

How to Become Popular on YouTube (Without Any Talent)

an eBook by Kevin Nalts: career marketer,
self-proclaimed “viral video genius,” and the
author of industry blog, [WillVideoForFood.com](#).



[Kevin Nalts](#) is one of YouTube's least talented "weblebrities," with some 20 million views of his more than 550 online videos. He is one of the [most-subscribed comedians on YouTube](#), and his videos routinely rank in the top "highest rated" and "most

discussed" lists. You need only watch several of his videos to know these rankings are *not* due to his video-making abilities alone. Here, the career marketer reveals some of "insider secrets" to developing a following on YouTube (and other online-video sites), and getting your videos widely viewed globally. The techniques he shares do not include "tricks" that ultimately undermine a video, but proven strategies that are not often intuitive.

Version 1.2. January 2008 © Copyright 2008, Kevin Nalts, WillVideoForFood, LLC. All rights reserved. No part of this document can be reproduced in any form without express permission from the author, Kevin Nalts. Nalts is *not* affiliated with YouTube or Google, and may have to change the title of this book if YouTube objects. But, candidly, the title "*How to Be Popular in Online Video*" just didn't sound as interesting.

About This Book

After languishing in viral video for 9 months, doctors told [Kevin Nalts](#) his viral-video career would be dead within weeks. But he persevered, and now reveals some *easy-to-apply* techniques that can help *you* become popular on YouTube.

In more than 30 pages – packed with real experience, examples and video links – the videographer/marketer shares some of proven methods to develop a global audience via YouTube.

The techniques are built on experience, and will help you avoid some of the many of the pitfalls and violations of "unwritten rules" of the YouTube community. They'll also save you from wasting time with ineffective approaches.

The book offers basic – but sometimes counterintuitive – advice on how to become a welcome participant of YouTube, build friends, develop a loyal following, promote yourself or other causes, and have a blast along the way.

Should You Read This Book?

If you're asking yourself the following questions, this book may be for you:

- How do I gain YouTube popularity without cheating or appearing desperate? What works and what might create a backlash?
- What can I do to get my videos more views without spending an inordinate amount of time promoting them to people?
- How can I help make my videos "viral" (get them passed along)?
- How can I use my YouTube fame to promote myself, friends, advertising sponsors or worthy causes?

Testimonials

"Promoting a product or service or even yourself on YouTube is utterly different than the message-driven advertising-centric approach to marketing. With tons of example videos, 'Nalts' shows everything you need to know about creating YouTube videos. His insider tips on etiquette and smart promotional ideas are worth thousands of dollars. This compelling guide has taught me a great deal. Now you can learn how to fun with this terrific media and promote your ideas too."

- [David Meerman Scott](#), bestselling author of [The New Rules of Marketing and PR](#)

"Online video is one crowded space right now and if all you do is upload your video and hope for the best, don't have high expectations. You have to be an active participant. Kevin's book on the subject is an eBook, so you'll have to print it out yourself (preferably not on good paper)."

-- Paul Kontonis, [For Your Imagination](#)

"I read Kevin's eBook after I had already become popular and after reading it, I am still popular. Thanks Kevin!"

-- Michael Buckley, [What The Buck Show](#)

"His book summarizes two years of useless knowledge. It wasn't really as useful as my [Viral Video Fever](#) DVDs, but it certainly was a good value for its price."

-- Charles Trippy, [YouTube Heartthrob](#) and Producer of [Viral Video Fever](#)

Table of Content

I. Foreword	5
II. Do You Really Want to Be a YouTube Star?.....	9
III. Understanding The Core of YouTube.....	11
IV. How To Make Videos That Don't Suck.....	13
V. Tips for Getting Your Videos Seen	18
VI. Avoid These Tricks	24
VII. YouTube and Profit	28
VIII. Big Finish	30
IX. Additional Resources.....	31

I. Foreword

Thank You

I'd like to start by thanking a few people for their help with this book. It's a free book, so I clearly will share all proceeds with the following people.

Parenthetically, I am working on a book tentatively titled *The Prophet of Online Video*, which is written for marketers, agencies and any business people interested in the convergence of online video and advertising. So buy it when it comes out, or make a nice donation to a charity of your choice for this gift.

Failing that, just buy some tasty beverages and toast me. At least [subscribe to my videos](#) and [RSS my blog](#) for crying out loud.

- Thanks to [David Meerman Scott](#), who encouraged me to publish this book for free (I can't remember his rationale but it was really compelling), and for reviewing a draft. David is an accomplished author and online-video expert, and has tolerated an endless barrage of questions from me (whose closest venture to print publishing was a weekly newspaper that went bankrupt 6 months after I started working there).
- [Jan Ischinger](#) has not only helped with this book, but is the driving force behind the [Willvideoforfood Forum](#). She also sends notes like this: *"Take care of your health. Viral Video Making can be dangerous. An acquaintance... The stress is exhilarating, but it is also debilitating. Melt downs really, really happen, almost over night."* And she's right.

- Paul Kontonis of [For Your Imagination](#) not only broadened my knowledge of online-video promotion beyond YouTube, but reviewed a draft and taught me the difference between the word "Mike" and "mic."
- Ben Relles of [Barely Political](#) provided some important tips he learned while promoting one of [YouTube's most popular videos of 2007](#). Until I met him recently I didn't know there was another MBA who moonlighted in online video.

Most of all, I'd like to thank my wife, Jo (aka [WifeofNalts](#)), for her continued support and patience. More than anyone, she knows how time-consuming online video has been over the past two years, and has tolerated my neglect of basic tasks around the house. And sleep.

Finally, I want to thank the many "peeps" who have been so supportive to me on YouTube. I wish I could list many of you by name, but to include some is to unfairly omit others. And I think you know who you are: You've watched my videos, provided me with positive feedback, participated in my blog ([WillVideoForFood](#)), and told friends about my videos, and maybe collaborated with me. You've even driven to my house to take me for pizza when I wanted to "throw in the towel" on YouTube. Thank you very, very much.

Sorry

I suppose my "sorry" section is as important as my "thanks." Invariably when you make yourself as accessible as I do online, you end up entertaining many but also offending some. I ignore most of my e-mail and YouTube messages simply because I don't have the capacity to be diligent about communication and also keep a full-time job and family. I try, but can't spend the *hours* a day it would take to read and reply to my messages. Often this is interpreted as arrogance by

people who don't know what it's like to get hundreds of messages from strangers each day. As a result, I'm fairly haphazard about my communication. Rather than sort and prioritize, I tend to impulsively check messages when I'm in the mood, and then ignore everything when I'm not feeling social. So if you feel like I've "blown you off," it's probably because I never even saw your note. Please don't take it personally.

Disclaimer

I hope you realize that the title was meant as self-deprecating humor and not a warranty. You are, in fact, going to need some talent. But contrary to conventional wisdom, talent is not the only ingredient for success. In fact there are *far* more talented people than me on YouTube that live in obscurity and deserve to have my incredible audience. But they're lost in a sea of garbage because they don't understand how to market themselves, and soon decide maybe they're not so talented. It's sad, really.

Here's an important take away, so you might want to highlight this paragraph. *YouTube fame (f) is a function of your **talent** (t) multiplied by your **marketing** (m).*

$$f = t \times m.$$

I really should stay as far from mathematical examples as I do from sports analogies. But this is vital. If you're 9 out of 10 in talent, and this book takes you to a 5 (out of 10) in marketing yourself, then you're a healthy 45. But if you're really not interesting (say, a 2 out of 10) then this book may not help much.

Sorry.

I will touch briefly on how to make your videos *not suck*, but I've seen some really, really talentless people on YouTube. I shudder to think that one of them is turning to this book for salvation. Not to be [Simon Fuller](#) or anything, but if your friends and family find your videos lame then you may want to take up pottery.

Still reading? Great. If you take nothing away from reading this, please remember this: *The act of "uploading" is only one tiny step on your YouTube adventure, and if you stop there you're not going to get very far.*

Glossary of Terms

I'm going to be using some terms in this book that are worth defining.

- **Collab Videos:** Making a collaboration video with someone else on YouTube. This is an important way to introduce yourself to the YouTube community, and can be time consuming but fun. [Pipi](#) taught me this.
- **Subscribers:** You know how your magazines magically show up in your mailbox? Hard core YouTubers wake up each day and check their "subscriptions." If they've subscribed to you, they'll know each time you post a new videos. You want quality not just quantity of subscribers because they're the ones who will rate your videos. If they like what they see, your video will get "honored" and appear on some of the "most viewed" or "most discussed" lists, which gets you a secondary audience.
- **Honors:** Temporary status a video garners if it's the most viewed, most discussed or highest rated of a certain time period. A video receiving these honors will, temporarily, be placed on lists and be more likely to surface on a YouTube search.

- **Partner:** YouTube shares advertising revenue with "partners." To learn more, see [YouTube's partner page](#). If you're thinking you're going to retire on YouTube partner income you're in for a shock. But it's still nice to receive income based on the advertising that appears around your videos.

II. Do You Really Want to Be a YouTube Star?

Let's evaluate YouTube "fame" for a moment, and make sure you really want what you're apparently after. I find most people in pursuit of YouTube "weblebrity" status are looking for one of four things:

- 1) They're a performer looking for a stage.
- 2) They're looking to sell a product or service.
- 3) They're trying to fill a self-esteem void with positive feedback, ratings and views (therapy is cheaper in the long run).
- 4) They're hoping to connect with similar people and share experiences.

I'm going to start by tempering your desire. You see, if you enter YouTube with desperation for fame, people are going to find you *really annoying*. You'll give off a *scent* like those people selling Amway at neighborhood picnics. You might even *annoy people more than I do*.

YouTube popularity is not all it's cracked up to be. You'll find yourself spending inordinate amounts of time on YouTube, you'll lose a great deal of your privacy, and you'll get insulted in ways you've never imagined (someone wants to defecate in my mouth).

Each day you'll feel guilty because you're ignoring someone's cry for help -- *watch my video, mention my sick friend, be in my "collaboration" video, tell me what*

you think of my son's video. Soon e-mail will feel sometimes like a portal to hell – with desperate and thirsty souls screaming for just a drop of water.

In some ways YouTube fame brings all of the negative side of real stardom without the money and perks. You'll almost certainly become addicted, and sometimes will fail to differentiate between your own view of yourself and the opinions of your viewers. The first time you get featured or have a video that goes viral will create a mad rush of adrenaline followed by a sugar crash.

But enough psychobabble. I just wanted to make sure you realize there *are* some downsides. Now let's explore the fun things you're going to experience if you have at least *some* talent and deploy the techniques you're going to learn here.

There are some fantastic things about having an established audience for your videos. First, you'll meet some terrific people. I started online video in December 2005 with naïve hopes of supplementing my income. I certainly wasn't in pursuit of meeting virtual friends, as I'm busy enough with my day job and my family. I'm doing good enough neglecting my "flesh" friends much less forgetting birthdays of virtual ones. But I've met some really amazingly creative and interesting people on YouTube. Some are passing relationships where we e-mail or mention each other in an occasional video. And others I've met in person to shoot videos, grab a drink, or huddle together at YouTube gatherings that make Star Trek conventions look cool.

I've been brought to tears by videos by my friends, and gained new perspectives from individuals – from all over the planet – with which I'd otherwise have no contact. And I've laughed until I could barely breathe. Lately I've leveraged my YouTube experience to help marketers benefit from online video, and that's been helpful in eliminating the mound of debt we've assumed along the way. But most gratifying is the joy of interacting with other creators, and getting instant

feedback when I experiment with a new approach. Where I used to burden dinner guests with my videos, I now can post a video, go upstairs and shower, and return to find hundreds of comments that tell me if the idea sank or sailed.

III. Understanding The Core of YouTube

Did you know YouTube is more than a search engine for videos? It's actually a lively community, and until you understand and respect that community, you're not likely to be widely seen. Certainly there are exceptions -- I call them "one hit wonders." Sometimes a video is so darned remarkable that it goes *viral* on its own merit. But please don't bet on that, because you have a greater chance of getting killed by a llama. Many of the most popular videos on YouTube never help the creator generate a regular following, so their next attempt is futile.

If you're new to YouTube, you may want to imagine yourself walking into the high school cafeteria. What's your body language saying?

- Sit with me because I'm afraid to sit alone.
- I came to eat, so please stay away or I'll eat *you*.
- Hi. I'm a cheerleader. Want to sit with me and be popular?
- Where's the table for the people that hate everyone else here?

Because YouTube is a visceral medium with two-way interaction, you can't simply post your video and return a few days later to see if you're the next [Numa Numa kid](#). People are going to talk back to you eventually. If you listen and respond, they might stick around and watch more. They may even tell their friends about you. But if you're posting to YouTube like you're sending out mass holiday letters, your community "reputation" will be poor.

There's a core group of YouTubers that hang out on [Stickam](#) (a live video site) each night and interact with each other. You can learn a lot from this group, and they'll influence your YouTube reputation. If I had more time (and didn't derive social anxiety from live video), I'd be on Stickam "hanging out" with these people regularly.

As with any community, there are countless of unwritten rules. To "fit in" you'll have to watch a lot of videos and get a sense for these yourself. But I'll give you the quick guide.

Like any community, YouTube has unwritten rules, and I outline some of these in a video called "[YouTube Etiquette](#)." Nobody wants to admit this, but there's a subtle social ladder based on how many subscribers you have. It's rather repulsive, and I try not to look at the numbers. I find that a creator's ego can unjustly enlarge as their subscribers grow, and I often prefer to "hang" with the less popular, more interesting people. But this social ladder is important.

For example, I get a lot of requests to collaborate with people that have no videos or subscribers, and it is a lot easier to ignore them than someone who has talent and a following. I know some famous YouTubers that simply won't collaborate with someone who obviously doesn't watch their videos. If you try to do a "collaboration" video with [HappySlip](#) before you know her – and have developed your own following – she's likely to ignore you (she ignores me most of the time too, but that's survival when you're blasted with 100 e-mails a day). So initially interact with people who have as many subscribers as you, and find your own "pod" within YouTube. There are countless subcultures built around people and their friends, and this group stays with you like your freshman roommates (or the stink of garlic).

Some YouTubers leverage their talent (in music or graphic design) to create custom material that popular YouTubers can use. This makes us far more interested in helping these creators find their way to the top.

IV. How To Make Videos That Don't Suck

This chapter sounds arrogant, and it's somewhat hypocritical. Because I make so many videos, many of them suck. If anyone should have the "magic recipe" for a good online video, it should be me. But I'm still learning each day, and that's part of what makes it so fun to create videos. People often ask me why I don't focus on creating fewer good videos instead of posting routinely. There are two reasons for that. First, if I stop creating for more than a few days, I generally don't feel like posting anymore. Second, I have no Earthly idea which of my video ideas will resonate and which will become popular. There are a lot of factors involved, so I play the odds with volume and frequency.

That said, there are a number of things I'd advise to help you make better videos. Technically, the barriers to entry are extremely low (access to the web, a computer, and an inexpensive camera). But here are some tips to making your videos interesting and more likely to be shared and, therefore, become "viral."

A. Stick To Your Brand

I know that my videos would be more popular if I made them more edgy and sexy. But it's not consistent with my style, and so I forgo that upside. It's not sustainable to create content that doesn't reflect your personality, and it will

confuse your audience. Find a unique style and stay with it. That doesn't mean you shouldn't experiment. Some of the best YouTube creators have a very specific and "ownable" style. [What The Buck](#) does daily celebrity gossip. [Smosh](#) does sketch comedy. [HappySlip](#) does clever comedies about her family, and to express her musical talent.

These creator aren't just talented, they know their audience and consistently provide for them. Some, of course, participate more extensively with the YouTube community, and others have their eyes toward larger media opportunities. To see other popular YouTubers, visit the "[most subscribed of all time](#)" section and get a feel for what's popular. Just resist the temptation to imitate these styles too closely. Find your own niche.

I tend to prefer variety in my videos – from simple vlogs (talking to camera) and real family moments to sketch comedy to "candid camera" style videos. I've even done suspense/thriller style, but usually with a comedic element. When "Farting in Public" was featured, I picked up thousands of new subscribers, and some of those stuck around while others left disappointed that all of my videos weren't in the same candid style.

B. Short, Fast and Big Finish

There are no hard rules of online video, but popular videos tend to be short, fast-paced and offer a "big finish." People generally want 2-3 minutes, and 90 seconds is maybe ideal. That said, the historically most popular video ever on YouTube, ([Evolution of Dance](#)) is six minutes long.

It takes me much longer to edit a video into 30-90 seconds, but it's almost always better that way. When you're editing, you sometimes can't resist keeping some

footage. But when I return to the video weeks later, I become infuriated by my undisciplined editing. The viewers will never miss that gag that took your video from 3 to 5 minutes, and you'll find your views are inversely related to the length of your video. If you must tell the story in more than 3-5 minutes, consider breaking it into a 3-part series.

I sometimes forget about the power of the "big finish," but it's the magical moment. If people lose interest, they won't forward the video on. If there's a great ending, however, we'll forgive some of the dips in the middle. And we'll rate it higher and share it with others. Surprise us at the end, or at least return to a previous gag so the story doesn't taper away.

There's nothing I enjoy more than finalizing the editing of a video, and adding music. It helps to have someone watch your video with you, and note when they look bored. I've chopped my videos down by watching my wife's blank stare when I preview them to her. You'll sense what you can lose. Sometimes the best part of the video is what you decide to leave *out*.

C. Topicality Drives Views

Topical celebrity humor brought Michael Buckley, host of "[What the Buck Show](#)" from obscurity to a top YouTuber within months. [Comedian Mark Day](#) is one of few comedians that has translated his timely wit into videos people watch. And Ben Relles, founder of [Barely Political](#), discovered the magical mix of timely political content, attractive women, and music videos (Ben reminded me recently that many of the top videos are musicals). He produced "[Obama Girl](#)," one of the most popular videos of 2007. He also parodied an SNL short ("Dick in a Box") with "[Box in a Box](#)," which has been viewed more than 5 million times.

Typically a major news event will spawn countless parodies, and timing is everything.

D. Respect Basic Production Guidelines

Want to know a secret? Many top creators have lousy equipment. For instance, this [GooTube Conspiracy trailer](#) was shot on a low-end camera using a very antiquated computer processor. A mediocre video can become much more appealing if the creator worries less about fancy equipment, and puts time into the lighting, camera shots, editing and sound.

Many people gravitate to online video because they're tired of overproduced television and film. So you're allowed to have a wobbly camera and some rough editing. But there are some basic tips, and countless websites that can help you improve your production.

- Light your subject softly with lights on two sides (not ceiling lights that produce a shadow). Natural light (overcast) produces the best quality.
- When possible, use an external microphone or avoid public places with ambient sound and horrible acoustics. Most YouTube creators use the mic on the camera, which is usually poor. And there's nothing that screams "amateur" than the echo of a room.
- Edit tight so no shot lasts more than 5 seconds. The best movies have rapid-fire editing, and short-form entertainment needs it too.

E. Package Your Video

Your video is more than the video. Your thumbnail, description, title and even keyword tags are part of the package. If these elements aren't consistent with your video idea, it won't have the same impact.

Some creators work hard for a good "thumbnail," which is the image that appears besides the video title. YouTube draws these images by default from the exact center frame of the video (so a 2:00 minute video will use the image that's at exactly 1:00). This picture is vital, and I spend time in editing to ensure that it's a representative image. Some YouTubers have been penalized by using a photo of an attractive woman in this thumbnail, which certainly works in the short term. But many of the curiosity clicks will result in frustrated viewers that were expecting something else.

Titles play another significant role in the decision of a subscriber to watch your video. I sometimes change my title when I think of a stronger one. For example, the video I posted recently features Spencer, the boy from my most popular video ("[Farting in Public](#)") beating up his friends with a 4-foot inflatable soccer and basketball. The title is "[Spencer Has Big Balls](#)." That should at least rouse some curiosity.

V. Tips for Getting Your Videos Seen

If you're a scanner, here comes the important part. I like lists because they simplify things, and are actionable. So let me jump right into some of the techniques that have helped me on YouTube. I'd also encourage you to watch a few videos and blog posts I've done on this subject:

- [YouTube Etiquette](#): This is meant as humorous, but it has some tips about posting, watching, interacting, collaborating, and meeting other YouTubers.
- [How to Promote Your Video](#): This is playfully titled "How to Cheat on YouTube," but it's got some decent basic tips like good titles, attractive thumbnail, compelling content, short videos and a "big finish." More importantly, it touches on the subject of *quality not just quantity* of subscribers. I speak about frequency of posting (my unofficial tagline is "Nalts posts a video every time you poop"). I also warn about the ineffectiveness of some techniques (like tag whoring and desperate "watch me" requests, and I'll elaborate these here). It outlines the power of making collaboration videos or those that invite responses (like contests).
- [How to Promote Your YouTube Videos](#) (blog post).

A. Collaborate With Other YouTubers

There's probably nothing you can do on YouTube that has more impact than collaborating. I spent nine months uploading my videos, only to find 20-50 people had viewed each. Quite by accident, I began interacting with people and collaborating with other YouTube creators. That is when things began to change.

Collaborations are a fun experience, and also introduce you to the audience of the person with whom you collaborate. For example, when popular YouTuber, [Renetto, shaved my head](#), I got some exposure to his rabid fans. When I [stalked HappySlip's NYC apartment](#), she was kind enough to post my video on her blog, and suddenly some of *her* subscribers subscribed to me. If you collaborate with someone whose content is similar to yours, this is more likely to occur.

I just launched a new online-video show, titled "[Bubblegum Tree Show](#)," to feature 50 of the most interesting online-video creators in 2008. People enjoy seeing their online-video "weblebrities" out of context, and this show will be fun to produce, but also a good way to meet creators and find new audiences.

B. Pursue Quality Subscribers (Not Quantity)

This time last year I had about 200 hundred people subscribed to my videos and now I have more than 25,000. Obviously many of these people subscribed and don't check their subscriber page, or lost interest in YouTube. But among these subscribers are people who share my sense of humor. Only a small portion people who frequent YouTube actually subscribe to videos and check them routinely. But this core audience is vital, because they are the ones that will watch your videos, give you feedback, and rate you favorably. I'm able to post a video, and have it appear in YouTube's "most highly rated videos of the day" because I have a group of subscribers that generally like my stuff (don't ask why). Then, when other YouTube "browsers" search for the highest rated videos of the day, they're finding my videos – thanks to my subscribers.

There are a few of us that live on these "most watched" and "most discussed" pages, and many of us aren't very talented. But our subscribers like us, and that propels us to "honors," which give us access to a secondary audience. My videos

almost always get "honors" because I have a quality base of subscribers. But if I suddenly inherited all of the subscribers of [Smosh](#), I'd probably get destroyed. Some of them would like me, but many of them would not be amused by an old, balding guy who drinks out of a coffee mug bearing his YouTube name. So it's quality, not just quantity you want.

C. Be Patient

Those creators who posted on YouTube early (2005) have a powerful advantage over the rest of us. They got in early and developed a regular fan base when the pickings were slim. [Renetto](#) and [MrSafety](#) are good examples. They're almost as talentless as me (I say in jest), but they have established audiences that really enjoy their content. It's very hard for a newcomer to rank initially. Please remember it's a marathon not a race. Save some energy and pace yourself.

D. Interact

The YouTube audience is watching less television and become enthralled with online video because it's mostly *real* and *amateur*. We're all tired of scripted television, or worse yet, the faux reality television. We want to see real people who are accessible and authentic, and with whom we can connect. This means you should try to read and reply to as many comments on each video as possible (and not just your own). This is easy at first, but becomes overwhelming as time goes on. Still, my favorite part of YouTube is the discussion that takes place on the video within the first 24 hours. I almost never check comments from old videos, but I tend to jump online to my most recent video and read and reply to interesting comments. If you ever want to catch the attention of a YouTuber, try

commenting on their most recent video. The more popular they are the less likely they read YouTube messages or e-mail.

E. Watch Other People's Videos

I read once that a new blogger spends time on his own blog. An old blogger spends time on other people's blogs. The same is true for online video, and yet I'm pretty bad at this. I tend to subscribe to anyone, and as a result my subscription page is bloated with garbage. So I don't visit it with great frequency, and sometimes miss that my favorite creators have posted a new video.

Nevertheless, do as I say... not as I do. Watch videos. Loads of them. There are several good reasons for this:

- First, people like to see your name on the comment section of their video. It makes them feel appreciated, especially if you have a lot of subscribers and still take the time to watch their videos.
- Watching videos gives you greater insight into what works and doesn't, and will keep you topical on YouTube trends.
- It's hard to connect with people if you don't watch their videos. And it's awfully embarrassing when you meet a prominent YouTuber and ask a question that reveals you haven't watched their videos.

Take this from someone who knows. I'm almost afraid to talk to prominent YouTubers because I'll invariably ask a question that reveals I don't watch their videos. I can almost count down to when they're going to say, "you don't watch my videos, do you?" I had one famous YouTuber get so annoyed he sat me down and showed me some of his videos. They get less angry when I tell them I've

watched them all but can't remember anything for more than 5 minutes. Then I call them [MrSafety](#) if they're a guy, and [Brookers](#) if they're a girl. That usually calms them down.

I vowed to myself when I meet people I would *never* assume they have watched even one of my videos. Join me at the next YouTube gathering, and you could ask me if I have any children. I wouldn't hold it against you.

F. Go Beyond YouTube

Remember that YouTube is the most popular video site, but only *one place* where YouTube videos are seen. When you post your video you may want to market it on niche sites, blogs, and discussion groups. I tend to avoid this because it's time consuming and often a violation of the community around that particular topic. For instance, when I did a video about [my obsession with The Office](#), I resisted the temptation to send the link to those blogging about the show. Unless you devote the time to personalizing your note (format below) and familiarizing yourself with their blog, then you're probably going to look like a spammer. That said, marketing your videos to blogs and social media sites has helped many popular creators. If you're making a video that spoofs Hillary Clinton, look no further than bloggers who have trashed her. Some chose to send their video URL anonymously, and others are forthright and personalize the message.

Here's an example of an e-mail I'm happy to get:

Dear Kevin: I've been reading WillVideoForFood.com for quite some time, and particularly enjoyed your recent post on (insert topic). I work for a company that does (insert company), and I would imagine this would be of some interest to your readers.

Do you agree? Could I send you information for the possibility of being mentioned in a future post?

Now contrast that with a random comment (including a link) on my blog from a promoter or public relations flack. Or worse, a form letter from a company that's simply interested in pushing its message. These feel like junk mail – at best you'll get some moderate uptake and at worst you'll get smarmy comments from their readers.

There are countless of social media vehicles that can help you promote your videos (MySpace, Friendster, FaceBook, Digg, StumbleUpon). I find these overwhelming and not nearly as productive as my other techniques, but other YouTubers swear by the power of these. A good resource on this subject is [CharlesTrippy's "Viral Video Fever."](#)

G. Merge Public Relations and Social Media

There are currently countless interactive agencies and public relations firms, but very few have merged these competencies to promote effectively via social media. This will be an evolving discipline, and a few companies are emerging with this valuable expertise. In the meanwhile, some of the most popular creators are partnering with public-relations experts to promote their video content. One of my favorites is Paul Kontonis from [For Your Imagination](#). Paul's online video network has a variety of shows, which helps him amortize the cost of promotion. He's taught me about how to get seen beyond YouTube, and has a knack for getting his video shows seen via blogs and other social media venues.

VI. Avoid These Tricks

There are ways to artificially drive the views and ratings of your videos, and "tricks" you can use to spam your videos to others. Ultimately these won't help much because you'll lose credibility and annoy people. It's cheap, tacky and may give you a short-term boost, but it's just not worth the effort. Here are some other mistakes I've seen as people make as they try to popularize their videos. Maybe you can save yourself some time and humiliation by reading this list.

A. Blatant Self Promotion

I often get accused of blatant self promotion because YouTube began as a community site for open dialogue, and I'm a marketer. So I can't resist a logo, a token hat, and a Nalts logo mug that sneaks into frame with all the subtlety of a migraine. Perhaps subconsciously some of my self-promotional behavior is driven by a desperate attempt to gain popularity to fortify my self worth. But a lot of what I do is meant as a self-deprecating humor. It's also fun to annoy people.

But self promotion can go terribly wrong. I wish I could show you some of the desperate e-mails I get requesting me to gratuitously mention someone else so they can get "famous." I get many requests to be in collaboration videos when the creator has no audience of his own, or any idea of what they are trying to do (other than to borrow some fame). It's awkward and embarrassing. Most of the popular YouTubers are insecure people with no experience in fame, so we are

inconsistent about what collaborations we join. But fame desperation is a general turnoff, and something to avoid at all costs.

B. Spamming

Unless there's a good reason to send someone a video, let them find it on their own. For instance, I almost never send someone a link to my recent video unless they're mentioned or in it. There's nothing for the ego like getting invited to watch a video in which you make a cameo or you're referenced. But I stopped reading my YouTube mail because 90% of the messages were:

- What type of equipment do you use? (Never mind that I explain that in my profile page).
- Will you watch my video and tell me what you think? (No specific reason- just a desire to be seen by a popular stranger?).
- You are so incredibly sexy (okay- that's not one I've received before, but I wanted to make sure you're still awake).

There are other forms of spamming videos through social networks and "friends" lists, and candidly, I don't even understand most of these. LisaNova (one of the most popular YouTubers) faced severe backlash for apparently spamming people with her videos (see [example of parody](#)). She [made a public apology on the subject](#), as well as a [parody that has more than 2 million views](#). The bottom line is that your videos should be viral based on the content and some promotion, but not through lazy and automated ways that will annoy people. Stay away from any promotional tool that's done by a 'bot.

C. Keyword Bloating

Many people have a naïve belief that if they bloat their "keywords" with terms like *funny*, *humor*, *comedy* and even other YouTuber's names, it will propel the video to the top of a related search. Indeed, this myth is not without some basis of truth. Keywords not only help people find the video, but they can propel it to the top of Google and ensure it appears besides related content on YouTube.

When I was first featured on YouTube I noticed that people were posting their videos as replies, and mimicking my video's keywords. This is misleading and annoying, and will eventually penalize a video's performance. Remember- YouTube is now owned by the master of defying search engine manipulation. A better approach is to use relevant keywords in hopes that your video appears besides related videos. It's not a bad idea to misspell either. For example, sellers of Heelys shoes are spending massive advertising budgets to have their sites appear on the common misspelling, "Healies." But my video (called "[Poor Man's Healies](#)") is unintentionally [one of the top results](#)... simply because I can't spell.

D. Abusing "Video Responses"

YouTube allows you to reply to another video, and this is a functionality that's often abused. Many people tack their videos onto popular videos, knowing that bored people will click them out of curiosity. Some video creators police this vigilantly by not allowing people to post replies without their approval (they select a YouTube option that moderates videos instead of permitting them automatically). I don't have time to groom the video replies, so I sometimes let anything get posted. However I become very annoyed by people posting videos

that have no relationship to mine, and will occasionally "block" them (prevent them from interacting with me).

E. Ask Someone to Help Get You Featured

YouTube editors have one of the most powerful jobs in modern media, and can literally turn obscure talent into overnight fame by simply featuring a video. Naturally when you've been around YouTube for a while, you interact with some of these editors. I rarely send them a video to feature. Don't ask someone to do this for you even if you know them fairly well. Send them the link and let them to decide to do that on their own.

I've been featured twice on YouTube's homepage. Once a YouTube community manager ([BigJoeSmith](#)) brought me to the homepage with [Viral Video Genius](#), but the video was only moderately well received. The second time was my "break out" video, and it was called "[Farting in Public](#)." There are three critical things to remember about the homepage feature:

1. Don't bank on it. Your odds are very low, and if you produce consistently good content it may happen without you trying.
2. The homepage of any site attracts "haters," so you'll be lambasted with negative comments if you land on the homepage. Newly featured creators are usually shocked by this, but it's just part of the game.
3. Not every video featured results in people subscribing to that creator. Many viewers will visit the profile page of the featured creator, but then decide there's not enough there to warrant their subscribing. Look at the profile page of popular creators and imitate some of the things they do.

VII. YouTube and Profit

As I mentioned, I am working on a book devoted specifically to the topic of marketing via video and monetizing creation, and it's tentatively titled *The Prophet of Online Video*. It's worth noting that my blog, [WillVideoForFood](#), is devoted to this subject. Here's a recent article I wrote for *Advertising Age*. It's called "[Ten Things a Marketers Should Know About Online Video](#)."

Coincidentally, my *Advertising Age* article ran days after a controversial [TechCrunch](#) article that revealed "secret" strategies behind clandestine marketing approaches. "I have run clandestine marketing campaigns meant to ensure that promotional videos become truly viral," said TechCrunch contributor [Dan Ackerman Greenberg](#). We were [characterized by one blogger](#) as *Glenda the Good Witch* and *The Wicked Witch of the West*. I was flattered in a way, but would secretly prefer an army of flying monkeys to a white dress and a bubble.

As I mentioned, I started in online video with hopes of entertaining people and supplementing my income. Initially I made a few thousand dollars through sites (like [Revver](#) and [Metacafe](#)) that share advertising revenue. However I found this to be very, very slow money. YouTube now offers a Partners program, and I'm not allowed to speak about my earnings... but rest assured I won't soon be retiring on the advertising annuity resulting from my videos. If making money is your goal, there are far, far more productive uses of your time. Find a topic that has a high Google cost-per-click (litigation, mortgage, diet, digital cameras), and start a blog about it with Google AdSense ads sprinkled about. But don't do

video for quick money. If I divided the revenue I've made from online video by the time I've invested, my payback would be less than minimal wage.

As marketers plunge more deeply into online video, however, it's possible that advertising premiums (which are shared with some creators) will become consequential. In the interim, I've found custom promotional videos to be far more profitable for myself and my sponsors. I'm careful not to make these over promotional, and I turn down more clients than I accept. But it's fun to make a video for a large brand, and help them engage with the online community with far more relevance than an online advertisement. I especially like being able to merge my day job (marketing) with my night job (online video).

If you are seeking YouTube popularity to market yourself or your products, I'd recommend putting that goal aside until you develop a following. The community will welcome you more if they don't see you as a walking advertisement. There are subtle ways to profit from your talents without looking like a commercial whore (that's my job, okay?), whether you're a musician, painter or voice-over professional. For instance, I've done several collaborations with Brett Slater (slatersgarage.com) and he uses his increasing online popularity to promote his services – without appearing overly promotion.

If you're an artist, you might find someone you like on YouTube and offer them a free song, logo, painting, etc. They'll typically mention you in a video, and that can help you expand your audience.

VIII. Big Finish

If you began this book to propel yourself to fame, I hope you've realized that there are effective strategies and some hidden pitfalls. More importantly, I hope you realize that there is tremendous gratification that comes along the way.

I hope you'll focus on the fun journey and not just on the destination of fame. You'll be criticized like never before, but you'll also get wonderful feedback and meet fantastic people. And occasionally you find out you've made someone else's life better, or at least a bit more interesting.

There are other important video sites, but I've focused mostly on YouTube because it's the "low hanging fruit," and currently where the vast majority of videos are seen. If you can crack the YouTube code, you can always explore other sites. The audiences among these various online-video sites overlap less than you'd think. I use [TubeMogul](#) to upload my videos to a dozen sites, but few get anywhere near the views I get on YouTube.

I'd really appreciate your feedback about this book, as you're reading a first draft. Did it meet your expectations? Were you hoping for the magic bullet and feel let down? Let me know.

Please send me an e-mail at kevinnaalts@gmail.com with the subject heading "Book Feedback" so I can revise this. Thanks for reading, and [as the public relations folks at YouTube say, "Keep Tubing."](#)

IX. Additional Resources

- [Inside Online Video](#) by Mike Abundo: Often the first to report on new trends and site features.
- [OnlineVideoWatch](#) (a great source).
- [ReelPop](#) by Steve Bryant, a columnist and editor living in New York, NY.
- [Cinemattech](#) by Scott Kirsner, who wrote "The Future of Online Video." CinemaTech focuses on how new technologies are changing cinema - the way movies get made, discovered, marketed, distributed and seen.
- [Uertainment Blog](#), written by a veteran technology-business journalist.
- [NewTeeVee](#)- an "Entertainment Tonight" of online video.
- [The Daily Reel](#) has had good coverage on the space (but is on ice currently).
- [Fred Graver Blog](#), written [by the guy that once helped ABC/Disney to explore "Telefusion."](#)
- [Mashable](#), a site for social networking news.
- [Web Video Doctor](#), for tips and tricks to help make better web videos.
- [ViralBlog](#), collaborative team of bloggers haunt the globe for great virals.
- [System Video Blog](#) by Ken McCarthy
- [StreamingMedia Blog](#) is a bit "techie" for me, but has some nice info.
- [Xlntads](#) is a website that connects marketers, advertisers and amateurs, and has a nice relatively new [blog written by Mark Schoneveld](#).
- [WebVideoZone](#) is a terrific resource (includes "members only" content).

- Less of a blog, but this "[Online Video Industry Index](#)" has a nice links.
- [NewsVideographer](#) for journalists looking to leverage online video.
- [ReelSEO](#)- how to optimize your videos for SEO.
- [Gadget News](#): Lots of topics, including online video.
- [Ronamok](#), by Ron the New Media Evangelist
- [Hot Air](#), a new media conservative something or another that is really interesting. Founded by Michelle Malkin.
- [Web Video Report](#): The bizzzness of online video
- [Politics YouTube In Review](#)
- [MathewWingram](#): The intersection between web and media.
- [PandemicLabs](#)
- [Camcorder Info](#): More than you'd expect from a camcorder site.
- [Viral Video Wannabe](#): [FallofAutumnDistro](#) is one of YouTube's more clever self marketers. I fear this name may soon be obsolete.
- [Web Jungle](#): Advertising, digital marketing & web culture.
- [Viral Video Fever](#): The Charles Trippy DVD collection that will give you a comprehensive video tutorial of this space (and I'm in it, okay?)

-
- [WillVideoForFood.com](#): My blog. Go RSS it immediately.
 - [Nalts on YouTube](#): My videos. Go subscribe.
 - [KevinNalts.com](#): My lame attempt at a personal site.