

# Social Media Global Best Practice

## YouTube



## **Executive Summary**

**Overview:** We have undertaken a comprehensive analysis into examples of best practice on YouTube for organisations/brands. This includes how to capitalise on new and emerging developments and trends on YouTube.

### **Key recommendations:**

- Treat YouTube as an engagement platform not a broadcasting one. Brands that are successful on YouTube do so through personalisation and character
- Videos that are educational, entertaining or otherwise useful for the viewer, without being overtly marketing-focussed, see the best success
- Video content produced with the highest levels of production value possible achieve the highest levels of engagement
- The personality of the presenter or voice-over is crucial to the success of the videos created
- Spread country-specific or specialised content across multiple channels
- Uploads should be regular and follow a consistent pattern
- Avoid the use of annotations, which are unpopular with users and considered intrusive
- Cross-channel engagement is key – successful channels use YouTube in conjunction with other social media, sharing video and interlinking content/ideas
- The ‘attention-economy’ means users are time-poor – short and punchy videos are vital, ensuring users do not disengage and navigate away
- YouTube also rewards uploaders in terms of both search position and AdSense revenue when users watch all or most of a video

**Summary:** These recommendations can be used as the basis of a social media strategy, to engage with new, wider and more diverse audiences.

## **Contents**

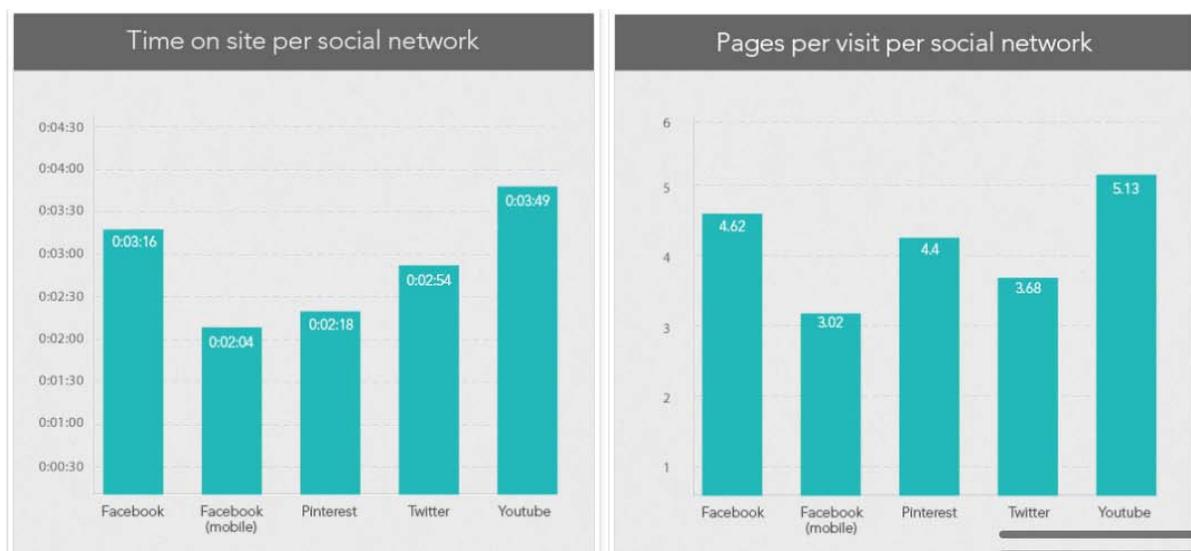
Overview	Page 4
Capitalising on YouTube	
Compelling Content	Page 5
Voice Recognition	Page 5
Monitoring	Page 6
Annotations	Page 6
Types of Content	Page 6
Establishing Brands on YouTube	Page 7
Recent and Upcoming Changes	Page 8
Examples of Best Practice	Page 10
Summary	Page 14
Overall Recommendations	Page 15

## Overview

YouTube is the third most visited website on the planet, behind Google and Facebook. A billion users visit the site on a monthly basis, roughly 1/3 of all internet users. In the US, YouTube reaches more adults in the core 18-34 demographic than any TV network.

While the numbers of users visiting YouTube are huge, reaching relevant audiences is difficult for the same reason. Every 60 seconds, more than 100 hours of video content is uploaded to the site, making 'cut-through' the priority.

YouTube users spend more time on the site per visit, and open more pages during that time, than any of the major social media sites across all platforms.



*Time on site and pages per visit for users of YouTube compared to other major social media*

YouTube remains the most popular, easiest to integrate and universally understood video platform available, and is an invaluable tool. Rather than focusing on number of subscribers and total reach on the site itself, as is the case with most social media, YouTube delivers value by offering a simple, reliable platform for hosting video content that can then be embedded on a website and linked across other social media.

Britain currently produces large numbers of successful 'YouTubers', who enjoy significant international reach: of the top 10 British uploaders in September 2015, only 34 percent of their total audience was based in the UK, with 27 percent coming from the US. The popularity of British content on YouTube is generally attributed to shared language with the US, as well as a current trend for British entertainment and media finding worldwide popularity. For younger audiences, this is termed the 'One Direction Effect', but is noticeable across the spectrum with the popularity of British exports such as Downton Abbey and Sherlock.

## **Capitalising on YouTube**

### **Compelling Content**

In most cases, it is not as straight forward, or cheap, to promote an organisation on YouTube as it is on other social media platforms. Done right it can be very effective, but requires time to be invested in planning a successful campaign.

Rather than promoting an organisations and/or products directly, YouTube is most effective when using quality content that audiences will want to see and engages them with something new. Successful videos are produced as professionally as possible, without being overly friendly, which often comes across as insincere to a significant percentage of the audience. Genuine insights into your organisation/brand's offering, rather than something that users could simply pull off a website with a Google search, or is already catered for by other YouTube videos, will capture users attention.

The most successful YouTube channels focus on the individual personality of the person presenting the video. **An engaging presenter is one of the most significant ways that an organisation can set its channel apart from competitors – helping to build an audience that engages with your content for its entertainment/education value rather than simply as an information resource.**

The same person or group of people can be used in each video for consistency across the brand, as well as beginning to build up a direct rapport between the audience and your presenter. The most successful 'YouTubers' have amassed huge audiences on the strength of their individual personalities and being able to generate a feeling that they engage directly with their viewers.

### **Voice Recognition**

Automatic captioning has been available for YouTube videos since March 2010 and can ensure videos are opened up to millions of hearing-impaired users, as well as potentially providing better clarity for users for which English is a second language.

YouTube is able to use voice-recognition to automatically compile captions for videos. As they are automatically generated, the quality of the captions may vary greatly from video to video and will invariably require manual editing to correct. The following factors may prevent automatic captioning from functioning correctly:

- The video is too long
- The video contains poor sound quality or speech that YouTube doesn't recognise
- There is a long period of silence at the beginning of the video
- There are multiple speakers whose speech overlaps

Captions generated automatically by YouTube can be manually edited using the captions in-line editor, which allows you to edit the captions for greater accuracy, as well as altering the timing to better match the video.



## Monitoring

Despite the popularity and the universal appeal of its content, YouTube has garnered an often well-deserved reputation for a comments section rife with trolling, abusive comments and spam. A significant factor linked to this is that, unlike other social media, the majority of users on YouTube are purely consumers and do not produce any content of their own that could be effected by their behaviour on the site. As a result, the comments section for YouTube videos often requires close monitoring.

While it is not appropriate to simply remove all negative comments, particularly those that are attempting to give constructive criticism, comments that are spam or use offensive language can be promptly removed.

## Annotations

Annotations allow for clickable links to be created that are superimposed over video content. While these may seem a good option for driving traffic to other videos or web links, in truth the majority of users find them an irritant. Furthermore, most ad-blocker software prevents these annotations from appearing. **According to a recent study by Yahoo, nearly 10 percent of page impressions come from users that have ad blocking software installed.**

Instead, relevant information and links can simply be included in the information box below the video. At a relevant point in the video, the presenter or voiceover could then direct viewers to the links.

## Types of Content

A variety of content types can be used to engage audiences. Examples include:

- Tutorial videos on how to use products or services
- Solutions to common service or product difficulties
- Recording of presentations, showcasing the product offering as well as the expertise of the team
- Expert interviews and insights
- A showcase video to support sales pitches
- Customer testimonials or results/case studies
- Introducing team members
- Short clips that combine entertainment with education

These are all in addition to the more standard, editorial content associated with YouTube as opportunities for organisations to better engage with potential customers. However, there is a risk that different types of content might alienate some audience segments – finding a balance will ensure a channel captures the widest audience possible.

Uploading content consistently (ideally 2-3 times a week, appearing at regular times so users know when to expect new content to appear) is one of the hallmarks of organisations that are successful on YouTube.



## Establishing Brands on YouTube

Only 74 of the top 5,000 YouTube channels are owned by brands/organisations. While a small number possess content that alone generates massive amounts of interest on the platform (the recent trailer for Star War's 'The Force Awakens' received over 50 million views in the week after it was released), many organisations have to embrace more creative methods to reach their target audience on YouTube.

While budget undoubtedly affects the quality of the production and the ability to widen reach via paid advertising, theoretically, every user who uploads a video to YouTube has the same tools available to them in terms of reaching site users. Despite some organisations having an advantage in terms of budget, they have overall failed to close the gap on vloggers and other individual content producers in the ten years since the site was launched. This clearly emphasises the importance of embracing the personality driven model, having a strong 'star' to front the organisations YouTube presence.

There are numerous examples amongst the top 5,000 that showcase the content strategy, originality and engagement that make for a successful YouTube channel. However, major brands that are otherwise market leading on many other social media are outperformed by smaller rivals who hit on a more successful video premise.

Amongst the top performing organisations, only Apple maintains a single, dedicated channel. Below are the top 20 performing brands according to most recent figures, which clearly illustrates that rather than attempting to keep a large, diverse audience engaged with a single channel, organisations instead split content across multiple feeds, appealing to different demographics using different kinds of content. The most extreme examples are Disney and Nike, with 41 channels each. Both maintain a geographically diverse range of channels to engage directly with audiences worldwide, as well a range of other specialised offerings (Nike Talent, Nike Football, Disney Parks and Disney Cruises etc).

Brand	Channels	Absolute views gained since May 2013	% View gain since May 2013	New videos produced since May 2013	% New videos since May 2013
Disney	41	2,940,414,743	118%	5,370	35%
Samsung	34	1,095,688,992	210%	5,421	45%
Sony	34	628,844,146	62%	3,842	39%
Google	40	621,647,358	42%	3,695	30%
Nike	41	500,104,651	145%	979	17%
Coca-Cola	17	401,966,888	203%	2,701	86%
adidas	31	335,619,050	181%	1,598	25%
MTV	9	262,429,174	127%	7,583	32%
Pepsi	23	171,592,007	103%	518	17%
L'Oreal	19	165,759,410	123%	1,657	50%
Visa	7	130,120,883	342%	588	290%
Volkswagen	16	125,111,562	98%	1,465	95%
Toyota	18	121,640,301	137%	2,227	46%
Hyundai	21	119,578,764	170%	1,529	87%
Kia	20	115,452,061	93%	1,068	49%
Apple	1	106,479,948	337%	114	285%
Nintendo	11	105,079,605	60%	1,043	40%
Honda	12	95,916,292	182%	1,006	52%
Audi	17	86,907,030	132%	1,155	34%
Budweiser	19	86,201,561	223%	357	36%

## Recent and Upcoming Changes

### Mobile Applications

Half of all YouTube views now come from mobile devices, with mobile traffic doubling each year. As a result, YouTube is introducing a number of new features to make it more accessible for mobile users.

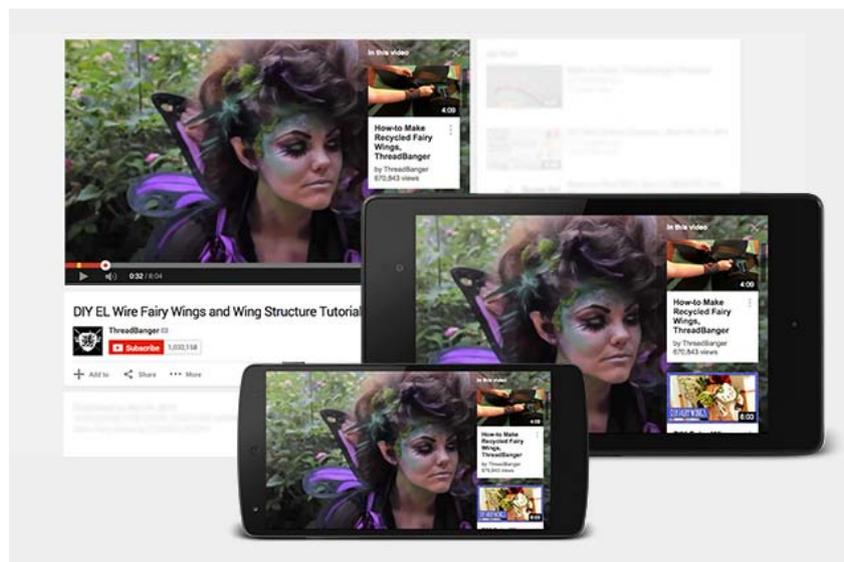
Subscribers now have the option of receiving mobile and email alerts when someone they follow uploads new videos. The subscription feed has also been overhauled on mobile devices, meaning subscribers are less likely to miss video content when on the go.

YouTube's Creator Studio app is also being updated for greater mobile functionality. A separate application designed for channel management, users will be able to edit video thumbnails and enable/disable monetization from their mobile devices, as well as the existing functionality to manage video content and moderate comments.

### YouTube Cards

YouTube cards were introduced in mid-2015, and there are currently six types available: merchandise, fundraising, video, playlist, associated website and fan funding.

Cards are presented as an evolution of annotations, which were widely disliked amongst users as being ugly and intrusive, as well as being flash-based so not functioning across multiple platforms. Cards are intended to inform viewers about other videos, merchandise, playlists and websites. They are designed to be as engaging as the video content itself and are available at any time during the video and carry across multiple platforms (desktop, tablet and mobile).



*YouTube cards appearing across desktop, tablet and mobile formats*

## How to set up Cards

- Go to YouTube Video Manager, and click on the 'edit' button.
- Click on 'Cards' in the top navigation bar, then 'add card'
- Scroll to the point in the video where you'd like to add a card. This is where a teaser of the card will appear for five seconds, before reverting to a small 'i' icon in the same position
- Click a blue button on the right called 'Add Card' to open up a creation window
- Select card type
- Customise the card by adding an image, title, call-to-action text and/or a URL
- Repeat in other parts of the video, if needed (but space out as much as possible to avoid over-saturation)

## Examples of Best Practice

### Kraft Foods

<https://www.youtube.com/user/KraftCookingSchool>

The American food giant, which this year merged with Heinz to create the fifth largest food company in the world, maintains a number of YouTube channels, but it is their 'Kraft Recipes' (previously named 'Kraft Cooking School') that stands out as a highly effective example of an organisation using YouTube successfully.

The screenshot shows the YouTube channel page for Kraft Recipes. At the top, there is a banner image of a peach cobbler with the Kraft logo in the top left corner. Below the banner, the channel name 'Kraft Recipes' is displayed with a 'Subscribe' button showing 41,655 subscribers. The main content area features a video player for 'Halloween Monster Cookie Balls' with a description and a link. Below the video player, there are three video thumbnails under the heading 'Game Day Recipes': 'Spicy Cheeseburger Dip', 'Famous Queso Dip', and 'Cheesy Spinach and Bacon Dip'. On the right side, there is a 'Featured Channels' list including Comida Kraft, Philadelphia Cream..., oscar mayer, JELLO, Athenos, Miracle Whip, kraftmacncheese, and VELVEETA.

The channel features useful, educational content that appeals to users of Kraft products. None of the content on the channel directly markets any Kraft products, although many are indirectly featured as ingredients in the many instructional videos.

While all focusing on instructional videos, the channel offers a variety of types of content to appeal to a variety of users. Examples include:

- Basic instructional videos for complete beginners, such as how to clean mushrooms or how to take the skin off a piece of fish
- More complicated, full recipes, often using a Kraft product as a primary ingredient
- Brief 15 second time-lapse videos explaining how to make simple dishes, such as salsa or an omelette

All of their content is presented as very short, bite-size videos, rarely lasting longer than a minute - the 15 second videos being the most extreme example of this. This is a good example of an organisation tailoring their content to take account of the 'attention economy' – creating short videos to capture the attention of time-poor people on the go.

The current 468 videos are split into over 50 different playlists, making it easy for users to navigate their content and find a series of videos that is relevant to them. Each playlist corresponds to a board on the Kraft Pinterest account, which is linked on their YouTube homepage, alongside their Facebook, Tumblr and Google+.

In total, the account has amassed over 41,000 subscribers, and their videos have accumulated around 17.5 million views. This shows that gaining subscribers isn't necessarily the most important thing for an organisation on YouTube – Kraft have a relatively small number of subscribers compared to overall video views – its engagement with the target audience that is key.



## Blendtec

<https://www.youtube.com/user/Blendtec>

As a company specialising in blenders and other kitchen equipment, Blendtec do not appear at first to be a company that lends itself to successful YouTube content. However, with over 800,000 subscribers and 267 million total views, they currently outperform the primary channels of many major brands, including Coca-Cola, Pepsi and McDonald's.

Blendtec are an excellent example of a company that enjoyed huge success on YouTube after hitting on a video concept that simply appealed to users' curiosity. Their 'Will it Blend' began with Blendtec founder Tom Dickson looking to showcase the power of their blenders by pitting them against unusual items such as marbles, a rake handle, golf balls and mobile phones. Impressive results - with many items reduced to dust - saw the videos gather significant views and quickly become viral.

Over the eight years the channel has been active, they have continued to grow that audience, and more importantly, keep them engaged and coming back to the channel, despite a relatively small number of overall uploads (there are currently 157 videos on the channel, averaging only slightly over 1.5 videos a month). They regularly ask for suggested items to be blended on their other social media accounts, and some of their most popular videos, including glow sticks, running shoes and hockey pucks, came about as a result of viewer suggestions. This is a good example of an organisation combining different social media channels to maximise engagement.

The videos have continued to follow the same format, although as they have grown in popularity the commercial tie-ins have become increasingly prevalent, with Apple, Samsung and Amazon products featuring prominently. The team have, however, diversified on occasion, with well-thought out, humorous additions, such as attempting to return electronic items to Best Buy after blending them and filming the staff's reaction.

As well as being entertaining for users, the channel almost subconsciously reinforces the quality of their products in the minds of their viewers, with their branding featuring prominently in the background of videos and their product being showcased as almost comically over-effective.



## University of Phoenix

<https://www.youtube.com/user/UniversityofPhoenix>

The University of Phoenix's YouTube channel has only a little over 13,000 subscribers. However, they are a case study on how accumulating subscribers is not necessarily the primary objective of YouTube, as it is with many other social media platforms.

Their YouTube channel has a wide variety of content, covering courses, extra-curricular activities, campus facilities and information for international students. This broad range of subject matter, and the high production values of the content, ensures that they effectively reach a wide spectrum of potential students. It also includes careers and course advice, and a dedicated Spanish-language playlist.

Amongst their most popular uploads are a testimonial from alumni and MSNBC anchor Christina Brown about her time at the university, and series of mini-documentaries that feature a broad spectrum of students from different backgrounds, who studied different subjects, and outlines the successes they have attained since graduating.

While their subscriber count is low, the objective of the channel is to convert viewers into students, not subscribers, and the effectiveness of this channel at reaching potential new students is evidenced by a total view count of well over 50 million. As almost all of their subject matter is simply well-presented information about the organisation itself, with no viral content or otherwise entertaining content.

The university's marketing department have carefully crafted a YouTube channel that offers content which engages with any prospective student who uses YouTube's search function or visits their channel. Videos feature real University of Phoenix students and graduates, and have a consistent, inspirational tone, informing users not what the university can help them achieve, but what they are already capable of achieving with a little guidance. Using compelling, emotionally engaging content, the University of Phoenix has effectively transformed its YouTube channel into a virtual recruitment machine to convert prospects into enrolled students.

**Keep making them proud.**

University of Phoenix 13,678 Subscribe

Home Videos Playlists Channels Discussion About

**Let's Get to Work**  
In September of 2012, we began speaking about the skills gap in America and the 3.9 million unfilled jobs in this country. At University of Phoenix, our mission is to connect education to careers through ...

**It's a Good Day to Do What You Love**  
by University of Phoenix  
1,354,671 views · 9 months ago

**Prep for the next step**  
by University of Phoenix  
1,096,288 views · 9 months ago

**Get going**  
by University of Phoenix  
1,180,723 views · 9 months ago

**Related channels**

- capellauniversity Subscribe
- SNHU Subscribe
- Ryan ToysReview Subscribe
- Liberty University Subscribe
- YOUR SHORTNESS Subscribe



## **Summary**

The size of audience on YouTube, and the amount of time that individual users spend on the site, means that it is a key social media for brands/organisations looking to engage with wider and more diverse audiences. A 'viral' YouTube video, while requiring planning, has the potential to reach and actively engage with a far wider audience than almost any other form of media or advertising.

However, securing significant audiences on YouTube itself requires either very high production values, and associated costs, or finding a niche and corresponding audience that is not already catered for by the millions of videos on the site. Therefore, successful channels don't always consider generating subscribers the primary objective of the platform, as is often the case with other social media such as Twitter and Instagram.

Instead, they focus on engaging with audiences and being able to showcase the brand and its values. Further, using YouTube is ideal as a simple, easy home for video content that can then be used across multiple social media channels, as well as relevant websites and any promotional material.

## Overall Recommendations

- Leading organisations treat YouTube as an engagement platform, not a broadcasting one.
- Brands that are successful on YouTube do so through personalisation and character.
- ‘Pre-roll’ ads (ones that play before another video, sometimes forcing a user to watch them in their entirety or for a certain length of time) are universally unpopular, with statistics showing that 94 percent of users skip them if the option is available. Unskippable ads can be damaging to a brand in the same way that pop-ups are, where an intrusive advert can mean that the product is perceived negatively by the viewer.
- While a viral video is often considered the ultimate objective for many YouTube channels, it is extremely difficult to deliberately set out to create one. Instead, leading organisations focus on providing content that is educational, entertaining or otherwise useful for the viewer, without overtly marketing products.
- The personality of the presenter or voice-over is key: the great majority of successful channels rely on personality to set them apart. An effective presenter, once identified, can be used as widely as possible on the channel to ensure a familiar face for viewers to engage with.
- Video content produced with the highest levels of production value possible, maintaining an enthusiastic and welcoming persona without being overly friendly, has the most success.
- Video content can be split into different playlists for easy navigation by viewers. Similarly, consider spreading country-specific or specialised content across multiple channels.
- Regular uploads, following a consistent pattern so users know when to expect fresh content on the channel, create maximum engagement. While some channels with particularly popular content are successful when uploading just one or two videos a month, for more specialised content a regular schedule of 3-4 posts a week would work best. Try to keep uploads consistent, such as a specific type of video appearing at the same time each Monday, and another type the same time each Wednesday etc.
- Annotations, are unpopular with users and considered intrusive. YouTube cards can be used to draw attention to key calls to action or to provide URLs, but should be used sparingly. Alternatively, simply include additional information and links in the information box below the video and have the presenter reference it (‘check out the box below for a link to xxx’ for example).
- Engage with the audience, both on YouTube and across other social media. Poll audiences for what kind of video content they want to see on the channel, or ask for suggestions for unique videos.
- The huge volume of videos available on YouTube means users often have a very short attention span. Videos that are kept short and punchy have most success, ensuring users do not grow bored and navigate away.
- YouTube rewards uploaders in terms of both search position and AdSense revenue when users watch all or most of a video, rather than clicking away after a watching only a small percentage.

**ENDS**



---

# About Us

We are a trusted PR agency that delivers exceptional results. Consistently.

Established in 1999 – and named after the founding directors – the GDR team has the power and expertise to deliver the right messages through the right media at the right time.

At the heart of what we do – whether it's an integrated PR campaign or competitor analysis report – is our dedicated team of professionals. Headed by founder and managing director Richard Baguley, our agency has the skills and knowledge to deliver.

Our well-established team of journalists, PR executives, media trainers, design experts and social media specialists, enables GDR to execute highly successful campaigns.

We pride ourselves on enjoying long-term relationships with our clients and media contacts alike. Working with Corona Extra beer for over 10 years is just one example of our proven ability to deliver fantastic results.

# Contact Us

**Call:** 01253 600800  
**Email:** [info@gdrpr.co.uk](mailto:info@gdrpr.co.uk)  
**Website:** [www.gdrpr.co.uk](http://www.gdrpr.co.uk)

6 Neptune Court, Hallam Way,  
Whitehills Business Park,  
Blackpool. FY4 5LZ

© Copyright GDR PR (UK) Ltd. 2015 all rights reserved.

