

IDEAS

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THE TECH BEAT | BY JAMES HARDING

GROWING YOUR YOUTUBE AUDIENCE

According to YouTube's 2016 Annual Report, over 1.3 billion people — one out of every two people online — now use the video platform. And those numbers continue to rise sharply each year. With demographics like that, it's easy to see why I've dedicated my first "Tech Beat" series on how to effectively use this powerful tool.

I've discussed how to set up your channel and how to create content for your viewers. Now, we need to attract and maintain an audience.

But before we begin, it's important to remember that every channel is different. The methods you might employ to promote yours will vary based on your target audience and on the tools you have available.

In the meantime, here are five strategies that have helped me develop loyal consumers for my video content:

CREATE INTERESTING CONTENT. On average, 20 percent of the people who start watching your videos will leave after the first 10 seconds. You have just over five seconds to hook your viewers and draw them in. What can



'While you're growing your YouTube audience, you're growing your business at the same time.'

you do in the first five seconds to pique your viewer's interest and compel them to subscribe? You could tease a contest or giveaway or viewer recognition to be conducted at the end of your video, or you could entice them with a compelling story or behind-the-scenes clip.

BRAND YOUR CHANNEL. Just as your store's appearance can enhance clients' opinions of your company and the products you carry, a professional-looking channel can elevate your video content in viewers' minds. Download a template from Google and create a "channel art" image that looks good on all devices.

Select a logo for your channel icon that's recognizable in a variety of sizes, and upload a custom watermark that will encourage viewers to subscribe. Make and use a custom thumbnail for your videos. These branding techniques will help your channel stand out and attract a host of loyal viewers.

INTEGRATE YOUR VIDEOS. One of the easiest ways to grow viewership is to embed your videos into your website and blog. You can link them in your email signature, on social media sites and in your newsletter.

ENGAGE YOUR VIEWERS. You can only do so much alone. Why not host a YouTube "battle of the bands" or a "company jingle" contest? You could encourage your viewers to submit videos with your company slogan! You

could edit their submissions and feature them in your videos. I recently filmed a series of videos with interns from a local university. Now, they are sharing those videos with their friends, and the university is sharing them as well.

CREATE A ROUTINE. Truly, there's "no place like home." Make your viewers feel "at home" with a familiar routine, and they will keep coming back. Consider using a catch phrase, graphic or mascot that will linger in your viewers' minds. Create a memorable signoff.

Release your videos on a regular schedule so viewers know what to expect. You don't have to make every video the same — just make them "feel" like you!

Building an audience takes time. But these tips will enhance your channel's appeal and quickly attract subscribers. If you're like me, you'll discover that while you're growing your YouTube audience, you're growing your business at the same time. **MI**

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