

# Genuine Influencers

New research has uncovered that as many as 17 percent of 11-16 year olds want to be a social media influencer when they grow up, outranking teacher and veterinarian; whilst one in eleven are aiming to become a YouTuber.

With such a fond idolisation by youths and millennials, a certain level of responsibility is being placed on both the talent and marketers who communicate with them.

Whilst the influencer space has undoubtedly grown in popularity, creators today are facing more scrutiny surrounding their every action. Audiences aren't necessarily

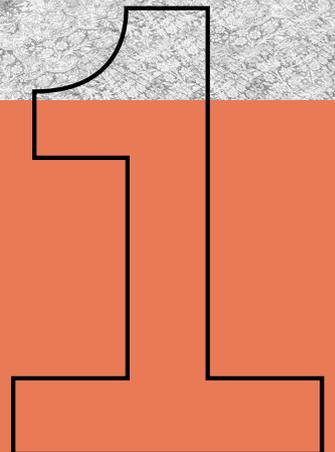
unfollowing those personalities who don't live up to modern moral standards, but the creators who do are quickly moving to the front of the pack. With this quick changing dynamic, it is more important than ever to ensure the brand has the right influencer representing them.



# People look to influential figures to give use to their platforms for important issues. It has almost become an expectation.

A social media influencer is someone who has “the power to affect others’ decisions” because of their authority, knowledge, position, or relationship with their audience”.<sup>1</sup> There is now a level of expectation for those in this kind of position to use their platforms to discuss and give comment to important societal issues. Many are doing so: last year, footballer Marcus Rashford campaigned for free school meals. Dr Alex George educates people on mental health and has been appointed the youth mental health ambassador by the Prime Minister.<sup>2</sup> The world turned

to social media to protest with the Black Lives Matter movement in May 2020. The #BlackoutTuesday hashtag dominated social media, as musicians, actors, major museums, social media companies and ordinary users all took part. A part of this movement was the #Silenceiscompliance hashtag, prompting individuals with a profile to not simply spectate or stand on the sidelines, but to also be part of the conversation. Audiences are coming to expect their idols to live up to a certain standard.



<sup>1</sup> What is an Influencer? – Social Media Influencers Defined

<sup>2</sup> Prime Minister appoints Dr. Alex George as Youth Mental Health Ambassador

# People are looking to influencers they trust to deconstruct complex issues.

Influencers who have been building their audience over years know exactly which methods are best to communicate with their community. These types of influencers can take complex messages or issues and find a way of deconstructing it to their audience in an understandable and often entertaining way. This creates opportunities for organizations and brands in the less 'sexy' industries looking to demystify their services. For example, Emily Canham, a top beauty and lifestyle creator who worked with ACCA UK. The ACCA

is the Association of Chartered Certified Accountants (Emily Canham - ACCA). A beauty influencer collaborating with an accountancy association? The campaign in fact exceeded all expectations because, not all of Emily's followers want to be beauty icons, some want to be accountants. Influencers like Emily who know their audience as well as their own friends and family are able to adapt intricate messages for them so that they're relevant and useful.



# Growing consumer consciousness and awareness means it is more important than ever to vet the influencers you're working with.

In the modern landscape, the influencers which a brand collaborates with will increasingly serve as a representation of the brand's values. Online gossip forums thrive on exposing digital personalities for their past indiscretions - yes, including that tweet from several years

ago. If an influencer is trending within these digital forums, their brand collaborations are bound to be picked up and discussed by these forum participants. With more data and knowledge readily available, marketers are able to identify influencers and talent who will represent their brand well.



# Influencers as consultants.

'Flash in the pan' activations in which influencers promote largely irrelevant products are quickly being faded out. The organisations which are winning at the moment are bringing their influencers into the brand family. They partner with creators for their industry knowledge and creativity, not purely their viewership. An example

being: Tiktok star Issey Moloney who has over 4.3m followers. She has the ear of such major, global brands as Amazon Prime. When she makes a suggestion as to what she thinks would work best for their collaborations, the brand listens and takes the advice - because it works.<sup>1</sup>



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<sup>1</sup> Issey Moloney, Amazon Prime TikTok post example

# Influencers as qualified and unqualified experts.

More and more, people are following influencers for free access to knowledge and resource. Various experts are using social media to offer what is often or was previously paid for knowledge.

Dr. Hazel Wallace is an NHS Doctor, nutritionist and author who has used her platform to educate her followers on the importance of a healthy body and mind. <sup>1</sup>

However, it's not just the formally qualified who are leveraging social media to spread free knowledge. Jessica Kelgren Fozard, perhaps

best known for is her content around LGBTQ+ issues uses her expertise in Queer History to shine light on how to deal with more current issues in today's societies. Consumers can now access free knowledge on almost any topic. <sup>2</sup>

Both qualified experts and passionate influencers are dedicating their time and their platforms to helping people. This also means that those with these large platforms, have the trust and confidence of those who follow them.



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<sup>1</sup> Jessica Kelgren Fozard, Queer History Post

<sup>2</sup> Dr. Hazel Wallace, The Food Medic Instagram

# Summary

More onus is falling onto influencers to say and do positive things that adds value to their audiences, rather than simply entertain. Many have been placed on a pedestal. They're often turned to in times of uncertainty or seen as experts in their respective fields. The responsibility to leverage this influence is as much on marketers as it is on the influencers themselves. Moving out of lockdown and into more positive times - audiences will remember

the creators who rose to the challenges of recent times and branded collaborations with these creators will resonate the strongest. Brands should be harnessing expert voice to address important issues in ways that would seem foreign to the corporate voice. When working with influencers, brands will need to ensure that there is alignment between the influencers values and the brands values.