CREATORS 101

A small business guide to creator partnerships



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CREATORS 101: WHY CREATORS

Get your business noticed with the right voices

Creators can introduce your business to new customers through recommendations that feel more personal than traditional advertising. You don't need a celebrity-sized audience to make an impact. The right creator may already be in your community.

60%

of U.S. consumers who engage with creators made a purchase in the last 6 months primarily because of a creator recommendation or sponsorship.

Source: Deloitte, 2026 Digital Media Trends



GET DISCOVERED

Reach new audiences through creators they already follow.



TELL YOUR STORY

Give customers a trustworthy way to see what makes you different.



BUILD COMMUNITY

Grow stronger connections around your business.

Think relevance, not reach

A smaller creator with the right audience can be more valuable than a larger creator with little connection to your customers.

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CREATORS 101: FIND + CHOOSE

Find people who already know your business

Some of your best potential partners may already be customers, followers or people in your community. Start with the connections you have, then expand your search to people whose content and audiences align with your business.



LOOK CLOSE TO HOME

Seek out people tagging your business, sharing your products, posting from your location or recommending you to others. An existing connection gives a creator a more authentic place to start.

THEN BROADEN YOUR SEARCH

Search social platforms and local communities for people creating content related to your business or category. They could be a cultural commentator, an expert in your industry or a neighborhood leader.

ON SOCIAL
TikTok and Instagram

IN YOUR COMMUNITY
Geotags and local accounts

IN YOUR NETWORK
Customers and partners

CHECK THE FIT

- **Audience** — Are their followers in the places and communities you serve?
- **Brand** — Does their point of view fit your business?
- **Content** — Do they already cover your category naturally?
- **Quality** — Do they tell clear, engaging stories?
- **Engagement** — Do comments on their content show genuine interest and conversation?
- **Authenticity** — Do their recommendations feel credible and consistent with their other content?

Prioritize follower quality over quantity.

Ask whether the right people are paying attention and actively engaging.

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CREATORS 101: CONNECT + COLLABORATE

Set your partnership up for success from first contact

The best creator partnerships begin with a genuine connection and clear expectations. Make your outreach personal, be upfront about what you're proposing and align on the deliverables before content gets created.



1 MAKE IT PERSONAL

Generic outreach is easy to overlook. Show you know their content, explain why the fit makes sense and give them an easy way to continue the conversation.

2 CHOOSE THE APPROACH

Do you need content for your channels, access to a creator's audience, or something else? Start with the collaboration that fits your goal and budget.

GIFTING
Product or experience with no required post

PAID CONTENT
Flat fee for defined deliverables

AMBASSADORSHIP
Ongoing relationship

AFFILIATE
Commission tied to sales

COLLABORATION
Co-create something together

Be clear about which you're requesting. Creators can produce photos or videos for your own use without posting them to their followers. A sponsored partnership includes posting to the creator's audience.

3 ALIGN ON THE DETAILS

Ensure you and the creator reach an agreement in writing before the work begins, including deliverables, timing and how the content may be used and by whom. Agree on a trackable link or offer code before the content goes live.

Give creators a story. Not a script.

Share your goal, essential facts and what makes the business interesting. Give the creator room to tell that story in their own voice.



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CREATORS 101: PUT IT INTO ACTION

Start small and build from there

Focus on a few people who genuinely fit your business, begin with a manageable collaboration and build from what you learn. Before you start, choose the action you want customers to take, such as visiting your shop, viewing a product, or signing up. Decide how you'll track it, then review what happened with the creator before planning another collaboration.

Don't try to build 100 relationships.

Connect with 3–5 people who genuinely fit your business.



Offer creators a reason to talk about and with you:

early access, behind-the-scenes experiences, exclusive invitations and co-created products.

1. Find 10 possible creators
2. Assess fit
3. Short list 3–5
4. Engage and reach out
5. Test one collaboration
6. Review the results

SAMPLE INITIAL INQUIRY

"Hi [name], I enjoyed your post about [specific topic]. I run [business], and I think [product or experience] could interest your audience because [reason]. Are you open to discussing a [paid collaboration/content/commission]? If so, I'd love to hear about your approach and rates."

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Your existing customers are your first creator pool

Look at who's already talking about you



- **Tag your business**
- **Attend your events**
- **Talk about your category**
- **Post your products**
- **Share your location**
- **Recommend you to friends**

WHY START HERE?

1. They already know you.
2. They already like you.
3. They already have a reason to tell your story.

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What would a partnership include?

Decide what you want the collaboration to achieve, then agree on the content, timing, payment and permitted use.

AGREEMENT

WHAT

What content will be created and how many pieces?

Ex. 30 second Instagram Reel

WHERE

Who will publish it and on which channels?

WHEN

When are drafts due and when will it go live?

PAYMENT

What is the agreed fee or exchange and when will it be provided?

USAGE

Where can your business reuse the content, for how long and does that include advertising?

EXCLUSIVITY

Are there restrictions on work with competing businesses? For how long?

Brand Representative Signature

Creator Signature

Keep the actual agreement simple, but make expectations explicit.

Know the creator spectrum

How audience size can help you understand scale

	AUDIENCE	TYPICAL OPPORTUNITY
MACRO	**Celebrity Tier** *(Greater than 1 million)*	• Scale + visibility • Mass visibility
MID-TIER	**Greater than 100K**	• Awareness + reach • Broader reach
MICRO *RECOMMENDED*	**10K–100K**	Engagement + relevance
NANO *RECOMMENDED*	**Less than 10K**	Community + local trust

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One-off post → long-term ambassador

How a single collaboration can become a relationship that grows over time.

FIRST POST → **REPEAT COLLAB** → **ONGOING PARTNER** → **BRAND ADVOCATE**



How to build the relationship

Stay connected between campaigns, give creators a reason to come back and make them part of the business.

STAY IN TOUCH
Don't only appear when you need something.

KEEP THEM IN THE LOOP
New products, events, launches.

INVOLVE THEM
Brainstorm content ideas and ongoing campaign evolution.

RECOGNIZE THEM
Share their work and make them part of your community.

CREATE REASONS TO COME BACK
Give them something new to experience or talk about together.

Platform nuances

Understand how content formats, audience behaviors and growth algorithms differ across social channels.

INSTAGRAM

- Relationship-driven
- Visual storytelling
- Community
- Consistency
- **Good for building an ongoing brand presence**

TIKTOK

- Discovery-driven
- Trend / culture-native
- Strong hooks
- Personality + context
- **Good for introducing something new**

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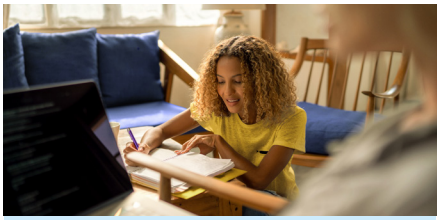
You’re a creator too

Founders can create content around their day-to-day business operations including:



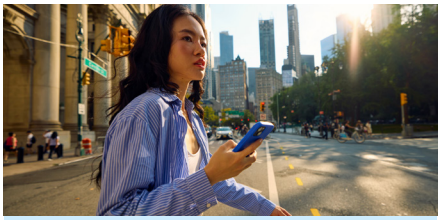
THE STORY
Why did you start?
Share your origin, mission and the core purpose behind your business.

Your “why.”



THE PROCESS
How is it made?
Take followers behind the scenes of craft, operations and execution.

Show how an order is made or packed.



THE POV
What do you believe?
Express unique industry insights, values and perspectives.

Explain one choice that makes your business different.



THE PEOPLE
Who makes it happen?
Highlight your team, collaborators, community and customers.

Introduce the person behind a product or service.



THE PRODUCT
Why does it exist?
Demonstrate real problem-solving, benefits and practical value.

Answer a question customers ask before buying.

What makes creator content work

HOOK Why should I stop the scroll?
CONTEXT What am I looking at?
PERSONALITY Why is this creator telling me?
VALUE Why should I care?

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THE CREATOR VOCABULARY

The terms you need to know before you start working with creators



AFFILIATE

Creator earns a commission when their audience purchases through their link or code.

AMBASSADOR

An ongoing creator relationship rather than a one-off collaboration.

GIFTING / SEEDING

Product sent to a creator with **no required post**.

SPONSORED CONTENT

A creator is paid to create and publish content to their own audience.

The simplest form of a paid creator partnership.

UGC

Content created for a brand to use.

The creator doesn't necessarily post it to their own audience.

USAGE RIGHTS

Permission for a brand to reuse creator content on its own channels or in advertising.

This is separate from the creator's posting fee.

WHITELISTING / PARTNERSHIP ADS

Brand puts paid media behind creator content, allowing it to reach a larger audience.

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