

COVID-19 Hinders Influencer Marketing Collaborations, Causes Some Creators to Shift Focus

ARTICLE | **APRIL 02, 2020**

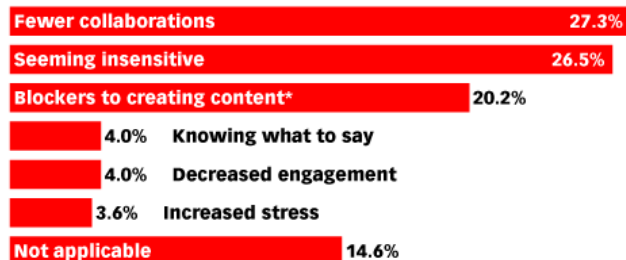
Blake Droesch

Fallout caused by the spread of the coronavirus—including travel restrictions, business closures and event cancellations—has taken its toll on the influencer marketing industry. Social distancing and fewer collaborations with brands have made it difficult for social media creators to produce regular content, causing some to shift focus.

More than one in four US influencers surveyed by influencer platform [Mavrck](#) in March 2020 said they were receiving fewer collaboration offers from brands during the coronavirus pandemic.

Main Challenge US Influencers Are Facing During the Coronavirus Pandemic, March 2020

% of respondents



Note: n=254; numbers may not add up to 100% due to rounding;
*challenges such as being required to stay indoors, travel restrictions, shooting locations being closed, retail stores closing or creating the most appropriate content during the outbreak

Source: Mavrck, "Social Influencing in a Time of Social Distancing: The Impact of COVID-19 on the Influencer Marketing Industry," March 17, 2020

254166

www.eMarketer.com

"All of my current campaigns have been postponed and one has been canceled," said Melissa Johnson, a creator focused on food and recipes, who works primarily on [Pinterest](#) and [Instagram](#). Johnson said she has shifted her content to focus on routines and normalcy, striving to offer value to her audience in a way that still feels "on brand" with her regular content.

The Mavrck survey found that about a third of respondents had changed the focus of their social media presence because of the outbreak; still, nearly 37% said their social media presence has not changed.

The decision to shift focus could depend on the type of influencer and the industries in which they have partnerships. For example, travel influencers have been hit particularly hard by the pandemic, as hospitality companies have slashed their marketing budgets, and travel restrictions have prevented influencers from planning future partnerships.

"Anything travel related has been put on hold for the future," said Jenn Haskins, a Seattle-based influencer who operates the Instagram account [@hellorigby](#). Haskins mentioned that brand collaborations have been slower to come in, but she has gotten requests around indoor activities like cooking, morning routines and wellness. "One brand decided to cancel their posts on my channels," she said.

“Another [restaurant] continued, but we restructured to highlight their delivery and pick-up options.”

Business closures and event cancellations have also been a hindrance to more than one in five influencers who responded to the Mavrck survey. Austin-based influencer Jane Ko, who operates the Instagram handle [@atasteofkoko](#), said she had several partnerships lined up during the city’s South by Southwest festival, but they were called off after the event was canceled in March.

“COVID-19 has also affected the creative community in Austin, causing everyone to lose their work, including me,” Ko said. She has instead shifted her content to promote local restaurants that offer takeout and curbside pickup, as well as relief programs for the [creative](#) and [service](#) industries in Austin. As of last week, Ko said brand partnerships have begun to start up again.

Many are also concerned about seeming insensitive to the pandemic. Influencers have already drawn media criticism for attempting to profit from it, even going so far as to promote potentially toxic vitamins in the guise of preventative supplements.

Influencer [Marquis Clarke](#) said brands seemed nervous about collaborating with influencers at the beginning of the pandemic, but business has picked up again as brands plan for the months ahead.

“I would say things have picked up slightly with more of a summer focus,” she said. “For example, each collaboration I received last week isn’t going live until June.”

Facebook and Twitter have reported increased usage, as users rely on social networks to follow breaking news and stay connected with friends. The influencers we spoke with have also claimed increases in comments and direct messages from their followers during the pandemic, as well as an influx of new followers and Story views on Instagram.