

# ADWEEK

MAY 2023

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MEET THE NEW  
CONTENT  
ROYALTY

## JUST DREW IT

**CREATOR  
VISIONARY  
OF THE YEAR  
DREW BARRYMORE  
IS OUTSTANDING ON  
EVERY PLATFORM.  
BY ROBERT KLARA**

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THE MONTH IN MEDIA AND MARKETING  
**Upfront**

**HEADLINE BLUES**

AD-SUPPORTED DIGITAL NEWS REMAINS AN UNSOLVED PUZZLE. BY MARK STENBERG



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Meet our newest class of innovators changing how business is done.



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Should **upfront week** still exist, or is it a relic of the TV industry's past?



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**COVER**  
PHOTOGRAPHY BY LANDON MCMAHON FOR ADWEEK

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The closure of BuzzFeed News last month marked the end of one of the most high-profile experiments in ad-supported digital newsgathering.

But Jonah Peretti's newsroom is just the most recent casualty. In the last year, BDG has shuttered Gawker and Input, while Axel Springer has issued cuts or closures at Insider, Morning Brew and Protocol.

Monetizing newsrooms through advertising runs counter to decades of accrued wisdom: Both on television and in print, news has always been a loss leader, subsidized by other sectors but prized for its ability to attract attention and add reputational sheen, said Jon Miller of Integrated Media Co.

If digital publishers once believed the Wild West of the

open web would unlock new capabilities for financing the news, the opposite now appears increasingly true.

Instead, the same bogeyman that have always plagued the news business—namely brand safety and weaker opportunities for content alignment—continue to do so.

And they have been joined by new, digitally native existential crises like keyword blocklists, the decline of open-market programmatic yields, signal loss due to third-party cookie deprecation, privacy legislation and social media's shift away from news content.

In short, like so many other dreams of the last decade, the notion of free, sustainable news has long been rooted in wishful thinking and misguided math.



**CREATIVITY**

"Got Wood Milk?" The ad from MilkPep, the Milk Processor Education Program, was supposed to be a parody of plant-based dairy alternatives starring Aubrey Plaza. But it only riled up the nut milk-loving young people it was meant to woo back to traditional milk, eliciting online anger at Plaza and sincere responses like "I'd try it"—echoing Plaza's alt-milk inventor in the ad: "Have you ever looked at a tree and thought, 'Can I drink this?' I did!" Oops. —Adweek Staff



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**ON THE MOVE**



**Marisa Thalberg** steps in as marketing lead at **SeaWorld Entertainment**



**Signet Jewelers** awards \$250 million media business to **Publicis Media**



**Comcast** fires NBCU CEO **Jeff Shell** just weeks before the upfronts

**BRAND MARKETING**

**SHALLOW ADVOCACY**

Bud Light, Dylan Mulvaney, "Responsibility to America." You know the story.

This marketing fiasco, according to creators and marketers, is a reminder that when working with trans talent, brands must recognize the prospect of backlash, while also considering whether their messaging will prevail—and what they're prepared to do to protect their brand partners.

"They want the benefit of this person's audience and their influence," said CMO adviser Lola Bakare, "but they don't want any of the negativity that might surround that."

"Bud Light was just looking to put something out there and didn't see [Mulvaney] as a strategic partner who is driving conversions, creative and community," said Jazmin Griffith of La Maras Consulting. "When you work with creators, they are an extension of you."

—*Emmy Liederman*

PHOTOGRAPHY: JONATHAN SLOAN; CREATIVITY: MILK PROCESSOR EDUCATION PROGRAM; BIG NUMBER: WIEDEN+KENNEDY; ON THE MOVE: MARISA THALBERG: JEFFREY MAYER; SIGNET JEWELERS: JEFFREY MAYER; COMCAST: HAROLD ALAMBERTY; SHALLOW ADVOCACY: GREGG DEGEN; BRAND MARKETING: JEFFREY MAYER; ADWEEK: JAMES HODGE; EMPLOYMENT: DAN MARRA; CO-MEDIA: HAROLD ALAMBERTY; SCIENCE PHOTO LIBRARY/GETTY IMAGES

## LESSONS LEARNED

# CYNTHIA ÁNGEL

SAYING 'NO' OPENED MORE DOORS FOR D L A FILMS' CO-FOUNDER.  
BY LUZ CORONA

When Cynthia Ángel first watched *Silence of the Lambs*, she was drawn to the 1991 horror film—but not for the reasons she first thought.

"I wanted to be Clarice," recalled Ángel, now co-owner of D L A Films, a full-service production company that creates branded content and commercials for Nike, Ikea and Amazon, and megastar talent like Bad Bunny, J Balvin and Janelle Monáe. "So I applied to John Jay College of Criminal Justice, and I studied forensic psychology with a view to becoming an FBI agent."

During the soul-searching that often happens in the postsecondary education years, Ángel questioned her career path, especially after finding herself more empathetic to the victims and their stories. In the end, it was a drama class that shined a light on the real reason she was enamored with *Silence of the Lambs*: the movie's cinematic storytelling.

## WORK HISTORY

Cynthia Ángel began her career as a receptionist for a VFX company and quickly moved up the ranks as a production assistant, then manager. From there, Ángel transitioned into commercial production, winning Clio's and Cannes Lions for her campaigns for Spotify, Google, Nike, Vevo and Amazon. Her passion for film and storytelling led her to co-found the creative studio D L A Films, with a dedication to diversity in front of and behind the camera. Ángel's team is in the postproduction phase of D L A's first feature film, the horror movie *Sun*.



And so, with a forensic science degree in tow, Ángel went on to pursue film production.

## Taking a road less traveled

As the daughter of Colombian immigrants, Ángel said her family cautioned her to consider a stable career path, preferably one that would leverage her degree after being the first to graduate college in her family.

Ángel reassured her family that production work was her passion, but doubt crept in from time to time. "There was always that fear of, 'What if it didn't work out?'" Ángel said.

It took a strong support system and a big leap of faith in herself to pursue a field where she didn't yet have connections or experience. Tackling that challenge has continued to pave the way for her success: "Believe in what you want to be and embody it," she said.

After applying for entry-level roles in live-action production and finding closed doors due to a lack of experience and opportunities for young, underprivileged women,

Ángel took a receptionist job at a VFX company. From the beginning, she was transparent with the executive producer about her career aspirations. "I wanted to learn as much as possible and work my way up. So [I said], 'I'm willing to work double shifts and do whatever it takes.' And I think she liked that enthusiasm."

Her work ethic quickly gained respect around the company, earning her new roles and promotions.

## The power of 'no'

Ángel went on to freelance throughout the years, quickly building her client portfolio and skill set. But she was concerned that her path had started to shift.

"I didn't want to be pigeonholed," she said. "I started saying 'no' to a lot of offers that I was getting for VFX and freelance work, and then that's when the doors started opening for edit positions. When I learned everything I could about post-producing, I knew I was ready for live action and then said 'no' to the edit offers."

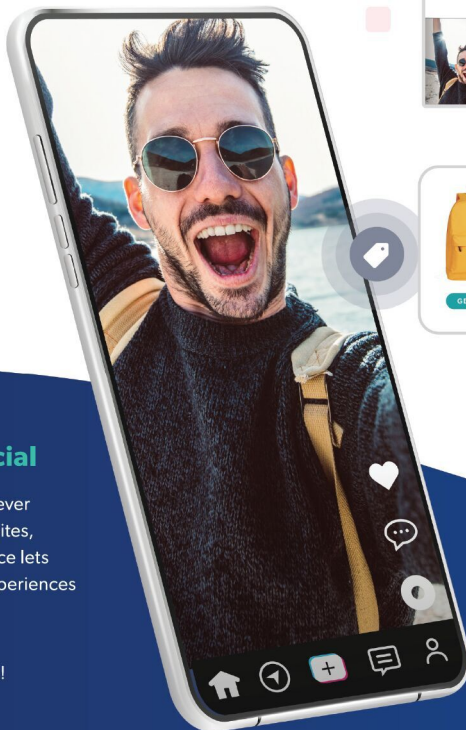
Saying "no" only opened more doors. Eventually, she transitioned

from freelancing to a full-time senior creative producer role for one of her major clients, Spotify. Ángel was among the first producers hired to create and help grow the audio platform's in-house brand and creative arm. Among the highlights was the 2018 "David Bowie Is Here" integrated campaign, a first-of-its-kind New York City subway takeover and tribute that went on to win advertising awards including a Cannes gold Lion, a Gold Pencil and a Clio. Along with spearheading the 2019 award-winning "Black History Is Happening Now" yearlong campaign, she cemented her status as the head of the team. "Once I felt I had learned everything I could about being an in-house producer, I had an epiphany: I knew it was finally time to start my own studio."

At D L A Films, "I am building the kind of company I wish I knew about as a kid and wanted to hire when I was on the client side," said Ángel. "I'm creating a place where diverse leadership matters and my rich culture permeates every aspect of our work."



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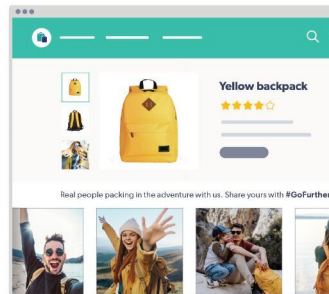


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# THE MOTHER OF REINVENTION

FROM CHILD STAR TO TALK SHOW QUEEN, HOW DREW BARRYMORE HAS ACHIEVED RARE HOLLYWOOD LONGEVITY.

**What's even harder** than becoming a star? Remaining one. Fewer and fewer celebrities are able to replay their success into decades-long careers. These days, it's nearly impossible to pull that off without reinventing oneself along the way—and often more than once. And that's what Drew Barrymore has managed to do.

Barrymore, our cover subject, first won our hearts as Gertie in the 1982 film *E.T.* And despite battling more than her share of demons over the years, she kept thriving as an actor. But Barrymore knew that she needed to start creating her own opportunities instead of just waiting for them to come her way, so she became a hit producer, branched into product lines, launched her own quarterly magazine and has now conquered daytime TV with *The Drew Barrymore Show*, which has come into its own after rolling out in the middle of the pandemic.

But Barrymore—who is Adweek's Creator Visionary of the Year—remains humble about her rare Hollywood longevity. As she told Robert Klara in our cover story, "I'm one of

the most uncalculated humans you'll ever meet... I've just tried to put one foot in front of the other."

The Barrymore cover story is part of Adweek's 2023 Creator Visionary Awards, honoring 21 social media innovators and influencers who have entertained us while shifting our approach to marketing and media. (In addition to everything else, Barrymore has mastered Instagram as well, where she has 17 million loyal followers.) It's the perfect centerpiece for our May theme, *The Creatorverse*, which spotlights the creator economy: the people who make up the industry's new content royalty, and the marketers and agencies that collaborate with them to drive next-level engagement for their brands.



**Jason Lynch**  
Senior Managing Editor,  
TV and Features  
@jasonlynch

In this issue, we also look at how shops are snapping up influencer agencies to stay ahead of the creator curve, and the efforts of creators and brands to navigate some of the murky FTC guidelines around sponsored posts.

After you've finished this issue, be sure to read our expanded *The Creatorverse* digital package (scan the QR code below), with several more in-depth features examining this theme, including the role of AI's uncanny value in helping creators prove their worth, how brands are shaking up their creator recruiting strategies and why many brands can actually thrive without influencers. It's a captivating look inside the creator economy, which grew to an estimated \$100 billion industry last year.



**THE CREATOR VISIONARY AWARDS**

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# INSIGHTS

TRENDS YOU NEED TO KNOW



## Why Does Upfront Week Still Exist?

BUYER SAY TV'S ANNUAL SHOWCASE HAS BECOME 'A LITTLE BIT SILLY,' BUT PRESENTERS INSIST IT STILL HAS VALUE. **BY BILL BRADLEY**

It's time again for upfront week, TV's annual advertising showcase in which Madison Avenue descends on decked-out Manhattan venues. But ahead of this year's week of presentations, which kick off May 15, many buyers are wondering whether the storied tradition—which returned last year in person following two years of pandemic shutdowns—is still necessary.

"[Upfront week] used to feel much more valuable. And then quite honestly, to some extent, Covid made everyone realize that it's a little bit silly," one buyer said, speaking anonymously. "We don't need to do the song and dance anymore, right?"

The consensus among the buyers Adweek spoke to was that the upfront pageantry is more for the broader marketing community, junior personnel, the media and clients. But

the value of big, flashy, star-studded presentations remains in question.

"I can go or not go, to be honest with you," a second buyer told us. "It's not going to change how I negotiate or what I think about what's happening in the marketplace."

Paramount would seemingly agree: The media conglomerate made headlines late last year by dropping out of this year's upfront week presentations, opting instead

for intimate upfront dinners. As John Halley—who is overseeing his first upfront as Paramount's ad sales chief—told Adweek in March, upfront conversations are happening months before the annual event, and the majority of the company's deals are done by mid-May.

"That timing does not facilitate the upfront discussion," said Halley, adding that the presentations were little more than "a PR event."

PHOTO: SEBASTIAN KAULITZKI/  
SCIENCE PHOTO LIBRARY/GETTY

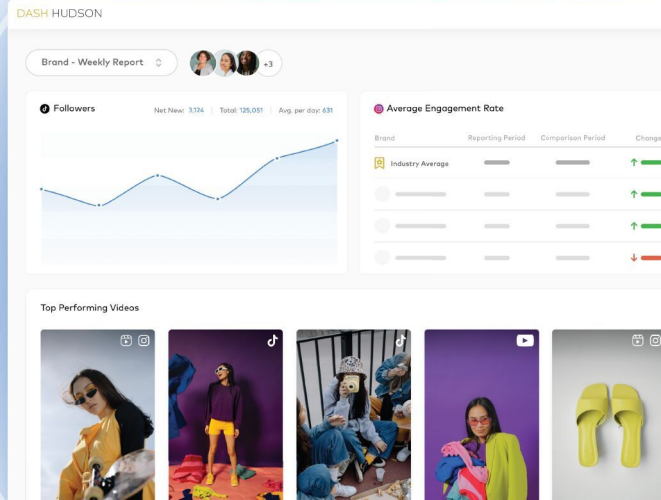


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Speaking anonymously, several buyers applauded Paramount's move out of upfront week to customized upfront dinners for clients in April, with one telling Adweek they were "relieved."

"You're going to come out, and you're going to feel special," the second buyer said of the upfront dinners. "You're going to feel like you've got access to information that maybe the trades don't have yet."

**'Still a really important week'**

Yet despite Paramount's exodus—and the decision of The CW's new parent company, Nexstar, to also skip that network's traditional presentation—the upfront week lineup is as busy as ever (see sidebar) with Netflix and YouTube both stepping in to fill Paramount's vacated Wednesday late afternoon/evening slot.

It's a move that "shows the importance of the upfront," said Marianne Gambelli, Fox's ad sales chief. "When you see companies like Netflix and YouTube coming into this week, it just shows the value of clients being able to evaluate all media at one time and how important that is across digital and linear, how it all works together and how clients want to evaluate their media mix. It's wonderful, actually—however the marketplace plays out—that clients get to feel it all at one time. There's a uniqueness to that."

Whatever their views on upfront week, all the insiders Adweek spoke to acknowledged the value in getting the industry together.

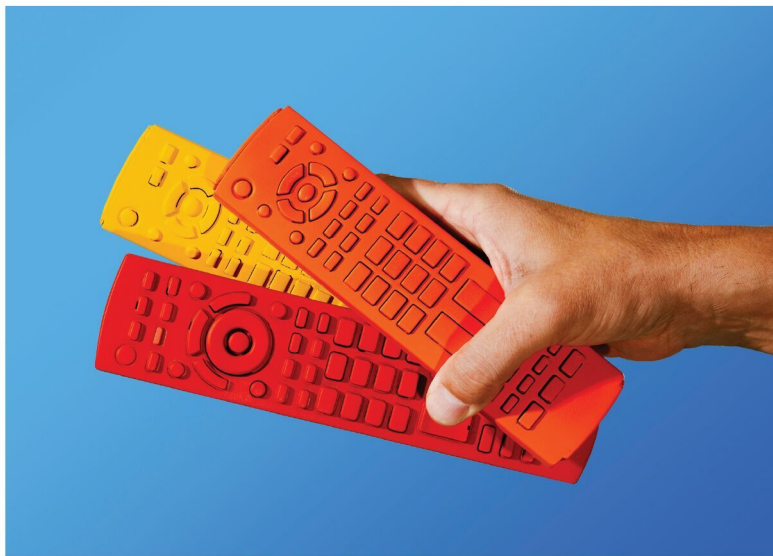
"I think it is still a really important week because it's a chance for all of us, not only the presentation, but it's the meetings and meals around this week that really start to dive into what the year ahead is going to look like and what the partnerships we're going to carve out with our advertisers start to look like," said Mark Marshall, president of advertising sales and client partnerships at NBCUniversal.

**Netflix's upfront debut**

Next week, all eyes will be on upfront newbie Netflix, which will have its

**'[Upfront week] used to feel much more valuable.'**

Anonymous buyer



first upfront week presentation at the Paris Theater, an iconic movie hall that the streamer purchased and reopened in 2019. However, the choice of a smaller upfront venue ranked some buyers looking to get highly coveted tickets for clients.

For one buyer, the smaller venue may be indicative of Netflix's upfront week strategy. "Upfronts are the Javits Center, right? It's the Hulu Theater at MSG. They're made to be these big, showy events," the first buyer said. "So I think, more than anything, it was about the optics of saying, 'Hey, we're on the agenda. We're here to play with the big dogs,' more than it really is going to be an upfront in a way that it's going to disrupt the week."

As for the presentations themselves, buyers expect topics such as DEI and measurement to be discussed at the upfront, but insiders are most interested to hear about the streaming strategies of each company—especially Disney+'s and Netflix's new ad tier offerings. And when it comes to differentiation, content isn't the only king: Distribution is also on buyers' minds.

"When we talk about players like Netflix and their ad-supported model, we know that the content is there," a third buyer said. "I don't think anyone is going to argue that Netflix doesn't

have strong content, but we also need an audience."

**The future of upfront week**

While 2023 will offer another traditional upfront week—although the ongoing WGA strike could remove some luster from this year's celebrations—buyers expect changes going forward. That's especially the case now that the lines are blurring between the upfront events and NewFronts presentations held two weeks earlier, with both weeks essentially focusing on video. As one buyer put it, "Traditional media companies want to be data and tech companies, and data and tech companies want to be media companies."

With rumors of potential media mergers on the horizon as the TV industry grapples with the complicated economics of streaming amid a soft ad market, next year will likely see new upfront week entries and possibly more legacy exits.

In many ways, the future of upfront week could come down to one company that's not even there this year. "A lot of it depends on how Paramount does this upfront," one buyer told us. "I don't think [their exit] is going to hurt them. At least, not with me."



**2023'S  
UPFRONT WEEK  
PRESENTATION  
SCHEDULE**

**MONDAY, 5/15**  
NBCUniversal | 10:30 a.m.  
*Radio City Music Hall*  
Fox | 4 p.m.  
*The Manhattan Center*

**TUESDAY, 5/16**  
Television | 11:30 a.m.  
*Pier 36*  
Disney | 4 p.m.  
*North Javits Center*

**WEDNESDAY, 5/17**  
Warner Bros. Discovery | 10 a.m.  
*Hulu Theater at MSG*  
Netflix | 5 p.m.  
*Paris Theater*  
YouTube | 7 p.m.  
*David Geffen Hall at Lincoln Center*

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# Creators and Brands Navigate Murky FTC Guidelines

OPAQUE GUIDELINES AROUND PAID-FOR PARTNERSHIPS ARE CONFUSING THE MARKETPLACE. **BY TRISHLA OSTWAL**



**For Gigi Robinson**, a health and wellness creator who works with brands such as Adobe and Shopify and has 178,000 followers on Snapchat, the lack of clarity around what to disclose for paid-for partnerships is adding more confusion to the marketplace.

In early April, Robinson checked into a luxurious D.C. hotel. As part of a collaboration, she was asked to create content for the hotel—which she declined to name, to maintain her business relationship—in exchange for the property comping her stay.

When she posted the content on Instagram, where she has nearly 40,000 followers, Robinson didn't include the disclosure that it was a #sponsored or #ad post—a requirement that is usually mentioned by brands in their contracts. "The lines are murky with that because technically it's a media stay," said Robinson. "How do you navigate that

as a creator? ... I'm confused about what the standard practices are."

She's far from the only one. Many look to brands, agencies or the Federal Trade Commission for guidance, but it's been four years since the FTC last updated its influencer marketing guidelines, requiring business relationship disclosures in influencer content.

Now the global influencer marketing industry is pegged to be worth \$21.1 billion in 2023, according to Influencer Marketing Hub. Given the increase in scrutiny, the risk is increasing for brands and creators. In March, for example, celebrities including Lindsay Lohan and Jake Paul paid more than \$400,000 combined to settle claims from the U.S. Securities and Exchange Commission that they promoted crypto assets on social media without disclosing they had been paid to do so.

Influencer marketing agency Whalar's chief creator officer, Ashley Rudder, points out that at any time a product appears in a photo due to a business relationship, as in Robinson's case, creators should assume it's an ad.

## 'More cautious' brands

According to the FTC's initial guidelines, brands are required to disclose any collaboration when they pay someone to promote their products or services. This includes hashtags such as #sponsored or #paidpartnership visibly, not below the "more" button.

But in 2022, the agency proposed making endorsement ads more transparent, including adding more definitions of who would be considered an endorser, additional scrutiny over social media posts and improvements in disclosure transparency on the targeted audience.

The Interactive Advertising Bureau (IAB) said the FTC's proposal is unclear and unnecessary; the ad trade body points to the suggestion of implementing "notice gates" (similar to pop-up messages) prior to people seeing sponsored content as "intrusive."

"Brands are going to be more cautious," said Lartese Tiffith, evp for public policy at the IAB, "because no one wants to be the first one outside of the crypto world to have a bad lawsuit settlement because of the people they work with."

Many believe that the brands must enforce guidelines, said Krishna Subramanian, co-founder and CEO of influencer marketing platform Captiv8. In creative concept documents shared with creators, brands often include campaign hashtag requirements and how they perceive the FTC guidelines.

"Now social platforms are allowing all the tagging to happen, such as paid promotion, and we're seeing a lot of brands lean into that," said Subramanian.

Whalar conducts training sessions to educate creators on the FTC guidelines and the importance of disclosure, as well as monitoring the content creators produce, Rudder said.

## Lawyering up

In some cases, smaller direct-to-consumer and Web3 brands have been more clandestine about labeling paid collaborations, said Avi Gandhi, founder of the advisory firm Partner With Creators. Instead of written contracts, these brands—which Gandhi did not name—have agreed to terms over the phone with creators.

"A lot of small creators, who don't have a lawyer, do it for such small dollars," Gandhi said. "They don't believe anyone's actually going to come after them."

The FTC is considering civil penalties against brands that encourage influencers not to disclose paid relationships, according to Tiffith, but these penalties are still on a case-by-case basis.

As the ecosystem gets more complex, creators are also protecting themselves. Increasingly, more are hiring their own lawyers, including Robinson, who does so for any contracts of at least six figures. It may be expensive, but the legal perspective "ensures that I'm not getting screwed over," she said.





*We Are*

# INFLUENCER MARKETING



# Holding Companies Snap Up Influencer Agencies

IS M&A THE WAY TO STAY AHEAD OF THE CREATOR CURVE? **BY KYLE O'BRIEN AND OLIVIA MORLEY**

The creator economy is growing exponentially, as more people claim to be creators and influencers. In 2022, Forbes noted that the creator economy was worth upward of \$100 billion. And a study last year from Adobe found the creator economy had grown by more than 165 million people globally in the last two years—an increase of 119%.

To address that rapid rise, holding companies and networks are acquiring influencer agencies, strengthening their expertise and offerings. Adweek talked with agency leaders about how to keep pace.

"Modern marketing campaigns work with influence," said Mark Read, CEO of WPP. "It's hard to imagine a successful campaign that isn't either using or embraced by influencers."

## Those shaking it up

Holding groups like Cheil Worldwide and WPP have made acquisitions in the space to bolster their offerings. Cheil's McKinney recently purchased influencer agency August United, which played a role in the agency securing the Popeyes business.

WPP is making moves on the M&A front, as well as building out influencer teams internally. The Ogilvy network has created an internal influencer department of more than 230 experts in 40 markets. In the M&A space, WPP bought Village Marketing in 2022 and placed it within Wunderman Thompson. In 2023 so far, it has purchased influencer agency Obviously, which will be paired with VMLY&R, and

Goat, which will join GroupM and merge with INCA, that company's current influencer marketing offering.

Rob Reilly, WPP's global chief creative officer, said having creators and influencers on tap is another great asset for the company. WPP made the acquisitions to scale its expertise, he said, bringing depth and breadth of relationships across the creator economy. The influencer shops help manage influencers, find the right audiences for the right influencer, scale the campaigns accordingly and track their effectiveness. On the media side, "being able to put immediate money behind influencer campaigns really enables clients to have a big impact," he said.

## Buy or build

Despite all of this, there are risks. Influencer marketing technology and increasing degrees of automation may render some manual influencer marketing strategies rote, according to Forrester principal analyst Jay Pattsallat.

**'Modern marketing campaigns work with influence.'**

**Mark Read, CEO, WPP**



When considering their acquisition options, merge with INCA, that company's current influencer marketing offering, or build tools themselves.

"It could be that some of the larger companies ... purchase ad tech or an 'agency' that has built some of this functionality and just buy their way into it," Pattsallat said.

Of course, there are many more agencies building and/or partnering than acquiring. M Booth has 18 employees solely focused on influencer marketing, and upward of 50 with knowledge of the practice. Scaling an internal department helps M Booth establish a fuller, more integrated offering.

Horizon Media, the largest independent media agency in the U.S., executes influencer marketing from its Blue Hour Studios department. While it's focused on building internal capabilities, the agency tracks potential attractive acquisition targets.

"We are certainly actively evaluating acquisition opportunities, but also investing in our own resources and capabilities simultaneously," said Sarah Bachman, evp at Blue Hour Studios.

## Integration catalysts?

The sheer scale of influencer marketing solutions on the market raises questions about where acquiring agencies—or even those agencies currently building proprietary offerings—should integrate the influencer practice within their broader organization.

Adrianna Bevilaqua, M Booth's chief creative officer, said influencer marketing has potential to spur more integrated agency offerings. "Influencer marketing lives best within an integrated agency structure," she said. "The truth is, it's both art and science."

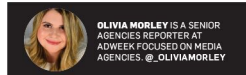
How agencies manage integration already differs. Horizon Media's Blue Hour Studios runs more like a department than a separate business, for example. VaynerX houses influencer marketing within its Gallery Media Group subsidiary, which it formed after acquiring PureWow in 2017. Gallery sits apart from VaynerMedia, positioned as a separate entity that manages influencer business for the rest of VaynerX.

Time will tell if recent acquisitions will give some a competitive edge in technological or strategic prowess.

"They bought credible companies that have reputations, and that helps automatically accreditate the brand and the purchaser," Pattsallat said. "That's one of the variables that has to be thought of. But in the long run, building it is likely a cheaper proposition for the agencies."



**KYLE O'BRIEN** IS AN AGENCIES REPORTER AT ADWEEK. HE PREVIOUSLY WORKED AT THE DRUM. @KBORIE



**OLIVIA MORLEY** IS A SENIOR AGENCIES REPORTER AT ADWEEK FOCUSED ON MEDIA AGENCIES. @\_OLIVIAMORLEY

An aerial photograph of ocean waves crashing over dark, jagged rocks. The water is a deep, vibrant blue, and the white foam of the waves is prominent. The scene is dynamic and powerful, with the waves moving from the top of the frame towards the bottom.

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**GENEROUS FILMS**

# New Users Wanted

WHERE MAJOR SOCIAL MEDIA PLATFORMS ARE SPENDING THEIR AD BUDGETS.

BY PAUL HIEBERT

**By now**, creators and the general public alike know that just because a social media platform is popular today doesn't mean it will have the same buzz tomorrow. Or even still exist.

"At the end of the day, the strength of social is defined by the diversity of its audience," said Gregory Aston, director of research and data science at advertising intelligence firm Vivvix. "As such, the battle to retain, stimulate and replenish active users is fierce."

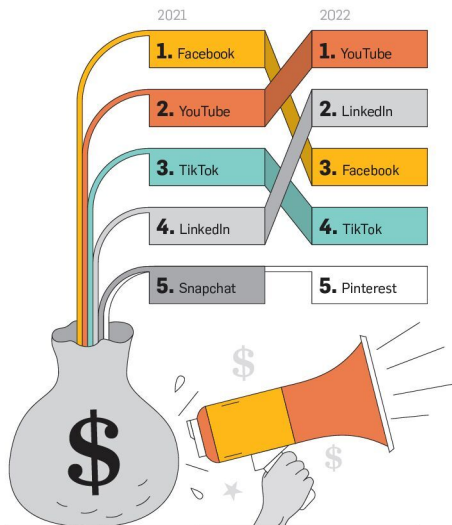
U.S. ad spend figures from Vivvix, including paid social data from Pathmatics, reveals how major platforms are seeking to remain relevant.

Although most brands dedicated a bigger chunk of their ad dollars to digital media in 2022 compared with 2021, not all strategies are the same. YouTube and Snapchat, for instance, increased their investments in traditional channels, such as print and television. Pinterest spent nearly one-third of its total ad budget on theaters last year, which is 10 times higher than the industry average.

Additional numbers suggest TikTok is backing away from paid social, while Twitter is experimenting with out-of-home as the pandemic subsidies and workers return to the office.

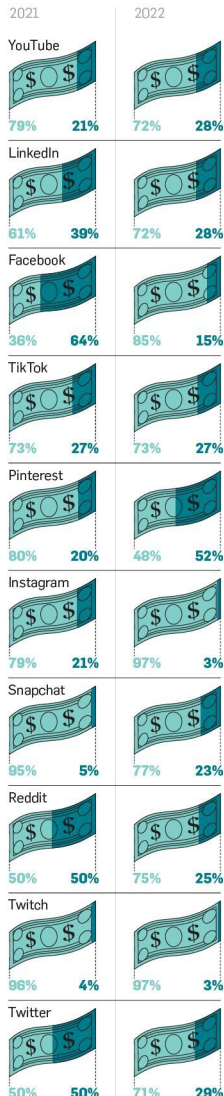
"Like any advertiser," Aston noted, "social platforms know that by diversifying their ad investments, they can reach a wider audience and increase exposure."

## Top 5 Biggest Ad Spenders



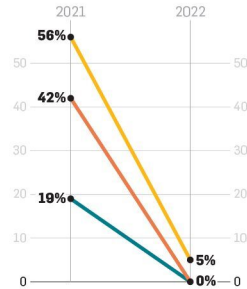
## Ad Spend:

● Digital ● Traditional



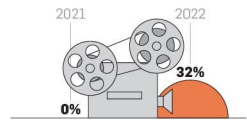
## Share of Total Ad Budget Spent on Television

Facebook Twitter Instagram



## Pinterest

% of total ad budget spent on theaters



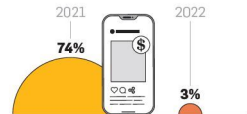
## Twitter

% of total ad budget spent on out-of-home



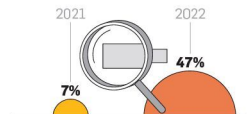
## TikTok

% of digital ad budget spent on paid social



## Snapchat

% of digital ad budget spent on search





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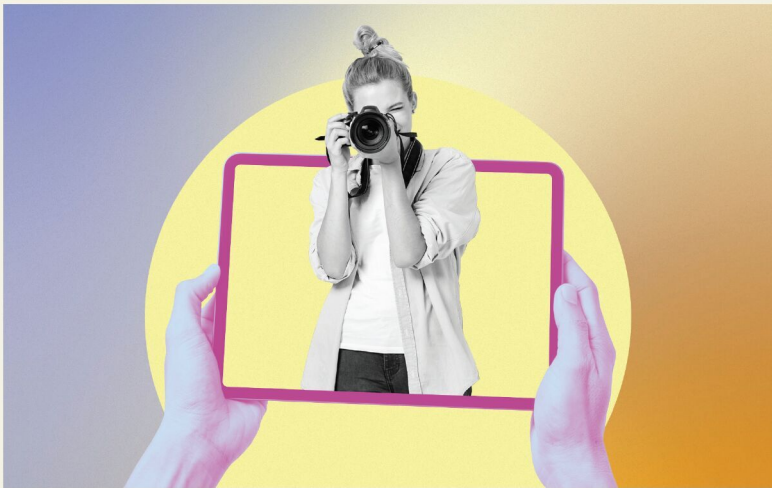
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# Creators Are Not Ad Units

STOP TREATING THEM LIKE ANOTHER BUCKET IN YOUR MEDIA PLAN. **BY ZACH BLUME**

**The default approach** for brands working with creators is broken. Too many marketers approach creators with a transactional mindset, where the process (and the outcome) is akin to purchasing media. It's ad-buying via creators.

This type of creator marketing almost always emanates from a brand's media budget—not creative, culture or brand—and filters through the brand's media agency.

Typically, marketers instruct media agencies to work with influencers as part of their overall media plan. Media agencies ship RFPs to a set of influencer marketing agencies. The brand then chooses an agency based on who can offer the most views, impressions or engagements for the least amount of budget. Briefs are sent out to creators, an Instagram post or TikTok is created, and voila, the transaction is complete. Creators are commoditized as units of media.

The result is a series of one-off engagements at scale, and over the last several years this approach has unfortunately become the norm. Check off the influencer box and move on to the next bucket in your media plan.

But there are limitations to this approach.

As we know, viewers grow weary of this type of transactional brand behavior, especially when it's the norm. In an era of on-demand entertainment, viewers can easily tune out brand messaging that isn't delivered thoughtfully or with respect for its audience. Marketers increasingly express concern about whether the transactional approach to creator partnerships is actually driving long-term value or is capturing the attention of audiences for more than a moment.

This dynamic is also not exclusive to the creator economy. There are parallel debates actively occurring

in more traditional venues: Brands like Airbnb are struggling to balance their investments in creative storytelling and brand-building with performance media and channels like search. After an era where brands had been increasing investments in performance media across the board, they are seeing diminishing returns—and brand-building and storytelling are fighting back.

The limitations of the transactional approach to creator partnerships were best illustrated through the lens of perhaps the most well-known brand and talent partnership of all time. What if Nike had approached Michael Jordan the way many brands approach influencers today? Wear our shoes for this one game, appear in this one commercial, stand next to our logo this one time. Unquantifiable brand value and equity would have been lost. Just like with traditional advertising, brands that invest in deeper, longer, creatively driven, strategically rooted relationships with creators will win.

The best marketers will think about creators the same way they might approach higher-funnel brand-building or partnerships with traditional talent: How can we tell a more meaningful brand story? How can we create a deeper connection with our audience? How can we align ourselves on a more substantive level with this new generation of personalities and tastemakers?

## 'What if Nike had approached Michael Jordan the way many brands approach influencers today?'

The savviest brands are already pursuing this approach. The briefs originate from the brand marketers themselves, who view creator partnerships as a top-of-the-funnel, brand-building opportunity.

And they are going directly to partners that specialize in this space and can help them define and realize their vision for collaborating with creators—content agencies focused on the creator economy, talent management firms that understand how to work with brands, publisher partners that have in-house creative and talent departments.

And they're going many levels deeper on the type of content, partnerships and strategy they are bringing to the creator space.

So don't treat creators like units of media. They represent the biggest opportunity in marketing today for brands to reach a new generation of viewers who tune out traditional media. If brands don't approach creators with the right mindset, they shouldn't be surprised when a creator builds their competitor's brand instead.



PHOTO: BALDWIN/ISTOCK, CHOKJA/ISTOCK

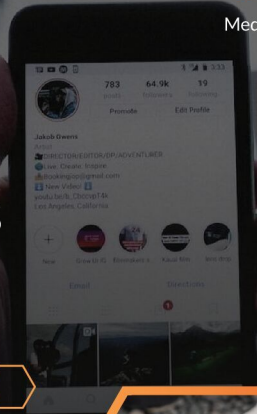


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### About Social Unbound:

Social Unbound, by Aki pushes the limits of influence by bringing **MomentsAI** technology to social, alongside powerful creator content. With Social Unbound, bring the influence of creators into receptive digital environments to extend reach and activate results-driven, cohesive campaigns - on and off social.



# ADWEEK CREATOR. VISIONARY AWARDS

Over the years, social media has evolved beyond basic communication to become an all-encompassing necessity for creativity and progress. As creators look to carve out a differentiated space for themselves and their community of supporters, they often bring about the very disruption that seasoned industry professionals strive for.

Adweek's third annual Creator Visionary Awards spotlight the innovators and influencers who have not only entertained us, but also wholly shifted our approach to marketing, media and connection. This year's winners, selected by a jury of Adweek experts, continue the mission of Social Media Week, established in 2009 to foster an elevated conversation around the impact of social media on advertising, media and culture. Once again, we are delighted to honor these dynamic creative forces who have forged lasting connections with global audiences while making unique contributions to social media.





# BARRYMORE THE MERRIER

Adweek's Creator Visionary of the Year Drew Barrymore  
on breaking all the rules—from TV to social media.

BY **ROBERT KLARA**

PHOTOGRAPHY BY **LONDON MCMAHON**

**CREATOR.**  
VISIONARY AWARDS



THE  
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THE  
MASH





**Opposite page:**

Barrymore on the set of her talk show, which she said is "the hardest [job] of my life."

**D**

rew Barrymore is on the floor. It's a weekday afternoon in her Manhattan apartment, and the Emmy-winning actress, producer, writer and entrepreneur—who is also Adweek's Creator Visionary of the Year—has eschewed her sofas in favor of the carpet.

For fans of *The Drew Barrymore Show*, this is a familiar habit. Throughout the syndicated show's three-season run (distributor CBS Media Ventures has already re-upped for season 4) Barrymore has sat, lain and even rolled on the floor during exchanges with George Clooney, Eddie Murphy and Hillary and Chelsea Clinton, among others. Indeed, even by the vacillating standards of daytime talk, Barrymore has thrown the rule book out the window: dressing as Glinda the Good Witch, interviewing an American Girl doll and cooking alongside a lizard named Jeremy. Still reminiscent of the 7-year-old Americans

first met in 1982 as Gertie in the Steven Spielberg blockbuster movie *E.T.*, Barrymore (now 48) runs the behavioral gamut from delight to astonishment, giggles to tears.

A talk show, however, is just one product of a creative force that's too big for TV to contain. These days, Barrymore also runs her own magazine and lines of cosmetics and home furnishings. She's an ambassador for multiple brands including Garnier and Quorn. Barrymore's unpredictable Instagram posts—including a viral one of her frolicking in the rain—have won her a following of 17 million.

In a rare hour of quietude, Barrymore sat down with Adweek—well, reclined on the aforementioned floor—to talk about her show, her creative process and life in the public eye.

*(This interview has been edited for length and clarity.)*

*Adweek: The reason we're sitting down for a talk is that you're our Creator Visionary for 2023. So, first off, congratulations.*

Drew Barrymore: I was just excited to be on the Adweek radar. I'm in shock. I'm so grateful.

*Your entire career has been creative in terms of acting and producing and, now, your talk show and the brands that carry your name. Do you see yourself as an inherently creative person, or is there some other term you associate with what you do?*

I, unfortunately, lack in objectivity about myself. I'm terrified of seeing myself as anything. I don't know what I am. I don't know what anybody thinks, and I don't want to know. We live in a world where everybody has access to what everybody thinks of them. Unfortu-

nately, it can swing way too far the other way for me where I'm not sure if I'm letting all the good in. [But] I know that I am no ladder-climbing, ambitious, driven person [in the traditional sense]. I really love working. If I see something that I wish existed and I can't find it, I want to make it or do it. Those things really light my fire. And then once the fire starts, it's really hard to extinguish.

*Well, that's a good segue to your talk show. In 2020, you said you were taking a hiatus from acting because you wanted to spend more time with your two daughters. So why did you say yes to doing TV?*

The hours seemed so much more civilized than the hours of filmmaking.

*Really?*

Yeah. There's a huge difference. In film, you usually work a minimum of 12-16 hours a day. And you never know where you're going to be, you never know what time you'll start, you never know if you're going to be on nights or days—which, before I had kids, was the best life I could have ever known. I loved the expanse on the horizon, how you get to see the world and different people. It's the most fulfilling thing I had ever known. But when I had kids, it turned into uncertainty.

*Has the show evolved into something greater than you expected at first?*

It's getting there and it's going better. For the first few years, it was not in that place, and it took a long time for me to find my way in it. I actually have never felt more insecure, self-doubting and in a state of constant self-flagellation as I have on this job. It's been the hardest one of my life.

*Why?*

I think it's because I don't have a character to hide behind. The films and the characters made me feel like I could do anything I set my mind to. And this was just me. It was a really sickening feeling for a long time—so much so that I couldn't sustain this level of self-doubt. And I would have to either let it go or stop doing the show, because this wasn't the point of doing the show. But once I got out there live...

*And you'd pushed really hard for a live format.*

It was half an itch that I wanted to scratch. But more importantly, I felt the state of the world demanded [it].

*You mean, you didn't want to be sitting in this apartment, hosting a TV show.*

I was never going to do a pandemic show.

*Were you trying to draw some energy out of a studio environment that you couldn't get from your sofa?*

Yes. I was like, there's no way I'm ever doing that. We've got to get people out of their homes, into a destination. So let's make this big and beautiful. Let's bring in people on green screen. There'll be no Zoom boxes. And it doesn't matter if I'm sitting there by myself. If

# 'I ACTUALLY HAVE NEVER FELT MORE INSECURE, SELF-DOUBTING AND IN A STATE OF CONSTANT SELF-FLAGELLATION AS I HAVE ON THIS JOB. ... I THINK IT'S BECAUSE I DON'T HAVE A CHARACTER TO HIDE BEHIND.'

-DREW BARRYMORE

we do this in real time, we'll be able to be respectful to the year and unprecedented nature of what we're living through. I felt it was the most respectful and responsible thing to do.

*Daytime TV is kind of weird right now because a number of marquee shows have ended their runs. Ellen and Dr. Oz signed off in 2022. Dr. Phil and Rachael Ray are throwing in the towel this year. Does that exodus freak you out, or do you see it as an opportunity?*

My first thought is that I'm excited that they hopefully know what they want for themselves. There's clearly a revolving door. If I could be with the other [hosts] who are doing it right now—part of that new guard, if you will—I am excited. Because I just want to be here really badly. My therapist would not prefer me to be so attached, but I am attached, for better or worse.

*When I watch your show, one of the things that surprises me is how vulnerable you allow yourself to be. You did an entire episode where you had no idea in advance who your guests would be. You even interviewed your ex-husband Tom Green without having seen him in person for 15 years. Why do you do scary things to yourself?*

It's funny—none of that is the stuff that scares me.

Why not?

It just seems like an amazing opportunity to explore, figure things out, check in with people, have conversations where you just take the armor off. But I don't think that comes about by just sitting around and wishing and hoping for it. It comes with cultivation of the relationships. And believe me, on the other side of that coin, I'll beat the shit out of myself if I thought I'd made something too much about me and not enough about that. If I think I crossed that line, I eviscerate myself, and I hate it. I'm working on it. But it was why I asked Cameron and Lucy to do the first show.

*Cameron Diaz and Lucy Liu from the 2000 film continuation of the Charlie's Angels franchise—which you starred in and co-produced.*

I thought, what if I started out with people I've been through everything with in life? We still have a piece of professional work to show that we're all linked by and proud of, but we've moved on.

We've become mothers, we've gone through breakups and relationships and everything together. And I was like, what if friendship could be at the forefront of this [episode]? And we got to show off our technology by Cameron being beamed in and out. Lucy was in the studio. And we just got to have this amazing conversation. I'm very fortunate to have [colleagues] who believe in the ideas. I could have worked with people who were like, "We don't want your exes on—we want this to be a traditional talk show."

*You have a huge social media presence. The show counts 3.7 million followers on TikTok, and you have more than 17 million followers on Instagram. But you've also expressed reservations about these platforms' pernicious effects on kids. Do you have an uneasy relationship with social media? And if so, how can you manage to maintain an authentic presence on it?*

I've always kept my kids out of it. I struggled. How do you be yourself with cutting off the most important thing in your life, which is my kids? So that has been tough. I really want to bring them on the journey. [But] I can't and I won't with my kids. It's OK to have a boundary.

*I assume you have people who help you post all the content that you do?*  
Only recently. I now work with this incredible woman who I love but, no, before that, I was manning it all by myself.

*... because you just have so much extra time on your hands.*

That's why I sought somebody out. Because I was drowning, and then I wasn't doing it.

*You're running two big retail brands right now: Beautiful by Drew Barrymore, a collection that includes the "Drew Chair," and Flower Beauty, your cosmetics line.*

Beautiful is this sort of mental game of how you function within your home. And Flower is more like how you engage with yourself in the beauty space.

*With so much on your plate, how can you stay meaningfully involved in your brands? Consumers can get cynical about celebrity brands—charging that it's just name slapping. How do you wrangle it?*

I moved everyone I work with in brands into the studio so I see

# Inside the Drew-niverse

HER REACH EXTENDS ACROSS MEDIA, RETAIL AND BRAND PARTNERSHIPS.

Barrymore's time in front of the camera represents only a tiny portion of her creative reach. Her Flower Films production company, which she founded in 1995 with business partner Nancy Juvonen, has been behind films like *Never Been Kissed*, *50 First Dates* and the *Charlie's Angels* movies. Since 2020, she has put her acting career on hold for *The Drew Barrymore Show*, her syndicated daytime talk show that will kick off its fourth season this fall. In summer 2021, she launched *Drew* magazine, a quarterly lifestyle publication produced with Bauer Media Group, featuring stories about travel, food, beauty, home and work, alongside Barrymore-authored stories.

After serving as CoverGirl's co-creative director and brand ambassador in 2007, Barrymore launched her cosmetics line, Flower Beauty, in 2013. In 2021, she rolled out a kitchen line called *Beautiful by Drew Barrymore*, which recently expanded into furniture with the *Drew Chair*. Produced in conjunction with Shae Hong, founder and CEO of *Made by Gather*, the *Beautiful by Drew Barrymore* products are available at Walmart.

In addition to her own brands, Barrymore has brand partnerships with Garnier, Walmart Vision Center, Grove Collaborative (in which she owns a stake), Pluto TV, Bingo Blitz and meat-alternative brand Quorn, where she also serves as "Chief Mom Officer." —**R.K.**



Barrymore appears in brand campaigns for Pluto (1) and Garnier (2), and her *Beautiful by Drew Barrymore* kitchen line (3) expanded into furniture with the *Drew Chair* (4), while *The Drew Barrymore Show* (5) has been renewed for Season 4.

PHOTOS: PLUTO, PINEAPPLE/GARNIER, THE DREW BARRYMORE SHOW, LOOKS BY BEAUTIFUL BY DREW, AND THE DREW BARRYMORE SHOW/ASH BEAN

Barrymore also works on her quarterly lifestyle magazine, *Drew*, at her talk show studio.



them every day and I work with them every day. And we do the magazine at the studio as well. And then when we have to work outside of the studio—because we're not there those days—everyone will come here [to my apartment.] It's a tremendous amount of work. But if you're not involved and invested and you don't make the time, not only do you risk that lack of a relationship with the people you're trying to make it for, I would just be dissatisfied and hard on myself for not putting in the time.

*And customers might also say, "Oh, this is just a cash grab. She's just trying to get 20 bucks from me for lipstick." I assume that's not what you'd want people to think.*

Not at all. Also, I hate email, but group texting is my life. Everyone [involved in my brands] is not only on big group texts, I've combined a lot of the group texts. So, silos are not happening. Everybody is talking to each other. And everybody is aware of each endeavor that we're working on. So if you're doing a talk show and a magazine and these brands, how do you bring everyone together? How do you get communication ideas and flow? We started doing episodes of the show that the entire hour is about the latest issue.

*You've also done advertising spots for other brands like Pluto TV, Garnier and meatless brand Quorn. How do you decide what brands to work with?*

That's a good question. Garnier is a very deep partnership. I'll be working with them to promote [that] they're cruelty-free.

*Meaning, a brand has to line up with—and I know this is an over-used term—your personal values?*

Yeah, absolutely. What [we're] doing is constantly tentacling everyone in. So, Garnier buys into the magazine; we'll do integrations on the show. I do campaigns with them. It's bigger than, "Yeah, I work with this brand." We try to grow and collaborate and coordinate.

*Because of E.T., you were a movie star at age 7, and you had to grow up really fast. So many childhood actors were destroyed by that process. For you, there were certainly consequences—but you weren't destroyed. In fact, you're enjoying a renaissance right now. How have you been able to persevere, to keep reinventing yourself?*

I promise you, I'm one of the most uncalculated humans you'll ever meet. I don't know. That is my answer. I don't know. I've just tried to put one foot in front of the other. And I'm desperate to become a better person, a better mom—someone that I can count on. There's been so many times in my life where I have been disappointed in myself. And I don't want to live in that state. So I keep trying to figure things out.

**'I'M ONE OF THE MOST UNCALCULATED HUMANS YOU'LL EVER MEET. ... I'VE JUST TRIED TO PUT ONE FOOT IN FRONT OF THE OTHER.'**

-DREW BARRYMORE

## Split Decision

THE FORMAT CHANGE THAT SAVED THE DREW BARRYMORE SHOW.

This season, *The Drew Barrymore Show* is averaging 1.2 million viewers each day—but that popularity was hardly immediate. CBS Media Ventures execs greenlit Barrymore's show before anyone knew what Covid-19 was and, when the first episode aired on Sept. 14, 2020, America was just beginning to emerge from lockdown.

At the 9,000-square-foot CBS Broadcast Center, Barrymore presided over empty audience seats and, worse still, a vacant stage. CBS-VFX's "virtual talkshow" technology shot Barrymore's guests at their locations on green screen and digitally grafted them onto the set to create what CBS termed a "big show feel."

Even so, average viewership in that first season limped in at just 694,000 per episode. While Season 2 finally let a live audience inside, it would take bigger changes to deliver the goods. In April 2022, CBS decided to produce the show as two freestanding, half-hour episodes that local stations could run as an hourlong program or air them separately.

That flexibility did the trick: The new format "has been an undeniable success," CBS Media Ventures said in a statement in January, as it renewed the show for the 2023-2024 TV season. "Ratings have grown 70% year to year and, creatively, the show is better than ever." —R.K.



## Cy Nguyen

ARTISTRY CREATOR  
OF THE YEAR

With a vibrant style and flare for flavors, the beloved Cy Nguyen brings the beauty of food and self-identity to more than 982,000 followers on TikTok. Authenticity and representation are hallmarks of Nguyen's journey as a creator. Combining her middle school love of frogs and a passion for Vietnamese culture, Nguyen invites her audience to explore and find joy in the ingredients that make up daily life. Last October, she was one of three TikTok creators who partnered with Denny's for the brand's latest "Social Stars Influenced Menu" campaign. —**Kennyatta Collins**

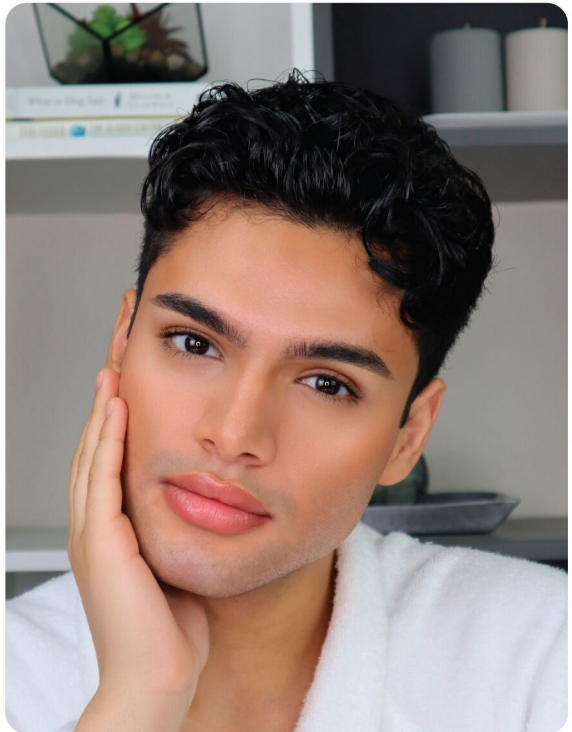
**TIKTOK:** @CYLOVESFROGS  
**FOLLOWERS:** 982,000

## Sergio 'Alessandro' Cardoso

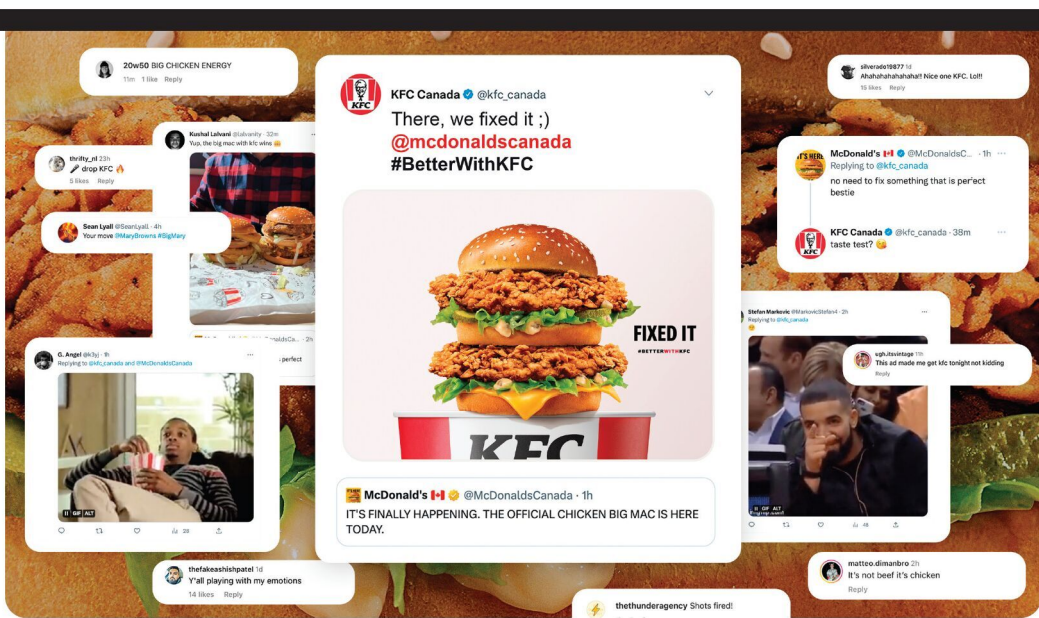
BEAUTY AND FASHION CREATOR  
OF THE YEAR

Sergio "Alessandro" Cardoso was one of many retail workers laid off during the early days of the Covid-19 pandemic, but it turned out to be a blessing in disguise, as it freed up his schedule to turn TikTok into a full-time job. Tapping into a rare and much-needed sense of honesty about the products he covers, Cardoso's transparency has gained him an enormous following in a short time. Sharing personal anecdotes while covering beauty products of all price ranges with equal diligence, Cardoso's work taps into a moment in which the beauty industry is being reimagined by new voices as enthusiasts become influencers. —**Sara Century**

**TIKTOK:** @MUALESANDRO  
**FOLLOWERS:** 1 MILLION



PHOTOS: WHALAR, KFC, CHIPOTLE



# KFC Canada's 'Fixed It' campaign

BEST FEATURE FOR MARKETING

KFC had no hesitation in defending its turf in the chicken sandwich war. Less than 24 hours after McDonald's Canada announced its chicken-themed Big Mac in March, the KFC Canada team and its AOR Courage launched a counter-campaign to "fix" its sandwich, replacing the signature Big Mac patties with KFC chicken fillets. The recent campaign was a full blitz across social media that generated nearly 9.7 million in earned media

impressions. The campaign featured invitations to influencers like @mukbangmaxwell to try the fixed sandwich while making the brand's presence felt in person with a billboard and truck-sized ad in front of McDonald's locations across Toronto. —**K.C.**

**INSTAGRAM:** @KFC  
**FOLLOWERS:** 1.7 MILLION



# Keith Lee and Alexis Frost

BRAND COLLAB

Mixed martial artist Keith Lee has been posting a wide array of videos since 2020, including everything from personal clips with his family to restaurant reviews. One of these videos was in response to a clip in fellow TikTok influencer Alexis Frost's "Eating What Employees Would Order" series, focusing on Chipotle. This spontaneous team-up led to the popularization of the "fajita quesadilla," inspiring countless variations to appear across the internet. In February, the brand spotlighted this innovation by offering it as a digital-only menu item, and surprising Lee and Frost with signs reading "Chipotlee" and "Chipotlex" in their honor at a Las Vegas branch. —**S.C.**

**TIKTOK:** @KEITH\_LEE125, @ALEXIS.FROST  
**FOLLOWERS:** 12.1 MILLION, 2.5 MILLION



## Glow Recipe

### BREAKTHROUGH BUSINESS OR BRAND

Friends and Glow Recipe founders Christine Chang and Sarah Lee opted to pass on Robert Herjavec's Shark Tank deal close to 10 years ago. Today, it looks like they made the right choice, with the company surpassing \$100 million in sales in 2021. This is due in no small part to the brand's social media presence, which offers helpful, practical beauty advice in addition to product promotion. Dedicated to transparency, Glow embraces realistic standards, avoiding words like "perfect" in its branding. With a devoted fan base backing its rise, the brand has made sustainability a major part of its platform, boasting Leaping Bunny certification and achieving carbon neutrality in 2022. —**S.C.**

**INSTAGRAM:** @GLOWRECIPE  
**FOLLOWERS:** 1.1 MILLION

## Girlbosstown

### BUSINESS INSIGHTS CREATOR OF THE YEAR

If you've ever found yourself asking in-depth questions about the PR moves of celebrities, Girlbosstown is the TikTok channel for you. Breaking down the media savvy of the rich and famous from a marketing standpoint, Robyn DeMonte has been living up to her self-appointed title as "the internet's agent" since quitting her corporate job more than two years ago. For DeMonte, creating compelling breakdowns is only the beginning, as many of her videos also feature creative ideas for how celebrities could improve their strategies, which has the internet taking notice. —**S.C.**

**TIKTOK:** @GIRLBOSSTOWN  
**FOLLOWERS:** 618,900



PHOTOS: AMANDA LOPEZ, CARLY JEAN SHARP





# We Love Drew

## Apparently, we aren't the only ones

Congrats, Drew, on Adweek's Creator Visionary of the Year award.  
Your talents bring joy & beauty to our customers' lives.



## CREATOR. VISIONARY AWARDS

# Molly McPherson

CAREERS CREATOR OF THE YEAR

Working in PR crisis management by day while tackling related news items on social media in her “off” time, Molly McPherson has become a go-to source for many seeking to better understand modern-day media scandals. Hosting the Indestructible PR podcast as well as offering consulting, workshops and keynote speaking, McPherson’s high-energy read of news items from minor slip-ups to major PR catastrophes have made her a trusted voice for everyone from casual consumers to industry experts. Yet it’s her advice on handling these often preventable missteps that make her an icon, giving helpful tidbits of advice to up-and-comers and seasoned pros alike. —**S.C.**

**TIKTOK:** @MOLLYBMCIPHERSON  
**FOLLOWERS:** 199,400



PHOTOS: MOLLY MCPHERSON, UNISIC



# Jonas Brothers

CROSSOVER CELEBRITY  
OF THE YEAR

The Jonas Brothers are no strangers to social media success, with viral videos and hit songs. Their approach to content creation draws in millions as they bring humor and lighthearted angst to their various platforms. In March, Nick Jonas did a TikTok duet with platform sensation Jake Shane (@octopuslover8), who had posted a video in which he was Diet Coke talking on the phone with Coke after learning about the existence of Coke Zero. That turned an already hilarious moment into a flavor conspiracy with an accumulated 3.4 million views—with siblings Joe and Kevin also contributing to the gag. With an understanding of creator trends, and an uninhibited approach to content creation, the Jonas Brothers are building new relationships with their fans worldwide. —**K.C.**

**TIKTOK:** @NICKJONAS,  
@KEVINJONAS, @JOEJONAS  
**FOLLOWERS:** 5.5 MILLION, 1.7  
MILLION, 5.7 MILLION

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FASTEST-GROWING SHOW IN DAYTIME

"Drew Barrymore  
is pulling off miracles  
in daytime TV."  
- The Daily Beast

the  
**DREW**  
barrymore show

"The 'millennial Oprah'?  
Fans praise **Drew Barrymore**  
for emotional, empathetic  
interviews."  
- Los Angeles Times

**CBS**  
MEDIA VENTURES

\*Source: Top banner = NSS, 09/12/22-12/18/22 vs. 09/13/21-12/19/21. Daytime's fastest growing show is vs. all broadcast strips M-F 9A-3P (ABC/CBS/NBC) and all syndicated strips. L+SD, P2+ 000s.

## Leo Gonzalez

COMEDY CREATOR  
OF THE YEAR

Tapping into the world of customer service as a source of inspiration, Leo Gonzalez has created a comedic brand highlighting the day-to-day interactions that most of us forget. Starting a TikTok account in the early days of the pandemic, his following has grown to nearly 3 million. With a down-to-earth ethos that gently pokes fun at scenarios like ordering food at a restaurant or asking a retail worker for assistance, Gonzalez's videos are hilarious in no small part due to their realism. Brands are taking notice of Gonzalez's rise in popularity, as he's recently partnered with several big companies, including Wendy's, Amazon and TurboTax. —**S.C.**

**TIKTOK:** @LEOGONZALL  
**FOLLOWERS:** 2.8 MILLION

## Arielle Varanasi

COMMUNITY SPIRIT AWARD

A champion on TikTok for teachers who often feel overlooked, Arielle Varanasi uses social media to address mental health for teachers and offer tips for engaging with young students as @Mrs.Frazzled. When the boundaries of political discourse began to extend into education, she joined in the conversations around the increasingly outlandish behavior of politicians by creating videos showing how kindergarten teachers would moderate their debates. With sharp wit and a bold demeanor, Varanasi navigates her 1.2 million TikTok followers through the experiences of educators as they tackle challenges for the benefit of students across the country. —**K.C.**

**TIKTOK:** @MRS.FRAZZLED  
**FOLLOWERS:** 1.2 MILLION



PHOTOS: WHALAR



AND THE AWARD GOES TO...

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# CREATOR.

VISIONARY AWARDS

## Emmanuel Duverneau

### CULINARY CREATOR OF THE YEAR

Emmanuel Duverneau became a TikTok sensation during the pandemic by combining a passion for performing arts with a desire to delight with delicious recipes for the at-home chef. Most of Duverneau's videos feature him experimenting with different recipes and putting meals together while performing some of users' favorite TikTok dance routines. This year, Major League Baseball invited Duverneau to participate in its latest MLB Creator Class, a yearly brand ambassador program to bring the league's joy to new audiences. —K.C.

**TIKTOK:** @EMMANUELDUVERNEAU  
**FOLLOWERS:** 3.7 MILLION



PHOTO: WHALAR



Beautiful recognition  
for our favorite visionary.  
Congratulations to  
my friend and  
business partner.

  
Shae Hong

Beautiful 



## Bailey Sok

DANCE CREATOR OF  
THE YEAR

Part of a family of dance enthusiasts, Bailey Sok began dancing at age 2, and was appearing in competitions four years later. Now 19, Sok has built an impressive résumé in a short time, choreographing music videos for K-Pop groups like K/DA, Red Velvet, SHINee and Kai. Having shared the stage with superstars like Janet Jackson, Meghan Trainor, Marshmello and Steve Aoki, her TikTok tends toward short, minimalist clips of her stunning dance moves that speak for themselves. That's led to recent brand partnerships with Samsung, Nike and YSL Beauty. —S.C.

**TIKTOK:** @BAILEYSOK1  
**FOLLOWERS:** 2.2 MILLION



CONGRATULATIONS, FROM YOUR FRIENDS AND PARTNERS AT KFC.

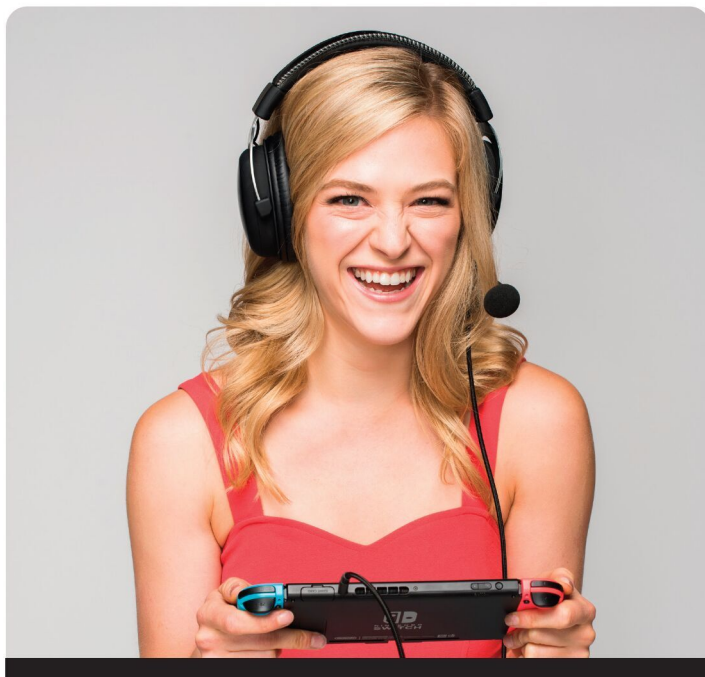
courage®  Wavemaker

# Michael Le

ENTREPRENEUR OF THE YEAR

Michael Le merges the worlds of gaming, content creation and dance to inspire others on their journey as creators across disciplines. Known to more than 52 million TikTok users as @Justmaiko, his collaborations with brands like Ashfall, dance routines and sibling videos have quickly made him one of the most followed creators on the platform, with more than 10 billion views. Le has made headlines as a Web3 founder with the 2022 launch of "Joystick," a startup that embraces blockchain technology and digital ownership to empower gamers and creators in a world that leans on them for growth and marketing opportunities. —K.C.

**TIKTOK:** @JUSTMAIKO  
**FOLLOWERS:** 52.1 MILLION



# Kelsey Impicciche

GAMER CREATOR OF THE YEAR

Since launching her YouTube channel in 2012 and producing shows for BuzzFeed from 2017 to 2021, Kelsey Impicciche became a creator synonymous with the rise in popularity of *The Sims 4*. Best known for her "Single Girl Tries the 100 Baby Challenge in *The Sims 4*" viral YouTube video, Impicciche's strong grasp of multiplatform distribution and community-building are her greatest strengths. Today, you can find Impicciche trying a host of new *Sims 4* challenges with her 146,000 followers on Twitch. —K.C.

**YOUTUBE:** @KELSEYDANGEROUS  
**SUBSCRIBERS:** 824,000

PHOTOS: RAUL ROMO, WHALAR





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## Chloé Pierre

HEALTH AND WELLNESS  
CREATOR OF THE YEAR

London-based creator and now author Chloé Pierre has cultivated a dedicated audience of people who are passionate about honest health, wellness and interpersonal relationships. Through her experiences as a Black woman, mother and multi-hyphenate creator, Pierre has inspired thousands of men and women to authentically show up for themselves through her *thy.self* and *thy.self.men* communities. Her new book, *Take Care*, features actionable guides to help Black women prioritize their mental, emotional and physical health. With more than 25,000 followers across her platforms, Pierre's community trusts her as the guide to help them navigate their journeys. —**K.C.**

**INSTAGRAM:** @CHLOEPIERRELDN  
**FOLLOWERS:** 14,400

## Warner Bros. Pictures' Barbie marketing team

MARKETING LEADER OF  
THE YEAR

Warner Bros. Pictures' marketing for the upcoming Barbie movie is a master class in hyping up an audience, and it's created buzz in the unlikeliest of places. A second trailer launch in April left most details vague around the Greta Gerwig-directed film, maintaining an air of mystery about the July 21 release, counterbalanced by an interactive strategy that thrives off the film's unique aesthetic. Between mobilizing the cast to post individual posters across their social media accounts and dropping the Barbie selfie generator that allows anyone to create their own memes with the template, the campaign has cast a much longer shadow than the trailer alone (with 19 million views and counting) could have. —**S.C.**

**YOUTUBE:** @WARNERBROSPICTURES  
**SUBSCRIBERS:** 10.8 MILLION



PHOTOS: THY\_SELF, WARNER BROS.



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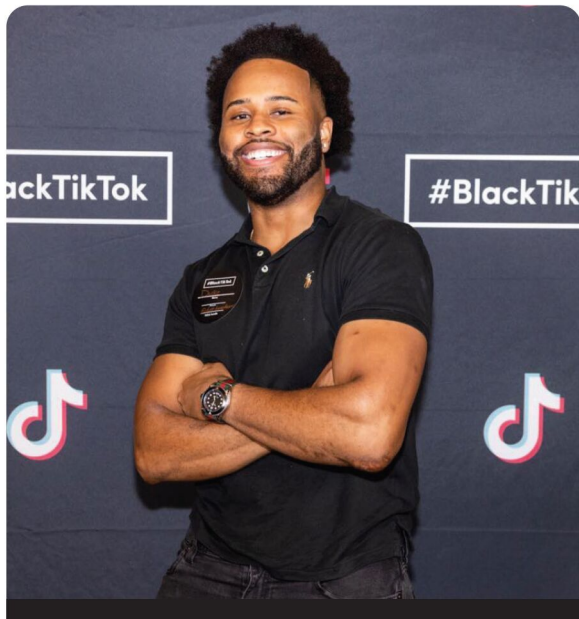


## Lindsey Gurk

PARENTING AND FAMILY  
CREATOR OF THE YEAR

While working as a journalist and entertainment TV host, Lindsey Gurk started her blog, *Nomis Niche*, in 2016. As it evolved from highlighting her own style to encapsulating beauty, lifestyle and parenthood, *Nomis Niche* proved to be only the beginning for Gurk. Expanding to TikTok and Instagram, Gurk's comical videos about the chaos of parenting have gained her a huge following, clearing 3 million followers on TikTok with no end in sight. This has led to recent partnerships with brands like Headquarters, Duracell and Aldi. In late 2022, Gurk introduced the *Get Your Pink Back* clothing line, intended to provide comfortable clothes for on-the-go parents. —S.C.

**TIKTOK:** @LINDSEYGURK  
**FOLLOWERS:** 3.1 MILLION



## Duke Alexander Moore

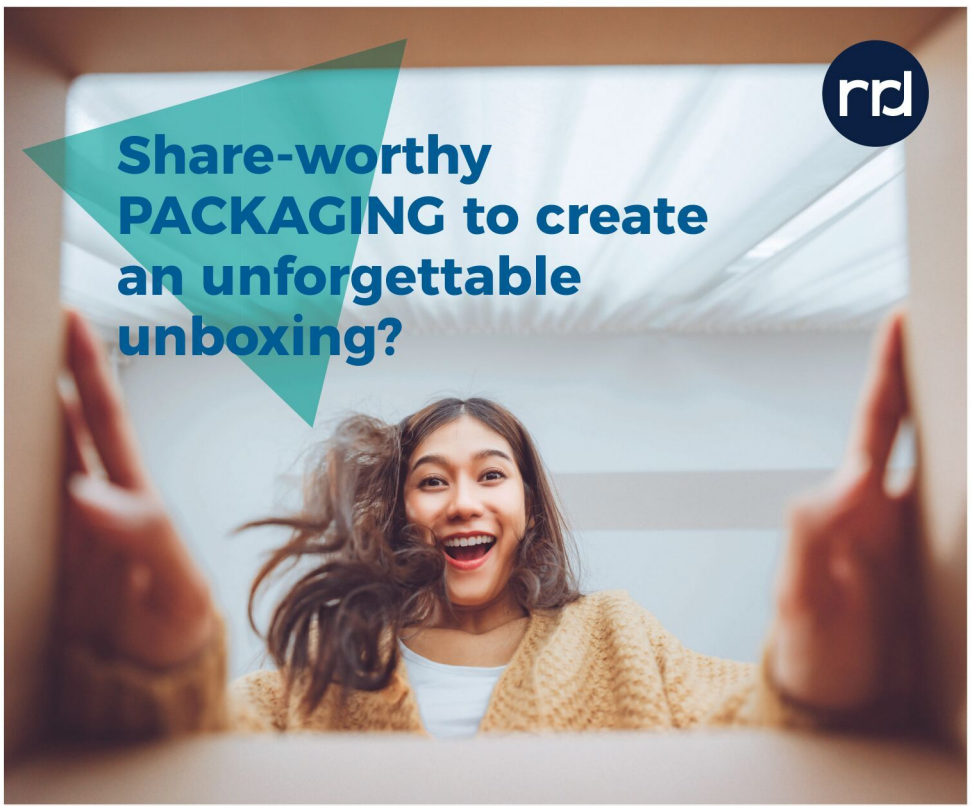
PERSONAL FINANCE  
CREATOR OF THE YEAR

Tax season has always been a stressful time for countless Americans, at least until Duke Alexander Moore opted for a career change. After struggling with a job as a forklift operator, Moore zeroed in on the tax space and became an enrolled agent, setting up his accounting firm, *Duke Tax*, with a focus on SBOs. Utilizing TikTok to spread helpful information that makes taxes easier to manage, his posts use levity to keep engagement high. Since those early days, *Duke Tax* has grown exponentially, currently representing more than 700 clients. Now, recognizing a growing need for good tax advice for content creators, Moore has shifted his focus to them. —S.C.

**TIKTOK:** @DUKELOVESTAXES  
**FOLLOWERS:** 3.4 MILLION



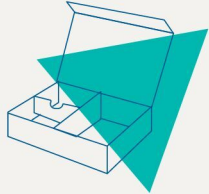
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**CREATOR.**  
VISIONARY AWARDS

## Keith Lee

SMALL BUSINESS  
CREATOR OF THE YEAR

Millions of people worldwide have discovered videos across various social platforms from Keith Lee, the MMA fighter turned small-business food critic. His videos on TikTok alone are responsible for locally known or forgotten restaurateurs selling out repeatedly. Lee started in 2020 with family vlogging and BTS of his MMA career and rapidly reached more than 10 million followers on TikTok when he began visiting mom-and-pop restaurants and giving his honest takes on their best meals. Lee takes his newfound "power" with "great responsibility" and encourages his supporters to be just as accountable and kind as he is. —**K.C.**

**TIKTOK:** @KEITH\_LEE125  
**FOLLOWERS:** 12.1 MILLION

PHOTOS: CHIPOTLE, FOUL TIP PODCAST

## Wahlid Mohammad and Zach Piona

SPORTS CREATORS  
OF THE YEAR

What do you do when you want to have fun in the world of sports fandom even though you have no affinity for it? If you're Wahlid Mohammad, you team up with Zach Piona—who touches all aspects of the fan experience, from games to stats to fantasy leagues—to co-host the Foul Tip sports podcast. No strangers to virality and online community-building, both Mohammad and Piona began as Vine sensations in 2015. Today, they use Foul Tip to excite their fans with a mix of pop culture and the latest news across sports leagues. —**K.C.**

**INSTAGRAM:** @ZACHPIONA, @WAHLIDM  
**FOLLOWERS:** 185,000, 81,100



# OPEN YOUR WORLD

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ON THE ORIGINS OF BRANDS AND THE PEOPLE WHO BUILD THEM

# Perspective

## THE KIDS

They buy most of the Mother's Day gifts, but so do spouses and other relations.

## THE MOTHER

There are some 77 million moms in the United States.

## THE GIFT

Chocolates? Sure. Edible gifts still make up 38% of those given.

## Mother's Day

HOW GEN Z AND MILLENNIALS ARE CHANGING THE HOLIDAY'S GIFT LIST. **BY ROBERT KLARA**



**In the spirit of gift giving** this Mother's Day, here's a memorable reflection on the holiday from the pages of the St. Louis Post-Dispatch in 1944: "Mother's Day is being desecrated. The telegraph companies with their ready-made greetings, the florists with their high-pressure campaigns and awful prices, and the candy manufacturers have made a racket out of my ideas."

The speaker? Anna Jarvis, founder of Mother's Day.

We'll get to Jarvis' story in a second but, for the moment, it's hard not to grant her point: Mother's Day is indeed a highly commercialized holiday. This year, Americans will spend nearly \$36 billion on gifts, a \$4 billion increase over 2022, according to the National Retail Federation. Jarvis was also on the mark about the companies that profit. Florists will book about \$2.9 billion, according to the NRF, and vendors (everyone from pharmacy chains to Etsy) will sell about 113 million greeting cards, according to the Greeting Card Association.

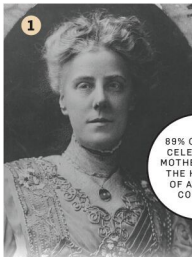
But while numbers like these might suggest that Mother's Day is the same old habit of shipping off the same old gifts, Americans are in fact changing how they celebrate the holiday—perhaps even in a way that would make Jarvis happy.

Thanks in part to years of cooped-up pandemic living, 57% of respondents to an NRF survey said they would take their mother on a "special outing" this year. "We are seeing an uptick in outings such as dinner or brunch," confirmed NRF senior director of industry and consumer insights Katherine Cullen. "[These] could be everything from tickets to an event to a cooking class. It could be a hike, if folks are looking to do something inexpensive and just spend time together."

And spending time with mom, it turns out, had been the point of Mother's Day nearly from the start. Ann Reeves Jarvis was a Sunday school teacher in Appalachia, determined to lower infant mortality rates with Mother's Day Work Clubs that promoted better domestic hygiene. After the Civil War (in which Jarvis refused to take a side), she broadened her work to include Mother's Friendship Day as a way of healing the rifts between the North and South. When Jarvis died in 1905, her daughter Anna Jarvis took up the cause of honoring mothers with a designated day. Finally, in 1914, President Woodrow Wilson declared the second Sunday in May as "a public expression of our love and reverence for the mothers of our country."

Anna Jarvis, as we've seen, eventually denounced Mother's Day for becoming too commercial. She believed that Americans should spend the day with their mothers and, if that was impossible, then they should write them letters.

We're unlikely to see a return to pen and ink, but Americans do still resort to the next best thing: Mother's Day sees a 37% spike in phone calls, according to History.com, making it the busiest calling day of the year.

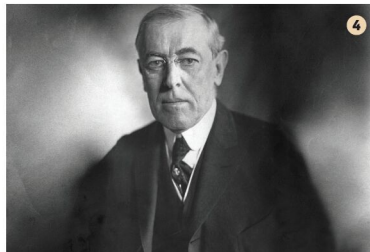


88% OF GEN Z CELEBRATES MOTHER'S DAY, THE HIGHEST OF ANY AGE COHORT

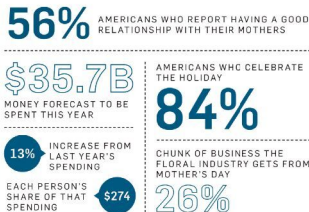


## KEEPING MUM

Anna Jarvis (1) crusaded for Mother's Day until its commercialization proved to be too much. Digital trends aside, flowers (2) and cards (3) still remain the most popular gifts—though other categories are gaining ground. While it's easy to assume that Mother's Day is as old as America itself, it's only been an official holiday since President Woodrow Wilson (4) declared it one in 1914.



### MOTHER'S DAY AT A GLANCE



### TRENDS IN MOTHER'S DAY GIFT SHOPPING



## THE Y AND Z EFFECT

A recent study by consumer research firm Collage Group found that Gen Z and millennials celebrate Mother's Day at higher rates (89% and 88%, respectively) than Gen X and boomers. These statistics don't surprise Jack Mackinnon, senior director of cultural insights, who points out that younger Americans—searching for opportunities to start their careers—have little choice but to move to large metro areas far away from their mothers. The difficulty of seeing mom, therefore, makes them more likely to buy her gifts. Much in keeping with the NRF's findings, those gifts skew toward experiential ones. "It's such a millennial trope because it's true—there's this feeling of not wanting to just check the box," he said. Citing an inherent "resistance to clichéd gifts [like] flowers, candy and cards," Gen Z and millennial children figure "an experience might be more meaningful."



# For the Birds

Futurimpose's Ollie Olanipekun helps people of color find solace in nature with Flock Together.

With its trendy bakeries, paint-spattered warehouses and hip hotel lobbies, Hackney, London, might seem an unlikely hangout for bird enthusiasts. That's why longtime bird-watcher Ollie Olanipekun, founder and creative director at agency Futurimpose, couldn't quite believe it when sports coach Nadeem Perera slid into his Instagram DMs after commenting on his bird-watching photos in 2020.

The pair soon discovered they shared the same hobby and lived just 5 minutes apart. Within a few weeks, they were staring through binoculars together on a local park bench.

"I'd wanted to set up a bird-watching club for a while because bird-watching has been hugely beneficial to me on a personal level," said Olanipekun, who asked Perera to help him form a monthly gathering, creating one of the rare nature groups for people of color.

This all happened during the height of the Covid-19 outbreak, which disproportionately impacted communities of color when it came to mortality and economics. In the U.S., George Floyd's murder at the hands of Minneapolis police had just sparked a wave of protests and conversations about systemic racism. Against this backdrop, Olanipekun and Perera wanted to offer a supportive space for people feeling the same way they did.

Weeks later, on a cloudy Sunday morning during the pandemic's second wave, Flock Together had its first meeting with the pair joined by 15 other enthusiasts, including creatives, graphic designers and photographers. Since then, Flock Together has garnered more than 23,000 followers on Instagram, hosted dozens of events across the U.K. with hundreds of enthusiasts—and even landed a book deal.



Ollie Olanipekun (L) and Nadeem Perera founded Flock Together in 2020.

In 2021, fashion and media outlet Highsnobiety placed Flock Together at the center of an editorial package exploring the vital role of green space, while showcasing the much-hyped Gucci x North Face collaboration.

"There's so much I love about Flock Together; each walk brings something different with a whole new variety of people," said Olanipekun. "It's the passion from everyone to support each other, which I think is what I love the most."

Olanipekun runs Flock Together alongside his agency, which focuses on social impact,

using the latter as the "perfect creative platform" to showcase Futurimpose's work in community-building and empowerment.

"I couldn't be a creative without nature; for me, nature is my biggest inspiration," he said. "It also helps ground me whilst protecting my mental health."

As Flock Together continues to spread its wings, "we're now focused on designing new access points in a few different categories and industries," Olanipekun said, "all with the aim of helping everyone see the endless benefits of nature."

PHOTO: DHAMIRAH COOMBEES



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