

The background of the image is a photograph of the YouTube Space LA building, a modern structure with large glass windows and a flat roof. The building is partially obscured by a semi-transparent red overlay. In the foreground, there are palm trees and some landscaping. The text "10 FUNDAMENTALS OF A CREATIVE STRATEGY ON" is written in a bold, white, sans-serif font, centered over the image. Below this text is the YouTube logo, which consists of the word "You" in a white sans-serif font and the word "Tube" in a white sans-serif font inside a white rounded rectangle.

10 FUNDAMENTALS OF A CREATIVE STRATEGY ON

YouTube

10 Fundamentals of a Creative Strategy

Some of the most creative people in the world are on YouTube.

They often build such loyal fan bases because of a creative show or series idea that catapulted them to success.

It can be tough to predict a hit, but there are certain fundamentals that we've identified as being key to developing new ideas.

We found these by talking to YouTube's most successful and most talented creators.

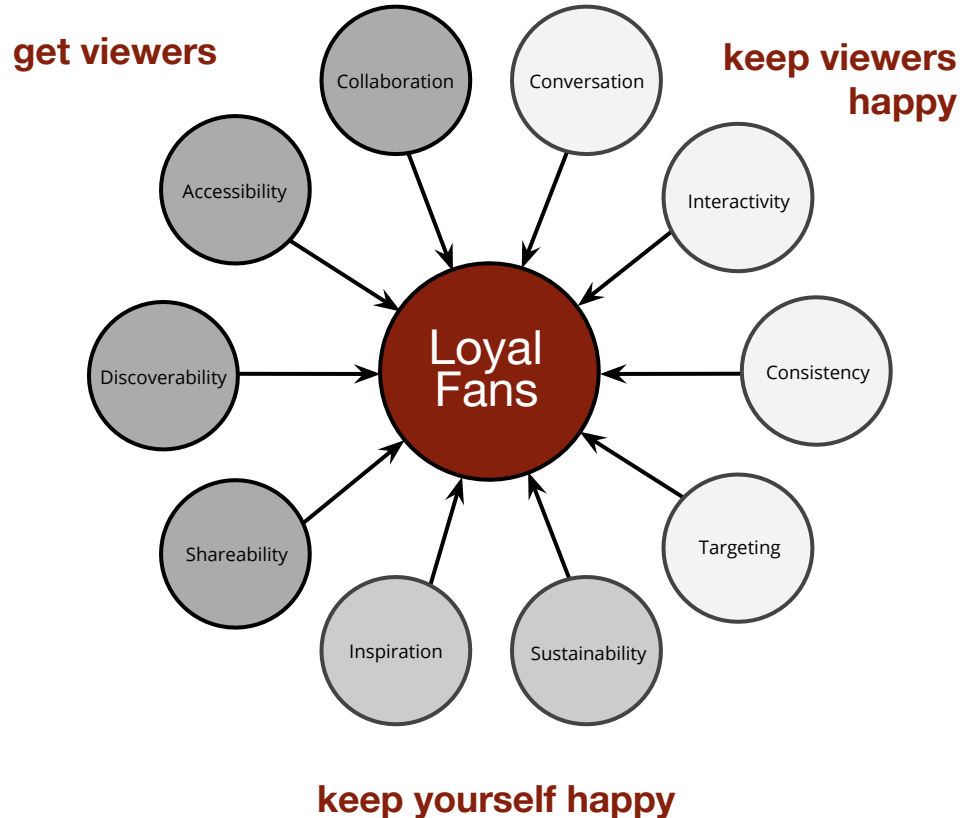
As you evaluate new ideas or existing ones, it can be helpful to consider the fundamentals to the right.

- 01 SHAREABILITY
- 02 CONVERSATION
- 03 INTERACTIVITY
- 04 CONSISTENCY
- 05 TARGETING
- 06 SUSTAINABILITY
- 07 DISCOVERABILITY
- 08 ACCESSIBILITY
- 09 COLLABORATION
- 10 INSPIRATION

10 Fundamentals of a Creative Strategy

Notice also how these all contribute to building a loyal fanbase -- one that comes back again and again.

The Fundamentals also fall into the three basic categories of Get Viewers, Keep Viewers Happy, and Keep Yourself Happy.



10 Fundamentals of a Creative Strategy

What this is:

It's a guide to help you brainstorm new, creative ideas for YouTube, with an emphasis on developing ongoing show ideas.

It's a filter to help you improve your existing shows and videos.

It's a tool to help you evaluate all the creative decisions you make for your channel.

What this is not:

It's not a checklist! You don't have to do *all* of these 10 Fundamentals to have a successful show on YouTube. In fact, there are many top creators who only do a few, but they do them extremely well.

It's not a hard science! We're talking creative here. It's often subjective and amorphous. Therefore, consider these as general guidelines, not hard and fast rules.

***First things first:** Understand the importance of a hit.*

One new creative idea or format can completely change the trajectory of a channel. Consider the channels [ZeFrank1](#) and [TheFineBros](#), who were doing just fine on YouTube. They then launched new show formats, "True Facts" and "Kids React".



True Facts About The Angler Fish



zefrank1 · 157 videos



1,131,091

13,004,956

82,022 2,696



Kids React to Viral Videos #1 (Double Rainbow, Obama Fail, T...



TheFineBros · 582 videos



7,863,433

4,729,609

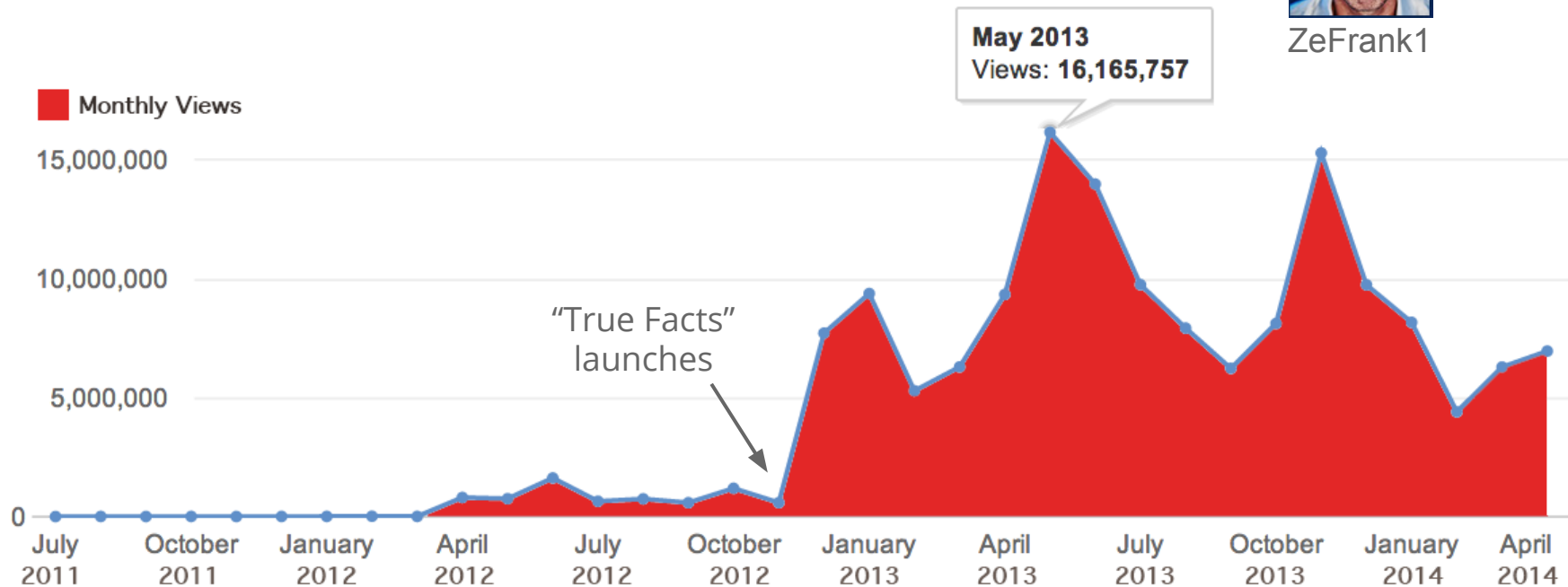
38,387 1,474

First things first: Understand the importance of a hit.

As you can see from Ze's channel analytics, he benefitted immensely from a breakout, creative show idea. More importantly, it was both popular and *sustainable*, which has upheld his channels' success to date.



ZeFrank1

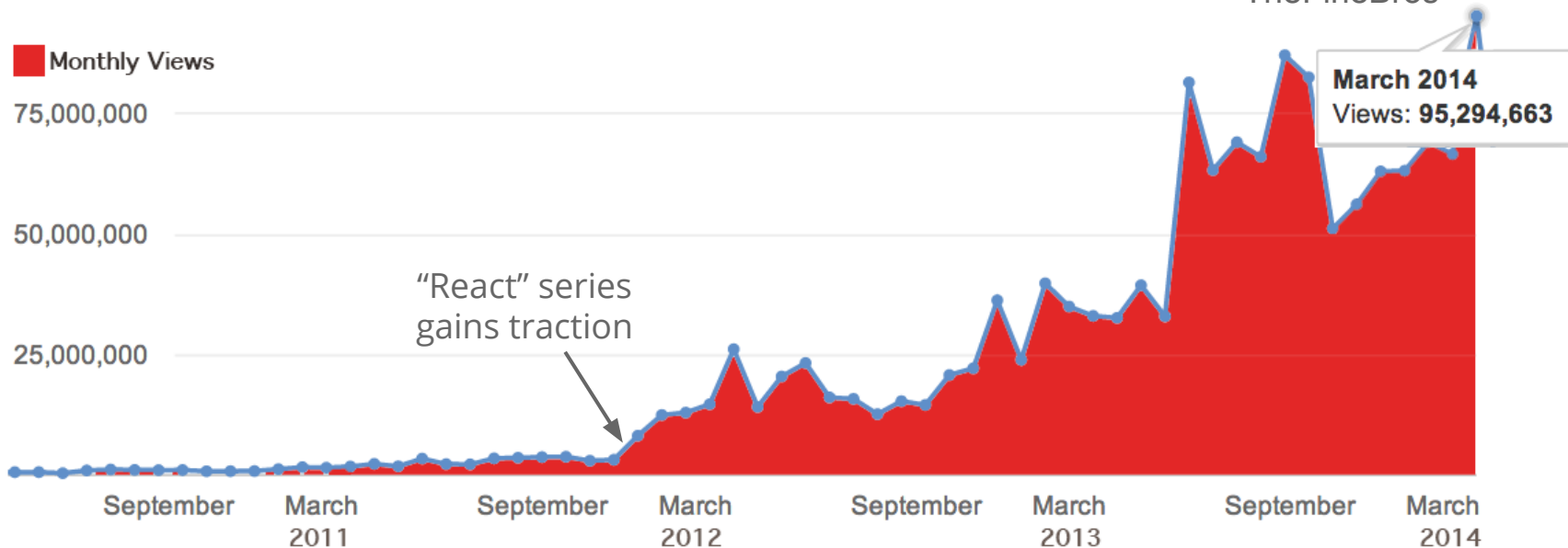


First things first: Understand the importance of a hit.

It was a similar case with The Fine Bros., who had been experimenting on YouTube for years. With the launch of Kids React, and then spin-offs Elders React, Teens React and YouTube React -- their channel took off and never looked back.



TheFineBros



01

SHAREABILITY

SHARE

(c) niklaswikstrom

01 SHAREABILITY

Will viewers share these videos?

We use “shareable” interchangeably with “viral” -- the idea that people watch your stuff and immediately want to share it.

It’s powerful because people are learning about YOU from the people THEY trust the most -- their friends and family.

We think people share mainly because of what the videos say about themselves. For example, sharing a funny video makes them look funny. Smart content makes them look smart.

How will your videos make people look when they share them? What was the last thing you shared in social media?

“What Does The Fox Say” was a music video and viral sensation that soared to 275,000,000 views in just four months. Much of the video’s success came from being shared.





01 SHAREABILITY

Ways to be shareable:

Be Topical. When a story is breaking, see if there's a way you can craft an episode of your show around it, to essentially join the conversation.

Be Relatable. Strike a chord with viewers on a subject that they can relate to, whether it's a broad topic like cell phone habits, or a niche topic like life in New York.

Be Valuable. Try to provide practical value to the viewer in a way that is extremely helpful, such as with tutorials.

Be Remarkable. Upload a demonstration of exceptional talent or ability.

"Construction Workers React to 'Wrecking Ball'" is a video from College Humor that tapped into the debate around Miley Cyrus' music video. It achieved 1 million views in a week.

Examples of being Shareable

Topical



The Dark Side of the iPhone 5S Lines



Valuable



25 Ways to Wear a Scarf in 4.5 Minutes!




Relatable



How to Piss Off Every New Yorker in 36 Seconds



A surreal outdoor scene featuring two men, Rhett and Link, sitting at a desk in a forest. The desk is cluttered with various objects: a guitar, a typewriter, a water cooler, a television set with donuts on top, a trumpet, a fan, and a small bear holding a toilet paper roll. The background shows a dense forest with trees and a small house in the distance.

“When we try to come up with ideas to go viral,
we ask ourselves, **When people share this,
what 10 words will they use to describe it to
their friends?**”

YouTube /Rhettandlink

02



CONVERSATION

02 CONVERSATION

Is there an element of speaking directly to the audience?

YouTube is an incredibly social platform. Viewers see their favorite stars as friends in their computer.

Talking to the audience is powerful because it builds loyalty and repeat views.

As you look at series ideas, consider ways to have a dialogue with your audience.

Establishing such a bond can be the difference between audience and obsessive fans.

The LatoyaForever channel has broken out over the past year thanks in large part to her directly addressing the audience in every video.





02 CONVERSATION

Ways to be conversational:

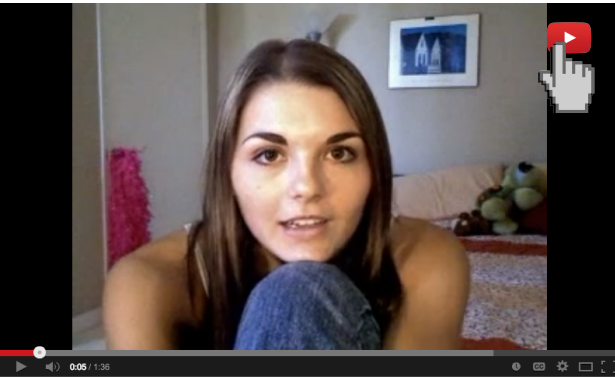
Talk to the audience in your core videos. The entire show can be made up of this element, or just a segment of it.

Talk to the audience in separate uploads. If you don't want to have a "video blog" portion of your main content, consider making supplemental videos to check-in with subscribers, say thanks, or respond to comments.

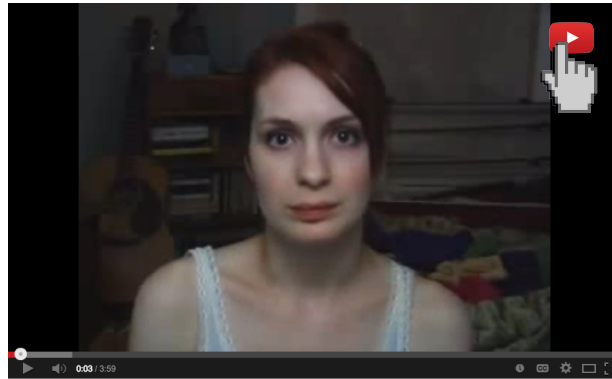
Be authentic. It should feel like a conversation because it is. For full effect, it's critical that the face of the channel come across as real, honest and genuine.

Vsauce is a science channel with over seven million subscribers. Key to its success has been the consistent face of Michael Stevens, who has spoken directly to his viewers for over six years.

Examples of being Conversational: In scripted series



First Blog / Dorkiness Prevails



The Guild : Episode 1: Wake-Up Call

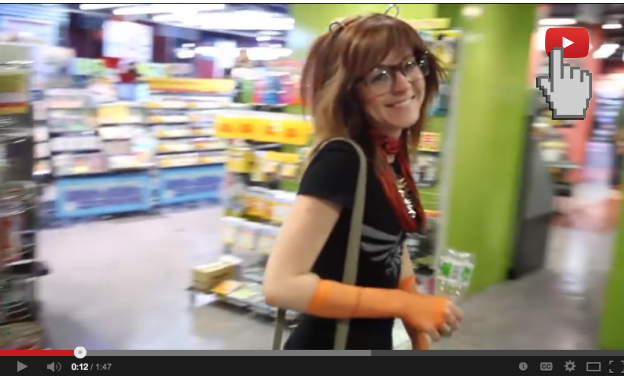


My Name is Lizzie Bennet - Ep: 1



LonelyGirl15, The Guild and Lizzie Bennet Diaries are three iconic YouTube scripted series. While the shows have storylines, all three actually opened with a vlog format which helped connect viewers by having a conversation directly with them.

Examples of being Conversational: In supplemental videos



Touring in Asia



LindseyTime · 74 videos



259,227

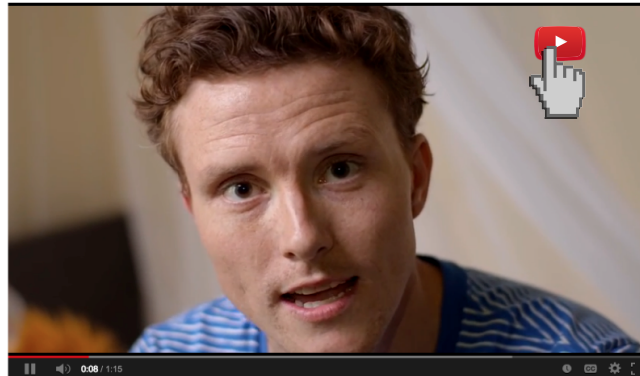
67,568



3,223



19



A Quick Thank You



ConvoWith2YrOld · 12 videos



489,479

311,542



8,624



52



WFW 92 - Awkward Pandas at the Zoo!



Wong Fu Productions · 379 videos



1,977,209

551,553



8,388



324

For those who don't want to incorporate conversation into their main content, another option is to do so with supplemental videos. The creators above make additional videos just for the sake of speaking directly to their subscribers.

"It's a **different relationship**.
YouTubers are more like
friends, brothers, or sisters
to the audience -- rather than
celebrities who are seen as
idols."





03

INTERACTIVITY

03 INTERACTIVITY

Is there a way to involve the audience with this show idea?

Imagine if you had the power to affect what happens in favorite TV show. How thrilling would that be?

One of the unique advantages of making content on YouTube is that you can give the audience a chance to participate.

Interactive videos are effective because it shows viewers that the channel is as much for them as it is the creator.

So, as you develop show ideas, see if there is a way to install an element of interactivity.

Every Halloween, Jimmy Kimmel invites parents to submit videos of them playing a “I ate all your candy” trick on their children. The funniest clips are then featured on both the TV show and his YouTube channel.



03 INTERACTIVITY


Ways to be interactive:

Directly ask the audience questions, or to submit opinions. Be sure to respond to them in a subsequent video.

Ask the audience to submit ideas for future episodes. And if you use their idea, be sure to give them a shout-out.

Incorporate viewer video submissions. With permission, feature clips that your fans have submitted to you.

“Epic Rap Battles of History” is a hugely popular series with a powerful interactive component. At the end of each episode, they ask viewers who won the battle, and who should be next. If they use your suggestion, they show it by way of a graphic.

A man wearing a black baseball cap with a colorful cartoon graphic and a grey jacket is speaking. He is gesturing with his hands. The background is dark with blue and purple lighting, and other people are visible but out of focus.

“ We’re completely scripted, but we write-in comments from the audience that help inform character and move the plot forward.”

- Bernie Su
creator, The Lizzie Bennet Diaries

04

CONSISTENCY

04 CONSISTENCY

Are there strong recurring elements to this idea?

Top YouTubers agree that consistency is critical in a channel's success, though many will define it in different ways.

Some talk about consistent formats, by way of a clearly packaged show. Others speak of consistency in the upload schedule, with videos delivered, every Tuesday and Thursday for example.

Some simply employ the same rituals in every video, such as an intro sequence.

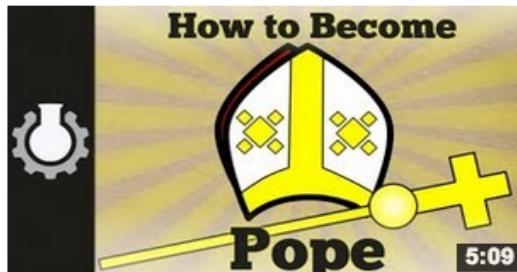
However you define it, the more consistent the better, as it gives viewers a sense of comfort, and something to look forward to.



Can Texas Secede from the Union?



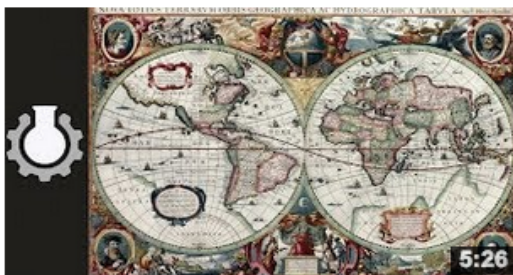
What is reddit?



How to Become Pope



The Debt Limit Explained



How Many Countries Are There?



Vatican City Explained



04 CONSISTENCY

Ways to be Consistent:

Have a clearly packaged show format. Come up with an overall idea that can be spread out over multiple episodes.

Upload on a regular schedule. Stick to delivering videos on a certain day, and communicate this to your audience.

Have a consistent personality of the channel. Sometimes it's a likeable and charismatic person who will be the "glue" of the channel.

Stay within the theme of the channel. Make sure this show idea isn't too different from the theme and voice already established on the channel.

"Convos With My 2 Year Old" could have been a hugely successful viral video on its own, but the creators smartly made it a repeatable series, picking up 200K subscribers in just two weeks after episode 1.

Examples of Consistency



Consistency of schedule - [TasteMade](#)



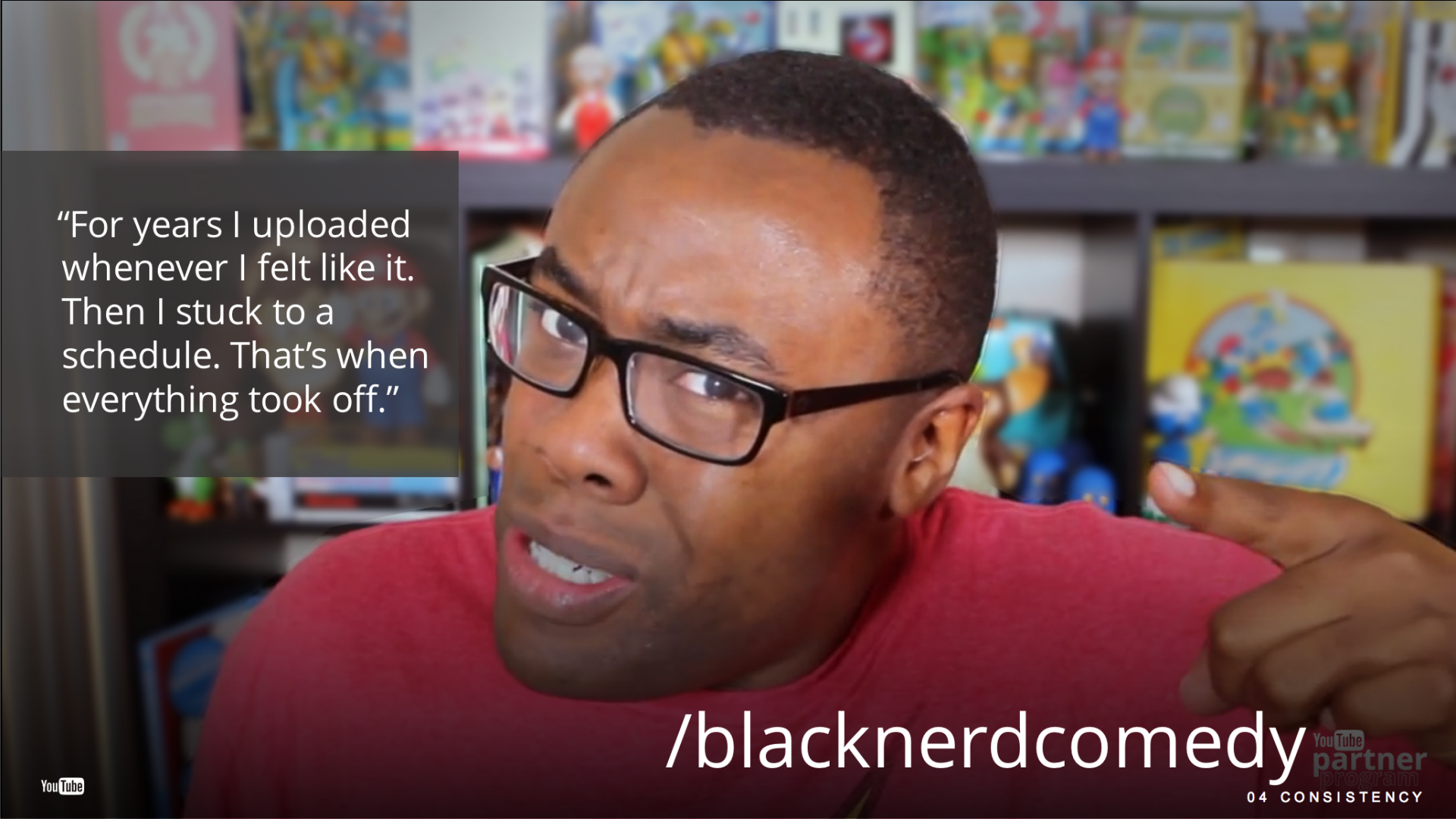
Consistency of format - [The Mythical Show](#)



Consistent personality - [PewDiePie](#)



Consistency in channel voice - [Vice](#)

A man with short dark hair, wearing black-rimmed glasses and a red t-shirt, is shown from the chest up. He is looking slightly to his left with a focused expression, his mouth open as if speaking. His right hand is partially visible, pointing towards the right. The background is a blurred shelf filled with various colorful toys, including action figures and comic books.

"For years I uploaded whenever I felt like it. Then I stuck to a schedule. That's when everything took off."

/blacknerdcomedy

ARCHERY.TV

05

TARGETING

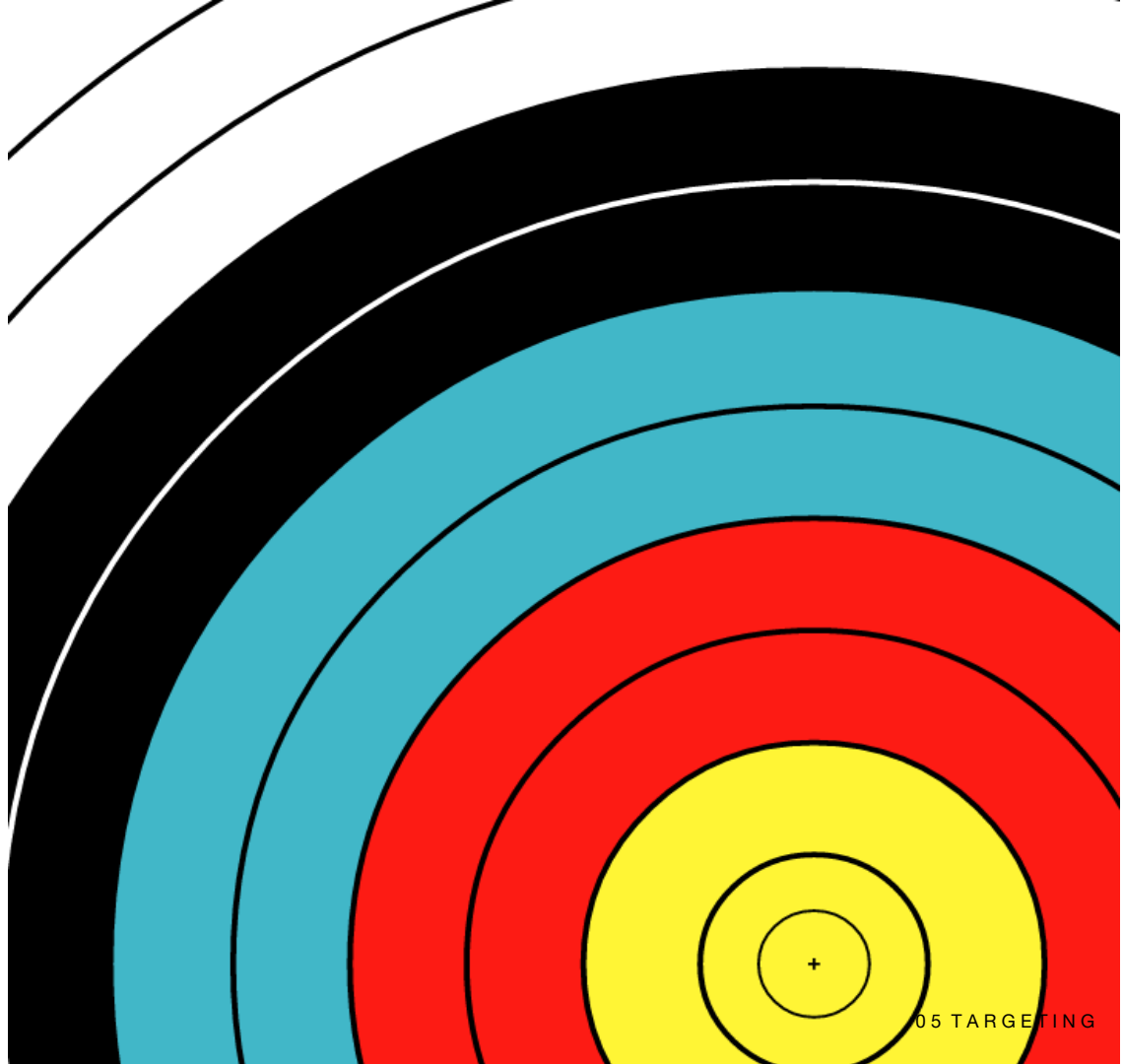
05 TARGETING

Is there a clearly defined audience?

Viewers love seeing videos they can relate to, so it's helpful when your content is tailored to a specific group or demographic.

This could be a large group such as parents of toddlers, or a small niche, such as collectors of Disney toys.

Either way, we've found that the more you can say about your intended audience, the more traction you can get with an idea.





SkyDoesMinecraft is a channel dedicated solely to the popular computer game. By targeting a strong niche, it has picked up over 7 million subscribers and 1.4 billion views.

05 TARGETING

Ways to do it

Target audience from the channel level, such as with [SkyDoesMinecraft](#), which is entirely devoted to players of the game Minecraft.

Target audience from the show level, such as with the series “[Get Ready With Me](#)” from MissGlamorazzi.

Target audience from the individual video level, such as [Sh*t Sri Lankan Mother’s Say](#).

Target an audience that is underserved, meaning they have a lack of options on other mediums. See “[Hello Cupid](#)”.

A white van is parked on a beach, with palm trees and the ocean in the background. The van has a roof rack loaded with gear, including a large bag and a surfboard. The entire image is overlaid with a semi-transparent red filter. A white circle containing the number '06' is positioned in the center of the van's side window.

06

SUSTAINABILITY

06 SUSTAINABILITY

If the audience loves it, can you make more of it?

Growing and maintaining a successful channel can be a long road. Some of our top creators have been uploading weekly videos for 300 weeks without stopping!

That may not be for you, and that's OK. Really. But it's important that you develop ideas that make sense on a practical level.

Ask yourself if you have the resources to sustain an idea over time, including budget, actors, crew, location and energy.



Phil DeFranco has maintained his channel for over seven years thanks in part to a sustainable show format.



06 SUSTAINABLE:

Ways to do it

Think light and nimble. Try to produce in a way that is less time and labor intensive. Typically, the less involved the production, the longer you can maintain it. Watch "[Your Grammar Sucks](#)".

Be realistic. Have a clear understanding of what it will take to produce the series, and for how long it will provide content for your channel.

Block shoot. Record several videos in one day to maximize resources.

Know what's next. Have a plan for what you will deliver to your audience after the current series of videos is finished.

Comedian Jack Douglas reads terrible comments back to the camera in "Your Grammar Sucks", a sustainable series recorded from his home. The show has been key to him reaching one million subscribers.

A photograph of two men standing in a recording studio. The man on the left has a beard and is wearing a light blue button-down shirt. The man on the right has glasses and is wearing a grey t-shirt with a 'Dharma' logo. They are in front of a purple wall with acoustic foam and a piece of equipment labeled 'My Music'.

"If we can't shoot at least three episodes in one day, we move on to the next idea."

/TheFineBros



07

DISCOVERABILITY

07 DISCOVERABILITY

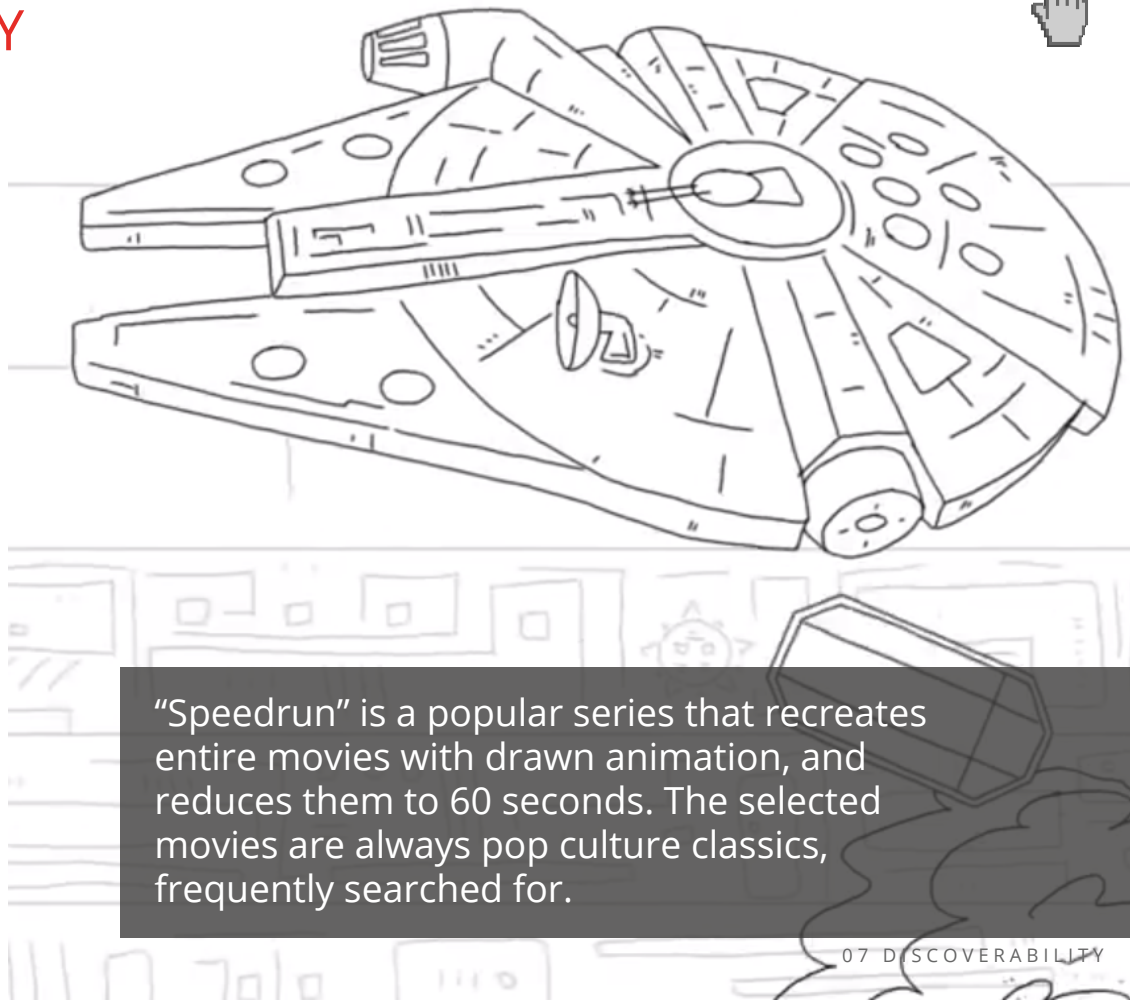
Will the videos get found through search or related videos?

YouTube is one of the most-used search engines in the world. People pour onto the site looking for video content around all kinds of subjects.

Sometimes these queries are around hot topics or trending events, like an amazing sports play, an election, or the Olympics.

Other times people search for information, such as how to fix a water heater, or how to do the “smokey eye” make-up effect.

Either way, having discoverable videos is powerful because it can pile on extra views and potential new subscribers.



“Speedrun” is a popular series that recreates entire movies with drawn animation, and reduces them to 60 seconds. The selected movies are always pop culture classics, frequently searched for.



07 DISCOVERABILITY

Ways to be Discoverable:

Build trending topics into your show.

Design your series in a way that the episodes can be relevant to trending topics in news or pop culture. Use resources like [Google Trends](#), Twitter Trends, and sites like [Trendspottr.com](#) to find out what's being discussed.

Make “evergreen” content. Create videos that answer common questions or solve common problems. Videos like “How to tie a tie” continue to get searched for, every day.

Be an optimization wizard. Read our [Creator Playbook](#) and learn how to best optimize every video with effective titles, tags and descriptions.

The ongoing series “Key of Awesome” has had multiple hits by producing videos around pop culture. Their Ke\$ha parodies have amassed over 130 million views combined.



"Every Monday we meet to talk about trending topics, videos, memes, tech, celebrity gossip -- anything we think people are looking for. From there, we brainstorm angles for a video."

/barelypolitical

08

ACCESSIBILITY

08 ACCESSIBILITY

Can every episode be fully appreciated by a brand new viewer?

When looking at new series ideas, it's worth considering that a significant percentage of people may end up there through a single episode on a social feed, a search result, or a related video. Therefore, it becomes important to have videos that don't require a lot of context going in.

Having a show with "stand alone" episodes is helpful because, if you've uploaded 50 episodes, you have 50 chances for a new viewer to stumble upon, enjoy, and subscribe for more.

We're *not* saying you have to have a fully accessible show, but it can help a channel grow faster.



Beauty and lifestyle creator MissGlamorazzi creates multi-episode shows that require no prior context, regardless of what episode is watched. This is episode #9 of her short series, "DIY December Days".



08 ACCESSIBILITY

Ways to be Accessible:

Don't tie each episode to the pilot.

Design the show in a way that each episode doesn't have to rely on a specific backstory that is only described in episode 1.

Show a brief recap of the situation.

Create an intro sequence that reviews what the audience may have missed, to help give context to what they're about to watch.

Make a strong call-to-action pointing back to the pilot episode. Let viewers know where they can learn the backstory via annotations or links in the description.

"Jake and Amir" is a long running series from College Humor with over 500 episodes, none of which require prior context to appreciate.

A man on the left is holding a professional video camera on a gimbal, filming a woman on the right. The woman is in a dynamic pose, performing a high kick with her right leg extended upwards and forward. She is wearing a dark t-shirt and light-colored pants. The background is a plain, light-colored wall. The entire image is overlaid with a semi-transparent red filter.

09

COLLABORATION

09 COLLABORATION

Is there room in this idea to feature other YouTubers?

One of the fastest ways to grow subscribers on YouTube is to “collab” with those who have their own fans, and feature them in your videos.

It works because when the guest star promotes the video, you get seen by another loyal audience that already knows how to use YouTube -- how to subscribe, comment and favorite videos. If they like you, they subscribe to you too.

Collaborating is also a great way to build relationships inside the very vibrant and active community of creators.



Hannah Hart (left) created a series called “My Drunk Kitchen”, which is designed to feature guest stars. As a result, episodes with a co-host tend to get extra promotion from that person’s social media presence.



09 COLLABORATION


Ways to Collaborate

Build a “guest chair” into your show. Design the show in a way that makes it easy and logical to have guest stars.

Reach out to partners that fit. Find creators in your genre or niche with similar subscriber numbers.

Be as specific as possible. YouTubers are busy with their own channel, so when reaching out, be as clear and as specific as possible. A script is often welcome.

Make them proud. The point here is to get your guest to promote the finished product, so feature them prominently and in a positive light.



"It should feel exciting, organic and seamless; that it's benefiting the audience as much as the creators."

- Jake Roper

Nsauce3



10

INSPIRATION

10 INSPIRATION

Is this idea coming from a place of genuine inspiration?

Top creators on YouTube will often tell you that this is of the utmost importance.

It's powerful because true passion often comes through in the content itself -- and lack of it does as well.

If you're an individual, we'd encourage you to make videos that will make you happy. It happens to be key to building fans.

And if you're part of a company, strive to make content that is true to brand, and find talented people who are inspired by the mission of the channel.



Freddie Wong and Brandon Latch created the kind of videos they loved watching. The result has been a wildly successful channel with over 6.5 million subscribers.



10 INSPIRATION


Ways to find it.

Pay attention to what you love to watch. From TV, movies, news or blogs, consider what you enjoy, and consider making something in the same arena.

Iterate on your videos based on what you most enjoy. Try different shows and observe what audiences like best. But also observe what you enjoy. Hopefully they will be the same thing!

Avoid producing videos just because you think they will be more popular. In the long run, making videos you don't want to make will probably just bring misery.

For companies, think about content that is true to brand.

A man wearing a black baseball cap and a black t-shirt with a white fish graphic is pointing his right index finger directly at the camera. He has a slight smile and is looking directly at the viewer. The background is a blurred indoor setting with warm lighting.

"If you love doing it, it will be a
lot easier... and a lot more fun."
- Tony Valenzuela

/blackboxTV

Quick Guide

Ask yourself the following questions as you develop new ideas, or look to improve your existing shows on YouTube.

1. Shareability

Will viewers share these videos?

2. Conversation

Is there an element of speaking directly to the audience?

3. Interactivity

Is there a way to involve the audience with this show idea?

4. Consistency

Are there strong recurring elements to this idea?

5. Targeting

Is there a clearly defined audience?

6. Sustainability

If the audience loves it, can you make more of it?

7. Discoverability

Will the videos get found through search or related videos?

8. Accessibility

Can every episode be fully appreciated by a brand new viewer?

9. Collaboration

Is there room in this idea to feature other YouTubers?

10. Inspiration

Is this idea coming from a place of genuine inspiration?

1. Shareability

[What does the Fox Say?](#)

[Construction Workers React to "Wrecking Ball"](#)

[Grand Theft Auto V Mythbusters: Episode 1](#)

[25 Ways to Wear a Scarf](#)

[How to Piss Off Every New Yorker in 36 Seconds](#)

2. Conversation

[Why Do We Get Bored?](#)

[First Blog / Dorkiness Prevails](#)

[The Guild: Episode 1: Wake-Up Call](#)

[My Name is Lizzie Bennet - Ep: 1](#)

[Touring in Asia](#)

[A Quick Thank You](#)

[WFW 92 - Awkward Pandas at the Zoo!](#)

3. Interactivity

[YouTube Challenge: I Told My Kids I Ate Their Halloween Candy](#)

[Rasputin vs Stalin. Epic Rap Battles of History](#)

[The Lizzie Bennet Diaries](#)

4. Consistency

[Convos With My 2 Year Old - EPISODE 1](#)

[Tastemade channel](#)

[The Mythical Show](#)

[PewDiePie](#)

[Vice channel](#)

Appendix of Examples

5. Targeting

[SkyDoesMinecraft channel](#)

[Get Ready With Me](#)

[Sh*t Sri Lankan Mothers Say](#)

[Hello Cupid](#)

6. Sustainability

[Philip DeFranco channel](#)

[Your Grammar Sucks](#)

7. Discoverability

[Speedrun: Star Wars Episode IV: A New Hope](#)

[Ke\\$ha Die Young Parody](#)

8. Accessibility

[DIY Coffee Mugs](#)

[Jake and Amir: Get Rich Quick Schemes](#)

9. Collaboration

[My Drunk Kitchen](#)

[I was Kidnapped by Hank Green!](#)

10. Inspiration

[Freddiew \(RocketJump\) channel](#)

[Veratasium channel](#)

A photograph of the YouTube Space LA building, a modern structure with large glass windows and a flat roof. The building is surrounded by palm trees and landscaping. The entire image is covered with a semi-transparent red overlay. The word "Thanks!" is written in white, bold, sans-serif font in the center of the image.

Thanks!