

# Videos, views and vanity metrics - how to really measure success

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According to the latest SA Social Media Landscape report, 62% of the top 130 brands on social media locally will be increasing their investment in rich media and video content creation in the year ahead. With increased investment, comes increased scrutiny on exactly how to determine the success of such content.

While views are the most obvious metric, they can also be the most deceptive. As the options for paid video content increase and platforms experiment with auto-play functionality, the waters are becoming increasingly muddied for measuring success.

## Spend = Reach (not resonance)

To prove a point about just how superficial video views can be as an indicator of good content, an experiment was conducted by American agency, Solve. Showing how even the most uncreative content can rack up a high number of views when backed by the right spend, they posted a completely blank four-minute video to YouTube. No sound, no witty description, literally no content.



The video was promoted with spend (where the agency would be charged for every viewer who watched beyond 30 seconds of the clip). The result? Over 100,000 views from an investment of just \$1400 - meaning they paid 1.4 cents per view (what would generally be considered a very good return). A total of 22% of all viewers also watched the full four-minute clip without skipping, but the video garnered a sum total of zero likes or shares.

What does this mean? Essentially that you can put any content in front of a pretty massive audience if you have a budget - and they'll probably watch it too. But that won't guarantee they'll actually like it, enjoy it or resonate with it in any way.

## False indicators

That's not to say that views don't mean anything at all. After all, the most viral YouTube videos of all time did not break viewership records by being backed by millions in ad spend - they spread by organic interaction (the digital equivalent of word-of-mouth).

The point is: views alone can be a false indicator of successful content. When a video has a high number of views but a low number of likes, comments or shares, it's a clear indication of paid viewership.

## Real measures of success

So how do you accurately gauge the success of your video content? True value can be gauged by these measurements:

### 1. Organic views

Even amazing content needs to initially be boosted by spend - especially on social platforms such as Facebook, where organic reach has been throttled to zero. But the real test is then whether your video content views continue to rise even when your spend has stopped. Sometimes all it takes is that initial boost to get social word-of-mouth started.

### 2. Shares

A share is as close to a holy grail as social interactions get. If your content is being shared, the audience reach will grow exponentially. The endorsement that often comes with the act of sharing is also key to understanding how, and if, your content resonates with people.

### 3. Comments and feedback

What is the general sentiment of the feedback you're receiving on your video content? Did it evoke any strong reactions? Are the reactions in line with or completely against what you had hoped to see?

### 4. Conversions

If you are investing in video content, it is highly recommended to use such content to drive a desired action on the part of the viewer (e.g. 'Find out more' or 'Sign up'). This not only makes the success of the content more measurable, it also ensures the video goes beyond pure entertainment value and actually drives your brand objectives.

## ABOUT DESIREE GULLAN

Having worked at the 'Big Three' advertising agencies in SA and proving her creative mettle abroad, Desirée has won multiple local and international awards for her work - including Cannes Lions and Clios. She believes in the importance of craftsmanship - that it's not in the designing, but in the redesigning. Not in the writing, but in the rewriting.

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