Tasting marketing: What a viral YouTube star wishes marketers knew

I’m not saying I exploited my position as managing editor to meet one of my favorite YouTubers…

… but I will say that I’m **unreasonably excited** to share today’s interview.

And, my selfishness aside, this former Disney marketer has a lot to learn from. Today’s master turned his covid furlough hobby into a highly successful **YouTube channel with nearly 4 million subscribers** *and* a cookbook on the New York Times Best Seller list.

Meet the Master

Max Miller

Host and creator, **Tasting History with Max Miller**

- **Fun fact:** Max’s house is filled to the brim with Lego. When I’m not working, I’m probably putting together Lego.”
- **Claim to fame:** Built a YouTube channel with almost 4 million subscribers and wrote an NYT bestselling cookbook.
  Before launching his channel, Max worked as a movie marketer for Walt Disney Studios.

  “I was there during the golden days when they started putting out the new Star Wars and the original Marvel movies.”

Lesson 1: Good content beats best practice.

Max Miller doesn’t act like a good YouTuber should: He doesn’t test his thumbnails. He has a theme song. And he never, ever makes the shocked YouTube face. (You know the one.)

“I break all of the rules. And not on purpose; it’s just that I didn’t know the rules,” he confesses with an unassuming smile.

So, how did he earn 3.7 million followers without ticking every box on the marketing to-do list?

“It sounds selfish, but I am my audience. **If I’m making content that I want to watch, and that I’m interested in, there are bound to be other people who are interested in it**,” Miller says.

Now, if you’re in an unsexy industry, you might think this doesn’t apply to you. Dear Sir or Madam, I used to write blogs about incontinence briefs. If I can find the interesting nugget in that, I guarantee there’s *something* you can find to care about.

“I’m the one spending 40 or 50 hours a week on a video, so I need to find it really interesting. Otherwise, the people watching will *know* I’m not really interested in it,” he explains.

Whether you’re in media or marketing, interesting content is what keeps an audience coming back. The rest is just icing on the 19th-century Johnny cake.

Lesson 2: Don’t short Shorts.

“[My YouTube partner] had to drag me kicking and screaming to start posting short-form videos,” Miller laughs.

YouTube Shorts are often dismissed by brands and creators alike because Shorts viewers rarely jump straight to watching long-form videos.

“The crossover is shockingly small. I wish it was more. It’s like five percent.”

But when he finally did try the format, Miller found that the benefit was in the *indirect* consequences.

“It brought tons of people to the channel, to Instagram,

Facebook, TikTok. It ended up leading to a huge spike in book sales because I was making recipes from my cookbook.”

So, rather than gauging the success of Shorts in terms of direct views, think about them as audience development.

Seen through that lens, “5% of a million people? That ain’t bad, y’know?”

He could’ve said it ain’t small potatoes. (Stop it, Curtis.)

Lesson 3: Find what creators care

about.

Since Miller has been both a marketer and a creator, I asked him what he wished more marketers knew about working with creators, whether that’s influencer marketing, collaboration, or even sponsorship.

“When I used to work [in marketing for] the movies, I didn’t make the movies,” Miller says. “We would take the movies and craft a marketing campaign around somebody else’s baby.”

The same goes for working with content creators: To you it may be just another campaign, but to the creator, it’s personal.

So, don’t just think about the content itself, though that is important. Think about what the content means to the person or people who created it.

Miller shares that he’ll often get pitches about professional editing or offers to double his views and grow his brand, but that’s not where heart is.

“I have no desire to have 200 employees. That’s why I’m never going to be a big company like Good Mythical Morning or MrBeast,” he says. “A lot of people in my situation think I’m crazy. They’re like, ‘You could be making twice as much money.’

“More is not always better, in my mind. Enough is fantastic.”

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