DERRAL EVES

YOUTUBE FORMULA

HOW ANYONE CAN UNLOCK

THE ALGORITHM TO DRIVE VIEWS,

BUILD AN AUDIENCE, AND GROW REVENUE

FOREWORD BY "MRBEAST" JIMMY DONALDSON

WHEY

Praise for The YouTube Formula

"Only one or two other people in the entire world understand YouTube on the level that Derral does. I have one of the top three most-watched channels on YouTube, and I still talk about YouTube data and strategy with Derral because nobody is on the same wavelength as he is. Whether you have 5 subscribers or 5 million, you can learn how to be successful on YouTube by reading Derral's book."

—Jimmy Donaldson, MrBeast

"Study it . . . understand it . . . dream it . . . Derral Eves just wrote the bible to You-Tube success."

> —Jordi van den Bussche, Kwebbelkop

Derral has the rare experience of being successful on YouTube as a creator, a marketer, an advertiser, and an entrepreneur. This book teaches you how to understand YouTube from the big picture all the way down to the important details.

—Chad Wild Clay and Vy Qwaint, Cocreators of Spy Ninjas

"When you talk about the 'brains behind the throne' among top YouTube stars, you're talking about Derral Eves. His unique understanding of the inner workings of YouTube, coupled with an insatiable appetite to find out why certain videos perform and others languish has placed him at the forefront of online video experts. Derral understands not only WHAT you need to do to build a bigger audience, but WHY you need to do it. Whether you're looking to build a big business on YouTube or just build a community of passionate fans, this book packs more inside than you'd get from months of expensive consulting and painstaking trial and error. Find out why so many top YouTubers call Derral both a friend and a confidant by buying this book right now—and you'll be taking the first step to making all your YouTube dreams come true!

—Jim Louderback, GM VidCon

"Derral Eves has a YouTube super power. He can spend five minutes looking at a YouTube channel's analytics and give a handful of actionable suggestions. Not just helpful tips, but algorithmic game changers. The fingerprints of Derral's strategic brain are on most of my largest successes."

—Jeffrey Harmon, Cofounder at Harmon Brothers and VidAngel "Derral is the preeminent expert authority on video marketing in the modern era of digital and social platforms. He has consulted the top YouTube creators and platforms and built his own content channels generating millions of followers. *The YouTube Formula* is a must read for anyone interested in gaining prominence in or simply learning about YouTube content creation, the mysterious algorithm, or optimizing audience growth."

—Ricky Ray Butler, CEO BEN Group

"Derral has been analyzing the YouTube algorithm longer than anyone I know. Whether you're just starting out or looking to reach ten million subscribers, Derral's book contains specific ideas that can help you do much better than you would on your own."

—Mark Rober, NASA Engineer turned YouTube Creator

YOUTUBE FORMULA

DERRAL EVES

THE

YOUTUBE FORMULA

HOW ANYONE CAN UNLOCK

THE ALGORITHM TO DRIVE VIEWS,

BUILD AN AUDIENCE. AND GROW REVENUE

WILEY

Copyright © 2021 by John Wiley & Sons, Inc. All rights reserved.

Published by John Wiley & Sons, Inc., Hoboken, New Jersey. Published simultaneously in Canada.

No part of this publication may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system, or transmitted in any form or by any means, electronic, mechanical, photocopying, recording, scanning, or otherwise, except as permitted under Section 107 or 108 of the 1976 United States Copyright Act, without either the prior written permission of the Publisher, or authorization through payment of the appropriate per-copy fee to the Copyright Clearance Center, Inc., 222 Rosewood Drive, Danvers, MA 01923, (978) 750-8400, fax (978) 646-8600, or on the Web at www.copyright.com. Requests to the Publisher for permission should be addressed to the Permissions Department, John Wiley & Sons, Inc., 111 River Street, Hoboken, NJ 07030, (201) 748-6011, fax (201) 748-6008, or online at http://www.wiley.com/go/

Limit of Liability/Disclaimer of Warranty: While the publisher and author have used their best efforts in preparing this book, they make no representations or warranties with respect to the accuracy or completeness of the contents of this book and specifically disclaim any implied warranties of merchantability or fitness for a particular purpose. No warranty may be created or extended by sales representatives or written sales materials. The advice and strategies contained herein may not be suitable for your situation. You should consult with a professional where appropriate. Neither the publisher nor author shall be liable for any loss of profit or any other commercial damages, including but not limited to special, incidental, consequential, or other damages.

For general information on our other products and services or for technical support, please contact our Customer Care Department within the United States at (800) 762-2974, outside the United States at (317) 572-3993 or fax (317) 572-4002.

Wiley publishes in a variety of print and electronic formats and by print-on-demand. Some material included with standard print versions of this book may not be included in e-books or in print-on-demand. If this book refers to media such as a CD or DVD that is not included in the version you purchased, you may download this material at http://booksupport.wiley.com. For more information about Wiley products, visit www.wiley.com.

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data is Available:

ISBN 9781119716020 (Hardcover) ISBN 9781119716044 (ePDF) ISBN 9781119716037 (ePub)

Cover Design: Derral Eves Cover Image: Doodles: Derral Eves Ripped paper: © stockcam/iStockphoto

10 9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2 1

permissions.

To my wife Carolyn:

No goal or accomplishment would mean anything

without you by my side.

You are my everything . . . for eternity!

CONTENTS

	Dedication	vii
	Foreword	xiii
	Introduction	xix
Pa	rt The Platform	
1	Try, Fail, Analyze, Adjust: A YouTube History Lesson	3
2	The YouTube Ecosystem	9
3	The YouTube AI: A Deep Learning Machine	21
4	The Algorithm Breakdown	27
Pa	rt The Opportunity	
5	Why Most YouTube Channels Fail to Succeed	41
6	Make Money Partnering with YouTube	57

X CONTENTS

7	Use Your Influence to Generate Big Money	75
8	The Real Power of Your Influence: Making a Difference	87
9	How Businesses Extend Their Reach and Drive Revenue	95
Pa	rt III The YouTube Formula	
10	The Data-Driven, Human-Centered Formula	115
11	Identify Your Audience	127
12	Recon and Research	143
13	Content Is King	153
14	Feedback Is Queen	169
15	Title and Thumbnail: Success Starts with a Click	183
16	Engaging Viewers' Attention So They Watch More	211
17	Creating a YouTube Content Strategy	223
18	Building a Community around Your Content	251
19	Optimizing, Launching, and Promoting Your Video	269

Contents xi

20	Tweaking Your Content	283
21	Try, Fail, Analyze, Adjust: Your YouTube Success	295
	Appendix: Free YouTube Formula Bonus Companion Course	301
	About the Author	303
	This Is Not Your Normal Acknowledgement	305
	Index	307

FOREWORD

especially brands. When I see brands that don't have a presence on YouTube, I think they're insane. It's unfathomable that anyone isn't capitalizing on the opportunity there. It's the most coveted job in America, and with good reason. It is quite literally a gold mine.

When I was a kid, I watched YouTube all the time. It was always my dream job. I didn't want to be an astronaut or a doctor—I couldn't envision a world where I wasn't a YouTuber. I started my channel in 2012 and only got 40 subscribers my first year. Now I have one of the fastest growing channels in the world. I gained more than 15 million subscribers in 2019 alone with just over 4 billion video views. And it's still growing every day.

If you are just getting started on YouTube, do not expect to pull any type of viewership in your first year. If this isn't something you can accept, don't start. But if you can, then you need to do this: make 100 videos. It doesn't matter what they are because they will be terrible, but do something you like doing. Your first 10 videos will be garbage. Then make 10 more. These will also be garbage, and so will the next 10. But eventually, things will start to improve. You'll get better little by little. The best way to improve your content is to make content and see what people like.

Then you'll notice something with your 101st video. It will be in a whole different league from your first video. You will still be a long way from good content, but it will be better than your first video was. xiv FOREWORD

It took me hundreds of videos over several years before I got good at it. I had been making YouTube videos for two years and still didn't make good quality videos, even though I thought they were good at the time. I was like so many creators: I thought the algorithm hated me because I wasn't getting subscribers and views. But in reality, my content wasn't good enough. In fact, my videos were horrible, like most YouTube videos are. Most YouTubers have their priorities backward. They spend all their time thinking about the algorithm in their first hundred videos when they should really be thinking about how to make better content geared toward the viewer.

Unless you're the rare YouTuber who has created content professionally, you're probably average (at best) at making content. You don't go from entertaining nobody to entertaining millions in a day. It's hard work and a slow progressive workup, and it should be. Because if you got millions of viewers overnight, you wouldn't know how to handle them.

Every video is your competitor, so you have to keep putting in the effort to keep your content relevant and competitive. Viewers have to pick between videos every time they go to YouTube, and they'll choose the better video without a second thought. Make your video the better video.

If a video from your channel from six months ago doesn't make you want to barf because of how much better you are at making content now, you're doing it wrong. I can't even stand watching my videos from six months ago because I am so much better at making content now. I can see how bad my old videos are. They could have been so much better! I'm depressed even thinking about those videos.

There is a huge opportunity on YouTube for brands. If every brand knew what I know, they could get a hundred times the viewership they get on television for the same cost. They should be giving creators like me their advertising budget to make YouTube videos around their brand. I'll give you an example. If I was Coca-Cola, I

Foreword xv

could build a pyramid of a million Coca-Cola cans. Or I could make a video called, "I Filled My Friend's House with a Million Cans of Coca-Cola." These are both banger ideas that would get a ton of views if done right. (This was free, Coca-Cola; next time you can pay me, lol.) Videos like these could lead to millions upon millions more return than TV-spends, and it's exponentially cheaper. And seriously, who really watches TV commercials anyway. Everyone picks up their phones during commercials.

If brands want to get real visibility, they have to get off of TV. What do you think people do—especially anyone under the age of 30—when the ads start rolling on TV? They pull out their phones and quit paying attention! They're not watching your commercial! Their attention has been moved to Twitter. SnapChat. YouTube. Tik-Tok. Tweets spike during TV commercials. And people don't put their phones down until the commercials are over and their show or sporting event comes back on. Three times fewer people skip a brand deal on YouTube than they do on TV, because people are usually watching from their phones. They don't have a second phone to grab when they come across an ad or brand deal on YouTube, so they watch it. And they're watching a YouTuber they watch all the time, so they are also less likely to skip because they trust these YouTubers.

I have more eyeballs on my content every week than the Super Bowl. And I have a personal connection with my viewers who have built trust in me. This audience trust value is worth so much more than an impersonal celebrity or athlete appearance in a TV commercial. Brands shell out more than \$5 million for 30 seconds crammed in with a bunch of other ads during the Super Bowl. With YouTubers like me, you could get 10 to 15 minutes of undivided attention centered on your brand for way cheaper. Then you can get the viewers to go watch more videos and interact with your brand in other ways if you're really smart about it. It's a no-brainer. You're quite literally insane if you're not capitalizing on the opportunity here.

xvi FOREWORD

Business execs think they know more than the YouTuber, especially if the YouTuber is very young. They want to control their integration, giving YouTubers a list of talking points to read verbatim with a call to action at the end. While this works to an extent, brands would convert exponentially more and see greater brand awareness and exposure if they let the YouTubers be themselves. A brand *should* say, "Here's a bunch of money, do what you do to connect with your viewers . . . as you've done on literally hundreds of videos with hundreds of millions of views. Do what you think would work best to get our brand talked about or our product sold. We trust you."

Brands who give the creative license to YouTubers and let them talk naturally like they normally would with their audience are getting more brand exposure and ROI than they could in any other way, guaranteed. And they should quit focusing on views but on what kind of impression they left. Will they remember you? Or will they hear another sleazy sales pitch?

Let me give you an example of the power of a YouTuber. I created an app called Finger On the App. I announced on my Instagram, Twitter, and SnapChat that everyone who downloaded and put their "finger on the app" at a certain time would have the chance to win \$25,000. All you had to do was be the last person with your finger still on the app. The app was only available on iPhones and only in America. Even with these limitations, and without even trying, I had 1.5 million people install the app. I hadn't even promoted it on my YouTube channel, which at the time had more than 37 million subscribers. In contrast, a newcomer to the mobile video world, Quibi, launched around the same time as my app, but they had a \$1.7 billion budget. Guess how many installs they got? Only 300,000 on the first day.

Finger On the App was inherently cool, so people talked about it. It naturally went viral. This is how businesses should pitch things. Change your mentality from wanting to get the most views Foreword xvii

to wanting to be the most talked about. My app was trending everywhere. I created a social footprint. And it all happened because I owned the app myself and had the control to spread the message my way. Brands come along and think they know better, but they would be so much more successful if they let YouTubers do what they do best. We know how to go viral. We know this digital world inherently because it's what we've lived and breathed our whole lives. We know how to get your brand talked about naturally. This is way more powerful than a pointless view.

YouTube isn't going anywhere. Google's parent company Alphabet and Google's Android operating system funnel so much crazy traffic to Google-owned YouTube. These companies have so much power and an unfathomable amount of cash that YouTube can't be a fad because of this. It's worth putting effort into something with such secure staying power. A lot of YouTube content is subpar now, but people will start to figure it out and it will be more competitive and expensive as time goes on. Figure it out now.

If you picked up this book, it's because you're already on YouTube or you are thinking about being on YouTube. Hopefully I've helped you understand that you absolutely should be on YouTube. You'd be nuts not to be. The opportunity to make money, grow a business, and spread a message is so huge, whether you're a regular person like me or a big brand. And this book has every element you'll need to do just that.

I first met Derral Eves in Dallas, Texas, for the sole purpose of talking about YouTube. I was working hard to achieve my dream of becoming the world's biggest YouTuber when I came across Derral's YouTube channel. I knew I had to meet him because he knew stuff I needed to know. So I messaged him, and I jumped on a plane. We've been YouTube data best buds together ever since.

Derral has pulled tens of billions of views on YouTube and even on other platforms because of his deep understanding of algorithms xviii FOREWORD

and the viewer. He owns VidSummit, the #1 YouTube data conference in the world. Only one or two other people in the entire world understand YouTube on the level that Derral does. I have one of the top three most-watched channels on YouTube, and I still talk about YouTube data and strategy with Derral because nobody is on the same wavelength as he is. Whether you're a creator or a brand, you can learn how to be successful on YouTube by reading Derral's book. Be open to what he can teach you, whether you have five subscribers or five million. Because remember, you should be improving at every level, always making better content. *The YouTube Formula* will help you do that.

MrBeast

INTRODUCTION

A magical ice-cream-pooping unicorn made me write this book. That's not where it started, but it's what pushed me over the edge. If you think this makes me sound a little crazy, let me explain.

It was 1999. I had recently graduated with a degree in advertising and marketing, and I had a stable job with benefits and potential for advancement. But then . . . I quit. It wasn't the right career path for me. I wanted to start my own business and create my own future. This felt crazy because my wife and I had our first baby, Ellie, that year, and I felt the pressure to provide for my family. Keeping a steady job and building savings would have been the safe thing to do, but instead, I spent all our money on the latest Macintosh computer and the software it needed (it would have been cheaper to go with a PC! Dang you, Steve Jobs). I was determined to be a successful business owner and ready to take on the world . . . from my kitchen table workstation at home.

I spent days coming up with my company info, designing a website, and making my own business card. I just knew I would be a great entrepreneur. But after only two weeks, my wife, Carolyn, let me know that my office needed to move from the family table where she fed the baby and where there were spills aplenty. She had gotten a degree in accounting and had a really good job and had put me through school, but we both wanted her to be able to stay home with Ellie and our future children. Carolyn was my business partner—she did payroll, invoicing, and bookkeeping. We discussed

xx INTRODUCTION

where the company was going and how we could get money coming in. I needed to find clients to start bringing in the money so Carolyn wouldn't have to go back to work.

My first order of business, though, was to move my work space. This took me to Staples to buy a desk for my computer. I was admiring all the things I wanted for my new business, walking down the aisle with color laser printers. If only I could convince my business partner-wife that I needed to buy one of these beauties! A fancy printer could help me show future clients work samples for ads I could make for them. My tech-geek daydream was interrupted by a man asking me a question about printers. He introduced himself as Chuck and was wondering if I could help him with picking a color printer. I explained the difference between the two printers in question because I knew all their specs—these were printers I wanted to buy for my business, too. I didn't have the money for a printer because I didn't have any clients. I recommended the more expensive printer because of its print capabilities and less expensive toner. He said, "I've been coming to Staples for years, and you are the best employee I've ever talked to." I informed him that I didn't work for Staples (which surprised him because I was wearing a red polo shirt and khakis—the classic Staples employee outfit). "Are you sure?" he asked. I convinced him by telling my story about starting my own business doing graphic design and websites. Wouldn't you know, he had recently started his own company called 1001 Business Cards and was looking for a designer. He hired me and my company on the spot to design his website and business cards. How serendipitous! I walked out of that Staples with a desk for \$200 and a check for \$300 from my first client, a \$100 net profit. "That was easy!" in true Staples fashion. Owning a business was going to be a walk in the park.

I couldn't wait to go home and share my first success with Carolyn. My confidence soared and I knew I could do anything I set

Introduction xxi

my mind to. However, only a few months later, my confidence had morphed into a feeling of uncertainty. I was going nowhere. I was barely making enough money to pay some of the bills and feed my family. We were dipping too much into our meager saving account. I needed more clients and fast.

Do You Know What Your Problem Is?

I went to see my dad to ask his advice. My dad had owned several businesses and done a lot of real estate ventures, and he had been successful at both. He gave me some simple advice, but it was some of the best advice I've ever received. He said, "You need to find a way to make more money with less time and with diverse streams of income." That was his standard way: he would always restate my problem before giving me fatherly advice. "Derral, don't think of solutions, think of the problem. When you focus and obsess on the problem, the solution will present itself." Take a minute and let that soak in. Einstein believed that our ability to identify problems was in direct proportion to the quality of the solutions we generate. He said, "If I had an hour to solve a problem I'd spend 55 minutes thinking about the problem and five minutes thinking about solutions." I believed Einstein's words, but I really trusted my dad.

I was determined to figure out what I was supposed to do by focusing on my problem, which was this: I needed more clients. I took the next morning to internalize what my dad had said and identified the problems that were keeping me from diversifying my income. I made a list of the problems associated with having only one client. I thought of every problem I might encounter that next week, month, and year if I continued on the path I was on. When I combed through my list, the solution presented itself to me. I had a list of businesses and all of their contact information sitting in a pile of business cards on my desk.

xxii INTRODUCTION

As an independent graphic designer, I created new business cards for my only client, Chuck, at 1001 Business Cards. He paid me \$10 a card. Normally, I would have had zero contact with those businesses ordering cards. Chuck would get a new client, collect their logo, their picture, and their design requirements, and send them to me. I would design their card and email it to Chuck. After client approval, Chuck would have the cards printed and delivered. There was no reason why I would have interacted with these businesses. But now I had a plan to diversify. I wanted to sell them a five-page website design package for \$299. I started cold calling these businesses with my offer. After spending a week calling every business card that I had designed, there were only two takers out of 200 calls. Selling over the phone was difficult; telemarketing wasn't for me.

I needed a new plan, so I refocused on the problem. I analyzed my talking points, learning from my telemarketing experience. I devised a new strategy that would take the process from a cold call to a warm lead, but it meant I needed to meet with these people in person. I asked Chuck if I could hand deliver the completed business cards to these businesses and offer my further services for ads and websites. He gave me the thumbs up and go-ahead, which landed me the opportunity to meet face-to-face with people who could be potential clients for my own business. These were the perfect candidates for businesses that needed a web designer.

When I'd present the finished cards to the owner or manager of the business, they were always impressed with the quality of the card. We didn't do simple cards; we printed in quality full-color graphics with all the bells and whistles of a premium business card, which was uncommon then. As soon as I saw the moment of excitement or approval of the product, I'd pounce. Here was my window to get a new client! I told them I was the card designer, I was glad they liked my work, and I could do a lot more for their business by helping them create a website. I told them that every business needed a

Introduction xxiii

website—this was the future in marketing because leads and sales were going digital. It actually was a tough sell, because most businesses in my area were still on dial-up Internet at the time. If you are unfamiliar with dial-up Internet, let me explain it this way for you youngsters: dial-up Internet ran at 56/K (kilobits) per second. Not megabits. Which means that if you wanted to download today's latest update of *Fortnite*, it would take you 30 days, 22 hours, and 3 minutes, assuming your connection wasn't interrupted and you didn't have to start all over again.

You could imagine that people didn't see the value in spending money on something so slow and widely unused, but I would start using my sales pitch. It really was going to be the way of the future. Even if only 10% of the city was using the Internet to look for a service, their business was guaranteed to take that call if their competitors weren't online yet. Having a website would give them a place to host frequently asked questions, share a bio about the business and/or the owner, and, most importantly, generate leads. It was a digital sales brochure and the future of marketing.

This new plan worked almost every time. I was converting nearly every business card client into a website client. I got more than 100 clients originally, plus referrals at every turn. And as a bonus, they would need a second business card printed because the first one I designed hadn't had a website listed on it! Score! I sold these updated business cards for \$20, helping my original client, Chuck, and giving him additional clientele. He had been my first and only client, and I became his biggest client over the years, bringing in lots of business for him.

Your Client's Success Is Your Success

But website design was one-off work. I only got paid once by each client, which meant that I was always hustling and trying to make a

xxiv INTRODUCTION

sale. There were a lot of ups and downs, and it was starting to wear on me. It was time to visit Dad again. I told my dad of my predicament, and he smiled as he said, "Remember the advice I gave you?" Of course, I did. I had gone from one client to hundreds of clients, even getting other designers to help me so I could save time while bringing in more money. Dear old Dad smiled and said, "Well, I only gave you half of the advice. You needed to learn that first part before you were ready to learn the next. You've been banging your head for some months now, right? There are a lot of ups and downs?" It was like he was reading my mind. "You've been losing sleep, too, haven't you?" How did he know? "Now you are ready to understand the second part: Success is all about acquisition and retention of clients and having them come back wanting more. You got the acquisition down. But how is your retention? How many clients pay you monthly?" I explained the one-and-done nature of website design. Every single client paid me once. Dad said, "You'll always have ups and downs and sleeplessness without retention. Figure out retention—how you can keep them wanting more, and you can figure out success." If you haven't realized it yet, my dad is a genius.

So I analyzed my problems again. What could I do differently? I came to the conclusion that there were two ways I could get recurring monthly payments from clients: hosting and ranking, that is, Internet marketing. All websites needed a host, which required monthly fees. So I started a hosting company called FatBoy Hosting. The name referred to the size of the hosting packages, not my personal weight (or did it . . .?). We had everything from small to XXXL to Blimpiesized packages. I also knew that companies paid monthly for Internet marketing. They needed to have websites get ranked in directories and other services. So I started doing website ranking for companies that paid me monthly. My business soon stabilized and started producing residual income. And I got more sleep. Thanks, Dad.

Introduction xxv

I continued to build websites for clients, hosted their website, and helped them get ranked on the relatively new Internet, or the World Wide Web as it was more commonly called then. I used search directories like Yahoo, Excite, Ask Jeeves, and AltaVista. "Google" wasn't yet a household name. I did this for several years, trying to expand my company. In 2005, I had hired a few new employees and needed to purchase some inexpensive office furniture, so I went to Craigslist to look for a good bargain. When you're fresh out of college and excited about a glowing future in entrepreneurship, you buy your office desk brand new at Staples, but when you've been around the block a few times and the shine has worn down, you save money and buy secondhand goods (or even better, get them for free) that work just the same!

While I was on Craigslist, I saw a listing for a contest to win a free new iPod Nano for anyone who could get people to join a new website called YouTube. The previous iPod on the market was the size of a brick and held a weighty 1,000 songs! Plus, if you threw it at someone you might kill them because it was heavy like a brick. Steve Jobs had just announced this new iPod Nano, which was the size of a pack of gum (much lighter than a brick) and held even more songs. I wanted that iPod! I signed up for YouTube, spammed all my contacts and clients to do the same, and even created new emails for myself personally to increase my chances. I became one of the lucky winners of the latest and greatest iPod on the market.

But then I started watching videos on YouTube and was blown away by the quality of the videos and the lack of the dreaded "buffering" load time so common then. I was hooked! I learned that you could embed videos from YouTube to any website, and people could play them wherever they were in the world. BAM, an idea came to me: I could upsell my 865 clients to embed a video on their website. It would be so easy, it would be like printing my own money. No

xxvi INTRODUCTION

one was doing this. I could be the first to put videos on my clients' websites.

In November 2006, YouTube was purchased by Google for \$1.65 billion. Naturally, the platform's videos started to gain ranking traction on Google searches—now that they owned it, of course they wanted to help it get noticed. At this time, my job was to keep my clients' websites ranked as #1 on the front page of Google. But there was an anti-spam czar at Google named Matt Cutts who made my life a living hell. Matt Cutts was my nemesis. My whole day was spent trying to figure out hacks to game the system and get my clients' websites highly ranked, and Matt and his team would find exploits to the system and shut them down every time. I felt like I was stuck on a roller coaster with no end in sight.

I was sick of fighting with Matt Cutts, and I was sick of getting the dreaded phone calls from my unsatisfied clients every time their ranking dropped. This was driving me insane. So I focused on the problem again. I looked at my business and asked myself what would be the easiest way to accomplish what I needed to do. I had an epiphany: if I stayed in line with Google's goals, I would get ranked every time. I didn't have to fight the system (or Matt Cutts) anymore. It sounds so simple now, but it was a big aha moment for me at the time. I looked at everything that Google was trying to accomplish. I read every blog post and watched every talk by Google founders Larry Page and Sergey Brin, and Google CEO Eric Schmidt. I started to listen to what they really wanted. They talked a lot about organic ranking and tracking. They also talked about the future of Google, with artificial intelligence that would look for patterns to predict what people would want. I made sure I met all of the requirements when it came to what Google wanted.

It was then that I noticed some patterns from my clients' data. Remember the 865 videos I made and embedded on their websites? Most of them were on the front page of Google without any hack Introduction xxvii

or help. WOW! You mean, I didn't have to fight Matt Cutts? And I didn't have to get frantic calls from clients? Sign me up! All I needed to do was make videos that were search-friendly. So I created a plan of attack. I made a series of videos for a few select businesses and focused on generating a lead. My brother-in-law is an optometrist, and I asked him to let me market his practice with videos. I was able to rank for some hard key terms that would have taken a lot of effort for a website but showed up easily in the results in a matter of hours when I used videos. *Crazy!* To make sure this wasn't a fluke, I tried it with a second business, a personal injury attorney. We got the same results: a high Google ranking and the phone ringing with leads.

I had done it; I had solved one of the biggest problems for my company, and I wanted to go all in on video and YouTube. I needed to become the expert helping businesses by generating leads and sales with video. I kept my big clients who were paying thousands of dollars a month, but I sold everything else. It was my point of no return. Like when Spanish commander Cortés sank his ships and conquered the Aztecs. In sinking the ships, he gave himself one option: succeed or die. There would be no means to turn back. Likewise, I sold all my website and Internet marketing clients to an SEO company in Salt Lake City, with the clause that I could keep all the video marketing work. They agreed because they didn't know what I knew, that videos ranked in Google without any blackhat hack or strategy. They were being promoted because YouTube was owned by Google. Google wanted videos to be found, so they moved more users to YouTube. So I shifted my focus from website creation and marketing to video creation and marketing . . . and I watched my clients' rankings and revenue skyrocket because these videos were ranking on page one of Google.

By this time, I was itching with excitement for what I was witnessing in the evolution of marketing: online video was going to be a big deal, and I wanted to be a part of it. Video power outweighed

xxviii INTRODUCTION

word power by an overwhelming margin. Viewers were much more likely to do what advertisers wanted them to do—pick up the phone and call, make a purchase, or sign up for a service—after watching a video. And these videos could be made by regular people who were getting incredible distribution to millions of viewers . . . using inexpensive camera equipment. This had never been done outside the realm of television studios and movie sets.

In my videos, I hyperfocused to dial in messaging with the goal of getting the phone to ring. It was so important to know everything about the person making the phone call. I would grill my brother-in-law and his office staff on all the things people would ask and what they needed help with. Then I would take those questions and turn them into talking points for the video with clear solutions on how we could help. I asked a ton of questions to get a good handle on the niche and what would work. Then I would make 10 solid videos that would show up in search. Once the messaging was working—the video was ranking and the phone was ringing—I would go to another city and do it all over again. (I only worked with one business per niche in each city.)

I had started with my optometrist brother-in-law, but I replicated my work in that niche hundreds of times in hundreds of locations. When I got a system down for one niche, I could rinse and repeat for any client in that niche. Why re-create the wheel when I could slap a new logo on what was already working? I had my systems dialed in so well. The clients were happy, which meant that I was happy. Matt Cutts was no longer the enemy; he was my best buddy! Talk about a win-win.

Uniting People around Their Passion

At that time, my relationship with YouTube consisted of creating videos and uploading them to YouTube for the sole purpose of getting