

# Six Influencers on Collaborating with Brands

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**Blake Droesch**

**E**arlier this year, we spoke with a number of social media influencers to find out what brand partnerships look like from their perspective. They shared insights on what creative collaboration looks like, how to engage their followers, and what they do to measure the performance of their content.

We also asked for their advice to marketers—e.g., what they liked and disliked about working with brands, what a successful partnership looks like. *(Editors' note: These conversations took place prior to the coronavirus pandemic in the US.)*

Here are six takeaways:

## **Find the right platform for your collaboration.**

“The biggest thing I would recommend to a brand is to ask the influencer where they've seen success in the past, because a lot of people assume that Instagram is going to be the best place for their business to be seen. But in my experience, that's a little bit limited. On Instagram, while the algorithm does show posts that are a little bit older, there's still a limited timeframe on them. And Stories disappear after 24 hours. But a blog is forever. I still see a lot of value from my website being a platform for evergreen content and to make long-term conversions.” —**Jenn Haskins**, an Instagram creator focusing on travel, lifestyle and fashion.

## **Be transparent about the goals of your collaboration.**

“Sometimes when you ask brands, ‘What are your KPIs [key performance indicators] for this campaign?’ they have no idea. A lot of them say, ‘Well, all of it. Can you just get all of the views and all of the conversions, and can you just make it go viral?’ —which obviously is not a thing you can do. You can't just put a viral filter on something. And so, I explain to brands that tailoring [their campaign] for a specific end goal will get them better results.” — [Trisha Hershberger](#), a creator on Instagram and Twitch focusing on gaming and tech reviews.

## **Build long-term relationships with creators.**

“It's really important to engage influencers on a longer-term basis as opposed to working with them on a one-off opportunity. With the way the algorithms work in social media, that post that you paid for is gone in 36 hours. Then you as a marketer might go, ‘Why didn't it work?’ Because there's no longer-term engagement.” — [Oneika Raymond](#), an Instagram creator focusing on travel.

## **Give creators the freedom to create.**

“I've gotten pitch decks that are six pages long, and I am supposed to hit seven different keynotes. Those are the ones I usually turn down because I know immediately they are not going to do as well. If you're hiring me or any other influencer, I genuinely believe that there needs to be a level of trust for me to go create content with your brand in mind. There are a lot of influencers who just take a check; they don't necessarily do a great job, and they're not committed to making it a mutually beneficial scenario. But when there is less restraint [from the client] and I can simply do what I have done to make my following [so high], it always does better.” — [Sean O'Donnell](#), an Instagram creator focusing on fashion and photography.

## **Trust influencers to know their audience.**

“Most brands still see influencers as a typical ad buy. I want to push back and say, ‘I'm not a magazine that's printing 100 pages, I can't just slide in an ad in between.’ That's not how Instagram works. If [my followers] don't like the content, they're not going to engage with it, and [the client] is going to think I did a bad job. But they didn't give me

the opportunity to tell a story in a way that's right for my audience. I know how to sell to my audience. I'm selling to them every single day.”  
—Jane Ko, an Instagram creator focusing on fashion and photography.

### Do the homework.

“I think marketers need to do more research on who they're partnering with instead of just throwing things at a wall and seeing what sticks. If something doesn't do well, they blame all influencers. I've seen that happen, and I hate that.” —David Cogen, a YouTube creator focusing on tech reviews.

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**Report** by Debra Aho Williamson Mar 02, 2020

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Creators Share How They Work,  
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Author: Debra Aho Williamson  
Contributors: Eric Deaton, Lauren Eising, Heidi Wickham, and Phil Peck



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