

Jillian Flodstrom ([00:07](#)):

If you are a small business owner that has been struggling with social media, this week's episode is gonna be one that you're definitely gonna wanna listen to because I'm talking with Hillary Billings, who has been a viral star on TikTok, so much so that she's actually on the advisory board for TikTok now. So she's got some great tips and strategies for working on your short form video content, and it really is taking over all of social media. So if that's something that you need help on, you're definitely gonna wanna stay tuned for this episode. Today's guest has received over a billion organic views this past year alone. That's right. Be with a billion. Hillary Billings is a popular viral video creator and strategist. She's also the co-founder and CEO of Attention years, where she leads a creative agency that helps brands and their partners drive exceptional audience growth through viral content.

Jillian Flodstrom ([01:05](#)):

Hillary understands the psychology of capturing and keeping attention online, which can be so tough these days. She uses this expertise to demystify TikTok for her clients, to help them build genuine relationships with their followers, all while going viral. She grew from zero to 400 KK followers on TikTok in 40 days. She's also a certified personal brand strategist and has worked with a gauntlet of high performing entrepreneurs, including billionaires, Victoria's Secret models, and New York Times bestselling author. As a former Miss Nevada, she's a journalist and on-camera host and a TV producer. Hillary has worked with national traditional media outlets, including U s A today, E-News, and Extra Entertainment Television. I am so excited to talk to Hillary today. Welcome to the show. How are you?

Hillary Billings ([01:55](#)):

I'm so good. I'm so happy to be here. Thank you for having me.

Jillian Flodstrom ([01:58](#)):

There's so many things that I'm excited to talk to you about today, especially TikTok. I mean, I feel like that is the newest, latest, greatest thing out there and everybody is so confused by it and is curious how to go viral. I mean, that's the thing that everybody talks about, but I'm really curious to see what your thoughts are on, you know, what's the best way to prepare ourselves to make these viral videos? Cuz I know that your background is essentially in that, so let's dive into that question.

Hillary Billings ([02:31](#)):

Yeah, and it's, it's a really great question because I think often what happens is when people hear that we have backgrounds, my, my co-founder and I in making viral videos that they, they, the first question is, okay, so what's my hashtag strategy or what time of day should I post? Or what do I need to make sure is included in the thumbnail so that this gets the most traction? And I think that that strategy of thinking about the post-production is really the, the wrong way to go about it. We always want to encourage people to start with creative first because it's the creative that is going to convert the best. Post-production strategy is actually having a fantastic pre-production strategy. So that's what we want to focus on. And really thinking through your content before you even post. I feel like short form video is taken over, whether it's on TikTok, Instagram reels, YouTube reels, Facebook reels you know, YouTube shorts, there's Twitter's talking about doing some kind of short form content.

Hillary Billings ([03:32](#)):

It's even changing the way that we're watching traditional shows, like on Netflix, on streaming platforms, just because of the way that we now grab and keep attention and the way that our brains like to, to

watch things. So because of this, it's so important that we're intentionally thinking about content. What's happening is most people are just throwing stuff up because everyone's trying to get on the train and trying to make an impact. And they're, they're posting up, you know, maybe clips from podcasts or, or longer form videos. And then there's a lot of frustration as to why it's not working. And it all comes down to we want to intentionally craft the videos to leverage the psychology of attention to help them reach the most people possible, and especially reach your target audience for your business. So that is where we want to start.

Jillian Flodstrom ([04:22](#)):

I think that's so important because you know what, you're right, that's what everybody talks about is the stuff afterwards mm-hmm. <Affirmative>. But really it starts at the beginning, like the thought process of creating those videos. Now here's what I think is interesting about you is before you started this consulting agency for TikTok, you didn't really care for the platform. No. In fact, you haven't mentioned that you wouldn't get audit. So what changed? Cause I think it's crazy that you went from zero to 400 k, now you're working with TikTok. Like what changed?

Hillary Billings ([04:53](#)):

So there was a couple things. So at the time I was making content for Facebook. That was our first kind of introduction into the viral video world. And it's all consuming when you're being a, a content creator full-time. And I say that over influencer cuz I, I prefer that term, but when and, and I like many other business owners and entrepreneurs and personal brands out there we have a a, the same mentor, Rory Vaden and I was at one of the events and they were talking about, Hey, by the way, TikTok is this new platform. They were also talking about clubhouse. You're gonna wanna get on there and start to build it while it's new. And I was so resistant. I'm like, I'm tired. I have all of these other platforms I have to maintain. I'm doing my personal Instagram, I've got these Facebook pages.

Hillary Billings ([05:37](#)):

I don't have the time or the energy. I don't want to, you can't make me, it doesn't look like something that I wanna be a part of. It's for the younger generation, which by the way is the, is the talk track that we hear all the time from everybody. And then one day I was posting videos to Facebook and there was a glitch on the backend of my Facebook page, which we had done nothing to incur a violation, but the, the page had a glitch and it got demonetized and there wasn't a set solution from Facebook as to how long it would take to get the page back up and running. And so we had just posted a video, it was doing really well and I'm just watching the views roll in on the millions of views and there are \$0 attached to it. And it's like, I can't watch this anymore.

Hillary Billings ([06:19](#)):

I need to put my attention somewhere else. So it was that week in divine timing that I said, okay, guess I'll just go see what this whole TikTok thing is about cuz I can't, I can't focus on this right now. And that was the only reason I got on the platform. And within, you know, the first week we were seeing massive traction on videos and even just spending time starting to understand how this short form video game was playing out differently on TikTok versus other platforms. And it quickly turned into a, a snowball of momentum, which we're really proud about and, and we're very excited that we've created close relationships with TikTok since then and are now on their advisory board for their agencies. And it's been a, it's been a wild ride. But yes, if it hadn't have been for that other Facebook page having an issue and me not being able to make money there, I would not have put my time and attention into TikTok.

Jillian Flodstrom ([07:13](#)):

That's so funny that you said that because I remember that meeting and I remember thinking for the love of Pete, one more that I have to do that is so much. And you know what though? I think there's so many of us business owners that are like, one more, you know, it's, it's so frustrating. But yeah, I'm glad that it happened that way because I know for a lot of people, if they have a video go viral on TikTok, it's kind of like a happy accident that they have no control over. Mm-Hmm. <Affirmative> they didn't mean for it to go viral, but you kind of look at it the opposite way because your content goes viral so consistently. I mean, you've had over a billion views and under a year, which to me is like, seems so crazy, but is so awesome at the same time. So I know we talked a little bit about approaching the content that you create, you know, starting with the amazing video. But what are some other tips that we could use to create content that we would be more likely to go viral?

Hillary Billings ([08:12](#)):

So I think for starters, you know, I, I wanna make this clear. Like I didn't come out of the gate making amazing videos you know, with my background in journalism. And I wrote for us A today and I was an on-camera host and I was doing a lot of videos for them. And my co-founder was a former musician and billboard charting artist. And he had his own background in film and tv. So when we started these videos and were given an opportunity to, to monetize on Facebook and, and to make these viral videos, we thought we had this in the back because we were former creators with these strong creator backgrounds and we're like, we can do this no problem. And the first couple months everything was tanking. It was so frustrating. We were so just deflated. And I, there was a, there's a turning point where we had to make the decision, are we gonna go all in on this or are we going to abandon it because this isn't working the way that we're trying to do it now.

Hillary Billings ([09:05](#)):

So we sat down and we watched thousands of viral videos. My, my co-founder made an Excel sheet making all of these different markers looking at what's happening at second three, what's happening at second five, how many people are in the frame, how long is the video? What's the theme of the video? What's the title, what's the caption? Is there music? What, what's happening? And as we started to put in all this data and look at this information and really taking more of a scientific approach to seeing what is the same, are there any trends or formulas that are popping up? We started to see some, and we took some of those theories and applied them to the next video that we did. And that video did 5 million views. And then the video after that did 10 million views. And it's not to say that every video that we've done is turned to gold because that is not the case.

Hillary Billings ([09:57](#)):

But we can, with relative certainty now figure out and, and say by looking at a video concept if it won't work or if it has a likelihood of working. And sometimes too, it depends upon, you know, which profile it gets posted to and things that are outside of your control. So at the end of the day, like going back to the, that first part of the conversation, if you're trying to focus on the hacks with hashtags and the times to post and the number of posts per day and descriptions and trends, none of it matters if your content isn't compelling. So we started building our videos off of what we call the, the psychology of attention. So we're leveraging the psychology of attention and there are, there's three pillars that you have to do in each video. And you have to, you have to meet these markers in order for the video to have a chance to go viral.

Hillary Billings ([10:47](#)):

And the first one is you have to grab attention, you have to spark an emotion, and then you have to create a curiosity gap. So grabbing attention off the bat, it's pretty self-explanatory. 20 million new videos are being posted to social media every single day. So you've got a lot of competition. You have to earn attention. It is no longer a game of someone's gonna scroll through and watch something for the sake of watching it. What are you doing within the first two and a half seconds? Because that's how much time you have to get somebody to give you another two and a half seconds. And that, that is the plan is you have to be thinking about it in those terms. What are you doing in the first two and a half seconds to get you another two and a half seconds? So we're starting with grabbing attention, sparking an emotion, people and, and content now is all about relate, relatability.

Hillary Billings ([11:38](#)):

We wanna make sure that when we're crafting content, that we are intentionally thinking about what we want somebody to feel. And that could be inspiration, motivation, it could be anger, it could be controversy. There's a lot of different emotions we we can look to play into, depending upon the topic that your business wants to address in that moment. It's also going to be the piece that makes this more shareable. When people see themselves in content or the content says something about them, they're more apt to share it. This is why on Facebook, you see all the time women are sharing the, which Disney princess or you results from the quizzes because they want you to know that they got Jasmine and that means that they're sassy. Like by sharing that piece of emo that that piece of content, they could just say, Hey, I'm a sassy woman, but instead they've chosen to share that piece of content to say it indirectly.

Hillary Billings ([12:31](#)):

So using the spark of emotion to not only help with relatability but shareability and again, to keep buying you more time on the watch channel videos. The last piece is creating the curiosity gap. And by, by far we think this is the the biggest piece that people have to learn to play with. So if you don't give enough information on the front end of the video, people get confused and they'll scroll away, right? I don't know what's happening, I don't know what this is, I don't know what I'm looking at, I'm not interested. Or you give too much information and there's no reason for them to keep watching. So what's the ideal bell curve instead? Well, we wanna give enough information on the front end so that they know what you're promising them, that they know what the end of this video is gonna be.

Hillary Billings ([13:16](#)):

So it could be, and this really shows up in two different ways. You either could have a gap in the, in the what, or you can have a gap in the how. So a great example would be someone that's an expert in Airbnbs. I watch a lot of Airbnb content cause I'm really into it and a creator being like, I made a million dollars this month, let, here's how I did it. So what I know is that there's a payoff, but I don't know how he did it. And so now I'm gonna watch the video to learn how he did it. Or it could be, here's what I did this month and now let me tell you how much money I made. And so then I know the how, but I don't know what the end result of the how is. So thinking about how you can put that curiosity gap into each video in order to keep people watching and also to add value. So again, grab attention, spark a motion, create a curiosity gap. Those are the three things you need in each video to make sure it has a chance of going viral regardless of the, the industry that you are in.

Jillian Flodstrom ([14:21](#)):

I love like the scientific aspect of it because it's those things that you don't think about that it's, and one thing that I wanna touch on that at the very beginning of this that you mentioned, which I think is like the most important thing of all is you guys were struggling and instead of giving up and jumping to the next newest, latest, dis greatest thing, you're like, no, we're gonna stick it out. We're gonna figure out how to make this work. Because you're right, there is a, a scientific aspect to it. It's just figuring that out and then tailoring it to your content or your client's content, which I think is so cool that you guys figured that out. I mean, that spreadsheet thank you is hysterical. Like, I just think that that is so funny, but what a great way to be. Like, what are the consistent things of all these videos?

Hillary Billings ([15:10](#)):

It's really taking that scientific approach and it removes the emotion from it, right? Because I think especially as creators, as business owners, it can be so vulnerable for us to put ourselves out there in content. And this content wasn't the most high brow, you know, we're talking pranks and, and DIY and, and gifting videos, but it's even more personal for someone who their entire business, their ethos, their values are being put forward. And that's very difficult when you're doing all of that work and you're being vulnerable and then you're not seeing the results that you wanna see. Or worse, you get some heckler in the comments who some Joe Schmo who leaves you some terrible review and now you feel like you're not making any impact. And so being able to remove that piece of it, that emotional investment and just saying, this is part of my job.

Hillary Billings ([15:58](#)):

How do I do my job better and what are the different levers that I can pull to potentially make this get the result that I want it to have? And I think that that was one of the biggest lessons that I learned as a content creator is, and this goes for any artist, any business owner, is you have to be less precious about the piece that you're putting out to the world and instead focus on the process. So we're, we're not as precious about the end result and product, but we are more precious about the process and protecting what works and making sure that that is constantly the piece that's being honed. Because that'll be what allows you to adapt. And you know, we were talking before we hit record too, about how there is such a, a dramatic change right now in the scope of, of the podcasting environment and ecosystem.

Hillary Billings ([16:44](#)):

And it's the same thing. You have people that tried it out, they're excited, they're motivated, and then it's not working. It's a lot of work, and then they get discouraged and they move on to the next thing. But if they were to take the time to sit and try to figure out what is going to get the audience that I wanna have, there could be massive results. It's just, it takes that additional step. And then intentionality when it comes to content that we don't often associate with social media and social content and, and podcasts in general. I think anything that's considered free content often is considered less than the other parts of the business when the reality is these can be massive opportunities for businesses and brands to bypass the gatekeepers and to create the relationships. And that's the great thing that TikTok was able to start.

Hillary Billings ([17:34](#)):

And, and this whole trend of allowing businesses and influencers to be the voices and finding their audience without even necessarily having to pay for it, which is so powerful. And, and we're really seeing that affect culture in a variety of ways from, you know, actors and actresses are now being forced to have their own followings and we have businesses that are forced to have to figure out how to create those

relationships in order to, to keep the attention and keep the consumer engaged. And it's a really powerful time to be thinking about your content.

Jillian Flodstrom ([18:10](#)):

Absolutely. Well, and I think too, knowing as you're going into it, if you're starting this social media journey because you're like, okay, I know this is, this is one of the things that I've gotta do mm-hmm. <Affirmative> and, you know, going into it that it's gonna be a bit of a slog sometimes. I mean, it's not always, I mean, there are parts of it that are glamorous and amazing and you're like riding the high, but there's also parts that you're like, I really don't wanna do this today, but you get up and you do it anyways. Knowing that going into it, I think can be very powerful because there's a lot of us that go into it thinking, I'm gonna be a viral, you know, content creator, influencer, it's gonna be amazing. People are gonna pay me to travel around the world. And the reality is, yes, that is the reality for some people, but for most of us not yet. And I know that the agency has created this proprietary process called the Three Vs. And I really wanna talk about that because I think it's so important for content creation and for anybody who's thinking about creating content. So let's talk about that because it's super interesting.

Hillary Billings ([19:15](#)):

Yeah, so I think that one of the primary pieces of resistance that we get from businesses is that they don't want to dance on TikTok. They don't wanna be a part of these trends. There's a lot of exhaustion that they start to feel just like even thinking about and premeditating having to keep up with what's happening on the platform, which we totally understand. And in fact, we take kind of a different approach. Our philosophy is that if you are following trends that you are by definition of follower, so we would prefer our clients to actually not focus on trends and instead trying to carve out a space for them within the ecosystem to allow the, their correct target audience to find them. And so this all comes down to those three Bs. So the first one being your values and your voice. So those are the first two and the values that you want to be known for as a brand.

Hillary Billings ([20:09](#)):

We will also wanna make sure these are coming out within your content. So even if you are not saying, I support small businesses, everything that you're putting out to your audience and your content has that as an underlying tonality, whether that's you're giving a ton of great advice, you're helping motivate them, you're talking about your own personal challenges. Whatever you're doing is showcasing that this matters to you. And so usually one of two things happens. Either a brand only picks one value and they're just trying to hone in that like, this is the thing that we care about when it doesn't really work that way. All businesses and and personal brands are multi-dimensional. So we always encourage people to choose three values that they want to make sure is consistent in their content or they don't really know how to integrate it into their content.

Hillary Billings ([20:59](#)):

And so it becomes very confusing for the watchers and the audience as to what they actually do care about. So that's the first piece. The second one then becomes your voice, the tonality. What type of characteristics and persona do you want to have on the platforms then through your content to allow to shine through, to create that connection. There's a lot of different ways that plays out, right? It could be sophisticated, it could be educational, it could be playful, it could be sassy. You know, Ryan Air has done a great job of this. They are a budget airline out of Europe, and they just own like, you are getting a flight,

you are lucky to have a seat. We will take you from point A to point B for the cheapest way possible. Do not ask for anything else. You're lucky you have a seatbelt.

Hillary Billings ([21:44](#)):

And, and so that is, they have embraced that as their persona and that they are just a super sassy airline that's gonna clap back if you ask for anything different. You know, Wendy's has done a great job of this on Twitter as well. And people will go to their Twitter profile because they want to be roasted by Wendy's. So du Lingo is another great example. Very unsexy, right? A language learning app. And they created a character duo, this bird that is just wreaking havoc and being a menace. And they have accepted that they're going to allow their consumers to fill the gap, to bridge the gap and take that final step to download the app. And they're just making great videos and great content that has nothing to do really with learning languages. So by focusing on those first two pieces is going to allow you to feel very confident in the brand that you're putting out there and that it's consistent with everything else in your business.

Hillary Billings ([22:41](#)):

And then the last piece is viral potential, which is what we've already talked about with the psychology of attention. How are we leveraging and grabbing attention? How are we sparking emotion? How are we creating a curiosity gap? Is this video set up appropriately so that it has the chance to go viral? And being able to also properly reflect, reflect the brand's values. So utilizing those three pieces, we're able to get a lot of traction and momentum for our clients because they're able to see how this works. Something else I wanted to just say really quickly because being on social media and creating content can be so exhausting when someone thinks about adding in a strategy, a short form video strategy, specifically thinking about like adding in TikTok for example. They may not want to do it because it feels additive. But here's the reality is that if you start and, and we take a TikTok first approach, not necessarily because every brand that we work with should be on the platform, but because what works on TikTok will translate to the other platforms, it's a one-way street though.

Hillary Billings ([23:45](#)):

So if you have a video that does well on Instagram, it probably won't do well on the other platforms. But if you're able to focus on a TikTok first strategy, that video will see results on Instagram wheels, we'll see results on YouTube shorts, we'll see results on Facebook reel. And now you've just halved or a quarter of the amount of work that you have to do because you've taken this approach. We're big believers that, you know, photo posts are are fun, but everything is going to be about short form video, and that is taking over the internet. Adobe recently did a study, 80% of the time that you are on your phone where you are not making phone calls or texts, you are watching short form videos. So when we talk about the 80 20 rule of 80% of your effort, you know, or 20% of your effort for 80% of your return, you need to be making short form video. And in fact, we encourage clients who feel overwhelmed to throw away everything else that they're doing on social media and just focus on those videos because that is where you're going to get the most traction, you're going to see the most results. And then if you take the TikTok first approach, you're gonna have one piece of content that works everywhere

Jillian Flodstrom ([24:57](#)):

That is so cool. And you don't really think about it like that either because you're like, oh, I'm doing all this other stuff on all these different platforms. And I think even just try to keep up with it all can be

overwhelming. Oh yeah. So if our listeners are like, I know that I need to be on TikTok, I know that I need to do a better job on TikTok, where can they connect with you? What's the best way to work with you?

Hillary Billings ([25:18](#)):

Yeah, we love having conversations with entrepreneurs, personal brands, business owners and agency owners about how we can help. The best way to connect with us is on our website, [attentions.com/free call](https://www.attentions.com/free-call), and you can schedule a call with either myself or my co-founder, and we would love to hear about what you're working on and how we can possibly help. We run monthly boot camps, which is a great way for clients to start working with us and to really get a deep dive into how we think about content, how they can start looking at their ideation, their production schedule, and their post-production, like a viral creator that also works for businesses. And, and we've seen it work time and time again, and it's, it's a really fantastic way to bring people together and just exponentially grow their short form content strategy. So [attentions.com/free call](https://www.attentions.com/free-call),

Jillian Flodstrom ([26:06](#)):

I love that. And of course I will link that in the show notes so people have quick access to that just in case they are listening to this while they're running or driving now. Yes. One final question for you. Okay. This one is tough for most people because you have to choose just one. But what is one piece of advice that you would give to a small business owner?

Hillary Billings ([26:27](#)):

One piece of advice.

Jillian Flodstrom ([26:29](#)):

Tough.

Hillary Billings ([26:35](#)):

Okay. I mean, sticking onto the theme of short form content strategy mm-hmm. <Affirmative>, right? And thinking, sticking to the, the theme that business owners are overwhelmed, there's a lot going on. It is so important for you to remember that short form content strategy is the new social media strategy. So if you are choosing to opt out of short form content strategy because it feels overwhelming or it feels like too much, just remember you are choosing to not be a part of the conversation that is happening and potentially choosing to not have your brand become culturally relevant.

Jillian Flodstrom ([27:14](#)):

Wow, that is heavy

Hillary Billings ([27:17](#)):

<Laugh>, that's a

Jillian Flodstrom ([27:19](#)):

Lot. But there's always important

Hillary Billings ([27:21](#)):

And there's such an easy fix, right? We just say, I'm going to take time to step away from everything else that I, I've said is important right now on my social media strategy and focus on this one piece and get this one piece right, because that is the piece that's going to move the needle. And that is the piece that's going to drive the right customers and convert to more business for you. And if you hop on the train now, it's gonna be even easier as more platforms continue to evolve and make this a priority. Again, 80% of the time people are on their phones, they are watching short form videos. Let's make sure that it's yours.

Jillian Flodstrom ([27:56](#)):

I love that. So important. So thank you so much for spending time with us. I know your schedule is crazy busy, but I appreciate you chatting with us about these short form content that is so relevant right now. And like you said, going forward, it's going to be what people are choosing to watch. So thank you so much for spending time with us today. I really appreciate

Hillary Billings ([28:18](#)):

It. Oh, anytime. This was so much fun.

Jillian Flodstrom ([28:25](#)):

Today's guest has received over a billion organic views this past year alone. That's right. Be with a billion. Hillary Billings is a popular viral video creator and strategist. She's also the co-founder and c e o of Attention years where she leads a creative agency that helps brands and their partners drive exceptional audience growth through viral content. Hillary understands the psychology of capturing and keeping attention online, which can be so tough these days. She uses this expertise to demystify TikTok for her clients to help them build genuine relationships with their followers, all while going viral. She grew from zero to 400 K followers on TikTok in 40 days. She's also a certified personal brand strategist and has worked with a gauntlet of high-performing entrepreneurs, including billionaires, Victoria's Secret models, and New York Times best-selling author. As a former Miss Nevada, she's a journalist and on-camera host and a TV producer. Hillary has worked with national traditional media outlets, including us, a today e-News, and Extra Entertainment Television. I am so excited to talk to Hillary today. Welcome to the show. How are you?

Hillary Billings ([29:38](#)):

I'm so good. I'm so happy to be here. Thank you for having me.

Jillian Flodstrom ([29:41](#)):

There's so many things that I'm excited to talk to you about today, especially TikTok. I mean, I feel like that is the newest, latest, greatest thing out there and everybody is so confused by it and is curious how to go viral. I mean, that's the thing that everybody talks about, but I'm really curious to see what your thoughts are on, you know, what's the best way to prepare ourselves to make these viral videos? Because I know that your background is essentially in that. So let's dive into that question.

Hillary Billings ([30:13](#)):

Yeah, and it's, it's a really great question because I think often what happens is when people hear that we have backgrounds, my, my co-founder and I in making viral videos that they, they, the first question is, okay, so what's my hashtag strategy or what time of day should I post? Or what do I need to make sure is included in the thumbnail so that this gets the most traction? And I think that that strategy of thinking

about the post-production is really the, the wrong way to go about it. We always want to encourage people to start with creative first because it's the creative that is going to convert the best post-production strategy is actually having a fantastic pre-production strategy. So that's what we want to focus on. And really thinking through your content before you even post. I feel like short form video is taken over, whether it's on TikTok, Instagram reels, YouTube reels, Facebook reels you know, YouTube shorts, there's Twitter's talking about doing some kind of short form content.

Hillary Billings ([31:15](#)):

It's even changing the way that we're watching traditional shows like on Netflix, on streaming platforms, just because of the way that we now grab and keep attention and the way that our brains like to, to watch things. So because of this, it's so important that we're intentionally thinking about content. What's happening is most people are just throwing stuff up because everyone's trying to get on the train and trying to make an impact. And they're, they're posting up, you know, maybe clips from podcasts or, or longer form videos. And then there's a lot of frustration as to why it's not working. And it all comes down to we want to intentionally craft the videos to leverage the psychology of attention to help them reach the most people possible, and especially reach your target audience for your business. So that is where we want to start.

Jillian Flodstrom ([32:05](#)):

I think that's so important because you know what, you're right, that's what everybody talks about is the stuff afterwards mm-hmm. <Affirmative>. But really it starts at the beginning, like the thought process of creating those videos. Now here's what I think is interesting about you is before you started this consulting agency for TikTok, you didn't really care for the platform. No. In fact, you haven't mentioned that you wouldn't get audit. So what changed? Cause I think it's crazy that you went from zero to 400 k, now you're working with TikTok. Like what changed?

Hillary Billings ([32:36](#)):

So there was a couple things. So at the time I was making content for Facebook. That was our first kind of introduction into the viral video world. And it's all consuming when you're being a, a content creator full-time. And I say that over influencer cuz I, I prefer that term, but when and, and I like many other business owners and entrepreneurs and personal brands out there we have a a the same mentor where invited and I was at one of the events and they were talking about, Hey, by the way, TikTok is this new platform. They were also talking about clubhouse. You're gonna wanna get on there and start to build it while it's new. And I was so resistant. I'm like, I'm tired. I have all of these other platforms I have to maintain. I'm doing my personal Instagram, I've got these Facebook pages.

Hillary Billings ([33:20](#)):

I don't have the time or the energy. I don't want to, you can't make me, it doesn't look like something that I wanna be a part of. It's for the younger generation, which by the way is the, is the talk track that we hear all the time from everybody. And then one day I was posting videos to Facebook and there was a glitch on the backend of my Facebook page, which we had done nothing to incur a violation, but the, the page had a glitch and it got demonetized and there wasn't a set solution from Facebook as to how long it would take to get the page back up and running. And so we had just posted a video, it was doing really well and I'm just watching the views roll in and the millions of views and there is \$0 attached to it. And it's like, I can't watch this anymore.

Hillary Billings ([34:02](#)):

I need to put my attention somewhere else. So it was that week in divine timing that I said, okay, guess I'll just go see what this whole TikTok thing is about cuz I can't, I can't focus on this right now. And that was the only reason I got on the platform. And within, you know, the first week we were seeing massive traction on videos and even just spending time starting to understand how this short form video game was playing out differently on TikTok versus other platforms. And it quickly turned into a, a snowball of momentum, which we're really proud about and, and we're very excited that we've created close relationships with TikTok since then and are now on their advisory board for their agencies. And it's been a, it's been a wild ride. But yes, if it hadn't have been for that other Facebook page having an issue and me not being able to make money there, I would not have put my time and attention into TikTok.

Jillian Flodstrom ([34:56](#)):

That's so funny that you said that because I remember that meeting and I remember thinking for the love of Pete, one more that I have to do that is so funny. And you know what though? I think there's so many of us business owners that are like, one more, you know, it's, it's so frustrating. But yeah, I'm glad that it happened that way because I know for a lot of people, if they have a a video go viral on TikTok, it's kind of like a happy accident that they have no control over. Mm-Hmm. <Affirmative>, they didn't mean for it to go viral, but you kind of look at it the opposite way because your content goes viral so consistently. I mean, you've had over a billion views in under a year year, which to me is like, seems so crazy, but is so awesome at the same time. So I know we talked a little bit about approaching the content that you create, you know, starting with the amazing video. But what are some other tips that we could use to create content that would be more likely to go viral?

Hillary Billings ([35:55](#)):

So I think for starters, you know, I, I wanna make this clear. Like I didn't come out of the gate making amazing videos you know, with my background in journalism. And I wrote for u s A today and I was an on-camera host and I was doing a lot of videos for them. And my co-founder was a former musician and the board charting artist, and he had his own background in film and tv. So when we started these videos and were given an opportunity to, to monetize on Facebook and, and to make these viral videos, we thought we had this in the back because we were former creators with these strong creator backgrounds and we're like, we can do this no problem. And the first couple months everything was tanking. It was so frustrating. We were so just deflated and I, there was a, there was a turning point where we had to make the decision, are we gonna go all in on this or are we going to abandon it because this isn't working the the way that we're trying to do it now.

Hillary Billings ([36:48](#)):

So we sat down and we watched thousands of viral videos. My, my co-founder made an Excel sheet making all of these different markers looking at what's happening at second three, what's happening at second five, how many people are in the frame, how long is the video? What's the theme of the video? What's the title, what's the caption? Is there music? What, what's happening? And as we started to put in all this data and look at this information and really taking more of a scientific approach to seeing what is the same, are there any trends or formulas that are popping up? We started to see some, and we took some of those theories and applied them to the next video that we did. And that video did 5 million views. And then the video after that did 10 million views. And it's not to say that every video that we've done is turned to gold because that is not the case.

Hillary Billings ([37:40](#)):

But we can, with relative certainty now figure out and, and say by looking at a video concept if it won't work or if it has a likelihood of working. And sometimes too, it depends upon, you know, which profile it gets posted to and things that are outside of your control. So at the end of the day, like going back to the, that first part of the conversation, if you're trying to focus on the hacks with hashtags and the times to post and the number of posts per day and descriptions and trends, none of it matters if your content isn't compelling. So we started building our videos off of what we call the, the psychology of attention. So we're leveraging the psychology of attention and there are, there are three pillars that you have to do in each video. And you have to, you have to meet these markers in order for the video to have a chance to go viral.

Hillary Billings ([38:30](#)):

And the first one is you have to grab attention, you have to spark an emotion, and then you have to create a curiosity gap. So grabbing attention off the bat is pretty self-explanatory. 20 million new videos are being posted to social media every single day. So you've got a lot of competition. You have to earn attention. It is no longer a game of someone's gonna scroll through and watch something for the sake of watching it. What are you doing within the first two and a half seconds? Because that's how much time you have to get somebody to give you another two and a half seconds. And that, that is the plan is you have to be thinking about it in those terms. What are you doing in the first two and a half seconds to get you another two and a half seconds? So we're starting with grabbing attention, sparking an emotion, people and, and content now is all about relate relatability.

Hillary Billings ([39:20](#)):

We wanna make sure that when we're crafting content, that we are intentionally thinking about what we want somebody to feel. And that could be inspiration, motivation, it could be anger, it could be controversy. There's a lot of different emotions we can look to play into, depending upon the topic that your business wants to address in that moment. It's also going to be the piece that makes this more shareable. When people see themselves in content or the content says something about them, they're more apt to share it. This is why on Facebook, you see all the time women are sharing the, which Disney princess are you results from the quizzes because they want you to know that they got Jasmine and that means that they're sassy. Like by sharing that piece of emo that that piece of content, they could just say, Hey, I'm a sassy woman, but instead they've chosen to share that piece of content to say it indirectly.

Hillary Billings ([40:14](#)):

So using the spark of emotion to not only help with relatability but shareability and again, to keep buying you more time on the watch channel videos. The last piece is creating the curiosity gap. And by, by far we think this is the, the biggest piece that people have to learn to play with. So if you don't give enough information on the front end of the video, people get confused and they'll scroll away, right? I don't know what's happening, I don't know what this is, I don't know what I'm looking at, I'm not interested. Or you give too much information and there's no reason for them to keep watching. So what's the ideal bell curve instead? Well, we wanna give enough information on the front end so that they know what you're promising them, that they know what the end of this video is gonna be.

Hillary Billings ([40:59](#)):

So it could be, and this really shows up in two different ways. You either could have a gap in the, in the what, or you could have a gap in the how. So a great example would be someone that's an expert in

Airbnbs. I watch a lot of Airbnb content cause I'm really into it and a creator being like, I made a million dollars this month, let, here's how I did it. So what I know is that there's a payoff, but I don't know how he did it. And so now I'm gonna watch the video to learn how he did it. Or it could be, here's what I did this month and now let me tell you how much money I made. And so then I know the how, but I don't know what the end result of the how is. So thinking about how you can put that curiosity gap into each video and order to keep people watching and also to add value. So again, grab attention, spark emotion, create a curiosity gap. Those are the three things you need in each video to make sure it has a chance of going viral regardless of the, the industry that you are in.

Jillian Flodstrom ([42:04](#)):

I love like the scientific aspect of it because it's those things that you don't think about that it's, and one thing that I wanna touch on that at the very beginning of this that you mentioned, which I think is like the most important thing of all is you guys were struggling and instead of giving up and jumping to the next newest, latest, dis greatest thing, you're like, no, we're gonna stick it out. We're gonna figure out how to make this work. Because you're right, there is a scientific aspect to it. It's just figuring that out and then tailoring it to your content or your client's content, which I think is so cool that you guys figured that out. I mean, that spreadsheet thank you is hysterical. Like, I just think that that is so funny, but what a great way to be. Like, what are the consistent things of all these videos?

Hillary Billings ([42:53](#)):

It's really taking that scientific approach and it removes the emotion from it, right? Because I think especially as creators as business owners, it can be so vulnerable for us to put ourselves out there in content. And this content wasn't the most high brow, you know, we're talking pranks and, and DIY and, and gifting videos, but it's even more personal for someone who their entire business, their ethos, their values are being put forward. And that's very difficult when you're doing all of that work and you're being vulnerable and then you're not seeing the results that you wanna see. Or worse, you get some heckler in the comments who some Joe Schmoie who leaves you some terrible review and now you feel like you're not making any impact. And so being able to remove that piece of it, that emotional investment and just saying, this is part of my job.

Hillary Billings ([43:41](#)):

How do I do my job better and what are the different levers that I can pull to potentially make this get the result that I wanted to have? And I think that that was one of the biggest lessons that I learned as a content creator is, and this goes for any artist, any business owner, is you have to be less precious about the piece that you're putting out to the world and instead focus on the process. So we're, we're not as precious about the end result and product, but we are more precious about the process and protecting what works and making sure that that is constantly the piece that's being honed because that'll be what allows you to adapt. And you know, we were talking before we hit record too, about how there is such a, a dramatic change right now in the scope of, of the podcasting environment and ecosystem, and it's the same thing.

Hillary Billings ([44:28](#)):

You have people that tried it out, they're excited, they're motivated, and then it's not working. It's a lot of work and then they get discouraged and they move on to the next thing. But if they were to take the time to sit and try to figure out what is going to get the audience that I wanna have, there could be massive results. It's just, it takes that additional step. And then intentionality when it comes to content

that we don't often associate with social media and social content and, and podcasts in general. I think anything that's considered free content often is considered less than the other parts of the business when the reality is these can be massive opportunities for businesses and brands to bypass the gatekeepers and to create the relationships. And that's the great thing that TikTok was able to start. And, and this whole trend of allowing businesses and influencers to be the voices and finding their audience without even necessarily having to pay for it, which is so powerful and, and we're really seeing that affect culture in a variety of ways from, you know, actors and actresses are now being forced to have their own followings and we have businesses that are forced to have to figure out how to create those relationships in order to, to keep the attention and keep the consumer engaged.

Hillary Billings ([45:49](#)):

And it's a really powerful time to be thinking about your content.

Jillian Flodstrom ([45:52](#)):

Absolutely. Well, and I think too, knowing as you're going into it, if you're starting this social media journey because you're like, okay, I know this is, this is one of the things that I've gotta do mm-hmm. <Affirmative> and, you know, going into it that it's gonna be a bit of a slog sometimes. I mean, it's not always, I mean, there are parts of it that are glamorous and amazing and you're like riding the high, but there's also parts that you're like, I really don't wanna do this today, but you get up and you do it anyways. Knowing that going into it, I think can be very powerful because there's a lot of us that go into it thinking, you know, I'm gonna be a viral, you know, content creator, influencer, it's gonna be amazing. People are gonna pay me to travel around the world. And the reality is, yes, that is the reality for some people, but for most of us not yet. And I know that the agency has created this proprietary process called the Three Vs. And I really wanna talk about that because I think it's so important for content creation and for anybody who's thinking about creating content. So let's talk about that because it's super interesting.

Hillary Billings ([46:57](#)):

Yeah, so I think that one of the primary pieces of resistance that we get from businesses is that they don't want to dance on TikTok. They don't wanna be a part of these trends. There's a lot of exhaustion that they start to feel just like even thinking about and premeditating having to keep up with what's happening on the platform, which we totally understand. And in fact, we take kind of a different approach. Our philosophy is that if you are following trends, that you are by definition a follower. So we would prefer our, our clients to actually not focus on trends and instead trying to carve out a space for them within the ecosystem to allow the, their correct target audience to find them. And so this all comes down to those three Bs. So the first one being your values and your voice. So those are the first two and the values that you want to be known for as a brand.

Hillary Billings ([47:52](#)):

We also wanna make sure these are coming out within your content. So even if you are not saying I support small businesses, everything that you're putting out to your audience and your content has that as an underlying tonality, whether that's you're giving a ton of great advice, you're helping motivate them, you're talking about your own personal challenges. Whatever you're doing is showcasing that this matters to you. And so usually one of two things happens. Either a brand only picks one value and they're just trying to hone in that like, this is the thing that we care about when it doesn't really work that way. All businesses and and personal brands are multidimensional. So we always encourage people to choose three values that they want to make sure is consistent in their content or they don't really

know how to integrate it into their content. And so it becomes very confusing for the watchers and the audience as to what they actually do care about.

Hillary Billings ([48:47](#)):

So that's the first piece. The second one then becomes your voice, the tonality. What type of characteristics and persona do you want to have on the platforms then through your content to allow to shine through, to create that connection. There's a lot of different ways that plays out, right? It could be sophisticated, it could be educational, it could be playful, it could be sassy. You know, riot Air has done a great job of this. They are a budget airline out of Europe and they just own like, you are getting a flight, you are lucky to have a seat. We will take you from point A to point B for the cheapest way possible. Do not ask for anything else. You're lucky you have a seatbelt. And, and so that is, they have embraced that as their persona and that they are just a super sassy airline that's gonna clap back if you ask for anything different.

Hillary Billings ([49:36](#)):

You know, Wendy's has done a great job of this on Twitter as well. And people will go to their Twitter profile because they want to be roasted by Wendy's. So duo Lingo is another great example. Very unsexy, right? A language learning app. And they created a character duo, this bird that is just wreaking havoc and being a menace, and they have accepted that they're going to allow their consumers to fill the gap, to bridge the gap and take that final step to download the app. And they're just making great videos and great content that has nothing to do really with learning languages. So by focusing on those first two pieces is going to allow you to feel very confident in the brand that you're putting out there and that it's consistent with everything else in your business. And then the last piece is viral potential, which is what we've already talked about, about with the psychology of attention.

Hillary Billings ([50:28](#)):

How are we leveraging and grabbing attention? How are we sparking emotion? How are we creating a curiosity gap? Is this video set up appropriately so that it has the chance to go viral? And being able to also properly reflect, reflect the brand's values. So utilizing those three pieces, we're able to get a lot of traction and momentum for our clients because they're able to see how this works. Something else I wanted to just say really quickly because being on social media and creating content can be so exhausting when someone thinks about adding in a strategy, a short form video strategy, specifically thinking about like adding in TikTok for example they may not want to do it because it feels additive. But here's the reality is that if you start and, and we take a TikTok first approach, not necessarily because every brand that we work with should be on the platform, but because what works on TikTok will translate to the other platforms, it's a one-way street though.

Hillary Billings ([51:28](#)):

So if you have a video that does well on Instagram, it probably won't do well on the other platforms. But if you're able to focus on a TikTok first strategy, that video will see results on Instagram wheels. We'll see results on YouTube shorts, we'll see results on Facebook reel. And now you've just have, or a quarter of the amount of work that you have to do because you've taken this approach. We're big believers that, you know, photo posts are are fun, but everything is going to be about short form video and that is taking over the internet. Adobe recently did a study, 80% of the time that you are on your phone where you are not making phone calls or texts, you are watching short form videos. So when we talk about the 80 20 rule of 80% of your effort, you know, or 20% of your effort for 80% of your return, you need to be

making short form video. And in fact, we encourage clients who feel overwhelmed to throw away everything else that they're doing on social media and just focus on those videos because that is where you're going to get the most traction, you're going to see the most results. And then if you take the TikTok first approach, you're gonna have one piece of content that works everywhere

Jillian Flodstrom ([52:39](#)):

That is so cool. And you don't really think about it like that either, because you're like, oh, I'm doing all this other stuff on all these different platforms. And I think even just try to keep up with it all can be overwhelming. Oh yeah. So if our listeners are like, I know that I need to be on TikTok, I know that I need to do a better job on TikTok, where can they connect with you? What's the best way to work with you?

Hillary Billings ([53:01](#)):

Yeah, we love having conversations with entrepreneurs, personal brands, business owners and agency owners about how we can help. The best way to connect with us is on our website, [attentions.com/free call](https://attentions.com/free-call), and you can schedule a call with either myself or my co-founder, and we would love to hear about what you're working on and how we can possibly help. We run monthly boot camps, which is a great way for clients to start working with us and to really get a deep dive into how we think about content, how they can start looking at their ideation, their production schedule, and their post-production, like a viral creator that also works for businesses. And, and we've seen it work time and time again, and it's, it's a really fantastic way to bring people together and just exponentially grow their short form content strategy. So [attention ears.com/free call](https://attentionears.com/free-call).

Jillian Flodstrom ([53:49](#)):

I love that. And of course I will link that in the show notes so people have quick access to that just in case they are listening to this while they're running or driving now. Yes. One final question for you. Okay. This one is tough for most people because you have to choose just one. But what is one piece of advice that you would give to a small business owner?

Hillary Billings ([54:10](#)):

One piece of advice. It's

Jillian Flodstrom ([54:12](#)):

Tough.

Hillary Billings ([54:17](#)):

Okay. I mean, ready, like sticking on to the theme of short form content strategy. Mm-Hmm. <Affirmative>, right? And thinking, sticking to the, the theme that business owners are overwhelmed, there's a lot going on. It is so important for you to remember that short form content strategy is the new social media strategy. So if you are choosing to opt out of short form content strategy because it feels overwhelming or it feels like too much, just remember you are choosing to not be a part of the conversation that is happening and potentially choosing to not have your brand become culturally relevant.

Jillian Flodstrom ([54:57](#)):

Wow, that is heavy

Hillary Billings ([55:00](#)):

<Laugh>. That's

Jillian Flodstrom ([55:01](#)):

A lot. But there's all

Hillary Billings ([55:03](#)):

Important and there's such an easy fix, right? We just say, I'm going to take time to step away from everything else that I, I've said is important right now, my social media strategy, and focus on this one piece and get this one piece right, because that is the piece that's going to move the needle. And that is the piece that's going to drive the right customers and convert to more business for you. And if you hop on the train now, it's gonna be even easier as more platforms continue to evolve and make this a priority. Again, 80% of the time people are on their phones, they are watching short form videos. Let's make sure that it's yours.

Jillian Flodstrom ([55:38](#)):

I love that. So important. So thank you so much for spending time with us. I know your schedule is crazy busy, but I appreciate you chatting with us about these short form content that is so relevant right now. And like you said, going forward, it's going to be what people are choosing to watch. So thank you so much for spending time with us today. I really appreciate it.

Hillary Billings ([56:01](#)):

Oh, anytime. This was so much fun.