

Shoo Rayner

YouTube was madness when I joined. It was like the Wild West and we were all learning as we went along. I had intended to promote my children's books by showing how to draw characters from the stories. The audience wanted something entirely different – and I've been making drawing videos based on ideas from my subscribers ever since.

Recently, when I ran a 'YouTube for Authors' session at the SoA's headquarters, I discovered that each author had a different use for video. Some wanted simply to promote their books. Others were aware that their experience had given them a background of knowledge and material that could be exploited or *re-purposed* for YouTube.

There are in fact four basic ways to use YouTube as an author. You can use it to:

## 1. Promote your work

Use YouTube as a stable, fast and reliable platform to host promotional videos for your books, events and services – an advertising outlet. If you have a blog as well, YouTube videos are easy to embed into blog posts to add value, entertain or inform your blog readers.

## 2. Make money

You can *monetise* your channel – I know we all hate these new web words, but it's the language the internet paymasters use, so get used to it. As an author, you probably have *content* that can be *re-purposed* for video. If you attract enough views, you will get a share of the advertising revenue that is shown alongside your video. (How much you get depends on what kind of audience you have and how much advertisers are prepared to pay for them in an auction. Fees are higher at Christmas. I would say you need about 3 or 4 million views before you can chuck the day job – but it will already have been a full-time job to reach that level.) Ad-blocking software has eaten into this revenue stream lately but should you gain millions of views and thousands of subscribers, advertisers will approach you directly.

## 3. Build your author platform

Another hideous term, this time invented by marketers who want to sell you a sure-fire way of becoming number one in the Kindle Store. However much you may instinctively resist this idea, YouTube is a great way to have a conversation with and build a subscriber base of fans who will buy your book – presuming you do want to sell your books and that all the work you put into writing wasn't just for a private audience.

Unlike a tweet or Facebook post that may never reach your followers, news of a newly uploaded video is broadcast to your YouTube subscribers and, in the comments box, you can have a sensible, curated conversation with your viewers.

When your book is published, your publisher will move on to promote its next book by the end of the week. Unless you are one of the lucky, chosen few, you really do have to take control of your marketing these days. *The Lord helps those who help themselves* – as they used to say.

Do whatever you have to do. Make video blogs about your life – how you write – where you write – what inspires you – rant about what enrages you – share special secret stuff – show the places you go – share your privileged lifestyle – share research – discuss ideas – hold online hangouts and actually talk to your readers.

## 4. Be an extrovert

You may just love being in front of a camera and the camera may just love you. If so... become a Vlogger! Be a YouTuber! You don't need to write a book – this is the new publishing, the new rock and roll. With enough views and subscribers, publishers will come to you with a book deal – you won't even have to write the books yourself!

## Maximise your chance of success

If you just want to promote your book, then make a video and put it on YouTube. There are a number of ways to improve its chances of success, however, each with their own terminology:

### Clickbait and thumbnails:

you can help your video be found by giving it a snappy *clickbait* title. A great title and a sharp *thumbnail* image are how you catch the viewer's attention and make them click on your video. You'll need a verified account to be able to choose your own thumbnail, but a well-designed one really does make a difference to gaining potential viewers.

### Watchtime:

YouTube is its own little universe. Most views come from within YouTube. In fact, YouTube is the second largest search engine on the internet. Add as much as you can to the description, including links to other videos – even if they are not your own. You will be rewarded in the rankings by keeping viewers on YouTube – *watchtime* is at the heart of the YouTube algorithm. The more *watchtime* your videos gain and that your channel promotes, the more your videos will be promoted by Youtube.

### Tags and keywords:

each video can be given a description and a string of tags that will help your video be found. By typing keywords into the YouTube search box, you will see search phrases from real, live viewers. Use those phrases in the tag box as well as other keywords that are relevant to your video. Make sure those keywords are in the title too – it doesn't hurt to use them once or twice in the video description either. If there are hashtags relevant to your subject,

drop them into the description as well.

#### *Uploading and playlists:*

building a subscriber base and view numbers requires regular uploading of your videos. Once a month, once a fortnight or even once a week: whatever it is, make it regular and stick to your advertised schedule. Make sure your channel page explains who you are and when and what you upload, and have a welcome video to introduce yourself. Curate your videos into playlists, which are like programme series.

#### *Comments and spats:*

answer every comment in a positive way. Trolls are often so surprised to get an answer that they come back, apologise and become faithful subscribers. If they continue being abusive – block them or report them – don't get into a spat! Building a community is noticed by the YouTube algorithm. If you help YouTube the algorithm will help you.

#### *Analytics:*

YouTube provides you with a phenomenal amount of analytical data. You can see who's watching from where and for how long, how they found you, how old they are and what their gender is. Find out which websites are promoting or embedding your video and get in touch with them: they might like a guest blog post from you. Find out when people watch, what day is best to upload, how much of your video they watch, the parts of it they like and where they get bored and switch off. If you want to know how to please an audience, this information is gold dust.

YouTube is a huge learning curve, and it can easily take over

your life. Always remember that YouTube (and all the other social media platforms) are gaming you: they want your content and are playing with you psychologically, persuading you to make more of it. Decide on your aims and limits and stick to them – don't spend all day checking to see if you've got another view. I'll admit it: I used to wake up and check my stats at three in the morning.

The best advice about YouTube I ever heard was from Scooter Braun, the manager who discovered Justin Bieber on YouTube. 'On YouTube,' he said, 'you don't make content to reach millions, you make content to move one person in an intimate setting.' Move that person and they just might buy your book. Listen to what they say and you might find yourself writing the book they want to read.

So now you want to know how to make a video? Well, I could write a book about that, but better still, why not watch a video on YouTube? Currently, there are over 52 million videos to choose from on that subject alone. ●

Shoo Rayner has been uploading videos to YouTube every week for the last eight years. His two main channels are [www.youtube.com/shooraynerdrawing](http://www.youtube.com/shooraynerdrawing) and [www.youtube.com/DrawStuffRealEasy](http://www.youtube.com/DrawStuffRealEasy). He has over 236,000 subscribers and 37 million views.

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