

# The Rise of Independent Content Creators

*How Are They Shaping Business Strategies and Politics*



In today's digital world, independent content creators who engage large audiences through platforms like podcasts, subscriber newsletters, and alternative media – are reshaping how news is consumed. This trend was notably highlighted during the US presidential campaign, where Kamala Harris and Donald Trump leveraged non-traditional media outlets to connect with voters who might otherwise tune out traditional news channels. Both candidates participated in interviews with popular online media creators, showcasing their growing influence.

Kamala Harris took part in a 40-minute interview on *Call Her Daddy*, a podcast with 10 million viewers per episode, while Trump's conversation on *The Joe Rogan Experience* attracted nearly 50 million views on YouTube. Both platforms have large, young audiences that traditional networks like CBS or Fox News can struggle to reach.

A new wave of independent content creators who have cultivated loyal followings, now play a central role in distributing news and shaping public opinion. These individuals have the power to influence markets, disrupt brands, and even sway elections.

### **Social media's growing influence in news consumption**

The reach of digital creators is hard to ignore. According to Pew Research, 54% of Americans now get news from social media. This represents a 12.5% increase since 2021. While some of this growth is due to traditional media being shared on social platforms, more Americans are turning to independent creators for news and analysis. About 20% of Americans rely on news influencers for their information, and 65% say these creators have influenced their views on politics, society, or global issues. This trend is expected to continue.

These creators have a unique ability to connect with their audiences on a personal level, giving them an edge over traditional news outlets. Even as legacy media faces layoffs and budget cuts, it's clear that new media is thriving. Many independent creators still depend on traditional journalism for sourcing news, with older outlets acting as "wire services" for new media.

### **Shifting corporate communication strategies**

For businesses, the rise of independent content creators signals a need to adapt. Unlike traditional outlets like Reuters or Bloomberg, these content creators foster a direct, personal connection with their audiences.

Though traditional media channels are entering platforms like TikTok and Instagram, their content often lacks the authenticity and relatability that creators can offer.

### **Engaged audiences and business opportunities**

Influencers are changing the landscape for businesses. The opportunities to reach engaged audiences on a global scale far surpass those offered by traditional media.

*"Influencers are the new gatekeepers of the internet. They have direct access to their audiences, and they can generate engagement in ways that traditional media can't."*

**Shane McNulty, Co-founder of Influencer Intelligence**

For businesses, the advantage lies in tapping into niche, engaged audiences. Sam Ro, a financial news journalist, shares that his audience on Substack is smaller than his previous platforms at Yahoo! Finance, but they are highly engaged. Business topics are already a major focus for creators, whether or not companies choose to

get involved. For example, Kyla Scanlon's newsletter covers topics ranging from personal finance, economics, and mental models. Her writing is engaging and relatable, aiming to make financial concepts more digestible while encouraging deeper thought about the way people interact with money and value.

### **Seizing the opportunity**

Companies that engage with influencers now stand to benefit as their influence continues to grow. Early investment in relationships with these creators will pay off, both in terms of amplifying positive news and managing reputational risks.

Navigating this new space may seem challenging, but it's essential for businesses to adapt. As Kerry Flynn, a media reporter at Axios, pointed out, companies should treat influencers with the same respect as traditional journalists. These creators have the power to shape public perception, and businesses that invest in these relationships now will be better positioned in the future.