

Lesson outcome

Learners can use vocabulary related to customer engagement.

Lead-in

1 Work in pairs. Discuss the questions.

- When was the last time you 'liked' something online? What was it?
- What or who is a follower and an influencer?
- Who do you follow on social media?

Reading

2 Match the sentence halves to give advice on how to use social media. Then read the article to check your answers.

- | | |
|---|---------------------------------------|
| 1 Personality-led businesses | a takes time. |
| 2 People are more likely to connect | b you're selling a culture. |
| 3 A micro-influencer can be more successful | c with a story than a product. |
| 4 You're not just selling a product, | d that's what grows an audience. |
| 5 If people find you interesting or likeable, | e on Instagram tend to do very well. |
| 6 Turning likes into money | f than someone with a bigger fanbase. |

3 Read the article again. Are the sentences **true (T)**, **false (F)** or **doesn't say (DS)**?

- According to the Advertising Standards Agency, having 30,000 or more followers makes you a social media celebrity or influencer.
- Molly Gunn has made more than £1m from selling products and courses on being a perfect mother.
- Arii was able to sell thousands of T-shirts for a brand because she had over 2.5 million followers and subscribers.
- According to the writer, engagement means becoming involved with someone or something online in order to understand them.
- Sara McCorquodale says little-known brands respond positively when followers request free gifts as this builds a better relationship.
- McCorquodale says influencers should choose brands carefully rather than accepting money for endorsing or promoting a brand that doesn't engage them.

4 Discuss with a partner.

- If you were going to set up an online business, what kind of business would it be?
- What kind of followers would you (not) like to attract?
- What would be your personal story that you would use to engage customers?

Vocabulary

5 Complete the definitions using the words in bold in the text.

- _____ refers to the quality of being real or true.
- _____ is the number of people who see a company's advert or content on the Internet.
- When a new idea becomes accepted by or popular with more and more people, it gains _____.
- If something is _____, it is so interesting or exciting that you have to pay attention.
- Being _____ means being good at judging what people or situations are really like.
- When something is _____, it means resources or ideas are reused in different ways for maximum benefit.

6 What do the expressions in bold mean? Choose the best option, a or b.

- It's all about **ramping up** your audience figures and knowing who they are.
 - persuading people that something is worth more than it really is
 - increasing the amount of something significantly
- ... someone who's happy to be **consumer-facing** is the best way to start ...
 - using technology with user interfaces or applications that directly interact with customers
 - dealing directly with customers' problems and queries face-to-face
- Social media influence is not a **get rich quick scheme**.
 - a clever plan, especially to do something that is bad or illegal
 - a formal business plan that is very profitable in a short period of time
- ...the opportunities to find your own target market are **there for the taking**.
 - money that a business gets from selling its goods over a particular period of time
 - available for someone to easily obtain or achieve

7 Complete the sentences using 1-3 words and phrases from Exercises 5-7.

- Molly Gunn had a(n) _____ of 40,000 followers before she started selling T-shirts with the word 'Mother'.
- Her online success is a perfect example of how a celebrity can get the most out of, or _____, social media and turn likes into money.
- Influencers need to feel at ease with technology and be _____ so that they can understand their audience.
- 'Engagement' means having a two-way conversation and inspiring a feeling of connection; it takes time. It's not a _____ scheme.
- What increases your number of followers is having a story people can engage with and being honest in your posts; it's about having _____ in your relationship with your audience.

Speaking

8 Discuss the questions.

- 1 How important is connecting with your audience when it comes to online marketing?
- 2 What are some of the pros and cons of having a personality-led business?
- 3 How do you think social media influencers are shaping our lives and our future?

How to turn social media 'likes' into money

by Rosa Silverman

For Molly Gunn, it started with a blog. As a freelance journalist who had just had her first child, she had no maternity leave pay and was, in her own words, trying to find her way “in a world that was all about perfect mothering.” Her response? To document new motherhood online, with all its imperfections and messiness. She called her blog Selfish Mother.

Today Gunn, now a mother-of-three, has 135,000 Instagram followers. According to the Advertising Standards Agency, that's 105,000 more than the number that makes you a “celebrity”. Influencer is perhaps a better term.

Her Selfish Mother shop, selling clothing, lifestyle accessories and digital courses for women online, has 47,900 Instagram followers alone – and Gunn has raised £1m for charity through sales.

So how did she do it?

“I started building up my Facebook following before Instagram,” she says, explaining how the brutally honest blog posts she shared on the social network in 2013 “started to get really good **traction**.”

She had amassed an impressive 40,000 Facebook followers, by the time she tried using her **online reach** to make money. In 2014, she decided to print 100 T-shirts with the word “Mother” on them to raise money for the charity Women for Women International, retailing them via a page on her blog and a link on Facebook. They sold out immediately and the brand grew from there.

Gunn, who has since moved from London to Somerset, is a perfect example of someone who has **leveraged** social media to launch a successful business, turning followers and likes into money.

To what does she attribute her achievement?

“I would say **authenticity**,” she says. “When I started, there weren't a lot of people talking about imperfect mothering. Engagement is definitely about honesty. You need to be really authentic so you can properly connect. It's all about tapping into your audience and knowing who they are.”

Sara McCorquodale, founder and chief executive of Corq, an influencer intelligence and digital trends platform, and author of *Influence: How Social Media Influencers Are Shaping Our Digital Future*, agrees that being open is crucial.

“If you're using social media to launch a business, it makes sense to delve into the personal reason why,” she says. “Personality-led businesses on Instagram tend to do very well. People are more likely to connect with a story than a product, because there are so many products out there...”

So talk about you, why you're doing this, what made you think of the idea. A human-led narrative with someone who's happy to be consumer-facing is the best way to start and to ramp up your audience.”

Yet growing your audience is not enough on its own.

A micro-influencer – one with a small but highly dedicated following – can sometimes be more successful than someone with a bigger fanbase. Ariana Renee, an 18-year-old Miami-based influencer known as Arie, learned this the hard way after launching her own clothing brand this year. Although she had 2.6 million followers on Instagram and 837,000 YouTube subscribers, she was unable to sell even 36 T-shirts.

The buzzword, then, for anyone using social media to generate and expand a market for their business is “engagement”: the conversation around what you're posting, comments and the feeling of connection you inspire.

“You're not just selling a product, you're selling a culture, and you need people to buy into [that],” says McCorquodale. “You need a core, dedicated audience. If people find you interesting or likeable or **compelling**, that's what grows an audience.”

Also a **shrewd** approach is recommended. “Brands always say to us that they hate getting emails saying ‘I've got this many followers, can you send me free clothes?’” says McCorquodale. “Better to say, ‘I love your brand, I wear it all the time in my content, I wonder if you could add me to your mailing list.’ It's about building a relationship.”

She warns against taking a quick buck. “Be picky, be smart, be sensible. Is £200 for a post for a brand that means nothing to you worth it, or does it make more sense to continue growing an audience and start building a relationship with brands you want to feature in the future?”

Social media influence is not a get rich quick scheme. Turning likes into money takes time. But the field is wide open, and the opportunities to find your own target market are there for the taking.