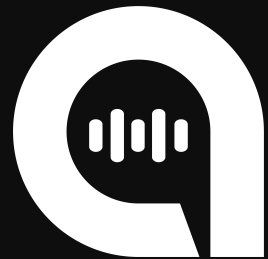


Amplifying Audio
Investments with
Video in 2026:

A Strategic Playbook for Brands





For more than a decade, audio has been the quiet over-performer in modern marketing. Americans now spend nearly four hours a day listening ([Nielsen](#)), giving audio the unmatched ability to drive emotion, memory, and persuasion. And now that influence is scaling across screens.

Video platforms, from YouTube and CTV, to Netflix and TikTok, are rapidly becoming audio creator's biggest growth engines. Not because audio is trendy, but because platforms with the deepest data know what audiences actually watch and listen to. YouTube alone reaches more than a billion monthly podcast listeners and accounts for 33% of weekly podcast consumption, with Gen Z overwhelmingly favoring video for deeper connection.

For marketers, this convergence is a turning point. Audio's authenticity now pairs with video's reach, precision, and algorithmic discovery. Campaigns that run across CTV and digital audio achieve 2.5x higher efficiency than CTV alone, and drive significant lift – 12 points in aided recall and 14 points in message association ([Sirius XM Media](#)).

Measurement has caught up, attribution is standardized, and attention metrics consistently show audio outperforming its spend share. As video platforms reorganize around audio-first content, they're also becoming top discovery engines for podcasts and creators. Adding digital audio to CTV meaningfully increases unique reach, while short-form video – TikTok, Reels, YouTube Shorts – remains the format marketers expect to invest in most this year. In 2026, audio isn't a supporting tactic. It's the connective tissue between the media plan and the cultural conversation, with video acting as its most powerful amplifier.



Video Is Audio's Biggest Growth Engine

The most important media story of 2026 is that audio, video, creators and communities are converging into a potent platform for brands. And that's because audio-first creators rewired the listening experience. By bringing cameras into the studio, they pulled audiences into a new mode of podcast discovery – one YouTube quickly scaled. Now every major platform is adapting to participate in a multi-billion-dollar industry that's attracting listeners, viewers and advertisers alike.

TikTok is building a global audio ecosystem with sound-first creation tools, live audio formats, and a growing network of voice-led content. Netflix is investing in video podcasts and sound-driven storytelling, signaling that “watching” is increasingly synonymous with “listening.” And YouTube and CTV are rapidly expanding formats where audio engages audiences, opening up powerful new opportunities for brands to combine sound, video, and creator voices to reach broad and highly targeted audiences at once.

We are witnessing the industrialization of audio-first creativity at scale. Storytelling that used to be confined to speakers and headphones is now fully native on the biggest screens in the home and small screens on the go. When a brand builds a sonic identity, it no longer lives in podcasts or radio. It travels frictionlessly across YouTube, CTV, TikTok, and streaming environments that are rapidly adopting audio-first creators and sound-led narratives.

This is not just audio extending into video. It's video evolving to meet audio.



THE 2026 PLAYBOOK:

Lead with Audio, Scale with Video

As audio and video collide, brands have an opportunity to rethink how their message travels. These three principles show how to modernize your audio strategy for a cross-platform world, plus the action steps marketers can take to bring it to life.

1. Think beyond the host-read.

While host-read ads remain one of the most effective audio formats, brands need to expand how they show up across audio and video – from in-narrative endorsements to streaming audio, in-studio moments, creator-led video, and in-show integrations. Start by building your campaign narrative in audio, then translate those ideas into visual environments.

ACTION STEPS:

Define the emotional response your brand should trigger the moment people hear it. Map the key story beats that should carry across audio, video, and creator-led moments. Establish a single memorable takeaway that travels consistently across formats.

2. Plan for cross-screen, cross-format attention.

Consumers don't experience media in channels – they experience it in flow. With attribution and attention tracking now operating across screens, it's finally possible to manage podcasts, YouTube, CTV, and social as a single attention system rather than siloed buys. When content engages across screens and speakers, the message compounds.

ACTION STEPS:

Identify the screens, devices, and environments where your brand voice should appear – and where it should adapt. Align with your partners on how audio and video can reinforce each other across the consumer journey. Use measurement frameworks that reflect real attention patterns, not media silos.

3. Put creator partnership at the center of your strategy.

Creators are the new distribution engine for trust and carry disproportionate influence. For marketers, this means it's time to take a step back and allow these personalities to translate your brand into the aesthetics, humor, pacing, and tone of their world in which they know audiences resonate with. And with podcast, YouTube, and CTV measurement now unified, marketers can clearly see how these creator-shaped integrations drive attention, lift, and conversion across the funnel.

ACTION STEPS:

Determine which parts of your message are best delivered through a creator's authentic voice. Select creators whose tone, values, and audience energy naturally align with the feeling your brand wants to evoke. Build guidelines that protect your brand's core message while giving creators the freedom to craft the story in their own style.



Putting the Playbook Into Action

Molson Coors' recent campaign for its new line of Happy Thursday spiked refreshers provides a perfect example of how the three playbook principles come together in practice.

When the brand wanted to connect authentically with a younger, highly engaged audience, they knew it couldn't feel scripted or forced. Enter The Basement Yard – a massively popular comedy podcast with a fiercely loyal fanbase and a shared sense of fun.

Rather than relying solely on traditional host-read ads, Happy Thursday provided key talking points and simple guidelines, giving the hosts the freedom to shape the story across channels. [The result was content that felt fully native to the show and authentically aligned with the creators' voice.](#) This approach drove measurable results – 930K+ views, 75K+ interactions, and positive fan feedback on the ads themselves – highlighting the power of audio-first creators as both amplifiers and trusted messengers.

Happy Thursday proved how powerful authentic, creator-led brand storytelling can be. And the industry is doubling down. Creator economy investment is projected to reach \$37 billion in 2025, growing 26% annually, with nearly half of advertisers calling creators a “must-buy” ([IAB](#)). Happy Thursday's results show exactly why that momentum is accelerating and why this playbook isn't just theory – it's a roadmap for 2026 and beyond.



Planning For the Future

The future will reward brands that treat audio as an ecosystem, not a channel. Marketers need to build unified audio-video-social strategies, create assets that work in both sound-first and sight-shared environments, and collaborate with creators as true co-developers. Brands that execute on these principles won't just be present – they'll connect, resonate, and drive meaningful outcomes.

