

## The Hill invests in building its YouTube channel to better engage audiences and drives impressive growth

The Hill is an American news media publisher focused on politics, policy, business, and international relations.

### OPPORTUNITY

The Hill wanted to extend its digital video content beyond its owned and operated website to reach a wider audience. It saw an opportunity to create a dedicated YouTube channel and hire a team who would develop new video programming and engage viewers.

### APPROACH

The Hill expanded its digital video team, launched a YouTube channel publishing digital-first content, and used performance data to inform content creation.

**Identifying the audience:** The Hill identified a younger (under 35) audience that was hungry for political content, but wasn't being served by cable news.

**Expanding the team, launching the channel:** The Hill hired a number of new staff for the video team so they could adequately cover original content creation, the transformation of existing content to YouTube-friendly formats, and live stream opportunities. Because this was a new effort, The Hill team had to work hard to find their audience through experimentation and learning.

**Tailoring existing content:** The team used digital video best practices to tailor their popular morning show "Rising" for use on YouTube. This included cutting clips, creating headlines, and adding visually appealing thumbnails for each segment. The daily news analysis show has since become appointment viewing for The Hill's YouTube audience when it's posted at 10:30am every weekday.

**Testing original content formats:** The team experimented with new formats (e.g., interviews, panel discussions, etc.) and used analytics to see what was working. They evolved their programming based on performance metrics. The team also experimented with running live streams at key political moments such as the Democratic primary debates.

**Ongoing testing and learning:** The Hill makes data-based decisions about all aspects of their YouTube presence, and looks at things like which guests perform best, which graphics add the most visual value, and which post-publish tactics help improve engagement.

**Driving engagement:** The Hill team is always on the lookout for new ways to engage viewers. For example, during live streams they have staff engaging with the audience via comments and Community posts. The staff pose questions about relevant topics to foster a constructive dialogue, and also encourage viewers to use the Super Chat feature as a way to contribute to the channel and make their comments more visible.

### RESULTS

The Hill launched and grew its YouTube channel, and nurtured an engaged subscriber base, which has helped them increase audience and viewer numbers every month since launch.

- **Grew the channel** from a few hundred subscribers in mid-2019 to **670k+ subscribers** in mid-2020.
- **Increased monthly video views** every month since launch and reached over **40M views** in June 2020.

### LEARNINGS

**Audiences want timely coverage in a variety of formats:** For The Hill's YouTube audience, videos of timely topics perform best, regardless of format. The Hill also found direct-to-camera commentaries by hosts did well, and panel segments on a relevant, timely topic outperformed other videos.

**Consistency pays:** The Hill team found that posting daily on a regular schedule helped them cultivate their audience, who came to expect content at a specific time each day. This was made very clear on a day The Hill had technical difficulties and posted a few minutes late — to the chagrin of regular viewers.

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**We are seeing increases every month in our audience and views on YouTube and we believe we can get to scale in 2020 and see YouTube as a key strategic partner in developing our video strategy in both audience and monetization.**

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