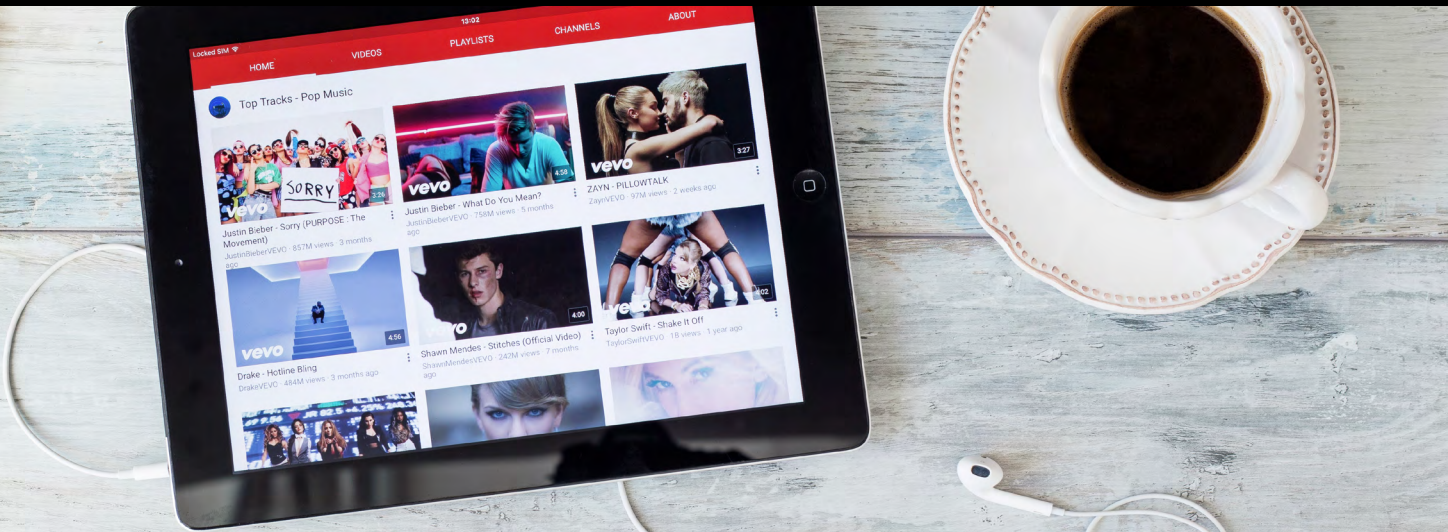


YouTube digital marketing guide for SMEs



► ***Video can be a powerful communication tool for small businesses. YouTube offers not only a platform for hosting videos but the potential to attract a valuable audience.***



If a picture is worth a thousand words, what's the value of film? Well-created videos can enable your business to communicate with existing and potential customers in a way that was never possible even a few years ago. What's more, you don't need expert knowledge or a massive budget to thrive on YouTube because inexpensive tools and technology have lowered the barriers.

Since its launch in 2005, YouTube's popularity has exploded, making it the world's second most popular search engine. Google, which now owns YouTube, gives prominence to video content within its own organic search rankings.

If you have so far overlooked YouTube as a marketing option for your business, you aren't alone. 'A lot of companies who could thrive on YouTube don't use it,' says social-media consultant Krishna De. 'But there are great opportunities to create valuable content for your clients or target market, inexpensively and effectively. The key things are to consider what content would be interesting to your audience, execute it well and make sure it gets seen.'



Ways to use YouTube



One of the most commonly searched for items on YouTube are 'how-to' videos. 'Creating useful, informative videos is an excellent way to gain an audience that trusts you,' says De. It can be as simple as answering a common question.

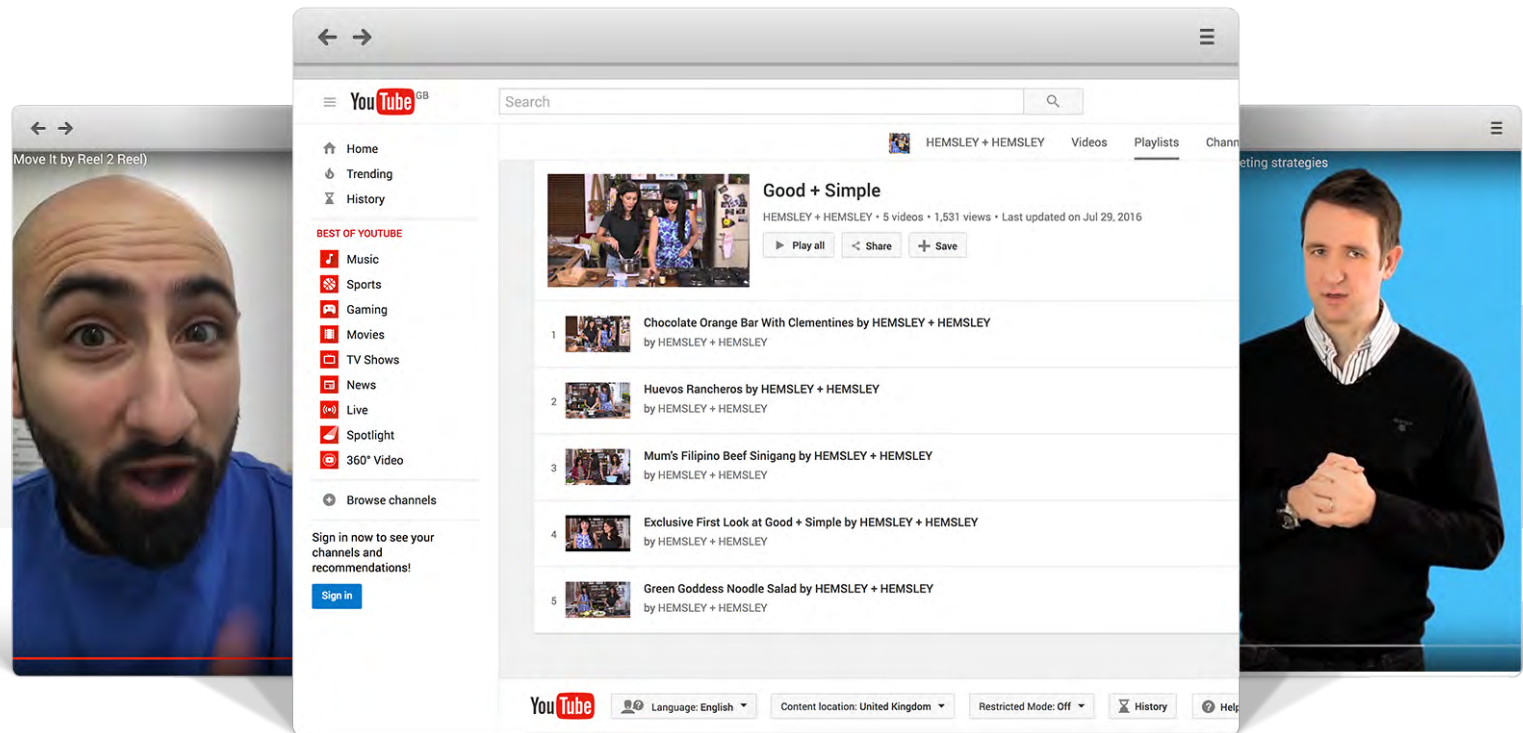
'A hostel in Dublin called Avalon House was constantly getting phone calls asking for directions from the airport - often from customers with poor English skills,' De recalls. 'So they filmed one of their staff making the journey dressed as a banana. As well as helping customers, it saved hours of staff-time fielding calls.'

Testimonial videos are a powerful way to build your brand. 'If your customers are prepared to be interviewed, that's fantastic,' says De. 'But even if not, you can turn quotes and photos into videos. The YouTube Creator Studio (on your YouTube dashboard) is a great resource for this.'

Product demonstrations and explainer videos are useful ways to show your expertise but you can go further and create "inspiration" videos, with ideas that perhaps your customers hadn't thought of associating with your product. Bold videos that show your mission, like this [video from Dollar Shave Club](#), can also be hugely popular and get the message across. It's also a good way to give your company personality, as high-end independent chalet company Alikats show in [their end-of-season-film](#).



Examples of small businesses using YouTube well



The Singing Dentist has clocked up nearly 200,000 views for an amusing [video shot on a mobile](#). Print Republic's straight-talking [video on marketing strategy for small businesses](#) has proved very popular while it's the enthusiasm of the Hemsley & Hemsley clean eating brand that really shines through in [their recipe videos](#).



YouTube Marketing – tips and insights



START WITH RESEARCH

Before you start creating content, check out what's already out there. What are your competitors doing and what is getting YouTube views and engagement? Look for inspiration from what small businesses in different industries do.

Keyword research

The simplest way to find out what's out there is just to do a YouTube search within the search box. Like on Google, the predictive sentence completion will show what the popular terms are. Then you can delve deeper with a Google Adword search tool or a paid-for tool such as TubeBuddy, De advises. 'If you do a search and no relevant video comes up, there's an opportunity.'

Consider your video titles

In terms of SEO, the title of your video is particularly important on YouTube, so use specific, interesting, descriptive titles where possible. Choosing the right categories and tags will also help your content reach the right audience. As well as the tags that YouTube suggests for you, you can also add your own.

Don't stress about perfection

'The good news is, you already have what you need to shoot, edit and share slick video in your pocket – a phone – and anyone can learn to do it,' says Alex Pell, founder of Dashboard Media, who helps train small businesses in creating video content. 'In these days of widespread video blogging, people don't expect perfection either. They just want to be informed and, ideally, entertained. Having a clear message and premise is more important than what equipment you use.'



YouTube Marketing – tips and insights

CREATE AND CUSTOMISE

Work towards a target length for your videos, paring out footage that doesn't add anything, to create something impactful. 'Short videos usually work best,' says Adam Grey, author of Brilliant Social-media. 'Check the analytics to see how long people watch your videos for.' Before posting a video, ask friends to view a draft to see what you can improve or cut out and to check that your film is getting the right message across.

Create content - but not for the sake of it

Popular YouTube channels generally have consistently updated video content. But choose quality over quantity; better to concentrate on fewer high-quality videos that really inform and inspire your audience than establish a lower standard for your business with a stream of mediocre or irrelevant ones.

Customise your channel

YouTube allows you to customise your channel, which will help differentiate it from other YouTube pages. Stamp your brand identity on it by using your logo, colour tone and messages or slogans that you want viewers to associate with your business. 'YouTube doesn't have to stand on its own – you can link back to your website and Twitter, for example,' says De. 'Video descriptions can tell viewers what the channel is about and how to get in touch.' Encourage viewers to subscribe so they get notified whenever you upload a new video.

Customise each video

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YouTube Marketing – tips and insights

Descriptions play an important role

Don't commit the common mistake of having no description for your video at all. As well as providing your audience with useful information, your description will be important for SEO. Keep your video descriptions short but informative, and include your important keywords, links and calls to action.

Include calls to action and encourage interactivity

At the outset, consider how you would like your audience to respond to a video. Include calls to action in the video itself, such as asking viewers to contact you for more information, subscribe to your YouTube channel and share your video on their own social network channels. Encourage interaction and comments and respond to all feedback promptly or regularly, if you can.

Use subtitles, not annotations

Enabling subtitles on your YouTube video is fairly straightforward – just turn on auto-captioning and edit the output for accuracy. There are hundreds of millions of hearing-impaired YouTube users who appreciate captions. You can keep the captions defaulted off, so they won't bother viewers who don't want them. YouTube can automatically generate subtitles for free and you can go through line by line and correct them afterwards. Resist adding annotative pop-ups to your videos – instead, place links and your comments in the description.





YouTube Marketing – tips and insights

DISTRIBUTE AND PROMOTE

In general the better your videos, the more views you will get. However, when it comes to increasing your audience, spreading the word is just as important as creating a great video. Unless your video is shared wildly and goes “viral”, which is a rare occurrence, views are still going to be proportional to how well you spread the word.

Create playlists

Playlists will help your audience find videos and make it easier for you to include relevant videos from other people, positioning your channel as a curator and not just a creator of content. ‘Playlists come up in search results,’ says De. ‘You might not be the authority on a certain subject, so creating playlists that include other people’s videos is a good opportunity to provide access to that information, especially if it’s a useful complementary area related to what your business does.’

Send links to videos within playlists

When you send out links to your video, such as in an email to a client or in a newsletter, you can actually give a link to the video within a playlist. ‘This will earn you more “watch time” because the video will be in the context of a list of others on your channel’, De says. ‘YouTube rewards this behaviour because it thinks you are doing a good job in terms of promoting relevant content – which indeed you are!’

Consider collaborating

Collaborative videos are popular on YouTube. Viewers tend to like them and they create an opportunity for additional exposure. Look for popular YouTube channels with offerings that complement (rather than compete with) your business. Suggest collaborations to help create content for someone else’s channel or invite other experts to talk about a subject on yours.



YouTube Marketing – tips and insights

Widen your channels

The video you've created for YouTube doesn't have to stay exclusively on YouTube, of course. 'It can be well worth uploading your video on other channels such as Facebook and Twitter to get more mileage and reach different audiences across multiple platforms.'

Bulk up your Google+ account

The YouTube commenting system is linked to Google+ profiles, which are important for SEO in Google's organic rankings. Ensure that your company profile is fully filled out and ready for visitors from YouTube.

Cross pollinate

Just because you create a YouTube channel, it doesn't mean people will go looking for it so spread the word across other social media platforms. When you post a new video that you want people to see and share, write a blog post about it, tweet the link and post it on Facebook. You can also embed videos on your website - especially tutorials and product demos.



FURTHER RESOURCES

Social media marketing expert Krishna De

<http://www.krishna.me/>

Get training in how to make inexpensive videos

<http://www.dashboardmedia.co.uk/>

Brilliant Social Media (Pearson) by Adam Gray

<http://www.pearsoned.co.uk/bookshop/detail.asp?item=100000000530223>

Adam Gray's social-media consultancy

<http://www.social-experts.net/>

Manage your YouTube workflow and optimise your videos:

<https://www.tubebuddy.com>

Create your YouTube header, YouTube Thumbnails and YouTube cards:

<https://www.canva.com/>

(they have a free plan you can get started with and lots of templates to use).

YouTube Creator Hub has lots of resources to help you get the most from YouTube, including tutorials:

<https://www.youtube.com/yt/creators/>

<https://creatoracademy.youtube.com/page/education>

Analyse the performance of your channel with YouTube Analytics:

<https://www.youtube.com/analytics>

Enhance your video on desktop or mobile:

<https://support.google.com/youtube/answer/1388383>

Create your videos and directly upload to YouTube:

<https://www.youtube.com/capture> (the iOS app)

YouTube help centre, if you have questions:

<https://support.google.com/youtube/#topic=4355266>