

What Are Creators For?

An approach to defining the role creators should play in brand marketing

Creators bring more than an audience

For years, the value of creator marketing was relatively easy to explain: a creator had an audience a brand wanted to reach, and a partnership gave the brand access to it.

Creators now make content for brand channels and paid media. They demonstrate products, explain complicated ideas, lend credibility, and help brands participate in communities where a corporate account may struggle to belong.

Creator content can also travel beyond the original audience through recommendations, search, paid amplification, shopping, and other forms of discovery.

The audience a creator brings is valuable. It is only one part of the value a creator can bring.

What exactly do we need the creator to do?

If creators can play many different roles, creator strategy should not begin by simply asking who we should partner with.

It should begin by defining why we need a creator in the first place.

Define the role first. Then find the creator best equipped to perform it.

Five jobs creators can do for brands

Most creator partnerships can be traced back to five primary jobs. A creator can perform several at once, but the strongest partnerships still have a clear primary job.

Attention

Get me seen.

Reach audiences the brand may struggle to reach on its own.

Credibility

Help people trust me.

Bring expertise, experience, or trust that makes the message more persuasive.

Explanation

Help people understand me.

Demonstrate, translate, or simplify something that needs more context.

Creative

Help me make better content.

Bring storytelling and platform knowledge the brand may not have internally.

Participation

Help me belong here.

Give the brand a credible way to enter a community, conversation, or culture.

Attention: *Get me seen.*

Attention is the most familiar reason brands work with creators. A creator already has access to people who have chosen to watch, follow, or hear from them, giving the brand a way to reach audiences it may struggle to reach on its own.

But reach alone does not make someone the right creator. A large audience can create exposure without creating much relevance.

When Attention is the primary job:

- New product or brand launches
- Reaching an audience the brand has difficulty reaching directly
- Building awareness quickly in a new category or market
- Extending a campaign into creator-led environments

The question is not simply "How many people can this creator reach?" It is "Whose attention do we need, and why is this creator a good way to earn it?"

Credibility — *Help people trust me.*

Some creators are important because their opinion carries weight. That credibility might come from expertise, lived experience, category knowledge, taste, or years spent building a relationship with their audience.

But credibility has to make sense. A creator can have the exact demographic audience a brand wants and still have very little reason to talk about the product.

78%

Most trusted creators for product recommendations

Of viewers surveyed consider YouTube the platform with the most trusted creators for product recommendations.

When Credibility is the primary job:

- Products where recommendation matters
- Categories where people seek reviews or opinions
- Brands trying to overcome skepticism
- Topics where expertise helps people decide

Explanation — *Help people understand me.*

Some products need to be shown, compared, or put into context before people understand why they matter. Creators can be particularly good at this because tutorials, reviews, demonstrations, walkthroughs, and Q&As are already native forms of creator content.

The best explainer is not always the person with the largest audience or the most authority. Sometimes the value is their ability to make something complicated interesting and easy to understand.

What becomes easier to understand because this person is explaining it?

When Explanation is the primary job:

- Products that benefit from demonstration
- Complicated categories or unfamiliar technology
- New features people need to see in action
- Products people frequently compare before buying
- Topics that generate recurring questions

ROLE 4 OF 5

Creative: *Help me make better content.*

One of the most interesting roles creators now play has little to do with the size of their audience. Sometimes the brand needs the creator because they know how to make content people want to watch, bringing storytelling, editing, platform knowledge, and an understanding of formats that can be difficult to reproduce through a traditional brand production process.

That content may live on the creator's account, on brand channels, or be amplified through paid media.

Sometimes brands are buying access to an audience. Sometimes they are buying creative talent. Often they are buying both.

Participation — *Help me belong here.*

Brands can buy their way into almost any feed. Belonging in a community or conversation is harder. Creators often understand the language, references, and expectations of communities because they are already part of them. The right partnership can give a brand a more natural way to participate.

Where does this creator give us a more credible way to participate?

Virgin Voyages × TikTok

1,103 creators participated in a cruise built around creator-led storytelling, generating **22.7M views** of #SailingWithVirgin.

Source: TikTok for Business, Virgin Voyages case study

The creator brief should start with the job

Once the job is clear, the rest of the creator strategy becomes easier to build. Instead of beginning with "five lifestyle creators with at least 500,000 followers," begin by defining why a creator is needed.

✗ The Old Brief

- 5 lifestyle creators
- 500K+ followers
- Women 25–34, US-based
- 3 posts per creator
- Deliverables: 2 Reels, 1 Story

The creator criteria *become* the strategy, with no clarity on what the partnership is meant to accomplish.

✓ The New Brief

Primary creator role: Explanation

Job: Show how the product works and make its advantage immediately understandable.

What to look for:

- Strong demonstration skills
- Ability to explain clearly on camera
- Credibility within the category
- Content style suited to the platform
- Past examples of making complex topics engaging

The job should determine what you measure

Creator programs are often measured using a familiar set of metrics: reach, views, engagement, and clicks. But a creator hired to build credibility should not be evaluated the same way as one hired to produce better advertising creative. **The job should help determine what success looks like.**

Role	Primary Goal	Possible Signals
Attention	Get seen by the right people	Reach, views, impressions
Credibility	Earn trust	Saves, comment sentiment, shares
Explanation	Build understanding	Completion rate/watch time, saves
Creative	Make better-performing content	Completion rate/watch time, engagement rate
Participation	Enter community credibly	Relevant comments, UGC

Measurement becomes much more useful when it answers **whether the creator performed the job they were hired to do.**

Start with the role

Before asking who should we partner with, define what you need a creator to do.

That decision should shape who you choose, what they create, where the content lives, and how you measure whether it worked.

Attention. Credibility. Explanation. Creative. Participation.

If this changes how you think about creator strategy, let's connect.

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Sources + Notes

This report draws on publicly available platform materials and case studies from YouTube and TikTok.. Platform-reported campaign results should be interpreted as examples of individual campaigns rather than universal performance benchmarks.

Sources:

- YouTube Creator Partnership Program
- TikTok for Business, Virgin Voyages case study