

HOW TO BUILD AN AUDIENCE FOR YOUR WEB SERIES:

**Market, Motivate and
Mobilize**



Julie Giles

A Publication of the Independent Production Fund



How to Build an Audience for Your Web Series: Market, Motivate and Mobilize

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About the Author

Julie Giles is a marketer, publicist, producer and filmmaker. Online since the early days of dial-up, her expertise is both wide and deep, including content marketing, seo, social media, email marketing, video marketing, and publicity and promotions. Julie is Chief Madhatter at GreenHAT Digital, a Toronto-based digital marketing agency. Follow her on Twitter @greenhatdigital.

About the IPF

The Independent Production Fund (IPF) was established in 1991 by Maclean Hunter Limited with an endowment now valued at \$35M. It is mandated to support the production of Canadian drama series and to encourage professional development and training for the television industry. In the past 20 years, the IPF has invested \$52 M in the production of 250 Canadian television drama series. In 2010, it launched a new funding program to support drama series created for digital platforms.

The Fund is "certified" by the CRTC as an independent production fund, eligible to receive BDU (Broadcast Distribution Undertaking) contributions. It is incorporated federally as a corporation without share capital and has been granted charitable status. The Board of Directors which represents the industry makes all funding decisions. The Fund is administered by offices in Toronto and Montreal.

Introduction

The recent explosion in the production of web series around the world has given audiences an impressive range of content to explore online and on other digital platforms. There are series for every taste and every demographic. Their audiences may be global, or may be targeted and niche. Yet, producers of this wealth of content share a challenge: how to let potential viewers know that they exist.

The Independent Production Fund, which began to finance web drama series in 2010, (after 20 years of funding television drama series), was amazed by the quality and diversity of material presented to them by both traditional television producers and new media producers. A lot of commitment and passion went into the production of their series. But, we all soon recognized that just as much commitment and labour and creativity and skill must go into marketing and promoting the web series, over long periods of time. No one really realized just what that could entail, if done right. And who should do it. And when it should be done. And how. And what resources exist. And how to use them. And for how long. Traditional PR and promotional techniques would not do the job.

How to Build an Audience for your Web Series: Market, Motivate & Mobilize is our attempt to answer these questions. It provides practical, hands-on advice and strategies to attract audiences to web series and websites, and to inspire audiences to become communities of interest, who in turn can become the best marketers you can get. There are not many experienced people in this field. Julie Giles is an exception. She is a digital entertainment specialist with years of experience, who has agreed to share her vast knowledge of the art and science of digital marketing.

The Independent Production Fund is a private Foundation mandated to fund Canadian drama series produced for any platform, and to support professional development of the production industry. It provides a [web series dashboard](#) for all the series that it funds. As producers learn to optimize their marketing knowledge, audiences will grow, and hopefully, fame and fortune will follow!

Andra Sheffer
Executive Director
Independent Production Fund

How to use this guide

How to Build an Audience for your Web Series: Market, Motivate & Mobilize is a comprehensive workbook for **web series creators** interested in building their audiences and reach via online, mobile and social media platforms.

It has been designed to provide a practical framework to direct your work from idea to production, launch and beyond. Each section addresses an essential aspect of **digital marketing** and provides specific tactics for building an engaged and loyal audience.

Whether you are interested in establishing a YouTube presence, building a video-enhanced website, or engaging Twitter and Facebook followers, the guide will take you through the necessary steps.

Sample budget, resources, links and timelines are all included allowing you to develop your **marketing plan** by platform and chapter, or by following the month-by-month schedule at the end of the guide.

The tasks suggested here are applicable to a broad range of web series, and to most creative producers. But keep in mind that you may need to do other things depending on your objectives and your niche. It's also possible that some of the tasks mentioned here, which may be necessary for other producers, may not be appropriate to your goals.

Marketing strategy

A good marketing strategy begins with a thorough understanding of **your product, your goals and your audience**.

Start with defined goals. Know what you want from your web series above all. Is your goal to:

- Launch your career?
- Take your web series to TV?
- Build a large audience?
- Build a long-term, sustainable fan base?
- Make money (via funding, advertising, sponsorship, etc.)?
- Have an impact on the world or create change?

Knowing your goal will define **what success means to you and your team**. Defined goals will also help when you have to make hard choices about where to allocate precious resources.

Once you have decided what your goals are, you'll need to **take stock of your web series**. Is the work good? Will it hold up to the harshness of the ultra-competitive marketplace? What's the one thing that makes it both different and compelling? Are there stars? Is there an irresistible story in the making of? Is your series shocking or controversial in any way? What makes it "the only one" of its kind? Answering these questions and others will help you to clearly define and differentiate your brand.

Audience identification should start as early in the process as possible. **Who makes up your core audience?** (A core audience might include one or more niche audiences -- people with a unique shared interest or preference). Is there a secondary audience that shares some of the same interests as your core audience? Who are they? Enlist your co-producers and advisors to help brainstorm audience profiles. It is difficult to market to your audience if you don't know who that audience is.

Understanding your competition, capitalizing on trends and knowing your marketing channels can further define your marketing strategy and help you to clearly define and differentiate your brand. Consider the following:

- **What wave are you riding?** Make a list of trends that can power your success. Can you ride more than one trend at a time?
- **Who shares the landscape?** Who are your competitors? What similar entertainment products come first, second, and third in the mind of the audience? Design a strategy to become number one or two. Or, become the first in a new category (*Twilight* did this by combining two genres: vampire and teen lit).
- **How will you spread the word?** Is your messaging as unique as your product? How will your audience learn about you? How can you “enroll” them to help spread the word about your work? Where should you put your marketing resources?
- **How do you earn fan loyalty?** What would turn off a fan? Is there a way to introduce super fans to new members of your audience? Or to you, your cast and crew? What cool things can you organize that will make your fans feel special?

We live in a world where **everything is marketing and marketing is everything**. The least amount of friction between who you are, what you produce, and what you market will give rise to an authentic and honest approach that can be #winning for both you and your audience.

Your marketing plan

Your marketing plan should be specific and detailed and include a step-by-step set of actions for you and your team to follow.

Below is a recommended eight-step system to build and execute your marketing plan:

STEP 1: Develop your audience profile(s).

STEP 2: Clearly define and differentiate your brand.

STEP 3: Design and deploy a content-driven website.

STEP 4: Choose your marketing channels. This can include traditional (advertising, direct mail, publicity, etc.) and non-traditional (blogger outreach, social media, etc.) channels.

STEP 5: Build an integrated campaign fueled by four core marketing strategies: content marketing, organic search marketing, social media and publicity.

STEP 6: Establish budgets. Allocate your money -- and your time.

STEP 7: Define timelines with milestones, tasks and responsibilities.

STEP 8: Measure everything; be willing to adapt and evolve. If a tactic doesn't work, either make changes or try a different course of action altogether.

Audience development

When you build an audience, you don't have to buy people's attention -- they give it to you. This is a huge advantage as it allows even small independents to build an audience for their work.

Traditionally, broadcasters have been the intermediaries between producer and audience. As such, they have been responsible for driving "eyeballs" to screens (usually via mass advertising and PR campaigns). With the advent of the web, this traditional form of marketing has changed. Now that producers have a direct relationship with their audience it is less about the big spend and more about creativity and passion.

To develop an audience for your show, you need to "pull" people using a combination of "**inbound marketing**" techniques, which include content marketing, organic search marketing, social media, and publicity and PR.

Once you have people coming to your website, then it becomes all about **connecting to your audience** and making them feel like they are part of something special. It is this "experiential" aspect that makes a web series unique to market.

There are three ways to build an engaged and loyal audience: by building a large following; by building a community; or by putting together a combination of the two.

Most of this guide will focus on how to build a **large following**. This involves creating great content, engaging with as many people as possible, getting coverage in top blogs, and maximizing your profile in online searches.

Build your website

Your website is the showcase for your web series and the cornerstone for all your marketing activities.

As you design a site for your show, there are several things to keep in mind.

First, put your web series **front and centre**. Your video player should be prominent and appear alongside a memorable tagline that introduces visitors to the show and explains (in as few words as possible) how it is different and compelling.

Second, visitors should straightaway know what other content they can find and **what they can do** on the site. The main website navigation should be clear and easy to understand (no creative titles, here) while features such as the newsletter sign-up should be positioned where visitors typically expect them to be (top right sidebar).

Lastly, your website should **connect visitors** to your social media channels and provide ways for them to interact with you -- as well as each other. The site should work for search engines (no broken links, slow loading, ghost pages or duplicate content) and be accessible to anyone using any device (desktop computer, mobile, tablet) or browser (IE, Firefox, Opera).

Inject your website with lots of personality ... and you're ready to go!

1. Select a unique domain name

Ensure that your site has a unique domain name. Claim your .ca, .com and/or .tv address. A .com address is the most common domain although not the only option. Many successful online brands have used non-traditional domains to make themselves memorable (for example, music service Last.fm). Most hosting providers offer domains for free along with their monthly or annual packages. Alternatively, you can purchase your domain through a service like [MyDomain](#). Protect your brand by buying as many domain variations as you can afford. The best domain names are short and easy to remember. For additional characteristics of a good domain, read this blog post on [Daily Blog Tips](#).

2. Choose a hosting service

There are lots of good, affordable website hosting plans available. Because your mandate is to first reach a Canadian audience, it's better to host your website on a server located in Canada. For an explanation why, watch this video from [Matt Cutts of Google Webmaster Helps](#). Do your research before your hand over your money. You want a service that is fast, secure and has great server "uptime". If you plan on hosting your own video, you may want to consider a [cloud hosting](#) plan so as to minimize down time if you start getting traffic spikes.

3. Set-up a landing page

As soon as you have the green light (and after you've registered your domain name and selected your hosting provider), the first thing you want to do is create a temporary landing page with the goal of collecting email or Twitter addresses. Your landing page should be simple and focused solely on capturing addresses. You can design your own or use a launch page service like [LaunchRock](#). Use the code provided by your email provider to set-up your opt-in email subscription box.

4. Select a CMS platform

Before you design and build your website, select a CMS platform. Content Management Systems (CMS) have revolutionized the world of web design, allowing anyone to create, publish, and manage content online. The three major content management systems are Drupal, Joomla and WordPress. Most web designers or developers will have a preference for one or the other. Make sure that you are comfortable with their recommendation by testing the platform ahead of time. If you're planning to do most of your updates yourself, then [WordPress](#) is by far the most user-friendly of the three. [Good Web Practices](#) has an excellent article explaining why you might choose one CMS over another.

5. Choose a theme or template

With the proliferation of ready-made themes and templates, it's no longer imperative to hire a designer for your website. This makes it much more affordable to design and build an attractive website. If you're using WordPress as your CMS, there are a large number of [free](#) and premium themes to style your website. Once you have WordPress installed on your host server, then it is only a matter of "skinning" your site with the theme of your choice. [ThemeForest](#) has a number of affordable premium themes. If you're a web series producer, look for a theme with a (big) video player built into the homepage layout.

6. Hire a designer/developer

Many themes now come with highly customizable backends that you can tweak in order to give your website a more unique look. Depending on your theme (and budget), you may still want to hire a designer/developer to customize your website for that fully "branded" feel.

7. Design your site for people

Usability (the people side of web design) is both art and science. Sites with good usability tend to have several things in common: a clear and simple navigation system, a search function, strong support for the brand, and easily scannable content. The subject of web design is huge and can't be covered in depth here. Instead, we suggest you visit an acknowledged design resource, such as [Smashing Magazine](#) or [WebDesignerWall](#) for tips and inspiration. The alternative is to hire a designer/developer.

8. But don't forget the search engines

Design your site for people but don't forget about the search engines. Search engines (like people) want to see content that is well organized and downloads quickly. Their main goal is to "crawl" and index your site. Don't block the search "bots" by using excessive javascript, splash pages or Flash files.

9. Decide on a navigation style and layout

Make it easy for people to navigate your site. Decide where on the page you want your main navigation to go: the top (horizontal), side (vertical) or both. The navigation should provide an overview of what the site has to offer and how it's organized. People are creatures of habit. Use classical layouts that visitors will easily recognize. Here is one place where it pays not to be too creative.

10. Design the perfect homepage

Effective design draws the attention of visitors to important elements. Place your web series front and centre on your website and “above the fold” so that it can be seen right away and without having to scroll down the page. Ensure that your important links, images and text are also “above the fold”.

Elements to include “above the fold”:

- Company or show logo
- Company or show name
- Tagline (a memorable one sentence summary)
- Main and sub-navigation
- Video player (if you’re producing a web series)
- RSS and email subscription options
- RSS and social media buttons/icons
- On-site search box

Elements to add “below the fold”:

- Sidebar content (blogroll, tag cloud, widgets, etc...)
- Content promos (latest or most popular news)
- Feature promos (latest episode)
- Social media widgets (Facebook or Twitter feeds)
- Footer information (sub-navigation, privacy and copyright info)

11. Add a blog

Blogs play an important function by keeping your audience engaged and by helping your search engine optimization (seo). If you are using a CMS such as WordPress, Drupal or Joomla, then a blog is a built-in feature. If you have a static site, you can use WordPress to add a blog feature. Do not use an off-site platform such as Blogger or WordPress.com to host your blog. You’ll gain nothing from the added benefits that a blog can bring such as increased traffic and enhanced seo. Try and stay away from [Tumblr](#) as well. Because Tumblr makes it easy to copy content from one blog to another (re-blogging) and lacks unique title tags for pages, it does not rank well with Google and other search engines.

12. Build your site from a blueprint

Before you build your website, organize your content (your pages) into a wireframe or screen blueprint. Doing this first can save time as you hash out the details of the site’s architecture, functionality, and content prior to actually starting the build. Wireframes can be executed with pen and paper or with special tools. For an overview of the wireframe process and a [comprehensive list of resources](#), visit Smashing Magazine.

13. Burn your RSS feed with FeedBurner

As soon as your website is built, one of the first things you want to do is burn your RSS (Real Simple Syndication) feed with FeedBurner. To create a FeedBurner account, you'll first need to have a Google account. Follow the instructions included in this [WP beginner post](#) to burn your feed. Manually add a redirect from your original feed to your new FeedBurner feed, or install the FeedBurner FeedSmith plugin to do this automatically.

There are several advantages to using FeedBurner. One of the main advantages is that it lets visitors sign-up to receive your news feed by email. This is important as many people are still unfamiliar with feedreaders and what's involved in subscribing to an RSS feed. Other advantages: FeedBurner allows you to find out how many people are subscribed to your feed. It automatically "pings" the search engines to let them know when new content has been added. And, if you change your blog, you can easily port your new feed to your FeedBurner account without interruption.

14. Add an email subscription box

Encourage email subscriptions on your website by adding an opt-in email subscription box. Place it "above the fold" in the upper-right corner of the page. The box should appear on your homepage as well as on the top ten pages of your website (including your blog). When creating your email subscription box, ask only for the information you absolutely need (i.e. an email address). If you absolutely have to collect more information, design a two-step sign-up process. In addition to having a subscription box on your website pages, you may also want to consider adding a call-to-action and a link to your sign-up page at the bottom of every blog post.

15. Enable social sharing

Enable social sharing on your website so that your content can be easily shared by your visitors. If you're using WordPress, there are hundreds of social sharing plugins to choose from. [AddThis](#) is one of the more popular plugins. Mashable has a good "how to" post on [adding social sharing buttons](#) to your website. To learn more about how the digital landscape is being reshaped by social sharing, read this blog post from Edelman PR: ["Why social sharing is bigger than Facebook and Twitter"](#).

16. Add a Facebook “Like” box

One of the easiest ways to extend the reach of your website is to add a Facebook “Like” Box. The “Like” box widget can be customized and added to your site’s sidebar. Grab the embed code from [Facebook Share](#). The “Like” box allows you to acquire new fans for your Facebook page without them having to leave your website. It also helps to build your social proof by showing your fan count.

17. Add your Twitter stream

Another way to extend the reach of your website is to add a Twitter badge. The Twitter badge shows your real-time Twitter stream and provides a link to your Twitter account. As with the Facebook “Like” box, the Twitter badge helps build social proof. If you plan to use this feature, just make sure that your account is active.

18. Add a row of social media icons

Add a row of social media icons (or buttons) to your sidebar and then link the images to your most important social media channels (Facebook, Flickr, Twitter, YouTube, etc.). Make sure that your buttons are “above the fold” and large enough to be visible. There are numerous plugins that let you add and customize this feature. Don’t forget to include your RSS feed (the famous orange button) in your “social” row.

19. Add a toolbar

Adding a toolbar to your website can help encourage on-site activity and interactivity. Toolbars typically sit at the bottom of the browser and provide a number of useful tools such as site search, translation, live-chat and more. Popular toolbars include the [Meebo Bar](#) and [Wibiya Toolbar](#). The only downside of toolbars is that they can slow the load time of your website. If you are planning to add one, do your research and optimize your cache. More on this in the Organic Search Marketing section.

20. Use feedback to discover problems

Embed feedback widgets to discover problems and to find out from your visitors what is and isn’t working with your website. There are two main types of feedback widgets: survey tools that pop a little question up from the bottom corner of the screen, and live-chat tools, which let you engage in a conversation. Add a survey widget ([Olark](#), [KISSinsights](#)) or a live-chat widget ([SnapEngage](#)) to your site for insights into points of confusion that you might not have thought of.

21. Make your site mobile friendly

Strengthen your ability to reach your audience anytime and anywhere by making your website mobile friendly. There are several plugins available (for WordPress) to help “mobilize” your site, including the [WordPress Mobile Pack](#), [Mobify](#), [Mofuse](#) and [WPTouch](#).

Bottom Line:

Follow established “best practices” when it comes to the design of your website. When in doubt hire a designer/developer but remember to make sure that you can handle updates yourself and that you are able to manage the CMS they recommend. Add a blog to make your website dynamic and to help with search engine optimization. Link to your social media channels and encourage on-site activity through widgets and other “sticky” features.

Organic search marketing

A big part of finding an audience is making sure that they can find you during an online search. Search engine optimization or seo is one of the strategies used to accomplish this.

Seo can provide you with a **distinct advantage** if only for the fact that most people either neglect or ignore this side of the marketing equation.

The primary goal of organic search marketing is to put you on the short list of best answers to a searcher's question. Search engine listings come two ways: paid and organic. Organic **search listings** are the free listings that dominate search engine results pages (also know as SERPs). In Google, these are the results on the left side of the page. Paid listings, sponsored results and pay-per-click, are typically on the right side of the page and appear as a few spots at the top of the page.

Organic search marketing “pulls” people to your website by highlighting content that is relevant to what they are looking for. Search traffic delivers visitors who are actively searching for information; who may have heard of your show from friends or family members; or who have a passionate interest in your themes and topics.

22. Develop a list of organic keywords

The first step in a search marketing strategy is to develop a list of keywords. Organic keywords are those keywords (and phrases) that appear naturally on your website and contribute to the search engine ranking of the page.

Keywords come in two types: head terms and long tail terms (or broad terms and narrow terms). Head terms are single words like “TV” or “webisode”; long tail terms are multi-word phrases like “TV series angel cast” or “webisodes for kids”.

Long tail terms comprise 70% of all search queries. If you know your audience, you will probably have a general idea of what words and phrases they might be using to search for your theme, genre or topic, genre. The more closely you can target highly specific phrases that are being used by your audience, the better you’ll be able to match their information needs to your content plan.

There are several free tools that you can use to develop a keyword list: [Google Suggest](#), [Google AdWords Keyword Tool](#), [Wordstream’s Free Keyword Tool](#) and [Wordtracker’s Free Keyword Tool](#). These tools generate keywords and keyword variations based on search queries performed by real people. Use Google AdWords to further refine your list by looking for keyword phrases that are popular with searchers but not that popular with webmasters. These are often referred to as competitive keywords.

You’ll want to generate a short list of long tail terms and a longer list of head terms. Use your keywords on pages, in posts and to identify images. Develop a broader and deeper list of keywords for use on your weblog. Or look for a browser extension, such as Seo Blogger, so you can search for keywords “on the go”.

Have one or two target keywords in mind before you start writing your website copy. A general rule of thumb is to use tail terms when optimizing web pages with specific content, and head terms when optimizing web pages with more general content (for example, your homepage). Select keywords that are consistent with the content of each page, as well as with the overall theme of your website. Refine your keyword selection, on a regular basis, by reviewing your analytics program and making changes based on what terms people are using to find your website.

23. Architect your site for search

A good site structure helps people navigate your website. It also helps search engines find and index your content. Good site structure should:

- **Look like a pyramid.** Your site structure should look like a reasonably balanced pyramid. No section should be more than twice as large as any other section. Your site should neither be too wide (too many main sections) nor too deep (too many sub-sections). Use pen and paper or an online mapping tool like [Gliffy](#) to map your site.
- **Organize your content.** Your site structure should organize your content and logically group it into sections. You wouldn't expect to find your show episodes in your "About" section. Neither will the search engines.
- **Name your content.** Each page on your website should have a unique URL. Each URL should describe the content of that page, yet it should be as short as possible. Include important keywords in your URL if possible.
- **Link your content.** Increase your site's rank-ability by building a fluid internal link structure.

To deep dive into [intelligent site structure for better seo](#), visit Yoast.com.

24. Optimize your web pages for search

When optimizing your web pages for search, there are two factors to consider -- the structural (such as file names and title tags) and the written (primarily the web page copy). For a complete analysis of on-page optimization factors, read "[Perfecting Keyword Targeting and On-Page Optimization](#)" from Seomoz. To execute on basic page optimization, follow these steps:

- **Title tags.** Title tags are the most important element on the page. Search engines use the text within the title tag to determine what the content of the page is about. Limit your title tag to 65 characters or less (search engines won't display more). Be mindful to create unique title tags for each page of your website. If you are using a CMS like WordPress, you can install a plugin that lets you customize your title tags, meta descriptions and keywords.
- **Files names.** If you're using a CMS, your file name will be automatically generated from the title of your page or post. You may want to edit the file name so that it is shorter and includes a keyword. WordPress and other CMS include tools that help with this.

- **Meta description tags.** Meta description tags summarize what your Web page content is about and are displayed in BOLD as part of the information people see on a search engine results page. Write a brief yet informative description about your content, including the keyword or phrase used in the title tag.
- **Meta keyword tags.** Although most search engines ignore this tag, some still use it in their ranking algorithms (Yahoo!). Keywords and phrases contained in your meta keywords tag work in tandem with the meta description tag to describe the content of your Webpage. Generate a short list of no more than 10 keywords or phrases to add.
- **Header tags.** Main topics and ideas can be placed within header tags. They alter the format of the text in the Web browser and tell the search engines that these keywords and phrases are important. Header tags are arranged in preset levels of importance from <H1> to <H6>. Text included in an <H1> tag appears larger than other text on the page. Header tags can be used anywhere within the body of the text.
- **Body copy.** Your written copy should include keywords. There is no hard and fast rule regarding keyword density (number of times a keyword is repeated within a section of copy) although two to three times for a short page and three to four times for a long page seems about right. Bold/strong and italic/emphasis tags seem to carry some weight and should be used to emphasize the targeted term at least once.
- **Images.** Search engine spiders cannot read images present on your pages. Therefore you must use <alt> image tags to describe your images. If you're using a CRM, you can add <alt> tags once your image has been uploaded. The <alt> tag should describe the image and be no more than two to five words long. Make sure that your image has a "real" name (for example, "my-name.jpg" rather than "00f45ffg.jg") and add a title to describe the image. The title can be a bit longer than the <alt> tag and read like a sentence. Relevant captions under or near images, or related text in the paragraph before or after images will further help the search engines and may produce a slightly higher ranking in the SERPs.

25. Optimize your blog for search

If you're using WordPress as your CMS or as your blogging software, there are some specific steps you'll need to take to make your site/blog more findable:

- **Update the permalink structure.** Make your URLs seo-friendly by changing the default setting for the permalinks from this: <http://www.abcwebseries.com/?p=123> to this: <http://www.abcwebseries.com/episodes/thefirst>. Click on Custom > Customize Permalink Structure and add the following code:

/category/%postname%/

For more information on the subject of permalinks, visit the [WordPress Codex](#).

- **Improve your site's load time.** Site speed (how quickly your website loads) is now an official ranking factor for Google. Load times can become an issue if you have a lot of plugins running or are streaming video from your site. One way to ensure faster load times is to optimize your cache. Wouldn't you know it, there's a plugin for this, too -- [W3 Total Cache](#). For background information on site speed, read this post, "[Site speed is now a ranking factor](#)", by Joost de Valk . This video explains how to [install and configure](#) W3 Total Cache. Note: This is not for the technical newbie. Talk to your programmer or ask for assistance.
- **Add an XML sitemap.** Sitemaps tell Google what pages are on your website and offer an easy way for the search "bots" to crawl and index your site. Download and install the [Google XML Sitemaps](#) plugin to automatically generate a sitemap, or look for an seo plugin (such as the WordPress Seo Plugin), which comes with a build-in sitemap generator. You'll need to configure your .htaccess files in order for the plugin to work so read the instructions first. For more on sitemaps and their importance, visit [Google Webmaster Central](#).

To explore seo optimization for WordPress in depth read "[WordPress Seo: The Definitive Guide To Higher Rankings For Your Blog](#)" by Joost de Valk. For instructions on how to optimize Drupal, Magento and Joomla, refer to the following: Joost de Valk has a guide to [Magento](#) Seo; the Joomla website provides an extensive list of seo [resources and tutorials](#) for the platform; Volacci has produced an e-book, "[Drupal 6 Search Engine Optimization](#)", for those using the Drupal platform.

26. Create and install a video sitemap

Unfortunately, Google can't read Flash very well (although it is trying), and as a result, most video content is invisible to Google's search crawlers. Therefore, the best way to have your video appear in Google's blended search results is to submit your video using a video sitemap. This is similar to an XML sitemap, but is formatted specifically for video, and only contains information about your video content. It is submitted using Google's Webmaster Tools.

If you have a lot of video content on your website (which we hope you do) then it is important that you submit a video sitemap. The video sitemap provides information to Google including: location tag, thumbnail location, title and description, content location, player location. Other data that can be included in video sitemaps include: video duration, expiration date, publication date and restriction tag

27. Create an account with Google Webmaster Tools

Google Webmaster Tools provides you with detailed reports about your site's visibility on Google, such as when you are getting 404 errors (pages not being found), and who is linking to your site. It's also a good place to verify that your XML sitemap has been submitted correctly and that your pages are being indexed.

28. Use an analytics tool

It is vitally important that you know who is coming to your site and what they are doing while they are there. There are a number of free tools available that track just this sort of information. Google Analytics is the most common analytics tool and the one we will talk about here. In addition to Google Analytics, there are several new free real-time analytics tools (such as [Clicky](#) and [Woopra](#)) that are well worth a try.

To set-up and install Google Analytics, you'll require a Google account. Watch this Tubetorial, "[Getting started with Google Analytics](#)", which shows you how to create an account and grab your tracking code. You'll need to add the tracking code to every page on your website that you want to track. Alternatively, you can copy and paste your tracking code into the footer of your CMS website or weblog for tracking across all pages.

29. Establish conversion goals and funnels in Google Analytics

Conversion goals are the actions you want your site visitors to take when they visit your website. Examples of conversion goals are: account sign-ups, email newsletter sign-ups, RSS subscriptions, and video plays.

To get started with goals and funnels, examine your website and make a list of all of the actions you'd like to track. If the actions are based on a sequence of steps, you'll need to set-up what's known as a funnel. Add these goals and funnels to your Google Analytics account.

To learn how to set-up goals and funnels, read this [guide to goals and funnels](#) or [watch this video tutorial](#). If you want to take a look at some of the more advanced goals that you can track, Web Analytics World has posted an article, "[10 Must Track Goals](#)".

For a comprehensive, in-depth, blow-by-blow examination of web analytics, subscribe to Avinash Kaushik's excellent [Web Analytics Blog](#).

30. Boost your search rankings with editorial content

Links to your website from other sites give your audience a way to find you. Links from other sites give search engine spiders a trail to follow to find and index your pages. Links are also "votes" for your site and factor into search engine algorithms, which determine where you appear on the SERPs.

[Link popularity](#) is determined by the number and quality of websites that link to you (also known as back links). A link from a high-quality website (for example, *The New York Times*) is worth more in the search engine algorithms than a link from a low-quality website. At the moment, link popularity is still an important ranking factor. But, it may be diminished as social media becomes a more popular way to share links. Follow blogs such as Search Engine Journal, Search Engine Watch or Seomoz Daily Seo Blog to keep on top of changes at the big three search engines: Google, Bing and Yahoo!

One of the best ways to build back links to your website is through editorial coverage. Therefore, you want to ensure that you have articles and reviews appearing online as well as in print publications. One of the best ways to get editorial coverage is to have a good marketing "hook" or angle and to get your content in front of as many relevant webmasters and bloggers as possible.

To find relevant websites or weblogs, create [Google Alerts](#) for themes, topics, genres or people related to your show. Look for bloggers who are writing about your topic (or who may have written about other web series). Follow their blog, comment on something they have written and add a link to your website. Ask bloggers to add you to their blogroll; offer to add them to yours.

You can also build back links by submitting your URL to industry directories. Use [social bookmarking sites](#) such as del.icio.us, digg, mixx, reddit (and hundreds of others) as well as news aggregators like squidoo, hubpages, zimbio and weebly to get authority links to your website.

Don't forget to ask all your investors, sponsors and partners for a link. Organize a link exchange with other web series producers...or other bloggers working in the same genre. For additional [link building tips](#), read this post on SeoMoz.

31. Boost your search rankings with social media

Links from social networks such as Facebook and Twitter are now one of the factors that determine your rank in search engine results. The effects of social media links on rank are still relatively small, however, most seo experts agree that over time social media links will become more and more important in determining where you are listed on a SERP.

Although no one but the mathematicians at the search engines know exactly which factors carry more weight, seo experts speculate that the following social media factors are likely to influence your ranking:

- Quantity of fans and followers
- Followers to following ratio
- Quality and importance of fans and followers

To encourage links via social media:

- Submit and promote your content on key social media networks, such as Facebook, Twitter and YouTube.
- Develop relationships with authoritative social media users.
- Find creative ways to encourage others to share your content.

32. Annotate important events in Google Analytics

When you get traffic spikes (from a blog post, press coverage, video upload etc.) add an annotation note into Google Analytics so that you can remember the reason for the surge the next time you login. Not only is this good for historical tracking, but deeper analysis of the data during these spikes can point to marketing opportunities.

Adding annotations is easy. Click the small gray drawer handle below the monthly traffic chart to open the notes panel, or click directly on a node (blue dot) in the chart. For further instructions and some good suggestions about the types of events to record, read this post on [making notes with Google Analytics](#).

33. Add custom reports to your Google Analytics dashboard

Set-up custom reports so you can get a quick overview of your most important metrics at a glance. The first step in setting-up a custom report is to figure out what you want to report on -- perhaps pick your top 5 KPI's (Key Performance Indicators) -- and create a report for each. Add the report to your dashboard. This saves the setup and structure of your report "query" so that you can access the data from one overview screen whenever you need to produce a report.

34. Run regular seo checks

Make sure that your website is performing at its best by running regular seo checks using Google Webmaster Tools. To perform just such a check, follow the steps as outlined in Search Engine Land's "[9 step seo check-up using Google Webmaster tools](#)".

Bottom Line:

Search engine optimization is the one thing that most producers neglect or ignore so even if you just do the basics you're still ahead. The best and quickest way to improve your search engine rank is to install a blog and produce a regular schedule of optimized content. Tap into the power of keywords by incorporating them into your social media, video marketing and publicity strategies. Seo is a process. Check Google Analytics regularly and make changes to your keyword strategy as you go. Consider using a tool like SeoMoz to help manage and refine your organic search marketing.

Content marketing

Joe Pulizzi, the co-author of the book “Get Content. Get Customers”, says that content marketing is “the art of communicating without selling”.

Having editorial content (in addition to your awesome web series content) is imperative if you plan on **keeping your audience interested** in your project over the long term.

Content “pulls” people to your website. It delivers **direct traffic** (the most valuable kind) when it is shared, included in a tweet, posted to a bookmarking site, or embedded in a blog post.

To build a following for your web series, you’ll need to develop editorial content that complements your **themes and topics**, and appeals to your target audience.

Content can be text or image-based, audio, video or transmedia. For a comprehensive list of content types, please refer to Appendix A at the end of this guide.

35. Choose your niche

By the time you've reach this stage, you will have done a lot of research and have a very clear picture of who your target audience is and what topics they are interested in. Hopefully, your interests and passions match those of your target audience as it will be much easier for you to find a true connection with them, and less of a chore to do the research.

Your organic keyword research (#24) will have provided insights into words and phrases that your audience is using to search online. At this point, you may want to use [Google Insights](#) to find out just how popular your topic is and where (geographically) there may be pockets of intense interest. Just remember, you don't need a topic that everyone is searching, just one that resonates with your audience.

When developing your editorial strategy, look for any content "gaps" that you can fill. Is there a way that you can become the "only"? Heed the advise of blogger Darren Rowse (ProBlogger) and aim to become a big fish in a small content pond rather than a small fish in a big content pond.

Invest time in research. Use [AllTop.com](#) to find heavily trafficked blogs covering your subject area. Run a topic search using [Addict-o-matic](#) to find text, images, and video content and to see what is being said (right now) on Twitter. See what's making news in [Google News](#), [Topix](#), [Yahoo! News](#) and [Blog Pulse](#) (among others). Bookmark your research.

Use Google Alerts, [Fastflip](#) and other tools to search for less heavily trafficked or local websites and weblogs. Set-up an account with Twitter and search for keywords and phrases related to your subject. Save these searches, watching for trending topics. Do this online but also keep an eye on TV, newspapers and magazines for hot trends that you can ride.

36. Develop an editorial plan

With your research completed, follow these steps to develop an editorial plan:

- **Take a content inventory.** Make a list of all the content you have on hand. Once you're finished doing this, you'll have a clear idea of the strengths and weaknesses in your current content assets and where you may have gaps: areas where you lack content.

- **Think about what you'd like to create.** Write down all your content ideas being as specific or generic as you like. Think about what you can have fun with as well as what you can use to inform, educate or entertain.
- **Aim to have a good mix of content.** What types of content will you offer? Short articles? Long articles? Profiles? Editorial pieces? New items? Audio podcasts, etc.? Remember that you don't have to create every piece of content yourself. Use a mix of original and curated content. Pull blog content from videos someone else has made, a Flickr feed of photos, etc. Use news stories to populate your Facebook feed, Twitter feed or as inspiration for a blog post.
- **Get your community to contribute.** Solicit posts from your cast and crew, guest bloggers, partners, etc. Find out if there are opportunities to incorporate user-generated content into your editorial plan. Set the tone for community contributions based on your interests and the characteristics of your project.
- **Re-purpose your content.** Review your editorial plan with an eye to re-purposing your content in multiple ways on multiple platforms and in multiple channels. For example, a photo can be posted to Flickr, sent to Twitter, pulled into the sidebar of your website, shared on Facebook, included with an audio podcast, added to an e-book, etc.

37. Link your editorial plan to outcomes

Make each piece of your editorial plan count by tying it to specific outcomes. Jay Baer explains how to do this on his weblog "Convince & Convert". He also provides a worksheet to guide you through the steps. You can download the doc [here](#) or copy and paste the following outline into a Word or Excel document and then "fill in the blanks" based on your plan:

- Format of content
- Description of content
- Budget (Time, Energy and Money)
- Who will be interested in this content?
- What questions does this content answer for them?
- What keywords will be used to find it?
- What do you want the audience to do after consuming it (call-to-action)?
- Three success metrics.

38. Develop an editorial calendar

An editorial calendar is a way to organize your ideas and develop a publishing schedule. Have an editorial calendar planned out, with responsibilities and deadlines, for the first six weeks of your project and refresh it at the beginning of every month.

The Junta 42 blog has several good articles on content publishing, including this one on how to develop an [editorial calendar](#) and this one, which talks about how to set-up a [long-term publishing schedule](#). Note: Both are business-focused but can be modified to non-business goals.

39. Hire a PMD

At this point, you might want to take stock of your human resources and hire a PMD or Producer of Marketing and Distribution to take over responsibilities for your marketing strategy and execution. Although this role is relatively new, it does fill an important skills gap and is quite popular within the independent film industry.

Typically, the PMD is responsible for developing the marketing strategy and producing content assets, including photography, behind-the-scenes footage and interviews. The PDM develops and manages all social media channels -- your Facebook Fan page, Flickr page, Twitter streams, and YouTube channel -- and is responsible for influencer outreach and audience development. The role may also handle seo, publicity, live events, cross-promotions and partnerships. And, be your de-facto community manager.

40. Build your original content assets

Assign someone from the crew or hire a PMD to build your original content assets. The best time to do this is during production when there is lots of activity on set and the cast and crew are accessible. Return to your editorial plan and take stock of what assets you want to produce. At minimum, you'll want to take photos, produce video clips, and do talent interviews.

41. Execute on your content strategy

Don't wait for the start of production -- or worse -- for your launch before planning and executing on your content strategy. You can start blogging or tweeting almost as soon as your production has the green light and you've identified your content niche. Be consistent. It's better to do a small "something" everyday then to have a flurry of content followed by big gaps in your editorial calendar.

42. Start blogging

Blogging is probably the most over examined aspect of social media (next to Twitter) so we won't go into great detail here. The basics: blogging helps in two ways; first by driving traffic to your site and second by helping your seo.

Blog to have a conversation with your audience. In addition to writing and posting your own material, ask for input and comments. Mix things up by offering insights into your process, interviews with your collaborators, and commentary on the web series industry in general. Once production and post-production starts, work your on-set stories and post-production progress into your editorial plan.

For expert advice on blogs and blogging, subscribe to [Prologger](#) (Darren Rowse), [Copylogger](#) (Brian Clark) or [Chris Brogan](#). If you're new to blogging, you may want to first read Prologger's guide to [blogging for beginners](#). For those of you with prior experience, Darren Rowse (Prologger) has an excellent 31 day series of posts, featuring daily tasks to improve your blogging skills.

Bottom Line:

Know your target audience. Dive deep into your subject area. Know who your competition is and look for content "gaps" that you can fill. Tie your editorial plan to specific outcomes and make sure that each and every piece of content is optimized for search and includes a call-to-action. Hire a PMD to take over responsibility for producing your editorial assets and for developing and executing your content strategy. At minimum, make sure that you take photos, produce video clips, and do talent interviews. Include a blog in your editorial plan to help drive traffic and improve your chances of being found in the search engines.

Social media marketing

Social media is the **brand new tool** in the digital marketing toolkit. Social media marketing builds awareness, promotes your work, helps with seo, and allows you to communicate directly with your fans (among other things).

Social media “pulls” people to your website, driving a lot of traffic through content links. Initially, this type of traffic is of lesser value -- people see an interesting item and click through to “check it out” but don’t stay very long. But, as you **build relationships** this traffic can become much more valuable as one-time visitors return and are converted to fans.

Social media strategies take many **months to implement** and are part of an ongoing effort that includes seo, search, community development, etc. Social media is not a silver bullet -- and does not provide instant results. It requires consistency and perseverance as well as an eye for opportunity.

There are hundreds if not thousands of social networks. Find which networks your audience prefers, participate in the networks they participate in, and use those networks to grow your audience base.

43. Claim your social network accounts

Avoid having your brand hijacked by setting-up accounts with important social networks. Do the majors -- Facebook, Flickr, Twitter and YouTube -- right away. You may also want to set-up accounts with niche social networks that are important to your audience. Use a free service like [Know Em](#) or [Check Usernames](#) to check on the availability of your username across hundreds of social media networks.

Create accounts with [video sharing sites](#) or use [Tubemogul](#), a video distribution service that allows you to maintain profiles on multiple video sharing sites. Make sure your username is consistent across all your channels (for example, facebook.com/yourbrandname or twitter.com/yourbrandname).

44. Set-up a Twitter account

You can start “tweeting” as soon as your project has the green light. Just make sure that you have a landing page in place so that any traffic you drive there can sign-up to your email newsletter. Customize your basic Twitter account by doing the following:

- **Design a branded background.** This article by Smashing Magazine includes everything you need to know about how to design a [stunning Twitter background](#). Note: For screen resolutions of 1280 pixels, you are limited to roughly 108 pixels for the core part of your background design and messaging.
- **Set-up your profile.** Add a short description of your web series (your tagline) in the bio section. Include one or more keywords in your tagline as this will help people to find you via Twitter search.
- **Change your avatar.** Replace the default Twitter “egg” with a personal photo, image or logo ASAP. Nobody trusts accounts with a generic avatar. Having a distinctive image is also important as many people use the avatar to quickly scan their stream for their favorite Twitter feeds.
- **Add your URL.** Add your URL and make it active (http://...) so that people can link through to your website. Make sure that you have a landing page in place that is collecting email addresses.

You may want to have multiple Twitter accounts -- one for yourself and one for your project (not to mention character accounts if this is part of your creative strategy). Just make sure that you have the human capacity to manage more than one account and follow the steps above to customize.

If you have to choose between a personal and project account, you may want to choose personal: people-oriented Twitter accounts tend to do better overall than “brand” accounts. If you’re sharing a project account with another person and have a personal account, say so in the bio. You may also want to add your initials to tweets so that followers can identify who is doing the tweeting.

Twitter is one of those things that you only master by doing. If, however you do want acquire some [quick tips on Twitter success](#) before starting, read this post from Social Media Explorer.

45. Define your Twitter style

There are three main styles of Twitter communication. Decide which style feels most natural to you and then jump into the stream:

- **Creators.** People who share content they’ve written or produced. Ideally, this is you! Your Web series gives you a great starting point to engage in conversation, or at the very least, is something to talk about and share with others.
- **Curators.** People who subscribe to lots of relevant content and then share it with others. Share content that resonates with your audience. A good strategy is to send your followers to content that you’ve curated on other social media channels.
- **Chatterboxes.** These are people who engage in conversation for the majority of their stream. You’ll want to include some “chat” in your stream so that your followers know you’re human. You can also use this style to develop creative story lines and backstories, or for character accounts.

Twitter tip: Remember when tweeting to leave about 20 characters at the end of your tweets to let people re-tweet without having to edit your message.

46. Build your Twitter following

There are several ways to build a following on Twitter. The best strategy is to focus on sharing quality content that will grow your following organically. Focus on QUALITY of followers not QUANTITY of followers. To build your Twitter following:

- **Follow other people.** Target people who are part of the niche you are interested in, who tweet about your topic, who offer good information, or who are members of your industry: festivals, distributors, other producers, journalists, etc. Most people within your community will follow you back but don't expect a high rate of return from well-known influencers or celebrities.
- **Check out who your followers are following.** They are likely interested in similar topics, and are a natural extension to your existing network. This can be a very time consuming process so do it in small chunks or use Twitter's built in "Who to follow" tool.
- **Participate in tweet chats.** Target your core audience. This is an excellent way to gain a lot of high-quality followers very fast. For the definitive [Twitter Chat schedule](#) browse this Google doc.
- **Use Twitter search.** Find keywords or phrases that relate to the audience you are trying to reach using Twitter search. Save your search query so that you can browse through the Twitter stream and follow people who are "tweeting" about your topic.
- **Browse directories and lists.** Find Twitter users by industry or interest using directories such as [Mr. Tweet](#), [Twellow](#) and [twibs](#). You can also browse through Twitter lists to find people or use a third-party tool such as [Listorious](#).
- **Social influence tools.** A raft of social influence tools have hit the market claiming to measure online influence. Some of the better known tools, include [Klout](#), [PeerIndex](#), [TwitterGrader](#) and [Twitalyzer](#). These tools can help you identify influencers but some of the [rankings are a bit iffy](#) so use common sense when going for the follow. The [Klout blog](#) posts lists of influencers by niche (for example, "chefs with klout", "moms with klout", etc.) which may be helpful to your research.

47. Manage your Twitter following

Organize your followers into lists. By doing this, you can easily sort your Twitter stream and zero-in on your most important followers. Read this Mashable post on [how to use Twitter lists](#) or visit the [Twitter help center](#).

Don't automatically follow everyone. If you do, you'll become a target for spammers and you'll get a lot of unfocused followers. Reject people or don't follow back people who are not part of your niche or your industry. Un-follow those people who are not following you and get rid of inactive accounts by using a tool like [Friend or Follow](#) or [ReFollow](#). Tools like [Nearby tweets](#) will allow you to geo-target followers for local messaging.

48. Manage, schedule and track your tweets

There are numerous free and paid tools that can help you manage your Twitter account, including [CoTweet](#), [Hootsuite](#) and [Tweetdeck](#) (to name just a few). Remember that Twitter is a "social" tool and is best used to build and nurture relationships. Don't treat it as a broadcast channel. In other words, don't automate your account and try and be present daily -- even if it's only for a short time.

You may want to look into mobile versions of the more popular Twitter tools. Many people seem to find it easier to tweet "on the go" from their smart phone or tablet than from their desktop.

When to tweet is sometimes an issue so we'll briefly touch on it here. Basically, you want to schedule your tweets for when your audience is most active online. As a general rule of thumb, if you're trying to reach as wide an audience as possible, start your tweets at 9 am PST so that you hit the start of the work day on the west coast; lunchtime on the east coast; and the end of the work day in Europe.

Twitter tip: According to blogger, Dan Zarella, Saturdays and Sundays are amongst the highest days for Twitter click-through rates. For more tips on [when](#) (weekends and afternoons) and [how often](#) to tweet follow his blog or read [13 Takeaways from The Science of Timing Webinar](#).

49. Manage your Twitter conversations

Stay on top of relevant conversations by setting-up a keyword search in your favorite Twitter client. Go back to your organic keywords list and pick a few keywords or phrases to track (plus any brand and genre-related terms that you think might be useful). Do a search for the term(s) and save the results. Refer back to the saved search and watch as conversations take place in real-time. Re-tweet items of interest, or jump in and engage with people.

Twitter tip: You may want to investigate the creative possibilities of live streaming apps such as [Twitcam](#) or video micro-blogs, such as [BubbleTweet](#), [robo.to](#) and [TwitVid](#).

50. Create a Facebook fan page

Create a Facebook fan page for your work. A fan page lets you grow as big as you want, send updates to an unlimited number of people, and keeps the focus on your web series.

Facebook is also a great place to share video. The social network is now the third largest video site after Google/YouTube and Yahoo! Recent data from Dan Zarella also shows that [Facebook is better for video marketing](#) than Twitter.

Facebook is an amazing tool for audience development. Just keep in mind that it is not that great at driving website traffic or building important relationships with influencers or within communities. Use Facebook to build awareness for your work.

There are two ways to create fan page. If you have a personal account login, find the [create a page](#) link and then select your type of fan page (Entertainment) and category (TV show). Since the rollout of Facebook's "new" page design, you are now able to modify your category in "Basic Information". You can also create a page without having a personal account from the [Facebook homepage](#), and you now have the option to "login as" your page.

The new page layout is all about photos. Make sure that you have a profile picture that "pops" by taking advantage of the maximum image dimensions: 180 x 540 pixels. You may want to add your website address to the photo or take advantage of the layout of the photo gallery to further promote your website or brand. Mashable has three photo galleries of creative layouts, which you can see [here](#), [here](#) and [here](#).

Fill out your "Basic Information" completely. Add keyword-rich text into your "Description" and "Plot Outline". Add links to your website and other social media channels. Ensure that the links to your "Photos" and "Video" are active in the sidebar. Unfortunately, the new page layout is not as good as old design for marketing. You may have to test different landing pages, wall updates, etc. before you hit on what works best for your project.

Don't forget to add video. There are a number of video apps for Facebook. Please review [this list from ReelSeo](#) for either free, one-time purchase or subscription options.

51. Design a Facebook landing page

Design a custom landing page to encourage more people to “like” you or to highlight your latest video content. Here are some examples of [inspired Facebook landing tabs](#) to get you thinking creatively.

To send non-fans to your Facebook landing page, you’ll need to [create a custom tab in iFrames](#) and then set your options so that non-fans are sent to the new landing page tab rather than to the main wall.

To set your options:

- Click the “Manage Permissions” link in “Edit Page”.
- Then change the “Default Landing Tab” to the custom tab (created above)

If your fan page was created before the change to the new design then you can still use FBML (Facebook Mark-Up Language) to create your landing page. For those of you who are setting-up new pages, follow the instructions contained in this two-part post ([Part 1](#) and [Part 2](#)) on how to build with iFrames.

52. Add an email app

Add an email app so that fans have the option to sign-up for your e-newsletter from your Facebook fan page. MailChimp and Constant Contact have built Facebook apps that add an opt-in subscription form tab to your page. Further promote your newsletter subscription landing page by including a link in your updates.

53. Find your friends

Upload your personal database (family, friends, cast, crew, etc.) to Facebook or to a compatible third-party service (HotMail, Yahoo Mail, Skype, etc.) and invite your closest friends and family to “like” your page. Use these people to build your initial fan base of twenty-five so that you grab a branded URL.

Gradually expand your invitation circle by inviting your cast, crew and industry “friends”. If you are logged into Facebook as a person (rather than a page), you’ll have to “friend” people first before inviting them to your page. Don’t send an invite “blast”. Spread out your invitations over several days so that you have a steady stream of activity. You don’t want to get 50 “likes” one day and then nothing.

54. Set-up a branded URL

To claim your page and acquired a branded URL (sometime called a vanity URL), you'll need to have an established fan base of at least 25 fans. As soon as you reach this number, go to <http://www.facebook.com/username/> and choose your URL. Keep your page name short and accurate as it can't be changed once it's been created.

55. Grow your fan base

Employ the following tactics to grow your Facebook fan base:

- **Target the right demographics.** Facebook skews female and younger so if your target audience is male and older, this may not be the best place to expend a lot of time or energy. Do your online research and know how best to tap into Facebook's huge user base.
- **Get influencers working for you.** Hire or offer an incentive to influencers who are also members of your core audience. Have them invite their friends and reward them with merchandise, site visits, walk-on parts or anything of value. If you can get 20 people to invite 100 or 200 people each, you can ramp-up your numbers rather quickly.
- **Promote your Facebook page.** Set-up a specific marketing campaign to promote your Facebook page. Promote via online communities, forums, websites, email lists...anywhere you have a presence. Cross-promote your page via other social media channels such as Twitter.
- **Offer exclusive content.** Leverage your fan base by offering exclusive content. Offer to unlock a special "prize" if the page hits a certain number of fans.
- **Pay for fans.** You may have to buy your way in either through hiring influencers or by running Facebook ads. More on this in the Advertising section.

56. Leverage your content to get fans

Facebook (like Google) “shapes” what updates people see in their newsfeed. The more fans engage with your updates (Like/Comment/Share), the more likely it will be that that content ends up in their “Top News”. Therefore you need to remind fans on a regular basis to Like/Comment/Share your content.

Facebook values shared videos, photos, links and status updates (in that order) so you want to ensure that you are uploading and sharing video and photo content on a regular basis and not just posting your latest idea. To learn more about how to [leverage Facebook’s EdgeRank algorithm](#), read this article by Scott Meldrum.

There are a large number of third-party apps that can help you add content to your Facebook page. Test them out to see which works best for your project. Set-up your wall to display updates by page admins and by fans. And, encourage your fans to add videos, photos and links.

Try and update your page at least three to four times a week. Consider posting updates on the weekend when Facebook traffic is often at its highest. For further insight into when and what to post, see this [infograph](#) by Dan Zarella.

57. Respond to fans

Providing quality content is just one aspect of building a good Facebook fan page. Another critical aspect is engagement. By actively responding to your fans' comments, questions, suggestions, ideas, etc., you show that you are someone who cares, listens and takes action to engage your community. The most successful Facebook pages are ones where the admins and the fans are actively engaged in the art of communication.

Bottom Line:

Heed Aesop’s advise to develop strong social media chops. What this translates into is: “the early bird catches the worm” ... start early in your project to build your social media presence ... and “slow and steady wins the race” ... be consistent; doing “something” small every day is far better than doing a lot of something one day and then nothing the next.

YouTube

If you're looking for any kind of substantial audience for your web series then you must have a YouTube channel.

The YouTube audience is ginormous, exceeding **2 billion views a day**. That's nearly double the prime-time audience of all three major U.S. broadcast networks combined.

The YouTube user base has a broad age range, from 18 year-old skateboarders to cat-loving grandparents, and is evenly divided between women and men. And these users come from all over the world.

The average person spends **15 minutes a day** on YouTube. Fifty-one percent of YouTube users visit the site weekly (or more frequently) and fifty-two percent of 18 to 34-year-old visitors share videos with their friends and colleagues.*

In addition to being the **largest video platform** on the web, YouTube is also the second largest search engine (after Google) and an important social media network.

*[Website Monitoring Blog: YouTube Facts & Figures](#)

58. Use YouTube to help get found

Video earns a lot of search engine “juice”. In fact, Forrester Research found that videos were fifty-three times more likely than traditional web pages to receive an organic first-page ranking in Google. So, from a practical seo perspective, it’s important that you upload your video to YouTube.

YouTube, in addition to being a video platform, is a very popular search engine in its own right. For many demographics, YouTube is their search engine of choice. At the risk of sounding repetitive, it’s important to have a presence here.

59. Use YouTube Suggest to find organic keywords

YouTube Suggest is an enhanced search function (not unlike Google Suggest), which doubles as an excellent video marketing keyword suggestion tool. The feature uses predictive text to display popular query suggestions (in order of search volume) in the YouTube search box.

With YouTube Suggest, you can gain insight into how users are searching YouTube. Using this knowledge, you can extrapolate keywords and phrases to use in your video titles, descriptions and tags. Optimizing your video for search will increase the chances of it being found by your target audience. As with traditional seo, you’re much more likely to see results if you target “long tail” search terms.

60. Customize your YouTube Channel

To set-up a YouTube channel, you will need to have a Google account. Log in then follow these steps to customize your channel:

- **My Channel.** Click on the four main tabs in the “My Channel” section. Under “Settings” add the title of your channel and choose “Director Account” as your “Channel Type”. Add your most important tags (your keywords) under “Channel Tags”. In “Themes and Colors” chose a theme that matches your brand or create a new theme. Upload a background image that is 2000 x 2200 pixels. YouTube will center your background image behind your channel content so design your background image so that your logo and messaging appears just to the left and right of the 960 pixel center column. Add the modules that you want to appear in your layout. Under “Videos and Playlists” make sure to check off “Playlists” (more on that later) and choose a featured video... your trailer, for example.

- **Account Settings.** Under “Account Settings” add a picture, your website address and a keyword-rich description. Add your URL at the start of the description. Don’t forget to include the “http://...” so that the link is active. Under “Interests” add a list of 10 to 20 keywords. Under “Favorite Movies & Shows” etc. add titles of movies, shows, music and books that share similar keywords or similar genres to your project.
- **Activity Sharing.** Connect your YouTube account to Facebook, Twitter and other important social media channels as desired.
- **Manage Account.** If you don’t want to have ads displayed with your uploaded videos, make sure to check off “Do not allow advertisements”.

YouTube tip: If you plan to produce more than one web series, you may want to have a YouTube channel for your production company rather than for your show. Upload all your video to this channel and then organize each show into a playlist. This is a good strategy when you have lots of new content that would benefit from the proximity of older, heavily trafficked video.

61. Optimize your YouTube channel for search

YouTube search works on a slightly different algorithm than the major search engines. Results (and where you appear on the search results page) are based on a combination of keywords, back links, channel views, video views, ratings, comments, etc.

To optimize your channel and assure a good ranking in the results page, you’ll need to:

- **Pick a descriptive title.** Include descriptive keywords in your title.
- **Add relevant tags.** Use YouTube Suggest to find and add relevant tags.
- **Build external links.** YouTube infers how “relevant” a resource your channel is by looking at the number of inbound links there are.
- **Build internal links.** This also helps with relevancy. There are two ways to do this: the first is by posting a video response to a popular video. The second is to get your video added to a popular playlist or to include your video in one of your own playlists.
- **Encourage ratings.** Add an annotation near the end of your video reminding views to rate your video.
- **Encourage comments.** Comments add indexed content to your page as well as a link to your video, which appears on your commenter’s page.

62. Time your video uploads

YouTube's clock starts ticking from the moment you upload your video. The "first day" on YouTube starts at midnight California time, and ends 24 hours later. Therefore, a video's first day isn't the 24 hour period after it is made public, or even uploaded. If you upload at 12:01 AM YouTube time, you have the full 24 hours to build your stats. This is important if you are trying to maximize your number of daily views to enhance the viral character of your video.

63. Optimize your video for search

To optimize your video and increase your chances of it turning-up near the top of a YouTube search, you'll need to:

- **Write a descriptive title.** Ensure that the title includes your most important keyword or keyword phrase. Your video title can be up to 100 characters long, including spaces (15 words). As in website seo, keywords that are close to the front of the title carry more weight. If you want to include the name of your series, put it at the end of the title (that's unless your brand name includes a keyword).
- **Write a good description.** The description should be keyword-rich and as detailed as possible. Add your URL at the start of your description, followed by a hard return. This way people will be able to see the link to your website even if the description is mostly hidden. Don't forget to include the "http://..." so that the link is live. Your description can be up to 5,000 characters long, including spaces (800 words). Your description is the next-best indicator of the video's content, right behind the title.
- **Add keyword-rich tags.** Tags should be as detailed as possible and include keywords from your title and description. Tags should relate to the content of your video. Tags can include: keywords, brand names, genres, topics, etc. You only have 120 characters so don't use natural language phrases and waste tag space on words like "and" or "to".

64. Add a call-to-action

Take advantage of YouTube's caption and annotation features to add a call-to-action near the end of your video. With captions and annotations you can add notes, subtitles, descriptions, and links directly over the top of the video. You might want to use annotations to ask viewers to rate your current episode or watch the next. Use these features judiciously so that you don't interrupt or spoil the user's viewing experience.

65. Add your video to a playlist

Playlists are a fantastic way to guide new viewers through your content the way you prefer them to experience it. A well organized playlist can also help viewers discover older videos they might have missed or highlight your greatest hits. Playlists also help your YouTube rank as they are indexed separately from individual videos. This means you double your chances of a video being found through search if you have it in a playlist. Plus, as we saw above, adding a video to a playlist helps build internal links, which Google seems to like.

Use Playlists to promote your channel. Negotiate internal links with other YouTube Producers in the spirit of “Add me to yours and I’ll add you to mine. You can also add curated video to your playlist to make your channel more “sticky”. More on this at [The Next Web](#).

66. Upload and promote

In order to maximize your daily views, you’ll need to promote your video after it has been uploaded (and within the first 24 hours). Notify your fans that you’ve uploaded a new video via Twitter, Facebook, and other social media channels; email bloggers (and traditional media outlets) that cover your genre or topic. See Appendix B for 38 more ways to promote your YouTube channel.

67. Get numbers. Get featured.

The “On the Rise” program lets users vote on which videos are featured on the YouTube home page. If your channel is rapidly growing its subscriber base but hasn’t quite reached 100,000 views, it’s a great candidate to receive this kind of broader recognition. If your channel has been around for a while and consistently puts out content that reaches people, it has a chance of being featured on YouTube’s “Featured Channels” section.

68. Embed the YouTube player

If you’re looking to build as large a following as possible, we recommend using YouTube as the de facto player on your website. You can also post new videos from your YouTube channel or playlist to your Facebook fan page automatically using a Facebook app like [Cueler](#). In addition to YouTube, there are other high-quality video platforms with competitive features or specialized markets. Use [alternative players](#) (such as Vimeo or Blip.tv) if there is a distinct advantage to your project from networking or promotional activities.

69. Learn from YouTube Insights

YouTube's analytics feature is quite robust and provides information that can help you with future marketing activities. View your referral headers to find out which websites are sending you the most views and then tailor your marketing efforts accordingly. For example, if Facebook is your largest referrer, make it your first and highest priority. Don't assume that the top referrer on your most recent video is the top referrer for all your other clips. Top referrers are very likely to change from video to video. You'll need to review insights for each and every video.

70. Apply to become a YouTube partner

When you reach a certain amount of traffic (usually thousands of views), you can apply to become a [YouTube partner](#). Partners get a share of revenue from ads that run on their videos, and more control of their channel's design. In order to qualify as a YouTube partner, your videos need to attract a certain number of views, and you'll need to post regularly. Unfortunately, the exact number of views you need and the post frequency requirements aren't clearly defined by YouTube. You can [learn more about YouTube Partner qualifications](#) on the YouTube website.

Bottom Line:

YouTube is the largest video platform on the Internet. If your goal is to build a large following for your web series then this is the place to be. Make sure your video has a fighting chance by optimizing it for YouTube search. Learn as much as you can about video marketing and apply your newfound skills to further improve the chances of your video being found. Share your video content and encourage others to share it too. Host your episodes on YouTube and share via your website and social media channels to capture views and build audience numbers.

Publicity and promotions

Creating “buzz” is important for building **awareness and anticipation** for your work. Buzz can be defined as anything which makes people talk about your project. This is sometimes referred to as free publicity.

Publicity is dependent on getting editorial coverage in traditional media outlets (newspapers, magazines, radio, tv) as well as non-traditional media outlets (weblogs, websites). To do this, you’ll have to search out and find “influencers” who will help support and champion your project.

The skills that you brought to content, search and social also apply here -- consistency, persistence and an **eye for opportunity**.

71. Find online influencers

Start early in the project to find and connect with influential people who love your work. Influencers are the people your audience listens to. They may include opinion leaders (political, government, business leaders), experts (academics, analysts, activists), columnists (journalists, commentators, critics, bloggers), trendsetters and creators (celebrities, actors, artists, musicians) and connectors (online networkers, business networks, leaders of community groups, etc.).

Start your outreach with top-tier influencers as they are easiest to find. Keep in mind, however, that they will also be the hardest to reach and engage. AllTop.com, Guy Kawasaki's news aggregation site, can help you find influential bloggers covering your subject area. Go to the sites listed in AllTop and take note of the editorial contact. See who is listed on their blog roll. Click through to see their contacts, expand your list and repeat.

You'll want to identify at least twice as many influencers (if not three times) as you are actually planning to send something to. You'll end up removing some for various reasons. Whatever you do, don't throw away any of the research you do because you never know when you'll need it for future projects.

Use influencers to build awareness for your web series via editorial coverage and back links. Before heading in with a pitch, build a relationship with the person. When you do "pitch" your story, make sure that it is newsworthy. You may want to solicit reviews from influencers. Before you do, make sure that the "fit" is right by following the individual's blog.

72. Find influencers with Google

Take one or more of your keywords and search "inward" from the most general to the most specific terms. Look for influencers who may have written on your topic in the past. Conduct a secondary search of your competitors (this could be other Web series, TV shows, films, etc.) by coupling *keyword + company name* or *keyword + project name*.

Keep in mind that the search results you see are not universal. They are determined by your geographic location. So, if you're searching from a Canadian IP address you will see Canadian results first. To find results for geographic areas other than Canada use Google Advanced search.

73. Find influencers with Twitter

Twitter is the place to build longterm relationships with influential people. There are a number of third-party applications that can help you to find influencers on Twitter. Consider adding [FollowerWonk](#) to your list of tools. Refer to the “[Ultimate How-To: Find, Network With & Influence People via Social Media Guide](#)” for more tools and techniques for finding influencers on Twitter.

74. Follow influencers

Don't pitch bloggers (or other influencers) without first following their blog or Twitter feed. Get to know what topics they cover. Some influential bloggers, like [Liz Shannon Miller](#) of GigaOM, are very specific about how they want to be pitched. If you have any doubts about how to approach a blogger, ask first. It's ALWAYS a good idea to introduce yourself and your project before heading in for the hard sell. And keep in mind when you do “pitch” your story to always think of it from the perspective of the writer and what he/she will get from covering your story.

75. Craft an email “pitch”

Before sending an email to an influencer, think about the intent of the message and “what's in it” for them. Your message should be short and include a strong hook (or angle) and some sort of “ask”. Make sure that you include a link to your online press room so that the writer can publish an item without having to do further follow-up with you.

Try to be enthusiastic and let your personality shine through in your correspondence. For tips on how to reach out to webmasters and other online influencers, watch this excellent [video by Tom Critchlow](#), head of search marketing, at Distilled.

76. Build a press room

Build a press room on your website so that journalists and bloggers can easily find your marketing materials. The press room should include the following:

- **Press kit.** Typically a downloadable PDF that includes your series' tag line, synopsis (short < 100 words and long < 500 words); cast & crew credits; bios; producer/director statement(s); production information; and a feature story. Re-post this information to your “About” section so it can be easily copied and pasted into a blog post or article.

- **Press releases.** Post HTML versions of your press release in date order (most recent first). Don't post press releases as PDF files. Make it easy for journalists to copy and paste your text. Optimize your press releases for search to get an extra boost.
- **Images.** Include a selection of high res (for print) and low-res images (for Web) as well as key art, portraits or behind-the-scenes shots.
- **Trailer.** Offer a downloadable version of your trailer that can be used as "B-roll" for TV news items or interviews. Make sure that your trailer is also available as an embedded version on YouTube or other popular video platforms.
- **Contact info.** Include full contact information (email, phone and skype) for you, your spokesperson or PR representative.

77. Write a press release

The press release is almost -- but not quite dead. Generic press releases are ok for "the wire" but don't send them to your A-list bloggers or A-list publications. If your goal is a feature story, send a personal letter that tells the writer or editor why you think your story merits coverage and how it fits into their audience interests.

Have your generic press release written and ready to send as back-up or to your B-list of bloggers and publications. To improve "open" rates follow these guidelines:

- **Pithy not pitchy.** Stick to the point and don't try to "stuff" your release with unnecessary information. Work your key points into your headline and sub-head and repeat the points in your opening paragraph. Most journalists don't read past the headlines so don't bury your story in a secondary paragraph.
- **Scannable not readable.** People today have short attention spans. They scan headlines and skim through paragraphs, clicking on hyperlinks as they go. Keep your press release short and to the point (one written page or less). Replace paragraphs and pages with bullet points and lists of resources or approved quotes. Banish the hyperbolic boilerplate and instead link out to additional information about your company and your partners.

78. Send your press release

The best distribution method for your press release is via your own lists. Upload your list of B-list bloggers and websites to a hosted email service such as MailChimp or Constant Contact. This way you can track who has opened your press release.

Send your press release via a wire service. Typically you won't get a lot of pick-up but sometime it can help get you into larger news aggregators such as Google News. To save money, only write to the minimum number of words demanded by the wire service, and include a link to a full version of your press release on your website.

You can also send your press release via free and paid online press release distribution services such as PRWeb. Just don't expect much pick-up from legit media or quality blogs. The only plus of sending a press release via a distribution service is that it provides another inbound link to your website.

Lastly don't forget to post a copy of the press release on your website and share via your social media channels.

79. Hire a publicist

Hire a publicist to give your web series an extra promotional push close to the launch. Be strategic when hiring. If you've already developed relationships with A-list bloggers (which you should have) and have good contacts with the trades then you don't need a publicist to get you coverage here. Instead look for a publicist that has good contacts in your subject area and have them focus their efforts on these outlets. The best strategy is to get your story off the entertainment pages and into the sections that your core audience reads.

80. Include industry-specific blogs

Make sure that you get to know the bloggers and journalists covering your industry, including the people at [Indie Intertube](#), [Newteevee](#), [Slebisodes](#), [Tubefilter](#) and [WebSeriesToday](#) (to name just a few). A news item or review on an industry blog can sometimes result in pick-up from more mainstream media.

81. Screen your series at festivals

Festivals are a great way to create "buzz" for your web series. Speciality festivals include [LA WebFest](#) and the [New Media Film Festival](#) but don't forget to look for traditional film festivals with "new media" categories. For a [list of festivals](#) that accept web series, visit Slebisodes.

82. Submit your series to awards programs

Get recognized for your extraordinary achievement and artistic excellence. Submit your web series to prestigious awards programs such as [The Shorty Awards](#), [The Streamy Awards](#) or [The Webby Awards](#). Publicize any wins to industry and local media. Ride trending news by having a generic press release written and ready to go.

83. Submit your content to “cool” websites

If you have unique or unusual content (or a really good story to tell), consider submitting to high traffic “cool” trending sites like [BoingBoing](#), [Laughing Squid](#), [Neatorama](#), [Notcot](#), [Waxy.org](#), and [We Make Money Not Art](#).

84. Submit your content to social news sites

Submit your content to social news sites such as Digg, Mixx, Reddit and Sphinn to give your traffic a bump. Social news sites feature user-submitted stories that are ranked by users based on popularity. Each social news site has a different audience and naturally likes different types of content. For a list of social news sites [categorized by niche](#), visit SquareOak or do a Google search using *social news + keyword* or *social news site + keyword*.

See what types of content are being consistently voted up and try to shape your own ideas to fit the desired format. Although not as influential as they once were, social news sites can be important sources of information for niche audiences as well as yet another back link to your website.

85. Submit your video to StumbleUpon Video

[StumbleUpon Video](#) is a new section of the StumbleUpon website. It aggregates bookmarked videos and shuffles them so users can watch one video after another and vote on them through their StumbleUpon account. Videos are organized into channels and users can see what videos others “stumblers” have voted on and shared. The service supports videos from YouTube, Google Video, MySpace, Metacafe, CollegeHumor, Funny or Die, Vimeo, Dailymotion, Veoh and vbs.tv videos.

To submit your video, you’ll need to sign up for an account and then download and install the browser toolbar. Once you’ve done this, direct your browser to the video you’d like to add to StumbleUpon’s database and click the “I like it” button on the toolbar. If your video hasn’t already been added to the database, a small window will pop up. You’ll be asked to decide whether the content is Safe For Work, and to assign it a topic and tags, and add a review.

“Stumble” your own videos. Ask friends, fans and members of your community to review and “stumble” your content. Make sure you have a StumbleUpon button on your video posts and channels.

86. Submit your video to other video recommendation services

Submit your video to other video recommendation services such as [Popscreen](#), [ShortForm](#) and [Redux](#). Some of these sites are getting significant traffic. Redux, for example, has some 200,000 visitors a month.

87. Submit your content to Clicker

[Submit your show to Clicker](#) “the TV Guide for the Internet age”. The site now has more than 1 million TV episodes, movies and web series in its database and a growing base of 2 million-plus monthly visitors. Make sure that you add the [Clicker check-in](#) or [Clickr widget](#) to your website. Clicker has a growing social network that allows friends to share favourites and see what their friends are watching.

88. Add your video to video search engines and search sites

There are a number of dedicated search tools and websites, which search for videos. Some of them, such as Google Video Search search across multiple sites; others, such as Youtube, will search only for their own uploaded content. Visit ReelSeo for a list of [video search sites](#). Check that your video is indexed and if not submit your site. You may also want to check-out [Topsy](#), a new search engine that surfaces hot videos that are being shared via Twitter.

89. Add your video to video sharing sites

There are more than [300 video sharing sites](#) on the Internet -- from YouTube and Yahoo Video to WTF Humor and Motor Sports Tube. Add your video to the biggest and most important sites and to niche sites relevant to your core audience.

90. Distribute your video with TubeMogul

TubeMogul is a video advertising and analytics platform. It is also a great way to [distribute your site to multiple video and social networking sites](#). TubeMogul users can also leverage [TubeMogul Destinations](#) to easily distribute to custom sites as well as encode and create RSS feeds to syndicate video anywhere. For a list of other [multiple video sharing sites](#), visit ReelSeo.

Community development

Earlier, we looked at audience development and some of the ways to grow a following using content, social media and publicity. In some situations, you may find that your following wants to become **more involved** with your project -- and with each other. Voila! You could have a community on your hands.

According to author and consultant Richard Millington, the easiest way to understand the difference between a following and a community is thus: a following is an audience that interacts with you. **A community is an audience that interacts with each other.**

91. Know your core audience

Know your core audience and where they congregate online. Join their communities and become an active participant. Know who to target as potential community members. In particular, you want to find people who are casual internet users as you'll have a better chance of getting them interested and involved in what you do. Heavy internet users are too busy to get involved, while influencers are too preoccupied with building their own networks to care.

Find potential community members in:

- **Fan communities.** [Fan communities](#) are a good place to start your outreach. Search book, music, film and TV sites that focus on comparable topics or genres.
- **Niche communities.** Use [Big-Boards](#) and [Boardtracker](#) to find popular forums and message boards in your niche. Join and get to know people. For a comprehensive list of community sites, refer to Shara Karasic's [Online Community/Social Media SUPER list](#).
- **Bloggers.** Not influential bloggers, but people with a blog about your topic. Look for people who are so passionate about the topic that they are willing to spend time writing about it.
- **Comments.** People that comment on blogs are great to contact. They're interested, know the tools and have the time to spare. Most news sites allow people to add their comments to news stories. Don't be afraid to approach anyone who expresses a strong opinion about your subject.
- **Book reviewers.** People that review books about your genre are becoming more approachable. Visit Amazon, eBay and other sites to find potential members.
- **Facebook, LinkedIn and other social networks.** Learn how to search for people by interest. (More on this in the Social Media section).
- **Industry blogs and magazines.** Take note of who's writing about your industry. Google their names. Do the same with "Letters to the Editor" and comments contributors.
- **Event.** Attend events or conventions that appeal to your niche audience. Better yet get a booth or host a panel. Collect names. Follow-up.

92. Decide what type of community you want to host

Different types of communities exist both in the face-to-face world and in the virtual world. Broadly speaking there are five different types of communities:

- **Interest.** Communities of people who share the same interest or passion.
- **Action.** Communities of people trying to bring about change.
- **Place.** Communities of people brought together by geography.
- **Practice.** Communities of people in the same profession or who undertake the same activities.
- **Circumstance.** Communities of people brought together by external events/situations.

Communities of interest are the most popular kind of communities to build. But, they are also the most difficult as you are competing for people's mental "down" time against every other media product out there. Broaden your scope by thinking about ways that you can develop a non interest-based community. Documentary film producers, for example, have been very successful at building communities around action; while software developers have build large communities of practice.

93. Hire a community manager

Community managers have specialized knowledge on how to grow and manage a community. Typically, they are experienced communicators who know how to listen. They are responsible for building awareness of your project through non-marketing efforts, finding opportunities to connect in and out of the community. Within the community, they are responsible for connecting people and facilitating conversation. The community manager may or may not be the same person who is responsible for social media outreach.

94. Start your community outreach

Community development should start as soon as you have the green light to move ahead with your project. It takes a long time and consistent effort to find and nurture relationships. Your goal should be to build a small group of true fans in the first year and then grow the numbers from there.

Keep your outreach manageable by aiming to contact five people a day. And, with this approach you won't be able to use the excuse that you don't have time! Ask everyone on your personal list to recommend people they think would like to become involved in your community. Take heed NOT to approach:

- **A-list bloggers.** Too busy to bother with your community. Focus on the people that comment on their blogs instead.
- **Journalists.** Same as above. Some journalists troll large communities looking for story ideas or leads.
- **Cast and crew.** Bring them in only if you have a good fan base.
- **Existing online communities.** Don't mass invite members of pre-existing online communities. Very bad netiquette.

95. Develop authority

Don't just promote your project, join the conversation. Contribute something of value before expecting something in return. Spend at least four months building relationships before you start "selling" your ideas. You'll feel less pressured to make friends quickly and the interactions will be more meaningful. Make sure to stay involved with the communities that you join, even when you don't have project news to share.

96. Build a place for your community

There are a number of free tools available that allow you to build a place for your community. They range from the simple -- mailing lists, forums and Facebook groups -- to the more complex, such as Ning sites and branded social networks. Start small. Start simple. Only when you have a growing community should you think about integrating it into your website.

- **Facebook Groups.** The new Facebook groups are designated spaces where small groups of friends can share information. By default they are closed communities. Make sure you unlock this feature before starting your outreach. Members can participate in back-and-forth IM conversations via group chat. It is all explained [here](#). As with anything Facebook, approach with caution. Facebook make frequent changes to its interface, often without warning. And, it owns your content.

- **Forums.** You can easily add a forum to your WordPress website via [BBPress](#), [SimplePress](#) or [Vanilla Forums](#). Forums are sometimes called “message boards” as they act much like a message board in an office or school. You post a message on the board and come back an hour, a day, or a week later to see if anyone has responded to it.
- **Ning.com.** Ning.com lets you build your own private-label social network. Each ning has a central group page and provides blogging and social networking tools for each member so they can build their own presence and brand. [Web Series Network](#) is a social network for web series producers (and fans) built on the Ning platform.
- **Website.** If you’re using WordPress as your CMS, there are several free plugins available that let you add a social network to your website. These range from simple plugins that allow you to set-up user profiles to more complex plugins, such as [BuddyPress](#), which are essentially social networks “in a box”. For more robust solutions, you may want to look to a for-pay platform such as [Get Satisfaction](#) .

97. Encourage community participation

Encourage participation in your community by giving everyone the opportunity to be involved. Build strong relationships between members. Introduce yourself to members -- and members to each other. Learn how to facilitate conversation within the community: when to ask leading questions, when to email people privately, when to post publicly, and when to let the conversation flow.

98. Write about others to build relationships

Use the 80/20 approach to building relationships by writing about others 80% of the time and yourself 20% of the time. Each week select one of your most active members and interview them for your blog. Interviews encourage others to participate more so they can be interviewed, too. Interviews also let you target specific people. You can interview people who you want to participate more, or who you want to join your community.

99. Build “buzz” within the community

Get the members of your online community excited and involved by making cool things happen. Offer exclusive discounts. Arrange for community members to send questions to your cast members and get replies. Host exclusive events, such as online chats or tweet-ups.

100. Get your cast and crew involved

Get your cast and crew (or development team) involved in building your online community. Some of the ways you can do this are:

- **Interview them.** People like to feel important. Interview cast and crew for the blog. Then get them to interview other people in the crew or in the community.
- **Introduce them.** Introduce them to the community. Talk about them in the community. They may get curious about what is being said and they might then be inclined to join.
- **Give them a column.** Make a cast or crew member responsible for producing a weekly column. Limit the run of the column to 3 or 4 weeks so that it doesn't seem too onerous a task. Who knows? They may enjoy contributing and ask to continue.

101. Use social networks strategically

The large social networks such as Facebook and Twitter are places where you can develop big followings. However, they are not that effective as community building tools because they are not designed to get your friends and followers talking to each other.

The exception to this is Twitter chat. Twitter chats are great for building community -- and can be exciting experiences, too. For tips and tricks on [how you can start and run your own Twitter chat](#), read this post by Mashable. Host a Twitter chat then archive it on your website to help grow your community.

102. Get people involved with your website

Even if you're not building a dedicated fan community, there are still plenty of ways to get people more involved with your website. If you're on WordPress, there are several free plugins that can help build community functions into your website. For details read Noupe.com's "[Building Community Sites with WordPress: 15 Plugins to Get You Started](#)" or Mashable's [10 WordPress plugins](#) post.

Other tools that encourage people to get more involved with your website include newsgroups (also known as "listserves") and chat. One of the easiest ways to add a chat feature to your website is via a toolbar that sits at the bottom of the browser. Two of the most popular toolbars are the [Meebo Bar](#) and [Wibiya Toolbar](#).

Bottom line

Rome wasn't built in a day. Your community is much the same. It requires time (and a healthy dose of persistence) to build a strong community. Find prospective members among casual internet users who are passionate about your subject. Build your community one person at a time. Give them a place on your website where they can hang out and meet one another. Keep them excited and involved by making cool things happen.

Email marketing

Email marketing may feel a bit old and fussy in this era of real-time interactions. But in reality, it is a fantastic tool for **building your brand and keeping your fans returning** episode after episode.

Today's third-party email providers let you create professional looking e-newsletters for next to nothing and integrate with most social media networks through an open API.

103. Set-up an account with a hosted email provider

If you plan to send bulk email, you'll need to create an account with a hosted email provider. Such services allow you to design, send and track HTML and plain text campaigns. Several of these services also offer additional features such as social share and QR codes. There are many excellent paid third-party services available, including Constant Contact, Campaign Monitor, Mail Chimp and Vertical Response. [Mail Chimp](#) is probably the most user-friendly of all and it's FREE until you reach a certain list size.

104. Build your email list

Add an opt-in subscription email box to your website, weblog, Facebook fan page, etc. Grow your list with social media. Host an online event (chat, panel, etc.) and include an email list subscription as part of the sign-up process. Ask people you meet at events, if you can add them your list.

105. Make your email newsletter unique

Use ready-made templates or design your own branded email newsletter. Offer content that fans can't get anywhere else on the website via your e-newsletter. Use <Merge> tags to personalize and customize your e-newsletter. Add a share functionality, allowing subscribers to share your e-newsletter with their social network. Ask people to forward and share your email to others in the email copy.

106. Set-up a publishing schedule

Set-up a publishing schedule (monthly, bi-monthly or weekly) and stick to it. Send "hot" updates when you have breaking news (for example, major press coverage, an award, etc.). Build a sequence of autoresponders to "build up" to your launch or to keep fans engaged with your show. You can also use this strategy to "ping" your fans on their birthdays or other important days.

107. Offer mobile subscriptions

MailChimp and other services will automatically generate a [mobile-friendly](#) version of your email campaign to send to your mobile subscribers. Remind your fans of this via Facebook and Twitter updates.

108. Have fun with QR codes

Generate a QR code that includes a link to your e-newsletter sign-up page. Add the code to any print design (for example, posters or flyers) and post them around town or where your audience might hang out. QR codes can also be added to T-shirts, mugs or even your business card.

109. Make the most of unsubscribes

When someone unsubscribes from your list, take the time to get feedback from them about why and what could be improved. Who knows, you might win them back or convert them into a super fan.

110. Promote your email subscription

Promote email subscription sign-ups by encouraging followers to sign-up for future email updates. Include a shortened link to your subscription page (using bit.ly or a similar service) so that it can be tracked. Give your Twitter followers a taste of your content. Automatically send your email updates to your Twitter account.

Bottom line:

Email isn't just for mom and dad. It's still one of the best way to reach anyone who has a job (yep, that's when they flip from chat to more conventional forms of communication). Email is a great vehicle for promotions, breaking news and rewarding fans. Use autoresponders to keep fans coming back after the first episode.

Advertising

The rise of social networks has opened-up a number of **low-cost advertising** options. These types of campaigns are affordable yet effective and can include display ads on community websites, Facebook ads, or StumbleUpon discovery ads.

Use advertising to:

- Build awareness among your core audience.
- Prime the social media pump and drive geo-specific niche audiences to become “fans”.
- Drive traffic to your website around important events such as your launch.
- Test the viability of complementary audiences prior to launching a full-blown social media campaign.

111. Advertise with niche sites

Advertise with niche websites or weblogs. These types of partnerships deliver the best results and produce “added value” as you can usually leverage your buy to include editorial coverage, backlinks, and more. The basics of display advertising are frequency and reach. Consider doing a test campaign over a two to four week period and if the results are good commit to a longer run. Negotiate for placement, making sure that your display ad appears “above the fold”. Set-up a goal in Google Analytics to track results.

112. Run a Facebook ad campaign

Drive fan acquisition rates with a Facebook ad campaign. Target your campaign to specific demographics, geo-locations and “interests”. Make sure that your image is eye-catching and not too detailed as the actual size of the ad is quite small. Try asking a provocative or leading question in your copy to tantalize your core audience. Break your overall campaign into smaller “bits” and schedule each campaign over a three to five day period with a \$50 to \$75 ceiling. Repeat using different criteria and track results. Pay for impressions rather than clicks. Facebook ad campaigns are most effective when they are driving people to your fan page (rather than your website).

113. Run a StumbleUpon campaign

[StumbleUpon Paid Discovery](#) can be VERY effective for driving traffic to your website or YouTube video channel. Sites that are part of the Paid Discovery program are integrated into the stream of sites that StumbleUpon users are “stumbling” to based on their interests. Your website is the ad, meaning you control 100% of the engagement. StumbleUpon ads are cumulative, meaning the more users like your site, the more people will see your ad -- driving additional earned media. Expect to spend between \$100 to \$200 for a short three to four day campaign, and upwards of \$1,000 for longer campaigns.

114. Tap into YouTube’s Promoted Videos program

YouTube’s Promoted Videos program is like Adwords for YouTube. Partners can run campaigns for their videos that will give them exposure across YouTube. As with Adwords, you pay only for actual clicks through to your video.

Bottom Line:

Advertising is a great way to prime the social media pump and drive geo-specific niche audiences to your channels. Use cost-effective social media advertising and measure, measure, measure to know its effectiveness.

Schedule

Month #1

1. Select a unique domain name
2. Choose a hosting service
103. Set-up an account with a hosted email provider
3. Set-up a landing page
104. Build your email list
22. Develop a list of organic keywords
35. Choose your niche
36. Develop an editorial plan
37. Link your editorial plan to outcomes
43. Claim your social network account
71. Find online influencers
74. Follow influencers
91. Know your core audience

Month #2

4. Select a CMS platform
5. Choose a theme or template
6. Hire a designer/developer
9. Decide on a navigation style and layout
23. Architect your site for search
11. Add a blog
12. Build your site from a blueprint
13. Burn your RSS feed
14. Add an email subscription box
15. Enable social sharing
18. Add a row of social media icons
21. Make your site mobile friendly
24. Optimize your web pages for search
25. Optimize your blog for search
27. Create an account with Google Webmaster Tools
28. Use an analytics tool
44. Set-up a Twitter account
45. Define your Twitter style

Month #3

38. Develop an editorial calendar
42. Start blogging
29. Establish conversion goals and funnels in Google Analytics
39. Hire a PMD
93. Hire a community manager
40. Build your original content assets
46. Build your Twitter following
94. Start your community outreach

Month #4

- 17. Add your Twitter stream
- 30. Boost your search rank with editorial content
- 31. Boost your search rank with social media
- 32. Annotate important events in Google Analytics
- 33. Add custom reports to your Google Analytics dashboard
- 47. Manage your Twitter following
- 48. Manage, schedule and track your tweets
- 49. Manage your Twitter conversations
- 50. Create a Facebook fan page
- 51. Design a landing page
- 52. Add an email app
- 53. Find your friends
- 54. Set-up a branded URL
- 55. Grow your fan base
- 95. Build a place for your community

Month #5

- 16. Add a Facebook “Like” box
- 56. Leverage your content to get fans
- 57. Respond to fans
- 76. Build a press room
- 75. Craft an email “pitch”
- 97. Encourage community participation
- 99. Build “buzz” within the community
- 100. Get your cast and crew involved
- 106. Write and send your email newsletter
- 112. Run a Facebook ad campaign

Month #6

- 26. Create and install a video sitemap
- 59. Use YouTube Suggest to find organic keywords
- 60. Customize your YouTube channel
- 61. Optimize your YouTube channel for search
- 62. Time your video uploads
- 63. Optimize your video for search
- 65. Add your video to a playlist
- 66. Upload and promote your video
- 77. Write a press release
- 79. Hire a publicist
- 110. Promote your email subscription

Month #7

- 67. Get numbers. Get featured
- 68. Embed the YouTube player
- 78. Send your press release
- 84. Submit your content to social news sites
- 85. Submit your video to StumbleUpon video
- 86. Submit your video to other video recommendation services
- 87. Submit your content to Clicker
- 88. Add your video to video search engines and search sites
- 89. Add your video to video sharing sites
- 90. Distribute your video with TubeMogul
- 111. Advertise with niche sites
- 113. Run a StumbleUpon campaign

Month #8

- 19. Add a toolbar
- 20. Use feedback to discover problems
- 34. Run regular seo checks
- 69. Learn from YouTube Insights
- 70. Apply to become a YouTube partner
- 81. Screen your series at festivals
- 82. Submit your series to award programs
- 83. Submit your content to “cool” websites
- 102. Get people involved with your website
- 114. Tap into YouTube’s Promoted Videos Program

... and keep on going...!

Budget

Be sure to include cost centres in your budget for labour, facilities and services that you will need to undertake your marketing campaign -- and resist the temptation to dig into these when you start to go over-budget during production! Following is an example of the basic costs and allocations for the marketing of a web series:

Item	Cost (Range)
<u>Labour & Fees:</u>	
Marketing Consultant * depends on whether they are providing a few hours of consulting or whether they are on-side to assist with project execution	\$50 - \$150 per hour \$500 - \$5,000
PMD * depends on responsibilities and length of engagement	\$50 - \$100 per hour \$5,000 - \$10,000
Social media or community manager * depends on responsibilities and length of engagement; some tasks may be part of PMD responsibilities	\$30 - \$50 per hour \$3,000 - \$5,000
<u>Marketing & PR Materials:</u>	
Graphic design (key art)	\$1,000 - \$3,000
Graphic design (misc)	\$500 - \$1,000
Press kit	\$0 - \$100
Posters, postcards, stickers, t-shirts and other promotional items	\$1,000 - \$5,000
Trailer/EPK	\$0
<u>Publicity/Promotions:</u>	
Publicist (National) * depends on whether task is farmed out or is part of PMD responsibilities	\$0 - \$5,000

Item	Cost (Range)
Publicist (Affinity) * responsible for niche PR	\$1,500 - \$3,000
Viral marketing teams * Facebook promo teams	\$0 - \$2,000
<u>Website:</u>	
Website design/development	\$1,000 - \$4,000
Web hosting	\$110 / year
Email provider	\$120 / year
Other accounts * HootSuite, Social Sprout, etc.	\$120 - \$240 / year
<u>Advertising:</u>	\$500 - \$2,000
<u>Launch party/events:</u>	\$0 - \$5,000

Appendix A: Content types

Text-based

- Website pages
- Weblog posts
- Email messages
- Email newsletters
- Status and Twitter updates
- Testimonials/quotes/reviews
- Press releases
- Social bookmarks
- Wikis
- Books, e-books, comic books
- Digital magazines and paper.li newspapers

Image-based

- Photos (production stills, head shots, behind-the-scene, key art, etc.)
- Drawings (story boards, sketches, illustrations)
- Maps and [Infographs](#)
- Icons and avatars
- iPhone and iPad wallpapers

Audio

- Soundtracks
- Music (original and licensed)
- Podcasts (interviews, monologues, music)

Video

- Web series episodes
- Animations
- Music videos and “shorts”
- Trailers
- Interviews, behind-the-scenes and ‘how to’ video

Transmedia

- Mobile applications
- Online games
- Facebook applications and other widgets
- QR codes

Events

- Twitter chats
- Live or recorded Skype chats and Q&A’s
- Fan conventions and conferences

Appendix B: 40 ways to promote your YouTube channel and videos

1. Embed your videos on your website
2. Embed your videos on your weblog
3. Embed your videos in your email updates
4. Embed your videos on online forums
5. Embed your videos on community and Ning sites
6. Embed your video and create a unique landing page for new Facebook fans
7. Embed your YouTube videos on your Facebook profile
8. Embed your YouTube videos on your Facebook Fan page
9. Link your YouTube channel to your website
10. Link your YouTube channel to your weblog
11. Link your YouTube channel to Twitter
12. Link your YouTube channel to Facebook
13. Link your YouTube channel to LinkedIn
14. Add a link to your YouTube channel in all your outgoing emails
15. Get your videos featured on YouTube
16. Use StumbleUpon Paid Discovery to promote your channel
17. Use Google Adwords to promote your channel
18. Get T-shirts printed with your channel URL
19. Get T-shirts printed with a QR code containing your channel URL
20. Create a YouTube video promoting your other videos
21. Advertise your YouTube channel on other websites and weblogs
22. Digg your videos
23. Stumble your videos
24. Like and Share your videos on Facebook
25. Tweet your videos
26. Add your channel URL to Twitter
27. Ask others to re-tweet your videos
28. Blog about your videos
29. Do a review of your videos
30. Ask others to review your videos
31. Do an interview with the producer/director and embed in your "About" page.
32. Cross promote your videos
33. Tag your YouTube videos
34. Buy targeted YouTube views
35. Buy targeted YouTube channel subscribers
36. Add a "subscribe to" YouTube button to your weblog or website
37. Add your YouTube video to a video directories and search engines
38. Shoot and post a video response to a popular video
39. Shoot and post a parody video as a response to a popular video
40. Shoot a music video, covering a popular song; post as a response

Appendix C: Performance Metrics

- Pageviews
- Unique visitors
- Repeat visitors
- Comments and trackbacks (on weblog)
- Tags/ratings/rankings
- Time spent on website
- Average length of visit
- Video plays (if self-hosting)
- Downloads (if offering “downloadable” content such as PDF files)
- International audience: number of countries where people engage with your content
- Subscribers to RSS feed
- Subscribers to mailing list
- Inbound links
- Page rank
- SERP rank
- Facebook fans
- New Facebook fans
- Active Facebook fans
- Likes/comments/shares on Facebook
- Twitter followers
- Appearances on Twitter lists
- Re-tweets and direct messages
- Mentions on Twitter
- Klout score
- Plays on YouTube
- Channel subscribers on YouTube
- Likes/comments/shares on YouTube
- Video responses on YouTube
- Tweets, re-tweets, lists
- StumbleUpon reviews
- Blog mentions or reviews
- Mentions or reviews on community sites, forums, message boards
- Number of credible professionals in entertainment, journalism, marketing, and other related industries who support your work (maintain a collection of quotes from these individuals)
- Comments about your work on multiple social networks (positive or negative), plays, profile views, and friends
- Festival screenings
- Industry awards
- Fan’s choice awards
- Brand recognition and brand-specific searches

Resources and links

Blogging

Chris Brogan: [How to blog almost every day](#)

Copyblogger: [50 Can't-Fail Techniques for Finding Great Blog Topics](#)

Liz Strauss -- <http://www.lizstrauss.com/>

Prologger: [How to choose a niche topic for your blog](#)

Search Engine People: [How To Get Blog Post Ideas](#)

Community Development

Community Spark -- <http://www.communityspark.com/>

GigaOm: [Building Online Community Brick by Virtual Brick](#)

Online Community Report -- <http://www.onlinecommunityreport.com/>

Content Marketing

Junta42 blog -- <http://blog.junta42.com/>

Smart Blogs: [From SXSW How HBO Keeps True Blood Fans Thirsty For More](#)

Conversion & Analytics

Six Revisions: [Google analytics in depth: goals and funnels](#)

The Conversion Scientist -- <http://conversionscientist.com>

YouTube: [How to create Google analytics conversion goals](#)

Web Analytics World: [10 must track Google analytics goals](#)

Demographics

TechCrunch: [Why Women Rule The Internet](#)

Email

Email Marketing Reports -- <http://www.email-marketing-reports.com/>

Facebook

All Facebook -- <http://www.allfacebook.com/>

Dan Zarella: The Facebook Marketing Book -- <http://danzarella.com/books>

Inside Facebook -- <http://www.insidefacebook.com/>

Influence & Persuasion

The Daily Seo Blog: [An illustrated guide to the science of influence and persuasion](#)

Marketing

Online Marketing Blog -- <http://www.toprankblog.com/>

Seth Godin's Blog: [How to get traffic for your blog](#)

Six Pixels of Separation -- <http://www.twistimage.com/>

The @KISSmetrics Marketing Blog -- <http://blog.kissmetrics.com/>

Search Marketing

iMedia Connection: [Rules for beating Google at Seo](#)

Search Engine Journal -- <http://www.searchenginejournal.com/>

Search Engine Watch -- <http://searchenginewatch.com/>

SEOMoz Daily -- <http://www.seomoz.org/blog>

Social Media

Dan Zarrella: The Social Media Scientist -- <http://danzarrella.com/>

Mashable -- <http://mashable.com>

SmartBlog on Social Media -- <http://smartblogs.com/socialmedia/>

The Conversation Prism -- <http://www.theconversationprism.com/>

Twitter

Alltop Twitter -- <http://twitter.alltop.com/>

Twitip: Twitter Tips -- <http://www.twitip.com/>

Usability

Alertbox by Jacob Nielsen -- <http://www.useit.com/alertbox/>

YouTube

GigaOm: [11 YouTube Tips From YouTube Experts](#)

iMedia Connection: [9 new rules for YouTube marketing](#)

Video & Web series

Christopher Sharpe: [How to Build an Audience for a Web Series](#)

Christopher Sharpe: [Leveling Up - Building an Audience is Kind of Like Playing a Video Game](#)

GigaOM Video -- <http://gigaom.com/video/>

GigaOm: [Want To Get Your Web Series Sponsored: 10 Things To Think About](#)

IdiotScreen: [Marketing the Internet Web Series: 5 Steps for Success](#)

Lost Remote -- <http://www.lostremote.com/>

paper.li: [The #webserieschat Daily](#)

ReelSEO Video Marketing -- <http://www.reelseo.com/>

Slebisodes: [When & How to Launch a Web Series](#)

Web Series Network: [Jen Dawson on Marketing](#)

Web Series Network: [Aleem Hossain Talks About His Marketing Process](#)

Web Series Network: [Chris Wiltz on Marketing His Web Series](#)

Web Video SEO and Marketing News -- <http://www.videoseonews.com/>

Will Video for Food -- <http://willvideoforfood.com/>