

Easy reading: Why is Charlie so cool ... like? (level 3) – text

From ordinary student to YouTube star. How did Charlie McDonnell do it?

In April 2007, a 16-year-old boy named Charlie McDonnell was studying for his exams. But he was bored, so he turned on his computer and started surfing the web. He soon found a website called YouTube and within minutes he was watching a video of another teenager sitting in his bedroom in the United States, talking to his computer about how bored he was. 'I could do better than that!' thought Charlie. So, using a cheap laptop computer and webcam that his dad had bought for him, he made his first video blog and posted it on YouTube under the name *Charlieissocoollike*.

YouTube started in 2005 and is now the world's largest video sharing website with hundreds of millions of users. There are over 3 billion videos viewed every day on the site, and 48 hours of video uploaded every minute. A very high proportion of the videos on YouTube are video blogs, which are just videos of people talking to a camera about their lives or things that interest them. That might sound boring, but in fact video blogging is now becoming more popular with teenagers than television!

Back in April 2007, a few days after Charlie had posted his first video, he was very surprised to find that he had 150 subscribers. Encouraged by this, he went on to make more videos. A month later, he posted a video called *How to get featured on YouTube*. The people at YouTube liked this and put it on their UK homepage. They weren't the only ones to like it. Two days later Charlie's audience had grown to 4,400 and he started to get hundreds of video messages from fans. 'It was really strange,' says Charlie. 'I'd been talking to my computer for a month, and suddenly my computer started talking back to me!'

His next big success came a few months later when Oprah Winfrey, the famous American TV host, showed one of Charlie's comedy videos called *How to be English* on her show. In this video, he wears a suit and tie, talks in a funny accent and shows viewers how to make a cup of tea. Charlie became an instant star in the United States and this is still one of his more popular videos, with nearly 3 million views.

In January 2008, Charlie reached 25,000 subscribers. As a way to say thank you to his fans he made a video called *Challenge Charlie*, inviting people to suggest funny or difficult things for him to do in his videos. Challenges included drinking tomato ketchup, eating baby food, wearing all of his clothes at once, giving himself an electric shock and painting himself purple!

Yet it's not all comedy. Charlie realised he could use his fame to help people less fortunate than himself. To celebrate his 18th birthday, he raised £5,000 for cancer research by shaving all his hair off on live TV. Topping that, in 2010 he raised more than four times as much when he teamed up with fellow YouTuber Myles Dyer to co-present a live show on the internet. The two stayed awake for 24 hours performing challenges that viewers set them. All the money went to the children's charity UNICEF. But there's even more to Charlie than this. He is also a talented singer and songwriter. In fact, his most popular videos are of him singing and playing the ukulele. In *Duet with Myself*, he uses special effects to sing a duet with himself about what a boring person he is. This has now been watched over 7 million times!

It's through music that Charlie met his best friend, fellow YouTuber and musician, Alex Day. When they discovered that they were both fans of the British science fiction series *Doctor Who*, they decided to form a band together. But this is a band with a difference: they only sing songs about Doctor Who! Under the

name Chameleon Circuit, they have now made two albums together and performed several concerts. Their second album, *Still Got Legs*, reached number 23 in the charts.

Charlie has more and more followers every week and *Charlieissocoollike* was the first YouTube UK channel to reach one million subscribers. It is now the most popular channel in the UK. But what is the secret of his popularity? 'I just make videos that I would want to watch,' he says, 'and I'm not trying to sell anything.' And when asked how all this fame has affected him, Charlie says, 'I'm still a guy who sits in his bedroom talking to his camera, and that's it for me.' His honesty and modesty are perhaps the main reasons why Charlie is so well liked.

And if you were wondering how Charlie did in his exams back in 2007 ... well, he passed with nine A grades and one B! He says that he wants to go on to study at university in the future but decided to try and make a career on YouTube before that. And so far it's going very well. With the money he has made from advertising on his channel and from music sales, he was recently able to buy a house in London with his friend Alex.

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