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DEBATE KIT: INFLUENCERS SHOULD ONLY USE THEIR PLATFORMS FOR THE BENEFIT OF SOCIETY

TEACHING RESOURCE



DEBATING

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Introduction

Famous people often become leaders in the community. They can influence how people think, dress and act. This has been observed throughout history and in contemporary society, social media has expanded the scope of influence.

Influencers are people who have built an online presence via social media, leading to many followers. This differs from traditional celebrities or public figures, who rely on their established careers, such as acting or politics, to gain popularity and influence.

Millions of people follow influencers for advice, ideas and entertainment. Should influencers utilise their platforms for positive social impact?

In Australia, there are legal requirements for influencer marketing, and they must adhere to regulations ensuring transparency and honesty and disclose when content is sponsored, or when they have received any benefit in exchange for their posts. But there aren't many rules about what they can post. This means influencers can share content that may be beneficial or detrimental to society.

The debate surrounding this issue is divided. Some advocate for influencers to consciously contribute to societal betterment, while others argue for unrestricted freedom of expression. This debate addresses the ethical, practical and social implications of influencers using their platforms for positive purposes.

This debate kit provides essential points and resource links to facilitate research and preparation for your debate. It is designed to complement the *Debating guide for classroom teachers* available at seriouslysocial.org.au.

Example arguments

Debate topic: Influencers should only use their platforms for the benefit of society

Affirmative arguments

- Influencers can help stop misinformation and share the right information about important topics like health, science and social justice. With more fake news and wrong information, influencers sharing the truth can help people be better informed and have educated conversations.
- Social media influencers can make real positive changes by talking about important issues and encouraging big news companies to cover those issues more.
- Many, especially young people, see influencers as role models. By sharing positive messages and causes, influencers can inspire their followers to help others, volunteer and get involved in their communities. This can create a culture of kindness and responsibility.
- Some people trust influencers more than big news companies, so influencers should be held to similar standards of honesty and responsibility.
- Influencers have a duty to help society because so many people follow them. They can influence how people think and act, even laws. It's important for them to talk about fairness, environmental sustainability and other things that help everyone.

Negative arguments

- As long as influencers follow the law, they have the right to say what they want, just like everyone else. Forcing them to use their platforms for certain things can violate this right. They should be free to choose what they want to create and share based on their own interests and values.
- Different communities, ethnic and religious groups, and countries have different ideas about what is 'the social good'. It would be too hard to agree on the types of content and messages that everyone thinks are 'good'.
- If influencers must create content for the social good, it might lead to fake activism, where actions are just for show and don't create real positive change. If influencers don't handle serious issues well, it can do more harm than good.
- Influencing is a modern form of employment in the advertising industry. Putting regulations on platforms could compromise employment opportunities for influencers.
- Influencers make content for lots of different interests, like fashion and fun stuff, not just serious things. Making them only talk about social issues could make online content less interesting and creative.

Web links

Influencers should only use their platforms for the benefit of society

Topic	Web link
Merriam Webster Dictionary Definition: Influencer	https://bit.ly/4cUO4c7
The Conversation News article <i>Could messages from social media influencers stop young people vaping? A look at the government's new campaign.</i>	https://bit.ly/4bVn4l2
ABC News News article <i>As hyper-masculine content floods social media, a "healthier" men's movement is stepping up.</i>	https://bit.ly/3AlHpy7
ABC News News article <i>Teenage boys are being "bombarded" with misogynist content online. It's making its way into the classroom.</i>	https://bit.ly/3Sh9p7w
Legal123 Q&A document <i>Legal Guide for Social Media Influencers (ACCC)</i>	https://bit.ly/4fe3HwJ
BTN Behind the News Video news clip 0.00-1.40 <i>What is the ACCC and why is it cracking down on Influencers?</i>	https://bit.ly/4d8dGBT
BTN Behind the News Video explainer <i>Kidfluencers and Junk Food Advertising</i>	https://bit.ly/3xXN5ZE
TED Talk Dominick Delpech <i>How influencers perpetuate misinformation and what audiences can do</i>	https://bit.ly/3WcKblo
9 News Australia News clip <i>Thousands riot in New York following influencer's out-of-control giveaway</i>	https://bit.ly/3yaSXP9

Web links

Influencers should only use their platforms for the benefit of society?

Topic	Web link
Forbes Case Study/thought piece video <i>Do Influencers Have A Responsibility To Do Good?</i>	https://bit.ly/3WH7jQZ
Meltwater Statistics <i>Top Australian Influencers 2024</i>	https://bit.ly/3WsClGt
RMIT News article/statistics <i>People increasingly turn to influencers for information, and it's a big problem</i>	https://bit.ly/3SgXgUG
Seriously Social Video explainer <i>How to spot an expert</i>	https://bit.ly/4bUCL2c
Think with Google Statistics and infographic <i>Why Youtube stars are more influential than celebrities</i>	https://bit.ly/4bT34Ws
CNN Video news article <i>'I made a mistake.' Influencer terminates Shein contract after sponsored trip</i>	https://bit.ly/3y9sz8m
CNN News article <i>Forget the influencers. Here come the 'deinfluencers'</i>	https://bit.ly/3Ycawc4
Vice Editorial <i>How Do You Convince People Your Sweatshop is Cool? Pay an Influencer To Tour It.</i>	https://bit.ly/3YcEVqY



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