

# **VIRAL**

## **VIDEO FRAMEWORK AND FORMATS**

by Brendan Kane

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# INTRODUCTION

This guide breaks down the formats and frameworks that we have seen increase the likelihood of content going viral. The information in this document can serve as a guide for content creation, whether you are creating it on your own or you have an in-house creative team or person— in which case you can supply them with this guide.



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# Meme Cards And Hooks For Video On Instagram And Facebook

## How to Leverage Meme Cards for Virality

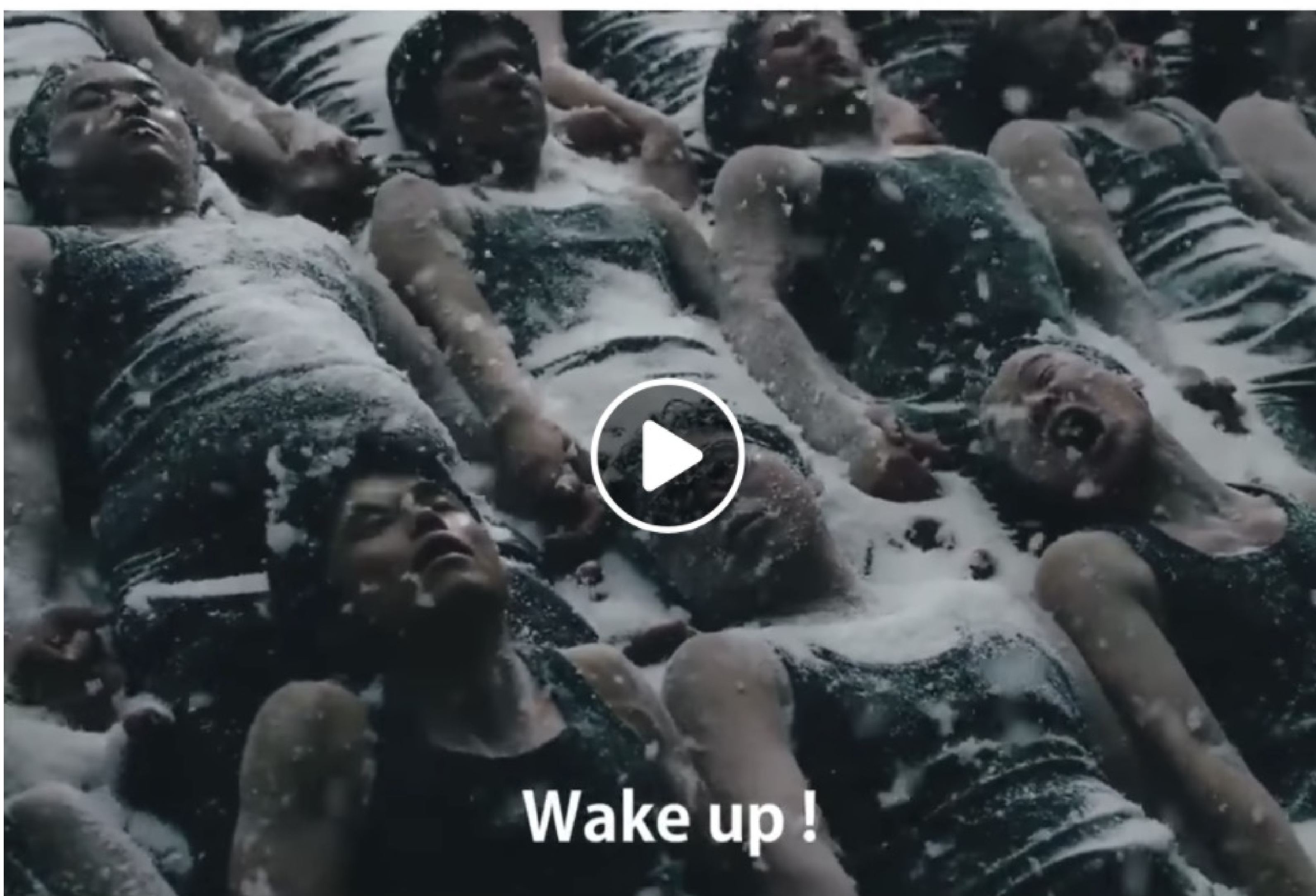
A key tactic for driving video virality on Facebook and Instagram is something called a “meme card.”

Everyone has seen them, or may have even created meme cards in the past. There are key nuances and strategies to making high-performing meme cards, and we are going to share some of our strategies for effective ones.

First, let’s define what a meme card is: A meme card is a social media design strategy that allows you to put a text headline in the forefront of your video content messaging. This allows you to communicate the “hook point” of your content, or why your video matters, in less than 3 seconds to grab people’s attention and build retention. Retention (the length of time someone watches your video) is critically important to viral content. If you have little retention, algorithms will suppress your content and reach. If you have high retention, algorithms will want to distribute your video with as many people as possible, potentially even beyond your followers.

## Meme Card Examples:

**You'll never guess  
what this ad is for**





# ARE YOU A **LEADER?** OR JUST A **SHEEP?**



and Marques died on the spot!

Notice the design in the meme card examples above. In comparison to solely providing a caption with a video post, you'll notice how quickly and effectively the meme cards on the video examples draw your eye and attention immediately. It piques curiosity, and enables you to instantly capture an audience's attention and drive your message, with little effort required by the audience. With a meme card, the audience doesn't need to read through a bunch of copy to decide if they're interested.

The sole purpose and goal of a meme card is to get someone to stop and watch your video as they are using the internet and social media. The headline of the meme card is one of the most important (and effective) elements in achieving this.

## **Crafting An Effective Headline For Your Meme Card**

Most who use meme cards fail at captivating the audience's attention because they try to get the viewer to understand what the entire video is about within the meme headline. This approach overwhelms, confuses, or disengages the viewer as they quickly scroll through media and content. It requires too much work on the audience's part to decide if they want to engage with the content.. . You have less than 3 seconds to capture people's attention. If you can't get your viewer to stop and look, all of the hard work you put into the rest of the video goes to waste.

Another way people go wrong with their meme card headline is trying to treat the headline like the title of a book. The meme headline should not try to explain or summarize the content, rather its purpose is to start the conversation and create engagement.

10 additional common issues with unsuccessful meme card headlines:

1. Too wordy
2. Confusing
3. Vague
4. Overused / too common (frequently used by others, or are common sense)
5. Not relevant to audience
6. Outdated – not up to date with current standards of how language is used online
7. Assuming that people are already interested in a topic
8. Inauthentic
9. Difficult to understand in under 3 seconds
10. Using language that doesn't catch the eye or that is unappealing

If you are seeking to improve at creating effective meme cards, I recommend joining our One Million Views Club Private Community:

<https://secure.brendanjane.com/one-million-views-club-1-dollar-trial>

## High-Performing Meme Card Examples

As mentioned earlier, a great meme card provokes or captivates the viewer. It doesn't summarize the video, and it is not a "title." It gives them just enough information so that they engage, and feel a subconscious urge or need to watch the video in order to feel satiated. Think of a meme card like a movie or TV show trailer. Give the audience just enough on it to make them want to stop scrolling and watch. Your content can take over from there.

### Example 1:

[This meme card](#) plays on the natural, human desire to be as a leader, rather than a follower. It evokes a connection with the audience because it's something that many people subconsciously insecure about. By framing the video with this in mind,, we engage the viewer's emotions and provoke their curiosity,




prompting them to watch and listen, and to ultimately determine how the video makes them feel. All good content, as well as products, ultimately make people feel something. It causes them to form a connection.

The success of this meme card was achieved by using as few words as possible, and without direct reference to the topic of the video. It’s an appetizer, but ties nicely to the core concept of the video. Keep in mind, the core concept of this video is psychological effect called “the Bystander Effect.” However, using that effectively in the title would require the viewer to have pre-existing interest in the effect itself–and As such, we made the decision not to use it in the headline.

<https://www.instagram.com/p/B0YchMTI3GQ/>


ARE YOU A **LEADER?**  
OR JUST A **SHEEP?**




and Marques died on the spot!

▶ 0:28 / 2:41

🔊 🔍 ⋮

 **brendankane** ⋮

 **brendankane** Are You A Leader Or A Sheep?

Stand out. Make the first move.



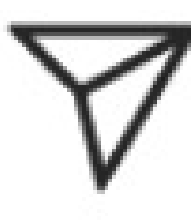
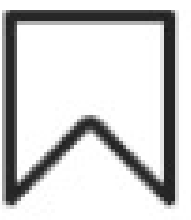
Studies show that when others don't take action, we're less likely to take action, too.

That's why it's so important to pick the crowd we're in carefully.

Leaders are simply people who make decisions and take action.

They do what is best for people and the situations they're in no matter what.

Next time you make a decision, do what YOU feel is right. Be the leader in your

**465,690 views**

JULY 26, 2019

Add a comment...

Post



## Example 2:

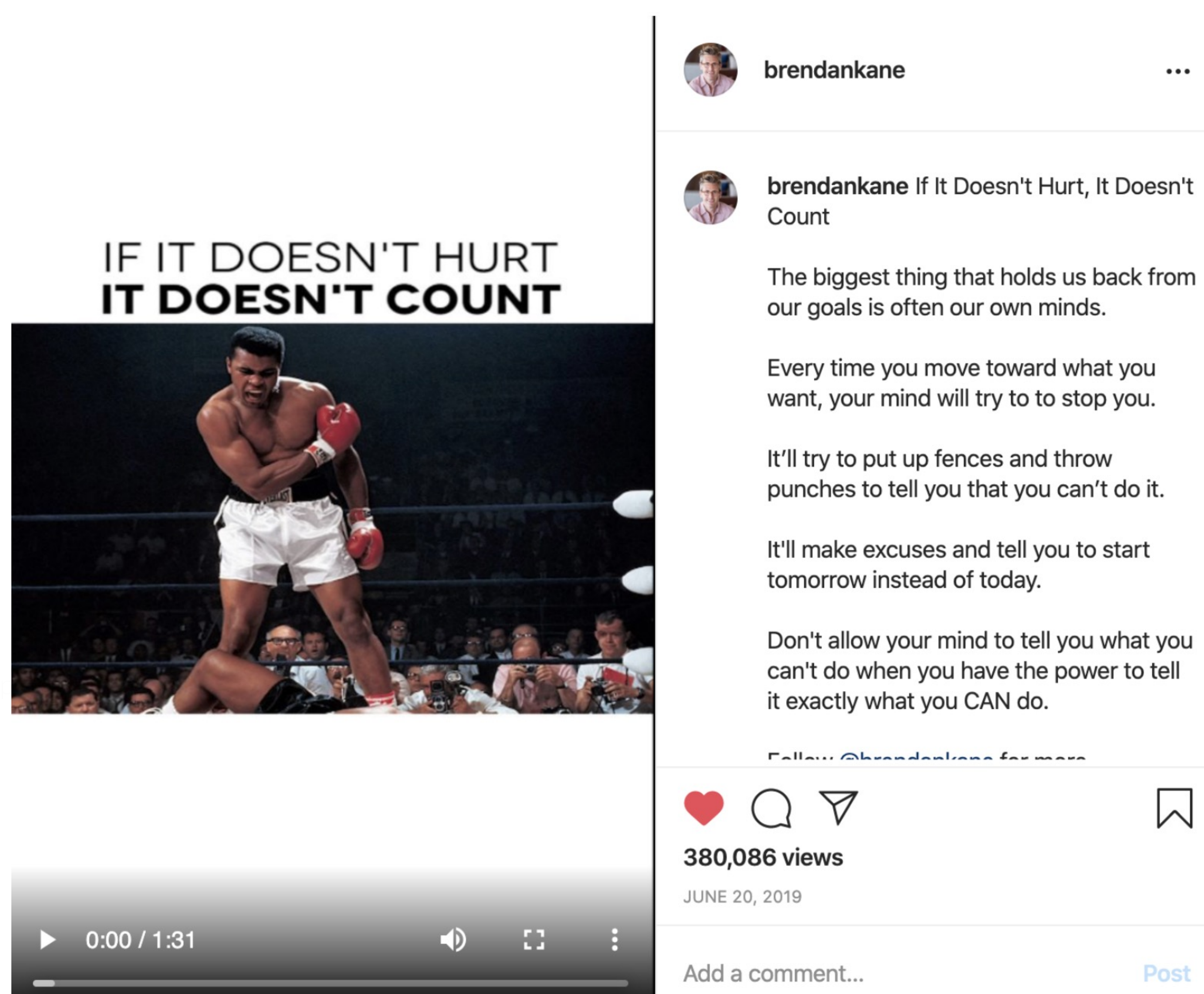
[This meme card's](#) strategy is to work side-by-side with the opening video footage to create engagement, rather than acting as a pure hook on its own. This creates a very guided and linear viewing experience within the first 3 seconds: Here's how this strategy engages the audience:

1. First, they read the headline. It “hooks” them in.
2. Next, they process what they're seeing in the video footage. The footage is very easy to understand visually. This enables them to process it quickly. Engagement is attained.
3. Then, they are pulled into the story without delay. The audience is now retained.

By designing the meme card in this way, the video is able to convert its potential audience into a fully-retained viewer within 3 seconds .

It may seem obvious, but designing a meme card and opener with clear and linear intent (in this case, using the above 3 steps) can generate massive improvements in performance. It can be very tempting to take this for granted, which often results in poor creative decisions or sloppy execution.

<https://www.instagram.com/p/By7w60UlnCJ/>






Example 3:

[This meme card](#) takes a general strategy. It plays on the common notion that the news lies to us, that social media lies to us, and that generally speaking, we're being manipulated.

This becomes the hook because not only does it tie into the concept of the video itself, but again plays on underlying emotions that people have. Everyone is familiar with the feeling of being lied to, or speculation about what they read and hear.. Imagine that a coworker told you that the boss had been lying to everyone about why you weren't getting a bonus this year. It's a very visceral feeling...and tapping into emotions in that way is an incredibly powerful tool for generating engagement.




<https://www.instagram.com/p/BwcdsobH1xW/>



ARE YOU BEING LIED TO?




you see all the pretty pictures

0:13 / 1:31







 **brendankane** 

 **brendankane** Are You Being Lied To?

Comparison puts focus on the wrong person.

- We live in a world where everyone's successes--are always visible and easy to access, all the time.
- This creates the illusion that your life lacks everything and that others have everything.
- In this video I share the cold truth with you.
- Tag someone that needs to see this!

48w



**177,693 views**

APRIL 19, 2019

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# Low-Performing Meme Card Examples


Below are examples of ineffective meme cards. We don't get things right every time, and neither does anyone else. We constantly test to learn what does and doesn't work as we develop new ideas. In order to master content on digital platforms, you will constantly need to do the same. If you have read my book One Million Followers, you will remember the importance of Hypothesis, Test, Pivot. Even though the examples below were not effective, we are constantly able to learn from them.


## Example 1:

Asking a question as your hook point can be tricky. One of the biggest traps of using a question as a hook point is that it can be too easily answered, causing the audience to disengage. That's the case [in this example](#).

Audiences exposed to this type of meme card design will already have a preconceived answer to the question presented, even before they see the meme card. When the viewer has already answered the question, they're likely to decide that they don't need to watch the video. Effective content always provokes the audience to think, feel, or take action. This meme card didn't achieve any of these things.


<https://www.instagram.com/p/BwKIJxJHoOu/>

IS DOING WHAT YOU  SMART?





@BRENDANKANE


YOU THINK ABOUT IT

brendankane


49w Reply

jtrevorchapman  Great content 🙌


49w Reply

jasna.burza Absolutely worth it ❤️




47w Reply

markwilson.art I like cleaning toilets it's my passion, I think about it even when I'm not doing it

34w Reply

davidloveofficial @votolato75

29w Reply



63,395 views

APRIL 12, 2019

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The headline of this meme card falls into two traps. First, it attempts to summarize, or title the video. This can instantly lose any of the audience that doesn't have an inherent interest in the topic. They will quickly move on as a result, without giving the video's content a chance to create that interest..

However, the biggest problem is that the title is too obvious and overused. There's nothing new, intriguing or captivating, even if you are someone interested in the topic. As a result, it falls flat. Much of the audience will move on to something that feels more interesting to them.

The content of this video does offer an interesting perspective on the subject, but unfortunately most viewers never got to that point in the video because of the issues with the meme card headline.

WHY IT'S IMPORTANT TO KNOW  
WHO YOUR AUDIENCE IS



WHETHER YOU ARE PUSHING  
OUT A BOOK,

brendankane

...

dellombard

@dellombardmodelportfolio  
@fashionsilueta

51w Reply

michaeltip

#urbangreenreport 🚲  
#denver

46w Reply

iamfmhmdi

@iamxmohammad he  
looks like you but if you die your hair  
😬

44w Reply

i\_am\_that\_ghost

🔥🖤🔥👻💯

26w Reply



12,805 views

MARCH 15, 2019

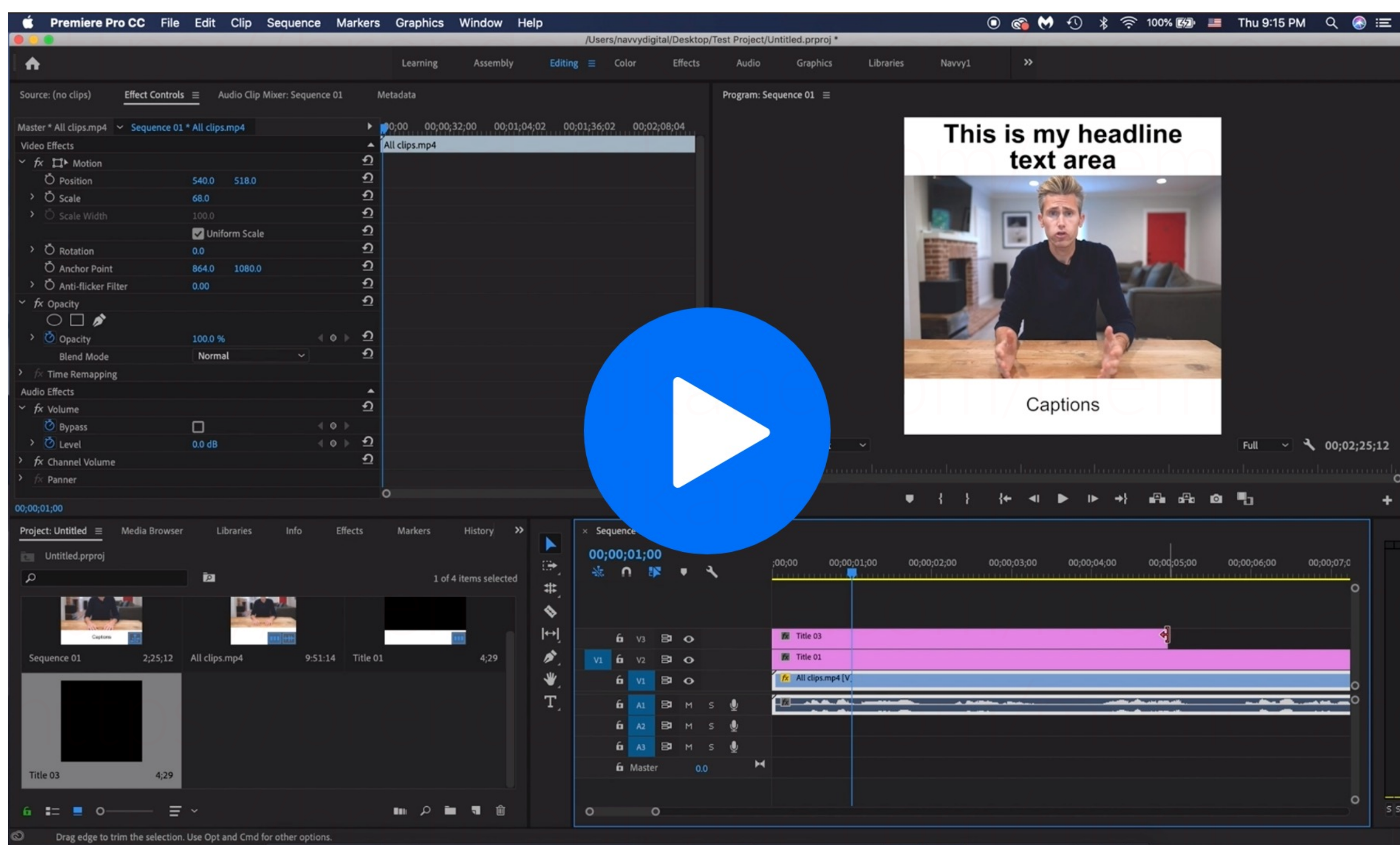
Add a comment...

Post

<https://www.brendanjane.com>



# How to Create a Meme Card: Technical Steps



Now that you're familiar with meme cards and the ways that they can succeed or fail, let's break down the technical aspects to creating them.

Important considerations to pay close attention to when creating meme cards:

- Font selection
- Font size
- Font weight
- Colors (both the font, and the banners)
- Spacing

These elements are critically important. If not designed properly, your meme card could distract, confuse or overwhelm the viewer, to the point that they ignore your content or disengage and scroll past your post.

When we create high-performing meme cards for Instagram and Facebook, we use the following guidelines. These instructions will work with most video editing software. We use Adobe Premiere Pro, but you can use these tactics and strategies with most video editing software. You can find a number of tutorials for Adobe Premiere Pro online, as well as other video editing software available.

Video editing software can seem intimidating, but there are a number of very easy options available for beginners. Many video editing software providers offer free, short-term trials to help you get familiar with the tools offered. Explore what is most comfortable to you.

Once you have familiarized yourself with the basics of Adobe Premiere or another video editing software, you'll be able to follow the instructions below to create a meme card for a video. If you are not doing the editing, you can supply these instructions to the video editor you use to create a meme card for you.



If you prefer written instructions, they are as follows:

1. [Start by creating a new video](#) with the dimensions of **1080px by 1080px** (square).
2. [Insert your video footage](#). Try to place the video in the vertical center of the frame, but don't worry if it's not filling the screen. You can adjust it later.
3. [Create a new shape](#), **a white box that is 190px in height, 1080px across**. Place it at the top edge of your video. This should be consistent in most software, you just need to create a white box (it does specify what this means if you click here).
  - **Copy that shape**, or create a new shape with the same dimensions. Place it at the bottom edge of your video.
4. [Adjust the video you placed earlier](#). The video should fill the space between the white bars you just created. Size the video up or down to achieve the look you want within that space.
5. [Add the headline text. Start with Arial Bold, font size 83 in black](#). Using the text tool, type in your text. Place your text box inside the top white box, making sure to keep spacing nice and even on the top and bottom, as well as in between the lines of text.

You can use the text editor in most software to adjust the spacing between lines of text, if it feels too wide. Make sure you're keeping everything centered and/or "snapped" to the center line horizontally!
6. Look in the video's timeline. Take all the elements/clips you've created, and [extend them out so they are the same duration as the video footage](#).
7. **Captions**. If your video has dialogue, now's the time to create text for it. Start at the beginning of the timeline and create a new text element and type in the first line of captions. Place it inside of the bottom white box. Use Arial Regular, font size 60, in black. Keep everything centered within that box horizontally and vertically. Once you've got that in place, adjust that text element in the timeline so that it starts and ends corresponding to the audio. Now, copy that clip, and move it to the right of the clip you just made (in the timeline). Replace the text inside that text element, and repeat this process until you've got all your captions in.

Remember that this can take time to learn. Take your time and pace yourself. You may feel clumsy or confused with the tools. Just keep in mind that you're learning something new. If the software you're using feels too complicated, consider trying other options or taking a tutorial. You can always hire someone else to create your videos and video meme cards if you prefer.



- If you want to edit the content yourself, here are two editing software options to consider:

- Adobe Premiere (industry standard and the platform, our team uses this as well)

<https://www.adobe.com/products/premiere.html>

- iMovie

- If you don't want to do the editing work, you can hire editors to create meme cards for you. Provide them with this framework document. Make sure they have experience in successfully creating viral video content, preferably with examples that have at least a few hundred thousand views. Resources for hiring video creators and editors:

- Post an ad on [Upwork](#). I have hired several people from here, you have to dig deep and search but there is talent here.

- Post an ad on [Craigslist.org](#). I have posted and hired several people from here. Make sure to ask for specific examples of content they have produced for clients in the past that has gone viral.

- [Repurpose House](#)

- Hire one of the editors we work with. Rates vary. Contact: [support@brendanjane.com](mailto:support@brendanjane.com) for more information

If you want to become a better content creator I recommend checking out our One Million Views Club Private Community:

<https://secure.brendanjane.com/one-million-views-club-1-dollar-trial>





# High Performance Formats

Video “formats” are a way to standardize and streamline some elements of production, so that you’re not creating everything from scratch for every video. This allows you to spend more time developing your hooks and content, while spending less time testing and designing what your end product should look like. Below, you’ll find examples of high performance formats that we’ve used in the past.

## Split Screen Format - Leading With Found Footage

This highly effective format makes use of what we call “found footage,” or footage that is already created and available on the internet, which we then edit with recordings of myself talking to the camera, or what we refer to as “monologue.”

This format is able to leverage the engaging qualities of the found footage, while giving you a forum to critique, comment on, and ultimately transform the footage into an entirely new piece of content. We also used a split screen visual approach with the video, which adds energy to content that would otherwise be one-dimensional, simply because of the dynamic visual nature of having two active videos on screen at once.

Insert split screen video

This one of the reasons this video was successful:

<https://www.instagram.com/p/B0YchMTI3GQ/>

# ARE YOU A **LEADER?** OR JUST A **SHEEP?**



brendankane



brendankane Are You A Leader Or A Sheep?

Stand out. Make the first move.

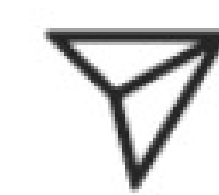
Studies show that when others don't take action, we're less likely to take action, too.

That's why it's so important to pick the crowd we're in carefully.

Leaders are simply people who make decisions and take action.

They do what is best for people and the situations they're in no matter what.

Next time you make a decision, do what YOU feel is right. Be the leader in your life.



465,690 views

JULY 26, 2019

Add a comment...

Post

We used the found footage to start the video with my voice over. If you watch the video, my voice starts immediately but I don't appear on the screen until 20 seconds in. By this time, we have hooked the viewer, we have built retention, and triggered the algorithm to show the video to more people on Instagram. If the video was me just speaking directly into the camera it wouldn't work as well. Here is an example of a video that was just me speaking into the camera that didn't work: <https://www.instagram.com/p/BvfWVjuoGqO/>. Watch both and you'll be able to identify the difference between the two. Especially pay close attention to the first 3 seconds in both videos.

Now, this is not to say that videos with someone speaking into the camera won't be successful. You will see many content creators that are amazing at it. But, what makes these videos work is the charisma, personality, and other attributes of the person in the video.



Using the format of found footage with monologue doesn't guarantee success. The found footage, meme card and overall concept of the video still has to be strong. You also have to be careful that your found footage doesn't feel too commercial, or like an ad. If the audience views something that feels too commercial, or like an advertisement, it will often lose interest and result in low engagement/low retention.

### **[An example of a video that underperformed due to stock footage feel.](#)**

An example of one that underperformed because we took a real advertisement and attempted to create a new spin on it: <https://www.instagram.com/p/Bxr950NhNyN/>

Note: We always recommend providing credit to the content creators for the content you use whenever possible. This is also not a format that should be used for monetization or advertising your products/services, unless you have permission to do so.

Fair Use: This is a gray area of how found footage and other content can be used on social media. We are not lawyers and do not provide legal guidance in this area. We recommend checking with your attorney or doing your own research. There are some resources we listed below as a starting point. Again, we do not validate or suggest these are accurate statements, but simply some resources to start reviewing on your own.

<https://www.copyright.gov/fair-use/more-info.html>

<https://fairuse.stanford.edu/overview/fair-use/what-is-fair-use/>

<https://fairuse.stanford.edu/overview/fair-use/four-factors/>

<https://www.legalzoom.com/articles/the-fair-use-doctrine-when-use-of-copyrighted-material-is-acceptable>

<https://www.legalzoom.com/articles/fair-use-and-fair-dealing-in-social-media>

[https://www.forbes.com/sites/oliverherzfeld/2016/05/26/fair-use-in-the-age-of-social-media/  
#3a3ef4683300](https://www.forbes.com/sites/oliverherzfeld/2016/05/26/fair-use-in-the-age-of-social-media/#3a3ef4683300)





# Back-End Commentary of Viral Videos Format




This format is very similar to the previous format discussed. The only difference is that you provide your commentary at the end of a viral video instead of intertwined with the found footage. Here is an example:


<https://www.instagram.com/p/B4XZYOCF0IK/>


Don't Play With Your Food!  
Me:




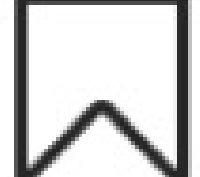



▶ 0:00 / 2:08



brendankane

brendankane Don't Play With Your Food!  
Good content that goes viral isn't luck.  
  
People ask me all the time how to make their content go viral.  
  
We all see videos that get huge views and shares and wonder how it's possible.  
  
Especially videos like this! I break it down and share why.  
  
Follow @brendankane for more  
  
Footage Credit: @janerichsen  
  
20w

suveriamota I don't know how I feel



319,638 views

NOVEMBER 2, 2019

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<https://www.brendanjane.com>



What we have learned is that if you find content that has already proven to go viral, it will most likely perform again on your own social channel. You will see a lot of content creators repurpose meme type videos and other viral content even if it's been posted on hundreds of other accounts. Why? It's because if the content has gone viral someplace else, it's likely triggering the algorithms to give more reach, which results in more engagement and likely new followers. Now the difference of what we have done with this format vs. what other accounts typically do is that we provide our commentary and perspective at the end of the video. We do this for a few reasons:

1. We wanted to create a new version of the work, and not just repurpose/repost someone's content. Adding our perspective provides value and builds brand. It allows us to provide our unique voice, insight and / or expertise. If we just post the video in its raw form it rarely ties back to our brand. Yes, this can be done in the caption provided with the video,, but providing perspective in the video drives more connection from the viewer to our brand.
2. Because the viral video is doing the heavy lifting in the first 3 to 5 seconds, it triggers the algorithms to release the video beyond our follower base and attract new followers and fuel further engagement.

My personal perspective is to only provide positive commentary on videos using this format. I don't want to tear anyone down, because A) I hate negativity on social media I think there is too much of it B) If someone sees you ripping on their video they may flag it or report you to get you to take it down. I have personally had content creators thank me for giving their work more exposure and sending more followers there way. One post helped generate 8K followers in 48 hours to another account.

Important note: all social platforms have (or are building) content ID systems to better detect when content is just repurposed. It is most prevalent with Facebook and Youtube. With Facebook you can get your content pulled down and flagged, and if you are a repeat offender your account can get shut down. This is especially prevalent with music content coming from major record labels. With Youtube it's often that the original owner will copyright claim the video allowing you to keep the video up, but they earn any advertising revenue generated from the video being on your channel. Instagram's system hasn't caught up with Facebook or Youtube just yet.



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Also, it's important to note that this is not a format to use if you are monetizing your content in any way, or using it as an advertisement (unless you have the appropriate permissions to do so).

Additionally, we always recommend providing credit to the content creators for the content you use whenever possible.

A few additional points about these formats. Be smart when choosing found footage. The footage should always be relevant to your brand, provide a unique perspective, credit the original creator of the content, and provide positive analysis. If someone asks you to take your video down, do so immediately. Follow the rules, be a good creator, and you'll avoid a lot of issues.

## **Narrative As Viral Video Format**

Narrative storytelling is an extremely powerful and viral format if you can do it effectively. Stories build retention, and keep audiences engaged. Think to times when a friend or family member tells you a story, or when you watch a movie. You typically stay engaged throughout the story because you want to know what happens in the end. Effective stories have a beginning, middle, and end. If the beginning of a story hooks you in, you'll most likely watch it until the end.

The same applies to social media content. When someone is presented a compelling intro to a story, they will almost always retain / watch longer.. As we discussed earlier the longer people watch, the more the algorithms will distribute your content to more people.



We also often see that stories open up to more emotional connection with viewers that can increase the overall shareability / virality.

[Jay Shetty](#) started off his career (and still does this today) through effective storytelling and short films. [Dhar Mann](#) is another remarkable narrative story teller that has gone viral with his short films. [The Dodo](#) goes viral all the time, telling compelling stories around animals using b-roll footage and voice over. The [World Economic Forum](#) tells compelling stories around companies, products and services that are transforming the world using a simple format of text overlays with b-roll footage and images.

In overview, the better that you can get at storytelling the more viral potential your content has.

If you are looking for more support in becoming a better content creator I recommend checking out our One Million Views Club Private Community:

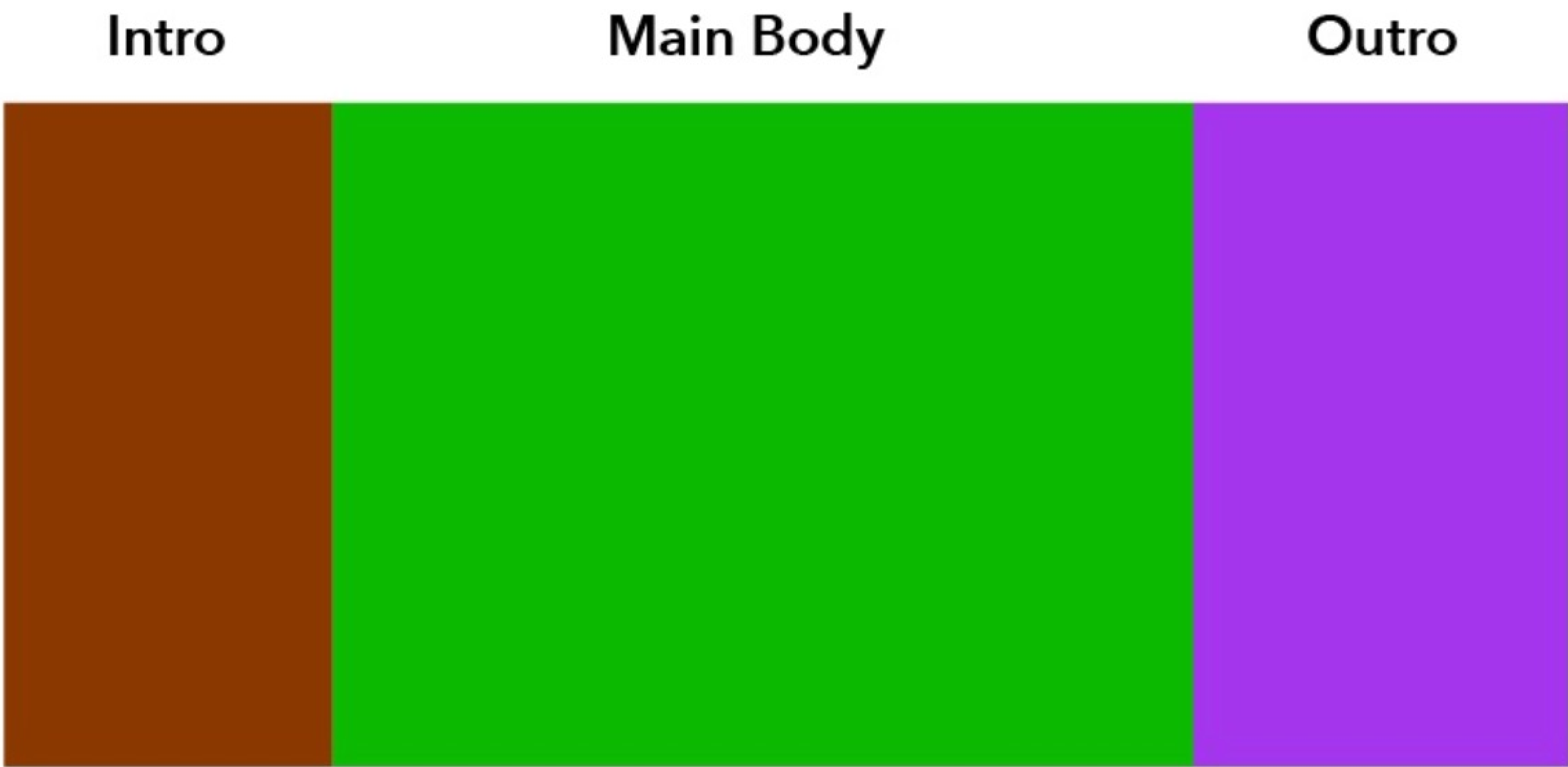
<https://secure.brendanjane.com/one-million-views-club-1-dollar-trial>

## How to Understand the Structure of Successful Videos

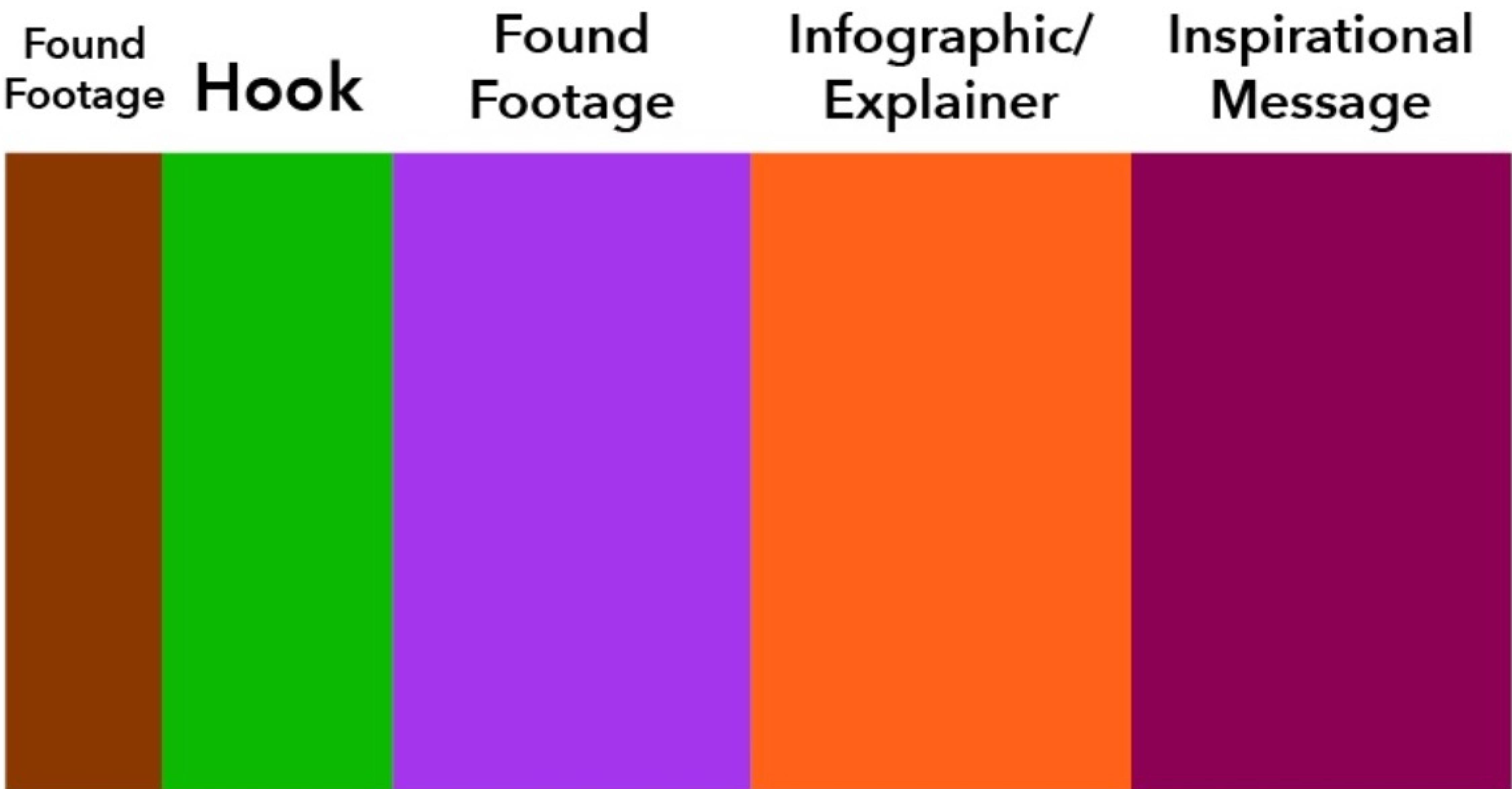
Whether you're creating videos for Youtube, Facebook, or Instagram, video structure is one of the most important things to understand and master. The structure of a video is essentially the "outline" of where and when the elements of your video will take place. Treat it just as you would if you were writing a 20 page essay. It's a lot easier when you have a framework to follow, and are then able to plug your content in.

There are hundreds (if not thousands) of different video structures out there. The key to success is identifying high-performing structures from other creators, and learning to break down how their video structures work. Once you understand the structures, all you need to do is plug in your own content with those structures, and you've got a very strong starting point.

Here is an example of an extremely basic story structure that most people are familiar with: Introduction, Main Body, Outro.



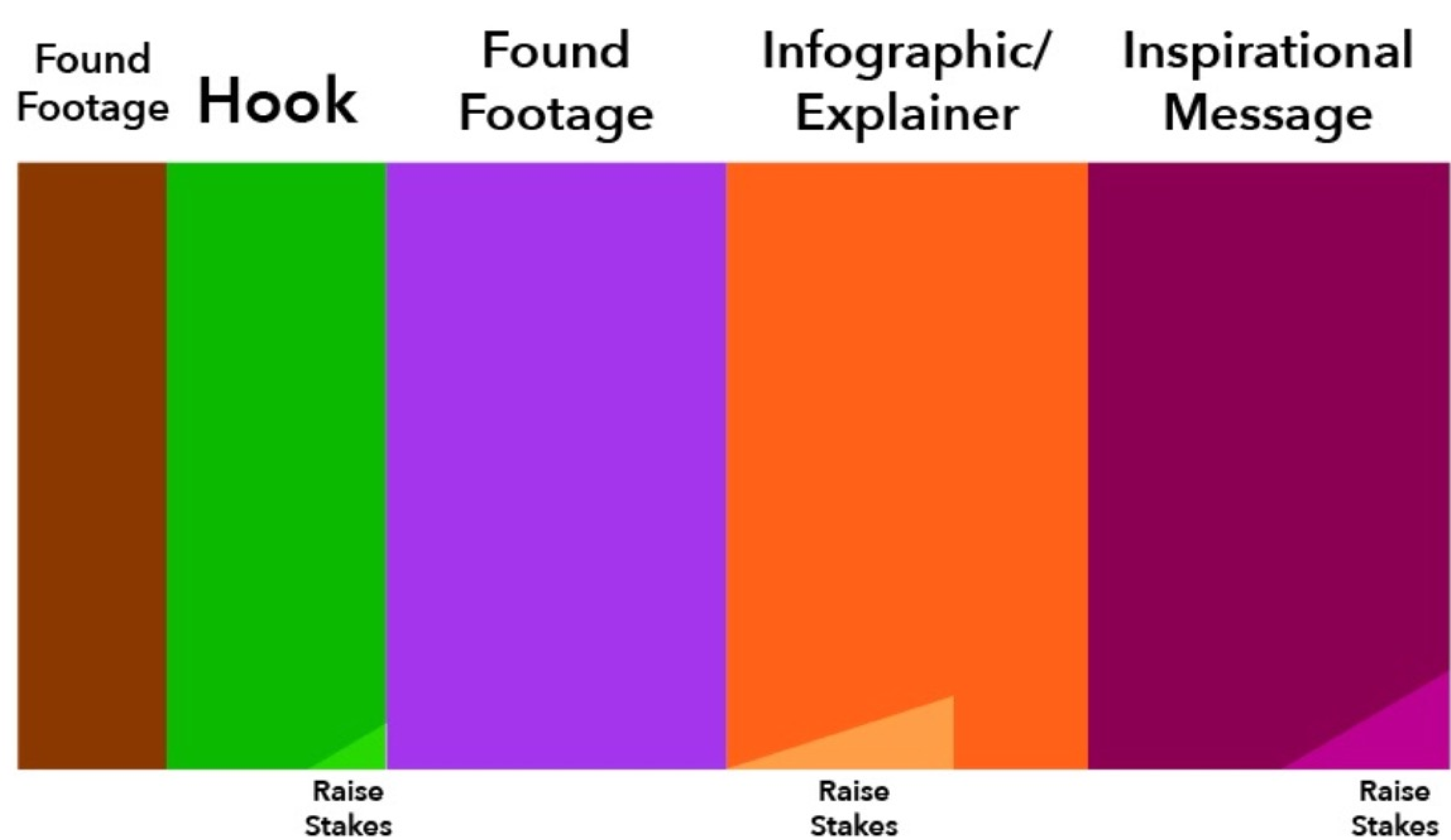
However, successful content creation requires more nuance than this, so we'll be adding more layers to it. Here is an example with more detail. When you're creating your own version of these diagrams as you research videos, feel free to define the blocks in any way that you'd like...but keep in mind the goal is to identify elements of the video's overall structure, not to pick out specifics of the content itself yet:





We’re still using the basic structure of our first example, but have added in more depth - found footage, the hook, etc.

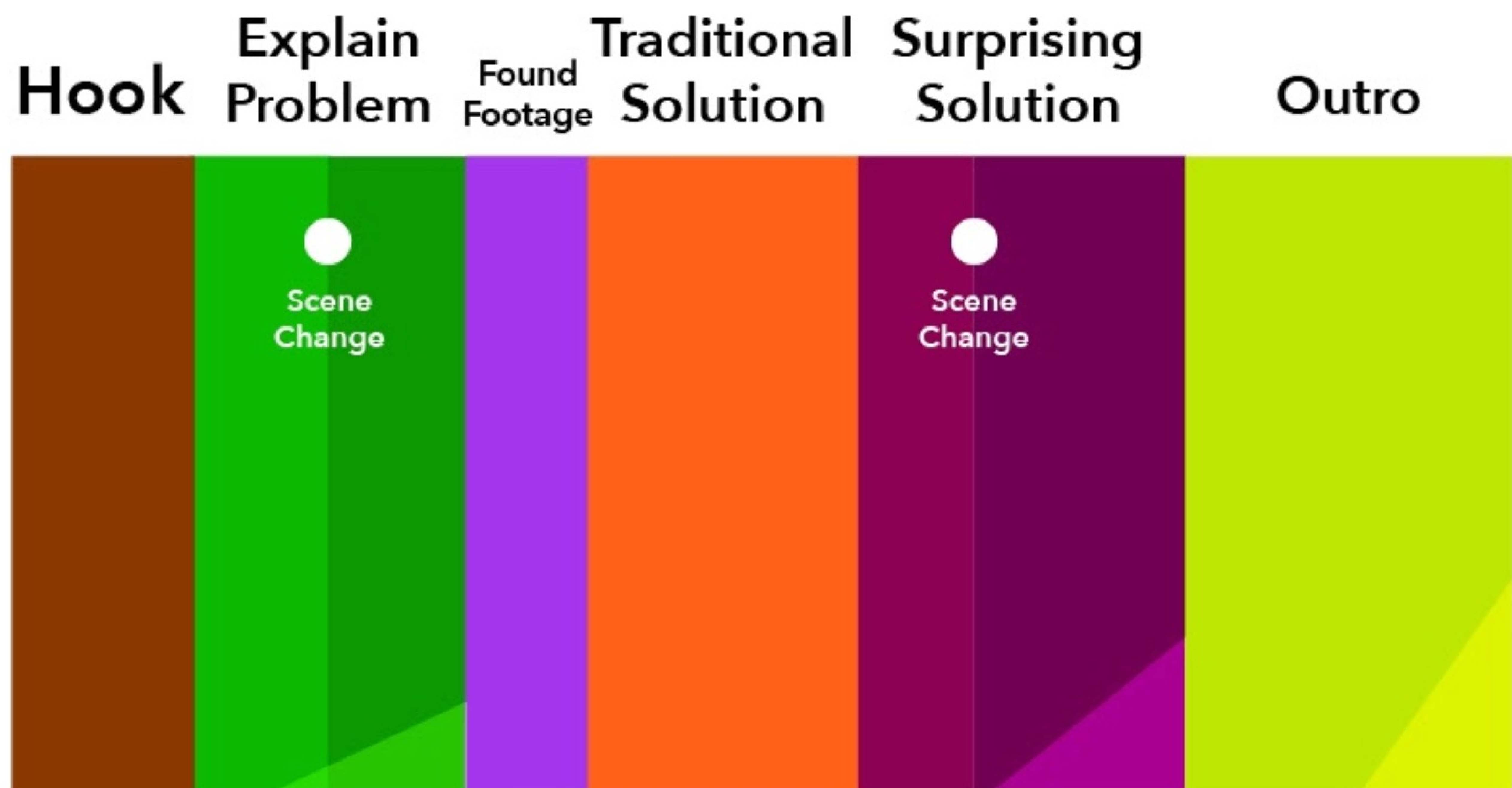
We can continue to build depth and add layers from there. “Raising the stakes” is a layer a lot of successful creators implement into their videos. The video increases the implications of what’s happening, driving intensity and excitement as the video continues to play. The creator Mr. Beast is a great example of this. Many likely recall the TV show, “Extreme Home Makeover,” which uses a similar effect. This is commonly referred to as the “Jenga effect,” as well. We add this into the structure below:



You can add your content to any of these formats at any stage. Or, you can add in even more layers and depth, such as these examples:

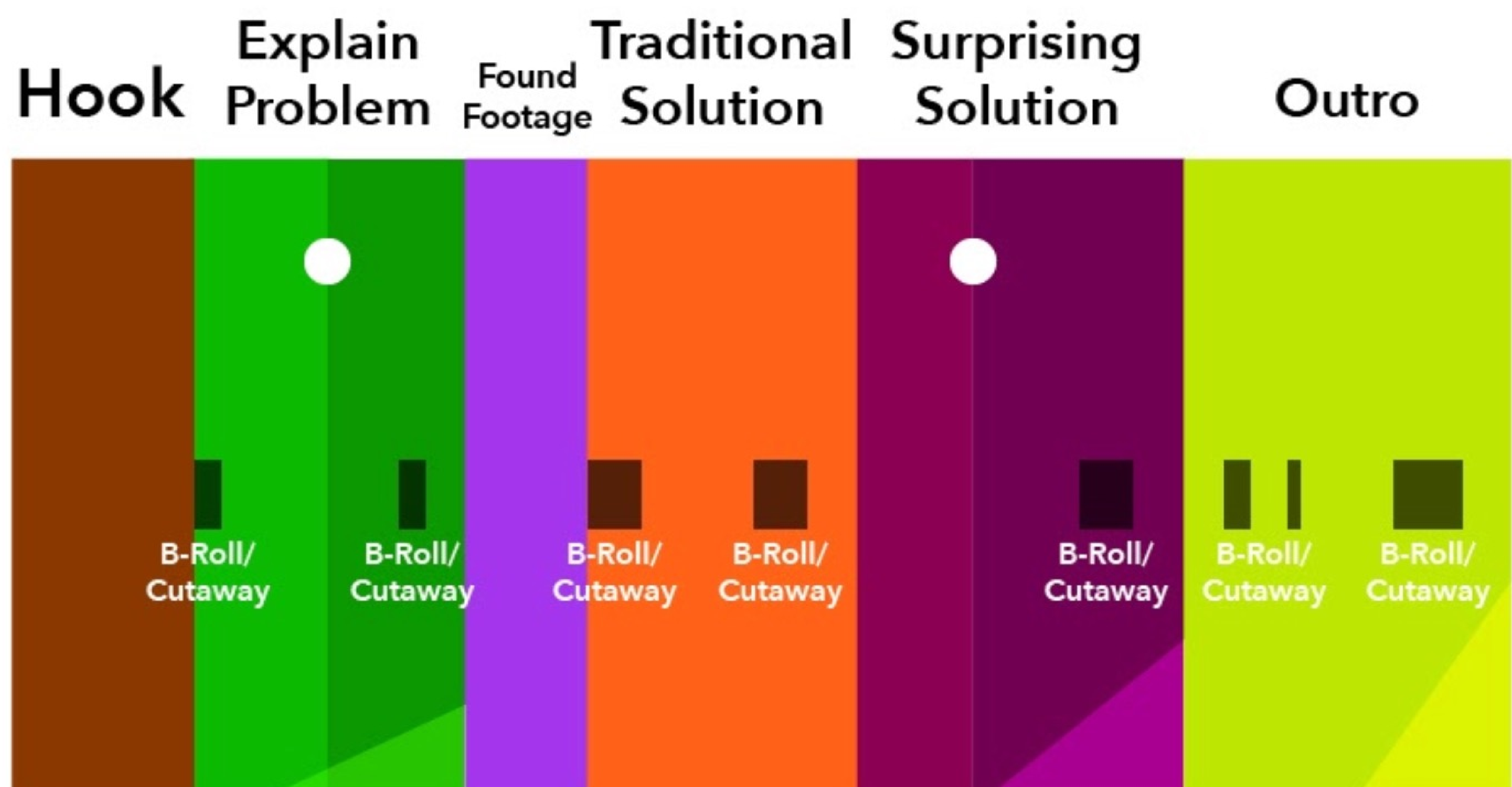
**Scene Changes And Cutaways**

Scene changes improve the dynamics of a video. Dynamics can be defined as a change in visual experience, pacing, energy, etc. Here’s an example of a scene change: First, I’m speaking directly to the camera in my living room. Then between sentences, I’m standing outside finishing the thought. They both may fall under the same blocked out segment of the video, but visual and environmental changes are happening.



Cutaways and b-roll are the last commonly used element to include in a breakdown. These are places where there is stock footage, or other secondary footage, inserted into the video in order to provide more context to the video, or to increase the visual dynamics.

This is what the diagram looks like with cutaways:





## The “Jenga Effect” Explained With Examples

If you’ve ever played a game of Jenga, you know how tense things can get near the end of the game. Each block getting placed introduces a new challenge, and brings you one step closer to the exciting moment where everything ends. In case the impact of the “Jenga Effect” is not clear enough for you in video form, here are a few examples.

Yes Theory:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZLb-tmGulGo>

In this video, the hosts introduce the challenge. As they embark on their journey, they start to break down and identify the steps they’ll need to take in order to succeed and get to the finish line. The Jenga Effect kicks in at regular intervals throughout the video, as they begin to run into roadblocks. Each one of these roadblocks could throw off the success of the project, and the viewer is able to watch them work through each new challenge just to find that there are even more challenges.

The viewer starts watching for the big picture goal as presented by the hook (the video title and thumbnail). They see that more problems arise. They see those problems solved, but new problems come up. Eventually, they are rooting for the hosts to see if they can solve an increasingly large number of things and get them to line up perfectly...resulting in a successful project and completion of the challenge.

VSAUCE: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=TVq2ivVpZgQ>

The host has a tendency to identify a challenge or problem, then talk about a hypothetical solution based on common sense. Then, he’ll introduce new information that brings up a new set of variables...questioning the initial solution. By the end of the video, you’ve learned a whole lot more than you expected going into it, because each layer of new complexity hooks you in, causing you to feel the need to keep watching for the “final” solution.

Veritasium: [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=97t7Xj\\_iBvO](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=97t7Xj_iBvO)

Veritasium hooks you in with a big concept, but then starts the video small. Smaller concepts that have bigger implications are introduced throughout the video, building the stakes of what is possible by exploring and learning more alongside the viewer. By the end of the video, we are left with a sense of understanding, and a sense of huge potential because of all the doors that are slowly opened up throughout the video...each time raising the stakes higher and higher.



# How to Research High Performing References

You may be just getting started with content, or are looking for a new direction with the videos you're making. Chances are, you're going to run into a situation where you don't know how to start or what exactly you should be making. Here's one of the most powerful methods I know, to help with this.

The core idea of this method is that you don't want to be reinventing the wheel when you're just starting out!

## Step 1: Research

Start with your product, service or brand. Do some digging, and find a page or channel that is in the same (or a similar) space that is able to consistently hit 100,000 views or more. The higher the numbers, the better, of course. Now try and find 2 more of these pages. These will be your "gold standard" reference.

Now, in that same content space, find 3 pages or channels that are making videos that you think should be hitting that 100,000 view mark (or higher, depending on the performance of your gold standard selections) but are not. These will be your "bronze" tier references.

Next, you'll be looking for 3 channels or pages in between the gold and bronze. You want to find channels that look the part of the gold tier, but don't quite have the same numbers. These will be your "silver" tier references.

You should now have a list of 9 total channels or pages, with 3 for each tier—gold, silver and bronze. By doing so, you'll be able to better recognize and identify what works, and what doesn't. In time, you'll train your eye to instantly spot it, and know how to do the same with your own videos.

## Step 2: Analyze

Within your gold tier, look through their best performing videos. Write down, in as much detail as you can, what you see that is causing those videos to do well.

As you review your bronze tier, look for the things that are missing from the gold tier list you just made. This will help verify things that are essential for performance. Also look for things they are doing in the bronze tier, that the gold tier is not. These will be the traps you want to avoid. Write them down!



In your silver tier, look for things that are similar to gold, but not done as well or as clearly. Write these down as well, they will tend to be nuanced details that have a big impact on performance, so they deserve your attention as you are creating.

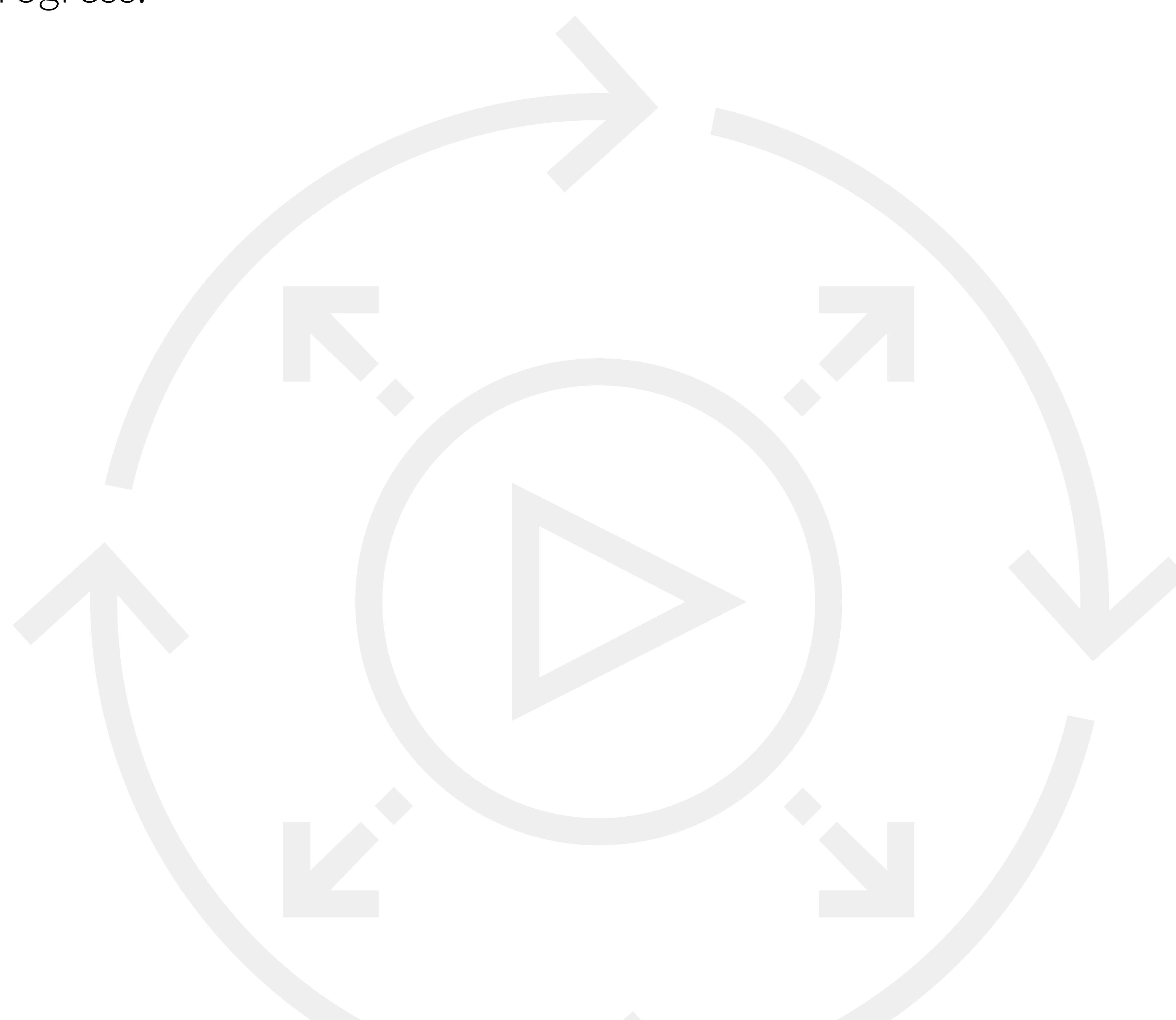
### Step 3: Create

**Once you've completed your research**, take one video from your gold tier reference that you feel like matches your type of content the closest. You're going to be creating a completely new piece of content, but there are elements you'll want to copy. Copy the structure of the video, copy the script format, copy the lighting and shot selection. Remember to avoid all the traps you wrote down, and to mimic all the things the reference video is doing right. By replicating all of these pieces, and by plugging in your own original content with your own unique twist, you reduce a lot of time spent on developing new structures from scratch...and considerably reduce the amount of luck needed in creating a brand new piece of viral content.

The goal here isn't to copy other creators, but learn from them. By creating your first video with the same similarities as another video, you'll begin to train yourself on the tactics and strategies. You can then make it your own, uniquely original content that fits you, your brand and your audience from there.

That's it. 3 steps.

That's how you create a video that gives you a strong chance of success, because it's been proven in a similar format. It also eliminates a lot of the creative decisions you'll need to make when you're just starting out, and along with a solid structural analysis will give you a baseline of performance from which you can adjust your creative vision as you progress.



## Final Checklist Before Posting for Facebook and Instagram:

This is what you'll find many places online will tell you:

Try running your video against this simple checklist. The more "YES" answers you give, the better:

1. Does it provide value?
2. Does it target your audience?
3. Does it stand out?
4. Is it interesting to watch?

Unfortunately, this checklist is not enough.

If you ask me about my video, am I really going to say that it doesn't have value? If it features my product, of course I'm going to say that it targets my audience. No matter what I made, I can self-justify that it stands out. And because I made it, of course I'm going to find it interesting. Basically, that checklist is too vague. You need to go more in-depth.

Here's a better checklist. It's intended to give you a starting point when it comes to analyzing your video performance. It also can (and should) help guide you the next time you're making a video.

1. Play the first 3 seconds, then stop the video. If someone who knew nothing about your brand saw ONLY those 3 seconds, would they want to see more?
2. Does the video not only address your topic, but bring a unique perspective to the topic?
3. Does the video create enough interest to engage someone that would possibly not care about the topic otherwise?
4. Have you minimized parts of the video that are for show and production value rather than contributions to the overall flow and story? (e.g. unnecessary transitions effects, fancy fonts, an unnecessary introduction sequence, etc)
5. Is your video edited down so that you have a series of very distinct key points laid out, and all the parts in between help in driving those key points?
6. Have you incorporated elements that will subvert the viewer's expectations of a video on that platform? (subvert them for the better of course)



7. Is the video satisfying to watch (visuals and pacing), even if you don't care about the topic?
8. Play your video side by side next to a competitor's. Ask a friend which one they think is more interesting. Did they choose yours?

A lot of people assume the algorithm is why their content isn't reaching their followers and target audience. Or, that they didn't post at the right time, aren't posting enough, and so on. Take a minute to go through the checklist above with your content. If you aren't hitting most on the list, there's a good chance it's your content, and time to rework it.

## **Bonus: The Secret Tool to Making More Effective Videos**

An amazing tool to start with in becoming a great video creator.

When I first came across this powerful tool, I was very excited. And, if you haven't heard of it, you should be too...

### **[The Facebook Ad Library](#)**

First of all, it's free.

Second, imagine that you have at your fingertips, every single ad creative that every brand is running across all of Facebook and Instagram.

If you don't already know why I love this tool, let me explain. Yes, it's highly useful if you want to create ads of any kind. But, the ad library is also an excellent research tool for any kind of content you want to make, including posts on your social pages. It can show you what may be working in your category, and can provide ideas. You can also spot patterns, strategies, common nuances, formats and trends. All of this can be applied to any content, whether it's an ad or not.

My team and I use it for everything we create. It's enormously helpful.

Give it a try. Find the brands or competitors in your industry or niche, and see what they're making. Leverage it for your own ideation and creation. Let me know if you find it helpful.

