

With over 1.6 million followers on TikTok and 600k followers on Instagram, Influencer Ian McAlister is Bringing Attention to Major Brands in the US, Now Going International and Introducing His Apparel Brand Toxic



Ian McAlister

Influencer

https://www.tiktok.com/@ian_mcalister?lang=en

Toxic Apparel shop (<https://staytoxicshop.com/>)

Interview conducted by:
Bud Wayne, Editorial Executive
CEOCFO Magazine

CEOCFO: *Mr. McAlister, influencers have become a major part of marketing today. What led you to this career choice; where did it all begin?*

Mr. McAlister: When COVID hit, I was working a full-time job and all of a sudden they told us to go home and I did not know what to do. I started watching a lot of Youtube, a lot of TikTok and I saw people like Mr. Beast and a few other big influencers and I thought that was cool. I wondered if I could do something like that.

Through the invention of TikTok, which was fairly new at the time, I saw kids making short videos and I thought, "I could do that." It all started there. I saw a video that I thought was funny and I recreated it. The first

one did not go viral, but I gained ten or fifteen followers and decided to do it again. Eventually I had a few videos go viral and that is where it all started.

CEOCFO: *Most people think of influencers as people who are in music, TV, movies or sports, yet you have been able to gain the attention of over 1.6 million followers on TikTok and 600k followers on Instagram. When you first ventured into this career did you think it was possible?*

Mr. McAlister: Yes, I thought it was possible, but I did not think it would happen to me. It's one of those things where you always think someone else can do it better and you are never lucky enough to be that person. I will be the first to admit that I got a little lucky. I think that fame and influence come with a little bit of luck, but it also comes with a lot of determination and dedication.

At my peak I was pushing out over three videos a day on TikTok just to keep the algorithm on my side. I was constantly going live with my followers because, at the end of the day, I wanted to build a connection with them. It is what I wanted, but I never thought it was going to be me that was going to have that success.

CEOCFO: *What are some of the tools of your trade, such as cameras that you use? Do you have a crew that works with you?*

Mr. McAlister: I record everything on my cell phone, I started off with an iPhone 11 way back when. I have a few tripods that I use. It is just about figuring out how to do it myself and from there I can expand what I do. Eventually I would love to have a crew that follows me around. However, with the type of content I make, I found that being able to control everything myself has given me a lot more flexibility in being able to shift and do something that I want to do.

CEO CFO: *Comedy is a big part of what you do. Did you always have the gift to make people laugh?*

Mr. McAlister: I am going to say I'd like to think so, but if you were to ask some of my friends from high school, they would think I was not funny at all, so it depends who you ask. Comedy for me has always been something I could fall back on and even in today's world, if I am ever uncomfortable in a situation or if I am speaking to a crowd, the first thing I like to do is make them laugh. That gives me the confidence boost to say: I own this, this is my show.

CEO CFO: *You do a mix of engaging content around lifestyle, travel, and short comedy voice-over skits. How did you know these are the areas that would give you the most attention?*

Mr. McAlister: When I first started creating content on TikTok and social media, I strategically looked at what videos were going viral and what videos were not. I specifically focused on trying to recreate or do some form of content that was in the same time window, style, or voice-over of videos that had gone viral in the past. For me, it was more of a research mission on trying to see if this worked for someone else, if it could also work for me. That is where it started.

CEO CFO: *You are currently bringing awareness to the brands you partner with, which includes AppleTV+, Keurig and GLOW Beverages. How did those relationships come about? Did they find you or did you initiate them?*

Mr. McAlister: Every deal that I have worked on so far, they reach out to me. I have not done too much cold outbound myself just because I figured that as my account grew, it would start to gain attention from people, businesses and so on. As of now, it has been directly through these companies or through an agency.

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CEO CFO: *Would you tell us about your recently launched merchandise brand, Toxic Apparel. Why did you decide on apparel?*

Mr. McAlister: To answer this question, I have to go back and say why I chose the Toxic brand to begin with. For me the Toxic brand was built out of not necessity, but out of a comical relief for myself. At the time I was going through a pretty serious break-up and the only place that I felt comfortable as I was getting back to my normal self was through comedy. I watched funny video after funny video and ultimately landed on the #staytoxic and #toxic hashtags. For me, it was where I could be cynical. People did not have to take me seriously and I could punch and play and do my own thing.

Ultimately, as I landed on the idea of Toxic and started creating these videos, my fans would say they needed a coffee mug, a t-shirt. They said they would buy them. I launched it and ultimately, at this point it's meant to represent being unique. It is meant to represent you being yourself because at the end of the day, you do not need to impress anybody. It is all about making yourself laugh and being comfortable in your own shoes.

CEO CFO: *What are some of the apparel lines you are bringing to the market?*

Mr. McAlister: I have one of the t-shirts right here which is one of the original Toxic shirts. I also have my Stay Toxic coffee mug, because what better way to start the morning than a coffee? These are the two items I'm selling right now. I am looking to break into a few other items, such as hats and phone cases, but for the time being I'm starting small and then we can scale from there.

CEO CFO: *What are some of the advantages of being based in Orlando, Florida?*

Mr. McAlister: Number one, it gives me the advantage of being near an international airport. I can hop on a plane and go anywhere very quickly. Two, Florida is called the Sunshine State for a reason. All of my content is filmed with natural light. I do not use any type of artificial light so that is an advantage to being here in Florida.

CEO CFO: *What do you understand about gaining attention on social media that sets you apart from others?*

Mr. McAlister: I think the biggest thing I learned early in my social media career was trying to identify what can go viral and what cannot go viral, what has the potential to go viral and what does not. Basically all of this was through self-education. I identify what has potential to maybe get some views or a lot of views or go very viral, and then I create the content based on this. Those are two things that I'm fairly good at when it comes to social media.

I also think from an attention-grabbing standpoint. If I am looking to gain the attention of a certain audience, I want to pique their interest quickly and draw them in. I want to be able to keep them engaged or maybe watch the video again a few times. These are all things that are going through my mind, whether this is engaging, if it can be funny, whether people are going to share this with other people. That is the kind of content I want to make.

CEO CFO: *You have been very strong at identifying trends and passions that align with your strengths and travel is very in right now. It is my understanding that you are also now working on some international business with Rhythm Communications. Would you tell us about your plans and how Rhythm will plug into that?*

Mr. McAlister: A lot of my business over the past two years has been focused around U.S.-based companies. I got a taste of travel last year in Europe; I was creating content the whole time and it went well. I am looking to expand from U.S. companies to worldwide companies where I can work with brands outside of the country. We are developing a campaign that is more of a business-to-business campaign to engage international business brands that might be located in the U.S. or brands that are located in the countries where I am traveling that want to promote their offerings to U.S. travelers.

I am looking to go somewhere in Central and South America later this year as well as potentially another trip back to Europe. With this trip, the idea is to make travel content and funny content as well as engaging content that my viewers can not only laugh about but maybe become engaged to do their own travel.

CEO CFO: *For companies looking to add an influencer to their marketing campaign, why choose Ian McAlister?*

Mr. McAlister: Why not? In all seriousness, when you look at my stats on how many eyes I can get on a piece of content, I pretty much have proven that if you want people to see a piece of content, I am really good at engaging people. Whether it is in a comment section, through likes, through follows or just getting awareness around something.

I have proven it is possible and I have proven that I can do it not only through my own content but through content created for some of the partners that I have worked with such as Apple TV and GLOW. What can I bring to the table? It's going to be awareness around a product and service and getting eyes on that.