

January 2026

# The Rise Of Original Content

How Authenticity is  
Rewriting Brand Storytelling





# Executive Summary

Content has never been more abundant, yet originality has never been more scarce. In a landscape crowded with repetition, automation, and formulaic creative outputs, audiences are actively seeking what feels real. They crave ideas rooted in authenticity, stories shaped by lived experience, and content that invites participation rather than passive consumption.

Original content is no longer a creative preference; it's a strategic imperative for any brand that wants to lead.

# A New Era of Creative Differentiation

Content has never been more abundant, yet originality has never felt more elusive. Automated tools generate endless variations of familiar ideas; social feeds are dominated by recycled formats, and campaigns, once unique, often echo each other with startling similarity.

Audiences are feeling the fatigue.

Across every platform, people are gravitating towards content that feels alive, imperfect, culturally aware, emotionally grounded, and undeniably human. They seek stories that invite them in, communities that feel real, and ideas that resonate beyond the scroll.

This is more than a trend. It's a reshaping of the brand to audience relationship. In a world overloaded with content, **originality is now a strategic advantage**, and the brands that embrace it will lead culture instead of chasing it.



# The Rise of Original Content: Why It Matters Now More Than Ever Before

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## Authenticity: The Divide Between Noise and Meaning

Today's consumers possess a remarkable radar for inauthenticity. Where carefully curated content once signalled brand excellence, it now risks creating distance. Today, the content that breaks through is honest, crafted with intention, reflective of real life, and connected to culture. For most consumers, authenticity is a key factor when deciding which brands to support.

Authenticity has become an imperative for effective communication because it builds trust, the very foundation of a lasting brand relationship. According to YouGov, two thirds (66%<sup>1</sup>) of UK consumers will boycott a brand that loses their trust, highlighting that it has become a commercial necessity. When consumers perceive a brand as genuine, they are more likely to develop a deep emotional connection, which can directly foster loyalty and advocacy.

<sup>1</sup> <https://yougov.com/en-gb/articles/53019-how-brands-can-rebuild-trust-with-uk-consumers-after-losing-it>



MyProtein\_Q1\_Sean



Cult Beauty: Can't Retouch This

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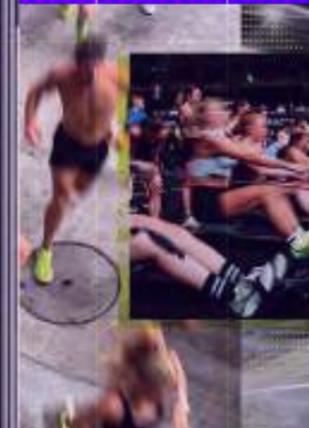
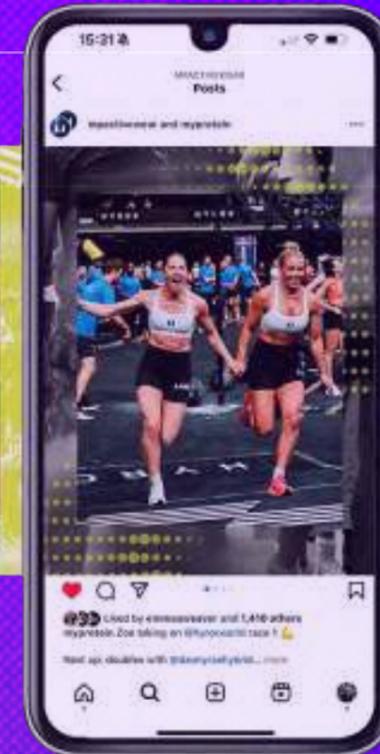
### Participation: Loyalty Through Collaboration

The most influential brands are not broadcasting; they are co-creating. Original content opens the door for audience driven storytelling, creator partnerships that bring new voices into the brand's world, and interactive formats that allow people to shape the narrative. Engagement is not about passive metrics; it's about meaningful involvement.

This transforms one off campaigns into a continuous dialogue, building communities that collaborate rather than simply consume. By moving beyond entertainment into creating connection, brands can articulate their values and what they stand for, empowering audiences to respond with loyalty, not just momentary interest.



myprotein\_move\_club



### Cultural Relevance is Earned, Not Declared

Culture moves fast. Audiences move faster. Genuine participation in cultural conversations requires agility, understanding, and originality. Brands that simply mimic trends without understanding their origin risk appearing intrusive and inauthentic. Original content, rooted in cultural intelligence, empowers brands to:

- Participate in cultural shifts with credibility.
- Join conversations where they can add value.
- Build a presence where their communities already exist.
- Create content that belongs, not interrupts.

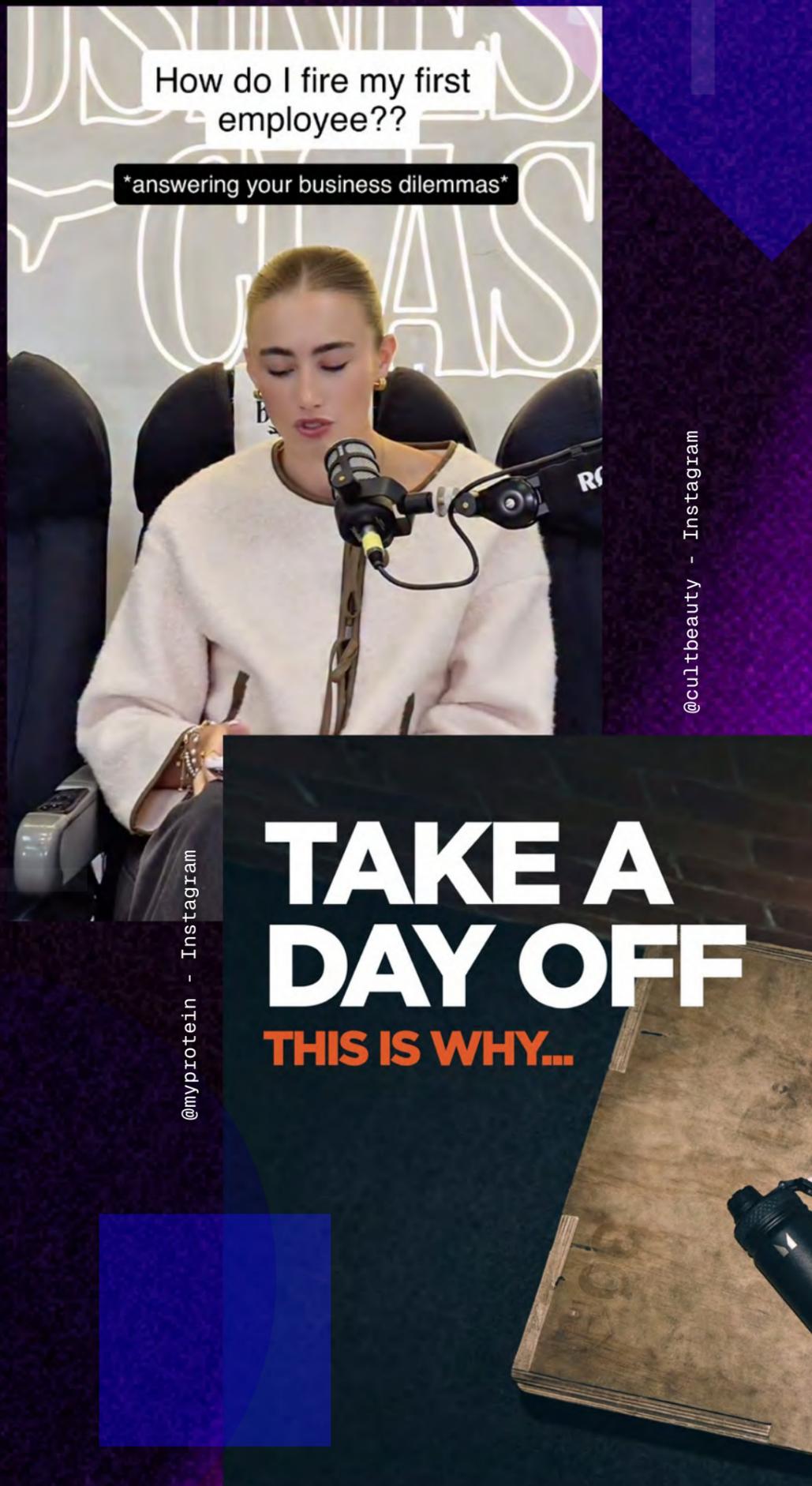


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# Harnessing the Hook: Creating Irresistible Engagement

Every successful piece of original content begins with a hook, a moment so compelling it disrupts instinctual scrolling. In a crowded digital environment, the hook has become an art form.

Hooks that work share several qualities:

- **Emotional Precision:** They provoke curiosity, surprise, tension, or delight within seconds.
- **Human Familiarity:** They reflect universal experiences, behaviours, or desires.
- **Cultural Fluency:** They tap into shared moments, trends, or cultural cues.
- **Brevity:** The hook is not the story; it's an invitation into the story.

Great hooks are not gimmicks. They are rooted in truth, crafted with intention, and designed to reward the viewer who stays for more

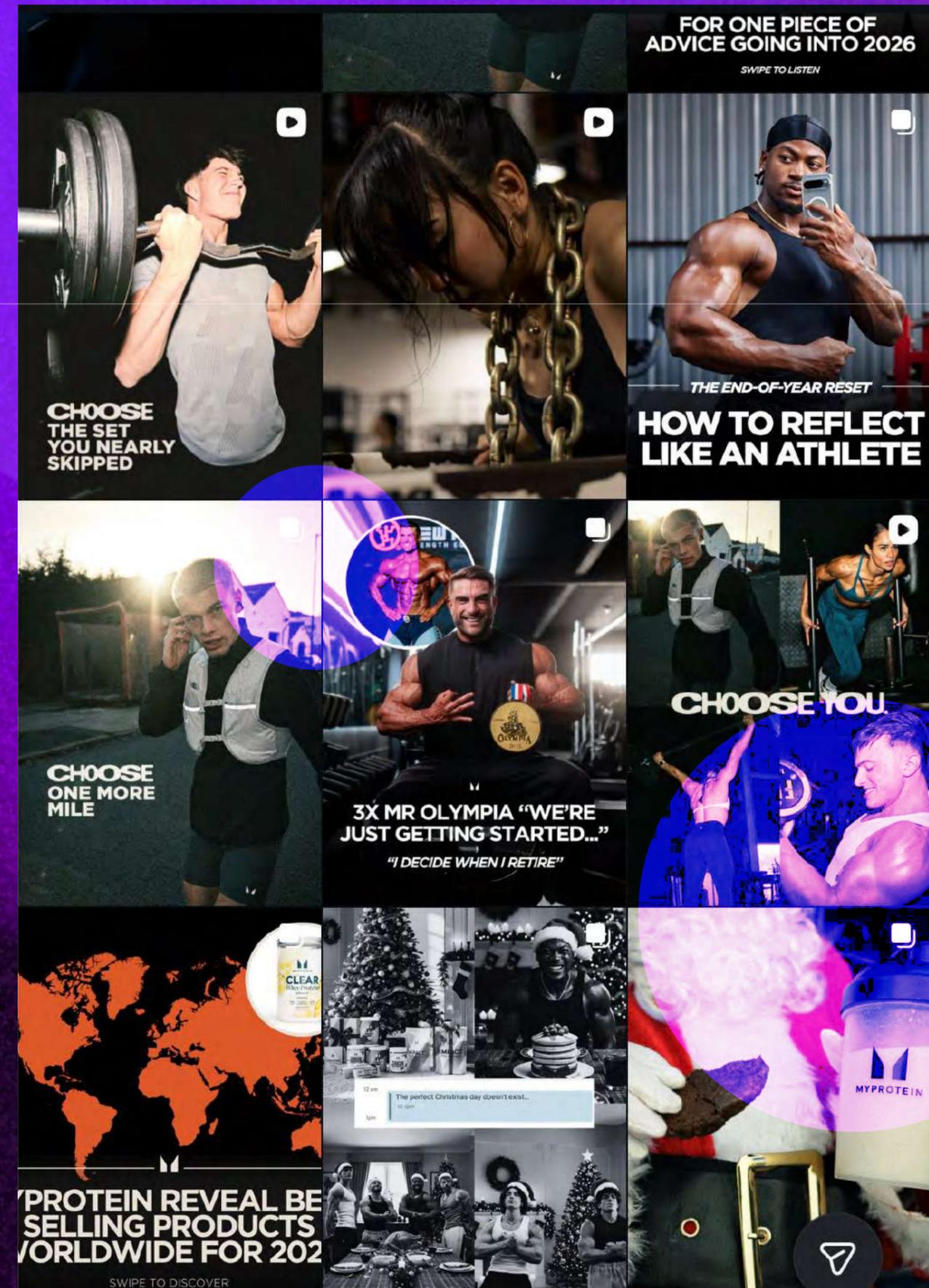
# Building Episodic Anticipation: Turning Audiences into Returning Viewers

Serialized storytelling, whether in short form series, creator led formats, or brand-built universes, creates a rhythm that audiences can rely on. This approach turns passive viewers into an active audience that anticipates the next instalment.

Why episodic structures work:

- **Predictability With Variation:** Familiar frameworks reduce cognitive load while fresh moments keep interest alive.
- **Emotional Progression:** Characters, themes, or narratives deepen over time, fostering a stronger connection.
- **Cultural Momentum:** Episodic content invites speculation, conversation, and collective anticipation.
- **Community Formation:** Shared anticipation builds fandoms, not just followings, driving customer retention.

Brands that master episodic content transform one off impressions into sustained engagement. This enables them to build continuous dialogues with audiences that outlast traditional campaigns.



@myprotein - Instagram

# Who's getting this right?

Gary Neville's hugely successful 'The Overlap' offers a perfect example of the effectiveness of episodic anticipation. Each episode is hosted by a panel of recognisable faces from the world of football in a purpose-built studio, delivering a format that makes each episode feel like the next instalment, not a random or stand-alone piece of content.

Because the guests change across the episodes, the audience want to come back to see the how the relationship dynamics, differing opinions and rivalries play out within a safe and familiar format. The repeated format gives the audience recognisable segments, so the viewers come back for their favourite "bits," not just the guest/topic for that week.



# And the result?

The Overlap delivers over 38M monthly YouTube views and won multiple industry awards, including Broadcast Sport's YouTube Channel of the Year and the Sports Journalism Awards' YouTube Show of the Year.

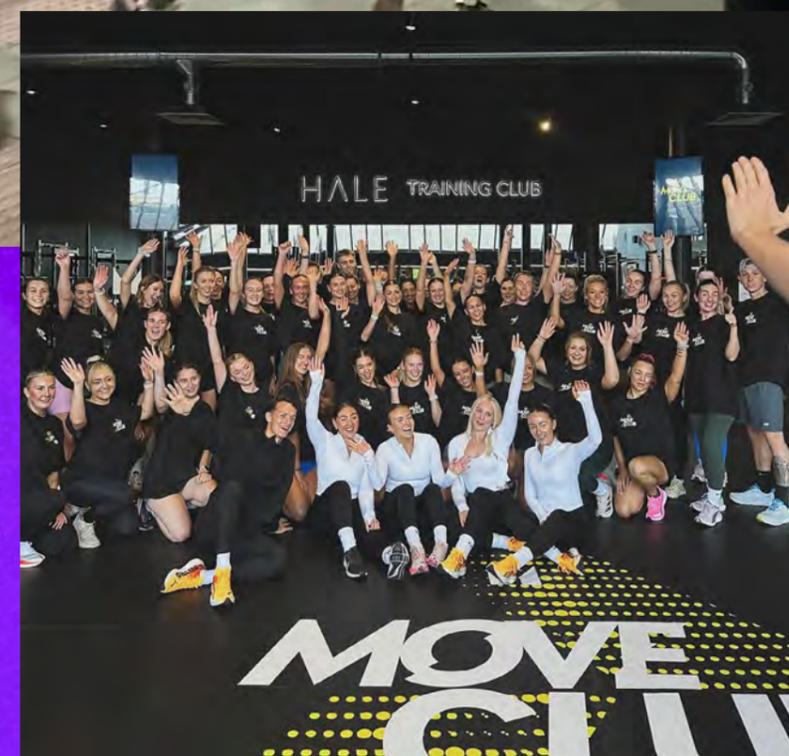
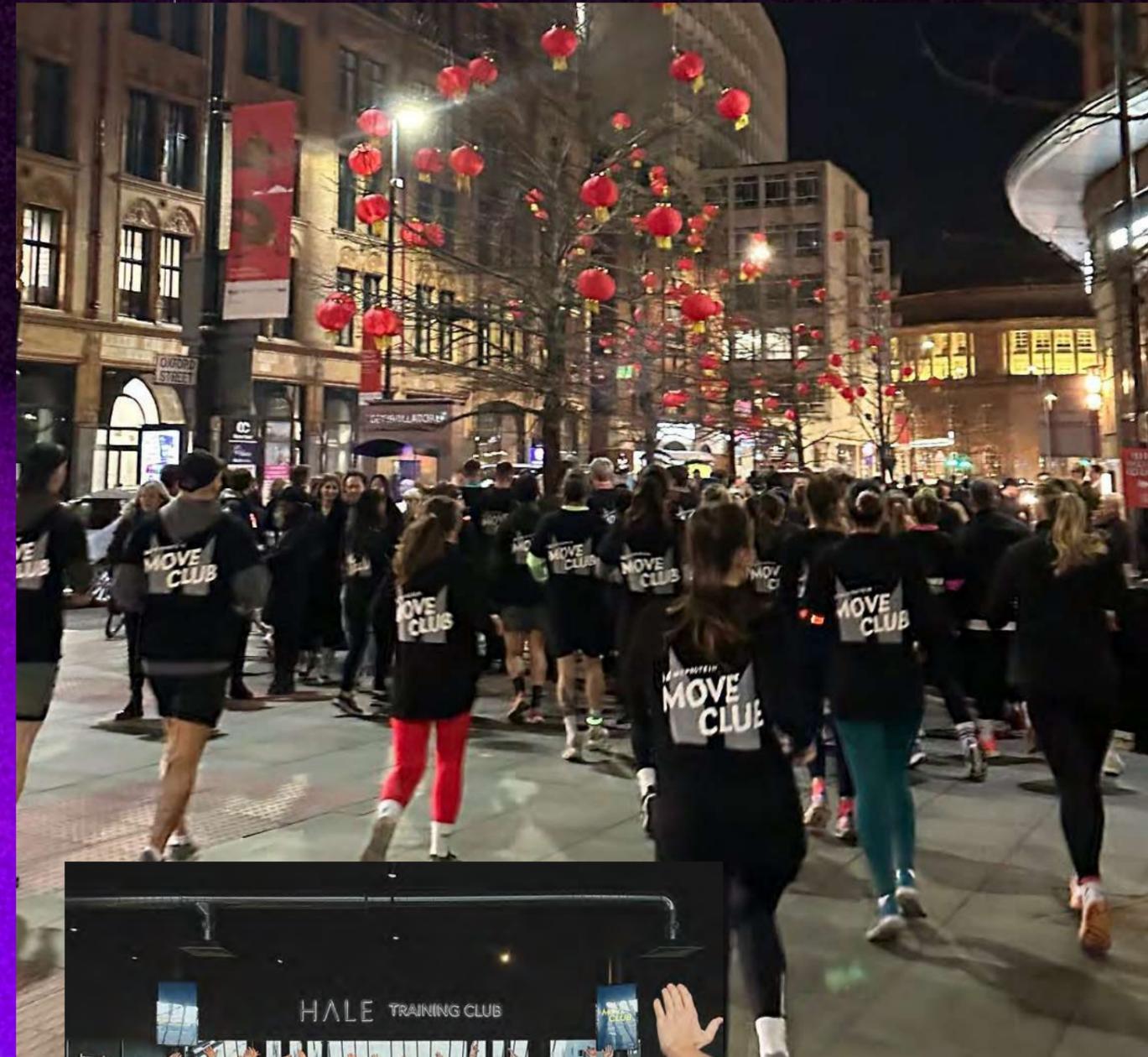
# How Brands Build Real-World Communities in the Digital Age

Communities are no longer build solely in physical spaces. Nor are they purely digital. The most successful brand communities today exist at the intersection of both.

Key principles for community building:

- Create Spaces for People to Gather: Digital first does not mean digital only. Events, workshops, and live collaborations create real world belonging that can be amplified online.
- Design With, not for, the Community: Communities grow when people feel ownership and recognition.
- Champion Shared Passions: Communities form around meaning, not marketing.
- Enable Ongoing Interaction: The community should evolve as the audience does, driven by participation.

Original content becomes the connective tissue, capturing, shaping, and amplifying the culture within the community, creating connections that matter.

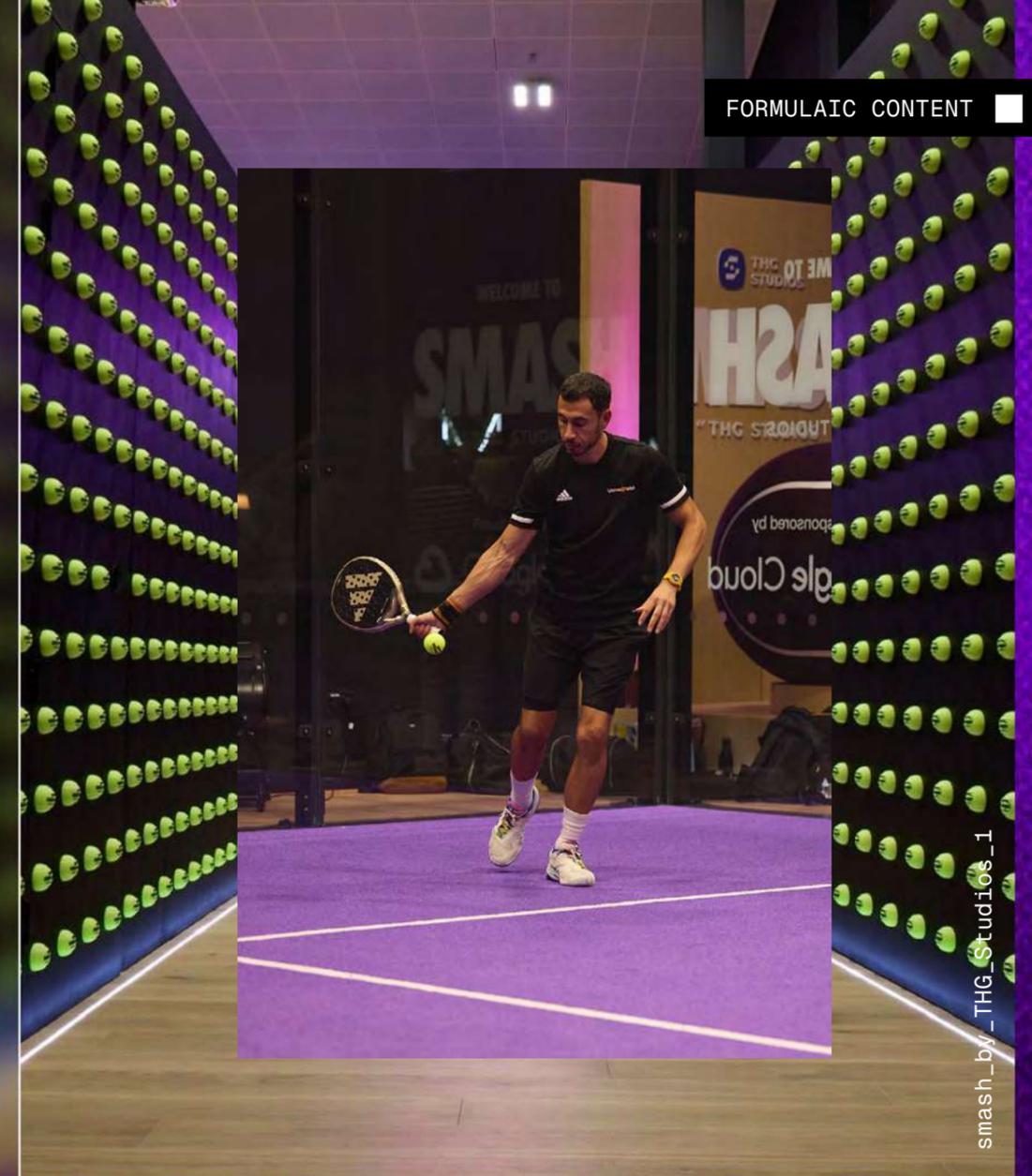


# Formulaic Content: Why Structure Creates Comfort

While originality is critical, audiences also show a deep preference for familiar formats. This is not because they are predictable, but because they are neurologically rewarding. This is known as cognitive ease: the brain's preference for information that is simple and easy to process.



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Why formulaic content works so well:

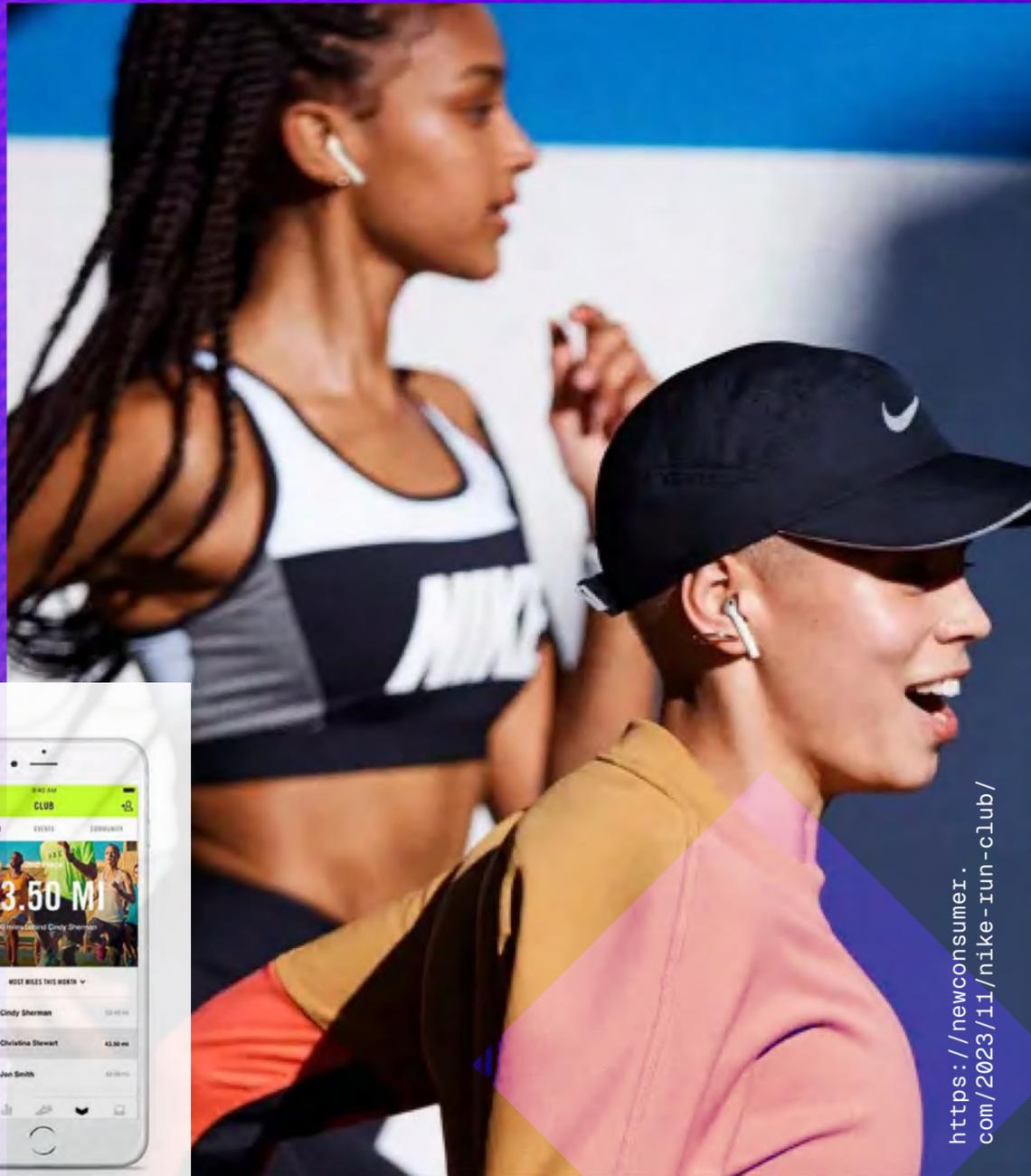
- **Cognitive Ease:** Repetition and familiar patterns reduce mental load, allowing viewers to relax into the experience.
- **Anticipatory Gratification:** Audiences enjoy recognising patterns and predicting outcomes.
- **Emotional Safety:** Familiar structures provide security in an overstimulated digital world.
- **The Mere-Exposure Effect:** This is a psychological principle that states that people develop a preference for things simply because they are familiar with them, which builds comfort and trust over time.

The most successful original content finds the balance between novelty and familiarity. Each piece brings a fresh idea delivered through a comforting structure.

# Who's getting this right?

Nike Run Club (NRC) has grown way beyond an app to a global community of users and translated into real-world, in person moments.

Nike positions its NRC explicitly around community, challenges, and motivation, not just tracking. Thanks to its global availability (160+ countries), and the low barrier to entry with a free app (from beginner runs up to long-distance training plans), the app goes beyond a digital tool creating reasons for users to come together in community.



<https://newconsumer.com/2023/11/nike-run-club/>



<http://www.sportyard.sa/?r=46934925071890>

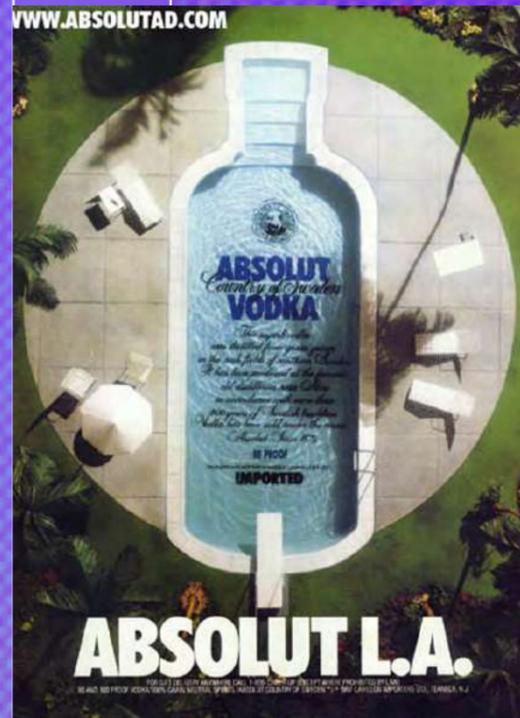


<https://hypebeast.com/2016/8/nike-run-club-app>

Nike uses NRC to drive participation in real-world events like Nike After Dark Tour London, with app-based training plans and on-the-ground race-pack pickup. Using a repeatable format such as weekly / monthly challenges, and status symbols - badges, leaderboards and challenge completions, users have reasons to take their experience beyond the app & offline into their real worlds to celebrate achievements and milestones reached.

# Fuelling Originality with Insight

True originality is not random; it's informed. Data is not the enemy of creativity but its most powerful catalyst. Harnessing insights is essential for creating content that is not only original but also effective.



How data fuels originality:

- **Audience Understanding:** Behavioural analytics and community listening reveal what your audience truly cares about, moving beyond demographics to understand their motivations and desires.
- **Cultural Intelligence:** Tracking trends, conversations, and cultural shifts allows brands to create content that is timely and relevant, ensuring they lead conversations rather than follow them.
- **Performance Analytics:** Understanding what content performs well, and why, provides a framework for repeatable success. It allows creative teams to refine their approach based on real world engagement.
- **White Space Opportunities:** Insight analysis can uncover untapped territories and unmet audience needs, pointing the way toward truly unique content ideas that drown out the competition.

By turning insights into action, brands can create content that is not just a shot in the dark, but a calculated move designed to connect and convert.

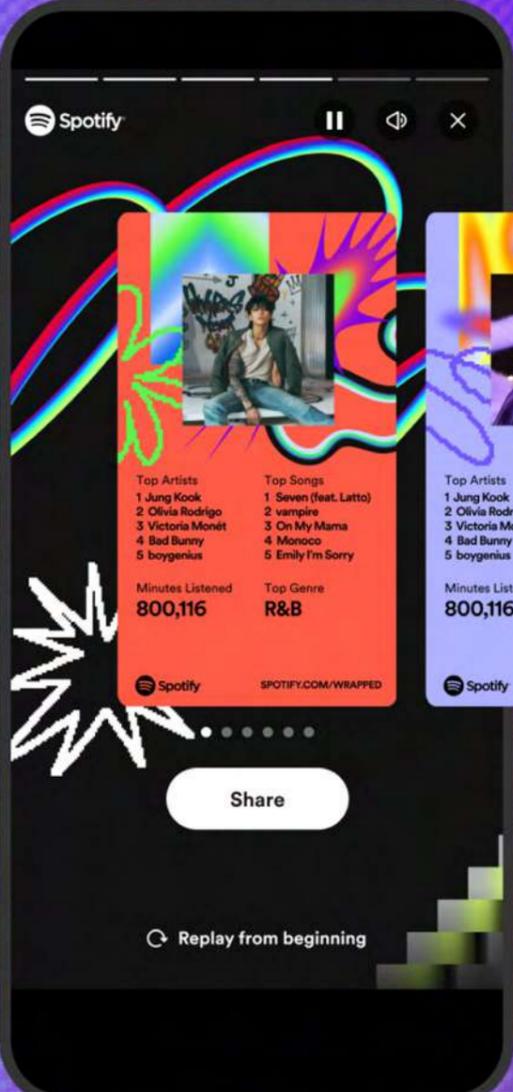
# Who's getting this right?

Evolving into a social ritual, Spotify's annual 'Wrapped' delivers highly personalised experiences rooted in the emotional bond users have with their music.

In perhaps one of the best examples of personalized content, Spotify's sharing of user data bonds them with the brand in a powerful way. The feeling of 'wow' this is my data; this information represents my year in audio resonates with audiences in a way far beyond what a 'most listened to' could deliver.



<https://blog.landr.com/spotify-wrapped/>



Top Artists	
1 Jung Kook	1 Seven (feat. Latto)
2 Olivia Rodrigo	2 vampire
3 Victoria Monét	3 On My Mama
4 Bad Bunny	4 Monoco
5 boygenius	5 Emily I'm Sorry
Minutes Listened: 800,116	
Top Genre: R&B	

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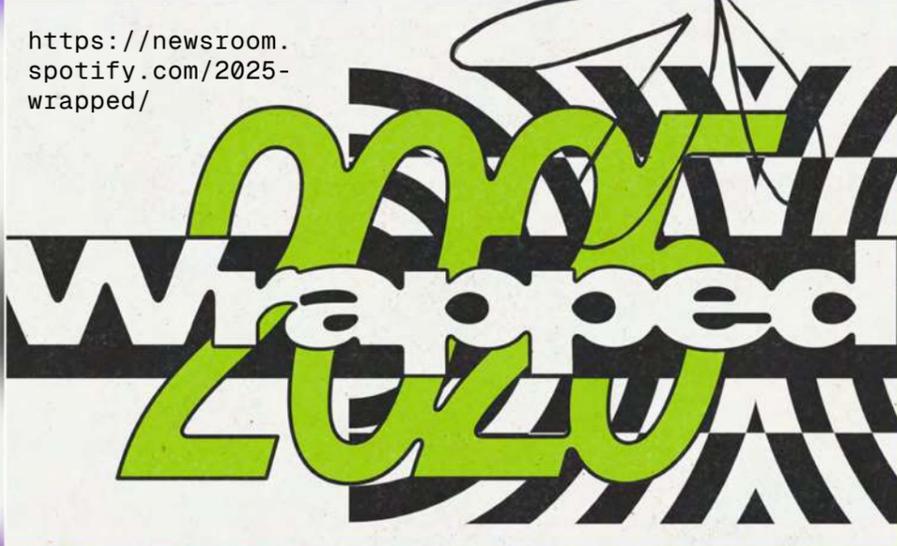
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<https://techcrunch.com/2023/11/29/spotify-wrapped-2023-adds-ai-dj-and-blend-to-spotifys-annual-personalized-insights/>

<https://newsroom.spotify.com/2025-wrapped/>



The way the data is packaged tells a story. It's not just dashboard; it brings the user into the narrative. The social share creates a post-able and ownable asset, that the user feels represents their tastes, whilst simultaneously promoting Spotify's dominance of the music streaming space.

Transforming user insight into shareable data has been so successfully received by users that brands across a wide range of industries including Monzo, Strava, Netflix, Trainline, and even Duolingo have produced similar initiatives.

Turning proprietary insights into a timed ritual - whether that be quarterly, or annually and ensuring the data is shareable in a digestible format gives users a moment to celebrate their originality in a way that is social.

# The Value of Effective Original Content

Original content does not just make brands look culturally intelligent. It drives tangible business outcomes. With content marketing costing 62% less than traditional methods and generating over three times as many leads<sup>2</sup>, its ROI is undeniable.

What original content unlocks for brands:

- **Brand Distinctiveness:** In a saturated landscape, originality becomes a competitive advantage, cutting through the noise to capture attention and market share.
- **Cultural Visibility:** It enables brands to participate in culture with credibility, earning them a place in conversation and boosting domain authority.
- **Audience Affinity and Loyalty:** Real stories build real emotional bonds, turning passive audiences into active advocates and driving long term customer retention.
- **Commercial Conversion:** Authentic, culturally resonant content influences behaviour more effectively than traditional advertising, with content marketing adopters seeing higher conversion rates.



The Overlap won YouTube series of the year, podcast of the year, and averaged 3.2m views per episode.

- **Scalability Across Platforms:** A strong original content idea can be adapted into multiple formats across multiple markets with ease, making budgets go further.
- **Longevity:** Unlike campaign bursts, original content ecosystems can live, evolve, and grow, creating ongoing commercial value and lasting brand legacy.



# The Future of Original Content

THG Studios has built a creative ecosystem specifically designed for storytelling, where real communities collaborate, cultural meaning drives creativity, and agility fuels innovation. Our creative space and cutting-edge tech help brands unlock new possibilities.



Our approach is built on:

- **Audience Understanding:** We leverage insights, platform intelligence, cultural research, community listening, and performance analytics. This ensures every idea is audience first, insight led, and creatively fearless.
- **Authentic Brand Storytelling:** Our work is grounded in truth and built for participation. We bridge the gap between brands and the communities they want to reach, not by speaking at them, but by creating with them.
- **Adaptive, Digital-First Production at Scale:** Originality becomes repeatable when supported by creative systems and fast turnaround production. We remove friction so creativity can move at the speed of culture, enabling brands to evolve faster.

# The Future Belongs to the Original



“Joining forces with MyProtein resulted in a HUGE explosion of sales for the brand, achieving over 3000% ROAS”

GenZ  
<https://seller.tiktok.com/uk/blog/title/10020202>

As content volumes grow, originality becomes increasingly rare and therefore increasingly valuable. Audiences are telling us what they want: stories that feel human, ideas that stand for something, and brands that act real.

At THG Studios, we empower brands to create original content build on truth, connection, and cultural resonance. This is not just storytelling. It's a model for brand growth, one build on participation, purpose, and community. The brands that embrace originality today will become the leaders of tomorrow.



