

What We Learned from #ShopSmall, We're Bringing to the Creator Economy

By Stephen J. Squeri, Chairman and Chief Executive Officer, American Express

When we launched **#ShopSmall** over a decade ago, it wasn't just about supporting small businesses during the holidays. It was about shifting how we define success in the American economy. We saw potential not just in storefronts, but in people—their ideas, passions, and the hustle behind every transaction.

Back then, small business owners worked from brick-lined streets and hand-painted signs. Today, many are building their business models in 15-second clips. They're on **TikTok**, creating from dorm rooms, kitchens, or studio apartments, and growing communities that span millions. Their storefront? A screen. Their inventory? Creativity.

But make no mistake: these creators are small business owners, too—and they deserve to be treated like that.

At American Express, we believe the systems around them need to evolve. That's why we're launching a **new payment platform built for luxury and prestige creators on TikTok**. This platform isn't just about helping creators make money. It's about helping them own their success with the same tools, access, and respect we offer to entrepreneurs in any other space.

The creator economy is booming—but it's also **uneven**. While some breakthroughs, many creators—especially those from underrepresented communities—face major gaps in support and infrastructure. They have reach, but not revenue. Influence, but not ownership. And often, they're excluded from financial systems that weren't built with them in mind.

We've seen this before.

That same gap existed for neighborhood businesses before **#ShopSmall** helped level the field. We proved that with the right support, small business owners could transform local economies. Now, we're applying that same energy to creators—because whether you're running a bakery or a digital brand, your work matters.

And their impact goes far beyond product sales. Creators are shaping culture. They're telling stories. They're building trust-based communities in real time. Yet many of them still struggle with inconsistent income, limited financial guidance, and a lack of recognition for what they truly are: entrepreneurs driving the next wave of the economy.

Our new platform is designed to give creators more control: over how they sell, who they reach, and how they build long-term financial stability. No middlemen. No gatekeepers. Just tools that meet them where they already are—and help them grow further.

It's also built with values in mind. We don't just want to fund businesses that already have resources. We want to build tools that make opportunity more equitable from the start. Because financial inclusion isn't about opening doors for the already-invited—it's about building new doors entirely.

The economy is changing. The way people create value is changing. But our mission remains the same: **empower the future of business, wherever that future lives — on Main Street, or on the For You Page.**

At American Express, we don't just believe in creators.

We back them.

Citation:

- American Express and TikTok launch the #ShopSmall Accelerator to help small businesses reach new audiences on Small Business Saturday. Business Wire, Nov. 14, 2022.
<https://www.businesswire.com/news/home/20221114005124/en/American-Express-and-TikTok-Launch-the-ShopSmall-Accelerator-to-Help-Small-Businesses-Reach-New-Audiences-on-Small-Business-Saturday>
- Casperson, Nicole. "Why the Future of TikTok Impacts the Fintech Industry." *Forbes*, 27 Mar. 2023,
<https://www.forbes.com/sites/nicolecasperson/2023/03/27/why-the-future-of-tiktok-impacts-the-fintech-industry/>
- Briggs, Ellyn. "Influencers Aren't Going Anywhere, and Their Power Is Expanding." *Morning Consult*, 1 Oct. 2024,
<https://pro.morningconsult.com/analysis/influencers-content-creators-evolving-power-2024>
- Bank of America. "Parent Trap: Nearly Half of Adult Gen Zers Getting Financial Help From Family." *Bank of America Newsroom*, July 2024.
<https://newsroom.bankofamerica.com/content/newsroom/press-releases/2024/07/parent-trap--nearly-half-of-adult-gen-zers-getting-financial-hel.html>

AI Citation:

- "Help me brainstorm some ideas about a thought-leadership piece as the CEO of American Express, promoting a new TikTok commerce platform for creators. I want to address the new launching with their old but powerful campaign ShopSmall." prompt.
ChatGPT, Mar. 2025 version, OpenAI, 20 Mar. 2025, <https://chat.openai.com/chat>

- *“Can you help me fix my draft, the tone should be confident and visionary, with warm, values-driven language. I want to tie this to AmEx’s #ShopSmall campaign and address ESG themes, particularly around creator empowerment and business equity.” prompt.*
ChatGPT, Mar. 2025 version, OpenAI, 20 Mar. 2025, <https://chat.openai.com/chat>
- *“I want to combine two narrative concepts: one about treating creators as entrepreneurs (#ShopSmall evolution) and the other about fixing inequities in the creator economy into a single professional, compelling article.” prompt.* ChatGPT, Mar. 2025 version, OpenAI, 21 Mar. 2025, <https://chat.openai.com/chat>
- *“Revise the opening of the article to reduce one-sentence paragraphs and improve flow. And please help me restructure the writing into a professional CEO tone” prompt.*
ChatGPT, Mar. 2025 version, OpenAI, 21 Mar. 2025, <https://chat.openai.com/chat>