Generate clickthroughs from related videos (including competitor's)

If you haven't done this for all the videos on your channel, make this a priority. You'll be glad you did.



UPLOADING TRANSCRIPTIONS IS ONE OF THE EASIEST AND MOST EFFECTIVE THINGS YOU CAN DO TO IMPROVE YOUR VIDEO'S SEARCH RANK.

CHAPTER SIX

THE IMPORTANCE OF ENGAGEMENT

YOUTUBE ENGAGEMENT

THE SECRET TO BETTER YOUTUBE SEO RANKINGS

Beyond the structural elements of an SEO-optimized YouTube video, the next most important success factor is audience engagement; getting your audience to validate that your video is actually relevant for your target keyword.

There are a variety of factors YouTube looks at to confirm that your video is high quality, all revolving around audience engagement.

In this final chapter, we'll discuss the two biggest ranking factors and ways to ensure your videos get the engagement needed to appear in YouTube and Google search results.

RANKING FACTOR #1: SESSION DURATION

Session duration has been the most important YouTube ranking factor since late 2012.

At the time, YouTube's official [Creators Blog](#) stated:

“We've started adjusting the ranking of videos in YouTube search to reward engaging videos that keep viewers watching. This is a continuation of ongoing efforts to focus our video discovery features on watch time. As with previous optimizations to our discovery features, this should benefit your channel *if your videos drive more viewing time across YouTube.*” (Emphasis mine)

Note that it doesn't refer to how long people watch **your** videos ("Watch Time"). Rather, it's about videos that make people stay on YouTube longer.

HOW DO YOU TRACK SESSION DURATION?

Unfortunately, there's no way to track session duration because YouTube hasn't made this metric available.

However, you can measure "watch time," which is how long viewers watch videos on your channel.

IMPROVING YOUR SESSION DURATION ON YOUTUBE

These tips can help ensure your videos keep viewers engaged longer and improve your average session duration on YouTube:

- Ensure your videos have a high audience retention (see page 31 for more on Audience Retention)
- Use Annotations to encourage viewers to watch a related video
- Place your video in playlists with related videos
- Provide high-quality videos
- Create custom thumbnails for your videos to increase click-through rates to related videos
- Get lots of subscribers, who typically watch more of your videos

Naturally, the ideal situation is for your viewers to keep watching **your** videos. But until you have a large channel, that can be difficult.

If that's the case, curate other high quality content on YouTube. There's no reason you can't add videos from other channel's to your playlist or annotations.

You can always update playlists later with your own videos, but in the meantime, make sure your viewers stick around if you want your videos to rank.

RANKING FACTOR #2: AUDIENCE RETENTION

Prior to late 2012, “views” were the #1 YouTube ranking factor. But as you may expect, views were easy to fake using click-bots.

Plus, videos with clickable titles and descriptions got the most views, even if the video had little to do with the title. Not a great user experience.

So for that reason, YouTube started focusing on audience retention to determine if your video is *actually* relevant for the keyword you’ve optimized for.

As an example, say you’re searching for videos about “Advanced YouTube SEO.” A few years ago, you may have seen some really strong videos, but you’d also see several that were really for beginners.

If that were the case, you’d probably realize it early on, stop watching the video, and go look elsewhere. But even though the video wasn’t what you were looking for, it still got a “view,” so it stayed high in the rankings.

This is exactly the type of thing YouTube was trying to avoid when they made audience retention a primary ranking factor.

WHAT IS AUDIENCE RETENTION?

Unlike session duration, which is viewer-specific, [Audience retention](#) is based on how **all your viewers** have engaged with a specific video.

Audience retention can be defined as the average percentage of your video that people watch.

Thus, a higher audience retention demonstrates to YouTube that viewers generally find your video valuable; the higher the better.



AUDIENCE RETENTION CAN BE DEFINED AS THE AVERAGE PERCENTAGE OF YOUR VIDEO THAT PEOPLE WATCH.

As a goal, you should strive for an absolute audience retention over 60%. Anything lower than that is a sign that your video may not be valuable enough and it will be difficult to rank in search.

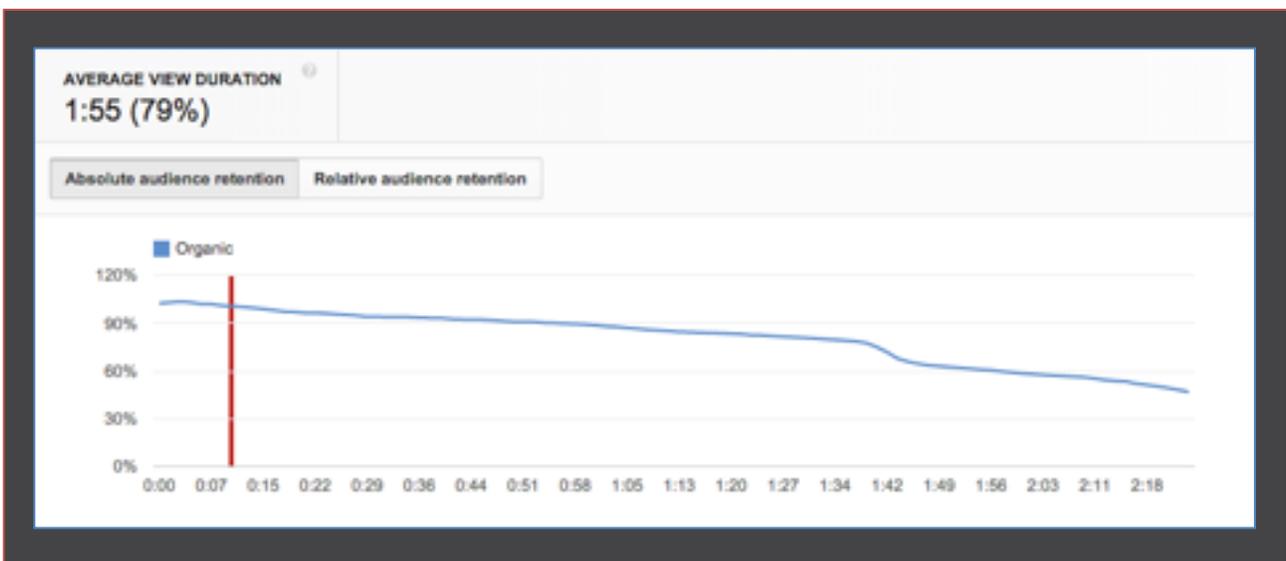
WHAT IF YOUR VIDEO MISSES THE MARK?

At WireBuzz, we've gotten really good at producing videos that hit the 60% mark, but there are no guarantees.

If that's the case, don't fret: learn from your mistakes using the audience retention report by identifying the weakest parts of your video.

In the first report below, you'll see a video we produced that got really strong engagement with 79% audience retention.

Sample Audience Retention Report



Note that there is only one “dip” in this video, right around 1:42.

What you're looking for in your reports are these drop-off points where lots of viewers are leaving. Perhaps your viewers became confused or the video started moving too slowly (“Get to the point!”). In many cases, a couple simple modifications can make all the difference.

In this case, if our audience retention were below 60%, we'd go back and re-edit this video at 1:42 to see if we could retain more viewers. But in this case, it wasn't necessary.

OTHER IMPORTANT ENGAGEMENT FACTORS

In addition to the big two engagement factors we've already discussed, your videos are also evaluated based on:

- Number & Quality of Backlinks
- Clickthrough Rate from Search Results and Recommended Videos
- Shares on Social Media
- Subscribers (especially subscribes after a video view)
- Thumbs Up
- Favorites
- Views (especially in the past 48 hours)
- Comments (especially video comments)

As you can see, there are a **ton** of engagement factors that affect how prominently your videos rank in YouTube and Google SERPs.

But the common thread amongst them all is that people are taking the extra effort to engage with your video when they could more easily leave or look for another video.

HOW TO GET MORE ENGAGEMENT RIGHT AWAY

The easiest way to get more engagement may also be the most obvious: asking.



**THE EASIEST WAY TO GET MORE ENGAGEMENT
MAY ALSO BE THE MOST OBVIOUS: ASKING.**

It really surprises me how many creators produce quality videos, but never ask their viewers to subscribe or share them.

While annotations are valuable, you should not rely on them for engagement. To get the most out of your video, you need to ask for shares and subscribes in the video itself.

If you don't ask for engagement, you will be disappointed in your video's performance.

Aside from asking in your videos, there are a variety of tactics you can employ to get your videos in front of more people.

OTHER STRATEGIES TO INCREASE ENGAGEMENT

The quickest way to get more eyeballs on your video is to promote them using YouTube's TrueView ad format. But unless you have experience in paid advertising, and preferably video advertising specifically, this may not be the most efficient thing to try yourself.

But if ads aren't your style, there's always good 'ole fashioned content promotion strategies, including:

- Building relationships with other YouTube creators, which makes them more likely to share your videos with their fans
- Posting your videos on social media
- Engaging in content partnerships, where you partner with other brands who have a similar audience to create videos that can be cross-promoted
- Finding bloggers or other websites that would benefit from embedding your videos on their website and **asking what they want you to create next**



IF YOU DON'T ASK FOR ENGAGEMENT, YOU WILL BE DISAPPOINTED IN YOUR VIDEO'S PERFORMANCE.

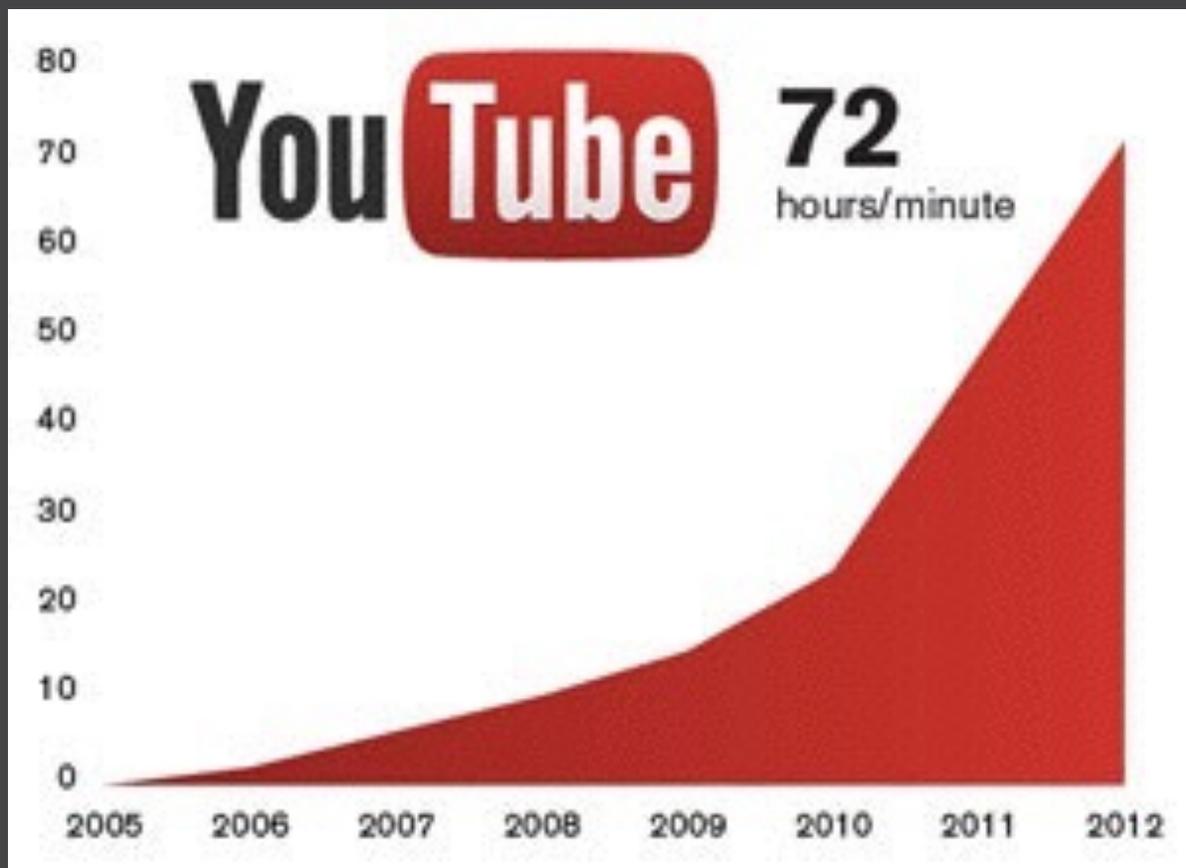
- Promoting your video on social platforms, like Facebook, Twitter or Google+
- Sharing your video multiple times
- Posting the video on your website

If that sounds like a lot, that's because it is.

The reality is it doesn't matter how great your video is if you don't promote it.

Over 72 hours of video is uploaded to YouTube each minute. Until you promote your video, it's like a grain of sand on the beach... indistinguishable from all the others and impossible to isolate.

Hours of Video Uploaded To YouTube Per Minute



KEY TAKEAWAY

YouTube is not a silver bullet.

But if you're serious about making money with YouTube, stop thinking about it as a publishing platform and start treating it like a social network.

YouTube is an amazing tool for growing your audience, but only if you approach promotion strategically.

Otherwise, you may create lots of videos that fail to generate a return on investment.

A good rule of thumb is to spend as much time promoting your videos as you do producing them.

If that means creating fewer videos that are promoted well, that's okay.

It takes more effort, but if you put in the extra time to do it right, your videos will rank higher and for longer. You'll be more successful in the long run.



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READY TO GET STARTED?

YOUTUBE IS ONE OF THE BEST PLATFORMS FOR GENERATING LEADS AND GROWING BRAND AWARENESS ONLINE.

IF YOU WANT HELP GETTING STARTED, OR JUST WANT SOMEONE ELSE TO HANDLE THE DETAILS FOR YOU, WIREBUZZ CAN HELP YOU GET ON THE RIGHT TRACK.

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