

On YouTube or Instagram? Here's what it takes to make money as social media 'influencer'

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Even after all these years, the offer still sounds really enticing.

Point a camera at yourself, attract an audience and get rewarded for your efforts by YouTube. Pose with a product and make money from brands on Instagram. Develop a following on Facebook, and the social network will share ad revenues with you.

Quit your job (or school), become a social media "influencer" and potentially make tens of thousands of dollars, if not even millions.

It's not easy to pull off, but if David Dobrik, Colleen Ballinger and Joey Graceffa could do it, why not you?

The trio is among the 90,000 [social media](#) fans, stars and industry pros who will descend on Anaheim this week, as early as Wednesday night,

for the annual fan fest/industry gathering that is known as VidCon.

Here, young fans arrive with their parents hoping to meet and greet with their favorite YouTubers, while many would-be YouTubers come to learn from experts like Graceffa about how to succeed as an influencer.

"YouTube still dominates because it pays the most revenues to creators," says Joe Gagliese, the co-founder of Viral Nation, which represents influencers and works with brands on their marketing campaigns. "And Instagram is getting close, in terms of importance to influencers."

Facebook-owned Instagram doesn't pay creators for posting their work. Instead, they go to agencies like ViralNation, which sells their posts to brands.

Facebook itself for years has talked about sharing ad revenues with creators via its Watch program, but the program to offer ads in exchange for revenues is being used by just tens of thousands of people, says Facebook, compared to "millions" on YouTube, according to the company.

Additionally, Facebook's entry hurdles are stricter than YouTube: 10,000 followers and 30,000 one-minute views of three-minute videos, versus 1,000 followers and 4,000 minutes of watch time.

VidCon is 10 years old, YouTube is 14 years old and established stars like Graceffa, PewDiePie and Ryan, the 7-year-old kid who reviews toys, have built giant fan bases, attracting multimillions of views daily.

Is it too late to get in?

Not according to Gagliese. "Honestly, it's never too

late," he says. "YouTube has more viewers this year than last year and new influencers are emerging from all over the world."

How much money can you make? It depends on how many people watch your videos, or follow you on Instagram.

Gagliese spells it out for us:

YOUTUBE:

Between 6 to 12 cents per view. So on the low end, a July video exploring Japanese vending machines by the young YouTuber named Safiya Nygaard brought in 6.8 million views, which could already be worth \$408,000.

INSTAGRAM:

This depends upon the influencer and their level of engagement, but a "micro-influencer," one with 10,000 to 50,000 active fans, "used to only pick up only a couple hundred bucks, now they're getting a few thousand per post," he says.

Influencers with up to 1 million followers will see \$10,000 per post, while 1 million followers and up can charge \$100,000 or more.

The most popular influencers are bringing in \$250,000 to \$500,000 per post, for posing with brands and featuring them on their Instagram Story pages, which allow direct links back to the [brand](#), he adds.

But it's not easy.

"People underestimate how hard it is," says Gagliese. It's a regular full-time job writing, shooting and editing videos and uploading them, adding all the correct tags and descriptions to make sure they get discovered, and that's just today's work. On the next day, they have to continue and do it all over again, hustling to build an audience.

And once they do that, he adds, they have to keep it up.

"They have to stay on top of everything."

And since you're judged by how many followers or views you have, a cottage industry has emerged of shady companies offering to "buy" views and followers, which leads to digital "influencer fraud," something brands are very concerned about.

Tim Sovay, the chief operating officer of marketing agency CreatorIQ is on a mission to weed out fraud.

"Brands want a better understanding of who they're partnering with, and what the social metrics really are," he says.

Meanwhile, besides talking up issues like fraud and how to legitimately get more views in industry sessions at VidCon, the real action is on the trade show floor, where fans get to meet their favorite online celebs.

VidCon "is a convergence of modern-day pop culture, celebrity and fandom," Sovay says. "The most culturally relevant celebrities, for 13- to 24-year-olds, are on the floor, and there's a fandom unlike anywhere else." And brands like M&Ms, Taco Bell and Kia are on the floor as well, to "try and find organic ways to integrate into the event, to get their message in front of the fans."

VidCon's trade show floor opens Thursday, and the convention concludes Saturday night. Fan tickets start at \$170.

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