

# **Generation **Youtube****

**Harnessing the Power  
of Internet Video  
for Youth Ministry**

**by Dennis Poulette**

**[www.youthministrytv.com](http://www.youthministrytv.com)**

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Harnessing the Power of internet video in youth  
ministry

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## Introduction

Youtube is a phenomenon among both young and old. In the last few months, both the possibility and popularity of video on the internet has exploded. With the increased popularity of online video, it seems that young people are more likely to watch videos on the internet than they are to watch television. The number of users for Youtube is astounding. They have 100 million uploaded videos daily.<sup>1</sup> And people are watching. With wireless technology, video iPods, and an ever-increasing and changing way to deliver entertainment, online video is more popular than ever. Even the big networks are getting into offering video on the internet.

As usual, churches are slow to adopt new technologies, and video on the internet is one of those things that we are hesitant to use in our ministries, either for lack of desire or lack of knowledge of how to use the technology. If we do adopt the technology, often times it comes across as utterly embarrassing in comparison to what is being offered by others (think of the majority of “Christian” movies, or “films”). We think that being “cutting edge” is putting up a video of our sermon series on Deuteronomy or making video slide shows of our programs. While these things may be useful, we can certainly be more creative in our use of technology than this.

It is incredibly easy to put video on the internet now, and video on the internet is very easy to access for the majority of people in the United States. As of March 2006, 42% of Americans has broadband internet access in their homes, a number that increased 30 percent from the year before.<sup>2</sup> This number is sure to increase as the technology becomes more and more cost-efficient.

The purpose of this book is to help youth workers harness the power of internet video to increase community in their group (i.e. interact more with young people), creatively sharing ideas and thoughts about relevant topics.

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<sup>1</sup> <http://www.webuser.co.uk/news/news.php?id=89131>

<sup>2</sup> [http://today.reuters.com/news/articleinvesting.aspx?type=governmentFilingsNews&storyID=2006-07-26T173306Z\\_01\\_N26316850\\_RTRIDST\\_0\\_TECH-BROADBAND.XML](http://today.reuters.com/news/articleinvesting.aspx?type=governmentFilingsNews&storyID=2006-07-26T173306Z_01_N26316850_RTRIDST_0_TECH-BROADBAND.XML)

## Why is it popular?

Have you ever asked yourself, “Why is all of this stuff so popular?” I have asked myself that before, and a few of the answers I have come up with are: content creating is compelling, social networking is enhanced through media, and people today are more visually-oriented than we have ever been in history.

This generation of young people are very excited about creating content themselves. They are the ones fueling this online media rush. The majority of people who use Youtube or some other online video site for watching video also contribute their own content. It could be pictures of them and their friends uploaded to Flickr.com and posted on their MySpace page, or it could be a video of them lip-synching to their favorite song on Youtube.

Have you ever been bored (or brave) enough to hand your video camera to a student in your ministry? It’s amazing the things they can create. I have seen young people spend hours and hours making a homemade movie for a history class, yet these same students would not even think about spending half that time writing a paper. This generation of young people wants to create media. They want to create their own stories and fables about life. Youtube is giving them that chance.

Social interaction is enhanced through media content. When someone can see your face, hear your voice, and respond to what you are saying, there is a deeper connection than there is when it is just written words on a page. The social networking sites that are having success are the ones who facilitate interaction between users. All people are social beings, and young people are at an important stage in their social development. They also have more time to be social than adults, and they are the ones fueling this phenomenon of online video.

We live in a visual society. We are getting away from the written word, and we are beginning to understand concepts more visually. This generation of young people has never known life without music videos. MTV just turned twenty-five years old, and even though they do not show many music videos anymore, this generation has never known life without MTV.

## Why Internet Video for Ministry?

If we do not have a relevant voice in online content, it will be dominated by others. By saying this, I mean that we must enter the conversation that is taking place online. If we do not, we are giving up this medium and allowing any number of rumors about Christians and Christianity to spread. People believe almost anything they see on television, read in the paper, and now they believe just about everything they read or see on the internet. Misinformation runs rampant. People need to hear the other side of the story. Many people will argue that the news media (AKA: old media) only gives one side of the story. In fact, that is one reason that citizen journalism and online user-based video is becoming so popular. People want to tell their stories. Media no longer belongs to people who have big budgets. It belongs to the people. A popular saying right now is, “We are the Media.”

I would argue that right now, the majority of voices online are negative toward religion and God. There is a large community of online content creators that are propagating a belief system that is anti-God and anti-religion. We must be bold enough to enter the conversation, not to argue with them, but to know them. They are open to conversation with us, but we must be open to criticism and able to converse on their terms. The world of online content is waiting for a relevant voice. Christianity can stand up to scrutiny. Those of us who have experience with working with people who are not exactly ready to fall in love with our beliefs still have the mandate to share our stories and engage the culture. The online world is ready to hear our stories. I believe that it is time for us to be relevant and firm in our beliefs, entering into the discussion and giving place to the conversations about God, faith, and religion.

With this comes many things, including the necessity to be transparent and accepting of others. Please don't get into the world of online video to just “preach at” people. It will not work. We need to share our thoughts and struggles without being so abrasive that turn out to be the crazy lunatic Christian fanatic. Yes, be bold in your beliefs. Stick to what you believe. Don't compromise. But be nice.

## Internet video or videoblogging?

What is a videoblog?

A videoblog is an internet weblog that uses video as well as text to communicate the ideas of the author to the audience. The audience can subscribe to it using many different news aggregators (What's an aggregator – read on – FireAnt, Bloglines, Mefedia, etc.), or they can simply check the content frequently. One of the important things about a weblog or videoblog is that the audience can interact with the author and other readers through comments on posts. Commenting on posts allows for readers to interact with the content of a vlog, and this interaction has the potential to be very useful in ministry.

Most online video sites have set up some sort of commenting on videos posted on their sites, making it almost unnecessary to have a separate blog. If you want to customize the look of the content delivery system (or website), you have to create your own blog on a blogging service such as blogger.com or wordpress.com. This gives you the freedom to add your own links and other things. Then it would be necessary to import the video into your own blogging service, which is easy with a little copying and pasting.

Since most people know what a blog is already, it is not necessary to talk about the steps to creating a blog here<sup>3</sup>.

### Advantages of creating your own blog instead of just using YouTube

While YouTube is the premiere online video site (for now), there are some advantages to creating your own blog and using it to promote your videos instead of just posting to an online video host. The key advantages are identity, maintenance, and features.

A blog gives your ministry Identity. We are always trying to create a brand in our ministries. Whether it be with a youth group name, a logo, or just the name of the church, it is good to have continuity when it comes to the “look” of our ministry. If you are going to really dive into this online video thing (which, I hope you do), you ought to have a place to put all of the videos that come out of your ministry. A personal blog will do that for you. You can post

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<sup>3</sup> If you don't know what it is, check out the Appendix of this book for Five Steps to setting up a videoblog.

the video online at one of the hosts (which we'll talk about later), and link to it on your blog or website. That way, when you tell students where to find the video of the week, you don't have to say, "Well, it's on Youtube along with millions of other videos." Yes, you will host the videos somewhere, but you won't have to sort through the other junk out there to find what you've created.

A blog is easier to maintain. With your personal blog, it is easier to maintain everything because it's all in one place. The comments will be posted directly on your site, and you won't have to worry about where every video is that you've ever made for your ministry. The maintenance of a blog is minimal, but it is likely that you'll find yourself "maintaining" (AKA spending time with) your blog more than you think.

A blog gives you more features. On a blog, you can also post links to youth group pictures (there are a ton of free photo sharing sites out there now, too, but that's another book). You can post upcoming events, flyers, a calendar, and all kinds of other things that you already know you can do with a blog. These things, along with your videos, will make your place online a great hang out for your students and their friends.

Blogs are also prettier than the interface on Youtube or the other video hosting sites. You can play around with the look of a blog, and you can also allow comments. If someone else talks about your blog, you will know through a trackback system that most blogs have now. You can also arrange the posts according to category, making it easier to surf through the old posts that will accumulate. Archives and search will make it easy to find the video of last year's graduating class or camp trip when it comes time to promote those activities again this year.

Do you have to have a blog to utilize online video in your ministry? The answer to that is no, but it helps. It will drastically change your approach to online video if you have a place to showcase the content that you create. Plus, with a blog, if you don't get to create a video, you can still communicate with your students.

Okay, I'm sold. Now, how can I make one?

Freevlog.org ([www.freevlog.org](http://www.freevlog.org)) is by far the best videoblogging tutorial page on the internet. It gives you step-by-step instruction on how to make a videoblog. Of course, you



could always just sign up for an account at youtube and place your video on there (like tons of other people). This option is good only if you don't have your own website or blog already, and you don't really care to create one. Of course, after having read the reasons mentioned above, you want to create a videoblog anyway. Keep reading for five easy steps to creating a videoblog.

What are the minimum requirements?

The minimum requirements for putting video on the internet are any kind of camera that captures video (this could be a digital still camera that has a video setting), a computer, internet access, and a place to host your video. Of course, editing software can come in handy, too.

A camera that captures video – You may have a camera that captures video on your cell phone. It is not necessary to have really expensive equipment to make good online video. Most of the time, the content is what makes good video or not. If the intended audience thinks it is funny or entertaining in some way, most of the time they will watch it despite the quality. Many people who make online video often prefer to use smaller, lightweight, digital still cameras to capture their video. The obvious advantage of this is that you can take it with you practically anywhere.

There are also consumer priced camcorders that record excellent video. Just remember that the better the camera, the bigger the file will be when you get it onto your computer. If you're going to post long videos, you will definitely need to compress the video before posting it to the web.

A computer – Pretty much any computer you have now (if you've upgraded in the last few years) will work to create internet video. We won't go into the Mac vs. PC debate, but there are some things to think about when picking out a computer. Like always, my advice is get the best one you can afford. RAM is one of the most important things as well as ability to process information. Get a computer with good RAM (upgrade it!) and with the ability to process the video when you are finished editing. This is my advice on the aspect of which computer to buy. Which computer to get is always a difficult choice, but chances are the computer that is in your

office will work just fine. There's no need to go out and buy a new one just because you want to do this internet video thing, although if you're looking for a good excuse, use it as an excuse!

Internet access – High speed internet access is necessary. Since dial-up is a thing of the past anyway, make sure you have decent internet access so that uploading video won't take forever. This is, once again, something that is obvious, but it is a minimum requirement, so I thought I'd include it in here.

A place to host your video – Once you have your video recorded, saved to the computer, and ready for the internet, you will need a place to host, or store, your video online. Not too long ago this service would have cost you lots of money for bandwidth, but thanks to the popularity of online video, there are now many places you can go to host your videos online for free. Here is an overview of some of the popular services for video hosting.

1. Youtube ([www.youtube.com](http://www.youtube.com)) is the most popular service for hosting video on the internet. Based in flash, youtube gives you many options for posting video directly to your own website. The file size limit is 100 MB, but very few videos you will put up would exceed this file size anyway (especially if you compress your videos first). All video that is uploaded to Youtube.com must already be edited, since they don't have any tools for editing video on their site. If you are looking for a chance to have a popular (outside of your sphere of influence) video, youtube is probably the most watched of all video sites.
2. Blip ([www.blip.tv](http://www.blip.tv)) is another video hosting site, which has no limit on the file size you can upload. They do suggest that the file size be less than 100 MB, due to download speeds for users. Blip offers you the options of uploading QuickTime files, Windows Media Files, and users can download these formats as well as flash (the most widely used format for online video).
3. Internet Archive ([www.archive.org](http://www.archive.org)) will allow you to upload videos to be stored online forever and works in conjunction with [www.blip.tv](http://www.blip.tv) and [www.ourmedia.org](http://www.ourmedia.org). The internet archive also has a great listing of music, text documents, and video that is available to the public. There are many things available to the public at the internet archive.

4. Revver ([www.revver.com](http://www.revver.com)) allows users to profit from the videos they put online because they add an advertisement to the end of your videos. You have no input as to what type of advertisement they place on your video, but you do receive half of the revenue generated from views of your videos. Their limit for file size is 100 MB, also. Users download the video in QuickTime format, which can be downloaded through iTunes and played on iPod videos. Revver does, however, reserve the right to delete your video from their archives if it is not gaining enough money.
5. Eyespot ([www.eyespot.com](http://www.eyespot.com)) offers video editing online with a simple user-interface. The format that you will view your video in is Flash, and you can trim and add effects to the files. This is an interesting site because you can mix and mash clips from other users, adding potential to what your audience will do with your files (for example, you could have a “mix-up” contest, having students submit their creations from all of the videos you have posted). The videos that are on Eyespot can be downloaded and viewed on computers that are not connected to the internet.
6. Google Video (<http://video.google.com>) has no limit to the file size you may upload, meaning that your half hour camp video could technically be uploaded to their service. Videos posted on Google Video can be downloaded, but the user is limited to using their viewing application, meaning that those who want to download the video will have to download their tool to watch it. If a user wants to view the video online, it will be in Flash format, like the majority of the other online video sites.
7. Grouper (<http://grouper.com>) is another video hosting site that can be used to store your videos and put them on different websites. In order to download videos, you must install the grouper software. Videos may also be downloaded to PSP and iPods for viewing offline. Since Grouper was recently bought by Sony<sup>4</sup>, there may be some changes coming their way soon.

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<sup>4</sup> See <http://www.bloomberg.com/apps/news?pid=20601101&sid=aI8aSajtv5DU&refer=japan> for more details about the purchase.

8. Jumpcut (<http://jumpcut.com>) is a lesser known Flash video sharing site that allows editing of your clips and mixing of other clips. The videos submitted to jumpcut cannot be downloaded, and the maximum file size is 50 MB.
9. Videoegg (<http://videoegg.com>) uses the Flash format, too, and makes it easy to insert into a blog. They also add advertisements to the videos, but you do not profit from their ads. Videos are not downloadable, and they may only be five minutes long, regardless of file size.

While there are other video hosting sites, the ones listed above are definitely the most popular (for now). As always, things on the web change rapidly. So be on the lookout for others in the future.

Will this kill my budget?

With an inexpensive digital camera, free editing programs like Windows Movie Maker and Avid DV, free blogging software like Wordpress.com or blogger.com, internet access that you probably already have (or can get free in some places), and your God given creativity, you can be posting video on the Internet in no time with very little investment (if any). It doesn't take money to be creative. In fact, most creative people are creative because they lack the finances to buy many of the things they need or want. Posting online video is no different. If you want to do it well, you can do it well using what you already have. The tools are there to do this without any financial investment at all.

Where do I come up with content?

Youth workers are some of the most creative people on the planet, but even we sometimes have lapses in our creativity. What happens if you can't think of something for a video? That's when you depend on the community to give you some good things to use and think about. Obviously, with millions of videos being released on the internet everyday, there has to be something out there that could be useful. The problem is filtering through all of the available video to see what is useful and what is not. The following sites are good starting points when you are looking for content to use.

The Internet archive – If you are looking for good video clips from the past, you will definitely want to check out what is on the Internet archive at [www.archive.org](http://www.archive.org). The archive is where many videos that are in the public domain have gone. There is a collection of incredibly interesting and useful video that you can download and use for free. The Prelinger archive is full of older videos from Americana that you can search according to topic and keyword. These old classic videos are public service announcements, propaganda videos, and other things that you could possibly use to remix or pull out some truth. Browse the archive and use your imagination to come up with some “new” videos from these classics.

Another place to find good free, downloadable video that is in Public Domain (i.e. free to use) is [www.open-media.org](http://www.open-media.org). This site has lots of searchable content, including stuff from NASA and older news reels. If you have the creativity, you can search a topic and edit together a good piece on something with the footage that is provided here.

Ourmedia.org has recently opened the Ourmedia Learning Center that has tutorials and links to so much free content online that I can’t list them all here. It’s better if you just go visit the site and check it out. They have stuff on how to create a podcast, how to create a videoblog, free music sites, free video sites, and all sorts of other things. The digital storytelling part of the learning center is also a great way to improve your skills. They also have the Open Media Directory<sup>5</sup> with tons of free, legal, “podsafes” music and video. Check it out at [www.ourmedia.org](http://www.ourmedia.org).

Apple has a ton of movie trailers available for viewing online at their website: [www.apple.com/trailers](http://www.apple.com/trailers). Many times the trailer has an important part of the movie or a useful quote that you can use to make an impact using follow up questions to get young people to think about a topic. Posting the video and encouraging responses in the form of comments on a blog is a great way to use video without having to actually create the content.

Most vlogs are licensed under Creative Commons. Creative Commons is a new way to license content in which the owner gives up some of their rights to it. For example, if someone posts a video on their website under a Creative Commons 2.0 license, they are giving you permission to use that video by reposting it, mixing it up, and giving them credit as the maker

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<sup>5</sup> The URL for the Open Media Directory is [www.ourmedia.org/learning-center/open](http://www.ourmedia.org/learning-center/open).

of the original content. This book has been released under a Creative Commons license, giving you permission to repost it, share it, as long as you don't make derivative works from it. You must also give credit to the original owner, but we don't care where you post it. In fact, please post it and make it available to everyone.

Anyway, the discussion of Creative Commons is important to us because it allows us to post works of many other people. We are allowed to use their content without any problems because they have already given us permission. It is a little different than traditional copyright, and it increases the amount of content available to us for our own purposes. It's simple, really.

Let's say a musician or band just wants to get their music out into the public eye. They simply release a song under a Creative Commons license, meaning that people are allowed to download the song for free, post it anywhere, and say who the artist is. This will get their music out into the public eye. They have already given free permission to use in any setting.

Youtube stuff is viral in nature, and is easily shared or posted to your own blog or site. The stuff on Youtube is meant to be shared. It's one of the purposes of putting things on the site. Everyone wants to put up the next video that has thousands of comments or views. It is sort of like high school all over again. The popularity of your video makes it even more popular.

## Ideas for internet video in ministry

Regardless of how you go about putting video on the internet, there are many uses for online video in ministry. We need to be a little creative in our approach to using online video in our ministries. Some of the ones we'll discuss here are for teaching, program promotion, leadership, community, and networking.

### Teaching

Teaching is an important part of ministry. Of course, we want to share information with people, but we also know that people learn the most when they interact with information. It is important for them to personalize and contextualize what we are teaching them. Many times, a sermon or a lecture does not really teach. We need to be able to allow the people to interact with the content given to them. Why not use video to pose an interesting question? With the format of a blog, people can comment on the post and share their thoughts. There are many ways we can use videoblogging in the teaching ministry of the church.

1. Post a video about a topic and invite responses. If you're going to be teaching on a certain subject, you can make a video about it, post it to the web, and invite students to respond to the topic via the comments section. Maybe they will make their own video response to your theme and link to it in the comments section. The ideas are limitless. Just be sure to invite responses and comments. That way they are part of the conversation started by the video.
2. Post a video that makes them think about a certain situation. This type of video will be excellent for allowing your students with their decision making skills. You could post a video case study, asking for their responses to the, "What would you do" question that is at the end of the video. You could possibly follow up with different types of endings, making it like those "choose your own adventure" books that were once so popular.
3. Post a parable of what you will be teaching. Parables, fables, or stories with a purpose, could greatly increase your effectiveness in teaching. We know that people remember stories more than they remember our points, and with online video you could post your introduction before you actually start to teach. Imagine if the students in your ministry saw a parable online before they came to your program. Then, when you show it again at the program, they have already thought about that parable before. They have begun

to mull over in their mind what you will be teaching about that night. It will give you a jump start on the teaching process, and it will help them remember what it was you said.

4. Post a thought on a topic and invite responses. Remember how Jerry Springer used to end his shows? Or how Dr. Phil gives his “thoughts” on his show? Well, you could post some thoughts of your own every week, allowing students to interact with them. You should vary your thoughts to be in accordance with or not in accordance with what you really think on a given topic. There are times when you could play devil’s advocate in your thoughts. Using different personalities and costumes might spruce this up a little bit. It’s always more fun to play your long lost cousin Fred than it is to play yourself in a video.
5. Interview people on the street about their thoughts on topics. Man on the street interviews are good ways to introduce a teaching topic. You could go to a local place where students hang out and ask them questions based on a variety of subjects. When you are doing this, it is important to use a camera with a good microphone and keep the interview to one subject. You don’t want to ask too many different questions at the same time. You do, however, want to be sure to get honest answers from the interviewees.
6. Interview respected people about their thoughts/theology on a topic. Video of your pastor talking about his theology may not be something that you think your students would be interested in, but they would probably be interested in the thoughts of that super cool camp pastor. If you have been to an event, you could always ask one of the people the students connected with to give their thoughts on one of your upcoming themes. I remember one time, after camp, I asked the camp pastor to record a greeting to our group, reminding them of what they had learned at camp. After we had returned home, we played that video to remind the students of the commitments they had made at camp.
7. Cover a local story of interest and invite responses. Many times, the news happens right in our own hometown. You could take your camera out and cover what’s going on around town. Current events are great attention getters, and if you can capture them with your camera, you will likely get some response from young people. It doesn’t have to be a HUGE news story, but it should be something that young people are thinking about or interested in. This will help you use that current event as a bridge to the theme of interest. You could cover a local story on homeless people, inviting your students to think about what your group could do to help these people.
8. Invite missionaries to show their place of service so you can better pray for them. Many students will never get the opportunity to go on a mission trip or meet a



missionary, but with online video, we can bring those missionaries to them. Use online video to invite a missionary to share about their work and place of service. This could get students involved in missions, and it would definitely be better than just getting out the map and showing them the geography of a place. If you're planning a mission trip, you could use video to introduce the project to the students, or the missionary could use it to talk about cultural differences or sensitivity.

9. Post a devotional thought by video everyday or every X amount of days. Maybe a devotional thought isn't the best way to use online video in youth ministry, but it is one way to use online video. You or some of your volunteers could share a short devotional or message to your students at critical times during the year. Maybe a back to school message or a Christmas greeting from you would be a way to encourage your students throughout the year.
10. Use trailers from movies to provoke discussion. Many times there is a nugget of truth in a movie trailer. These trailers are freely downloadable online, or you could just link to them, posting some discussion questions about a key thought in the trailer. You can find some examples of this at [www.youthministrytv.com](http://www.youthministrytv.com).

Another way to use online video is for promotion. We are always trying to get the attention of students. We need them to know what's happening in our ministries. If they aren't paying attention to what we are doing, they aren't going to attend any of the programs we might have. We can use internet video for promotion in many different ways.

#### Promotion

1. Post an intro video about the series you will be teaching. You can pull out all the stops and post an introduction video to the series that is coming soon. You could use a movie trailer format or any other format that will get their attention and allow you to promote the upcoming series.
2. Post a highlight video about a recent past event. This is probably the most popular way to use video in youth ministry. It isn't unusual to see youth ministries posting their "highlight videos" on the web. This is one of the times where, "We've always done that," doesn't necessarily mean that we should stop doing it.
3. Post a video in which you visit a place you will be going to for a future event. If you're going to be visiting the campsite anyway, bring your camera with you and take some promo video of the place. If you're going to be in the beautiful mountains of Colorado, show that to them with the promo video. Post that video on the web and increase those pre-registration numbers! It's also good for the parents to get a feel for where you'll be before they let their kid go on that trip with you.

4. Post a personal story about the impact of a program (from a student, leader, or you). Personal stories are important. If a student hears a friend talk about the impact of their small group, they are more likely to attend a small group. If a student talks to their friends about how awesome their experience was at camp last year, other students will listen. So, record some of those stories and use them online as promotion for the events you have coming up. They are sure to get interest from other students.

Another great use for video in youth ministry, especially online video, is to build community in your group. We want students to belong to the group. They want to belong to the group. With video, we can help them get to know each other and our staff better. A few ideas for using video to promote community in a youth ministry follow.

### Community

- Post video introductions of the staff. You can introduce the new staff members every year by posting a video introduction online. They can talk about themselves or show important things from their lives. This will bring an intimacy between your staff members and students even before they know each other. You could also use this as “staff member” or “volunteer” of the week.
- Interview members of the group so others can get to know them better. One of my favorite things about online video is that people get to know people better by watching their faces and expressions. Remember that a lot of what we say is non-verbal. There are things that watching someone tell their story will convey that reading their stories will not. Imagine being able to see your grandfather tell stories about things that happened to him instead of just reading his journals. Now magnify that in your youth ministry with the students, allowing them the opportunities to share their stories for the community of students to watch. Plus, you can probably get students who would never talk in front of people to talk to a camera.

You could also use this to tell about things that probably nobody knows about students. It could turn into a series of, “I bet you didn’t know...” This would build community as students got to know interesting things about the featured student.

- Use the “what if” books to talk ask a question and answer it yourself in video. You could always bring up a “what if” type question, leaving the answer open ended, and ask the students to answer it either via comments or their own video. This would allow them to express themselves. Be sure you answer the question yourself, too, of how you would respond in a certain situation. (Example: “What would you do if you won the lottery?”)

- Post a personal birthday greeting from a “special guest.” Create a birthday video greeting, either as yourself or dressed up as somebody else. This will create community and show the students that you went out of your way to not just remember their birthday but do something about it, too.
- Comedy clips – There are any number of possibilities to use comedy videos in youth ministry. A few ideas are: the youth staff lip synching to a funny song, dressed up in crazy outfits, people goofing off, parents being crazy, parodies of TV shows like 24 or Saturday Night Live-like clips or sketches.
- Post clips from last night’s youth meeting. A classic way video gets used in youth ministry is by making short videos of what happened at last week’s youth meeting. With the power of the internet, you can post last night’s youth meeting highlight video online the next day, making it easy for students to invite their friends to next week’s meeting.

You could also use easily-accessible online video for leadership training. We are living in a busy world, and many people are learning how to take their entertainment or training on the road with them. Why not use online video that is available 24 hours a day, seven days a week, to train your leaders? Here are some suggestions for online video for leadership training.

#### Leadership

- Post a video of an interview with respected professionals in the field. Next time you get the opportunity to meet up with someone who you respect in the field of youth ministry, why not ask them to do some training for your volunteers who will not get the chance to meet them? If you go to a training session, you can record it and post it so that all of your volunteers can watch it as well. If some friends in a youth ministry network did this, then they could put together a training course for the volunteers in all of the youth ministries in the area.
- Post your own videos to train your youth workers/volunteers. You could record your volunteer training sessions and post them online so that those who could not make it to a session (those with a good excuse, at least) could download them and watch what they missed at the session. These could also serve as recruiting tools in the future for those volunteers who are interested in being part of your team but aren’t sure about what to expect from you. A really good example is the monthly training podcast by Kurt Johnston, where he gives advice on working with young people. The Simply Youth Ministry Podcast is another example, although this podcast is not just training.

Besides using internet video in your own ministry, it could help youth workers all over the world in their efforts to network and share resources. There are many things that internet video could be used for in the area of networking, but here are a few that I think would really help us out as we attempt to work with this generation.

### Networking

- We could create a searchable, viewable games database that shows variations on games as well as how to set up and use certain games. If you've ever looked through many games databases, you probably saw a few that you didn't understand. If you could see the game in action, maybe you would change your mind.
- Youth workers from all over could post some training sessions, discussing various topics of youth ministry and allowing others to comment on their thoughts. This would help us develop a more comprehensive training database for our lay-workers. If we posted these videos in a downloadable format, they could be used in local church settings as well.
- Dramas, especially mimes, are always difficult to explain, but they are easy to copy if you see them. If youth ministries all over the country posted a searchable database of video dramas, others could easily use these dramas in their ministries.
- If you have been to a campground or ski lodge, and you think other youth workers would like to see more of what it has to offer, you could post your video of the facility online and allow others to see what it was like for you. Your critique may help someone find exactly what they are looking for or exactly what they want to avoid.

I'm sure there are other ways to use online video for networking. It only takes a little of our creativity. I believe that we could make many things easier for all of us if we would take the time to help each other out.

### Getting young people involved in creating content (AKA web 2.0 for ym)

One of the best ways for your videos to be popular among your students is for them to create the content in the videos. Allow them to use their creativity, and before you know it, you will have a ton of videos on your site. Video on the internet is a two-way street. We should include others in the creation of the content. It isn't enough just to post our sermon video or audio online. Online video is all about interaction. Give students a chance to contribute and

interact with each other. That's what community is all about.<sup>6</sup> Here are some examples of things you could do to get the young people involved in this.

**Weekly Challenge:** Post a question or topic of conversation and invite your students to make a video about the topic. When they post the video, have them link to it in the comments section of your videoblog. You will be amazed at the things they create with this challenge in front of them. Young people are the people who are driving Youtube, and the majority of the content creators are young people. Not only will they create the content, but they will also promote the content that they created, telling their friends (even the ones who don't participate in your ministry) about the video they just made.

**Sunday school class/small group promos:** Allowing students from various Sunday school classes or small groups to make a video about how incredible their group is would make a great promotional piece and community builder at the same time. Just give each group some guidelines and allow them time during class to think up their video idea.

**Remixes:** Get your young people to download your videos (or give them a CD with the original videos on it), and ask them to remix what you have created. How cool would it be to see different takes on summer camp from the perspective of different young people? They could even create the music (free music to legally download and remix is available all over the internet – [www.ccmixer.org](http://www.ccmixer.org) is one of the most popular). Then you can showcase each of those remixes on your site.

**Cabin cam (or small group cam):** With the invention of disposable video cameras, you could get one of these for various small groups, allowing them to video a youth activity and create their own video from the activity. These disposable video cameras are fairly cheap, and the video you can get from them would be from the perspective of the students instead of your perspective as the youth worker. You could also use these for students to share their thoughts about what they are feeling at a specific time in a retreat or activity (or every night they could give an "interview" about what they learned that day.

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<sup>6</sup> One of the best sites on the internet that has young people interacting and creating content is [www.bx21.org](http://www.bx21.org), a site out of the Bronx, NY, about a project that is teaching students to videoblog.

## Technical Aspects

While it is not necessary for your video to have high quality on the internet, it is a good idea to think through some of the technical aspects of creating content specifically for the internet. Some of the things that we ought to think about when getting ready for this are: cameras, lighting, sound, editing software, compression techniques, and video hosting services.

### Cameras

It is not my purpose to investigate every camera available to you, but I do want to give you some ideas as to what to look for in a camera based on what you are going to do with it. If you already have a camera, skip this section. Even a digital camera that takes video will work for putting video on the web, although even in this camera bracket there are things to look for.

### Lighting

Like all photography, a camera works best when there is enough light for it to pick up what you are trying to record. Low light is always a problem with video, so make sure that you are recording where there is plenty of light. Think about lighting before you turn the camera on, and turn all the lights on that you can. This will help with the problem of bad lighting. There's nothing worse than missing a great shot because of poor lighting. Be sure to think about it often.

### Sound

Although not necessary, if you are going to be doing a lot of "on-the-street" interviews, you want to choose a camera with a separate microphone input. Usually, the microphone on a camera is not good enough to work well in these situations (although it can be done). Look for a camera that can pick up good sound or has an input for a separate microphone. This way, you won't be stuck asking, "What did he just say?"

### Editing software

I can remember when I used to hook two VCRs together to record clips from one tape to another. Thanks to the digital age, digital video editing is available to everyone. However, this

is not a book on software. There are a ton of options out there that you can use to edit video. There is no way that I could try to talk about every software option out there. A few of the video editing programs that are popular are:

1. Windows Movie Maker – free on all PCs and very easy to use:  
([www.microsoft.com/windowsxp/using/moviemaker/default.msp](http://www.microsoft.com/windowsxp/using/moviemaker/default.msp))
2. Sony Vegas - a little more difficult to use, but not brain surgery: ([www.sony.com](http://www.sony.com))
3. Adobe Premiere elements – a little more difficult to use than Sony Vegas, but preferred by a lot of people who edit video ([www.adobe.com/products/premiereel/index.html](http://www.adobe.com/products/premiereel/index.html))
4. iMovie ([www.apple.com/ilife/imovie](http://www.apple.com/ilife/imovie))
5. Avid free DV ([www.avid.com/freedv/features.asp](http://www.avid.com/freedv/features.asp))

Instead of focusing out energy on different software, we will talk about what to look for in software for editing video. Some things to keep in mind when looking for editing software are number of audio and video tracks to work with, transitions (not that important), and output file types.

If you will be editing a lot of different files together, you want to be able to work with a few different videos at a time. You should look at video editing software that allows you to do this. You may want to insert voice-overs or break up a video in the middle while keeping the same sound. If that is the case, being able to split the audio and video track will be important to you, too.

Most good video editing does not use many transitions. If you think about the majority of movies or television shows, the producer does not use many different types of transitions, and you probably won't want to, either. So, it is not that important how many different transitions a video editing program claims to make available to the user. The chances are that transitions and effects will be used infrequently.

The output formats of videos will be very important to you. Remember that we are trying to get higher quality video onto the internet without the huge file size that is usually associated with quality video. Many of the video hosting sites will transcode your video into Flash format anyway, but if you choose to make available the original files, you will either want

to save your video into AVI, Windows Media, QuickTime, or MPEG 4 format. These are the most popular formats right now.

The difference formats have a lot to do with what you want to allow to be done eventually to your videos and what type of computers the majority of your users have. If you want them to just watch the videos online on your site, you will probably use the Flash format that is the most popular. If you want them to be able to download the videos and watch them on their computer, you will choose another format. If they will be downloading by iTunes or watching on a video iPod, you will want them to be able to download the MPEG 4 or QuickTime format. Confused yet?

The answer to the confusion is to look for video editing software that allows you to output to different formats, especially the one you prefer to make available to those who will eventually view your videos. Most of us will not have this problem at first, because we are introducing something new. But as your online video experience grows, you will want software with more capabilities. Save yourself some time and money, and get it now.

## Advanced Advice

The following things don't need to be understood to put good video online, but if you read through this section, it will help you improve your understanding of the vast subject of online video. It might help you consider better ways to get the word out about your project and also help improve the quality of the video you are producing. In this "advanced" section, we will talk about compression techniques, RSS feeds, and aggregators.

### Compression techniques

Most video on the internet has a little bit of a problem with quality. A lot of compression problems have to do with the online hosting service, but it also has a lot to do with the quality of the video before you upload it to the web. It is a generally good idea to compress your video before you upload it to avoid large files that take a long time to download. If properly compressed, the quality of the video when viewed online not is affected too much.

If you follow the simple instructions from Michael Verdi, you will definitely produce better quality videos. The compression techniques he uses and teaches will allow you to have



high quality video that takes up less space on your computer and online. The following is an overview of the process, using QuickTime Pro<sup>7</sup> (costs around \$30) and 3ivX<sup>8</sup>.

Here are the steps outlined by freevlog.org:

1. In QuickTime Pro: FILE > EXPORT
2. Select Movie to QuickTime Movie
3. Click OPTIONS
  - a. Video Settings:
  - b. Compressor Type: 3ivx
  - c. Frame Rate: 15 fps
  - d. Data Rate - Restrict to: 600kbps
  - e. Compressor quality: Best
4. Click Options to set 3ivx specifics
5. Select Dual Pass - First Pass
6. Click on the Advanced Tab
  - a. Force keyframes every 5 delta frames
  - b. Check Adaptive Quantization
7. Click OK, then click OK again
8. Next set the Video size to 320 X 240 pixels
9. Sound Settings:
  - a. Format: AAC
  - b. Channels: Mono
  - c. Don't try to set the Rate - instead set the Target Bit Rate to 32kbps
  - d. The Rate (sample rate) will automatically change to 32kHz
10. Click OK
11. Make sure Prepare for Internet Streaming is checked and set to Fast Start
12. Click OK, then click SAVE. The First Pass will then start.

After the first pass is done you will need to drag the 3ivx2pass log file to your desktop while you set up the second pass.

Mac - HOME > LIBRARY > PREFERENCES > 3ivx2pass.log

PC - C: > 3ivx2pass

1. Now set up the second pass.
2. In QuickTime Pro: FILE > EXPORT
3. Select Movie to QuickTime Movie
4. Click OPTIONS
  - a. Video Settings:
  - b. Click the options button and switch Encoder Mode from Dual Pass - First Pass
  - c. to Dual Pass - Second Pass

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<sup>7</sup> [www.apple.com/quicktime](http://www.apple.com/quicktime)

<sup>8</sup> [www.3ivx.com](http://www.3ivx.com)

5. Click OK, OK, OK but DON'T CLICK SAVE YET.
6. Replace the new 3ivx2pass log file with the one you moved to the desktop.
7. Then, back in QuickTime Pro, click SAVE (replace the first pass video).<sup>9</sup>

That's it! It may seem like compression is a lot of work. You will be happy you did it. Also, make sure that the Fast Start button is clicked when you are making a QuickTime video. This will make it able to be streamed online, allowing a viewer to see the video as it is downloading instead of needing to wait for the entire video to download to their computer before being able to watch it.

The compression technique mentioned above will also allow you to produce videos that can be downloaded and watched in iTunes as well as viewed on the increasingly popular video iPod. It's definitely worth the money to produce quality videos that can be viewed online.

So, you've made your video, compressed it into a nice neat package, and uploaded it to one of the suggested video hosting services. Now, how will people actually see your videos? There are many ways they could do this. They could go to your site and just watch the videos there. This is a popular way to do it. Wouldn't it be great if there was a way to let everyone know each time you put a new video online? It would be cool if they didn't always have to go to your site to see it. Maybe they could get them delivered to their computer. That's where RSS and aggregators come in handy for all of us.

RSS (Really Simple Syndication)

RSS is a type of web feed that will make it possible for users to be notified when various sites are updated. RSS stands for Really Simple Syndication, meaning that it is a way to syndicate, or group stuff for delivery. It's not the purpose of this book to explain everything about RSS. What you need to know about it is that it is a very easy way for people to know when your site has been updated. In videoblogging terms, it's a way for you to deliver your content to someone else without them having to physically visit your website.

If you set up a blog for your videos, you already will have RSS. The question is whether it will work to deliver video content. If you want a sure-fire way of making sure that your site has an RSS feed that will deliver media content, then use feedburner to make a feed for your

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<sup>9</sup> This entire process is released by freevlog.org under a Creative Commons, Attribution, non-commercial, share-alike 2.5 License.

site. With Feedburner, you can even be sure that the content of your site can be delivered via iTunes (either audio or video). They make it really easy. All you have to do is put in your site address, and they will create an RSS feed for you. You can optimize and publicize your site with lots of interesting things they have for you, too.

There are other RSS sites that can help you with your feed, including sites that allow users to sign up to receive emails anytime you update your site. That feature might be useful to you now that you have everything set up, too.

### Aggregators

An aggregator is a program that allows people to subscribe to RSS feeds and will deliver the content to their computer. With an aggregator, you can subscribe to different feeds but see them all using one program.

One of the most popular web based aggregators is Bloglines ([www.bloglines.com](http://www.bloglines.com)). It allows you to sign up for different blogs and get the content right on their site. Anytime any one of the blogs that you are subscribed to updates their site, you will be able to see that on Bloglines. This helps avoid the need for checking hundreds of sites daily.

There are also aggregators for media content. Mefedia, Fireant, and iTunes are three of the most popular media aggregators right now. Mefedia is a web-based media aggregator with which people can subscribe to different video blogs, receive the content from them in a play list style format, and watch them all from the Mefedia website. Mefedia also ranks different feeds based on popularity and allows searches and tags for video content.

Apple's popular program iTunes delivers thousands of podcasts and "video podcasts" to users everyday. With iTunes (and FireAnt), users can subscribe to different feeds and the computer program will automatically download the media file anytime that feed is updated. This is a great way to manage media content on your computer, allowing people to subscribe to your videos and watch them when they get the time.

I have intentionally been very broad with the discussion of these things because they are not of utmost importance when it comes to getting the attention of the YouTube Generation. The important thing is that you are aware of these things, and that we all begin to think about

how to use the various aspects of online video in our ministries. Before we go any further, however, we must take into account some special considerations.

## Special considerations

Remember that the young people in your church are not the only ones who will probably see your videos. Be prepared for negative feedback. It will come. There will be people (both Christian and not) who will be ready to blast you for what you are doing. This was evident early in 2006 when a video for a worship conference was posted on Youtube. There were people who were ready to blast the responsible ministry for heresy because of the type of music that was used in the video. Be prepared for this. Anytime we put stuff on the internet, somebody will be waiting to share comments. Many of those comments may not be easy to take. Don't say someone didn't warn you.

Negative comments, or comments that go against what you are trying to say in a video, will also come. People who don't agree with your religious or political point of view will watch your videos, too. They will want to share their thoughts. How you deal with these comments will say a lot about the credibility of your online video. Remember that your intended audience is not always your only audience. Be prepared to respond to these comments. You could moderate comments and filter out the negative ones, but this will cause a lot of negative feedback. It might be a better response to allow those comments (when not vulgar) and respond to them. Our students live in a world where people do not always agree with them. They need to have a good example of how to respond to negative feedback about their faith. Your online video can be that environment, if you let it.

## A word about copyrights, music, and licenses

Many videos that are online today seem to laugh at copyright infringement. It is important to note that copyright is a serious thing. I don't want anyone stealing my ideas, especially if there is a possibility to profit from them. I think most people are the same way. When you use copyrighted music in a video, you are running a risk because you are using

someone else's ideas. Be careful with this. If you are not careful, they will ask you to take down the entire video.

One of the best things to do to avoid this is to use music that you have permission to use. There is a ton out there licensed under creative commons, which means that the author has already given you permission. Do not fall into the trap of thinking that nobody will ever notice that you are using something you don't have permission to use. What happens if that really cool video you made gets really popular on Youtube, but you didn't have permission to make it? You might be forced to take it down. I don't know everything on the subject, but the advice I can give you is this: It's better to be safe than sorry. Find the cool music on sites that let you use the music. That way you won't have to think about it.

## Appendix 1: Five Easy steps to setting up a videoblog

1. Get a blog: Sign up at Blogger.com, Wordpress.com, or any other free blogging site (blogger is popular and easy). If you have a gmail account, you already have an account with the new blogger.com interface, so it shouldn't be any problem.
2. Record a video: Grab your digital camera or video camera and record a video. You don't even have to edit it. You could just record you talking into the camera. Editing is good, but not always necessary. Get that video you just recorded onto your computer.
3. Upload the video: Now that the video is on your computer, go to youtube, blip.tv, or any of the other video hosting sites available (and mentioned already). Sign up for an account (if you don't already have one). Next, go to the place where it says, "upload my video," and upload your video to the service. Before you know it, your video will be online.
4. Link to the video on your blog: After the video has been uploaded to the site, the site will provide you with a permalink (or link) to your video. On Youtube, you can either link to the page or embed the video into your site, which means that the video will be played on your blog (if you embed it). The important thing is that you tell the people who will read your new blog where to find that video you just made. Youtube and blip both give you options to copy and paste some code into your blog posts. Just do this if you need to.
5. Publish to your blog: After you've got the link to your video in your blog post, either by copy and paste or writing the code yourself, click the publish button. That's it. You've successfully posted a video to your website. Now check out your blog by clicking view site. Your link to your video should be in there. Kapow!

## Appendix 2: Storytelling Techniques

Many of the videos you will make might be stories. Using the following parts of good, epic stories might help you in making a good video for your ministry. I got these thoughts for good stories from a video from Vloggercon 2006.<sup>10</sup>

Most epic stories have seven parts. These parts all help with the plot of a story. In a plot, something happens because something else has happened. Everything builds on the other parts of the story. Really good stories make use of the following scenes.

*The Call to Adventure* is the part of the story where the hero gets an idea or has a challenge placed in front of him. You can usually tell where the story is going by seeing this first part. It may be a problem to overcome or a quest to find something.

Many times, the hero *will be mentored* in his quest. There will be someone who helps him with the problem to overcome. He will be taught something that will be beneficial later or he will learn something about himself that he will need as the story continues.

The *crossing over* part of a story is the part in which the hero of the story accepts the challenge and begins the quest. He enters the adventure, maybe leaving his old home or place to embark on the quest.

In many stories, our hero will *face many obstacles*. He will have to overcome these obstacles and ordeals in the story in order to complete the task at hand. Many times, overcoming these obstacles require something that he learned in the mentoring stage of the story.

Finally, the hero *acquires the quest object*. He gets what he was looking for. The mission is accomplished, even though he faced many obstacles to get there. It is a joyous time for all.

*The return* is what happens when the hero arrives back to the original place where he was at the beginning of the story. The audience can see how he has changed as a result of his quest, and he has a different place in the minds of people because of his adventure.

*Mastery and Freedom* is felt by the hero after this quest is over. He has obtained what he was searching for, and he now has the respect (in most cases) of the people from where he came. This is the final stage in the story, but it could mean that other stories and adventures await the hero in the future.

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<sup>10</sup> You can download and watch the video at [www.vloggercon.com](http://www.vloggercon.com).

## About the author

Dennis Poulette is a youth ministry trainer with Youth Ministry International. He currently lives in Mexico City, working at the Mexican Baptist Theological Seminary. He is the Director of Latin American Ministries for Youth Ministry International, training youth workers all over Latin America.

He is also a videoblogger. You can visit Mexico Movies, his personal videoblog at [www.ymimexico.org/vlog](http://www.ymimexico.org/vlog). This videoblog includes videos about his life and ministry, videos about Mexico, and, of course, family videos, especially of his son.

Dennis graduated from Liberty University with a degree in youth ministry, and he served as a youth pastor in Florida for seven years prior to leaving for Mexico. He is married to Janell, and they have a son named Nathan. The Poulette family's blog is [www.ymimexico.org](http://www.ymimexico.org).



## About [www.youthministrytv.com](http://www.youthministrytv.com)

YouthMinistryTV.com is a website dedicated to youth workers. YouthMinistryTV.com really wants to be a videoblog for youth workers all over the world. It is really a place for us to converse about various youth ministry topics and think about things that are on our minds.

I hope for youthministrytv.com to become a videoblog dedicated to youth workers and created with youth workers in mind. I want it to be a place where we can demonstrate what we are doing in our ministries and what we are thinking about in youth ministry. I want to see it become a place of resource and community. So, come check it out and help create it. If you're doing something online with youth ministry, let me know and I'll be happy to showcase it at [www.youthministrytv.com](http://www.youthministrytv.com).

## Acknowledgements

The people who got me started in internet video can be counted on one hand. Mostly, I got started with videoblogging by watching a guy named Aaron Flores. His videoblog ([www.thevoiz.com](http://www.thevoiz.com)) was one of the first who helped me understand how cool it was to post videos with thoughts about life on the internet. Without him, I wouldn't have gotten started with internet video.

The people of [www.Freevlog.org](http://www.Freevlog.org) helped me a ton with the technical aspects of getting my personal videoblog set up. Ryan Hodson ([www.ryanedit.blogspot.com](http://www.ryanedit.blogspot.com)) and Michael Verdi ([www.michaelverdi.com](http://www.michaelverdi.com)) have answered a lot of questions on freevlog.org, which has helped many people get involved in online video.

The videoblogging group at yahoo<sup>11</sup> has also played an influential role in my experience of videoblogging. This list is all about the community aspect of videoblogging, and you can find all kinds of information on this list about Vlogging.

### If you liked this book...

Please feel free to tell me. I'd love to hear your feedback and examples of how you are using online video in your ministry. If your thinking has changed about online video in ministry, I'd love to hear about it, too.

Also, if you liked the book, please forward it to someone else and tell them what you liked about it. It would be great to see youth workers all over the world involved in the online community, sharing their resources and thoughts about online video.

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<sup>11</sup> [www.yahoo.com/videoblogginggroup](http://www.yahoo.com/videoblogginggroup)



share

Please share.

Feel free to do any of the following:

1. Send this file to anyone.
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3. Print out as many copies as you like.
4. Use the principles in this book for your ministry (and tell us you did).



Just don't sell it, make changes to it in digital format, or bind it and sell it as a book.

If you made it this far in the book, you deserve a giant hug. Thanks for reading, and thanks for what you do with young people. Online video will never replace personal contact. You know this already. I want to thank you for the effort you make to connect with kids.