

social triggers

WITH DEREK HALPERN

# WHAT MAKES THINGS GO VIRAL: 7 TIPS FOR VIRALITY I LEARNED FROM EATING \$150 SALAD DRESSING



# Hey, what's up?

I'm Derek Halpern, founder of Social Triggers — the blog where I break down psychological research into **INSANELY PRACTICAL TIPS** that you can start benefiting from TODAY!

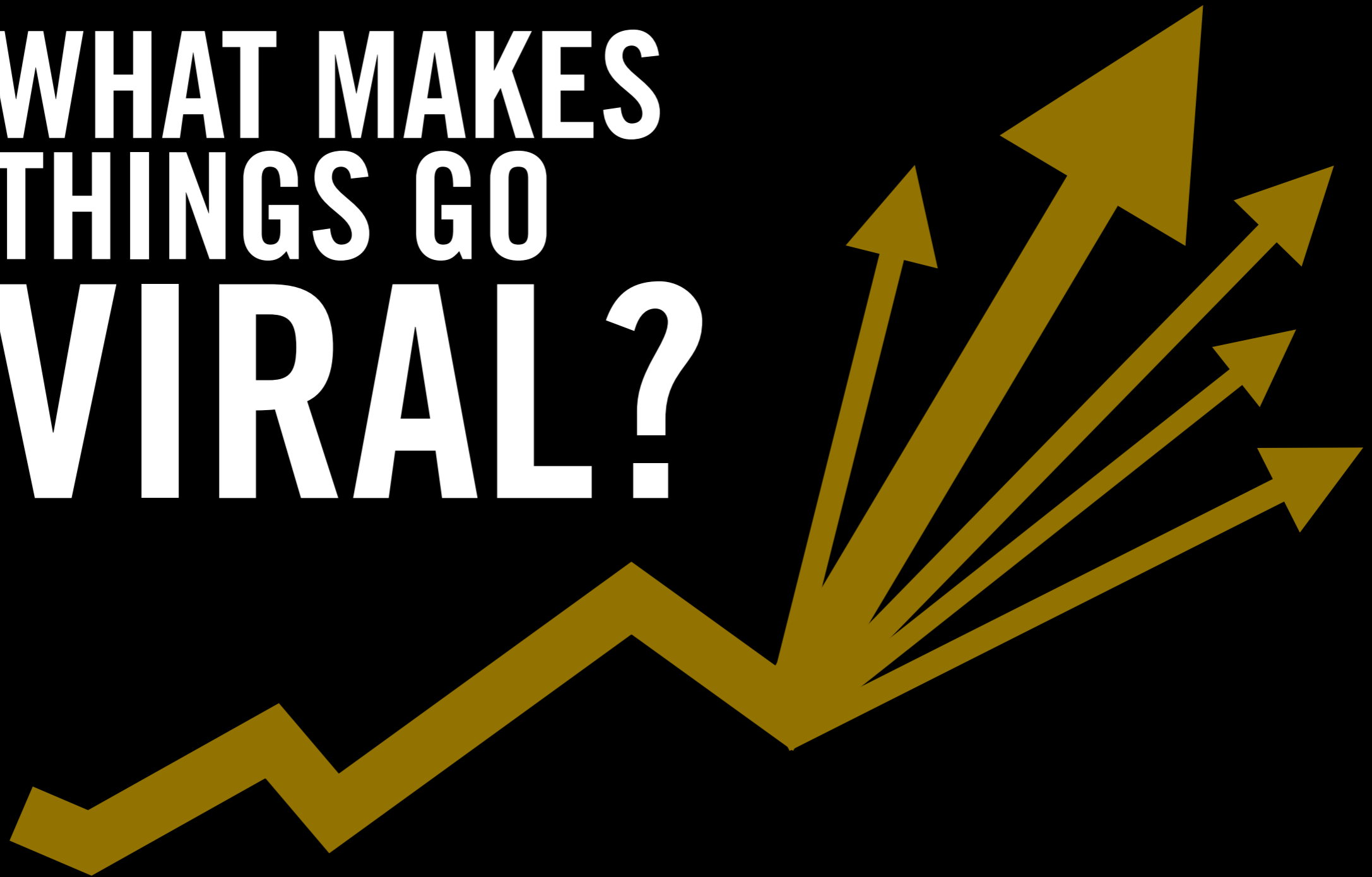
*Like this...*



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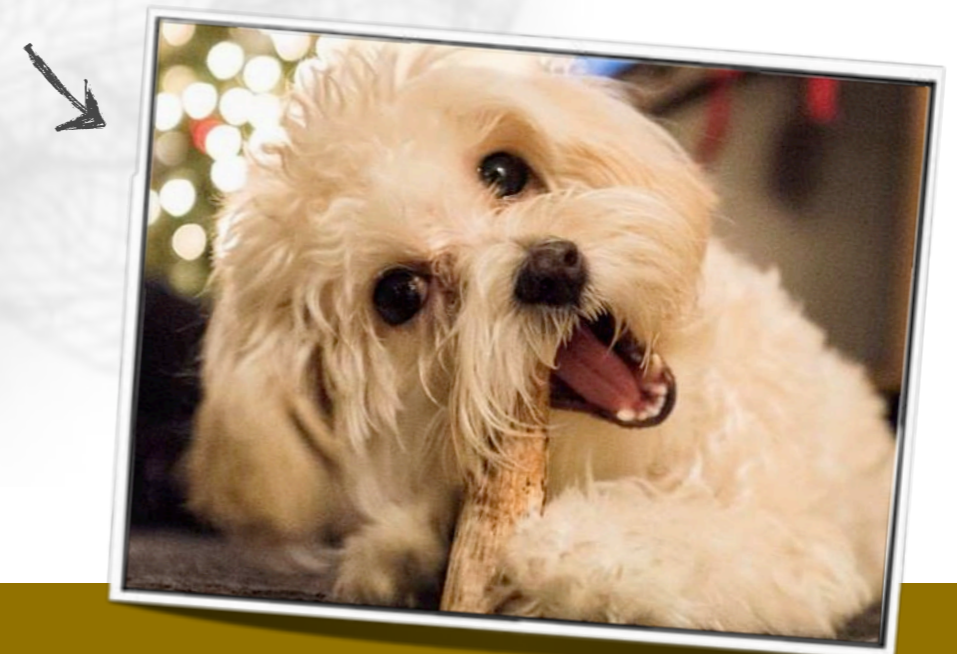
# WHAT MAKES THINGS GO VIRAL?



**You've probably heard hundreds of tips, tricks and tactics for getting your content to “GO VIRAL”.**

**But you're not sure what works and what doesn't.**

**(plus much of it seems like overblown headlines and cute animal videos.)**



**Let me tell you something –  
GETTING THINGS TO GO VIRAL  
IS NOT RANDOM OR A GIMMICK.**

**There is a reason why people  
remember things and want to  
share them with others.**



**Today, I'm going to show you**  
**7 PSYCHOLOGICALLY-**  
**PROVEN INSIGHTS**  
**on what makes people want to TALK**  
**ABOUT and SHARE anything.**

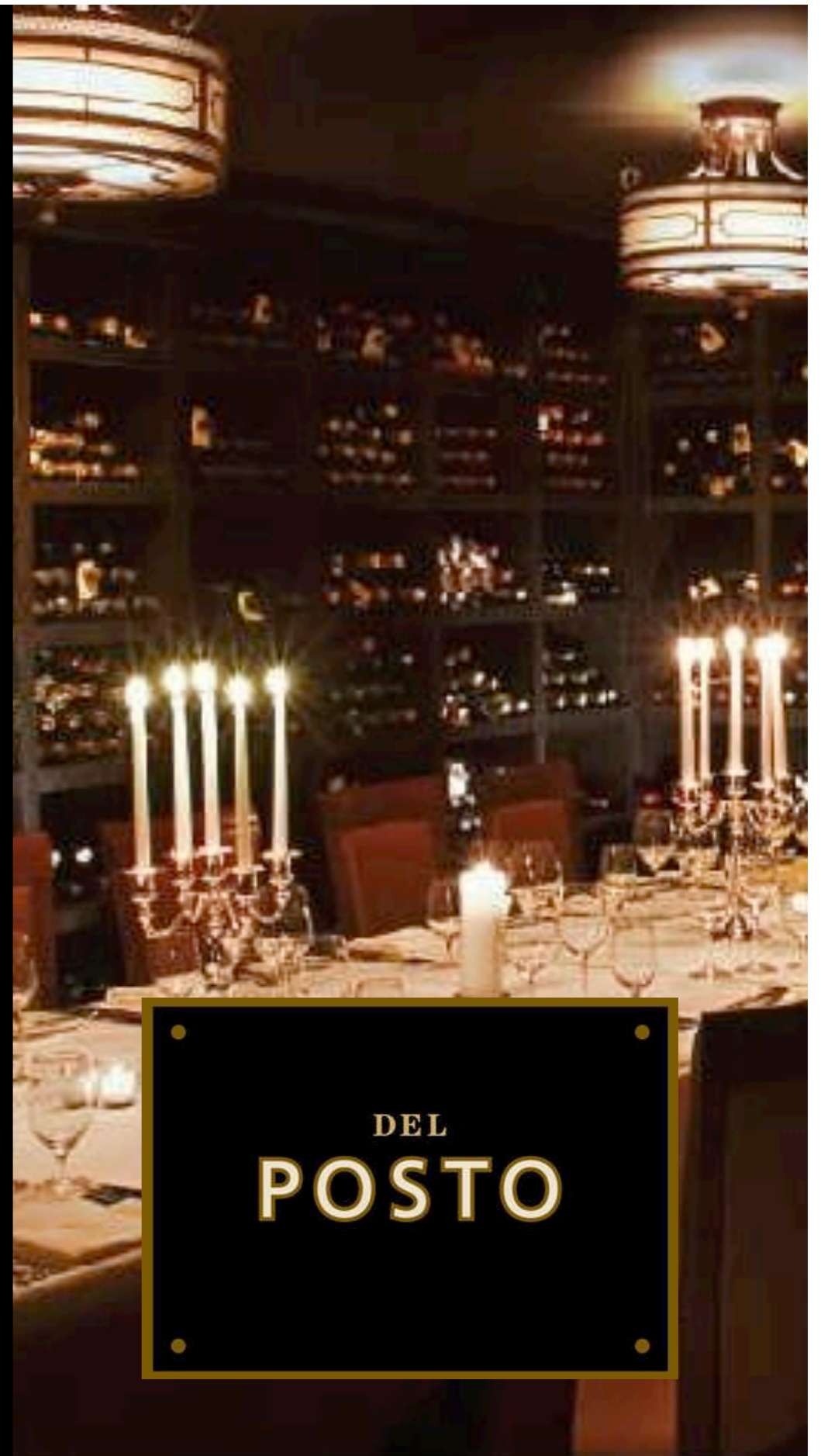


**But what does this have to do  
with \$150 dollar salad dressing?!**

**I'm glad you asked!**

One night,  
I went to this  
high-end  
restaurant in  
New York City  
called

**DEL POSTO**



DEL  
POSTO



**After I inhaled their salad, the GM at the restaurant asked me what I thought. So I responded:**

**“DUDE! THAT WAS AMAZING!”**



← (I LOVED the dressing, so yeah I yelled it. whatever.)

He laughed and said,

**THE CHEF AND I TALKED  
ABOUT BOTTLING THE  
DRESSING, BUT IT  
WAS GOING TO COST  
\$150 DOLLARS A BOTTLE**

**A hundred fifty dollars?!  
For a salad dressing?**

**THAT'S INSANE!**

**NO WAIT, IT'S GENIUS!**

# WHY?

**Because it gives people something to talk about. And that's what you want people to do — talk about you with their friends.**

**So the question is,  
WHAT DO PEOPLE WANT  
TO TALK ABOUT?**

**(other than \$150 salad dressing)**

# WELL, I'VE GOT 7 TIPS

FOR GETTING PEOPLE  
TO SPREAD THE WORD  
ABOUT YOU



TIP NUMBER 1:



**PEOPLE TALK ABOUT  
(AND SHARE) THINGS  
THEY REMEMBER**

**Research suggests people are more apt to talk about something, if they remember to talk about it!**

**Who could forget \$150 dollars for salad dressing?  
RIGHT?!**



# Look at this experiment, where I asked my Facebook followers:





 **Social Triggers**  
April 23, 2014


What's the **FIRST** Social Triggers TV video that pops into your head right now?


Like · Comment · Share 👍 23 💬 24

 **[Name]** The video about the **\$300 haircut**  
Like · Reply · April 22 at 6:27pm

 **[Name]** **Haircut**  
Like · Reply · April 23 at 1:07am

 **[Name]** **300 haircut**  
Like · Reply · April 22 at 11:57pm

 **[Name]** The first one that pops into my head is the one about the **300 dollar haircut.**  
Like · Reply · April 22 at 6:27pm

 **[Name]** The one about your trip to the **luxury hair cut.** I even remember telling my friends about that one.  
Like · Reply · April 23 at 11:54am

**Even though it was nearly 6 months old by that point, people still remembered the \$310 haircut video.**

**WHY? For the same reason I want to talk about \$150 salad dressing!**  
**IT WAS MEMORABLE.**

**HOW DO YOU BECOME MEMORABLE?**  
**Be DIFFERENT from your competition.**  
**If they charge low prices, you charge**  
**HIGH prices. FOCUS on customer service**  
**when others ignore it.**

**JUST DO SOMETHING,**  
**ANYTHING, THAT'S DIFFERENT!**

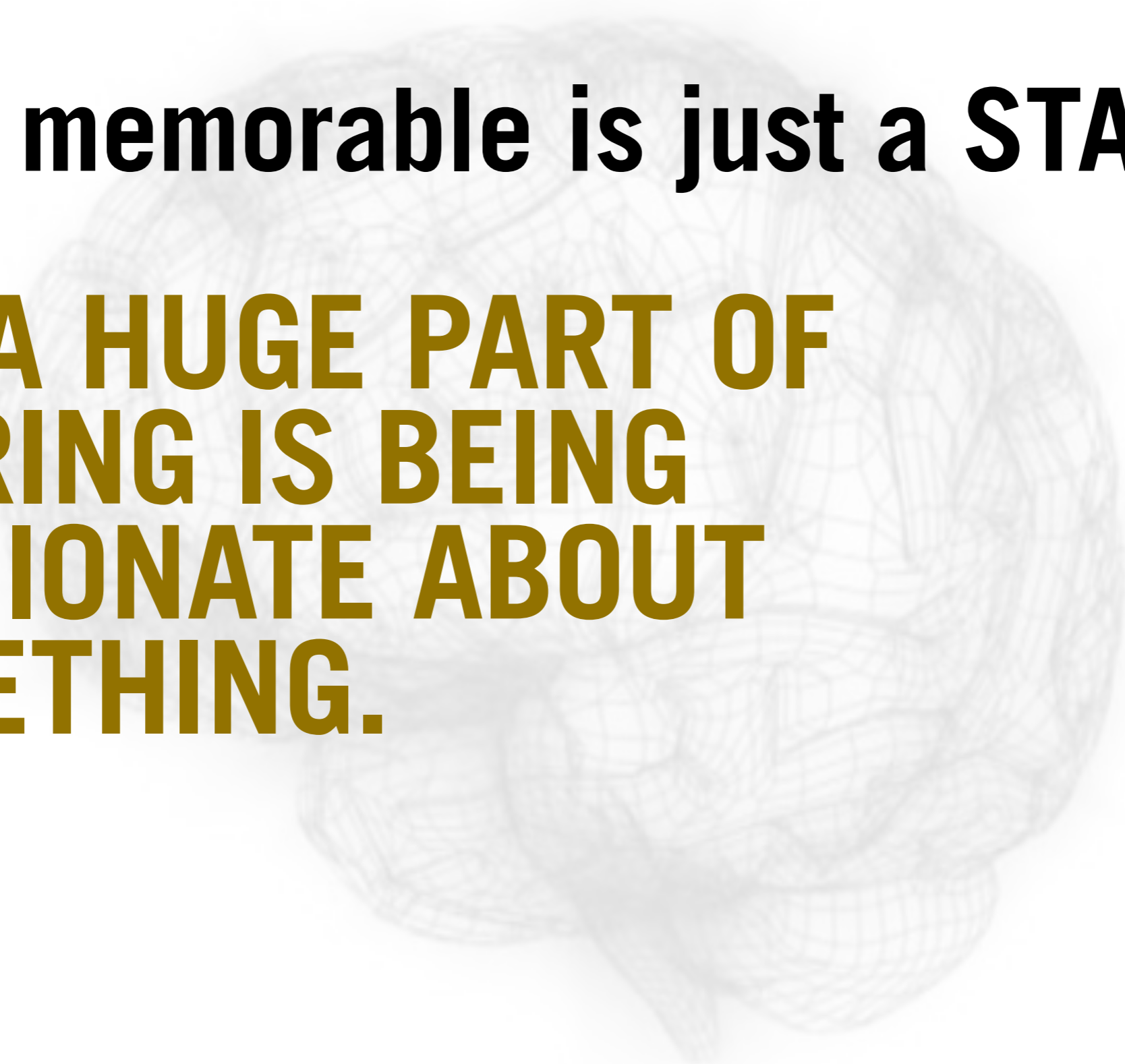
TIP NUMBER 2:



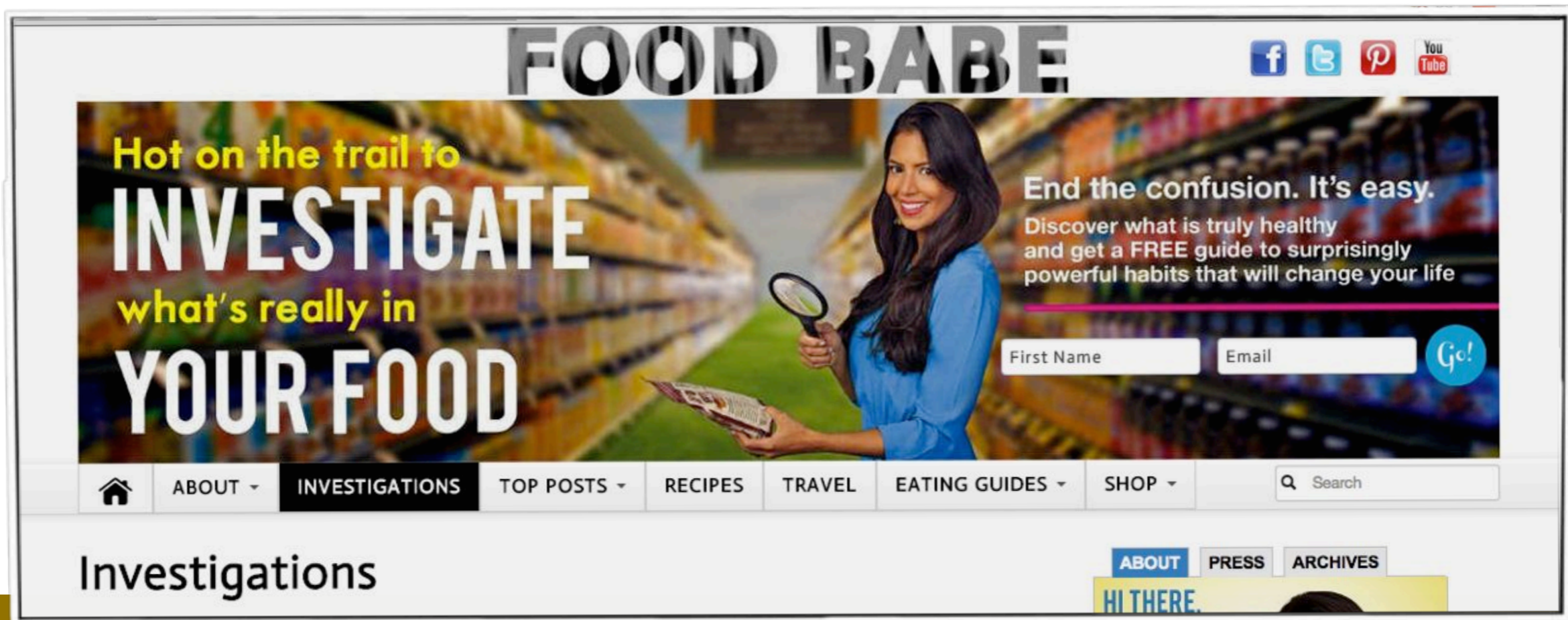
**PEOPLE TALK ABOUT  
(AND SHARE) THINGS  
THAT MATTER**

**Being memorable is just a *START*.**

**BUT A HUGE PART OF  
SHARING IS BEING  
PASSIONATE ABOUT  
SOMETHING.**



Look at my friend **VANI HARI** from **FOOD BABE**. It's no surprise her blog has skyrocketed to one of the top food blogs. She exposes the poisons the food industry sells to us.



**THINGS LIKE THIS  
matter to us. Which  
makes us want to  
talk about it and  
share with others.**



**SO IN THE END YOU'VE GOT TO  
TALK ABOUT SOMETHING THAT  
MATTERS TO PEOPLE.**

## TIP NUMBER 3:



**PEOPLE TALK ABOUT  
(AND SHARE) THINGS  
THAT DELIVER  
PRACTICAL VALUE**



Research by NYT bestselling author Jonah Berger and Katherine Milkman discovered that people are more likely to talk about things that have practical value in their lives.



JONAH BERGER and KATHERINE L. MILKMAN\*

Why are certain pieces of online content (e.g., advertisements, videos, news articles) more viral than others? This article takes a psychological approach to understanding diffusion. Using a unique data set of all the *New York Times* articles published over a three-month period, the authors examine how emotion shapes virality. The results indicate that positive content is more viral than negative content, but the relationship between emotion and social transmission is more complex than valence alone. Virality is partially driven by physiological arousal. Content that evokes high-arousal positive (awe) or negative (anger or anxiety) emotions is more viral. Content that evokes low-arousal, or deactivating, emotions (e.g., sadness) is less viral. These results hold even when the authors control for how surprising, interesting, or practically useful content is (all of which are positively linked to virality), as well as external drivers of attention (e.g., how prominently content was featured). Experimental results further demonstrate the causal impact of specific emotion on transmission and illustrate that it is driven by the level of activation induced. Taken together, these findings shed light on why people share content and how to design more effective viral marketing campaigns.

Keywords: word of mouth, viral marketing, social transmission, online content

### What Makes Online Content Viral?

Sharing online content is an integral part of modern life. People forward newspaper articles to their friends, pass YouTube videos to their relatives, and send restaurant reviews to their neighbors. Indeed, 59% of people report that they frequently share online content with others (Allsop, Bassett, and Hoskins 2007), and someone tweets a link to a *New York Times* story once every four seconds (Harris 2010).

Such social transmission also has an important impact on both consumers and brands. Decades of research suggest

\*Jonah Berger is Joseph G. Campbell Assistant Professor of Marketing (e-mail: jberger@wharton.upenn.edu), and Katherine L. Milkman is Assistant Professor of Operations and Information Management (e-mail: kmilkman@wharton.upenn.edu), the Wharton School, University of Pennsylvania. Michael Buckley, Jason Chen, Michael Danekheimer, Heming Krohnstad, Heidi Liu, Lauren McDevitt, Arab Pirani, Jason Pollack, and Ronnie Wang all provided helpful research assistance. Hector Castro and Premal Vora created the web crawler that made this project possible, and Roger Booth and James W. Pennebaker provided access to LIWC. Devin Pope and Bill Simpson provided helpful suggestions on our analysis strategy. Thanks to Max Bazerman, John Beshears, Jonathan Hasti, Chip Heath, Small, and Andrew Stephen for helpful comments on prior versions of the article. The Dean's Research Initiative and the Wharton Interactive Media Initiative helped fund this research. Ravi Dhar served as associate editor for this article.

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that interpersonal communication affects attitudes and decision making (Asch 1956; Katz and Lazarsfeld 1955), and recent work has demonstrated the causal impact of word of mouth on product adoption and sales (Chevalier and Mayzlin 2006; Godes and Mayzlin 2009).

Although it is clear that social transmission is both frequent and important, less is known about why certain pieces of online content are more viral than others. Some customer service experiences spread throughout the blogosphere, while others are never shared. Some newspaper articles earn a position on their website's "most e-mailed list," while others languish. Companies often create online ad campaigns or encourage customer-generated content in the hope that people will share this content with others, but some of these efforts take off while others fail. Is virality just random, as some argue (e.g., Cashmore 2009), or might certain characteristics predict whether content will be highly shared?

This article examines how content characteristics affect virality. In particular, we focus on how emotion shapes social transmission. We do so in two ways. First, we analyze a unique data set of nearly 7000 *New York Times* articles to examine which articles make the newspaper's "most e-mailed list." Controlling for external drivers of attention, such as where an article was featured online and for how long, we examine how content's valence (i.e., whether an

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One of the **MOST** referenced techniques I have ever shared is the **“WHAT ARE YOU STRUGGLING WITH?”** technique.

(not familiar?  
just Google it!)



**When people LEARNED THIS,  
they IMMEDIATELY used it and  
got INCREDIBLE RESULTS.**

**WHICH MAKES PEOPLE  
WANT TO TALK ABOUT IT  
EVEN MORE!**

# People can't help talking about something that's:

- 1) **INSANELY PRACTICAL,**
- 2) **EASY TO IMPLEMENT, AND**
- 3) **DELIVERS RESULTS.**

TIP NUMBER 4:



**PEOPLE TALK ABOUT  
(AND SHARE) THINGS  
THAT PROJECT WHO  
THEY WANT TO BE TO  
THEIR FRIENDS**

**IT SOUNDS SIMPLE,  
BUT IT'S TRUE.**

**People want to be perceived a  
certain way, so they talk about  
and share things about how  
they want to be perceived.**

**SO KNOW YOUR AUDIENCE.**

**SHARE THINGS THAT ALIGN WITH  
(AND NOT DETRACT FROM) HOW  
THEY WANT TO BE PERCEIVED.**

TIP NUMBER 5:



**PEOPLE TALK ABOUT  
(AND SHARE) THINGS  
THAT ARE  
CONTROVERSIAL**



**I KNOW YOU'RE  
THINKING — “THAT’S  
OBVIOUS!”**

**But some controversy actually  
inhibits sharing while other  
controversy promotes it.**

**Back to the Godfather of virality, Jonah Berger . He conducted a study on controversy with Zoey Chen and they found that people like to fight only about **MODERATELY** controversial things.**

**Highly controversial topics made people **UNCOMFORTABLE**, and **LESS WILLING** to share with friends.**

**One of my most popular articles is “Content is King Myth, Debunked”. I had research that proves design, not content, is king. My readers loved fighting about this and it still gets shared today. Why?**

**PEOPLE LOVE TO FIGHT ABOUT MODERATELY CONTROVERSIAL THINGS.**

**So – it matters, but it's not life or death for your blog.**

# TIP NUMBER 6:



**PEOPLE TALK ABOUT  
(AND SHARE) THINGS  
THAT OTHER PEOPLE  
TALK ABOUT AND  
SHARE**

# I RECENTLY READ A STUDY THAT PROVES THIS:

“When people **LIKE** a Facebook post,  
their friends are more likely to **LIKE**  
the same post.”

# WHY?

**Because when it comes to what people talk about and share, they are MORE LIKELY to talk about something their friends talk about.**

**This is similar to what I shared earlier but with a slight difference.**

**WHEN FOCUSING ON SOCIAL PROOF, YOU DON'T WANT NEGATIVE SOCIAL ENGAGEMENT.**

**So, if you're just getting started and your blog post has zero likes or shares, you might not want to show share buttons, or at least hide the numbers on them.**

TIP NUMBER 7:



**PEOPLE TALK ABOUT  
(AND SHARE) THINGS  
THAT ENTERTAIN**



**My friend Alex runs a pet food company called Pet Flow. Earlier this year they started to blog and quickly REACHED MORE THAN 6 MILLION VISITORS EACH DAY!**

**Just by posting funny videos about dogs, cats and grandmas.**



# What does this have to do with you?

Look at my videos, not only do I give some great tips but I'm also trying to be a little entertaining at the same time.





# TO RECAP, PEOPLE TALK ABOUT (AND SHARE)...

...things they remember

...things that matter

...things that deliver practical value

...things that project who they want to be to friends

...things that are controversial

...things that other people talk about and share

...things that entertain

# ...AND THAT'S IT!

# WAIT!

## One more thing...



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# \$150

# SALAD

# DRESSING?!

HERE'S A BONUS TIP:



**PEOPLE REMEMBER  
THINGS THAT GET  
REPEATED, AND  
PEOPLE SHARE  
THINGS THEY  
REMEMBER**

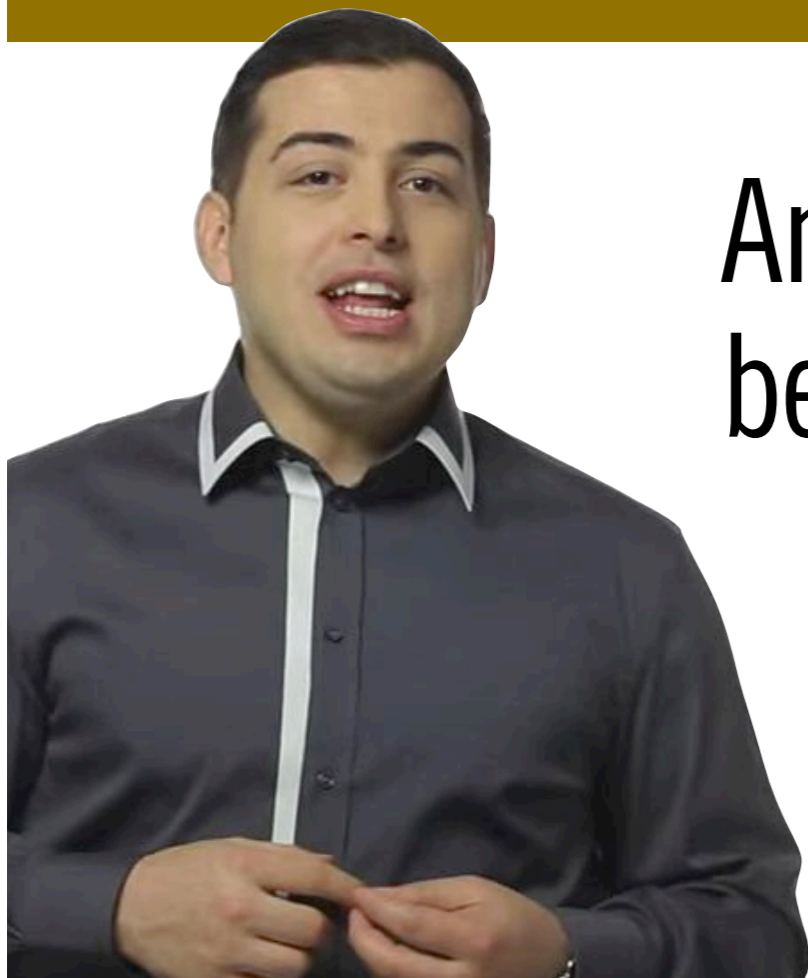
# LET ME ASK YOU,

What was your biggest takeaway today?

Which tip are you most excited to use?

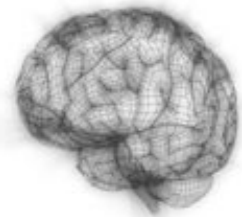
Please, leave a comment and let me know!

And if you know anyone who could benefit from this, make sure you share it. You'll be helping them out and me too.





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