About SciShow
• www.youtube.com/scishow

Goals
• Evolve science education to reach and engage broad audiences online
• Create content that not only teaches but inspires and entertains viewers
• Build a loyal community of knowledge seekers who know and love its brand

Approach
• Started the channel with a bang
• Developed super engaging programming
• Encouraged audience participation
• Plugged into trending topics and conversations
• Got fans invested in the channel's success

Results
• 2M total subscribers
• 215M lifetime views
• 8.5M views per month
• 380K average views per video
• 3.1M minutes of watchtime per month

The Science Behind SciShow's YouTube Success

After three years and countless flasks, beakers and graduated cylinders, SciShow has emerged as one of the premier education channels on YouTube. Its unique brand of edutainment has attracted over 2M subscribers, many of whom affectionately refer to themselves as Nerdfighters. But how did SciShow do it? What can we learn from a channel that has testing, innovation and learning in its very DNA? We'll examine five strategies we think were responsible for its early and ongoing success.

Starting off with a (big) bang!

Having already built a thriving online community on the **Vlogbrothers** channel and across the social web, Hank Green was keenly aware of the power of true fans to support new initiatives.
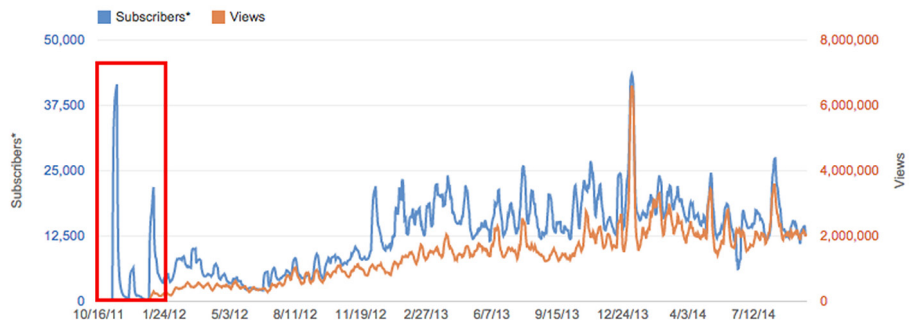
Before SciShow uploaded a single episode to the new channel, Green announced its upcoming launch to fans across the web—and Nerdfighters flocked to the new channel. Within two weeks, the channel had attracted more than 40K subscribers eagerly awaiting its first upload. Within the first day of upload, the channel attracted over 100K views, crossing 1M views in less than a month. Today the channel has more than 200M views and viewership is still growing fast.

Channels just starting out can build excitement by posting teasers, collaborating with other YouTube channels to get the word out and actively recruiting potential fans on social media.

**Infusing entertainment into educational topics**

There is no one single way to engage viewers, but Green's unique vlog-style format and audience retention tactics have undoubtedly played a role in SciShow's sky-high view-through rates. The combination of Green's direct address style and unwavering eye contact makes viewers feel as though they are having a conversation with a close friend.

His relentless flow of brain food—presented at a rapid 260 words per minute (WPM)—doesn't give viewers an opportunity to disengage. For comparison, the average American speaks 110–150 WPM, while notoriously fast-talking auctioneers speak at 250–440 WPM. The result of these engagement tactics is a channel-wide audience retention rate of 70%, with many videos driving more than 90% retention rates (including several longer-form videos).

Celebrating audience participation

At one time or another, most of us have had a teacher who would stand in front of the classroom and drone on and on until the bell rang—how boring was that? SciShow takes a different approach, infusing a healthy dose of audience interaction in all of its lessons.
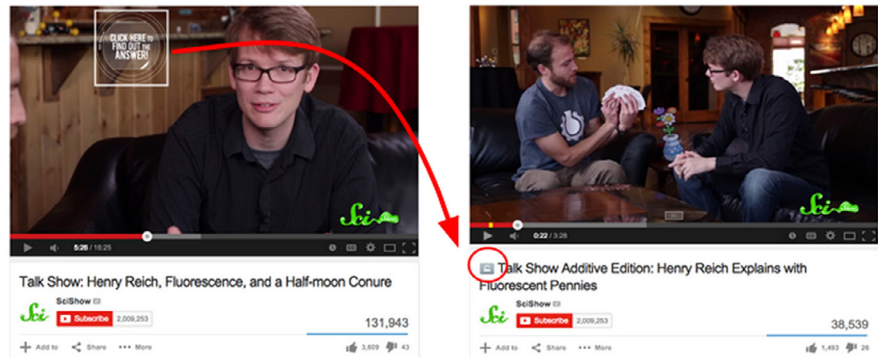
Some of the fun ways that audiences can get involved in SciShow include asking questions on social media that are then **answered** as standalone episodes on the channel. Fans can also interact with annotations to uncover answers and in-depth explanations in separate videos (see image above). By encouraging and celebrating audience participation, SciShow has been able to achieve higher Comment and Like rates than other top educational channels (3x and 2x, respectively).

Engaging audiences on topics that matter

Channels that are able to anticipate popular topics can take some of the guess work out of content production and deliver videos that audiences actually want to watch.

SciShow is keenly in tune with its audiences and what they are most likely to want information about. The channel frequently creates videos that help explain complex topics in layman terms, debunk myths and otherwise offer insightful commentary. SciShow videos about topical information (such as Ebola) drive approximately 150% higher viewership in the first week of upload than other top-performing videos, signaling that there is significant demand for this type of content. Doubling down on its early success with trending topics, SciShow launched a ten-day series titled **"World's Most Asked Questions"** in which trending Google searches serve as the source of future programming ideas.

Engaging fans through sustainable streams of funding and programming

To maintain high-quality content, SciShow knew it had to find a sustainable stream of funding and programming to continue engaging fans with the brainfood to which they had become accustomed.

In 2013, Green built **Subbable**, a voluntary content-funding and engagement platform powered by actual fans of the show, making it available to other creators as well. Viewers turned into supporters and helped fund new content by donating to the channel and its mission of educating the world. In exchange, donors could receive attribution and influence the programming they helped fund; personal messages, image sponsorships, episode credits and topic selections are just a few of the ways fans could be featured on the channel. In addition, the channel introduced a content format called **"Quiz Show"** in which YouTubers compete in a battle of wits on behalf of select fans. All of these efforts helped convert fans into loyal channel supporters with a vested interest in seeing SciShow succeed.
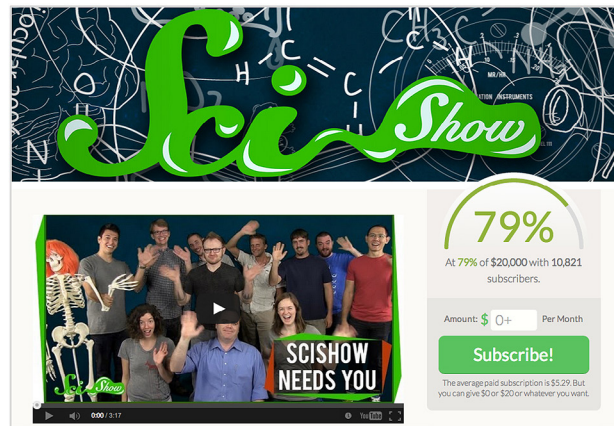
Realizing that SciShow could be (and already was) so much more than a single host, Green invited guest stars, industry experts and cohosts to help scale the SciShow brand. Notable guests have included Derek Muller (**Veritasium**), Henry Reich (**MinutePhysics**) and LeVar Burton (**Reading Rainbow**), among others. By featuring other faces on the channel, SciShow is better able to provide audiences with a wide range of information and consistent programming. Green is keenly aware that he, as a person, cannot scale as well as the SciShow brand can. With that in mind, he is now building **SciShowSpace** to include other hosts that can develop the SciShow brand without his 100% involvement.

Conclusion

SciShow has shown us that education doesn't have to be dry regurgitation of facts; it can be an entertaining, interactive and enriching experience. And by taking that approach, SciShow has become one of the leading educational channels on YouTube, amassing hundreds of millions of views and a subscriber community that anxiously awaits each new upload.