

What's a Creator Anyway? It Depends on the Platform

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Creators are all over the news, but are they different from influencers? While it's easy to say yes, it's hard to say why. For our latest report, "[Video Ads in Social Media 2019](#)," we explored how the two are differentiated.

The term "creator" is commonly thought to have evolved from the phrase "content creator." Next New Networks, a multichannel network (MCN) on YouTube, was one of the first to use the word in the context of online video. In 2009, it put together a group of independent video makers, dubbed the Next New Creators, that it helped with distribution and monetization.

YouTube adopted the term after it acquired Next New Networks and used it to describe people who had amassed large followings by producing video content for the site. Back then, these people were also described as "YouTube stars," "YouTube celebrities" or simply, "YouTubers."

As the creator business blossomed, another type of notable individual also gained prominence: the influencer. Are these individuals the same as creators? Many say no.

"We tend to think about a creator as someone who's a true maker and publisher of content, said Kamiu Lee, CEO of Activate, an influencer marketing agency. "From writing copy to filming, shooting and editing,

they creatively produce their content and publish it for their audiences. When people hear the term influencer, they're usually looking more through the lens of someone monetizing their influence."

Sounds easy, right? But neither the social properties nor YouTube use the term "influencer" to describe their video content partners:

- **YouTube** has essentially used the same definition for years, but it segments creators into "established" and "aspiring" to account for varying follower counts.
- **Facebook** considers any entity that builds community by publishing content on Facebook to be a creator, whether an individual video creator, publisher or media company.
- **Instagram** considers influencers and creators to be one and the same. The company says it uses the term creator because that's how many of its partners see themselves.
- **Snapchat** uses a similarly broad definition that includes not only video producers but also those who create augmented reality (AR) features.
- **Twitter** defines a creator as any entity that produces content. It further divides the term into "artists" (known for their skill at creating a particular type of content) and "influencers" (known for their voice or their thought leadership in a particular community).

Others also consider creators and influencers to be the same. "They are people that build a footprint on social platforms," said Benoit Vatore, founder and CEO of Mammoth Media, a mobile media company. "All of them are creating content, but they're also influencing because they have a large audience. Some are better at one thing than the other, but they are all doing both."

Ultimately, we believe the terms do have different meanings, but the distinction is more about the action than the person.

"Creators create," said Danielle Wiley, founder and CEO of Sway Group, an influencer marketing agency. "They're making content and then sharing it with the world." On the other hand, "Influencers influence. They often have an aspirational or relatable life or style that makes

people want to be like them or trust their style. But they are not necessarily creating anything other than their personal brand.”

In our report, we define the terms this way:

- **Creators:** People or entities that develop original video content for digital properties, and who consider creating that content to be their career or livelihood.
- **Influencers:** Individuals who sway the brand preferences, buying decisions and loyalty of the population because of their notoriety or fame.

Even with those separate definitions, it’s not productive to pigeonhole everyone who posts videos in social media. Instead, think of it as a Venn diagram, where some people might be purely creators, influencers or both.

To learn more about how content creators are influencing social media, eMarketer PRO subscribers can read our latest report:

Report by Debra Aho Williamson Sep 05, 2019

Video Ads in Social Media 2019

VIDEO ADS IN SOCIAL MEDIA 2019

Creators Are in Demand on Social Properties. Here's Why—and What It Means for YouTube

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