

The State of YouTube **2019 Report**

Get to know the creators behind the content.



Storyblocks



ICX MEDIA

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Introduction + Methodology

Welcome to the Storyblocks + ICX Media 2019 State of YouTube.

We surveyed 400+ YouTube creators to bring you valuable insights into the current YouTube creator landscape--who they are, what their goals are, and what challenges they face as they work to reach those goals. As we uncover this, we'll also present an outlook for 2019 and what you can expect for the future of YouTubers.

We're excited to share our learnings and let you peek behind the curtain into the world of YouTube creators and influencers!



Key Takeaways



1

Creatives see YouTube as a place to express creativity and make money.

2

YouTubers face many challenges as the platform grows in popularity.

3

YouTubers think that joining an influencer agency could help with success.



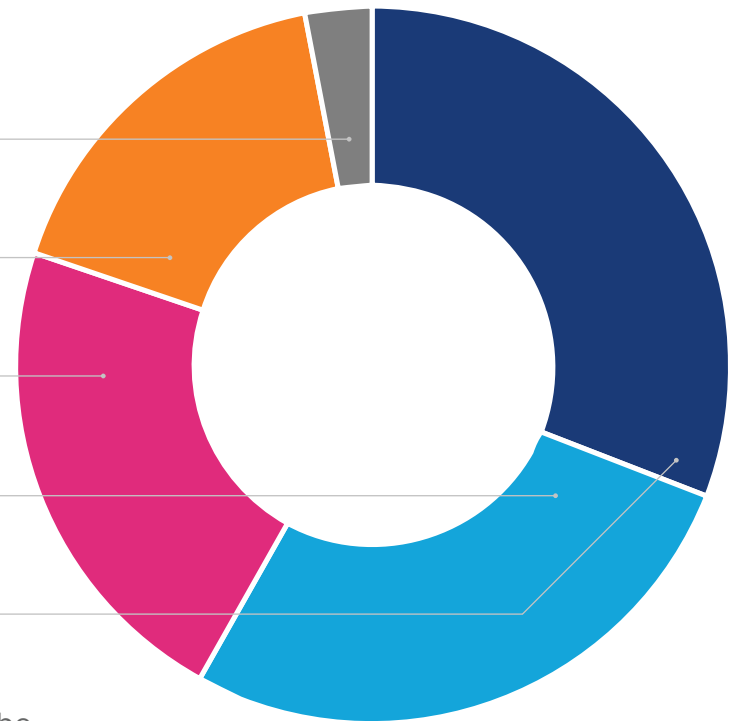
Creators



Who are the creators behind YouTube content?

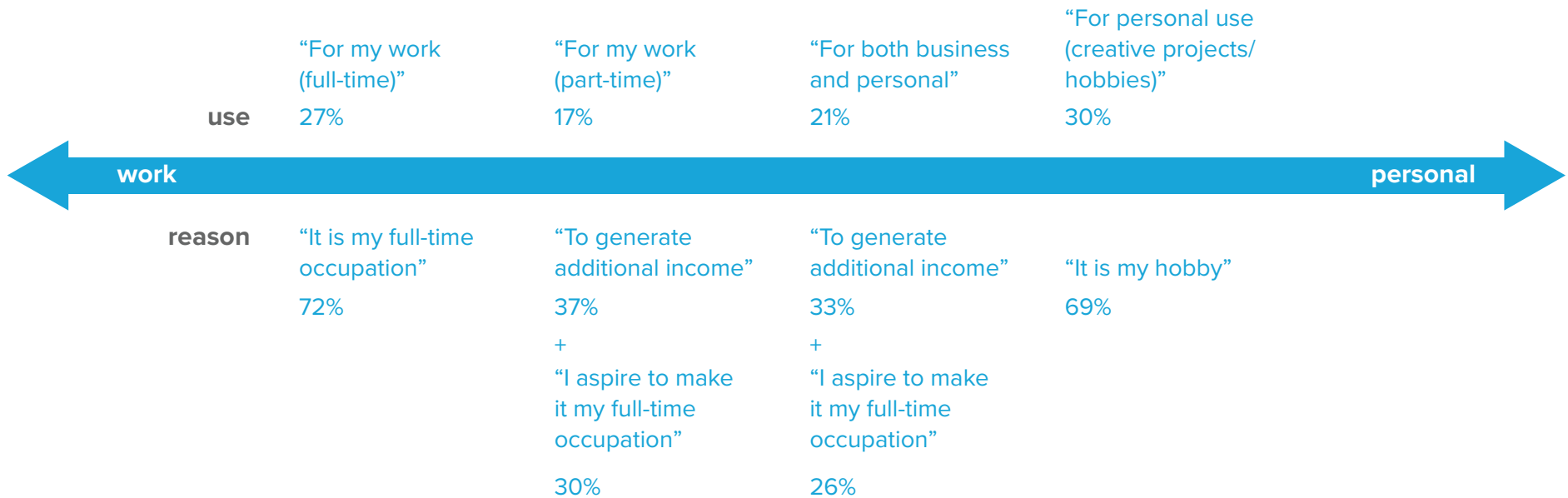
There are lots of YouTube channels out there. From big brand names to famous YouTubers like PewDiePie. But did you know that there are thousands of smaller creators participating with different aspirations? For this guide, here's a snapshot of the people we surveyed:

Education	3%
Part Time Work	17%
Business/Personal Work	22%
Full Time Work	27%
Personal Use	31%



There's a mix of full-time YouTubers and hobbyists who find the platform to be a viable place to express their creativity. 30% of respondents use YouTube for creative projects/hobbies, which is the highest percentage but not far off from people who say they use it for their work full time, 27%.

Primary reason for posting

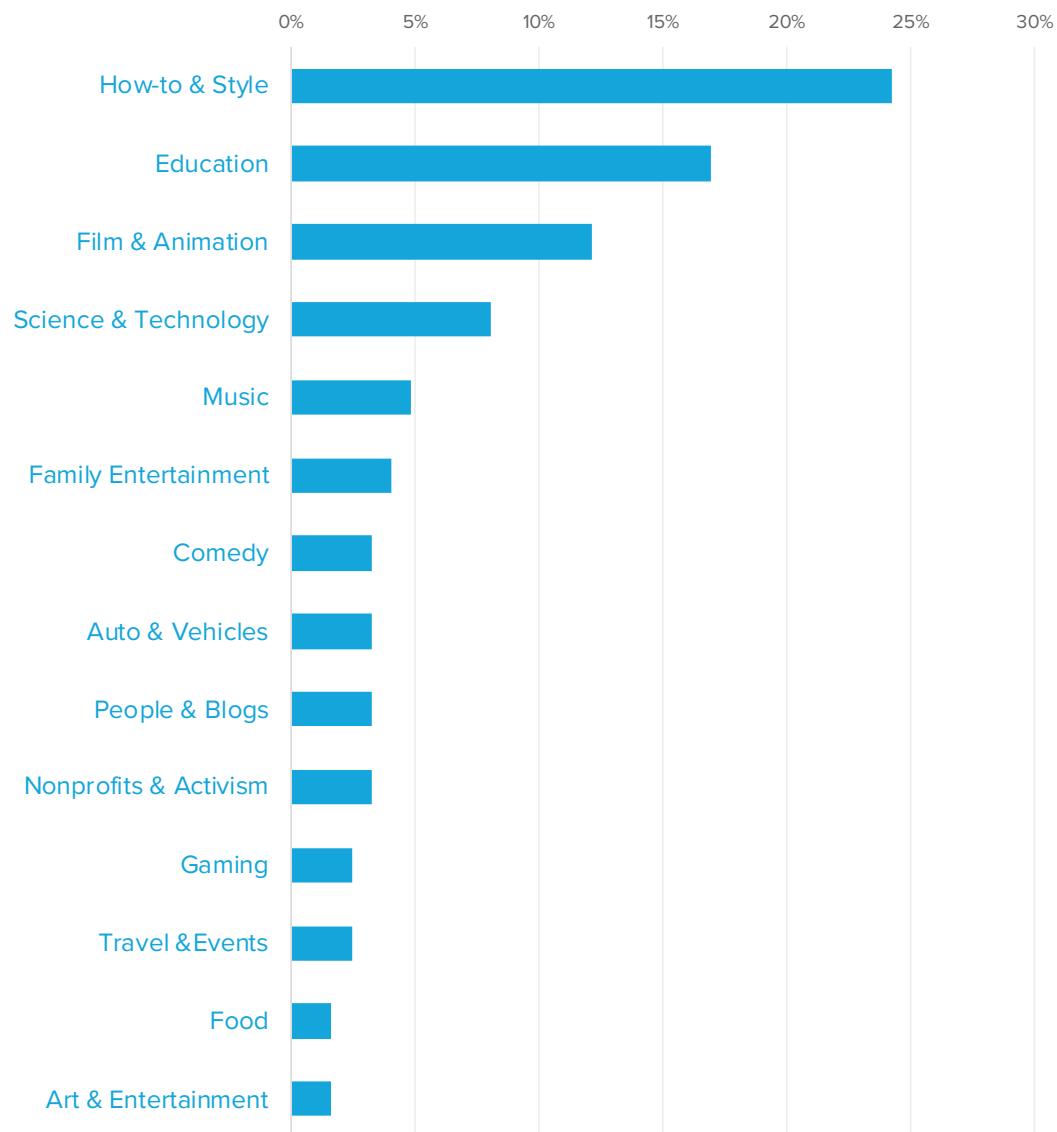


To better understand each creator's motivation and why they go to YouTube, we asked about their primary reason for sharing. Unsurprisingly, for those who use YouTube with their full-time job or for personal creative use, the primary reasons for sharing correlate to their use.

Those who fall in the middle of the creator spectrum, YouTubers who create video as a part-time gig or for a combination of business and personal use, listed two primary reasons. Both of these groups report that their primary reason for sharing is to get additional income--37% for part-timers and 33% for business and personal use. They also both aspire to create video as a full-time job--30% for part-timers and 26% for business and personal use.

Popular video topics

Creators love making videos that teach. Our respondents say that the topic they cover the most is “How-to & Style” while the second most popular topic is “Education.”



Goals



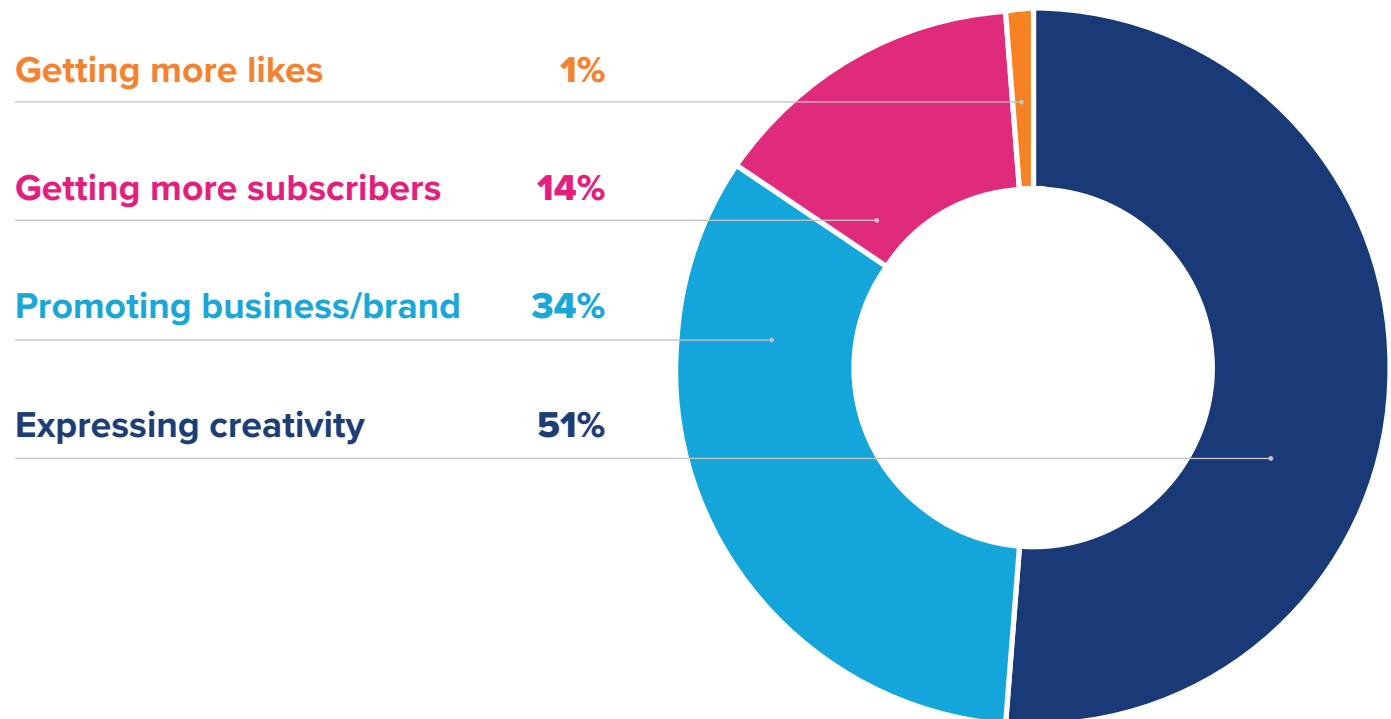
What are the goals of YouTubers?



When looking at the goals for today's YouTubers, there are two primary motivators, "expressing your creativity" and "promotion for yourself or your business." Roughly half of the creators (49%) see "creativity" as their primary motivator, which is inspiring since it matches up with YouTube's mission "to give everyone a voice and show them the world."

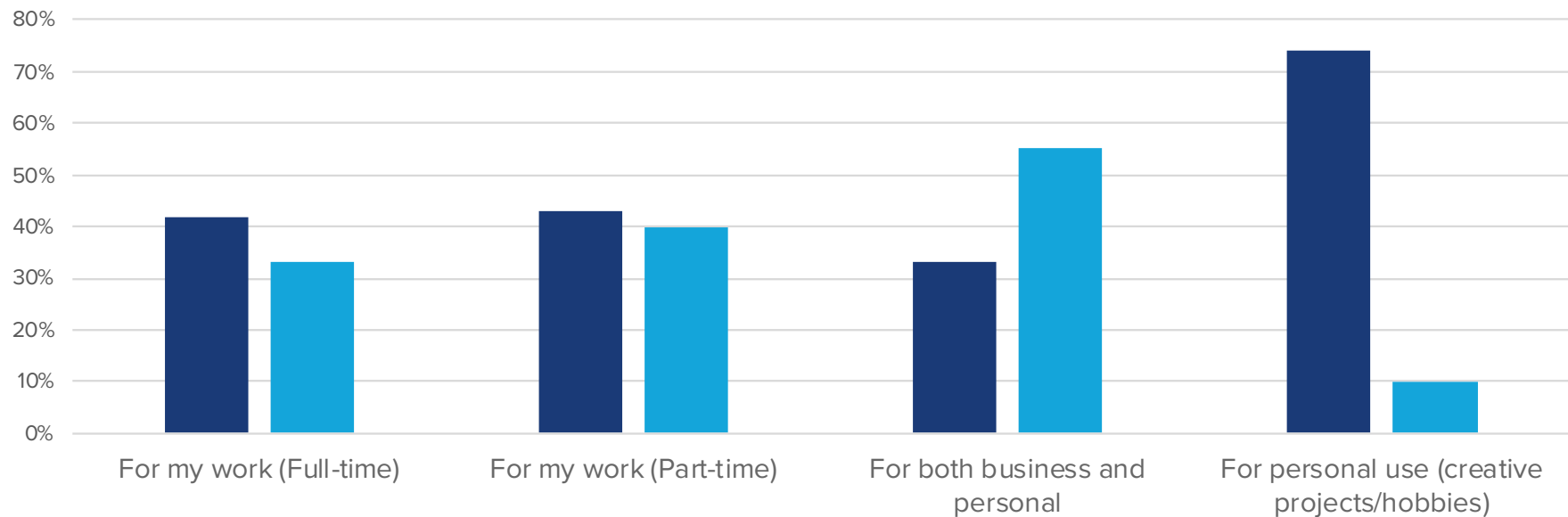
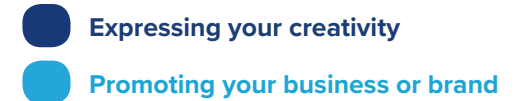
Goals of full-time YouTubers

Even those who reported that sharing content on YouTube is their full-time job overwhelmingly selected “expressing your creativity” as their primary goal for posting. While YouTube has become a favorite medium for creative professionals to build a brand and make a living, their primary reason for using YouTube is as a creative outlet. Maybe this is an indication that on YouTube, authenticity is king.



Motivations for each creator group

Throughout the spectrum of creators, there's a clear trend: creativity is essential. There's a correlation between creativity and success of a YouTube channel. Once creators realize that there's potential to turn their creative endeavor into a living, the importance of promotion increases. They want people to see their content to help sustain their livelihood.



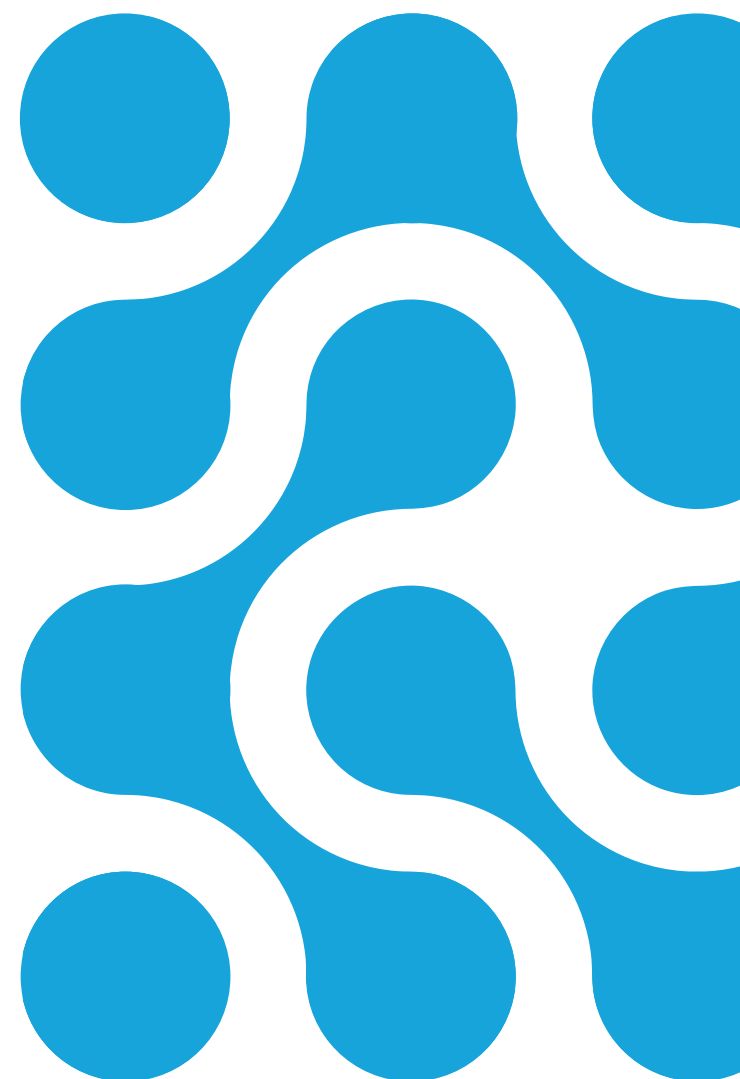
Motivations for each creator group

For my work (full-time)

For the full-timers, 42% said creativity was their primary motivator. 33% said promotion was most important. These motivations make sense for this group because they are focused on using their passion for creating to build their livelihood. Promotion is a key factor for sustaining their livelihood, but the reason they're creating YouTube content is that the platform gives them a great outlet for self-expression.

For my work (part-time)

Part-time YouTubers share similar alignment with 43% citing creativity as their primary motivation and 40% saying it's about promotion. One interesting difference is the fact that part-timers place a higher priority on promotion than the full-time group. This group focuses on reaching a point where YouTube can become their full-time occupation, and that aspirational goal explains their additional emphasis on the value of promotion.



Motivations for each creator group

For both business and personal use

For YouTubers using the platform for both business and personal projects, the trend begins to flip in favor of promotion as the primary motivator at 55%, and creativity falls in second place at 33%. These creators are motivated to make video creation their full-time job, so they utilize promotion as a way to achieve that goal.

For personal use

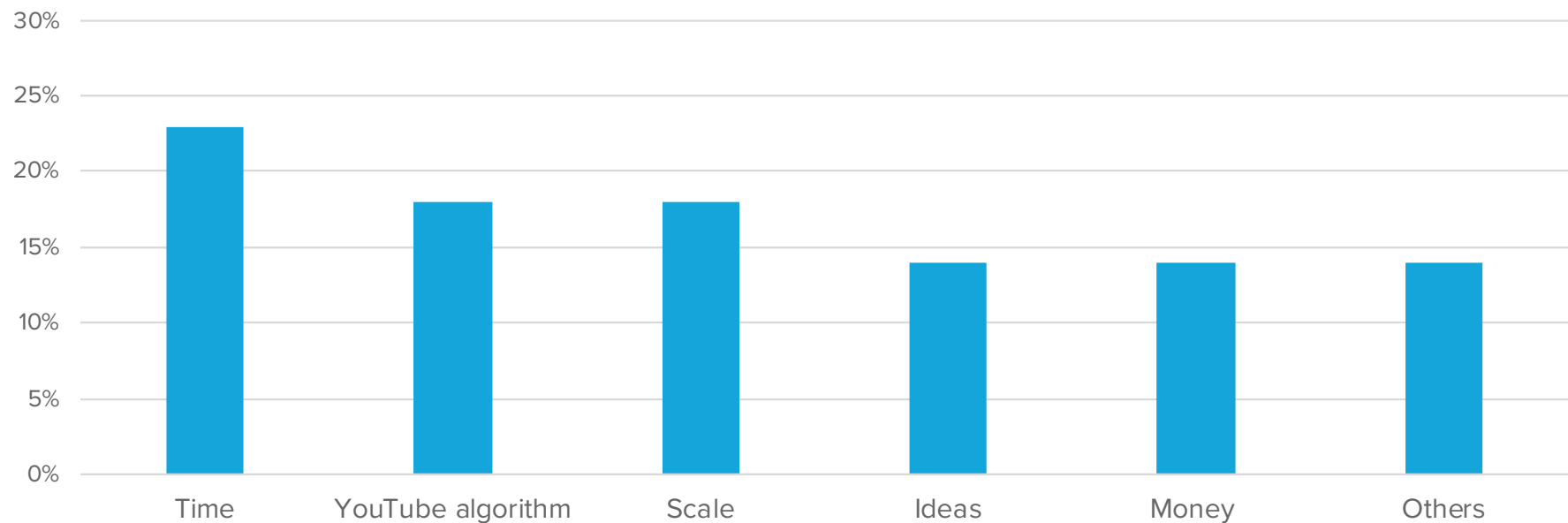
Creators using YouTube for only personal use site creative expression as their top motivator at 74% and place significantly less importance on promotion at 10%. Since these creators are using the platform for self-expression and fun, they are not concerned with promoting the content they create.

Challenges

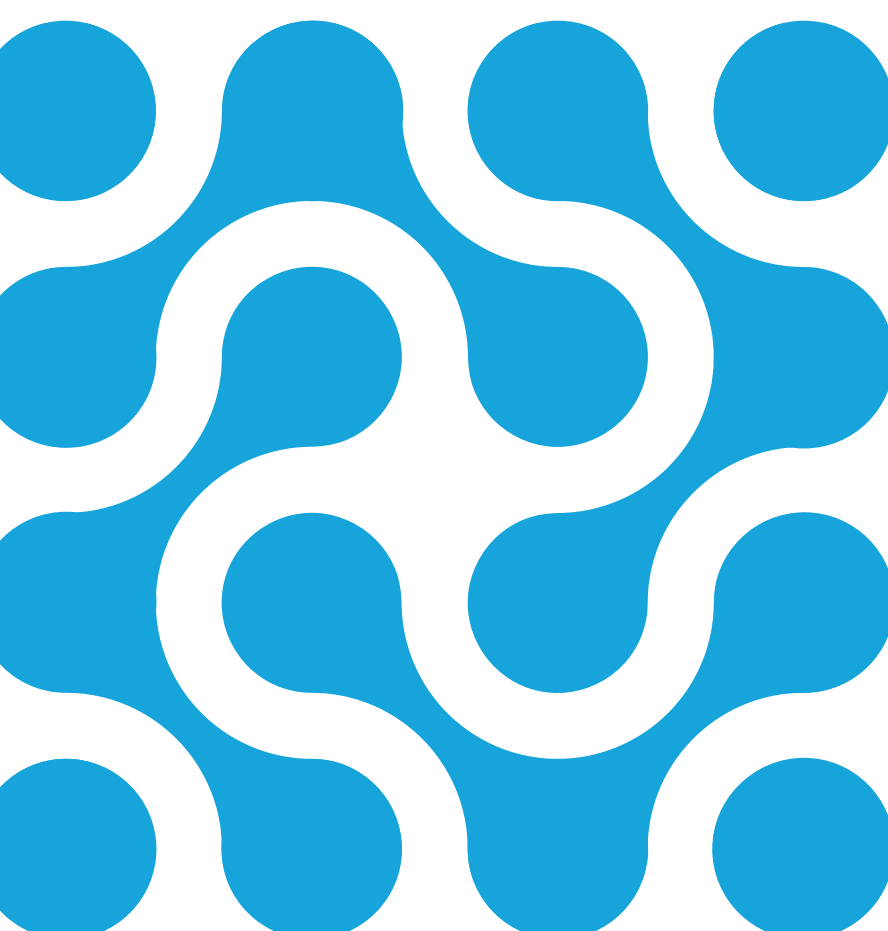


What are their challenges?

YouTube creators face a variety of challenges as they work toward achieving the goals they have set. Some of these challenges are universally shared--from full-time pros to personal hobbyists--while some are unique to each group. Understanding these challenges can help aspiring creators, or anyone working to build a robust YouTube presence, navigate potential pitfalls successfully.



Lack of time and resources



“Time. I have thousands of ideas constantly flowing, but only so much time and physical willpower as a one-man-show to make it happen.

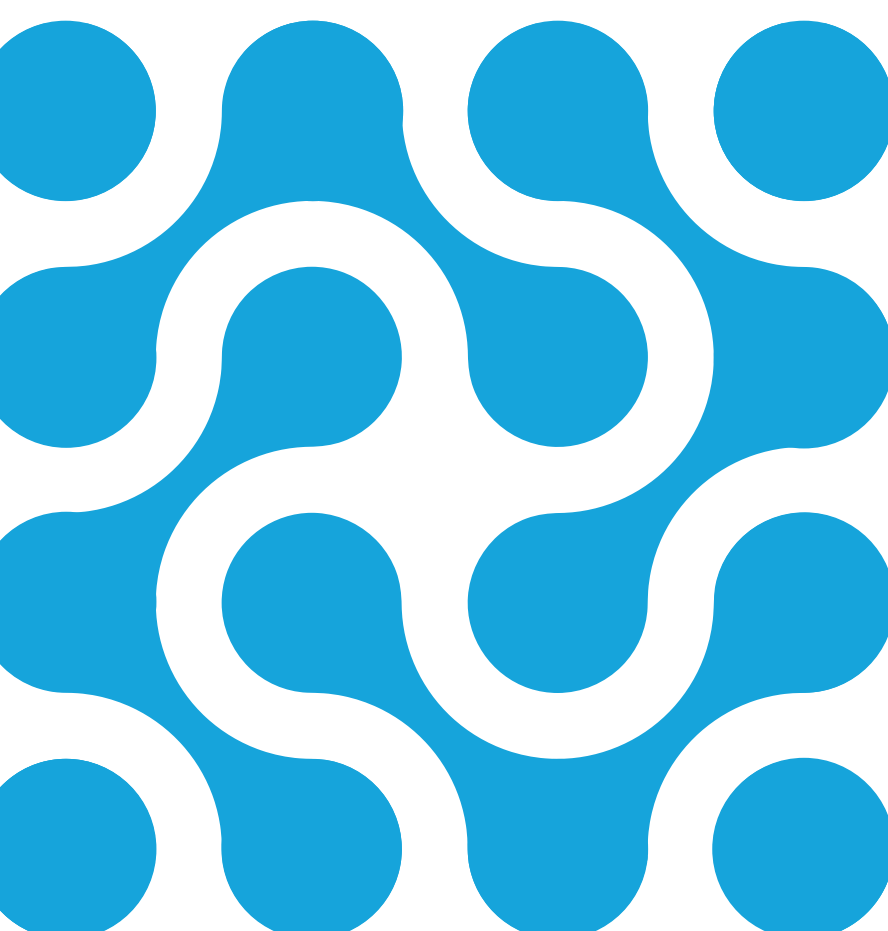
Lack of time and resources is a common challenge for creative professionals. Based on our survey responses, 23% mention “time” as one of their difficulties in expressing their creativity. This could be why more creators are going full time, but even those who do dedicate their full time to growing their presence on YouTube have hurdles.

Engagement is tough

YouTube is growing. Channels are getting more subscribers. But it's still tough getting people to like, comment and share videos. YouTubers who identify as professionals see engagement rates of 3.07%, while hobbyists report engagement rates of 2.49%. YouTubers find these low engagement numbers surprising considering that their channel is growing, and they regularly try to spark engagement in their videos by asking people to share their opinions via comments.



Content visibility is low

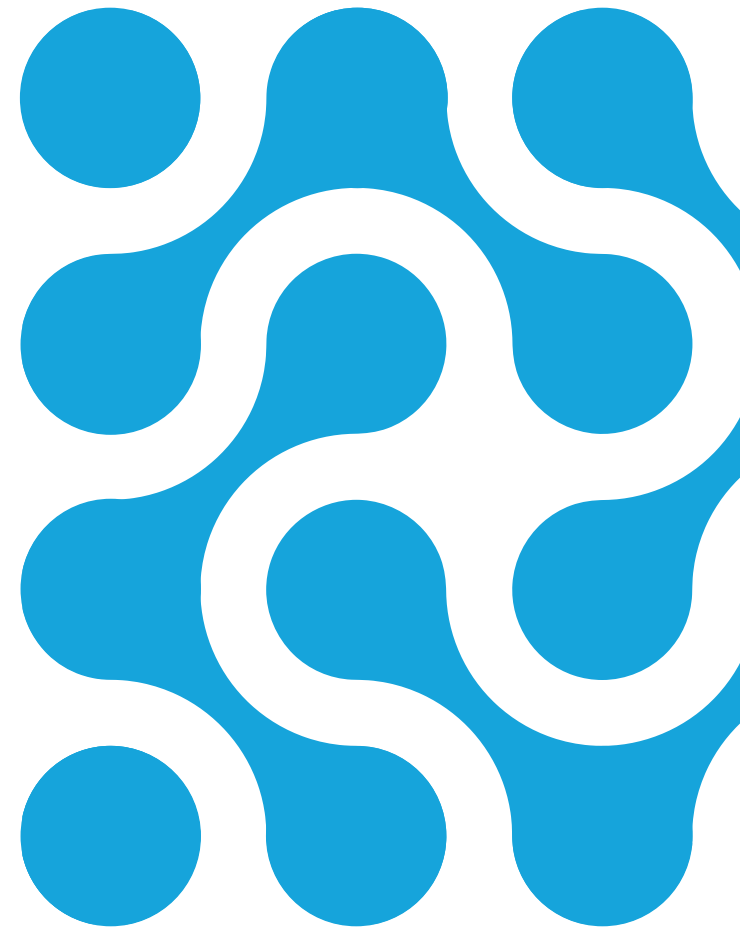


“The Algorithm has forced me to triple my output to daily videos in order to maintain the sort of growth I was seeing in 2017. This is much more difficult and doesn't allow me to polish the final product as much as I would like.

No matter the size of their channel, many YouTubers are having a difficult time getting their content surfaced to both new and subscribed viewers. And, frequent policy changes and lack of support and communication from YouTube causes confusion and seemingly random demonetization and penalties.

Monetization could mean lower engagement

What creator wouldn't mind a little extra money for their creative efforts? 71% of creators indicate that they pursue monetization opportunities and 37% say that one of the reasons why they post to YouTube is to help generate additional income. But, some smaller YouTube channels run by hobbyists notice that monetizing could slightly hurt engagement. Creatives with lower subscribers counts, less than 10,000, tend to shy away from monetization, and they report engagement rates of 2.81%. Creatives with higher subscriber counts, more than 100,000, do monetize their videos more often and report engagement rates of 2.56%. The difference is small, but based on average engagement numbers, it could be significant.



A close-up photograph of a woman with short brown hair and black-rimmed glasses, smiling and holding a camera with a large lens up to her eye. The image is overlaid with a semi-transparent blue filter. The word "Insights" is written in white text on the left side, underlined with a thin yellow line.

Insights

The evolving influencer landscape

“The influencer world as we know it is going to end soon.

One thing was made clear as we combed through our survey and interview responses--it's becoming more challenging to make it full-time as a YouTube influencer. Between the changes made to the monetization policy and over-saturation making it more difficult to be found, already-established influencers have seen decreases in earnings and newcomers are faced with hurdle after hurdle in achieving success.

Influencers that are self-identifying as being in an influencer agency are seeing a higher average engagement rate of 3.9% compared to the rate of 2.56% by those who didn't identify as being part of an influencer agency. It's not entirely clear if this is causation or correlation--is their engagement higher because of the agency's help, or are they represented by an agency because of their high performance? However, it seems that the most successful influencers are using professional resources.

The evolving influencer landscape

The increasing saturation of the influencer space means influencers have to work harder, and they also must find additional sources of revenue. Virginia Messina, the founder of creative collective Blue Monkey Studio, says, “The influencer world as we know it is going to end soon. So we keep putting effort into building our skills as producers, project managers, graphic designers, filmmakers, etc.” A YouTube influencer who has seen some success is actually uniquely able to qualify and be considered for a variety of jobs or freelance gigs. They have a portfolio and brand presence that demonstrates their skills in marketing and video production.

Influencers are also faced with opportunity overload because they have to choose whether or not to share their content on multiple social channels to increase views and brand awareness. With time being the number one challenge for YouTube creators, channels will need to compete heavily to encourage creators to participate on their platform.



YouTube's 2019 outlook

Over 1.9 billion logged-in users visit YouTube each month, and every day people watch over a billion hours of video and generate billions of views. This growing video platform is an incredible opportunity for creatives to express themselves and make some money, but it isn't easy. YouTube is constantly growing. YouTubers face challenges, but that doesn't deter them from their goal of being creative.

To remain competitive, more YouTubers are choosing to create videos for the platform full time. This allows them to dedicate the time needed to produce engaging content consistently. We're seeing many YouTubers find success by joining influencer agencies, but the influencer landscape is changing. It may not be the solution to better performance that YouTubers hope it will be for long.

One big takeaway is that you have to engage your creativity to be a successful YouTuber. Producing high-quality videos, maintaining a consistent posting schedule and interacting with your audience matters, but the common thread we found with our survey respondents is that they do it for the love of their craft. The typical creator, whether hobbyist or professional, is sharing because they have a deep passion and want to foster a community around that passion. While this may not be the magic bullet you were hoping for, an authentic creative drive is an essential, unavoidable component that should shape YouTubers' strategy. Optimizing for passion is the secret to unlocking high engagement and rewards, whether the content is for your company or for you.

2019 is going to be a very interesting year for YouTube and those that hope to take advantage of its reach.

