

Easy reading: Why is Charlie so cool ... like? (level 2) – text

Can YouTube make you famous? It worked for Charlie McDonnell!

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 laptop and started surfing the internet. He soon found a website called YouTube and watched a video of another teenager just like him, sitting in his bedroom and talking to his computer about how bored he was. 'I could do better than that!' thought Charlie. So, using his computer and a webcam, 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. Forty-eight hours of video are uploaded to YouTube every minute and more than 3 billion videos are watched every day. A large number of those are video blogs: videos of people simply talking to a camera about their lives or things that interest them. In fact, video blogging is becoming more popular with teenagers than television.

A few days after Charlie posted his first video, he saw that he had 150 subscribers, so he decided to make more. He soon became quite popular, and a few months later Oprah Winfrey, the famous American TV host, showed one of his videos called *How to be English* on her programme. In this video, he wears a suit and tie, talks in a funny accent and shows viewers how to make a cup of tea. This made Charlie suddenly very famous in the United States too, and it is still one of his more popular videos, with nearly 3 million views.

In January 2008 he reached 25,000 subscribers. As a way to thank his fans Charlie 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, wearing all of his clothes at once, giving himself an electric shock and painting himself purple!

Charlie also realised he could use his fame to help other people. On his 18th birthday he raised £5,000 for charity by shaving all his hair off on live TV. Topping that, in 2010 he raised more than four times as much when he co-presented a live show on the internet. He stayed awake for 24 hours performing challenges from viewers. All the money went to the children's charity UNICEF.

But did you know that Charlie is also a singer and songwriter? 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!

Charlie's best friend, Alex Day, is also a musician and video blogger. They met through YouTube 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 not an ordinary band: they are called Chameleon Circuit and they only sing songs about Doctor Who! They have now made two albums together and performed several concerts. Their second album, *Still Got Legs*, reached number 23 in the charts.

With more than one and a half million subscribers, Charlie is now the most popular video blogger in the UK. He has now made enough money from YouTube to buy a house in London with his friend Alex. 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 to university in the future but decided to try and make a career on YouTube before that. So far, it seems to be going very well!

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