

Can Influencer Marketing Produce Direct Ecommerce Sales?

How creators view their role in the purchasing process

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Most influencers consider brand awareness to be their primary role when collaborating with marketers. But in the past year, social networks like Instagram have slowly begun [opening commerce features to creators](#), indicating that influencer marketing could soon play a larger part in driving purchases on social media.

For our latest report on this subject, we spoke with 16 creators to find out where they see themselves in the path to purchase. Our panel revealed how their conversations with marketers inform the content they create and the platforms on which they work. They also gave their thoughts on performance metrics—including discount codes and Instagram's "Swipe Up" feature—and told us how they measure the success of their collaborations.

Below are select insights from our [“Influencer Marketing and the Path to Purchase”](#) report.

Some platforms are better for conversions than others.

“I usually ask them what their KPIs [key performance indicators] are—if it's impressions or if it's sales conversions. And if it is specifically sales

conversions, I will direct them toward certain platforms that I feel convert to sales better, such as Twitch, where there's a higher click-through rate." — [Trisha Hershberger](#), a creator on Instagram and Twitch focusing on gaming and tech reviews

Pay attention to the content—and culture—of the platform.

"Marketers obviously want to sell products; that's their job. But as soon as there's someone in a video telling you to click on a link, on TikTok, it's just not the vibe. It's too short-form. You're taking up precious video space, and it's too easy to just scroll past it. ... If it's in a YouTube video, and people love that YouTuber, they know they have to work with brands in order to make money. So, if you have a sponsor and a link, that's fine. That'll work on YouTube." — [TJ Black](#), a TikTok creator focusing on music and entertainment

Give your creator partners authority to come up with content that drives purchases.

"As soon as I start talking to a client, I will ask them upfront, 'What are your goals for this campaign? What are your KPIs?' I don't want to start with 'Here's what you should do,' unless I know what it is that they're getting measured on. A lot of times, it is sales, so that changes the way that I would present the product. Probably what I'm going to do is a best-of video. I know that the person is actively searching for this product, and they're about to purchase. They just need to know which one." — [David Cogen](#), a YouTube creator who focuses on tech reviews

Not all products are commonly purchased online.

"What I primarily do is more brand awareness. A lot of my posts are targeted to busy moms on the go, showing ways they can simplify their life, or products that I can rely on as a mom. It does drive product purchases, but it's extremely hard to track, because a lot of things that I promote are purchased at the grocery store; it's a lot different from driving direct sales." — [Marquis Clarke](#), an Instagram creator focusing on parenting and lifestyle

Some influencers work in industries with highly considered products and services.

“In the travel industry, the goal is to create awareness of a particular destination. If people see a backpack or a pair of shoes, and they like them, will they purchase them right away? Absolutely. But will they book a 10-day trip to Indonesia when they see a picture online? Absolutely not, because they have to check their holidays, they have to check their finances, they have to see whether somebody's interested in going with them.” —[Oneika Raymond](#), an Instagram creator focusing on travel

Driving sales can be a delicate subject.

“I would say it comes up about 50% of the time. When those conversations do take place, it changes the mood somewhat. If the brand is too straightforward about it, and they're not sharing enough information as far as what their expectations are—or if it's not within the list of directives—sometimes it comes across as being inauthentic. It's like they're looking to me to make a quick buck, and they're not looking to me for a valued partnership.” —[Jenna Martin](#), a creator on Instagram focusing on lifestyle, travel and fashion

There are other ways to measure success.

"My audience is very vocal; they send me an unbelievable amount of messages. I can tell when something hits home and does well because I'll get 200 to 300 messages within a couple hours with people saying, 'Oh my gosh, I love this brand,' or 'I think this is such a great product,' or 'I've used this before,' or 'I can't wait to try it.' I will screenshot all those and send them to the brand. I'll be like, 'Look, there's been a good response.' I don't use customer codes, and I can't get a physical number of how many people actually went out and bought it, so I try to go on customer perception and how many people enjoyed what the business was doing and felt strongly enough that they wanted to be vocal about it." —[Sean O'Donnell](#), an Instagram creator focusing on fashion and photography