



BACKSTAGE

Making UGC Work for Your Brand:

The Role of Professional Talent

Summary

User-generated content (UGC) has become a cornerstone of modern marketing, rightly recognized for its role in driving engagement and building trust between brands and audiences.

But many brands struggle to scale UGC effectively while maintaining consistency and quality. This report explores how professional talent bridges that gap, enabling brands to create UGC-inspired campaigns that feel authentic while achieving professional results.

In this report, you'll get insights into key trends and strategies for success and read case studies and feedback from actual Backstage users about how Backstage has helped agencies and production companies find the right actors, models, content creators, and other professional performers to bring their campaigns to life.

KEY TAKEAWAYS

The evolution of UGC:

UGC has evolved into a core strategy for creating authentic, relatable content that resonates with today's consumers.

Consumer demand for authenticity:

90% of consumers say authenticity is an important factor when choosing brands, driving the continued rise of UGC-inspired campaigns.

Actionable strategies:

Backstage helps brands scale UGC-style content by providing professional performers and models who deliver authentic, high-quality performances, ensuring consistency and efficiency.

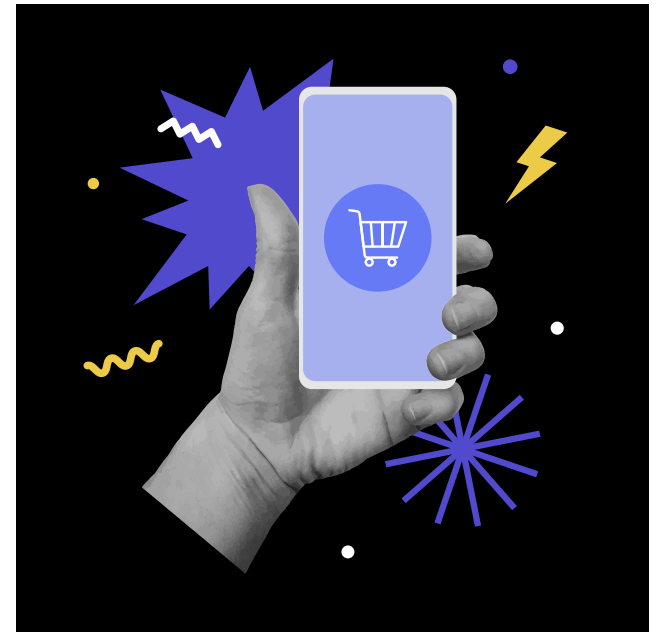
Introduction

From necessity to strategy: UGC's continued evolution

UGC emerged as a lifeline for marketers during the pandemic, providing a cost-effective way to create content in response to traditional production methods being abruptly restricted. Today, it has matured into a deliberate strategy, driven by consumer demand for content that feels real and relatable.

A [Stackla report](#) shows that **84% of millennials say UGC influences their purchasing decisions**. According to [Shopify](#), UGC ads have been shown to generate **4x higher click-through rates** than traditional ads, making them an essential tool for engagement.

The impact of UGC extends well beyond millennials. Gen Z is even more reliant on social media to guide their purchasing decisions. A whopping [97% of Gen Z shoppers report](#) getting buying inspiration from social media. [Statista](#) found that, in the U.S., Gen Z spends an average of 3.5 hours per day on social media, positioning them as a critical audience for UGC-driven campaigns.



Looking ahead, Gen Z's purchasing power is projected to surpass millennials by 2026, according to [Deloitte's 2023 Global Consumer Trends report](#). This demographic is expected to control **nearly 40% of total consumer spending by the end of the decade**. With this massive increase in purchasing power, the addressable market for UGC is poised for continued rapid growth, meaning that demand for authentic, relatable content is likely to intensify as the influence of Gen Zers expands—and millennials continue to grow up right behind them.

Social media platforms like TikTok, Instagram, and YouTube have popularized UGC-style content, where casual, raw aesthetics dominate. However, relying solely on grassroots creators poses challenges:

- **Inconsistency:** UGC creators often lack the professional skills needed to meet brand standards
- **Scalability:** Producing a large, consistent volume of high-quality content across multiple platforms can be resource-intensive.
- **Quality control:** UGC can lack the consistency and polish required for high-stakes brand campaigns, risking misalignment with brand image or messaging.



Rising demand for content creators

Backstage's role in the shift

With its extensive talent pool and streamlined casting tools, Backstage provides a hybrid solution, connecting brands with professional actors, models, and content creators skilled in delivering UGC-inspired performances.

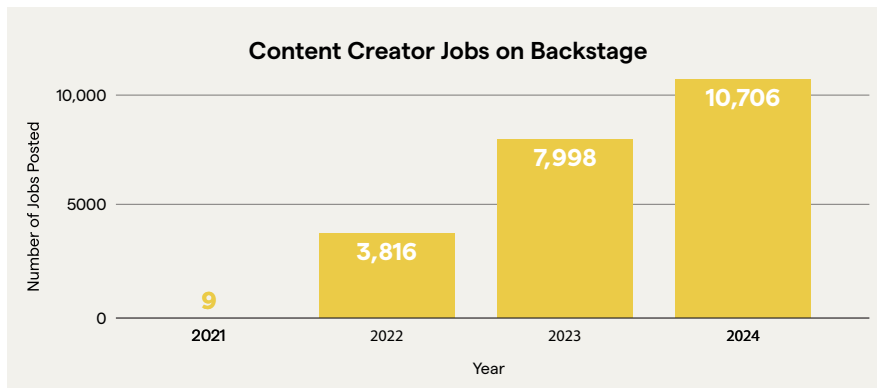
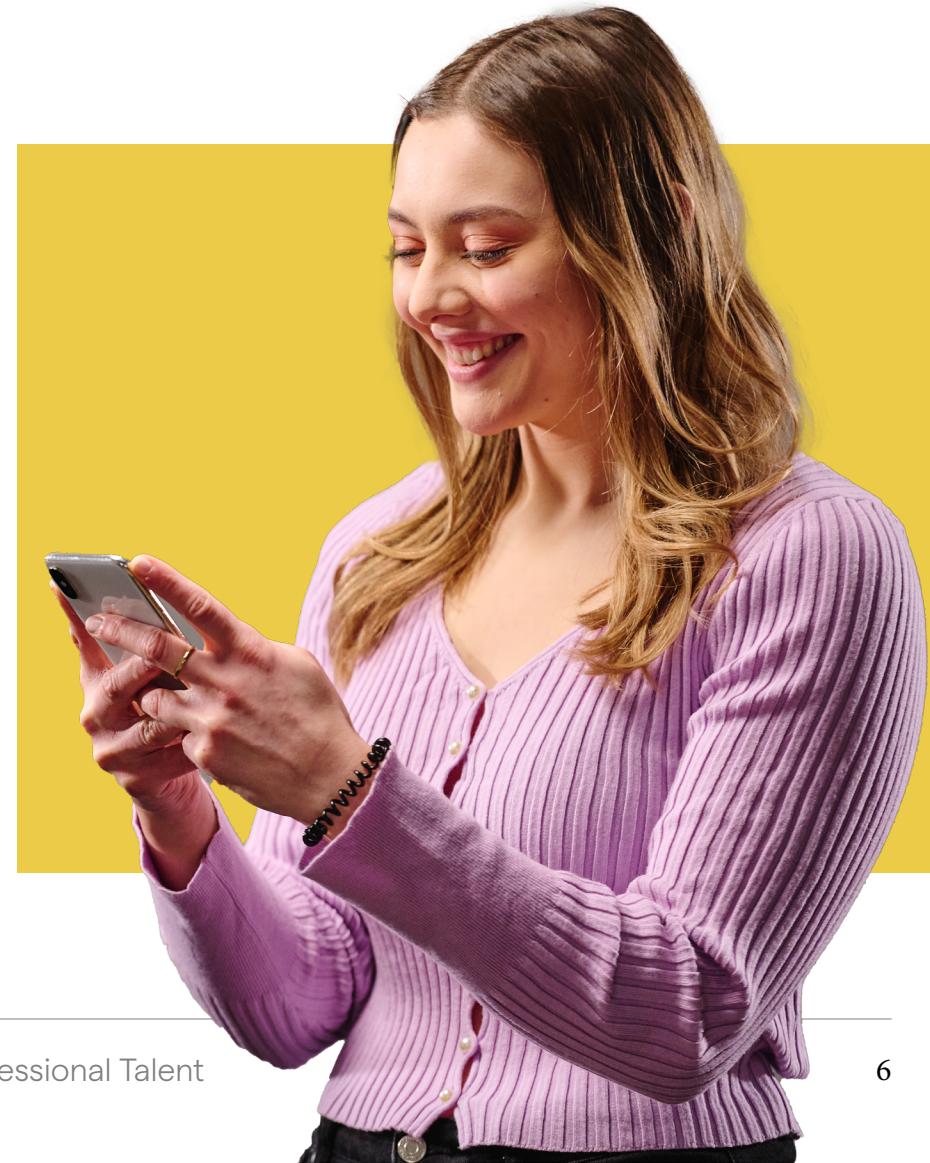
Backstage enables brands to scale content production efficiently while maintaining the authenticity that audiences crave.

Data insights

Backstage has seen a significant increase in demand for content creators, reflecting the broader growth of the creator economy. This surge in job postings and talent applications highlights the evolving landscape of digital marketing and entertainment.

As of January 2025, **nearly 50,000 Backstage members** list content creation as a skill on their profiles, showcasing the growing pool of talent available for brands seeking authentic, relatable content.

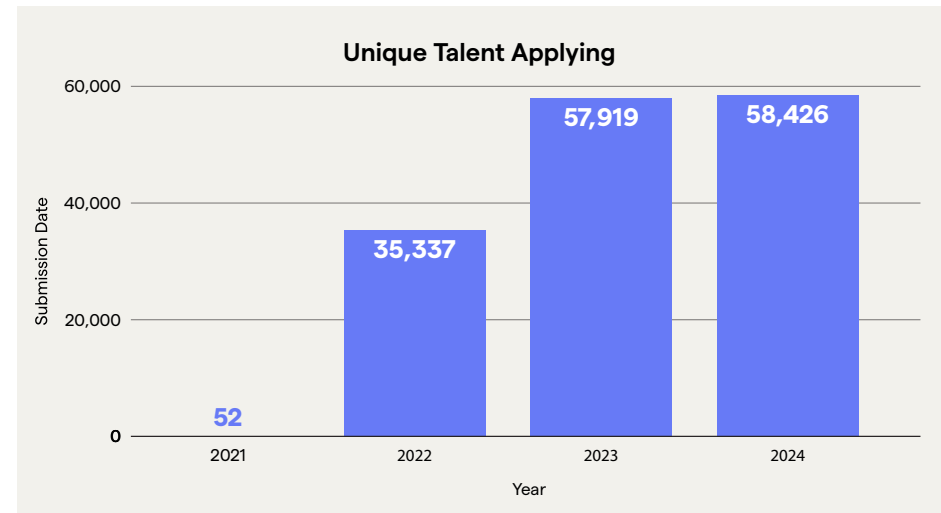
Since 2021, the number of job postings for content creators on Backstage has skyrocketed.



Increasing applications

Applications for content creator roles have followed suit, with a dramatic rise in the volume of submissions.

The demand for creators has led to **75% of casting calls** receiving applicants within the **first day**, underscoring the competitive and fast-paced nature of the industry.



In-demand skills for content creators

Backstage's job posting for content creators highlight key skills most sought after by brands.

Top 10 skills cited in content creator job postings:

- UGC Content
- Social Media Expertise
- Acting
- Testimonials/reviews
- Social Media Influencers
- Public speaking
- Unboxing videos
- Hosting/presenting
- Improvisation
- Brand ambassadorship

These skills reflect the diverse types of content that brands are prioritizing, from testimonials to influencer-driven campaigns, further emphasizing the need for versatile, multi-talented, professional creators.

Backstage talent profiles

Backstage offers powerful search features to help brands quickly identify the right creators.

These customizable search options make it easier for brands to find creators who align with their specific needs, no matter if it's for a one-off campaign or long-term content strategy.



Talent profiles can be filtered by numerous **skills and specializations**, including:

Content creation type
(UGC, social media, influencer, etc.)

Language

Accent/dialect

Modeling type

Acting technique

Voiceover (style, type)

Hosting/presenting

Sports/fitness

Training/certifications

The Hybrid Approach: Professional Meets Relatable

Brands are increasingly turning to hybrid strategies, where professional talent is used to create UGC-inspired content that blends the desire for authenticity and spontaneity with scalable, polished, and effective outcomes.

Why it works

Professionalism and consistency

Professional performers bring the reliability and consistency that grassroots creators often lack, ensuring campaigns meet deadlines, brand standards, and quality expectations.

Expanded reach

Combining UGC with professional performers results in content that feels both relatable and polished, resonating with diverse audiences across different demographics, extending potential reach and driving higher engagement.

Cost-effectiveness

A majority of [marketers report](#) that UGC is more cost-effective than traditional content, even when organically sourced and intentionally produced.

Scalability

UGC-inspired content allows for faster production and quicker turnaround, enabling brands to launch campaigns across multiple platforms more efficiently.

How Brands Are Winning with UGC

Examples of success

- ✔ **Short-form videos featuring professional talent drove a 35% increase in engagement for a major apparel brand.** According to [Wyzowl's 2023 report](#), 91% of businesses say video marketing helped them increase traffic, with short-form videos being the most effective content type for boosting engagement.
- ✔ **A food brand saw a 45% increase in social media shares and a 20% lift in sales after incorporating professional actors into their UGC-inspired ads.** [HubSpot reported](#) that brands using relatable, UGC-inspired video content on social platforms like TikTok saw an increase in engagement and sharing, often leading to significant sales lift.
- ✔ **A consumer electronics company reported a 30% increase in click-through rates after creating UGC-inspired videos featuring professional actors.** [InVideo's research](#) shows that brands using UGC-inspired videos had higher engagement and better click-through rates compared to traditional ads.

Emerging best practices

Hybrid campaigns:

Combining professional talent with UGC-inspired aesthetics balance relatability and polish.

Strategic casting:

Platforms like Backstage allow brands to quickly find talent that meets specific project needs efficiently.

Data-driven decisions:

Brands are increasingly using insights from audience feedback and engagement metrics to optimize UGC campaigns, ensuring higher return on investment.

Real Success Stories: Casting UGC with Backstage



How one agency scaled talent sourcing to drive 10x growth

Agency: Ready Set

Challenge: Scaling content production across multiple high-demand, branded projects.

Social media ad agency **Ready Set** needed to quickly scale their talent sourcing to meet the increasing demand for UGC-style campaigns. With a client roster that includes **DoorDash**, **MeUndies**, and **Coinbase**, Ready Set was tasked with producing engaging content that merged the authenticity of influencer marketing with the professionalism of experienced performers.

Solution: Using Backstage to cast hundreds of roles for client campaigns each month.

Using Backstage, Ready Set was able to cast **350-500 roles** each month. The platform's advanced search and audition tools enabled Ready Set to find the best talent quickly and efficiently, meeting client needs while delivering high-quality, relatable content.

Results:

- **10x business growth** in under two years, expanding from fewer than 20 employees to over 200.
- **Increased performance** for clients like **DoorDash**, with their social media content seeing some of the best-ever performance rates.

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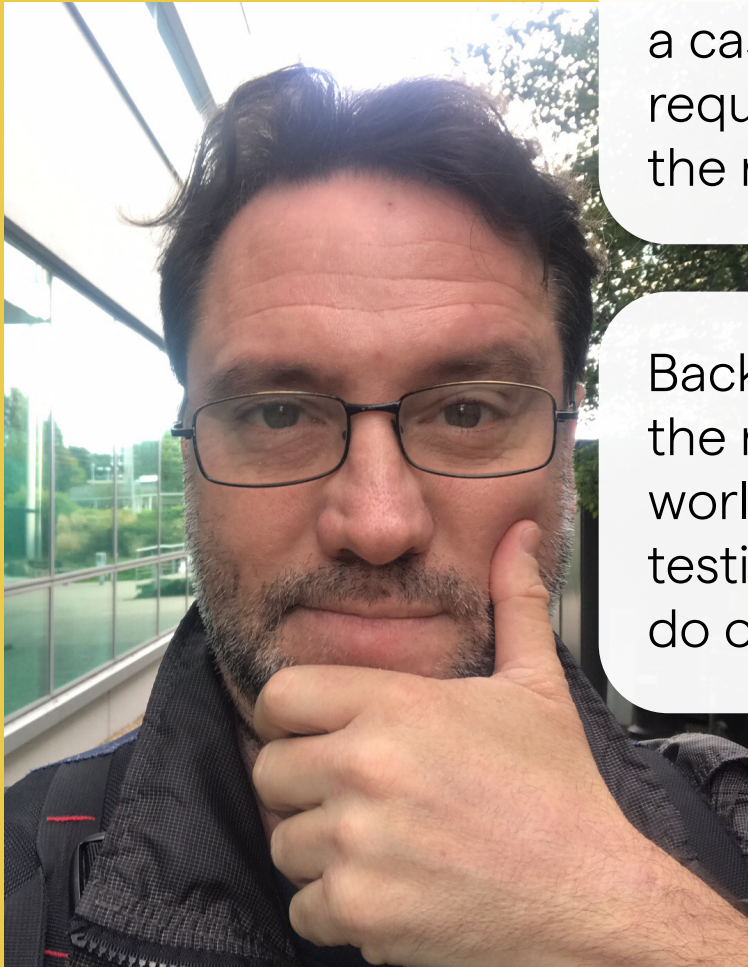
We designed a format that integrates the classic advertising experience with the new content creators trend. ... We understood that having a casting platform where we could find, select, request auditions from, and hire the best talent in the market was the solution we needed.

Backstage [is] always anticipating the challenges of the market, always listening to what players in the world of talent need, and always developing and testing new features and options so that we can do our job. ... We consider them part of our team.

—**Alex Stiegwardt**,

Head of casting and talent management, Ready Set

[Read the full success story](#)



Additional highlights

The outcomes below also illustrate how agencies across various industries have turned to Backstage to solve casting challenges. The ability to quickly source diverse, authentic professional talent has empowered these companies to deliver on high expectations, even under tight deadlines.

“[Our cast talent] was great! ... Utmost professional! The client, production, and director loved [them]. Even the director said to me, ‘This is why it’s good to have someone who can act and has experience, because it makes it so much easier for me!’”

—Jym Benzing, Producer and casting director

Jym Benzing, saved significant time by using Backstage to bypass traditional casting agencies. He quickly found professional actors with the right personality and improvisational skills for a makeup tutorial series. The platform met his casting needs on a tight production schedule.

“My experience working with talent on Backstage was second to none. ... I felt like this was the one-stop solution we needed.”

—Dominique Jordan, Senior creative producer

Direct-to-consumer auto insurance brand Jerry struggled to find reliable UGC talent right for their tech-savvy audience. Using Backstage creators led to a 35% increase in click-through rates and a faster content creation process. Jerry was able to meet tight deadlines and get high-quality results.

“When we found Backstage we realized we could not only access local talent much easier, but we could also control the casting process more intimately.”

—Nick Manning, Director of Primacy Studios

Digital agency Primacy was able to cast 25 principal and background performers across 7 branded projects fast. Backstage’s tools allowed them to streamline talent selection and reduce casting time, ensuring quicker project turnarounds.

Why Backstage Is Your Partner

Backstage continues to evolve and meet the ever-changing needs of the industry, offering reliable talent, flexible remote casting, and user-friendly tools to make the casting process seamless. As demonstrated by the case studies above, Backstage enables production companies and agencies to stay ahead of industry trends, improve workflow efficiency, and produce top-tier content.

What sets Backstage apart

More talent

Backstage offers access to a dynamic mix of professional talent—actors, models, UGC creators, niche performers and more—to ensure brands find right-fit talent for every campaign, bringing authenticity and credibility to every piece of content.

More efficient

Backstage's platform makes it easy for brands to quickly find, communicate with, hire performers, and receive a finished product. Hire, produce, and pay—all in one place.

Proven success

Thousands of Backstage professionals have been hired for UGC jobs and branded content. Real-world case studies demonstrate how Backstage has helped brands meet their marketing goals with engaging, high-converting UGC-inspired content.

Conclusion

UGC-inspired content has become an indispensable part of modern marketing, and Backstage is uniquely positioned to help brands capitalize on this trend. By combining authenticity with professionalism, Backstage empowers brands to create campaigns that resonate with audiences and deliver results.

Ready to create impactful, authentic campaigns? Post your job on Backstage today to discover exceptional talent that brings your vision to life.



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