

network of 100 florists within India to deliver pan-India, even to remote villages like Sangrur in Punjab for an additional cost. Today, the company has started delivering gift items like champagne, chocolates along with flowers and has a pan-world presence with a network of 250 florists in countries like the US, the UK, UAE, Canada, Australia and New Zealand.

Sachdeva has Africa and Europe on his list next. After setting up the website in 2004, designed by a Delhi web designer, he only used Google AdWords to popularise the site. "When I started out, there was no one to help me out. I made mistakes – in reading the AdWords clauses, how to get traffic to the site and the search keywords to be used – and learnt from them," he says. The first five years of business were spent in understanding how Google works and how to increase his site's visibility. The money that came in was pumped back into advertising. Result: what started as a ₹200 per day ad spend has spiralled into ₹50,000 a day (AdWords works on a pay-per-click model).

"There has to be a key differentiator to your blog, site or service you offer that will drive people onto your site," says Raju PP, a tech blogger who runs the site techpp.com (started in 2008). It started as a personal blog in 2005 and took on a life of its own as a consumer and personal tech blog in 2008. In 2009, Raju quit his job with Infosys to start full-time blogging. The blog has 2 million page views per month with 1.23 million unique users. Raju says he's working harder than he has ever done in any job but he's happy with the results. AdSense contributes 60% towards his monthly kitty of a few lakhs while Tribal Fusion make the rest.

Get the Numbers

Ultimately it's all about the numbers, read the traffic on your site. "It has to be more content creative than resource intensive as the people will come back to you only if they like what they see," says Hitendra Merchant of YoBoHo New Media. Merchant hosts 35 YouTube channels and nearly 10,000 videos on Bollywood, Hollywood, general entertainment, cooking, kids and yoga and is part of the YouTube Partner Program (YPP). An old hand from the music industry, Merchant was in music marketing with HMV and Times Music for some time. In 2007, he joined promoter Shripal Morakhia who exited out of ShareKhan in 2007, to launch a service for digital downloads. The licensing hassles stopped the idea from taking off.

Then they decided to create entertainment content for mobile phones, but were few years

too early. In December 2007, the same set of animators designed web content and desimad.com was launched. But Merchant and his men were still struggling with the numbers and thus getting the advertiser interested. In 2008, Desimad started uploading on YouTube. "Within 7-8 months, YouTube started paying up and as soon as the YPP started we got regular cheques within 45 days from them, very encouraging for a start-up, and now we are one of the leading partners with the YPP" he says.

YPP is Google's way of sharing advertising revenue with its most popular and successful video creators. Once in the YPP, ads start appearing overlaid or next to their videos. The content developer gets 68% share of the revenue while Google pockets 32%.

"There's a fair bit of handholding from Google, as they advise on what content will fetch us more views, key searches, feature placements on youtube etc," Merchant says. But over time, he has found out that sometimes what they think will work and what actually does are poles apart. Take for instance,

some of our nursery rhymes on the Hooplakidz Channel on youtube gets YoBoHo nearly 50,000 views a day.

For 40-year-old Saameer Mody, part of the YPP, YouTube has been helpful in getting the numbers. Mody, along with two friends, started Itakemedia.com to provide opportunities within the Indian Film & TV Industry. The site

also had job postings – a sort of yellow pages for the Mumbai film industry. "In 2009, we took the next step by deciding to set up a distribution platform for short films and documentaries through YouTube," Mody says.

The Itakemedia channel on YouTube has over 14 million views and is adding over 50,000 views a day for its library of over 1600 videos from over 800 independent and aspiring filmmakers. According to Mody, there's been a 400% jump in the company's revenues. "The way content is consumed today is changing and it's this evolution that keeps me going," he says.

Optimise your Earnings

Mody is now planning to launch a video app for Apple and Android platforms, which will generate revenues through AdMobs from Google, one of the world's largest mobile advertising networks, offering solutions for discovery, branding and monetisation on the mobile web. He also regularly conducts short film contests including the recent exclusive branded contest called Gorbatschow Pure Shorts. Agarwal of labnol.org has started making tech

videos for YouTube and monetises it through YPP but as he says it's a "work in progress".

Once the idea takes off and you have the eyeballs, the rest is a matter of channelising the same resources to develop more content. M R Hari of Invis Multimedia that runs individeo.org is an old hand at developing video content. It was in 1996 he got into the industry and made several cultural videos for Kerala Tourism. In 2004, they realised that DVD is on its way out. And individeo.org was born. But how to monetise it? In 2008, their YouTube channel started. From less than 1,000 views a day they are at 50,000 views per day at present. "This is amazing as most of our content is serious and educational in nature," he says.

But more than numbers, aligning with Google has had other benefits too. Like using YouTube as a host server rather their own, which helped in cutting down on bandwidth, server and security costs. "Our annual savings in this regards is more than ₹10 lakh. Plus, we are free of technical hurdles and save on manpower too," he says. While Individeo made ₹25 lakh last year from YouTube, they follow suggestions from YouTube and AdSense that help in maximising revenues. "Our group is one of the earliest certified marketing partners for AdWords. We use the skills of the advertising team in increasing revenues from advertising by selecting most searched topic in content production," he says.

Also, since 50% of their viewership comes by way of related videos, they have started setting up brand pages of clients on their host site with videos uploaded to our brand channel in YouTube. "This has become a major player in multiplying our revenue and we are seriously thinking of a shift in policy," he says.

What Next?

Sachdeva of Aryan Florist has hired a UK-based web service agency to carry out search engine optimisation (SEO) plan for Aryan Florist that will help to get it on the first page of Google search engine as a search response to certain keywords. "I will keep using AdWords but I want Aryan Florist to grow organically too," he says. And after that he plans to have a physical presence for his company through florist and gift shops.

Mody has also launched an education-related video content channel called Pocketgyan which will have tutorials for engineering students and will extend it for other subjects as well.

"You could have started your online venture just for fun and it paid for some time but you can't sustain it without continued focus. It's not rocket science," says Bhawani of techadvices.com. After all, failure can be a click away. ■

With little to no capital required, online businesses are the way forward. But decoding the web is not easy



Raju PP|29

Location: Bangalore
Company: Techpp
Website: techpp.com
Business: Personal &

consumer tech blog **Started in:** 2007
After Google: 2 million views a month, with 1.23 million unique users
Service Used: AdSense
Money Matters: ₹4,60,000 a month*



"You have to scale the blog to stay topical. Extend your coverage area"



Hitendra Merchant|39

Location: Mumbai
Company: YoBoHo

New Media:
YouTube Channel: youtube.com/bollywoodbackstage, youtube.com/hollywoodbackstage, youtube.com/desimad, youtube.com/hooplakidz, youtube.com/anandayoga, youtube.com/aniskitchen, youtube.com/nehabhasin

Business: Video content on entertainment, health, cooking, children, etc
Started in: 2008
Before Google: 30,000 views
After Google: More than 2 million video views per day across 30 channels
Service Used: YouTube Partner Programme
Money Matters: Approx ₹30 lakh a month*



"You'd be surprised as to what can get you more traffic online. For instance, a nursery rhyme gets us our maximum hits at 50,000 a day"



Amit Bhawani|27

Location: Hyderabad
Company: Digital World Solutions
Website:

techadvices.com (tech blog), mastergadgets.com (gadget blog), androidadvices.com (Android blog), helpfulhealthtips.com (health blog), autoadvices.com (auto blog), hyderabadadvisor.com (city blog)

Business: Websites and blogs on technology, health, automobiles, city info
Started in: 2006
After Google: 1.2 million views per day
Service Used: AdSense

Money Matters: ₹1.2 crore last year
Google Gyan "Start with a generic brand name even if your blog is a personal blog. It's difficult to pitch a personalised blog (with your name) as a viable business brand to get advertisers in the future. Never under estimate the power of your social connections and start sharing your blog content with them which can go viral and help you reach a broader audience"



MR Hari|47

Location: Thiruvananthapuram
Company: Invis Multimedia
YouTube Channel: youtube.com/individeodotorg
Started in: 1996; **Joined YouTube:** 2008
Before Google: Less than 1,000 views a day

After Google: 50,000 views a day
Service Used: YouTube Partner Programme

Money Matters: Earned ₹25 lakh last year from YouTube alone

Google Gyan "Google should update their view meter. Their counter for measuring views is not reliable. In certain cases, we know that the video has been watched by more than 1 lakh people but the counter shows 10,000. Using YouTube as the host server you save on bandwidth, server and security cost. Secondly, it rids you of all technical hurdles and saves manpower"



Name: Amit Agarwal|34

Location: Agra
Company: Digital Inspiration
Website: labnol.org
After Google: 4.5 million views a month and 1,25,000 subscribers

Service Used: Google AdSense, YouTube Partner Programme

Money Matters: Few crores per year

Google Gyan "One area where Google can improve is "support." The premium AdSense partners do have dedicated account managers but the smaller publishers can only reach Google by email or through online forums. Also the YPP is still relatively new. Google can help in the training area so that the quality of produced content can get better. They do have initiatives like YouTube Next in the US – maybe they can introduce something similar here"