

By the Numbers: 7 ways to go viral

Summary: Australia's top YouTube channel attracts more than 2.3 million views per video. The best that Vodafone Australia can manage is an average of 9,600. As most brands struggle to go viral, here are seven tips that might help.

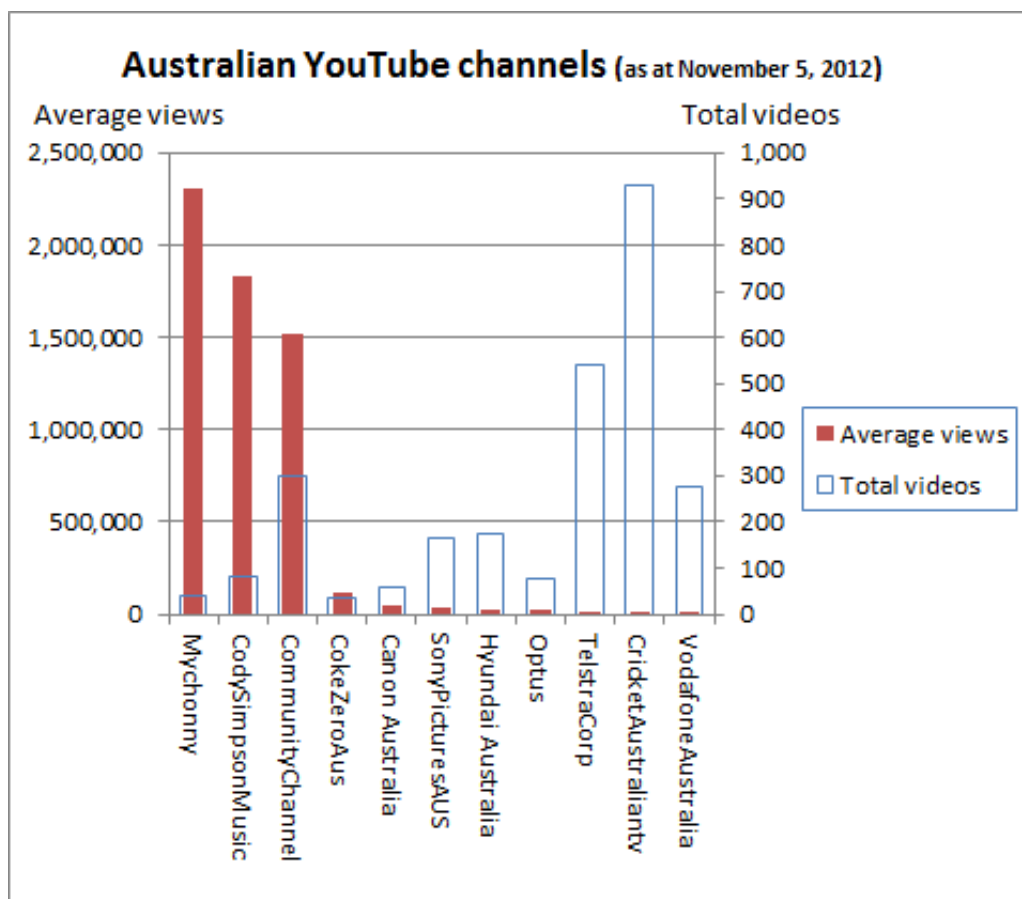
By [Phil Dobbie](#) | November 5, 2012 -- 06:33 GMT

As the music video for [Gangnam Style](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9bZkp7q19f0) (<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9bZkp7q19f0>) is forecast to hit one billion views on YouTube, marketers around the world are wondering what they can do to see their corporate video go viral.

They're dreaming, of course.

For a company to enjoy anywhere near the success of major viral achievers is akin to the school nerd wanting to date the best looking boy or girl in the class.

A comparison of Mychonny to Telstra makes the point. [Mychonny](http://www.youtube.com/user/mychonny) (<http://www.youtube.com/user/mychonny>) is a YouTube channel featuring 40 videos from an Asian Australian who says that "immaturity keeps me young" — it also helps that he is young. He has picked up 2.3 million views for his helpful advice on "getting kicked out of school," "having dinner with Asians," and "parents on sex education." [Telstra](http://www.youtube.com/user/telstracorp) (<http://www.youtube.com/user/telstracorp>), meanwhile, is working on the formula of "churn them out, but don't stand out." Telstra has 541 videos on YouTube, which have collectively achieved just 6 percent of Mychonny's total audience.



How can timid corporations ever hope to get close to the youngsters that are leading the charge on YouTube? They can't. But there does seem to be at least seven approaches that will help to build an audience, and perhaps one day, reach the seismic viral event that marketers dream about.

Go crazy

Crazy definitely wins on YouTube. Mychonny might be the antithesis of how corporations want to be perceived, but it's certainly a direction to head for. A case in point is the UK's Bensons for Beds, with their [Mattress Dominoes World Record Attempt](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ndYxBQXhNjI&feature=plcp) (<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ndYxBQXhNjI&feature=plcp>) ; 41 people, each strapped to a mattress, toppled over one by one around Bensons for Beds' Tewksbury warehouse. Well over a million people watched the video.

Sadly, their other 17 videos have achieved an average of just 5,600 views each, and only 118 people have subscribed to their YouTube channel. There's probably only one good way of having fun with a mattress (at least, for a family audience) and they've used that one up. So crazy might work once, but it's hard to maintain the rage.

Use humour

Natalie Tran, a 26-year-old daughter of Vietnamese refugees, is another Australian YouTube sensation. With a staggering 450 million video views of her YouTube "[communitychannel](http://www.youtube.com/user/communitychannel)" (<http://www.youtube.com/user/communitychannel>) , " it's not quite as over the top as "Mychonny"; but the humour is a little more sophisticated, and hence a broader appeal.

Humour is generally a prerequisite for viral success. Remember the [Old Spice Man](http://www.youtube.com/user/OldSpice) (<http://www.youtube.com/user/OldSpice>) ? He has generated 307 million views for the aftershave that everyone was embarrassed to wear, and 319,000 subscribers want to see more. And they are hilarious. It shows that corporate and viral can work together, even if we're secretly laughing about the product they're pushing.

The celebrity challenge

[Coke Zero](http://www.youtube.com/user/CokeZeroAus) (<http://www.youtube.com/user/CokeZeroAus>) is doing better than any other corporation in Australia, thanks to a series of challenges featuring prominent sports stars; the Australian cricket team, the Paramatta Eels, and Penrith Panthers (amongst others) all trying to hit a can of icy-cold coke. It's fun, relevant to the product, and in such a sports-mad nation, how could it fail? With almost 120,000 views per video, they are well behind the Natalie Tran's of this world, but way ahead of the rest of corporate Australia in the viral video stakes.

Science and statistics

Coke Australia's corporate content falls a long way behind [the Diet Coke and Mentos Experiments](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hKoB0MHVBvM) (<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hKoB0MHVBvM>) , which shows, allegedly, how 4 Mentos balls in a 2 litre bottle of Coke make the bottle form a fountain of the liquid — a "revelation" that has attracted 15.8 million viewers since its launch in June 2006.

It wasn't a Coke endorsed video — the spout of liquid seems a little frightening — but it does show that we love off-the-wall science experiments. If it's not an experiment, we'll go for facts and figures. How many videos have you seen telling you that if Facebook was a country, it would be the third biggest in the world? It'll soon be the biggest, by the way.

Get instructional

The Australian company that's proven to be best at gathering followers is [Canon Australia](http://www.youtube.com/user/canonaustralia) (<http://www.youtube.com/user/canonaustralia>) . Of course, they have an advantage. Their product is all about video and imagery. They use YouTube to good effect, with a broad selection of instructional items, highlighting their products and shooting tips from professionals. It's an approach that has picked up 17,286 subscribers, a steady result, but nothing to write home about.

Add street cred (if that is a term any more) to instructional, and you get EpicMealTime, a cooking show

from Canada that has attracted 470 million views. There's no expense spent on production values, but YouTube audiences seem to like that. It looks genuine. Somehow, when companies try to do it, it just looks bad.

Show something 'first'

Breaking the news is always a winner. [Tsunami Caught On Camera P1](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=b9DMiy_DVok), (http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=b9DMiy_DVok) for example, attracted more than 26 million views.

Telstra's best performing videos are the ones that announce something new. They managed half a million glances for their 15 second promotion of their MOG music service. They probably could have taken it further if they had featured instructions on how it works; further again if they had put some statistics behind it, and through the roof if they had Mychonne to present it.

Embrace the game culture

Rovio Entertainment are the people behind Angry Birds. Their [YouTube channel](http://www.youtube.com/user/roviomobile) (<http://www.youtube.com/user/roviomobile>) has a quarter of a million subscribers and a staggering 793 million views — more than a million for each of their 732 videos. They are clever animations to promote their games. Basically, it's Tom & Jerry for the 21st century.

Games are dominating Gen-Y, and marketers should be finding ways to introduce it into viral videos, because it seems that when gamers are not playing games, they like to watch videos of other people playing games. An example is [BlueXephos](http://www.youtube.com/user/bluexephos) (<http://www.youtube.com/user/bluexephos>), a group of amusing, rambling poms who talk their way through various games, picking up 2.6 million subscribers and 1.5 billion (yes, billion) views in the process.

Of course, there is no magic formula for a viral video. Attempts will invariably fail. Corporations can never hope to match the success of independent, free-thinkers on YouTube, but they should be studying what really works. In the online world, "edgy" wins — always. Corporations need to think about how they could do that, without appearing to try too hard. Or they can just keep pumping out the same old videos and keep the production houses in business.

Topics: [Social Enterprise](#), [Telcos](#), [Telstra](#)



About Phil Dobbie

Phil Dobbie has a wealth of radio and business experience. He started his career in commercial radio in the UK and, since coming to Australia in 1991, has held senior marketing and management roles with Telstra, OzEmail, the British Tourist Authority and other telecommunications, media, travel and advertising businesses.

Related Stories



[How to make money online with YouTube: a comprehensive guide](#)
ZDNet