



# The Secret Structure of a Viral Video

How to make your videos unforgettable so you can sell more products and services, creating more fans and followers in the process

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For more information, please write to:

Visible Authority, 8 Juniper Rd., Windsor, CT 06095

Phone: (860) 484-3360 | [steve@visibleauthority.com](mailto:steve@visibleauthority.com)

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## A letter from the author

“Viral” has become almost a dirty word. At best, an example of meaningless corporate-speak used by clueless marketers, as in “then we’ll make a viral video...”

Of course only your market can do that.

So why call this ebook **The Secret Structure of a Viral Video?**

Because there **is** an underlying structure to a certain kind of video that you can easily make use of, so that even if your video isn’t mentioned on the Today Show, it will get more shares, more comments and far more sales than it would have.

In the next few pages you’ll discover the astonishing reason why. And I’m almost certain that you’ll arrive at the realization that you, too, can make this magic happen...with what you already know.

Blue skies and tailwinds,  
Steve



*Steven Washer – Visible Authority Academy*



## The Secret Structure of a Viral Video

What makes an ad go viral? A question that used to haunt marketers until they gave up the chase, finally realizing that it wasn't random eyeballs they wanted, but perfect customers with an itch to spend freely with them, and pretty much only them.

That means each and every ad needs to be built to attract a certain group of potential buyers; not built for mass hypnosis.

Still, the question remains. Is there a way to construct an ad so that it reaches its intended market with the best possible chance of winning the most clicks?

If there was, it would have to have a structure and design so tight and a message so clear that no one in the intended group could possibly miss it.

Add to that structure a few key elements of copy, and it's wholly possible that anyone, given the right knowledge about their market, could create a monster advertisement that bridges the gap between content marketing and sales video.





Before we get into the secret structure I am about to reveal, let's discuss the three soft elements that must be in such a video.

**Tone:**

Today there is a simple spectrum of acceptable emotions that engage the most viewers.



The continuum is based on the perceived gap between true love and superficial lust. On one end you are to take the advertiser quite seriously when he tells you that this cheeseburger will bring you the love of your life.

Toward the middle of the spectrum we are encouraged to snicker; in fact this runs an entire gamut of gross-out to sarcastic to wit.

Finally, on the other end we have old familiar lust. The spectrum here starts with the pretty girl with a come-hither smile sporting an orange hunting vest selling roofing tile, to a sparkling sedan containing a movie star musing on his backstory as he speeds into the the nighttime metropolis; all the way to a molded piece of aluminum playing 1000 songs in your pocket.



*Humor, being smack in the middle of the emotional spectrum, is very popular.*

Tone is determined by what turns on your audience. Incidentally, choosing the unexpected here is usually a good choice.



## Talent

On camera or off-camera? If on, you'd better be good. And don't tell me it's just about the information, so you can just use a powerpoint video. The web is an information pile-up. We don't want any more information. Information is free. Tell me something I don't know.

On second thought, just be entertaining with the information you have. You're about to see how to structure that information so that it's practically unforgettable anyway.

## Timing

The most-shared viral ad of 2014 was First Kiss, a video made by an unknown clothing



*"First Kiss" bolted Sentiment onto Lust and created a viral sensation.*

manufacturer. It said nothing about the company. It was a whopping three minutes and twenty-nine seconds. Almost an eternity in internet attention spans.

Fueled by both ends of the emotional continuum, it bolted sentiment onto lust with timing, talent and music.

More to our point, almost 95,000,000 views would indicate that the regularly trotted-out and "thoroughly tested" 2 minutes-max video should no longer be taken as gospel.

Still, don't waste time. Still, shave it down until it hurts. As Faulkner said, "kill your darlings".

Timing also relates to when the video is released. In a moment we'll see why that's important.

Now quick, what are the 3 most important soft elements of a viral ad? That's right! Tone, Time and Talent. The keyword in that sentence is the concept of "three". We're about to see how significant it is in one of the most engaging ads of the last few years.





## Case Study: The Dollar Shave Club

First, a bit of background on the company. The founder, Michael Dubin, was making promotional videos for others when he ran across a warehouse with 250,000 razors in it.

Then he made a video and within two days of launching had received 12,000 orders. But is that really how it happened?

According to the New York Times, here's how Mr. Dubin says it happened:

**Cont'd...**



*Michael Dubin hams it up as Chief “Engineer” of Dollar Shave Club*





## Case Study: The Dollar Shave Club

**Q.** *Where did the idea of doing a video come from?*

**A.** I have always believed in the power of videos to tell stories. I had been working on it for several months after we started. Then I met up with my friend Lucia Aniello, who I had studied comedy with in New York at the Upright Citizen's Brigade. I asked her to help me shoot the video, which we filmed in our original warehouse in Gardena in October 2011. We spent about \$4,500 on it.

**Q.** *Why do you think it went viral?*

**A.** It's a funny video that promotes a smart business, which appealed to the mainstream media. The timing of the launch was not accidental. Early March is great to launch something tech-related because there isn't a lot happening in sports or otherwise, and it's a lead-up to the South by Southwest festival in Austin.



*Once you know your audience, you can't be afraid to take risks. The humor might be rough, but his audience loves it!*

There's way more to this interview. Check it out here later:

<http://www.nytimes.com/2013/04/11/business/smallbusiness/dollar-shave-club-from-viral-video-to-real-business.html?pagewanted=all>

Now let's move on to the principle behind this video that you can so easily emulate...

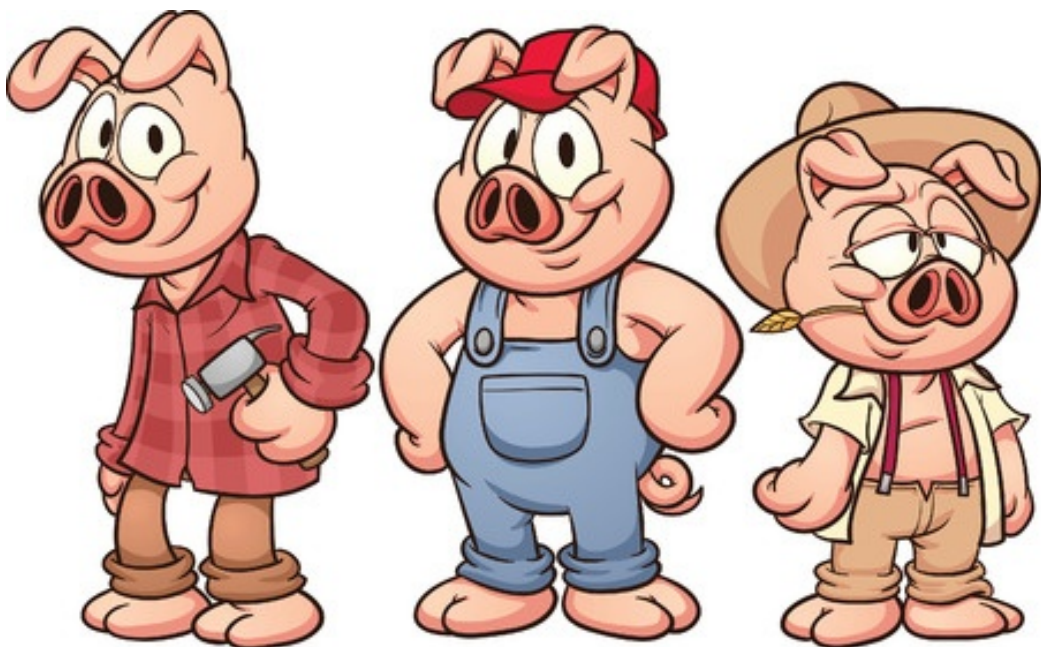


## The Secret Structure – The Principle of “Three”

The Three Little Pigs, The Three Billy Goats Gruff, The Three Kings, the Troika, the ménage-a-trois, “Answer me these questions three” from Monty Python and The Holy Grail.

Everywhere you look you see three of everything. Do you think this is an accident? It would appear that we humans have an innate ability to understand information best when it is served up in threes. Two is somehow not enough. One is indeed the loneliest number. And four is just a party-crasher.

No, it has to be three. And if you want to present even more information, then pack 3 more items into each of the bigger items. So you have 3 of 3. So for example, maybe each of the Three Little Pigs has three pieces of furniture in his house. And therein lies a story. But the theory applies to much more than story.



*Whether it's pigs, bears or kings, the number “3” rules!*



## The Secret Structure – The Principle of “Three”



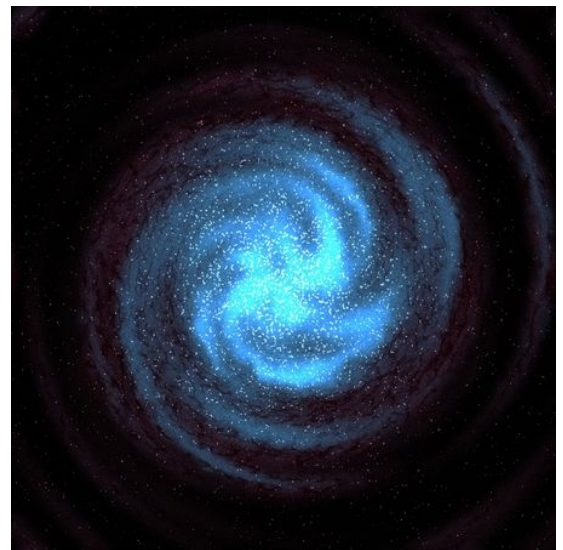
*A fractal design shows up in every scale.  
From the smallest shell...*

So naturally I wondered if this could be applied to video. And in analyzing this particular video I was pleasantly surprised. What's more, it was obvious that these principles could be grasped intuitively by anyone, even if they could not express them objectively.

So, let's look at how the structural principle of “three” is neatly woven into the fabric of the script of Dollar Shave Club.

Plus, the theory also seemed fractal to my eyes. In other words, if it could be seen equally in written stories and branches of government, could it also be seen in something even smaller?

Is it possible that this secret structure was more like the Golden Mean of the Fibonacci sequence, seen in the design of a seashell as much as in the design of a galaxy?



*...to the largest galaxy.*





## The Dollar Shave Club Structure



*High quality blades...*

For purposes of discussing the structure of this video we'll leave out the sight gags that punctuate the end of the description of each feature.

As you read the script you'll note that each feature has its own color. That color is used throughout when those features are transformed into benefits.

In the Dollar Shave Club video there are 3 features of the subscription blade service that are mentioned.

Each of those features has 3 benefits.



*Home delivery...*



*Price-to-Value Ratio..*

Red = Price to Value Ratio

Blue = High quality

Green = Home delivery

OK. Let's strip out most of the description and take a close look the script now.



## The Dollar Shave Club Script

0:00 – 0:05 Hi. I'm Mike. Founder of dollar shave club dot com.  
What is dollar shave club dot com?

0:05 – 0:09 Well, for a dollar a month we send high quality razors right to your door.

0:09 – 0:13 Yeah. A dollar. Are the blades any good?

0:13 – 0:19 No. Our blades are ----ing (bleeped out) great.

(sight gag)

0:19 – 0:25 Each razor has stainless steel blades, an aloe vera lubricating strip and a pivot head. It's so gentle a toddler could use it.

0:25 – 0:47 And do you like spending twenty dollars a month on brand name razors?  
Nineteen go to Roger Federer. I'm good at tennis.

And do you think your razor needs a vibrating handle, a flashlight, a backscratcher and ten blades? Your handsome-ass grandfather had one blade, and polio.

(off-camera)

Looking good, papa!

Stop paying for shave tech you don't need.

0:47 – 0:53 And stop forgettin' to buy your blades every month.  
Alejandra and I are gonna ship 'em right to ya.

(sight gag)

[Cont'd...]



- 0:53 – 1:07      We're not just sellin' razors, we're also makin' new jobs. Alejandra, what were you doin' last month?  
[Alejandra] (overlapping slightly) Not working.  
What are you doin' now?  
[Alejandra] (overlapping slightly) Working.  
I'm no Vanderbilt, but this train makes hay.
- (sight gag)
- (climbing down from a stack of boxes)
- 1:09 – 1:12      So stop forgetting to buy your blades every month and start deciding where you're gonna **stack all those dollar bills I'm saving you.**
- 1:12 – 1:23      We are dollar shave club dot com and the party is on.
- (sight gag)
- fade to black
- 1:23 – 1:33      CTA outro: 1:22 – 1:33  
(music under – pounding disco-type with lyrics)
- White block all-cap text over black:  
"Isn't it about time?"
- Fade to:  
Red Logo above white text against black background
- DOLLARSHAVECLUB.COM  
SHAVE TIME. SHAVE MONEY
- \*\*\*\*\*





## Dollar Shave Club Structural Analysis

This video is divided into 6 sections. Three main sections are sub-divided into 3 sub-sections, consisting of 3 rhetorical arguments (or features) and a summing up benefit.

Let's diagram this super-symmetrical video.

**Introduction:** "Hi I'm Mike"

**Feature 1:** "A dollar a month"

Point 1 - \$20/mo. wasted

Point 2 – Roger Federer doesn't deserve it.

Point 3 – too many dumb benefits

Benefit – "Stop paying for tech you don't need"

**Feature 2:** "High Quality Razors"

Point 1: stainless steel blades

Point 2: aloe vera seal

Point 3: pivot head

Benefit: "so gentle a toddler could use it"

**Feature 3:** "Right to your door"

Point 1: "stop forgetting to buy"

Point 2: "ship 'em right to ya"

Point 3: "making new jobs" (Note: Train joke is a double-entendre)

Benefit: "This train makes hay"

**Close:** "Stop forgetting to buy...stack your dollar bills"

**CTA:** Shave time. Shave Money.



## What About Your Video?

If you use this structure you'll end up with a perfectly constructed sales video.

Why? Because you will never, ever forget to choose your most important features. And you will find it impossible to forget to sum up with a powerful benefit that makes the features come together in the mind of your viewer.

It's kind of genius, isn't it?

Best of all, whether it goes viral or not is irrelevant. The point is that your argument will be airtight and dead-simple to understand and remember.

Most people do not buy because they lack a strong enough understanding of why they should part with their money. This video is a perfect reminder of why they should.

So maybe we shouldn't call it a viral video after all. Maybe we should just call it your video sales engine.

Plus, there is no simpler way to create this kind of video. As a producer, you may not feel up to "First Kiss", but I believe almost anyone can find success with this simple formula.

So what are you waiting for? Go make yours! 😊



*Special thanks to Sean D'Souza*