



SEASON 1, EPISODE 3: SO YOU WANT TO BECOME A PROFESSIONAL INFLUENCER?

<https://www.blkirl.com/episodes/soyouwanttobeaninfluencer>

FULL EPISODE TRANSCRIPT

BLK IRL 00:00

Hello, I am Anuli Akanegbu and you are listening to the Black in Real life podcast.

MUSIC 00:10

[Intro music: "Wild" by Garth.]

BLK IRL 00:24

A 2019 report by research firm Morning Consult revealed that most young Americans are interested in becoming influencers. 2000 Americans ages 13 to 38 were surveyed about influencer culture for the study. 54% of those surveyed said they would become an influencer if given the opportunity. As the cultural practice of content creation becomes more professionalized whole business structures are being set up to help aspiring influencers monetize their personalities and skill sets as they transition from social media hobbyist to professional. Today's guest Qianna Smith Bruneteau believes that Wow, it is an exciting time to be working in influencer marketing, the largely unregulated industry is in need of some stewardship. Kiana Smith Veneto is the founder and executive director of American influencer Council and serves on its board of directors. Some of our accolades include winning Best celebrity influencer campaign on Snapchat at the 10th annual shorty awards for a campaign she crafted and negotiated in partnership with Snapchat spectacles. She holds a master's degree in fashion journalism from the London College of fashion and graduated with distinction I first learned about Kiana when I first learned about the American influencer council this summer. And candidly, once I learned that it was founded by a black woman, I knew I had to reach out to learn more about her. As the founder and executive director of an organization with a mission to contribute to the professionalization of influencing as well as a self-described career influencer, I thought Kiana could provide a lay of the land look at the influence and marketing industry in this episode. As a reminder, here's how each episode will work. In each episode, I'm going to share a brief introduction to the subject of the day before introducing my guest. At the end of each interview, I will come back to share a few key takeaways that stood out to me from our conversation. These takeaways will be supplemented with research from both academic and nonacademic sources. To add further context, the subjects are brought up in the interview portion. For every episode, I will include citations to the reference materials I mentioned, as well as some additional background reading for you on the black and real life website. Visit www.blkirl.com to nerd out. Okay. Now without further ado, let's get into my conversation with



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Qianna Smith Bruneteau, the founder and executive director of American Influencer Council, I think you are the perfect person to ask this first question to which is what does it mean to be an influencer? It just will be basic what is the influence there?

QIANNA SMITH BRUNETEAU 03:37

I think, you know, that's definitely a multi-faceted question. And it's a question that we are, you know, looking to define, even amongst our founding members, because I think it means so many different things to so many different to so many different people. Right? I think first and foremost, of course, within the digital age, you have one, you know, it's an individual who has been able to create or generate a following and leverage their platform to one influence and drive conversation and, you know, their their platform, whether that's through video content, still content, they are creating a message no different than an advertiser. I say that creators and influencers are the modern day advertiser because you know they are they're putting out messages and information that are being consumed, depending on what what stage you are in your career as an influencer, whether that's nano to mega and they are able to reach you know, so many different types of users. So, one, you know, with a lot of influence comes a lot of responsibility. And so I think, you know, in a startup industry, the idea of an influencer has 100% evolved, because you've had a group of individuals who won were incredible content creators, and some did it with passion, you know, they, they, they were able to start something just for the pure joy of sharing their creativity with people, and then some who took that, that talent and have been able to become American small business owners and entrepreneurs, whether that starting, you know, as a sole proprietor an LLC, and grow or growing that into a corporation and having their own teams and scaling that. And so you see that at, you know, from so many different types of creators, I think, you know, YouTube, the youtubers have had the stage and resources, probably the most developed. And then, you know, of course, with Instagram turns 10, in hand over. Right, so that tells you, that tells you, it tells you a lot about is where the industry is, from a timing perspective, a great stat is that 90% of all influencer marketing campaigns, at least last year included Instagram. So you know, when you tell when you look at the platforms as well, you know, Instagram is very important to to creators, too. So if you think Instagram, YouTube, then if you go, you know, way back my space and Vine, right, so the evolution of this space American Influencer Council, we launched on global social media day, and that was the, that was the anniversary the the 10 year anniversary of global social media day. And so that was a very important defining day for us as a council just because if you look at just the evolution and all of the different players and all of the different creators, it's, it's incredible, just WordPress, you know, think about all of the voices that were able to change the internet and consumption. No, I started my career with a blog, you know, I'm a testament to to



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WordPress. So I think with influence, you know, it's, it's one is the ability to be proactive, and to one, be proactive in terms of whether on what stage that is determining what platform, you want to be proactive, and activate, and tell your story and be authentic in your, in your storytelling, and then assuming, you know, a community and I always say, influence comes in so many different forms, whether that is the creator who your traditional creator, who's producing content daily, your career creator, or someone like myself, who's kind of a hybrid of a creator, you know, I started as a blogger, I went into corporate, you know, I produce all of my campaigns throughout my career. And so you know, you have the those Blurred Lines, right. But all of us who've been in this industry, first and foremost, we live for creativity. So I think, you know, what finds an influencer, it's someone who needs daily inspiration and needs a place to invoke that inspiration and wants to share that with somebody.

BLK IRL 09:04

Is there a difference in how you perceive like, content creators, because you use creators the word in your response, but there's also that people call themselves brand ambassadors, some people call themselves story, storytellers? Is it just dependent on the individual of what they call themselves? Or are we to categorize these rules differently?

QIANNA SMITH BRUNETEAU 09:24

You know, you have you have brand ambassador could be someone who just works for a brand, right, who's representing a brand or who's endorsing a product. And so I would say, as you know, someone coming on the brand side, if I was to refer to an individual, as a brand ambassador, that's someone who is advocating on behalf of me, that's definitely still a creator, because that person most likely is creating content for that brand, but yes, you can have different titles within, you know, you can be a creator, who's also a brand ambassador for many different companies within different industries, right. So if I was a lifestyle creator, I could be a brand ambassador for, you know, a beverage drink for a fitness product, you know, a yoga mat or, you know, a treadmill raid, so you can have different variations of what you call yourself. I think that the label people get stuck on on wanting to be labeled. And I think our industry went through very much a transformation of how people wanted to refer to themselves. influencer, for some people can be a dirty word, you know, and it can invoke a very negative emotional response for some people who don't feel that it is a legitimate profession, when so just like within the modeling industry, you know, models did not have rights. And so we are very much facing some of the same challenges that models did in the in, in, in the early days of some of the things that they were advocating for. So I think it It depends on who you're speaking to, when you look at what the industry is driving in terms of revenue, you know, this is 100%, a



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high growth, startup industry. And it is an industry that is creating a lot of jobs. And it's an industry that is creating a ton of opportunity. And I'm a testament to the incredible amount of opportunity that it holds. Because you have the opportunity to one take on roles and titles that I didn't even dream of when I was in college. There were no social media directors, influencer marketing directors like that didn't exist. And so I think even you know, as you go through as a someone on the brand side, like even the idea of Chief Content Officer, Chief Innovation Officer, that all became like, wow, there's even more growth and opportunity. I didn't even think when I started. And so for me, this industry is, is what you want it to be. And that makes it incredibly exciting. Because as as it evolves, there's more Nish and more things that people need to operate and function. And so it's super dynamic. It's, it's, it's very multifaceted, and I think creators are trying are also questioning their roles, especially in 2020. You know, I think for black creators, and as an African American woman, I think, you know, creators are wanting equity in in what they're doing. They want representation and they want commitments from brands. And I think you're you're looking at so many different layers, right? It's, it's not one single, I think it would be wrong to pigeonhole because it's, you know, if you talked to a blogger, it's very different than the fashion influencer, you know, this word I a lot of creators, like the term digital media entrepreneur. And that's a term that I also relate to, because it's so much more when you look at the the scope of what you do on a day to day, you're running a business, you're strategizing, you're planning content, you're producing content, you're editing content, you're managing, you could be managing a team, or you might be thinking about growth and how you can grow your scale your business to take on team members. And you might be thinking about, you know, what are loans or you know, wealth management, all of these things that are just beyond like, let's do a post, like that idea of like, let's just create a post is so to me marginalizing, and so I even just think the term like someone who has an influence, it's just boxing.

BLK IRL 14:49

I want to unpack so much from your answer, but one of the things I'll start with a collection onto is the marginalization you just mentioned because even in the research for the Like my own academic work, and just this podcast, I see this gendered notion of influence when it comes to like men before to themselves more so as content creators and influencing is more associated with, like women. So with that seems like the term influencer has become more marginalized because of its association with women. And I wanted to get your thoughts on that, whether or not that's true.

QIANNA SMITH BRUNETEAU 15:26



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I think it also depends on the type of creator because, you know, you have in terms of like street style photographers, you know, working with a lot of the top streetstyle photographers, they very much did not want to be boxed in with influencer. And so you want 100% had streetstyle photographers wanting to move into this true photographer. And, you know, what does that mean to be a creative director or someone who's presenting work in a gallery or shooting, you know, true editorial spreads rather than being on the street with their fellow influencer? I do agree on the from a female to male perspective that they it you know, from a masculine masculinity kind of perspective, you know, point of view, yeah, it that word can rub a lot of men the wrong way. And so even I will say transparently recruiting men for the American influence or counsel, a lot of males said I don't consider myself an influencer. I don't like that word. And so that's why we I always say I use the word creator and influencer interchangeably. Because no matter what if your business is rooted on social media, and you're, you're doing branded content deals as a main source of revenue for your business, you're influencing whether you want to accept that or not, that's the reality of it. So I think you know, from you, personally, everyone has to take terms as they as you are, you know, you have love I always put the slash sheets however, however, you know, whatever you whatever term you need to define your or empower what you do on a day to day, I'm good with like, there is no wrong.

BLK IRL 17:46

Another thing you mentioned that I find so striking is he made a comparison between the influence and marketing industry in the modeling industry, because in the more recent years, the modeling industry has made attempts to you know, unionize and professionalize what models do and not now that the American influencer council we're seeing this as a part of a wave of trying to professionalize the role of influencing and trying to share that this is a job. So I want to understand why did you find a need to want to start the AIC?

QIANNA SMITH BRUNETEAU 18:21

You know, whenever you have a high growth industry, or as someone who has been, you know, part, my entire career has been rooted in influencer marketing and social media marketing. And there was no playbook right there. There was, you know, a test and learn culture, and you figure it out on the job. And so because education is so important, and I believe it benefits society in so many ways, and that's one of our key mission pillars. It's so important that generation alpha doesn't have to go through what I did, or what so many of my colleagues did. And so I believe having standards just makes an industry stronger. And I look to, you know, other spaces journalism and Master's in journalism, and I have freelanced for so many publications, AOL, and every so many different prestigious magazine and Teen Vogue, and so



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many other I was at timing. And so because I trained as a journalist, and I understand the standards that come with back checking, and you know, editorial review and conduct as a journalist that when you don't have it, it can be the Wild West. Right. And I do believe that there are aspects of our industry that need regulation. And that will be stronger with more regulation. And one of those areas for sure is within sponsored content. And that What

BLK IRL 20:23

do you mean by that?

QIANNA SMITH BRUNETEAU 20:24

sponsored content in terms of how sponsored content is one regulated by the Federal Trade Commission, and it's loosely regulated. I think if you think about just as a, as someone who was a blogger, you know, 2019 was the was a critical year for bloggers, is that's when the FTC really started to change their opinion and want in and decided to toughen up how endorsements were made by influencers. And so when you think about just the regulation of this space, and getting more formalities and opinions from the Federal Trade Commission, I think, seeing how the space has evolved, and where it currently is, it's important to to have as an entrepreneur guide, and, and that's what we're at, or advocating for, when you look to the next generation, and you have creators coming into this space and don't know the best practices and are getting their first branded deals, you want them to be informed, and you want them to take branded content deals that are the best for their business. And when you don't have skilled education, when you don't have centralized places for knowledge exchange, or created a creator education, that's when you have issues, and you've seen influencers who've been tremendously impacted when they have deals go wrong, or they have not disclosed properly. And it's good news. Yeah. And so, you know, for us, it's about protecting the next generation and making it easy for them. You know, we don't we want them to to just run their business, have the tool, have a toolkit have a playbook and to do what they do best and create and not have to worry about, is this the way I should do it? Where do I look to to get the information? And when you have industry wide standards, it's true. Like

BLK IRL 22:49

it's also notable that there was I didn't find any mention of influencer marketing in the testimonials that the tech giants just had on on the hill a couple of weeks ago, and even the ones prior to that, just like you had Facebook, you had Apple like all of these men who influenced the influencer industry, but there was no mention of it. Do you feel like that was a missed opportunity?



SEASON 1, EPISODE 3: SO YOU WANT TO BECOME A PROFESSIONAL INFLUENCER?

<https://www.blkirl.com/episodes/soyouwanttobeaninfluencer>

QIANNA SMITH BRUNETEAU 23:15

I think that there was a very specific agenda with that Senate hearing at least the last one, and that was very much an antitrust conversation. And the Federal Trade Commission, though the following week was in front of that same senate group, and 100% the conversation was about different areas of influencer marketing that do need review and one of the hot topics was in the area of child privacy and, and, and FTC COPPA. So I think there is a place for it, and whether the car, you know, strategically what the agenda was for those various hearings, but the endorsement guides definitely came up and the Federal Trade Commissioners asked for more authority to to enforce the endorsement guides are up for review this year. And we gave a public comment. I don't know if you've had a chance to read it. That was our first act as a trade association. And so, you know, the FTC in terms of their ability to enforce their decisions requires a lot of aid from other agencies. And I think you know, that makes it difficult when they want to reward consumers for deception. Because if you have experienced consumer deception, the benefit of the FTC is to, of course, get your money back. So, you know, you know, if the FTC doesn't have enough attorneys, to, to enforce their decisions or to collect it, it's the bureaucracy, the bureaucracy of it all. So I think, you know, it's the it's the business dynamics of influencer marketing and, and that's what we're championing. You know, we are we're the our mission agenda is really looking at all of the different players and that aspects of the business dynamics. And there are so many players within the influencer marketing industry, that if you're just starting out, I think it's overwhelming. And you can a lot of creators operate in a silo and don't know all of the resources available. You know, depending on how informed and educated you are, you might not even know that you have a ton of resources within the Small Business Administration, administration ministraton, or that you can, especially with COVID times that you could file for the Care Act, right? Like, there are things that within such a large and structured and loosely structured space, that where do you turn to get all this the platform's do offer great information, Facebook, Small Business Resource has a ton of tools, and they keep adding to it. Their boost program this year is phenomenal. And so many people don't know about it. And so we're trying to help spread the word and centralize some of the things we think creators will 100% benefit from YouTube launched an incredible series of just how to create more authentic content, especially after Black Lives Matters, because that was a huge concern, even resources, the Webby Awards launched a resource page of just like where to donate, who to support in and this all there's so much information that you have to watch. This could be like just a full time job trying to store all of this information. And so we hope to be a value to the creator community is we have you know, a person dedicated to just diving through and looking at all of the platforms and understanding like what are one looking at



SEASON 1, EPISODE 3: SO YOU WANT TO BECOME A PROFESSIONAL INFLUENCER?

<https://www.blkirl.com/episodes/soyouwanttobeaninfluencer>

policies coming out when platforms launch things, looking at what funds, you know, Facebook launched the black creator program, you had Tick Tock who launched the creator fund, there's things happening, that it's a full time job just to keep up with it.

BLK IRL 28:08

So if your organization, the American influencer Council, and I just want to understand the structure, you are going to open to the sub 15 members in 21. Is that correct?

QIANNA SMITH BRUNETEAU 28:19

Yes. So we are actually opening up to 15 members this year, okay. And our model is intimate in terms of we are startup and from a founding member perspective, the founding members provide volunteer service. And in order for us as the leadership team to work with our volunteers, you need to be able to do that in a way that's meaningful, in a way, that's something that's manageable, and that can be managed with hundreds of people not at this current stage of our of our business. And so we we voted as a council to bring on 15 as the leadership team grows, and we're able to take on more, more team and more staff, we will keep expanding that number. And then we also have without outside of the founding members, we also have annual fee membership. We have a fee model that that takes all crew creators, organizations, and professional advisors. And that's how that allows us to be funded and helps, you know, invest into what we're doing for our mission work. So we have a membership model.

BLK IRL 29:49

And what does it mean to be a member does it get do members get help with negotiations education, like how is a member different than just someone that's influencing on dependently Yep.

QIANNA SMITH BRUNETEAU 30:02

So if you think about any other type of membership organization like the Association for national advertisers, or social media.org, or the Council of fashion designers of America, you have member benefits. So as a career creator, you participate within our committees. So each of our mission pillars have a committee attached to it. And they committee is doing our mission based work. So as an example, our Learning and Development Committee, it just launched in July, our AIC, in the classroom program. And that program is rooted in terms of getting creators into digital marketing degree programs and partnering either with a professor or a chair to create elective work, or to do video lecture or simulation, or to work on a major Marketing Challenge. And so we take the creator expertise, like the hands on knowledge you have, and



SEASON 1, EPISODE 3: SO YOU WANT TO BECOME A PROFESSIONAL INFLUENCER?

<https://www.blkirl.com/episodes/soyouwanttobeaninfluencer>

then pair it with the book expertise of a professor to be able to enable that next generation of advertisers with like, all of the on the job issues and challenges you face to prepare them. So we launched that at UCLA, and we were at Woodbury college, and next week, we're at North Carolina University. And each month, we are adding more schools.

BLK IRL 31:45

Well, and I want to ask this next question to you as a creator, because what you're doing is a major feat, you know,

QIANNA SMITH BRUNETEAU 31:55

even two months old,

BLK IRL 31:56

exactly. Like you're contributing to like professionalizing this industry, so like, just the idea of like, let me start organization for like influencers. How did you go from like, this is a nice idea to like, Okay, I'm actually going to do this idea and tell people about it?

QIANNA SMITH BRUNETEAU 32:14

So I, I've been thinking about putting a council together for quite a long time and really mobilized so came up with the idea in the early part of 2019, and then started to mobilize the idea in the winter. And Alexander Patino is our deputy director and someone I've worked with throughout my entire career and came with him to the with the idea and I was like, you know, we need to make this council happen. Would you support me from being part of the leadership team as I develop this idea? And he said, Yes. And so I just started writing the bylaws and researching just one just trying to understand the trade model concept. I was very fortunate and did some of the most meaningful work in my career at the US Open, which has a matrix membership model. And the US Open is part of the United States Tennis Association. And that I was very lucky to work closely with the board of directors at the USTA and that experience 100% inspired a lot of the AIC and also some of the work in terms of at Nordstrom, I was able to interview the Vogue fashion fund designers do the CFDA and xx I started the social media department and of course, supporting American designers is you know, Paramount at Saks Fifth Avenue, our windows and our brand matrix and, and so I was very fortunate at Saks to also have exchanges and experiences with the CFDA and then at the US Open I was a member of the Association of national advertisers and participated in some of their workshops and I was also a member of social media.org which is one of the most inspiring professional organizations for someone with my background and all of these experiences like it's like put cook them in a pot



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BLK IRL 34:45

you're built for this is what you're saying like you're basically crafted this this was meant for you to do

QIANNA SMITH BRUNETEAU 34:52

I mean I can't I work with all of my all of my award winning influencer campaign work And I'm one of the unicorns in terms of I wrote all of my contracts and work really closely with our legal team in brokering the deals with all of our influencers. So I didn't leverage an agency unless it was critical. So most of my early campaigns were deals I brokered myself. And then later stage in my career, of course, I had third party vendors, and agency partners. And so I have a lot of experience crafting the deals, and then paid media, I always ran all of the paid medium in the roles that I had and built the infrastructure and hired the teams to entrain with the teams to run pay. So as like Facebook launched, Facebook Business Manager, and you know, you were starting to run paid on a no, when we started at the rules I had running paid on YouTube, and Snapchat, and I was doing a lot of that I also started the departments at most of the places I worked. So I was employee one doing all of the work. So I have all of this expertise and knowledge. And so I know the gaps. And so I know the gaps, and I know the gaps, and the issues and the challenges creators face. And so it's like, all of these combinations of things are in the bylaws and in our mission, and things that I want as a professional want to solve things and challenges I've faced personally, trials and errors and things that I've encountered, and I wish I had someone to have helped me, um, in different in different projects. And so you have a lot of like personal things that are deep and deep passions that that have gone into the AIC.

BLK IRL 37:07

thinking ahead about the industry does like all your knowledge of it. What do you think the future of influencer marketing looks like?

QIANNA SMITH BRUNETEAU 37:14

It's so bright, I think when you look at just how brands are spending, influencer marketing, looking at other industries 100% in q1 q2, one was impacted, but not impacted like other spaces. And so the growth is still very much it exciting ad and the outlook very, very positive. When you renew, when you talk about, you know, 3.9 billion people on earth using social media, I'm in the right place. At the right, I'm in the right industry, and it's exciting because of all of the innovation and the thought leaders involved within this marketplace. But it's also a space that needs some stewardship and a space that you have a cyber bullying, you know what



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<https://www.blkirl.com/episodes/soyouwanttobeaninfluencer>

I mean? It you you have you have issues. And you have you know, creators who have fatigue, right? You know, there is a there's a lot of pressure to push push out a tremendous amount of content. I faced this in different roles myself, where it's like, what's next? What's the next, you know, what's the next deal? What's the next partnership? What's the next big idea? So you have prayer fatigue, right, you also there, you also have different actors who are necessarily representing the industry in the way that they should. And they have this incredible stage, and they're not being the role model that they should be. And so there you have a lot of young entrepreneurs who are making mistake in a very public way. And so there is it's a, it's a, it's an exciting time. It's a it's a time to also learn and grow. It's a place that I'm excited for all that it holds.

BLK IRL 39:29

And as a black woman in this industry, and also like the founder of the American influencer Council, I just feel a need to ask you about like, what do you think needs to change with how companies work with black influencers in particular?

QIANNA SMITH BRUNETEAU 39:46

So when you think about that there are only three CEOs that are black at fortune 500 companies for me, it's more so question of Leadership changing at the top. Because if the C suite at some of the biggest companies is not diverse, then that's going to affect marketing and culture and everything. Right. So this for me is more of a question of how do we, as a nation, look at diversity and inclusion from starting with leadership?

BLK IRL 40:32

How do you do that? Like, I can't imagine telling some like, says why guy like, Hey, you got to get out of here. You can't have this job anymore.

QIANNA SMITH BRUNETEAU 40:42

I do think that boards are having these conversations of what does what is the right culture? And what is the right type of leadership? Because employees are demanding it? Look what happened at Adidas? No, um, it's it, look, look what's happening at Pinterest. So I think you you 100% employees know, employees want a culture that is representative of everyone. And they want to see people that look like them. In VP and above roles, it's very important. And if organizations stay stagnant, it will also affect the way consumers perceive them, too. So I do think change is happening. And you're seeing a lot of new leaders being hired right now, which is very exciting. So I'm optimistic. There's a lot of work to be done. Black fashion Council has



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gotten a lot of exciting brand commitments for what they're trying to do in terms of of, of cultural evaluations and, and and ways to to make things more equitable, and have more representation of all people but I think it's for me, it's it's looking at inclusion of also Hispanics, as well you know, of all marginalized groups so that everyone feels that and knows they have an opportunity to be where they they you dream.

BLK IRL 42:35

Much of the regulation of the influencer marketing industry has been left to federal agencies like the Federal Trade Commission to take care of the Federal Trade Commission, or FTC is a bipartisan federal agency with a dual mission to protect consumers and promotes competition. The FTC works to protect consumers by stopping unfair, deceptive or fraudulent practices in the marketplace. The agency works to promote competition by enforcing antitrust laws and challenging anti-competitive mergers and business practices that could harm consumers can Yana explains during our conversation that 2019 was a critical year for bloggers because that's when the FTC decided to toughen up how endorsements were made by influencers. Overall, the FTC believes that endorsements are an important tool for advertisers because they can be persuasive to consumers. They are particularly concerned with ensuring that endorsements follow the letter of the law by being truthful and not misleading. Today, I will provide an update on some actions that the FTC has taken over the last year to regulate the influencer marketing industry. Now, this will not be a comprehensive look at everything they're doing. For example, I will not be discussing the children's online Privacy Protection Act, also known as the copper rule. That said, I'll provide enough information to give you an idea of what their priorities have been in regards to regulating endorsements and reviews from influencers. Despite having majored in legal communications as an undergrad student at Howard University. I am not in any way, a lawyer so bear with me, the FTC is focusing its regulatory efforts on advertisers, not small influencers. In fact, they want to focus on educating small influencers. In November 2019. The agency released a video to provide advice to help social media influencers, comply with the law. Their tips, urge social media influencers to clearly disclose relationships they have with a brand when they promote anything from a brand. That's a month the FTC released an online brochure for social media influencers with additional information on when and how to make good disclosures. And the statement will list in February 2020 wellhead shopper, the Commissioner of the FTC, wrote that misinformation is plaguing the digital economy, and that retailers and brands employing fake reviews and undisclosed influencer endorsements may be doing little to deter deception. He explained in the statement that when companies launder advertising by paying an influencer, to pretend that their endorsement or review is untainted by a financial relationship, they are participating in an illegal payola started that if these



SEASON 1, EPISODE 3: SO YOU WANT TO BECOME A PROFESSIONAL INFLUENCER?

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companies are also pressuring influencers, to post in ways that these guys that their review or endorsement is paid advertising, then those advertisers especially need to be held accountable. He highlighted Lord and Taylor and Sunday Riley as examples of popular brands that the FTC has pursued enforcement actions against. In both cases, the FTC charged two brands with this even the public, but ultimately proposed no money, no fault settlements. So what does that mean? Well, that means a few things. No consumers were we funded number one. Number two, no notice of the reception had to be made to consumers. Number three, the brands didn't have to delete any wrongfully obtained personal data. And number four, they didn't have to make an admission of liability. Sherpa ends a statement by sharing his desire for the agency to seek tougher remedies for companies that disguise their advertising. As an authentic endorsement or review. He additionally calls for a close and careful review of the FTC non-binding endorsement guides and a self-critical analysis of the agency's enforcement approach. After the statement was released, the FTC invited the public to participate in a public comments period for a regulatory review process of its endorsement guides to help the agency shark its way forward. Kiana shared in our interview that the American influencer council made a public comments to the FTC on the guides in April 2020. Shortly after its own incorporation, and its comments, the AIC calls for the FTC to encourage a partnership among what they refer to as the big six social media platforms in order to establish visual and language standardizations for sponsored content. At the time of this recording. 110 public comments have been submitted during the public comment period. The comments deadline for the endorsement guides ended in June 2020. In August 2020. The FTC testified at an oversight hearing before the Senate Committee on Commerce, science and transportation, as Kiana said during our conversation, this is the same Senate committee that big tech executives at Jeff Bezos and Mark Zuckerberg testified before just a few weeks earlier in July, the FTC is oversight hearing focus on an agency's work to protect consumers and promote competition, including its efforts to combat frauds designed to take advantage consumers during the covid 19 pandemic. Since the pandemic began in March, the FTC has taken several actions to protect consumers. His actions include issuing joint warning letters with the Food and Drug Administration to more than 70 marketers regarding claims that their products will treat, cure or prevent COVID-19 as well as issuing eight warning letters to businesses posing as the Small Business Administration. So scams abound just scams COVID scams. Well, I know that I just threw a lot at you. But remember that I include my recipe reference materials on the website for black in real life that is [www dot blk irl.com](http://www.dot.blkirl.com). Check it out, you will see reference materials and background readings for every episode, including this one. You have just listened to a production of the black in real life podcast hosted by Anuli Akanegbu. Developed by Anuli Akanegbu scripted by Anuli Akanegbu Edited by Anuli Akanegbu with research support Anuli Akanegbu The music was



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