



## **NEOREACH BLOG GUIDE**

Subscription-based services have changed the game for not just film and television, but online content creators as well. Although launching subscription-based models seems counterintuitive for content creators who post their work on YouTube for their audience's free access, this model is revolutionizing content creation for those who leverage it well. Creator-made streaming services offer creators the freedom to curate and make high-quality content for their audience, and give them the ability to stretch their content-creation limits further than they imagined.



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Dropout, formerly known as College Humor was an improv comedy website and later YouTube channel that featured videos and articles, both user-submitted and featured in-house. In 2018, the platform launched its own streaming service, DropoutTV. At the time it was a risk, especially when factoring in the COVID-19 pandemic. After making many changes, including discontinuing the selling of ads and stopping in-house branded content, the company found much success after pivoting completely to the streaming service model.

Similarly, The Try Guys launched their streaming service 2nd Try. They used a similar model, posting their new experimental streaming series on their streaming platform while continuing their classic content model for their non-paying users on YouTube.



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✦ Launching a creator-made streaming platform is no easy feat, from building a sustainable business model to keeping audiences engaged, there are plenty of strategic moves to make—and just as many pitfalls to avoid.

This guide breaks down the essential dos and don'ts of running your own streaming service. Whether you're an influencer, filmmaker, podcaster, or educator looking to create a subscription-based platform, this is your roadmap to making it work. *Let's dive in.*

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Both Dropout and the Try Guys specialize in long-form improv comedy. Since the 1970s, gameshows on ABC, CBS, and NBC had audiences enraptured, DropoutTV does the same. Now hosts are comedians competing in everything from trivia in their series “Um, Actually” and “Smartyants.” Dropout combines comedy and cooking in their show “Gastronauts.” Similarly, The Try Guys are elaborating on their classic shows like “Without a Recipe.”

The more cohesive your content is within your niche, the stronger your audience retention. Those who are most invested in your brand and niche will be the ones buying subscriptions to your service. They will be looking for a certain level of cohesiveness when it comes to what to expect on your platform.

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Special content is a must-have for a creator-made streaming services. The decision to purchase a subscription is not one to be taken lightly by consumers, and offering bonus content as a thank you is never a bad idea.

Dropout's streaming service features live-recorded specials such as Hank Green's "Pissing out Cancer" and Adam Conover's "Unmedicated." Meanwhile, 2nd Try livestreams many of their challenges, taking live suggestions from their audience.





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Keith and Zach of The Try Guys / 2nd Try [took to YouTube](#) asking those subscribed to their streaming service 2nd Try: What are you liking? For those not subscribed to 2nd Try, they asked: What are you looking for?

From here, they can gauge what is working for the platform, and what their paying subscribers are enjoying. This helps everything from brand curation - especially knowing the subtle differences between your non-paying and paying audiences - as well as organic content creation ideas. Asking both the paying and non-paying audience members allows them to gauge what content strategies would bring in the most members to their streaming platform.

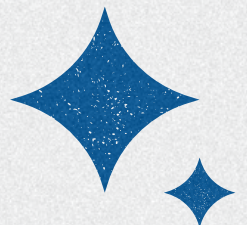
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Don't leave behind your non-paying audience - this is the backbone of your company. To expect all of your original audience to turn to a subscription model is unrealistic. With a thoughtful strategy and communication style, many audience members may feel inspired to join your streaming service. But they are not obligated to do so. Switching the entirety of your content to a streaming service would blindside your audience.

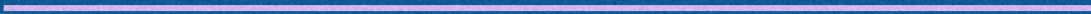




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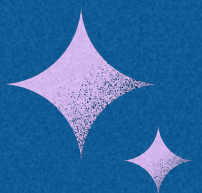
Make it clear what content is on which platform so that the audience knows exactly what they are going to get. Promote the first episode of a series for free to garner interest for possible streaming subscribers. Let them know that the rest of the series is available on your streaming platform.

Your schedule for what is going up on your subscription platform vs what is on your non-paying platform should be consistent and understandable. Like the old days of cable, viewers should know whether their favorite episodes are Friday evening, Sunday morning etc. Post your schedules on socials to spread awareness for your brand.



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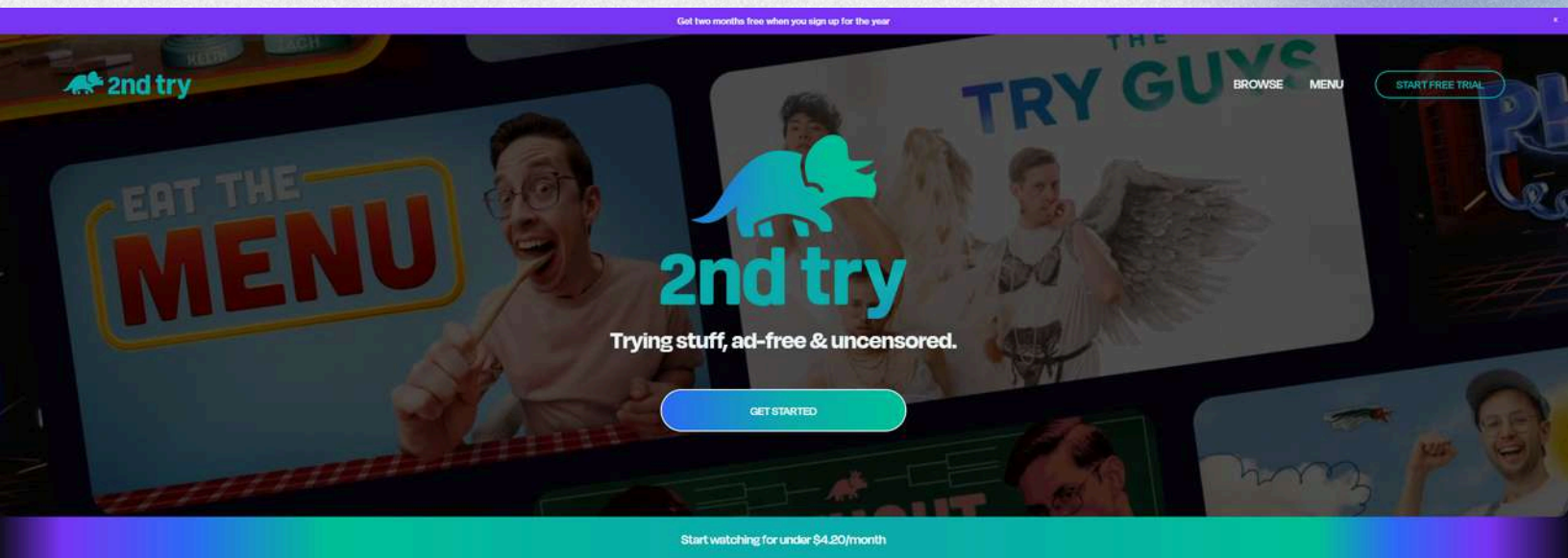
Removing content from its original home - for many companies this is YouTube or a free-access website - would be a drastic move eliminating any touchpoints you have with a nonpaying, loyal fanbase. This likely would break down trust between you and your audience members who should not feel obligated or pressured to move to your streaming service.





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The decision to purchase a subscription is not one consumers take lightly. They want to know exactly what they are getting when they sign up for your streaming platform. What better way than to give them the full experience? This is a great way to show off the hooks of all your new content and shows.



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Ads are everywhere - they interrupt our TikToks and YouTube videos. They even crop up on traditional streaming services like Disney+ and Hulu. Audiences are drawn to creator-made streaming services because they offer something different from traditional platforms. Adding ads may diminish the experience for audience members used to getting ads on nearly all platforms.





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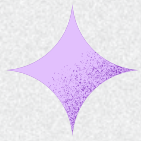


One thing that [Sam Reich](#), Dropout CEO underscores is the value of people over profits. By not only hiring talented, entertaining creators, but allowing them creative freedom over their content, he empowers Dropout's employees to create unique content that the audience enjoys. Similarly, both Dropout and 2nd Try allow their longform comedians to speak for themselves, developing their own bits and characters throughout all of their work.

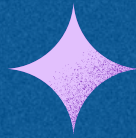
Not only does this foster community amongst the employees, who are loyal to both the company and content they make due to their personal stake in the game, but it fosters community amongst audience members. The authenticity of the characters/actors, as well as the inside jokes allow the audience to feel like they're in the room. The audience is playing the game alongside the comedians. Audiences now have their favorite inside jokes and content creator/characters to follow, and will likely be loyal to their creators no matter what new show or content they are creating.

Both companies have built in the inherent value of their workers into the company culture, making for an enjoyable, fun content creation experience. Sam says that the feedback he gets is that Dropout feels like a "safe space" which is natural, because he describes his team as "kind, decent" people. There is a high value placed on valuing everybody for their work and what they bring to the projects. They also allow their individual values to shine, such as [Brennan Lee Mulligan's](#) staunch anti-capitalist Dungeons and Dragons sessions and Sam's encouragement of a "Game Changers" union as an episode of the show.





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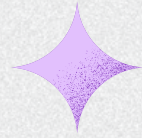
In 2018, parent company IAC launched DropoutTV after attempting what Sam Reich called “get rich quick schemes” in placing their shows on platforms such as Comcast Watchable, Facebook Watch, and YouTube. They also sold ads and specialized in branded content. They decided to put everything they could into DropoutTV, including \$10 million before seeing any return. DropoutTV looked like it would go under, as not only did interested buyers drop out, but the CEO and CMO also left the company. The company was then sold for \$0 to Sam Reich in March of 2020 at the height of the COVID-19 pandemic. The number of employees had gone from 100 down to 7, effectively setting Sam up with a skeleton crew of a failing company

As Sam worked to rebuild the company, he decided to stop selling ads and close their branded content studio and instead focus solely on low-cost, long-form improv content, solidifying a cast of characters. In 2023, Dropout saw an increase in viewership, doubling the number of subscribers to “mid to high six figures.” This model hit the jackpot with low-cost content garnering high engagement and a close-knit community among the audience.

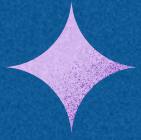
Partially out of necessity, Reich has focused on the low-cost, long-form improv comedy model, promoting long-form videos with short-form content. This content felt worth it for those subscribing for \$5.99 a month or \$60 annually. He also adopted a profit-sharing system for employees, giving them a financial stake in the company’s success.

“We were profitable the moment we began...by a small margin,” Sam said. Due to the fact that there were less people working for College Humor and they were not spending as much money.

He outlines the model, saying that they go from product (video) then direct to market with that (putting it on the subscription platform) and reap the benefit from it (from paying audience base). “Full stop,” Sam says. “It could not be simpler on paper.”



Overall, subscription services offer creators a unique avenue to make content that they love and that is important to them. The financial backing from loyal subscription-paying audience members may just open the door for new content creation opportunities and content that just doesn't work on traditional content platforms. Creator-made streaming services give creators the freedom to do what they do best: create. Done well, it's a path we see more creators exploring.



<https://www.creatorhandbook.net/the-try-guys-youtube-channel-struggles-after-2nd-try-launch/>

<https://www.slashfilm.com/1739679/dropout-best-streaming-service-2024/>

<https://www.fastcompany.com/91136741/dropout-rebrand-collegehumor-sam-reich>

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