

FINDING YOUR NICHE ON YOUTUBE



How to Use Video to Turn Audience Engagement into Action. YouTube is an online video platform that allows users to upload original content and share and view videos from other users. Over [1.9 billion users](#) visit YouTube each month. There are many ways that nonprofits can use YouTube to educate, engage and activate the communities they want to reach.

Is YouTube Worth Your Staff Time?

YouTube is a visual platform that allows nonprofits to tell their stories and directly interact with their audiences. When deciding whether to use YouTube, think about whether the capabilities of the platform align with your strategic goals. Many nonprofits use YouTube to educate target audiences about the issues that they work on and the unique role that the organization plays in addressing those causes. Content can be practical how-to videos, testimonials that speak to the impact of nonprofit work or videos that promote specific campaigns and events. YouTube also can be a fundraising tool and many nonprofits create videos that appeal to donors by showing the impact of donations and thanking donors for their support.

Building your YouTube following requires a consistent stream of content and activity, so running an effective YouTube account could require a significant time investment. If your organization is just looking to host live videos, consider using Facebook Live.

To decide if YouTube will serve your strategic communication goals, start by asking: Who are your target audiences, where can they be found and what do you want them to do? The [Spitfire Smart Chart®](#) helps you think through these questions to begin crafting your YouTube strategy.



Who uses YouTube?

While nonprofits are sending more emails than ever before, that means there is more competition for your audience's attention. YouTube's

demographics offer the potential to reach any audience with hard work and a little strategic thinking. The platform has 1.9 billion users and is available in [91 countries and 80 languages](#). YouTube is outpacing traditional television viewership. Through mobile devices, the platform reaches more [18-49 year olds](#) than any broadcast or CABLE TV network. In addition, [81 percent of parents](#) in the U.S. use the channel to find content for their children.

Most people use YouTube to watch original videos created by individuals, with branded content created by companies and institutions coming in second. [More than half of video views come from mobile devices and mobile users spend an average of about 40 minutes a day on YouTube.](#)



Begin Building Your Channel

Once you've decided that YouTube will help advance your organization's communication goals, create a YouTube channel for your nonprofit. YouTube is owned by Google, so in order to make a YouTube account you must first have a Google account.

When creating and uploading your videos, keep these tips in mind to help the right audiences find and engage with your videos.

1. **Two-minute rule:** Viewers are more likely to watch content that is under two minutes, so keep your videos short when appropriate.
2. **Call-to-action:** Consider putting a call-to-action at the end of your videos to help guide viewers to what you want them to do.
3. **Keep your video titles short and sweet:** Make sure that your video title is simple and gives the viewer a reason to watch your videos. Include most relevant keywords in the title, which should be under 70 words so individuals can see the full title in search results.
4. **Customize your thumbnail to attract more viewers.** Thumbnails that feature close ups of faces, brightly colored backgrounds, text overlays, contrast/outlines and tasteful branding perform particularly well. Your thumbnail should represent accurately both your brand and the content of the video. The best size for thumbnails is 1280 x 720.
5. **Utilize your video descriptions:** Video descriptions briefly should explain your videos using relevant keywords. The most important information should be in the first 100-150 words because that is what a person will see in search results. Anything after the first 150 words will be displayed in the "Show more" section of the description. Note: Avoid beginning your description with a link because that will lower your search rank.

6. **Tag your videos:** Put specific, descriptive video tags in the “Tags” section of your upload to help your desired audience find your content. Maintain your video tags across thematically linked videos so viewers can easily find related content. If appropriate, try to tap into relevant, trending tags to describe your video. Note: Do NOT put tags in the description.
7. **Organize your videos using playlists.** If you upload regularly, consider creating playlists to help viewers seamlessly view more of your content in an organized, thematic way. Playlist titles should include targeted, appropriate keywords to help them appear in searches. Your playlist should start with the top viewed video in that category, and feature videos with high audience retention. When strategic, feel free to incorporate relevant videos from other YouTubers in your playlists.

Building a Following

Think about your organization’s goals and audiences and follow these tips to begin growing your YouTube following.

1. **Finding your niche.** YouTube is comprised of many different communities of actively engaged users. Become active in relevant YouTube communities by following other nonprofits and organizations related to your fields of expertise, and liking YouTube videos related to your cause.
2. **Like, rate comment and subscribe.** Encourage viewers to engage with your videos by asking them to like, share and leave a comment. Make the ask either in your descriptions or at the end of the video. Also, ask them to subscribe to your channel, because YouTube will automatically alert subscribers when you upload a new video. Engage with viewer when they comment on your videos.
3. **Cross promote your page on your other social channels.** Cross promote your videos on your organizations owned media platforms. If you have a blog, embed a YouTube video in an appropriate blog post. Consider sending your videos to your email subscription list and including a link to your YouTube page in your email signature.
4. **Use [cards](#) to engage viewers throughout the video.** Cards are preformatted notifications that are used for a variety of purposes like linking to website, polling your audience, linking to other channels and asking your audience to donate. Cards work best in conjunction with a call to action, and in the later 20% of the video, when viewers are considering their next move.



Listening to your audience

YouTube Analytics is a useful tool for tracking audience participation and engagement. They can be accessed on the “Analytics” section of the [YouTube dashboard](#). Use YouTube Analytics to track important metrics such as:

- **Views:** how many people are watching your videos.
- **Watch time:** the estimated total minutes people spend watching your videos.
- **Real-time report:** the estimated number of views, across your channel and for specific videos, from the last 48 hours and the last 60 minutes.
- **Viewer engagement metrics (shares, likes and comments):** shows if and how your audience is engaging with your content.