

1 Try, Fail, Analyze, Adjust: *A YouTube History Lesson*

Have you ever watched the first video uploaded to YouTube?

It's an important question. No, really, it matters. Not because it's great content—it is not. It matters because it is history, and history teaches patterns. I love documentaries and biopics for that exact reason. When you study the past, you start to understand how people make decisions, how failure creates pivots, and how those pivots can change everything.

So why am I talking about history in a book that is supposed to be about YouTube and making you money? Because studying the history of anything helps you succeed in that world. The same is true for YouTube. If creators and businesses take the time to understand how YouTube became YouTube, how failure led to adjustment and adjustment led to explosive success, they will become better equipped to build their own success on the platform.

So how did YouTube start, and why should that matter to you?

In 2002, PayPal was acquired by eBay for \$1.5 billion. That created a lot of excitement in Silicon Valley. Suddenly, everyone was thinking about websites, apps, and digital platforms that could make money and reshape the future. Three former PayPal employees, Jawed Karim, Chad Hurley, and Steve Chen—were part of that wave of thinking. They came up with the idea for YouTube, but not as the platform we know today. At first, they built it as a dating website.

The domain name YouTube.com went live on February 14, 2005—Valentine’s Day. Perfect timing for a dating site. On April 23, Karim uploaded the first video, “Me at the Zoo.” It was nineteen seconds long. He stood in front of elephants at the San Diego Zoo and made a clumsy little comment about their trunks. If you go and watch it now, you’ll laugh because you know he was trying to get the website to be a place to find a date, and he makes an innuendo about the anatomy of the elephant. The video was actually pretty good quality for nonprofessionals at the time.

At that point, the founders needed users. Their assumption was that young adults would use the site to meet people, so they went to Stanford and passed out flyers. Their slogan was, “Tune in, hook up.” They needed more videos on the site, so they uploaded random footage of airplanes taking off and landing. Then they tried Craigslist, offering women \$20 to upload dating videos of themselves. They got exactly zero responses.

That is where the story gets useful.

Once people started using the site, the founders looked at the data and realized something surprising. Users were not showing up for dating. They were using the platform for self-broadcasting. They were uploading funny videos, awkward videos, weird videos, pet videos, sports videos, random videos, and videos of their everyday lives. In other words, people were telling YouTube what they wanted the platform to be.

At that critical moment, the founders had a choice. They could keep forcing the original idea and insist that YouTube remain a dating site, or they could pay attention to what the data was telling them and pivot. They chose the second option. Steve Chen famously said, “Forget the dating aspect. Let’s just open it up to any video.”

That decision changed everything.

Instead of trying to force the wrong use case, they adjusted to the behavior they were seeing. They built tools that supported self-broadcasting. They added features like video embedding, which became a game changer for distribution across websites and blogs. They gave creators control. They gave people a place to upload, share, and spread their videos around the world. Users were not looking to hook up on YouTube. They were looking for a platform to share their creativity.

That pivot turned YouTube into the most powerful video platform in the world.

It changed the entertainment industry. It shifted creative power away from a small group of media gatekeepers and put it into the hands of regular people with cameras, ideas, and internet access. That seems normal now, but at the time it was revolutionary. Brands noticed. Businesses noticed. Media companies noticed. For the first time, creators could build attention on their own, and big companies had to adapt to that reality.

Google saw the potential early and bought YouTube in 2006 for \$1.65 billion. From there, the platform exploded. Today, YouTube is not just a website. It is one of the central pieces of modern media. Even television has been transformed: in July 2025, YouTube captured 13.4% of total TV watch time, making it the No. 1 platform on TV in the United States. It reaches the world, influences culture, shapes buying behavior, builds businesses, launches careers, and creates communities at scale.

But none of that would have happened if the founders had ignored the data and stubbornly forced the platform to stay what they originally imagined. That is the lesson. They tried something. It failed. They analyzed the behavior. They adjusted. And the adjustment unlocked the future.

That pattern is the YouTube Formula.

YouTube itself became YouTube by trying, failing, analyzing, and adjusting. That is why this story matters. It is not just platform history. It is the blueprint. If you understand this principle, you understand the foundation this entire book is built on. Success on YouTube does not come from guessing harder or clinging to the wrong plan. It comes from paying attention, learning from feedback, and making better decisions over time.

That is exactly what you are going to learn in this book. In Part I, I'll break down the algorithm so you understand how YouTube actually works and how to become part of that system instead of fighting it. In Part II, I'll show you the real opportunity most people never fully see, including exposure, creativity, collaboration, sponsorships, products, and ownership. Yes, YouTube can pay you, but the bigger opportunity is what influence can do for your life, your business, and your impact.

Then in Part III, I'll walk you through the YouTube Formula itself—planning, creating, packaging, distributing, analyzing, and adjusting—so you can grow with intention. You'll learn how to find your audience, speak to them, keep them watching, and build a community that comes back again and again. You'll learn where views actually come from, how videos get discovered, and how to read your data so you can make better decisions with every upload.

I've helped thousands of creators unlock growth they could not see on their own. More views. More income. Stronger brands. Real businesses built on attention. If you follow the formula and apply

what you learn here, you will not just grow a channel. You will build a platform that can change everything.

Before you move on, I want to give you a shortcut. Reading is powerful, but for a lot of us, things click faster when we can see them. That's why I watch so much video content when I'm learning something new.

Download Digital Resources

I put together a set of digital resources to go with this book, including quick-hit worksheets, checklists, and video training that walk you through the key ideas step by step so you can apply them right away. If you bought this book on Amazon, this is especially important because it gives you access to the full course version of what you're reading here. Go download everything at www.ytformula.com/training and bookmark the page, because we'll keep building on these tools chapter by chapter.



