



# YouTube Ads Rewind: A LOOK BACK AT THE YEAR'S BEST

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## THE **RUNDOWN**

PUBLISHED  
*December 2014*

Today, brands are making some of the most popular content on YouTube. Case in point: People chose to spend nearly 1 billion minutes watching the top 10 ads on YouTube this year. The key word there is “chose.” Brands are making content that people *want* to watch, and those people are coming to YouTube to tune in. Every December, we celebrate the year’s top ads—based on views, sharing and watchtime—with the YouTube Ads Rewind Video. This year, we have a lot to celebrate.

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This year was a breakthrough year for ads on YouTube; some of the most popular content uploaded came from brands—from CPGs to NGOs. Whether they tugged our heartstrings or tickled our funny bones, these videos made a lasting impression and viewers shared them around the world. Let's take a look back at some of the most chosen ads of the year:



Besides impressive engagement, what do these ads have in common? In looking at the trends, we have five recommendations for brand advertisers in 2015:

## 1. TAKE ALL THE TIME YOU NEED

After years of being confined to 60-, 30- or even 15-second spots, brands are stretching their legs on YouTube and taking the time they need to tell compelling, memorable brand stories. The top 10 ads on YouTube in 2014 averaged three minutes in length. That's 47% longer than the videos on the Leaderboard in 2013. When viewers *choose* to watch an ad, there's no time limit: Consumers are happy to stay tuned if the content stays interesting.

## 2. GIVE EVENTS A BEFORE AND AFTER

Pigskin or vinyl, oblong or spherical, field or pitch, football fans flocked to YouTube in 2014. But now, as audiences turn to YouTube to extend the shared experience of their favorite events, brands have an even bigger window in which to engage them. Fans spent a staggering 14 million hours watching the top 10 Super Bowl and World Cup

ads featured in the Ads Rewind video. Seventy-five percent of those hours were earned *before* or *after* game time. Whether your brand's event is the World Cup or a World of Warcraft convention, consider engaging the community with event-centric content.

### 3. EXPAND SUCCESSFUL STORYLINES

When brands build on an existing storyline on YouTube, fans rally behind plots or characters they recognize and relate to. Evian, for example, continued its 2013 ["Baby & Me"](#) story in 2014 with ["The Amazing Baby & Me"](#) video. When the sequel launched, the brand saw a 4x week-over-week increase in views of the original "Baby & Me." Rather than reinventing your branded content in 2015, consider how your brand can continue the conversation you started in 2014.

### 4. SHAPE THE CULTURAL CONVERSATION

Videos such as Save the Children's ["Most Shocking Second a Day"](#) and Always' ["#LikeAGirl"](#) challenged viewers to rethink social norms and sparked important conversations in 2014. Users saw their [personal passions](#) reflected in these ads and shared them accordingly: Always earned more than 300,000 likes, shares and comments in 30 days on YouTube alone, driving its view count to nearly 60 million in the first month; Save the Children saw its views jump to 21 million in just the first five days.

### 5. LEVERAGE CREATOR KNOW-HOW

BuzzFeed knows a good cat video when it sees one, and Purina Friskies knows a good cat video creative partner. Like many YouTube creators, BuzzFeed is an expert at making videos that its audience will choose to watch and share. Together, Friskies and BuzzFeed mastered the branded cat video in 2014 with ["Dear Kitten."](#) Six months after its release, "Dear Kitten" is still the #1 video on BuzzFeed's channel and boasts a 98% favorability rating.

The power of audience choice is reshaping advertising. Brand stories are more evocative, timely and, surprisingly, longer than ever. Successful video ads have evolved from one-offs to serialized stories. And brands are working with new partners, such as YouTube creators, to make content that people choose. We're looking forward to seeing how brand advertisers continue to adapt to choice in 2015. But for now, let's continue to toast their success with the top 10 ads and top 10 trailers of the year in our [2014 Year-End Ads Leaderboard](#) and [2014 Year-End Trailers Leaderboard](#).