

What factors cause a promotional video to be successful?

In order to create an effective promotional video, research into competition is key. By analysing the videos' performance on sites such as Youtube - which allows the public to interact with a video by "liking" or "disliking" it, and commenting on it (this is called its 'engagement'), and tracks how many views a video receives - one can begin to gather an idea of what works in a video, and what doesn't.

In order to do this, I researched a range of videos created by both the college's immediate competition (such as West Suffolk College) and colleges elsewhere (such as Redbridge College). I took note of each video's number of views, amount of engagement (likes, dislikes, comments), date of posting, and the total subscriptions the College's channel had, and put them in a spreadsheet for easy viewing and sorting. [1]

A video's success cannot simply be judged by the amount of views it has received – its age and engagement must be taken into account. With regards to the content of a video, and what works, a video with more views and less engagement could be less effective than a video with less views and more engagement – in the latter case, it may simply be a case of a poor strategy in the promotion of the video itself. So, in order to get a more accurate idea of the effectiveness of a video, it was important to compare the average views per month, and the amount of engagement per views. This way, it would be clearer which videos performed better over time, regardless of its age, and which videos were being engaged with and enjoyed.

To find a video's average views per month, I simply divided its view number by the number of months it had been active. Then, to find out which videos gained better engagement, I added up the number of likes and comments, minus the number of dislikes, then divided the total number of views by that amount. This way, a better analysis of how many views it took for someone to engage with the video could be gleaned – and in this manner, the video with the highest views per month was found to be the worst in terms of its views:engagement ratio. This could suggest that the marketing of the video was working well, but the content of the video itself was not resonating with viewers.

Now that I had a better idea of which videos were successful, it was time to determine what features and factors could have contributed to the videos' performance. To do so, I took notes on what (and who) the video contained, and the techniques of cinematography and editing, then compared the most and least successful videos in terms of engagement with each other, and the second of each, to find any correlation between them; the findings for which can be found on the next page.

Surprisingly, the top and bottom videos in terms of number of views per engagement, out of the 10 videos analysed, were both posted on behalf of the University of Suffolk. Immediately, this means that the number of subscriptions isn't a major factor in how successful a video is. In terms of views, the 30-second television advert "Be Fearless, Not Faceless" came out on top – but in terms of engagement, the more information- and speaking- heavy video "Working Together to Enhance the Student Experience" seemed to be most successful.

In second place in terms of engagement was West Suffolk College's "It's Your Choice" video, which was also the video to gain the highest number of positive comments. The second-least-successful video (despite being, in my opinion, of very high-quality and excellent in terms of technique and execution) was Redbridge College's "Achieve your ambitions with Redbridge College".

Judging by correlation, the factors that the two top videos shared were the following:

- Footage featuring both students and staff around the college, made relatable with names, who they were within the college, and facts about them or a showcase of their skills
- Negative wording – "we don't always get it right, but –", and "we don't do a-levels or agriculture, but –"
- Information-heavy – information regarding the student experience and what makes the college/university stand out in terms of this experience
- Both videos' main source of information was a voice, and the speaker was named either within the video or in the video's description
- Camera movement and speed varied between shots – both had a mix of fast, panning shots, and longer static shots, which kept fluidity in the videos without being nauseating.
- Less "promotional" in terms of tone – no obvious call-to-action
- Lighting was bright and colours were vivid, making the video more lively visually
- Lively visuals were accompanied by upbeat and up-tempo music

In summary, the main similarity between the two videos was a feeling of relatability – knowing the person speaking on a first-name basis, and the information was provided in a conversational, genuine tone with use of personal pronouns like "I" and "we". Both videos were brightly-lit and colourful, with the lively visuals accompanied by lively, upbeat music. The shots around the college included candid footage of students and staff smiling and laughing, which didn't feel forced or posed – and nobody seemed uncomfortable while speaking or on-camera.

Contrastingly, the factors that the two bottom videos shared, which differed from those in the top videos, were as follows:

- Impersonal tone – voiceovers, when present, had no identity, and no eye contact was made with the camera to involve the viewer
- Little information given about the actual student experience within the college, past sentence-long slogans.
- Camera was either static throughout or constantly in motion – there was no variation in shot type
- One video was still brightly-lit, but neither video was particularly colourful

These results suggest that viewers are more likely to engage with a piece of media if it is personal, relatable, and contains a lot of information that is relevant to them. Many of the videos with high

amounts of views had little engagement, which suggests that no amount of marketing can convince an audience to engage with a video that doesn't hold their interest.

Of course, we can only make estimations at what causes these videos to succeed or fail using the limited information we have. Access to further analytics and data beyond that which is shown publically would provide more insight to things such as how a video was being shared or found, audience retention (how long, on average, a viewer actually watches the video before leaving or engaging with the content), and much more.

The success of a video depends on how you define it – if views are what you're aiming for, to get people watching regardless of whether they'll engage with the video, then how you market, tag, and share the video is likely the primary factor in its success. On the other hand, if success is defined by the shares, likes, and comments on the video, it seems making your video relatable, lively, and brightly-lit and vividly-coloured, makes viewers more likely to engage with your media.

[1] Research spreadsheet:

https://docs.google.com/spreadsheets/d/1pWRPsmopy3DF13x2DWa9Ds6cRrTQJidOGJyegu_hmQM/edit?usp=sharing

Videos researched:

[Be Fearless, Not Faceless](#)

[16-19s at Kingston College](#)

[Achieve your ambitions with Redbridge College](#)

[West Suffolk College – It's your choice](#)

[West Suffolk College – Be Prepared #WeStandOut](#)

[Life @ One](#)

[Welcome to Leicester College](#)

[East Durham College's New 30 Sec TV Commercial, Autumn 2016 – Apply Now](#)

[University of Suffolk – Working Together to Enhance the Student Experience](#)

[Why Pick One?](#)

