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The Easiest Way to a First-Page Ranking on Google

Posted by Nate Elliott on January 8, 2009

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If you're like most interactive marketers, you probably don't think much about search optimizing your online video content. Less than 20% of marketers tell us they insert keywords into the filenames of the videos on their site, and even fewer use more advanced tactics like writing keyword-rich captions and annotations, or creating online video libraries.

But if you're not optimizing your videos, you should start. "Blended search," the practice in which search engines display videos, images, news stories, maps, and other types of results alongside their standard search results, has become increasingly common on major search engines. And optimizing video content to take advantage of blended search is by far the easiest way to get a first-page organic ranking on Google.

Recently, we conducted a little experiment to learn more about how search engines respond to common queries. We created a list of 40 of the most-searched keywords -- pulled from the search engines' own lists of popular and fast-growing search terms, like [Google Trends](#) -- and ran those searches on Google in the US and the UK, as well as on MSN UK and Yahoo UK.

MSN and Yahoo (both of which we studied only in the UK) still present only standard results for most of their searches. But Google blended non-standard search results into a large majority of the keywords we studied: nearly three-quarters of the searches we ran on Google in the UK, and well over half the searches we ran on Google in the US, returned blended results. In both the US and the UK, Google was more likely to blend videos into its results than any other type of media. (Images, in case you're wondering, are only rarely blended into any of the engines' search results.)

Not only are video results increasingly common in Google's search results, but your videos stand a much better chance than your text pages of being shown on the first results page. On the keywords for which Google offers video results, we found an average of 16,000 videos vying to appear on results pages containing an average of 1.5 video results -- giving each video about an 11,000-to-1 chance of making it onto the first page of results. By comparison, there were an average of 4.7 million text pages competing for a place on results pages with an average of just 9.4 text results -- giving each text page about a 500,000-to-1 chance of appearing on the first page of results. Now that's a lot of math, but here's what it means: on the keywords for which Google offers video results, any given video in the index stands about a 50 times better chance of appearing on the first page of results than any given text page in the index. Those are some attractive odds.

Best of all, so few interactive marketers focus on video optimization that most of the videos in Google's index aren't very well optimized -- so if you optimize your videos well, your chances of success will increase even further.

So how can you optimize your online videos? The agencies and search engines I've talked to offer a number of different tips:

- Insert keywords into your video filenames.
- Host your videos on YouTube, and embed those YouTube videos into your own site. Google says its algorithms consider how many times a video is viewed, and any views embedded videos receive on your own site get added to the 'views' tally on YouTube. (And yes, nearly every video we saw Google blend into its results came from YouTube.)
- Optimize your YouTube videos by writing keywords into your videos' titles, descriptions, and tags.

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Headed to South Africa. Flying up to Victoria Falls for the weekend; client visits and speeches in Joburg Mon/Tues.

— 2:17 PM Sep 8 from [HootSuite](#)

apparently, they still keep a desk for me in the london office. i don't see it often. time to go there now.

— 3:13 AM Sep 5 from [HootSuite](#)

[@lazerow](#) I'd pay a lot just to make it back to my beloved NYS Fair, so I'm sure any price would work

— 2:25 PM Sep 3 from [HootSuite](#)

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Embed videos into relevant text pages on your site. The context provided by the text on those pages (which is hopefully already optimized for search as well) will help the search engines figure out what your videos are about.

- Also create a video library on your site, so Google knows where to find your video content. (Google [Video Sitemaps](#) can help with this too.) Write keyword-rich annotations for each video in the library.

Clients can read more about this topic, including some examples and further best practices, in our reports [SEO for Blended Search](#) (a Europe-focused report) and [Video and Image Optimization](#) (which is US-focused).

I'm also curious to hear about your experiences. Do you optimize your video content? If so, which tactics do you use -- and which have worked best for you?

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video marketing

Comment from phill peel (not verified) on Tue, 07/06/2010 - 16:31

very interested to red these comments , i began to make videos a year ago with no intention of making money . i use youtube and video jug to upload, most not all of these now appear high or number one in a google search. the keyword is adding the phrase video to any title, i think it could be a trend where people are just fed up with reading reams of text and want the instant fix a video can provide. im here now because i dont know how to best exploit my high ranking vids ! any advice would be greatly appreciated.

Use Video Captions and Subtitles for Video SEO

Comment from Pablo Giralt (not verified) on Thu, 09/30/2010 - 11:42

Great experiment of ranking video vs. text in google

I would like to add that for some time now Youtube and Google index the contents of subtitles and close captions of videos. Transcribing your videos and linking the text to your video is very easily done in youtube and helps search engines understand much better the content of the video.

While using free hosting services like youtube has its benefits, maybe being the 2 most important exposure and bandwidth costs (none for youtube) it also has its disadvantages. Following this posts topic (SEO), if you upload an interesting content to Youtube and users link to it you will be giving away all those valuable links to Youtube.

Using an online video platform like ours: <http://www.dnovae.com> its much more interesting in terms of SEO than using a service like Youtube as all links will point to your website. Our platform automatically pushes your video to Google by the use of mRSS so it is indexed quickly. It also supports the adding of subtitles to videos to leverage SEO and accesability

Thanks

[Nate Elliott](#) (47)
[Neil Strother](#) (19)
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a very helpful strategies. Be

Comment from Thom Mcfadden (not verified) on Wed, 11/24/2010 - 12:39

a very helpful strategies. Be Bop!!

re: The Easiest Way to a First-Page Ranking on Google

Comment from Thom Mcfadden (not verified) on Wed, 11/24/2010 - 12:40

a very helpful strategies. Be Bop!!

re: The Easiest Way to a First-Page Ranking on Google

Comment from Max Kalehoff (not verified) on Thu, 01/08/2009 - 22:07

Nate, This is a very good, useful post. There's another important dimension, though, which might have been overlooked: interesting video tends to be very viral, and engage in ways other content doesn't. If you create great video, you're likely to draw external behaviors that drive natural search-engine ranking, particularly inbound links. And if you have great video, which justifies inbound links, the task of actively and passively encouraging others to link to you becomes far, far easier. Other tactics include bookmarking your videos, submitting them to relevant directories, and uploading them to multiple platforms. For example, while we host the high-quality Clickable tour on our site, we also have it hosted and uploaded elsewhere, like YouTube, and have seen positive benefit. Cheers! Max

re: The Easiest Way to a First-Page Ranking on Google

Comment from Jason (not verified) on Fri, 01/09/2009 - 02:28

This is fascinating. However, I am very curious you aren't mentioning the Anti-trust implications of what Google is doing. With their search engine market share in the 65-70% range in the US, one can argue they are a monopoly in the Internet search engine market. This in and of itself is not a problem. YouTube, is a video sharing and destination site. If Google's search engine ignores other video on the internet and/or gives preference to YouTube, then doesn't this constitute an anti-trust violation in the same way some of what Microsoft used to do? They are using their monopoly in one market, internet search, to help them compete in another market (video sharing/hosting) or protect their interests in another market. Just curious as to why Microsoft used to get beat up so badly over this but Google gets a free pass. Jason

re: The Easiest Way to a First-Page Ranking on Google

Comment from null on Fri, 01/09/2009 - 09:47

"50 times more likely to appear on the first page" WOW, wow wow you have just encouraged us to look into getting our videos up and going.

re: The Easiest Way to a First-Page Ranking on Google

Comment from Jeff (not verified) on Fri, 01/09/2009 - 11:46

This analysis isn't right. The probability of showing up for any individual term isn't uniform across all the "possible" elements in the set Google selects from. Similarly - For any given query, although Google may say, i.e. "results 691 - 695 of about 16,900,000 for trip to asia." There are no available results from 695 to 16,000,000. So, the denominator should be adjusted for at least this basic fact. "On the keywords for which Google offers video results, we found an average of 16,000 videos vying to appear on results pages containing an average of 1.5 video results." Can you elaborate on your methodology in arriving at the above numbers? Thanks, Jeff

re: The Easiest Way to a First-Page Ranking on Google

Comment from Mark Alan Effinger (not verified) on Fri, 01/09/2009 - 11:54

Nate, this is truly mission-critical research. In addition to Google prioritizing YouTube videos in the SERPs, we've also found Revver, GoFish and Europe's fastest growing video site, DailyMotion showing well in Universal Search. We've also found that it's critical to treat your media assets (ALL online media assets, whether on your site or on any content hosting site) just as you would a professionally Search Optimized Page on your own site. Once you enhance your positioning to include these media assets, we find you can maintain much better organic control of your brand, message and overall traffic. Excellent report. Thanks for sharing measured datapoints to support the expanding value of Universal Search. Mark Alan Effinger - RichContent.com

re: The Easiest Way to a First-Page Ranking on Google

Comment from Billy Ye (not verified) on Fri, 01/09/2009 - 12:23

Video optimization is overrated as a full cost benefit analysis will show you that at the end you will come out in the red. The way that Google works with optimized videos having the perfect titles, descriptions, keywords, and multiple site embedding is that they will provide the video a temporary high natural search results ranking (treated the same way as a current news result), sometime even appearing on the first page then drops the videos back to obscurity after a week or two. Comparing this to search optimization of websites, or creating viral videos that can successfully garner millions of views, then video optimization is a wasted effort. Websites become authorities, and rise to top results through links. Videos become viral, and stay at top results/relevance through links. Video optimization have a very temporary positive effect, and 99.999% never becomes viral enough to maintain the natural rankings after 1-2 weeks. If you really want to create videos to manipulate search results, then focus on making it viral rather than optimizing titles, descriptions, and file names that add little long term value.

re: The Easiest Way to a First-Page Ranking on Google

Comment from Michael Munz (not verified) on Fri, 01/09/2009 - 15:53

This is a very hot topic right now. Video SEO is a industry secret used by some of the most holistic Internet Marketing Consultants in Pittsburgh. During the last 2 years of Podcamp Pittsburgh I have taught a seminar/class on how to use video for rank and what tools are out there for you to use. If you should find yourself trying some video optimization and need more info than what is provided here check out <http://blog.pghpunch.com> for some other video seo tips. P.s. Look in to TubeMogul...good stuff!

re: The Easiest Way to a First-Page Ranking on Google

Comment from Greg (not verified) on Fri, 01/09/2009 - 17:34

I guess my question would be how to find out what searches Google will return video for? You mention that this is only true of results where google is returning video? Will relevant videos lead to Google returning video on terms that they aren't currently providing video results for?

re: The Easiest Way to a First-Page Ranking on Google

Comment from Peter Young (not verified) on Sat, 01/10/2009 - 03:47

Good article Nate, and I certainly think indicative of where Google's mindset is at present in terms of providing more than just the organic and paid text results. Much of the integration of blended search technologies has meant that the search pages are becoming the new landing pages. In response to your question Greg, much of it is common sense. Your unlikely to find video results on searches where other blended results would be better suited ie. Localised Searches (Maps, Local Business Centre) and Products (Google Base/Products). More likely you would find it with brand related searches or areas such as entertainment (ie Music etc). Much I would suggest just comes down to common sense) My personal

opinion is we are likely to see more usage of blended search during 2009.

re: The Easiest Way to a First-Page Ranking on Google

Comment from Abhilash (not verified) on Sat, 01/10/2009 - 06:18

We have used a YouTube channel without integrating it into our site. We use Vimeo on our site because their player looks so much better, and because we felt that since Vimeo is more of a platform for professionals, we would be perceived in that way, too. However, after reading your report I understand why our YouTube videos don't rank 'organically'. We have to embed them on our site to maximize views. I am thrilled to give it a try. Thank you for this insightful report. Regards, Abhilash

re: The Easiest Way to a First-Page Ranking on Google

Comment from null on Sat, 01/10/2009 - 08:37

Google aren't a monopoly - they grew from the ground up and deserve what they have earned by making the world an easier place to navigate - in whatever manner you wish. David Foghorn Internet Marketing Charlotte NC and Plymouth UK

re: The Easiest Way to a First-Page Ranking on Google

Comment from Shane Jones (not verified) on Sat, 01/10/2009 - 10:05

Really good post, if you want more information on YouTube check out this post I did <http://www.shanedj.com/blog/work/youtube/top-10-how-to-succeed-on-youtube/>

re: The Easiest Way to a First-Page Ranking on Google

Comment from Tad Miller (not verified) on Mon, 01/12/2009 - 15:12

Yes it is easy to get YouTube Videos or Google Videos to rank in the top 10 Google results. But those aren't YOUR site. Closing the huge gap between a video view on those sites and an actual referral to your site is a problem. An even bigger gap is the difference between the people who were referred to your site and actually did a conversion action or were a sale. These Video SEO services are becoming quite popular with car dealers right now in the US, but no one has ever given me a straight answer about the return on investment, probably because their isn't any...

re: The Easiest Way to a First-Page Ranking on Google

Comment from Daniel Aharonoff (not verified) on Mon, 01/12/2009 - 20:39

Great article, infact there is a company taking advantage precisely of these SEO optimization methods among other things. They provide a turnkey private label player that dramatically enhances SEO for video among other features such as viral chat, social actions and Live TV viewing coupled w/the ondemand content - see <http://miiTV.com>

re: The Easiest Way to a First-Page Ranking on Google

Comment from Ian Snead (not verified) on Tue, 01/20/2009 - 09:39

Great article. Shane Jones remarked "Yes it is easy to get YouTube Videos or Google Videos to rank in the top 10 Google results. But those aren't YOUR site. Closing the huge gap between a video view on those sites and an actual referral to your site is a problem." This is true. Here at vzaar.com, a video platform for business's, we allow the owner of the video to submit the url where the video is on their site. This way when the video appears in SERPS the searcher is directed not to vzaar but to the url submitted. In other

words if you use vzaar we solve this problem.

re: The Easiest Way to a First-Page Ranking on Google

Comment from Grant McNicol (not verified) on Wed, 01/21/2009 - 17:22

Nate, Very good!!! As soon as google bought YouTube for \$1.65bn dollars, we new their next steps in Search. After nearly 2yrs of Beta-Testing we have created a concept called Internet Video Billboards that are 1pg video sites that list in the natural top 10 of search engines. We call the concept Search Engine Advertising. By placing 100 billboards (search Titles) with relevant client video, then linking the video to YouTube and other video sites, then linking it all back to the clients website, we can dramatically increase traffic to any client's website within weeks of posting. Example: Catalina Restaurant Rose Bay, Sydney Australia - YouTube Video Campaign. http://www.youtube.com/results?search_type=&search_query=Restaurants+Sydney&aq=f The search term is very broad for city of 4mill people. You will find 'INTERNET BILLBOARDS' listed 4-7, 10, 15 etc. This has been occurring for a few weeks now. Google Example: Catalina's <http://www.google.com.au/search?hl=en&q=xmas+function+sydney+waterfront&meta=cr%3DcountryAUCatalina's+Internet+Video+Billboard> ranks number 1. The Stats - http://www.catalinabar.com/plesk-stat/webstat/usage_200901.html These are great stats for a restaurant, with the client saying they have received more bookings (and web visits) over this Dec/Jan period than in the past 3yrs. Video is here to stay, it's just a matter of doing it right. Grant McNicol Sales and Marketing Director McLaren Media www.mclarenint.com

re: The Easiest Way to a First-Page Ranking on Google

Comment from Andrew Shotland (not verified) on Fri, 01/23/2009 - 16:08

Nate, this is a good 101 intro to video SEO, but per Billy Ye's comment I think you'll need a slightly more sophisticated strategy than this, particularly as local video seo becomes more competitive and the time spent on it gets more costly.

re: The Easiest Way to a First-Page Ranking on Google

Comment from seo services (not verified) on Sat, 01/24/2009 - 00:59

Hi, Very good article. Thanks for sharing measured data points to support the expanding value of Universal Search...

re: The Easiest Way to a First-Page Ranking on Google

Comment from Yo Seo (not verified) on Sat, 01/24/2009 - 14:19

Exceptional Post - Now at last I really understand the power of YouTube videos and ranking in Google. Wasn't sure how it worked before, so I never did any videos for site promotion. But now it seems easy!

re: The Easiest Way to a First-Page Ranking on Google

Comment from Yo Seo (not verified) on Sat, 01/24/2009 - 14:21

Exceptional Post - Now at last I really understand the power of YouTube videos and ranking in Google. Wasn't sure how it worked before, so I never did any videos for site promotion. But now it seems easy!

re: The Easiest Way to a First-Page Ranking on Google

Comment from Guido (not verified) on Sun, 01/25/2009 - 07:35

uhm...nice post, but maybe you forgot something.....something called links ???!! Links pointing to the video

page are extremely important in order to get a good video ranking.

re: The Easiest Way to a First-Page Ranking on Google

Comment from Pay Per Click Advertising - Brad (not verified) on Sun, 01/25/2009 - 08:47

Guys that is a great summary on how to effectively use video to help your search rankings. well done!

re: The Easiest Way to a First-Page Ranking on Google

Comment from Get A Trip (not verified) on Sun, 02/08/2009 - 01:46

It sounds easier said than done. Our travel website is set go "live" in March 2009, but now this video angle has me wondering if we seriously missed something. Most "You Tube" videos look so unprofessional to me I would hate for a "home-looking" video to ever grace my pages. Any thoughts on how to create a professional looking video without breaking the bank?

re: The Easiest Way to a First-Page Ranking on Google

Comment from Albert (not verified) on Mon, 02/16/2009 - 09:45

Billy Ye - your post was dead on. Hopefully, some of the naive readers will listen. We advocate using the technique, but to not put too much faith into it for it will change. Video SEO will not be easy pickings for much longer. As the people pushing it are successful at junking up the results, Google will make some severe adjustments. They are looking at these changes right now and you should start seeing some different algos in place in the next 2 to 3 months. Also, we've experimented with deadlining a competitor's good SERP Video results with some outstanding success. Not that we would advocate doing this, but it is very nice to know that it does work. There are a lot of questionable business tactics going on with this including this posting - "This way when the video appears in SERPS the searcher is directed not to xxxxx but to the url submitted. In other words if you use xxxxx we solve this problem." Yes you solve that problem, but what about the fact that Google only really likes videos served on a handful of platforms and your's isn't one of them? A lot of people will throw a significant amount of money at this only to be left with little at the end of the day.

re: The Easiest Way to a First-Page Ranking on Google

Comment from Justin Brooke (not verified) on Fri, 02/20/2009 - 06:17

Videos will definitely help in your campaign to increase the page ranking of the site. Just make sure that the videos are of the right length.

re: The Easiest Way to a First-Page Ranking on Google

Comment from Ken Fisher (not verified) on Mon, 03/09/2009 - 16:29

Really nice to see some discussion on this subject. I've been working on getting videos into the Google SERPS and have one in particular that is now showing not the actual video but the text title from You Tube. Can that have something to do with not only embedded videos but keyword rich inbound links?

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