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YOUTUBE - A WAY FORWARD FOR PROFESSIONAL BRANDING

Why is YouTube your digital brand?

Since its launch in 2005, YouTube has now emerged as a powerhouse of reach and SEO. With more than 2 billion users and 30 million visits a day, YouTube moved branding from video over static content. Gone are the days when a Facebook post, a tweet or newsletters to clients would suffice. YouTube is no longer regarded as an entertainment site, but a portal for self-education and branding.

Let us take a simple example – Your client calls and asks you on simple steps to file GST return. You prepare a 4 pager document spending at least a full day in writing the same and share it with the client. The client now has to read the document and follow the steps written there and then visit the GST portal and try it for himself to understand each step.

Alternative, what could have been valuable to both the client and you is – screen recording the steps on GST portal, making a video and sharing it with the client. You could have just spend 10 minutes on same and the client would also have been comfortable watching the video.

The fact isn't hidden that visuals work better than texts for the consumer and the creator. And advantaging on these visuals, professionals can build a brand for themselves, that will have a reach globally. And if you are still not convinced that YouTube is the next thing you should start for branding your firm, the below pointers may help you:

- **YouTube is high in improving your SEO.** The YouTube Channel works as a second site and lends room for you to describe about yourself. Additionally, you may also describe each video with tags to optimize search results and reach maximum people. Tagging videos for SEO purpose gives an advantage of being found in general.
- **Global Audience** – YouTube is analogous to Google or Bing where users visit to find useful tutorials, explanation videos, product reviews.
- **Posting on YouTube will help people find you on google** which ultimately does the branding for you without you using any of the paid modes.
- **Videos build a brand for you** – Videos help humanize your brand. They bring it to life, taking your messages from flat and static to dynamic and engaging. Videos help your brand build trust and authority in such a unique way. If a brand really wants to connect with people, videos absolutely have to be a part of their digital marketing plan. Undeniably, videos capture our attention better than both text and images.



Now since, we have tried and convinced you that how important it is to have a YouTube Channel for your brand, let us help you get started with some tips on starting a YouTube channel.

1. **Setting up for a Business YouTube Account:**

While almost all Social Media requires users to create an account to access its content, YouTube does not have any such requirement. A User can view its contents without having an account but to upload your content you need an Account. Thought, Membership is required to view videos flagged as adult content. Follow these steps to create your business YouTube account:

1. Sign in to your company's Google account.
2. Click on your Google account's avatar. You'll find this in the top right corner. It's a small circle containing your profile picture.
3. Click on "Your channel." It's the top option in the first batch of icons.
4. Choose "use a business or other name." You'll need to select this option to get started with a business YouTube account. You can then enter your company's name.
5. Click "Create." - You have a business YouTube account.

In the top right corner of the page, there are four buttons. The first one is an icon of a video camera, directs you to the page where you upload a video. Next Icon is for YouTube apps. After that there is an Icon for Notifications and messages, it notifies you of your account activity, such as a new like or comment. The one closest to the right side, which is an icon of your profile picture, will direct you to your account information pulled from Google.

2. **Customizing your YouTube profile and Verifying your channel**

Once you've signed up for YouTube, you'll need to customize your profile with your business's information. Every user is assigned a channel according to their username, and you'll be given a specific URL so other people can find your channel through a direct link – but you'll need to do more than the basics to stand out from the competition.

A. **Customize your channel:**

- Add channel art
- Fill in your business info
- Create a channel trailer - While optional, a channel trailer – a brief video that introduces viewers to the content they'll find on your YouTube channel – is an excellent customization option to increase YouTube viewer engagement. Once you add this trailer, it will appear on your account's homepage when viewers visit, helping to reel them in and acquaint them with your brand



B. **Interacting with others on YouTube:**

There are several ways to interact with other YouTube users:

- a. Comments and replies to the Comments
- b. Likes : If the Channel Likes are public, it works as a Playlist for the Channel
- c. Subscription: Best way to get users.
- d. Playlists: You can organize related content together using the site's playlist feature. If you choose to publicize your playlists, they will appear on your channel's page below your uploaded content.

- e. Sharing: The site's social widget allows users to share videos on other social media networks, such as Twitter, Facebook, Google Plus, Blogger, Reddit, Tumblr, Pinterest and LinkedIn.

C. Verifying your YouTube channel:

How will you know if a channel is verified or not? There will be a small checkbox, which indicates a verification badge next to the channel's name. To apply for verification, your channel must have 100,000 subscribers.

D. YouTube Live:

Similar to Facebook Live, YouTube has its own livestreaming feature. Broadcasts are usually oriented around news or sports but now many speakers have started taking their session on YouTube Live. Also many apps like Zoom allows internal integration where you can simply do a zoom meeting and live stream it on YouTube.

3. Strategies on branding on YouTube

YouTube, just like almost any other Social Media, is a lot about how many views you generate and how active audiences you have. YouTube promotes the channels and videos through its own unique Machine Learning algorithm. There are no direct hacks available to achieve that but as always there is some smartwork and a few tips which we can try to generate more views and create a successful channel.

- Share videos on other social media platforms:

Link back to your videos whenever possible on your website and other social media networks. Don't stop at direct video links, though. Link back to your channel so your audience can see what it looks like and have the chance to subscribe.

Just uploading a video and sharing it on Social Media is not enough. You should have a proper Video Strategy on how you want to target your audience. For example: A Video explaining GST 3B around the due date will give you more views than on normal days.

- Use relevant keywords in a video's title, tags and description:

Experiment with different titles and descriptions. Selecting relevant keywords to increase hits is a common SEO strategy for marketers on any social networking site. It helps audiences find content that interests them. A quick exercise would be to watch one of your company's videos from the beginning and then create a list of relevant words and phrases as you watch.

- Engage with similar content uploaded by other users:

Like and comment on videos uploaded by other users. Not only might those users stumble upon your videos and channel, but anyone else who sees that comment or like might as well. Do this with videos that have a similar topic, interest or theme as yours to attract new viewers.

- Display content uploaded by other users:

In addition to liking and commenting on other users' videos, you can highlight featured channels and your liked videos on your own account. In doing so, you show that you're active in your industry's YouTube community and direct traffic – a much-needed internet commodity – to other YouTube users in your realm. Be sure to highlight videos that are relevant to your viewer base and not uploads from your direct competitors.

- Curate playlist:

If any of your videos follow a consistent theme, organize them together. Perhaps you upload a video every Friday morning; you could compile all those videos into a "Friday series" playlist. Your playlists will appear on your channel's page, right below your uploaded videos.

- Upload content regularly - MOST IMPORTANT:

Especially if you've developed a decent pool of subscribers, viewers will be counting on you to create, edit and upload new content. This adds relevance to your brand. This also applies to any other website where users can follow and engage with your content.

- Use clickable links to reference other content:

At the end of videos, you'll notice many videos reference previous, relevant or even newer content with a clickable link inside the video. You can add these while editing your video in the site's video manager. This feature can also link to any pages or sites your video covers.

- Use YouTube stories:

YouTube recently created YouTube stories, which are similar to Snapchat or Instagram stories. A story is a collection of short videos that can remain visible for a day or until they're deleted. It gives good visibility.

4. **Personal (firm) branding on YouTube:**

Creating a brand for yourself and your firm is what you should primarily look at YouTube and not to get clients or monetize. In craving of more reach and gaining clients (which at first shouldn't be the intent), the essence of branding should not be list. However, there are still ways in which you may have a personal brand on YouTube:

- Stick to your niche:

At first, find people you want to create your brand within. Your content should definitely be curated accordingly. For eg: you wish to showcase yourself as a GST expert, it is indeed very important to regularly post videos on that topic. Diverging topics for the sake of gaining followers will not help in anyway. The audience should be relevant and engaging and not more.

- Call to Action:

The Code Of Ethics doesn't allow us to mention contact or personal details in the educational video. However, the video description section is something that you may use to let people know how to reach you in case they have any queries. You may also use your profile to have contact details and email id or links to your professional social media profiles. This will make it easier for the viewer to reach out to you.

- Start and End Page:

Having a really good start and end page is as important as the content of the video. This is your chance to brand for yourself. For the end page, you may consider giving references to other videos which makes the viewers convenient to know where will they find their answers.

Concluding, if used with correct strategies and efforts (which we have tried and put it together in the article), YouTube can do branding for you and your firm (without ofcourse in any violation of the Code Of Ethics). However, it is also important to note that we do not violate any of the clauses in the COE (eg: As per Clause 2.14.1.6 (iv) – Q, the educational video should not make any reference to the CA Firm and should not contain contact details or website in the video. However, your channel page may have such details in description)

