



Book Beyond Viral

How to Attract Customers, Promote Your Brand, and Make Money with Online Video

Kevin H. Nalty
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Recommendation

Kevin Nalty, affectionately known as “Nalts” by YouTube fans, is one of the website’s most-viewed personalities. He’s also an experienced marketer who has worked with Coca-Cola, Microsoft, Starbucks and Fox Broadcasting. Here he helps fellow marketers use the evolving world of online video sharing to promote their brands. Not surprisingly, a dominant underlying theme is the wisdom of collaborating with established “weblebrities” who already have a large, loyal audience – such as Nalts himself. The book offers gems of knowledge, but it’s quite disorganized, so they’re tricky to find. *BooksInShort* suggests that the book may be more helpful to webstar wannabes who are already familiar with the subject.

Take-Aways

- Online video sharing offers marketers opportunities to promote their brands.
- Promotional options include branded entertainment, sponsorships, product placement or collaboration with video creators.
- YouTube advertising includes pop-ups, “InVideo” ads and inserted hyperlinks.
- Videos range from professionally produced to user-generated content (UGC).
- Viral videos capture viewers’ attention, inspiring them to share with friends and family.
- The chances of your video going viral are a long shot, at best.
- Successful viral videos are short, engaging, surprising, entertaining and imaginative.
- YouTube’s debut in 2005 has given rise to a new breed of star, the “weblebrity.”
- “Webstars” are talented, determined, and persistent, and they have a passion for creating videos.
- To maximize your YouTube success, create partnerships with established online video creators who know the medium and have an audience.

Summary

YouTube 101

The standard definition of “online video” refers to video content people view on their computers. However, this definition is evolving with smart phone technology that allows individuals to view videos on their mobile devices. The world’s number two search engine, YouTube, is the dominant video-sharing site. Hulu is in second place, according to the market research company ComScore. Audiences for online video sites are growing steadily, while television and print continue to lose viewers, readers and also revenues.

“It’s not a viral video if people don’t want to share it.”

YouTube, which began as a community of creators and viewers, developed into a hugely popular social media site. It’s easier to access than Facebook and Twitter because you don’t have to register or create a profile. People using the Internet are more likely to watch a video than visit a social networking site.

“Online video is the most visceral, engaging and persuasive form of mass entertainment and marketing.”

Content created by “webstars,” musicians and professionals generate most of YouTube’s revenue. Webstars, also known as “YouTube Stars” or “weblebrities,” are

amateurs whose videos gain a substantial, loyal audience. Many develop a cultlike following – supporters with whom they interact and build relationships. Devoted viewers develop feelings of kinship and intimacy with their favorite webstars, who wield significant influence.

Learning As You Go

Online video offers new opportunities to promote brands, although advertisers are still establishing the best practices. The old ways of advertising won't work on this new medium as they did on older channels. Audience engagement is the most valuable asset of online videos. Attempts to engage audiences via branded entertainment, such as Budweiser's Bud.tv, often fail. Marketers should form relationships with producers who are already generating popular content.

“Online-video viewing continues to grow, and advertising dollars are shifting to sites like YouTube.”

YouTube viewership garners a broad audience across all demographics. Although traditional display advertising has its place, video sponsorships, product placement and collaboration with video creators produce better results. Nielsen IAG and Microsoft conducted research and found online video ads more effective than television spots in terms of recall, awareness, and likability. Measuring results to determine your return on investment is not difficult. A variety of metrics can gather information that goes beyond cost per impression. You want to know not only if people clicked on a video but also if they watched it all the way through. YouTube offers free monitoring tools that track keywords such as your brand name.

“Keep your clip or video short, interesting, edgy and give us a surprise that makes us want to forward it to our friends.”

Marketers are experimenting with the best ways to advertise through online video. Agencies now use “seeding” – that is, providing videos to relevant bloggers and targeted websites. For example, a hotel chain may place a video on travel-related sites and blogs. YouTube offers other paid advertising formats, while smaller video-sharing sites provide pay-per-view options.

“The community will welcome you more if they don't see you as a walking advertisement.”

One way to garner attention is to purchase ads surrounding videos that appear before, during or adjacent to popular content. Creators get paid to put annotation text over their videos showing hyperlinks to other related videos or to a YouTube channel. Advertisers can create original content and pay YouTube to promote their videos based on searched keywords. Pop-up ads and “InVideo” ads are hard for viewers to ignore, but they are more expensive than static banner ads.

“Creating a video in hopes for it to go viral is the gambler's equivalent of roulette.”

As marketers learn how to use video to engage consumers, they often err. Television spots on video-sharing sites or product sites usually flop. Promotional contests can generate engagement if you handle them correctly, but they are becoming too common. Search engine optimization techniques, such as keyword loading and tagging, can draw viewers if you use them judiciously.

What You See

YouTube content comes from a variety of sources in the following three categories: “professional content, user-generated content (UGC)” and “hidden online-video flavor.” Marketers usually feel more comfortable buying ads within content produced by professionals. Amateur UGC may include such videos as film clips of cats skateboarding or babies laughing.

“There have been countless companies attempting to cash in on the growth of online video, and most have failed.”

Hidden flavor videos fall on the continuum between professional and amateur content. For example, producers and distributors of broadband videos have formed digital studios to create “short-form” content. Studios include Next New Networks, 15 Gigs, Mondo, Funny or Die, Take 180, Revision3 and Demand Media. Digital studios produced the successful web series Dr. Horrible's Sing-Along Blog by Mutant Enemy Productions and The Guild by Felicia Day.

“Putting your videos on a bloated product.com site is the online equivalent to running television commercials on a kiosk hidden in an abandoned cemetery.”

Popular YouTube stars create content that draws a large, loyal audience, sometimes surpassing that of popular television shows. Hidden flavor also offers videos producers create to reach small, niche markets. The best tool for reaching targets at the far end of the long tail is focused amateur content. These ad-friendly videos are cheap-to-produce, cost-efficient advertising vehicles.

Going Viral

Viral videos are film clips that capture viewers' attention so much that they share the video online. Eventually, thousands and even millions of people view a viral video. There's little point in producing a video in hopes of it going viral. Nobody can foresee which videos might capture people's imagination, although some of the most successful viral videos have features in common. They highlight practical jokes, dancing, music or song spoofs, children and animals, bloopers and goofs, political satire or humor, video blogging (vlogging), or teaching. For your video to go viral, you need good timing and good luck. Marketers need to know eight things about viral video:

1. “The definition of viral video is that it goes viral” – If people don't share a video, it's not viral.
2. “A viral video does not have to be good” – Don't spend a lot of money on production. The film's quality has little effect on audience engagement.
3. “Nobody can predict what becomes viral” – Most successful viral videos are engaging, unexpected, entertaining, short and imaginative.
4. “If you are trying to advertise via viral, dial down the marketing” – Savvy viewers will disregard the ad and demand transparency.
5. “Topical is important” – Topical videos show up on popular YouTube searches.
6. “New viral ideas rarely derive from old ones” – Imitation doesn't work in viral video. Don't try to copy other people's success.

7. The “duration of [the] video is vital” – Today’s viewers have short attention spans and prefer short videos.
8. “Cheaters never win (at least in the long run)” – Videos must go viral organically. Trying to cheat the process can cause a negative backlash.

YouTube Doesn’t Share Its Secrets

Google owns YouTube and utilizes a ranking model for videos similar to its model for Google searches. YouTube promotes content it can monetize or that has high relevance to viewers as demonstrated by their keyword searches, ratings, view counts, and favorite status tags. Unlike Google listings, it’s hard to tell at a glance if a video is a paid placement or if it earned a high rank organically. YouTube is not transparent about how it ranks content, nor does it share its formulas and algorithms.

“The online-video viewer is leaning forward (versus leaning back while watching television) and is hovering his cursor over the ‘close’ or ‘back’ button.”

YouTube star wannabes should produce relevant, topical content aimed toward a specific interest. The more popular you become, the easier it is to become more popular. Garnering a certain number of views qualifies you as a YouTube Partner, entitling you to share a percentage of the site’s revenues and enjoy prime positioning on the home page.

“Weblebrity”

Since its 2005 debut, YouTube has created a new breed of stars with a unique type of fame. Some of the most successful make a living producing YouTube content. The most-viewed personalities, who are listed on TubeMogul.com/marketplace, have certain characteristics in common:

- “One-man bands” – YouTube stars handle every aspect of short-form video production including writing, producing, taping, editing, distributing and promoting.
- “Persistence” – Some creators get lucky with one-hit wonders, but growing an online audience takes dedication and doggedness.
- “Thick skin” – Putting your work on a social media site – where it becomes fodder for barbed criticism and review – is not for the faint of heart.
- “Self-driven” – Weblebrities are inspired by the freedom of working independently.
- “Marketers” – Webstars are savvy self-promoters, even if they market by instinct rather than traditional methods.

Working Knowledge

Ad and PR agencies are scrambling to figure out the best ways to use online video and other social media to promote their clients’ brands. Education is the first step. Marketers need a working knowledge of social media, even if they don’t use Twitter, YouTube or Facebook. Someone on the executive team should spearhead agency efforts to pursue new channels and study changes in consumer behavior online. The agency also needs an internal team to explore and create social media tactics that tie into clients’ strategies. Be ready to use consultants and external specialists to exploit opportunities as they arise. As the African proverb goes, “If you wait for the whole beast to appear before throwing the spear, you’re already too late.”

“As online video continues to mature...it will become almost as measurable as paid searches.”

Consider collaborating with established online video creators who know the medium and have an audience. For example, Fox Broadcasting formed a partnership with author Kevin Nalty and other weblebrities to promote the television series *Lie to Me*, *Fringe*, and *Glee*. Millions online viewed the video campaign and participated in a game. Sponsored video campaigns outperform display ads and paid search advertising on a cost-per-view basis. Their higher engagement rates generate greater impact. The creative challenge is to entertain viewers while promoting a brand.

“What we marketers really want is behavior change, and that happens when prospects give us time, attention, and engagement.”

YouTube offers several forms of paid advertising. You can purchase homepage placement, although viewers often distrust this tactic. Paying to become a “featured video” guarantees views. YouTube’s Partner Program attracts advertisers who place InVideo ads on videos from proven content producers. You can buy a “takeover” and have your brand splashed all over YouTube’s homepage. Deep pocket advertisers purchase branded channels, an expensive option that may garner higher traffic than posting a separate campaign site.

YouTube Stardom

YouTube is an online community. To become a star, abide by its unwritten rules. If you want people to watch your videos, watch videos others have posted and, crucially, make comments. Interacting with other YouTube creators fuels networking and promotes your content. Speak with creators online or meet them in person. Creators organize events in cities throughout the US that hundreds of online video producers attend. Collaborating with other YouTube users helps you gain an additional audience.

“YouTube is not just a video-sharing site; it’s a community.”

Search engine optimization techniques help Google find and rank your video. After uploading it to YouTube, place it on other video-sharing sites such as Metacafe, Dailymotion and Yahoo Video. Ensure that search engines can find your video on your website with a well-configured site map, smart use of keywords, and unique titles and descriptions. An attractive thumbnail – a still from your video – increases the likelihood that people will click on your video.

About the Author

Frequent public speaker **Kevin Nalty**, known as “Nalts” on YouTube, founded Nalts Consulting. He was marketing director at Merck and Johnson & Johnson.