Kevin Allocca: Why videos go viral

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[Hi. I'm Kevin Allocca, I'm the trends manager at YouTube,](http://www.ted.com/talks/kevin_allocca_why_videos_go_viral.html#0) [and I professionally watch YouTube videos.](http://www.ted.com/talks/kevin_allocca_why_videos_go_viral.html#3000) [It's true.](http://www.ted.com/talks/kevin_allocca_why_videos_go_viral.html#5000) [So we're going to talk a little bit today about how videos go viral](http://www.ted.com/talks/kevin_allocca_why_videos_go_viral.html#7000) [and then why that even matters.](http://www.ted.com/talks/kevin_allocca_why_videos_go_viral.html#10000) [We all want to be stars --](http://www.ted.com/talks/kevin_allocca_why_videos_go_viral.html#12000) [celebrities, singers, comedians --](http://www.ted.com/talks/kevin_allocca_why_videos_go_viral.html#14000)[and when I was younger, that seemed so very, very hard to do.](http://www.ted.com/talks/kevin_allocca_why_videos_go_viral.html#17000) [But now Web video has made it](http://www.ted.com/talks/kevin_allocca_why_videos_go_viral.html#20000) [so that any of us or any of the creative things that we do](http://www.ted.com/talks/kevin_allocca_why_videos_go_viral.html#22000) [can become completely famous](http://www.ted.com/talks/kevin_allocca_why_videos_go_viral.html#24000) [in a part of our world's culture.](http://www.ted.com/talks/kevin_allocca_why_videos_go_viral.html#26000) [Any one of you could be famous on the Internet](http://www.ted.com/talks/kevin_allocca_why_videos_go_viral.html#28000) [by next Saturday.](http://www.ted.com/talks/kevin_allocca_why_videos_go_viral.html#30000) [But there are over 48 hours of video uploaded to YouTube](http://www.ted.com/talks/kevin_allocca_why_videos_go_viral.html#32000) [every minute.](http://www.ted.com/talks/kevin_allocca_why_videos_go_viral.html#34000) [And of that, only a tiny percentage](http://www.ted.com/talks/kevin_allocca_why_videos_go_viral.html#36000) [ever goes viral and gets tons of views and becomes a cultural moment.](http://www.ted.com/talks/kevin_allocca_why_videos_go_viral.html#38000) [So how does it happen?](http://www.ted.com/talks/kevin_allocca_why_videos_go_viral.html#41000) [Three things:](http://www.ted.com/talks/kevin_allocca_why_videos_go_viral.html#43000) [tastemakers, communities of participation](http://www.ted.com/talks/kevin_allocca_why_videos_go_viral.html#45000) [and unexpectedness.](http://www.ted.com/talks/kevin_allocca_why_videos_go_viral.html#47000) [All right, let's go.](http://www.ted.com/talks/kevin_allocca_why_videos_go_viral.html#49000)

[(Video) Bear Vasquez: Oh, my God. Oh, my God.](http://www.ted.com/talks/kevin_allocca_why_videos_go_viral.html#51000) [Oh, my God!](http://www.ted.com/talks/kevin_allocca_why_videos_go_viral.html#55000) [Wooo!](http://www.ted.com/talks/kevin_allocca_why_videos_go_viral.html%22%20%5Cl%20%2258000) [Ohhhhh, wowwww!](http://www.ted.com/talks/kevin_allocca_why_videos_go_viral.html%22%20%5Cl%20%2260000)

[KA: Last year, Bear Vasquez posted this video](http://www.ted.com/talks/kevin_allocca_why_videos_go_viral.html#65000) [that he had shot outside his home in Yosemite National Park.](http://www.ted.com/talks/kevin_allocca_why_videos_go_viral.html#67000) [In 2010, it was viewed 23 million times.](http://www.ted.com/talks/kevin_allocca_why_videos_go_viral.html#70000) [(Laughter)](http://www.ted.com/talks/kevin_allocca_why_videos_go_viral.html#73000) [This is a chart of what it looked like](http://www.ted.com/talks/kevin_allocca_why_videos_go_viral.html#75000) [when it first became popular last summer.](http://www.ted.com/talks/kevin_allocca_why_videos_go_viral.html#77000) [But he didn't actually set out to make a viral video, Bear.](http://www.ted.com/talks/kevin_allocca_why_videos_go_viral.html#80000) [He just wanted to share a rainbow.](http://www.ted.com/talks/kevin_allocca_why_videos_go_viral.html#83000) [Because that's what you do when your name is Yosemite Mountain Bear.](http://www.ted.com/talks/kevin_allocca_why_videos_go_viral.html#85000) [(Laughter)](http://www.ted.com/talks/kevin_allocca_why_videos_go_viral.html#87000) [And he had posted lots of nature videos in fact.](http://www.ted.com/talks/kevin_allocca_why_videos_go_viral.html#89000) [And this video had actually been posted](http://www.ted.com/talks/kevin_allocca_why_videos_go_viral.html#92000) [all the way back in January.](http://www.ted.com/talks/kevin_allocca_why_videos_go_viral.html#94000)[So what happened here?](http://www.ted.com/talks/kevin_allocca_why_videos_go_viral.html#97000) [Jimmy Kimmel actually.](http://www.ted.com/talks/kevin_allocca_why_videos_go_viral.html#99000) [Jimmy Kimmel posted this tweet](http://www.ted.com/talks/kevin_allocca_why_videos_go_viral.html#101000) [that would eventually propel the video to be as popular as it would become.](http://www.ted.com/talks/kevin_allocca_why_videos_go_viral.html#103000) [Because tastemakers like Jimmy Kimmel](http://www.ted.com/talks/kevin_allocca_why_videos_go_viral.html#106000) [introduce us to new and interesting things](http://www.ted.com/talks/kevin_allocca_why_videos_go_viral.html#109000) [and bring them to a larger audience.](http://www.ted.com/talks/kevin_allocca_why_videos_go_viral.html#111000)

[(Video) Rebecca Black: ♫ It's Friday, Friday. Gotta get down on Friday. ♫](http://www.ted.com/talks/kevin_allocca_why_videos_go_viral.html#113000) [♫ Everybody's looking forward to the weekend, weekend. ♫](http://www.ted.com/talks/kevin_allocca_why_videos_go_viral.html#117000) [♫ Friday, Friday. Gettin' down on Friday. ♫](http://www.ted.com/talks/kevin_allocca_why_videos_go_viral.html#122000)

[KA: So you didn't think that we could actually have this conversation](http://www.ted.com/talks/kevin_allocca_why_videos_go_viral.html#126000) [without talking about this video I hope.](http://www.ted.com/talks/kevin_allocca_why_videos_go_viral.html#129000) [Rebecca Black's "Friday" is one of the most popular videos of the year.](http://www.ted.com/talks/kevin_allocca_why_videos_go_viral.html#131000) [It's been seen nearly 200 million times this year.](http://www.ted.com/talks/kevin_allocca_why_videos_go_viral.html#134000) [This is a chart of what it looked like.](http://www.ted.com/talks/kevin_allocca_why_videos_go_viral.html#137000) [And similar to "Double Rainbow,"](http://www.ted.com/talks/kevin_allocca_why_videos_go_viral.html#139000) [it seems to have just sprouted up out of nowhere.](http://www.ted.com/talks/kevin_allocca_why_videos_go_viral.html#141000)

[So what happened on this day?](http://www.ted.com/talks/kevin_allocca_why_videos_go_viral.html#145000) [Well it was a Friday, this is true.](http://www.ted.com/talks/kevin_allocca_why_videos_go_viral.html#147000) [And if you're wondering about those other spikes, those are also Fridays.](http://www.ted.com/talks/kevin_allocca_why_videos_go_viral.html#150000) [(Laughter)](http://www.ted.com/talks/kevin_allocca_why_videos_go_viral.html#153000) [But what about this day,](http://www.ted.com/talks/kevin_allocca_why_videos_go_viral.html#158000) [this one particular Friday?](http://www.ted.com/talks/kevin_allocca_why_videos_go_viral.html#160000) [Well Tosh.0 picked it up, a lot of blogs starting writing about.](http://www.ted.com/talks/kevin_allocca_why_videos_go_viral.html#162000) [Michael J. Nelson from Mystery Science Theater](http://www.ted.com/talks/kevin_allocca_why_videos_go_viral.html#165000) [was one of the first people to post a joke about the video on Twitter.](http://www.ted.com/talks/kevin_allocca_why_videos_go_viral.html#167000) [But what's important is that an individual or a group of tastemakers](http://www.ted.com/talks/kevin_allocca_why_videos_go_viral.html#171000) [took a point of view](http://www.ted.com/talks/kevin_allocca_why_videos_go_viral.html#173000) [and they shared that with a larger audience, accelerating the process.](http://www.ted.com/talks/kevin_allocca_why_videos_go_viral.html#175000)

[And so then this community formed](http://www.ted.com/talks/kevin_allocca_why_videos_go_viral.html#178000) [of people who shared this big inside joke](http://www.ted.com/talks/kevin_allocca_why_videos_go_viral.html#180000) [and they started talking about it and doing things with it.](http://www.ted.com/talks/kevin_allocca_why_videos_go_viral.html#182000) [And now there are 10,000 parodies of "Friday" on YouTube.](http://www.ted.com/talks/kevin_allocca_why_videos_go_viral.html#185000) [Even in the first seven days,](http://www.ted.com/talks/kevin_allocca_why_videos_go_viral.html#188000) [there was one parody for every other day of the week.](http://www.ted.com/talks/kevin_allocca_why_videos_go_viral.html#190000) [(Laughter)](http://www.ted.com/talks/kevin_allocca_why_videos_go_viral.html#193000) [Unlike the one-way entertainment of the 20th century,](http://www.ted.com/talks/kevin_allocca_why_videos_go_viral.html#197000) [this community participation](http://www.ted.com/talks/kevin_allocca_why_videos_go_viral.html#200000) [is how we become a part of the phenomenon --](http://www.ted.com/talks/kevin_allocca_why_videos_go_viral.html#202000) [either by spreading it or by doing something new with it.](http://www.ted.com/talks/kevin_allocca_why_videos_go_viral.html#204000)

[(Music)](http://www.ted.com/talks/kevin_allocca_why_videos_go_viral.html#207000)

[So "Nyan Cat" is a looped animation](http://www.ted.com/talks/kevin_allocca_why_videos_go_viral.html#216000) [with looped music.](http://www.ted.com/talks/kevin_allocca_why_videos_go_viral.html#219000) [It's this, just like this.](http://www.ted.com/talks/kevin_allocca_why_videos_go_viral.html#221000) [It's been viewed nearly 50 million times this year.](http://www.ted.com/talks/kevin_allocca_why_videos_go_viral.html#223000) [And if you think that that is weird,](http://www.ted.com/talks/kevin_allocca_why_videos_go_viral.html#227000) [you should know that there is a three-hour version of this](http://www.ted.com/talks/kevin_allocca_why_videos_go_viral.html#229000) [that's been viewed four million times.](http://www.ted.com/talks/kevin_allocca_why_videos_go_viral.html#231000) [(Laughter)](http://www.ted.com/talks/kevin_allocca_why_videos_go_viral.html#233000)[Even cats were watching this video.](http://www.ted.com/talks/kevin_allocca_why_videos_go_viral.html#236000) [(Laughter)](http://www.ted.com/talks/kevin_allocca_why_videos_go_viral.html#238000) [Cats were watching other cats watch this video.](http://www.ted.com/talks/kevin_allocca_why_videos_go_viral.html#242000)

[(Laughter)](http://www.ted.com/talks/kevin_allocca_why_videos_go_viral.html#246000)

[But what's important here](http://www.ted.com/talks/kevin_allocca_why_videos_go_viral.html#254000) [is the creativity that it inspired](http://www.ted.com/talks/kevin_allocca_why_videos_go_viral.html#257000) [amongst this techie, geeky Internet culture.](http://www.ted.com/talks/kevin_allocca_why_videos_go_viral.html#259000) [There were remixes.](http://www.ted.com/talks/kevin_allocca_why_videos_go_viral.html#262000) [(Laughter)](http://www.ted.com/talks/kevin_allocca_why_videos_go_viral.html#264000) [Someone made an old timey version.](http://www.ted.com/talks/kevin_allocca_why_videos_go_viral.html#266000)[(Laughter)](http://www.ted.com/talks/kevin_allocca_why_videos_go_viral.html#269000) [And then it went international.](http://www.ted.com/talks/kevin_allocca_why_videos_go_viral.html#271000) [(Laughter)](http://www.ted.com/talks/kevin_allocca_why_videos_go_viral.html#274000) [An entire remix community sprouted up](http://www.ted.com/talks/kevin_allocca_why_videos_go_viral.html#288000) [that brought it from being just a stupid joke](http://www.ted.com/talks/kevin_allocca_why_videos_go_viral.html#291000) [to something that we can all actually be a part of.](http://www.ted.com/talks/kevin_allocca_why_videos_go_viral.html#294000) [Because we don't just enjoy now,](http://www.ted.com/talks/kevin_allocca_why_videos_go_viral.html#296000) [we participate.](http://www.ted.com/talks/kevin_allocca_why_videos_go_viral.html#298000)

[And who could have predicted any of this?](http://www.ted.com/talks/kevin_allocca_why_videos_go_viral.html#303000) [Who could have predicted "Double Rainbow" or Rebecca Black](http://www.ted.com/talks/kevin_allocca_why_videos_go_viral.html#305000) [or "Nyan Cat?"](http://www.ted.com/talks/kevin_allocca_why_videos_go_viral.html#307000) [What scripts could you have written](http://www.ted.com/talks/kevin_allocca_why_videos_go_viral.html#309000) [that would have contained this in it?](http://www.ted.com/talks/kevin_allocca_why_videos_go_viral.html#311000) [In a world where over two days of video](http://www.ted.com/talks/kevin_allocca_why_videos_go_viral.html#314000) [get uploaded every minute,](http://www.ted.com/talks/kevin_allocca_why_videos_go_viral.html#316000) [only that which is truly unique and unexpected](http://www.ted.com/talks/kevin_allocca_why_videos_go_viral.html#318000) [can stand out in the way that these things have.](http://www.ted.com/talks/kevin_allocca_why_videos_go_viral.html#320000) [When a friend of mine told me that I needed to see this great video](http://www.ted.com/talks/kevin_allocca_why_videos_go_viral.html#323000) [about a guy protesting bicycle fines in New York City,](http://www.ted.com/talks/kevin_allocca_why_videos_go_viral.html#326000) [I admit I wasn't very interested.](http://www.ted.com/talks/kevin_allocca_why_videos_go_viral.html#329000)

[(Video) Casey Niestat: So I got a ticket for not riding in the bike lane,](http://www.ted.com/talks/kevin_allocca_why_videos_go_viral.html#331000) [but often there are obstructions](http://www.ted.com/talks/kevin_allocca_why_videos_go_viral.html#334000) [that keep you from properly riding in the bike lane.](http://www.ted.com/talks/kevin_allocca_why_videos_go_viral.html#336000)

[(Laughter)](http://www.ted.com/talks/kevin_allocca_why_videos_go_viral.html#339000)

[KA: By being totally surprising and humorous,](http://www.ted.com/talks/kevin_allocca_why_videos_go_viral.html#353000) [Casey Niestat got his funny idea and point](http://www.ted.com/talks/kevin_allocca_why_videos_go_viral.html#355000) [seen five million times.](http://www.ted.com/talks/kevin_allocca_why_videos_go_viral.html#359000) [And so this approach holds](http://www.ted.com/talks/kevin_allocca_why_videos_go_viral.html#361000) [for anything new that we do creatively.](http://www.ted.com/talks/kevin_allocca_why_videos_go_viral.html#363000) [And so it all brings us](http://www.ted.com/talks/kevin_allocca_why_videos_go_viral.html#365000) [to one big question ...](http://www.ted.com/talks/kevin_allocca_why_videos_go_viral.html#367000)

[(Video) Bear Vasquez: What does this mean?](http://www.ted.com/talks/kevin_allocca_why_videos_go_viral.html#369000) [Ohhhh.](http://www.ted.com/talks/kevin_allocca_why_videos_go_viral.html%22%20%5Cl%20%22372000) [(Laughter)](http://www.ted.com/talks/kevin_allocca_why_videos_go_viral.html#374000)

[KA: What does it mean?](http://www.ted.com/talks/kevin_allocca_why_videos_go_viral.html#377000) [Tastemakers, creative participating communities,](http://www.ted.com/talks/kevin_allocca_why_videos_go_viral.html#380000) [complete unexpectedness,](http://www.ted.com/talks/kevin_allocca_why_videos_go_viral.html#383000) [these are characteristics of a new kind of media and a new kind of culture](http://www.ted.com/talks/kevin_allocca_why_videos_go_viral.html#385000) [where anyone has access](http://www.ted.com/talks/kevin_allocca_why_videos_go_viral.html%22%20%5Cl%20%22388000) [and the audience defines the popularity.](http://www.ted.com/talks/kevin_allocca_why_videos_go_viral.html#390000) [I mean, as mentioned earlier,](http://www.ted.com/talks/kevin_allocca_why_videos_go_viral.html#392000) [one of the biggest stars in the world right now, Justin Bieber,](http://www.ted.com/talks/kevin_allocca_why_videos_go_viral.html#394000) [got his start on YouTube.](http://www.ted.com/talks/kevin_allocca_why_videos_go_viral.html#396000) [No one has to green-light your idea.](http://www.ted.com/talks/kevin_allocca_why_videos_go_viral.html#398000) [And we all now feel some ownership](http://www.ted.com/talks/kevin_allocca_why_videos_go_viral.html#401000) [in our own pop culture.](http://www.ted.com/talks/kevin_allocca_why_videos_go_viral.html#403000) [And these are not characteristics of old media,](http://www.ted.com/talks/kevin_allocca_why_videos_go_viral.html#405000) [and they're barely true of the media of today,](http://www.ted.com/talks/kevin_allocca_why_videos_go_viral.html#407000) [but they will define the entertainment of the future.](http://www.ted.com/talks/kevin_allocca_why_videos_go_viral.html#410000)

[Thank you.](http://www.ted.com/talks/kevin_allocca_why_videos_go_viral.html#412000)

[(Applause)](http://www.ted.com/talks/kevin_allocca_why_videos_go_viral.html#414000)

<http://www.ted.com/talks/kevin_allocca_why_videos_go_viral.html#conversation>