



BY JENNIFER GOLDBERG, WRITER, EDITOR, CO-FOUNDER OF TAVANBERG CUSTOM CONTENT AGENCY

5 LESSONS ON YOUTUBE SUCCESS FOR MAGAZINES

YOUTUBE IS WIDELY CONSIDERED the web's second largest search engine after its parent company, Google. With more than one billion unique users every month, it's a platform that media brands can leverage to connect and share innovative content with readers. But for many Canadian magazines, it remains a largely untapped resource.

"There's an opportunity for many more Canadian magazine brands to achieve a voice on YouTube," says Dave Brown, strategic manager of content partnerships at YouTube Canada. The YouTube audience is eager to discuss and share the type of stories that magazines tell, and a smart strategy will help enhance your content and grow your digital readership. Here we look at [Vervegirl](#) magazine as an example of a Canadian brand that's seen growing success on its recently launched channel.

THE BRAND

Vervegirl is published five times per year and distributed in schools, colleges and universities across Canada. Their target readers are between 12 and 24 years of age, heavy Internet users and deeply invested in celebrity culture.

THE CHALLENGE

The magazine was being offered a lot of celebrity interviews that they couldn't fully make use of due to the book's longer lead times and infrequent publishing schedule. "YouTube gave us the opportunity to have ongoing engagement with our audience as well as take advantage celebrity interviews," says Karen Whitney-Vernon, president and CEO of Youth Culture Inc., the company that publishes *Vervegirl*.

THE SOLUTION

Vervegirl launched its YouTube channel ([vervegirlmag](#)) in May 2013 and has since grown to more than 2,300 subscribers. To give some context around that number, *Flare* joined YouTube in 2005 and has 1,115 subscribers to date, and *Canadian Living*, which joined in 2007, has fewer than 1,700 subscribers.

THE STRATEGY

How can a magazine brand develop a robust following on YouTube? Here are some of *Vervegirl*'s tactics:

BE CONSISTENT

Like any social media channel, a major key to building community is a steady and frequent publishing schedule. "A consistent audience requires consistent uploads," says Brown. "The YouTube channels that are really successful let their audience know what they're going to get on a regular basis."

Vervegirl's goal is to publish a new video to their channel every week. Their strategy revolves around a linchpin interview show called "Mirror in the Bathroom", in which a host invites celebrities into a bathroom and asks them what they carry in their handbags.

Just like in a print product, this regular franchise and constant posting schedule gives the *Vervegirl* audience a reason to subscribe and return to the channel again and again.

The lesson: Posting once in a blue moon won't foster or grow your readership. Develop an ongoing posting schedule with franchises your readers will want to watch, discuss and share.

UNDERSTAND THE PLATFORM

When the *Vervegirl* team developed their YouTube strategy, they combined their main reader draw (celebrities) with the needs of their advertisers (beauty brands) and the type of content they knew would perform well on the platform (beauty, product and "what's in your bag" videos are hugely popular). The result was a show that not only speaks to *Vervegirl* readers with the magazine's authentic voice, but also stands alone as a product that YouTube viewers want to watch, share and discuss.

The lesson: A video concept may seem like a great addition to your magazine features, but if YouTube users aren't sharing that type of content, it will go unseen. Do some research

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around the type of content that already does well on YouTube and consider how you can adapt those concepts to tell your brand's stories.

INTEGRATE VIDEO INTO YOUR EDITORIAL PLAN

Vervegirl found the “Mirror in the Bathroom” concept so successful with their YouTube audience that they launched an editorial franchise in the magazine based on the videos. “We created an editorial piece that tells the reader what we found that was interesting in the celebrities’ bags and what brand it is,” says Whitney-Vernon. This strategy drives the viewer back to the print magazine for more information on what they’re seeing online, rather than the other way around.

The lesson: YouTube viewers can convert into readers and print subscribers, and compelling video shouldn’t be an afterthought. Incorporate video concepts into your overall editorial strategy and develop YouTube content in tandem with your lineups to ensure that the stories you tell online are a natural extension of your brand.

IDENTIFY OPPORTUNITIES FOR CROSS-PROMOTION

YouTube is a thriving community with its own ecosystem of experts and celebrities that exist outside the spectrum of traditional media. “Brands that are successful on YouTube realize there’s a zeitgeist out there that they can tap into and use as resources and contributors to their subject matter,” says Brown.

Along with the “Mirror in the Bathroom” series, *Vervegirl* creates content with a team of social media and YouTube influencers called Vreps, a roster of young Canadian women

who maintain their own successful beauty-focused YouTube channels outside of the content they produce for *Vervegirl*. For example B.C.-based-Vrep, Mikayla, has more than 27,000 subscribers to her own channel, MissMkaylaG. *Vervegirl* leverages the authority these contributors already have in the YouTube space to drive viewers to their own channel.

The lesson: Reach out to successful YouTube contributors to serve as experts for your stories and collaborators on your video content. Cross-promotion from highly followed YouTube personalities can drive subscriptions, shares and conversation on your channel.

INTERACT WITH YOUR AUDIENCE

YouTube isn’t a one-way broadcast like a traditional TV channel; it’s a social network and should be treated as one. Engaging your users in conversation about your videos is a key to success on the platform. “I would rather have fewer views and more conversation and sharing,” says Whitney-Vernon. “Whether it’s positive or negative, conversation means people are being entertained and wanting to talk about it.”

The lesson: Writers and editors may want to steer clear of the often-murky comment section, but avoiding it completely is a missed opportunity to connect with your audience. Create content with the expectation that viewers will want to share and discuss it, and where appropriate, engage with your viewers in the comments space to address their questions and concerns. Communicating with your viewers can go a long way to building your brand’s continued success and longevity on the YouTube platform.

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