

## The Early Days of Video Search

Engines, Marketers Are Working to Optimize Results, but No One Can Figure Out How to Monetize This Market

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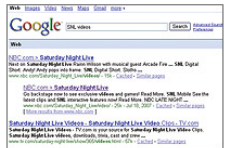
By now, everyone knows full episodes of ABC prime-time shows are available on the network's website, [ABC.com](#). But let's say you didn't know that -- and you were looking online for the final episode of the most recent season of "Lost." You might go where most people go to look for things online: Google. You type in the words "Lost final episode video." What's the first result? A three-minute YouTube clip that's not the final episode at

### 1. The "Saturday Night Live" sketch "Lazy Sunday" broke out as a viral hit on YouTube.



all but a spoof from the Consumer Electronics Show of Kate and Sawyer walking on the beach talking about going to Vegas to see how the HD DVD/Blu-ray rivalry plays out -- with Spanish subtitles. Not at all what you were looking for, to say the least.

### 2. But a Google search for "SNL videos" turned up nothing from NBC on the first page of results -- until the network undertook some major video-search-optimization efforts.



This scenario is likely to change as Google improves its video-search function and as video sites it didn't use to detect -- such as ABC.com's Flash player -- start to become more relevant. Of course, you could search again, refining your keywords until you find what you want. But this example also illustrates the immaturity of the video-search market. No proven, paid video-search model exists yet.

Richard Hagerty, CEO of Impact, a search-engine-marketing agency outside of Pittsburgh, says the state of video search reminds him of where text search was seven years ago -- in part because monetization of video search barely exists, if at all, and mostly because of the relatively rudimentary ways in which marketers optimize video to show up in search results.

"In the early days of search, you had a big title tag, a graphic in the middle of the page and a description describing the page," he says. "We're back to that with video."

### No universal standard

"We're still in the early stage in terms of marketing opportunities for video search," agrees David Berkowitz, director of emerging media and client strategy at 360i, which boasts video-heavy companies such as NBC Universal, Scripps Networks and MTV Networks as search clients. "It's in natural search where more opportunity lies." He says one of the problems with video search that doesn't plague text search is there isn't a universal standard for how videos get indexed into search engines.

### 3. Now the top search result on Google for "SNL videos" is a rich NBC site.



Mr. Berkowitz points to an example of how his firm has optimized video so that it shows up higher in search results. When the "Saturday Night Live" hit "Lazy Sunday," a hip-hop-music-video parody starring Andy Samberg, went viral on YouTube in December 2005, NBC was nowhere to be found in the first page of results for a Google search on "SNL videos." After major video-search-optimization efforts, the SNL video page showed up first. Mr. Berkowitz also credits optimization efforts for ensuring NBC video sites show up in the top half of results for other phrases, such as "Friday Night Lights," ahead of other popular sites such as IMDB, TV.com and Wikipedia.

Marketers will have to pay closer attention to such optimization tactics as more of them begin to add video to their sites to explain complex stories that can be better told in sight, sound and motion. How will consumers find those videos?

### More video searches

Consumers, too, are increasingly interested in video. Tim Tuttle, who runs all of AOL's video-search efforts under the brand name Truveo, a company AOL acquired 18 months ago, says he's seen search queries steadily increase -- up 40% month-over-month since November 2006.

Previously one had to search for video on a separate search channel, Google Video, which began life as a video-hosting site where you could watch, buy and rent online videos of TV shows. After Google acquired YouTube last year, it made YouTube its video-hosting site and turned Google Video into a video-search destination.

The only trouble is, until recently, Google Video searched only the videos hosted on Google sites -- not videos across the web.

Google is joined by a slew of start-up competitors and established portals that are hoping to make a name for themselves with sophisticated video-search techniques that include things such as converting speech to text and detecting images that appear within video.

### Letting others in

Suranga Chandratillake, CEO of video search engine Blinkx, says Google's previously closed video-search system has opened the door for companies such as [Blinkx](#) to be the next Google.

Still unclear is how video search engines intend to make money off video searches -- there is no set model for advertising like there is with the \$7 billion text-search industry. Blinkx, for one, is trying to use its technology to place contextual advertising in video content. "We want to help people find content and help people get relevant ads for that content," he says. Blinkx outsources its ad sales to [Advertising.com](#), another indication of how nascent the industry is.

The hurdle Blinkx and other start-ups may run into is how to get traffic when consumer search behavior is ingrained. When searching, people naturally gravitate to Google. And when looking for video, people still tend to go to YouTube.

Take 360i's Mr. Berkowitz, for example. He recalls staying in Las Vegas recently and noticing a particular comedian was performing in his hotel. He wanted to check out the comedian in action before splurging on a ticket, so the first place he stopped was YouTube.com.

"YouTube has already branded itself a video search engine, but it's not a great experience," he says. "Increasingly, I won't need to take that extra step if I realize Google will have it [in its Universal Search results]."

