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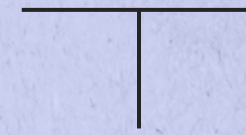
Source: Shing / Rice via Unsplash

THE MOVE

The many faces of Hustle

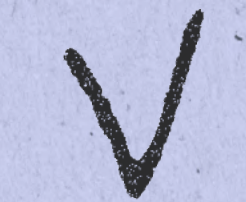
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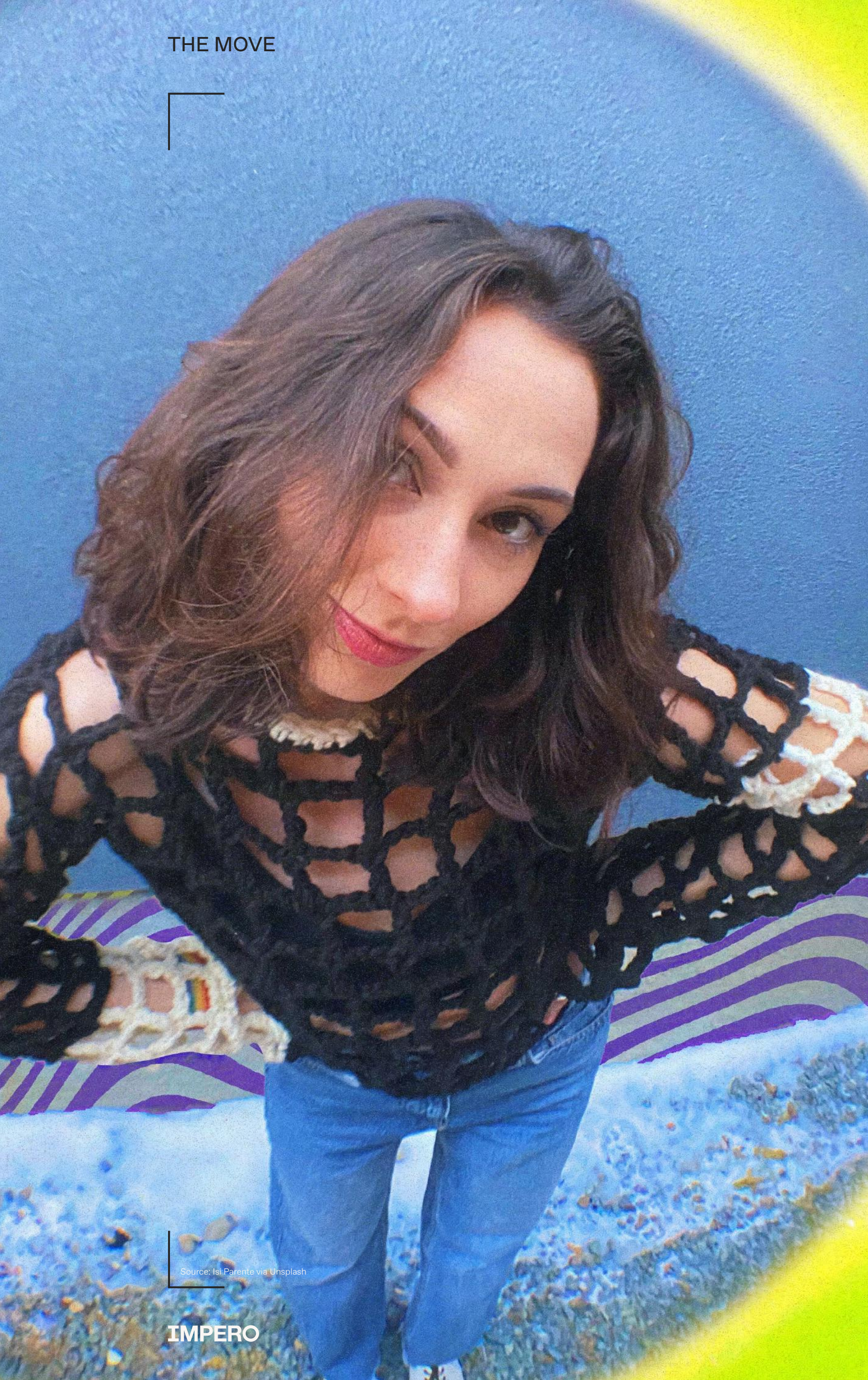
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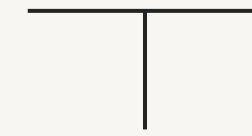
We are a next-gen cultural insights platform, powered by a globally diverse, hyper engaged Gen Z community.

We are cultural decoders; we put an unfiltered spotlight on their voices, and offer brands a real-time source for cultural relevance and future-focused thinking.





Source: Ist. Parente via Unsplash



We live in a world obsessed with ‘making it’. From the pressure to climb the career ladder and pursue new opportunities at every turn, to the normalisation of side hustles and personal projects, it’s hard to avoid the feeling that you’re falling behind if you’re not constantly progressing or hustling to improve / level-up / change / all of the above. It’s why productivity hacks and trends perform so well on social media; in 2022, there’s an *expectation* that we should be spending every hour we aren’t asleep working on something – be it our career, relationships, wellbeing or financial status.

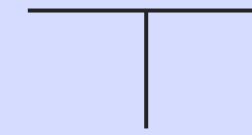
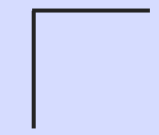
Put simply, ‘hustle culture’ refers to the belief that the pursuit of real success in a career and in life involves working harder, more, and for longer. As a result, people experience a pressure and urgency in their personal and professional environment to work constantly, beyond what’s asked for or anticipated.

But, while the pressure to be productive 24/7 has become pervasive – not everyone subscribes to it. In fact, an ongoing pandemic, along with a spotlight on mental wellness and activism has fundamentally reshaped what’s to come for the next generation, with a growing number of Gen Z rejecting the pressure in favour of a more balanced, structured lifestyle.



Yet on the flip side, one of the most distinctive values for Gen Z globally is being ‘successful’, which could partly be down to life stage, with many yet to enter the workforce. Either way, the motivation is the same – this generation is here to secure a better future for themselves, and the attitude towards making it happen is multifaceted, fuelled in part by the hardships faced in the pandemic, as well as the wider cultural landscape around them.

Gen Z is giving hustle a facelift, and brands need to take note – this report examines the changing attitudes towards hustle and how this generation is reworking the definition of success.



Summary of findings

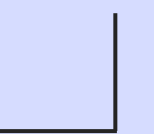
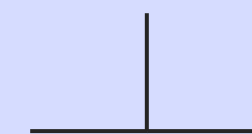
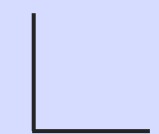
01 'The Girlboss' era is officially dead, Gen Z is all about girl union.

02 'Hard work' at what cost? Gen Z is putting self-care centre stage.

03 For Gen Z, side-hustle is less about passion and more about survival.

04 Fuelled by social media, productivity pressure is pushing Gen Z into a state of inaction.

05 Gen Z is making work work for *them*, not the other way around.



Methodology

01

Desk research and community observations.



02

An online survey completed by 260 members from our global community of Gen Z early adopters across the UK in May 2022.



03

In-depth interviews with 10 community founders, leaders, and members.



Where have all the Girlbosses gone?

The rise & fall of the Girlboss

We've all heard of her, and some of us may have known (or been) a version of her; but the 'girlboss' wasn't around for long. In fact, the term was coined by *Nasty Gal* founder Sophia Amoruso in 2014, with the intention to describe someone very much like Amoruso herself: forward-thinking, powerful, inclusive – a boss, but like, a cool boss.

The 'girlboss' was a direct counterpoint to the traditional 'boss' stereotype – the kind of wealthy white cis male that historically dominated the top ranks of the workforce and who didn't just wield power, but usually abused it. Instead, the girlboss promised business practices and a hustle culture rooted in inclusion, positing their leadership as evidence of a shattered glass ceiling.

These women weren't just executives, but often the *face* of their brands, and commanded large social followings. The companies they helmed were also uncannily similar. They peddled different products – from suitcases and skincare, to jeans and co-working spaces – but what set them apart from regular bosses was the way they pinned feminism to hustle culture and business success. Women like *Facebook's* Sheryl Sandberg, Steph Korey, co-founder and co-CEO of luggage company *Away*, and *Glossier* founder Emily Weiss, were finally wrangling power away from the men who had held it for so long, and this was seen as a form of social justice.

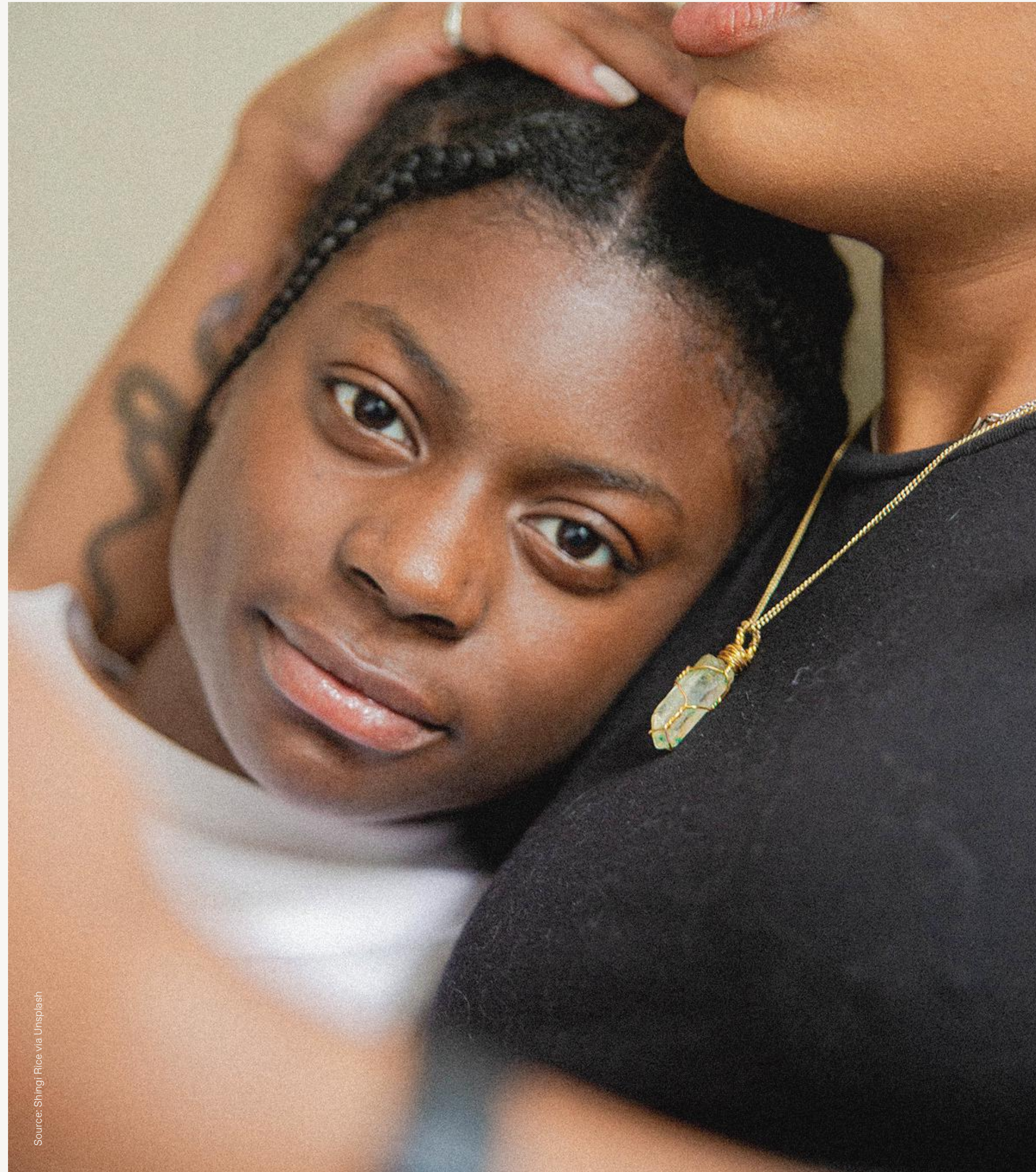


Source: Thabo Bole via Unsplash

As the concept was codified, the idea of the girlboss became about the melding of professional self and personal identity, capitalist aspiration, and a specific (and arguably limited) vision of empowerment. These often already privileged women's pursuit of power was rebranded as a righteous quest for equality, with success enabling them to 'lift up' the women below.

The reality of being a girlboss, however, was messier. Amoruso's career at *Nasty Gal* was dogged by constant turnover, accusations of discrimination and abusive management, leading to the company's eventual bankruptcy. Over time, accusations of sinister labor practices among prominent businesswomen who fit the girlboss template became more common. The confident, hardworking, camera-ready young women of a publicist's dreams often followed the same structure: pedigreed, usually white, and not only as accomplished as her male counterparts, but as ruthless and demanding too.

Unsurprisingly, Gen Z has wholeheartedly rejected the girlboss construct. Instead, they're looking for alternatives to individualism, actively shifting towards a 'girl union' mindset where collective action is encouraged. In trying to connect with an audience that seeks to lift each other up in a more tangible way, brands should move beyond the 'female empowerment' tropes of the last eight years and interrogate the evolution of the subject to discover what empowerment looks like for Gen Z women in 2022.



Source: Shingl Rice via Unsplash

The power of Girl Union

As highlighted by the uproar around Kim Kardashian’s “*get your fucking ass up and work*” statement, the girlboss trope is highly individualistic. In reality, women are looking for community-driven initiatives to support empowerment. The rise of the ‘girl union’ – referring to women’s increased participation in unions across the UK and US – has brought on benefits such as higher pay and increased child support, demonstrating the importance of collective feminism.

This was also seen on Twitter during International Women’s Day 2022, when anonymous activists launched a gender pay gap bot that highlighted the discrepancies in company wages for men and women. For businesses, there’s an opportunity around platforming and supporting initiatives that enable women to meaningfully thrive in the workplace. And amid growing cynicism around performative statements, the challenge is to foster ongoing dialog and community, moving away from statement-led corporate culture. For example, InHerSight is a platform specifically designed to meet the needs of mums looking for new employment opportunities.

Gen Z calling bullsh*t on the millennial old guard.



REFINERY29

Refinery29 Editor Resigns After Former Employees Describe 'Toxic Culture'

The editor, Christine Barberich, said she decided to leave after reading accounts by black women and other women of colour who said they had faced discrimination at the company.



THE WING

Audrey German, the Wing's Co-Founder, Resigns.

She leaves amid a juror over treatment of black and brown employees at the chain of women's networking spaces.

Glossier.

Exclusive: Ex-Glossier employees describe a company that failed to support Black workers – even as it donated \$1 million to racial justice causes.

AWAY

Emotional Baggage. Away's founders sold a vision of travel and inclusion, but former employees say it masked a toxic work environment.



Source: Hazel Gaskin

Injecting self-care into hustle

Gen Z may not be onboard with the trope of the Gen Y 'girlboss' – but the culture of self-optimisation is still alive and well online, as seen with the ascent of the 'that girl' TikTok aesthetic, which claims to prioritise actual wellness over relentless self-improvement.

Featuring content such as healthy breakfasts, daily journaling, and candlelit baths, 'that girl' began as an extension of Gen Y girlboss culture, but has since evolved into a space for people to push back against it – with young women even sharing videos that highlight the struggles of trying to be 'that girl'. Following criticism for promoting the relentless optimisation of daily routines, the aesthetic has become less focused on wellbeing as an outward achievement to be ticked off, and more of an honest self-expression.

With 48% of Gen Z saying they feel increased anxiety about their future in comparison to others on social, 'That girl' may now represent a softer, more wellness-centric style of self-optimisation than the 'girlboss' trope, but it's still provoked backlash.

Dr. Carl Cederström, business professor at Stockholm University, says that constant optimisation means "our culture of self-help generally has no purpose. You don't ask yourself why you're doing each of these things; you just do it". As with other iterations of hustle culture, brands would be wise to stay on top the narrative to ensure that they 'lean in' the right way.



[SUPPORTING DATA]

The concept of being a ‘Girlboss’ has gone from a millennial ideal to a nightmare that Gen Z is more than happy to laugh at.

[BRAND TAKEAWAY]

Brands would do well to help dismantle ‘toxic’ forms of wellness and shift focus away from ‘success’ and towards ‘acceptance’.

Continued focus on outward signifiers of efficiency is likely to invite more pushback.



[DATA]

63%

Of our audience said that they do not resonate or identify with ‘The Girlboss.’

THE MOVE COMMUNITY, 2022

58%

Of our audience said they do not find ‘The Girlboss’ aspirational.

THE MOVE COMMUNITY, 2022

51%

Of our audience said that they find ‘The Girlboss’ harmful.

THE MOVE COMMUNITY, 2022



 **Imani Barbarin**
@Imani_Barbarin Follow

Girl boss culture is just capitalism ✨ for her ✨

1:14 PM - 26 Feb 2019

6K 313 45.4K

 **mensa member**
@obvious0mmy Follow

me, pushing a giant boulder up a hill forever: they HATE to see a girlboss winning 🍷

1:14 PM - 26 Feb 2019

6K 313 45.4K

 **sarah schauer**
@sarahschauer Follow

my mom says I can gatekeep as long as your mom can girlboss

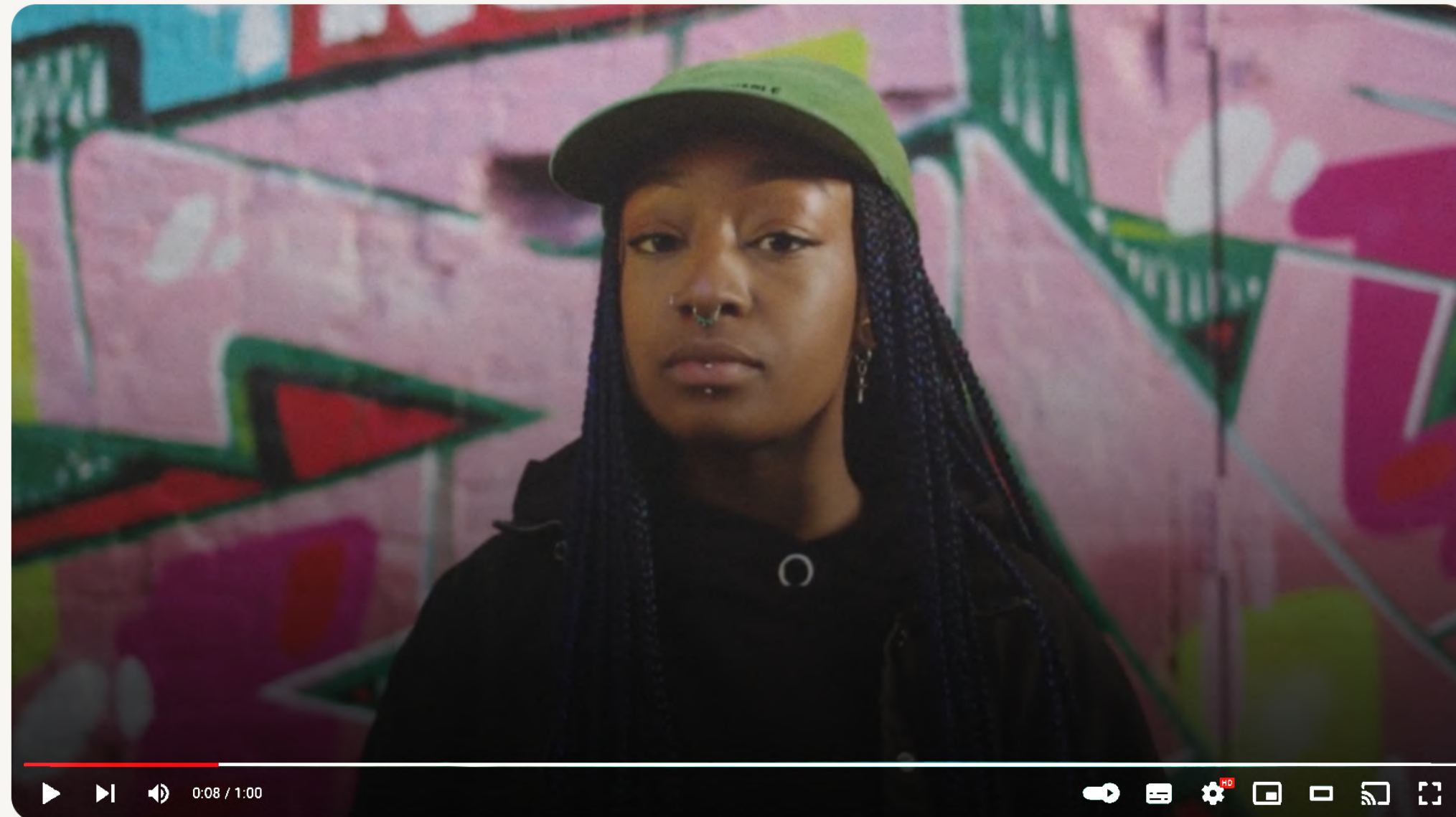
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1.5K 400 24.4K

“I don’t like the term girl boss or what it connotes. It feels very much like women role-playing as a powerful man.”

It’s become a bit of a joke on the internet.”

JIM, 28, LONDON,
THE MOVE COMMUNITY



[CASE STUDY]

Empowerment vs Investment

NATWEST HELPS FEMALE-LED START-UPS WITH
£165,000 MARKETING SPEND DONATION.

[CASE STUDY SUMMARY]

The *Back Her Business* initiative from NatWest was designed to help more female entrepreneurs launch their own business. The UK-wide campaign is part of NatWest's pledge to inspire 400,000 female-led businesses by 2025.

The initiative works by giving participants a crowdfunding platform to raise the money they need to launch a commercial enterprise, as well as free coaching, mentoring, and opportunities to meet like-minded women.

Side-hustling

Side hustling as a survival tool

It sounds obvious now, but the pandemic created an irreversible shift in how people view their careers. In giving them time to pause and reconsider what they value in life, many have turned to passion projects to give them a sense of purpose – one in three members of The Move community surveyed claim to have a side hustle, with 31% saying they started their side hustle during the pandemic.

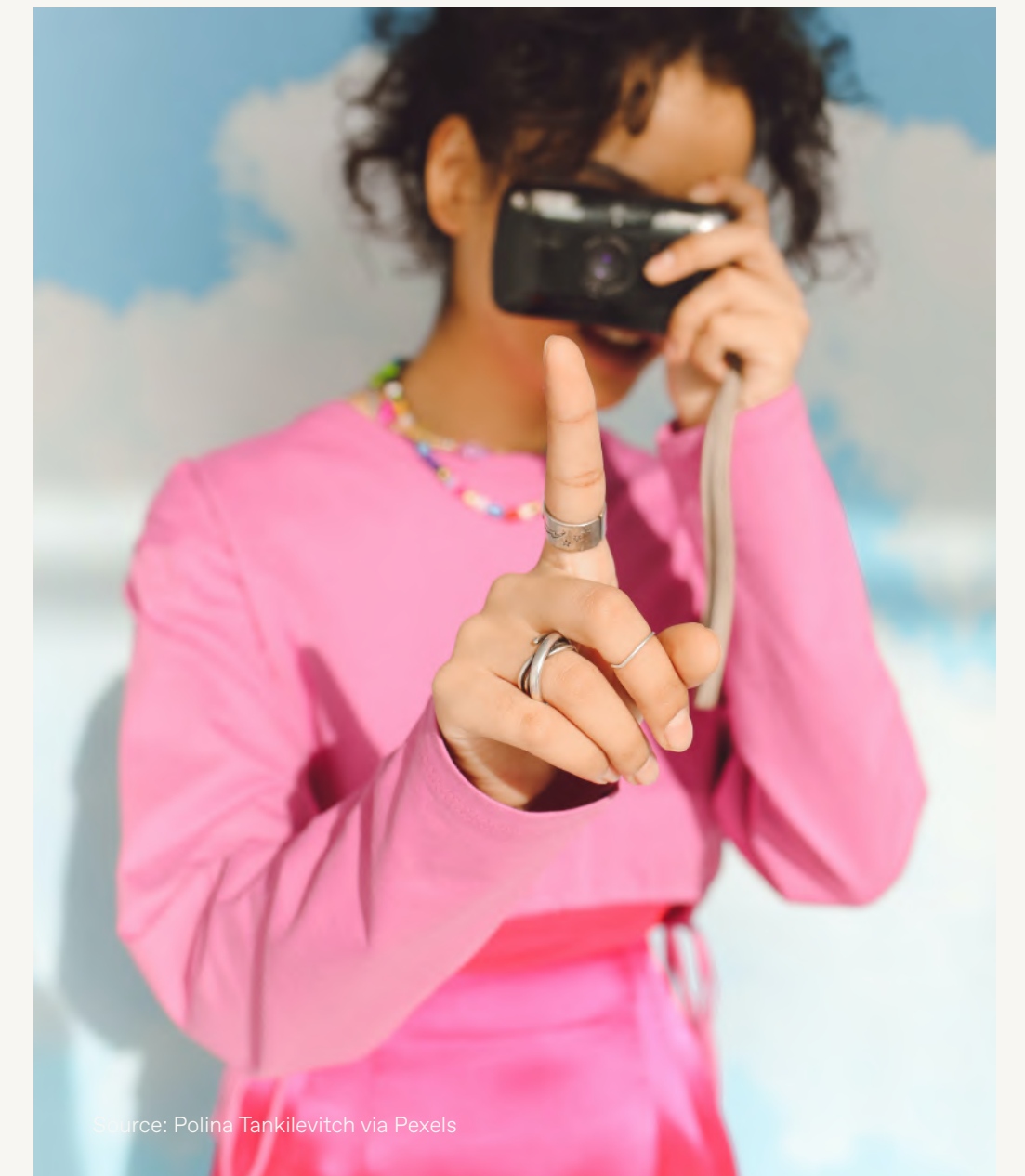
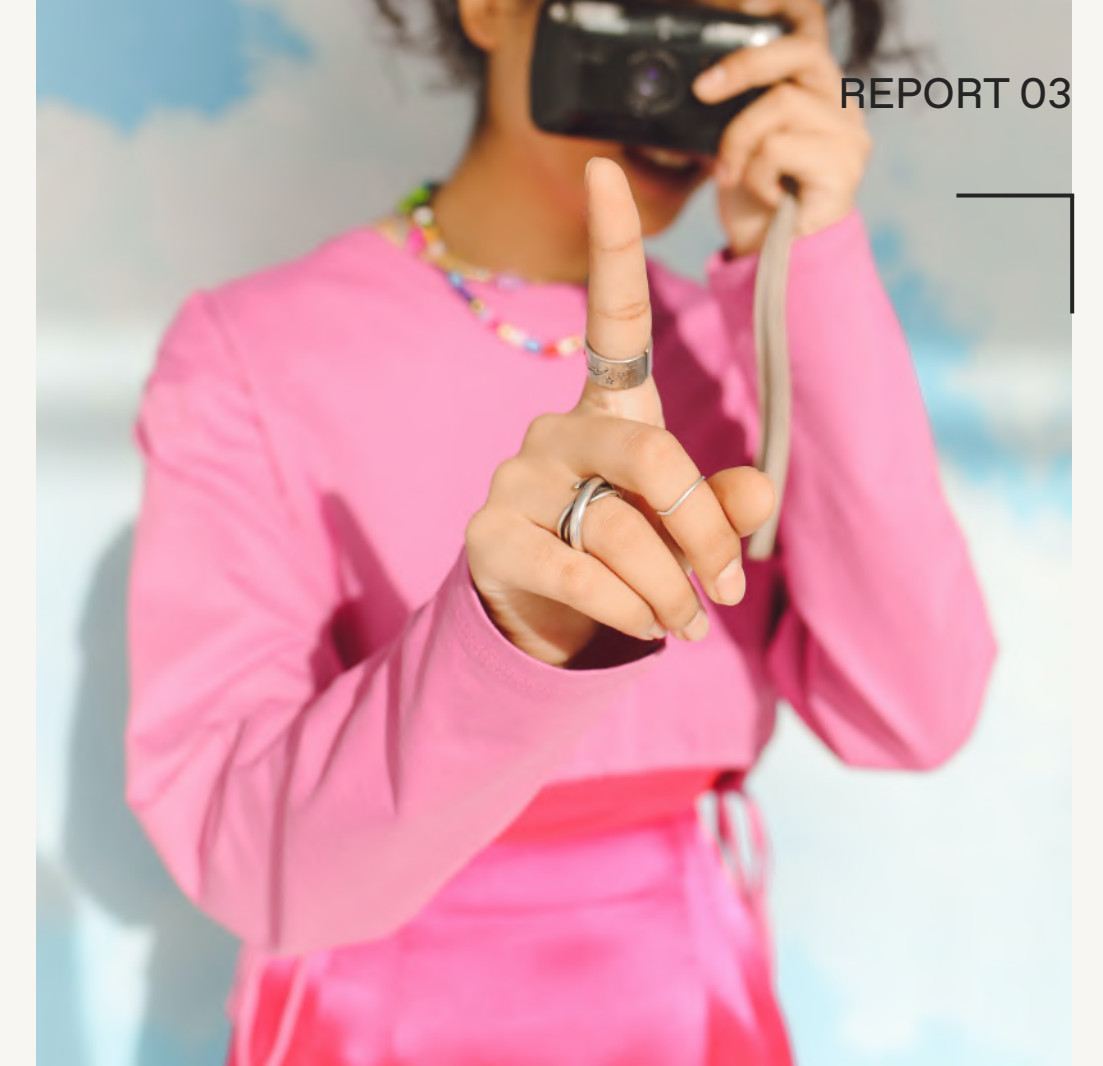
In some cases, side hustles offer an outlet for people's creativity. Social media platforms have lowered the barrier to entry for anyone wanting to engage, and this contributed to the growth of online marketplaces like Fiverr, Etsy, and Depop, which has made it easier than ever to join the side hustle culture.

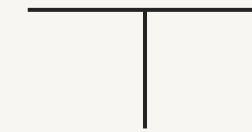
But, while Gen Z is known for channeling creativity into their professional and personal lives, on closer inspection it's clear that side hustles are

something more – they're a financial necessity for most.

In many cases, these projects go beyond merely passion or creativity, with 46% sharing that the prospect of a passive income is what motivates them to create a side project. In fact, one in five claim that the extra money is used to cover debt and expenses – no great surprise when you consider the average cost of student housing is 60% higher than a decade ago.

Meanwhile, nearly one in seven – 14% – said they use their side hustle income to save money for a house deposit. For anyone who isn't lucky enough to have help from 'the bank of mum and dad', having a second income may be the only way of getting on the property ladder.





[SUPPORTING DATA]

Although there is no single reason for why young Brits are taking on a side hustle, it is clear how they spend their extra money.

[BRAND TAKEAWAY]

With an increase in young entrepreneurs, there's opportunity for brands to support self-starters and equip them with the tools they need to move from survive to thrive, and turn their passions into real career and financial growth.



[DATA]

57%

Of our audience spend more than 16 hours a week on a side hustle.

THE MOVE COMMUNITY, 2022

38%

Of our audience said that they spend any extra income on subsidising their living expenses.

THE MOVE COMMUNITY, 2022

17%

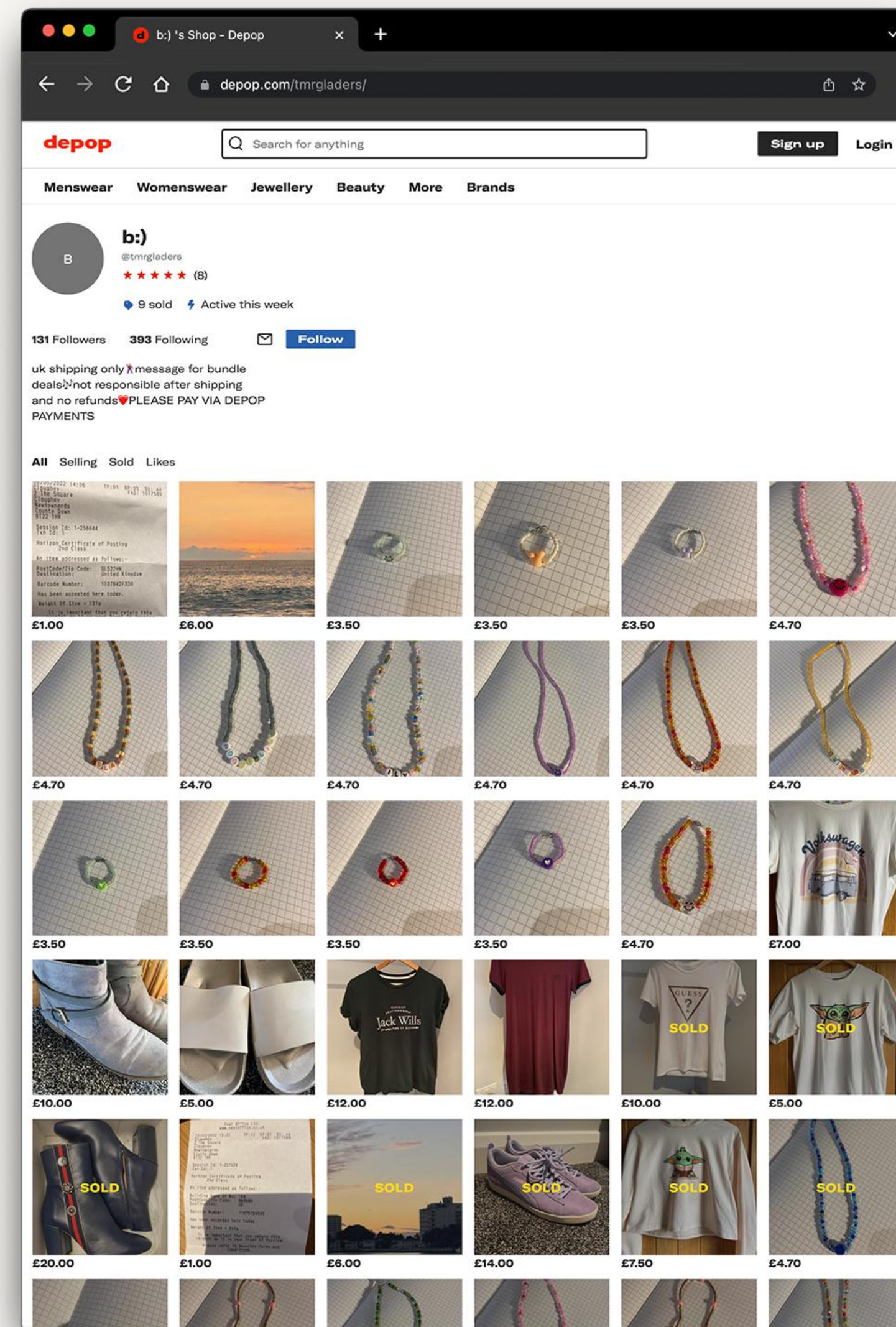
Of our audience said that their 'side hustle' was a pure passion activity.

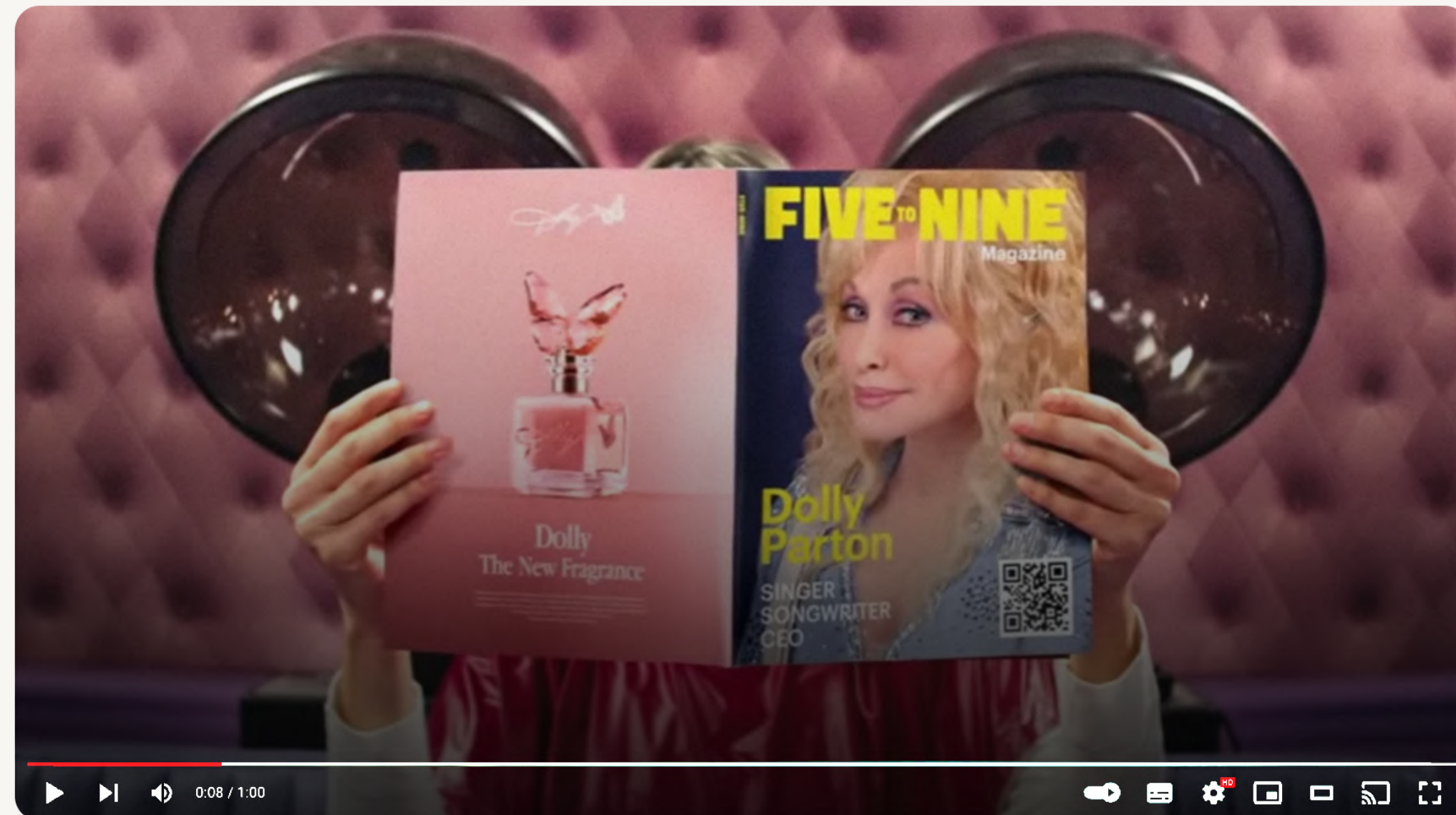
THE MOVE COMMUNITY, 2022

THE MOVE

“ I make beaded jewellery and sell them online. It started off as something fun to do but it has quickly become how I support myself through uni. It is incredibly time-consuming, but stopping isn't an option.”

ZOE, 20 BIRMINGHAM
THE MOVE COMMUNITY





[CASE STUDY]

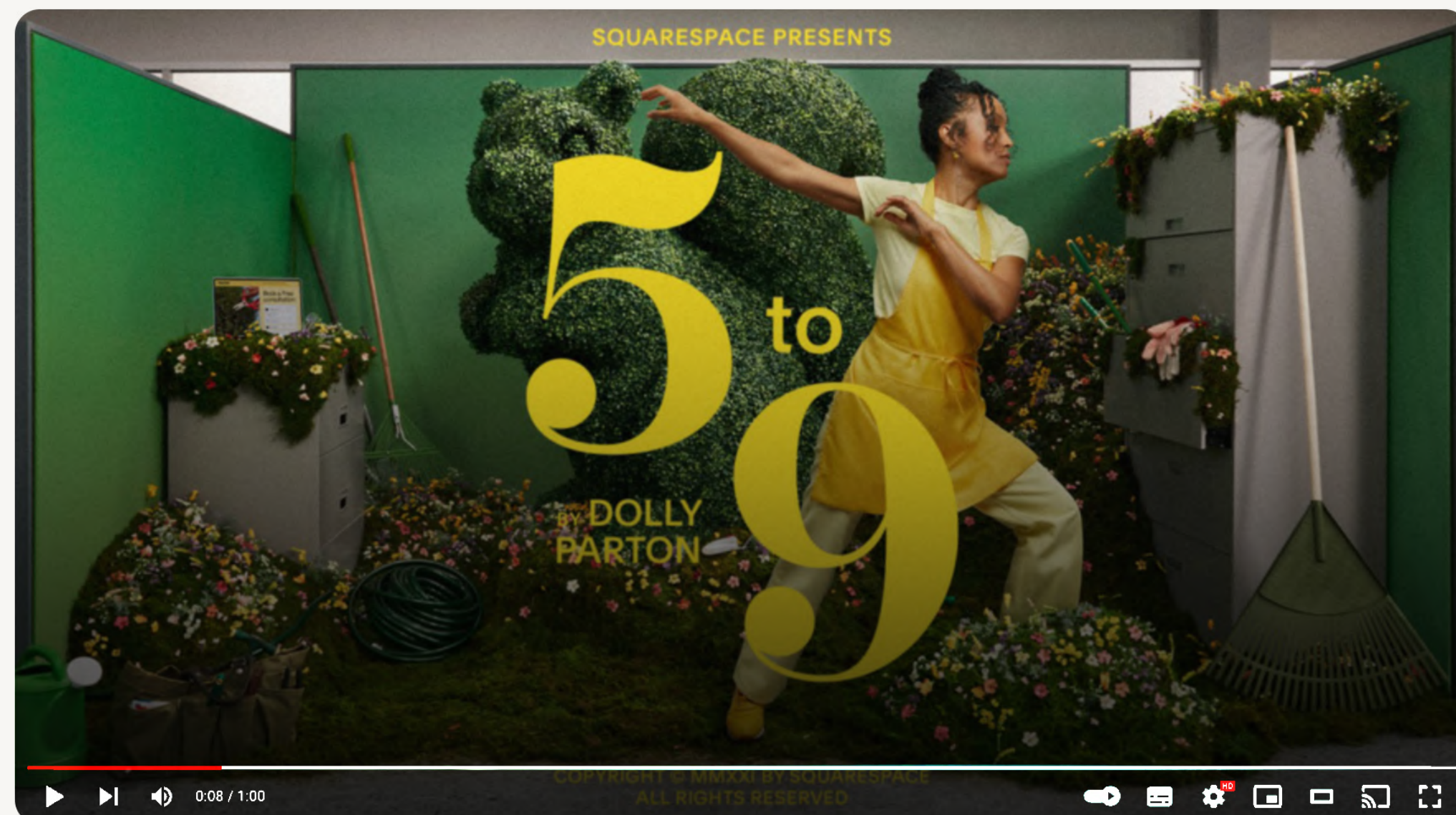
Tapping into the passion of side hustling

SQUARESPACE - "5 TO 9 BY DOLLY PARTON"

[CASE STUDY SUMMARY]

Dolly Parton has reimagined her classic 1980 song "9 to 5" as "5 to 9" for a Squarespace commercial that celebrates office workers getting their entrepreneurial side hustles going after hours.

To engage a younger audience, brands should tap into the passion drives of side-hustling and not just show arbitrary depictions of office work.



Busy and Anxious

“It creates the assumption that the only value we have as human beings is our productivity. Our ability to work is valued more than our humanity, and working more does not means we’re worth more as people.”



Held back by productivity anxiety

Source: SHVETS Production via Pixels

What is ‘productivity anxiety’? Laine Fullerton of *A Girl in Progress* explains it best – “... it’s the feeling that you are never doing enough. No matter how many hours you work or how much you get done, you never truly feel satisfied with your achievements because there is always more to do.” It’s a super overwhelming space to navigate – and that was before the pandemic hit.

The pandemic was arguably the biggest test of resilience for Gen Z, with disruption to education, job losses, financial uncertainty, and social isolation all weighing heavily on their shoulders. Dubbed the “sacrificed generation” by the Guardian in 2021, the toll of the pandemic on young people’s mental wellness is undeniable – and something that sets them apart from other generations. Across the UK, the number of Gen Z who say they experience stress regularly/ often has increased by 30% since 2020, with feelings of anxiety also creeping up by 18%.

Despite their confidence about being the hardest-working generation, Gen Z suffers from career-specific anxiety – ranging from work expectations to achieving ‘success’, with 34% of The Move community believing that this holds them back from job success.

Globally, 45% of the Gen Z demographic say they’re prone to anxiety, compared with Baby Boomers’ 25%. Gen Z grew up with technology at their fingertips – a double-edged sword as their anxiety is often exacerbated by social media, with doomscrolling during the pandemic likely playing a part in driving anxiety.

It’s no wonder then, that Gen Z are more likely than the average consumer to worry about spending too much time on social media or on their phone. Yet, even in a time when ‘it’s okay to not be okay’, only 1 in 3 of our Move community said they would feel comfortable talking about mental health, as they do not feel that their concerns or feelings would be taken seriously.



[SUPPORTING DATA]

For Gen Z feelings of stress about not doing 'enough' pervades every aspect of their lives, not just the work space.

[BRAND TAKEAWAY]

Brands should be mindful of piling on the anxieties by pushing traditional, one-dimensional 'hustle', 'working-hard', 'success' narratives, and instead celebrate taking time out.



[DATA]

45%

Of our community said that they prioritise their mental health over career success.

THE MOVE COMMUNITY, 2022

61%

Of our audience said that they feel pressure to be as productive as possible.

THE MOVE COMMUNITY, 2022

42%

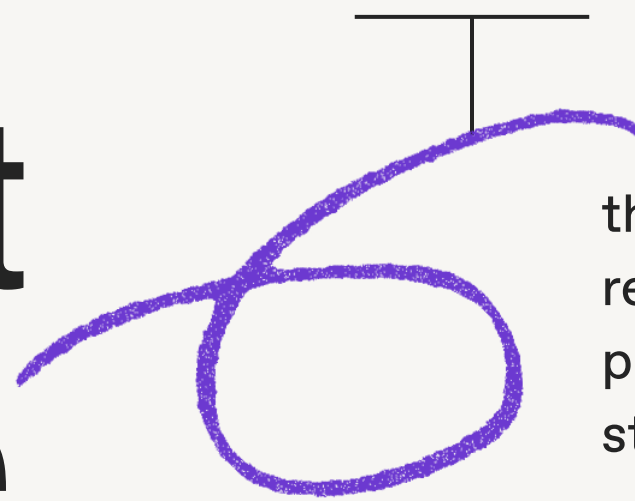
Of our audience said that social media is the key driver of anxiousness around productivity.

THE MOVE COMMUNITY, 2022

THE MOVE



Escaping burnout via **#GoblinMode**



Source: Curology via Unsplash

With employees returning to the office amid easing pandemic restrictions and anxieties around a possible global conflict, many are struggling to shrug off *#GoblinMode*.

According to Google Trends, the term rose in popularity in early February 2021, and relates to the doubling down of slobbishness and antisocial behaviour associated with the early pandemic, when hordes of self-isolators spent their time 'goblin' down snacks, forgoing makeup and showers, and doomscrolling on social media. As Gen Z emerge from the pandemic, the habits born out of comfort have become a way of life for many, and are proving hard to shake.

Although *#GoblinMode* started as an online meme, this movement is becoming more than a pandemic coping mechanism – it's a way of rejecting hustle and productivity expectations, a fight against burnout, and a rallying cry to those who want a work/life balance. Going *#GoblinMode* means having permission to do nothing, to be selfish with your time, and not fill the day with endless tasks.

And while 'goblincore' was simply a pandemic-induced fashion trend that celebrated the earthen realism of nature, *#GoblinMode* is "about a complete lack of aesthetic" and "an almost spiritual-level embrace of our most debased tendencies." With many young people struggling to cope with post-pandemic lethargy, there's a role for brands to play in helping people navigate uncertainty, stagnancy, and grant permission to lean into *#GoblinMode* behaviour when necessary.

For example, the Nod app helps Gen Z relearn social skills that may have atrophied during the pandemic, while Nike's 'Play New' campaign celebrates sports failures.



[CASE STUDY]

Play and enjoyment as new markers of success

NIKE NEW PLAY - "CELEBRATING AND ENCOURAGING FAILURE"

[CASE STUDY SUMMARY]

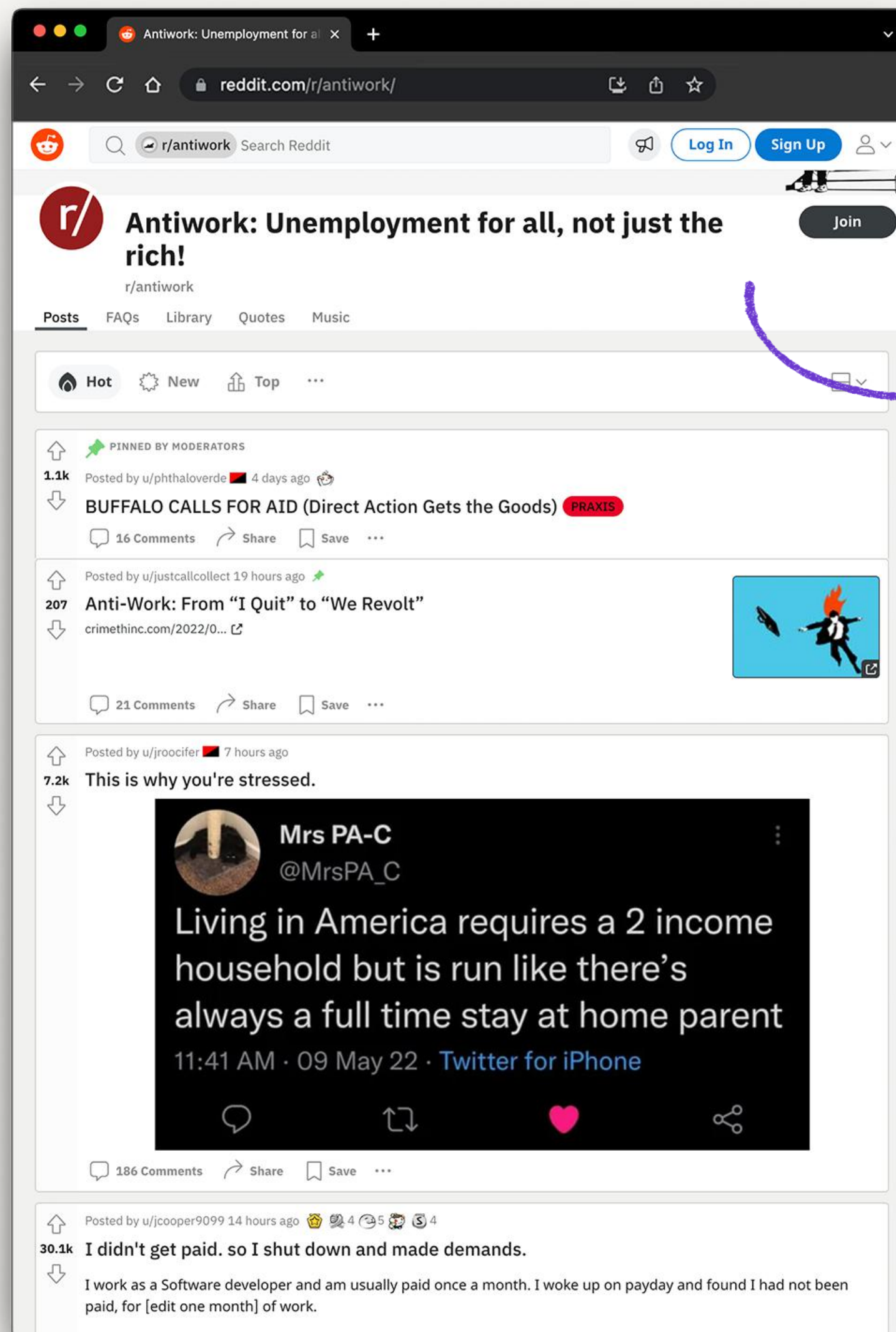
Nike believes that sport can inspire, create community, and provide a platform for positive change. With this campaign, sport is not just about competition, hustling hard, and success – it can be about the joy of movement and the creativity of play.

Nike's 'Play New' campaign celebrates sports failures with the aim of reframing it as a low-pressure environment, overcoming hesitancy and encouraging participation.



Source: Brett Sayles via Pixels

Rejecting the rat race



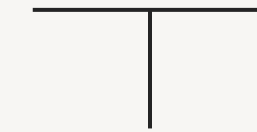
#AntiWork movement

We've all become more self-reflective in the wake of the pandemic, especially around work/life balance and whether it aligns with our wants and needs. So, it's no surprise that the #AntiWork movement, which emerged across 2020-21, has gradually gained traction as a way for Gen Y and Z to express their changing views.

The movement is essentially the opposite of hustle culture, and sees people quitting their jobs or drastically reducing their hours to create a lifestyle that works more in their favour. The r/antiwork subreddit, for "those who want to end work, are curious about ending work, or want to get the most out of a work-free life," has tripled its subscribers since March 2020, and appeals most to those who reject the idea of the 'rat race' and 'living to work'.

The #AntiWork movement is part of a broader pattern of people redefining and reprioritising what's 'normal' in the workplace, with traditional expectations around hustle culture coming into question. Gen Z, as the most vocal demographic around this shift, has influenced other generations to reevaluate their work/life balance, with 38% of British workers planning to change jobs between September 2021 and March 2022.

While work remains an economic necessity for most, the #AntiWork movement represents a cultural shift in the perception of employment.



[SUPPORTING DATA]

For Gen Z the 40-hour, 9-to-5 work week is no longer the arena for hustle and the path to success.

[BRAND TAKEAWAY]

Most Gen Z prefer space to pursue personal and professional fulfilment on their own terms.

This is a moment for brands, especially in the careers space, to capture audiences who want to think about work differently.



[DATA]

45%

Of our community said their career and money does not define success.

THE MOVE COMMUNITY, 2022

61%

Of our audience said that they would not work for a company that did not reflect their values.

THE MOVE COMMUNITY, 2022

81%

Of our audience said social personal fulfilment was more important than professional fulfilment.

THE MOVE COMMUNITY, 2022




The Great Resignation: Why Gen Z Is Leaving The Workforce In Drove...And What To Do About It

LEADERSHIP STRATEGY

Jason Wingard Senior Contributor
I write about organizational strategy, leadership development, and the future of work [Follow](#)

Sep 2, 2021, 04:16pm EDT



More than half workers in the 18–24 age group say they are planning to switch jobs in the next year. ... [+] GETTY

Gen Z has had enough. A recent [Adobe survey](#) of 5,500 workers found that 56% of those ages 18–24 say they are planning to switch jobs in the next year. Research from [Microsoft](#) and [Bankrate](#) backs this up, reporting that 54% and 77% of Gen Zs, respectively, are thinking about quitting.

Though statements do not always line up with actions, there may be reason to take these workers seriously: A record [4 million Americans](#) quit their jobs in April, twice the number who quit in April of the

“I don’t think I can work a 9 to 5 for more than a couple of years. I am definitely putting pressure on myself to find new ways of working.”

NABIHA, 23, LONDON,
THE MOVE COMMUNITY

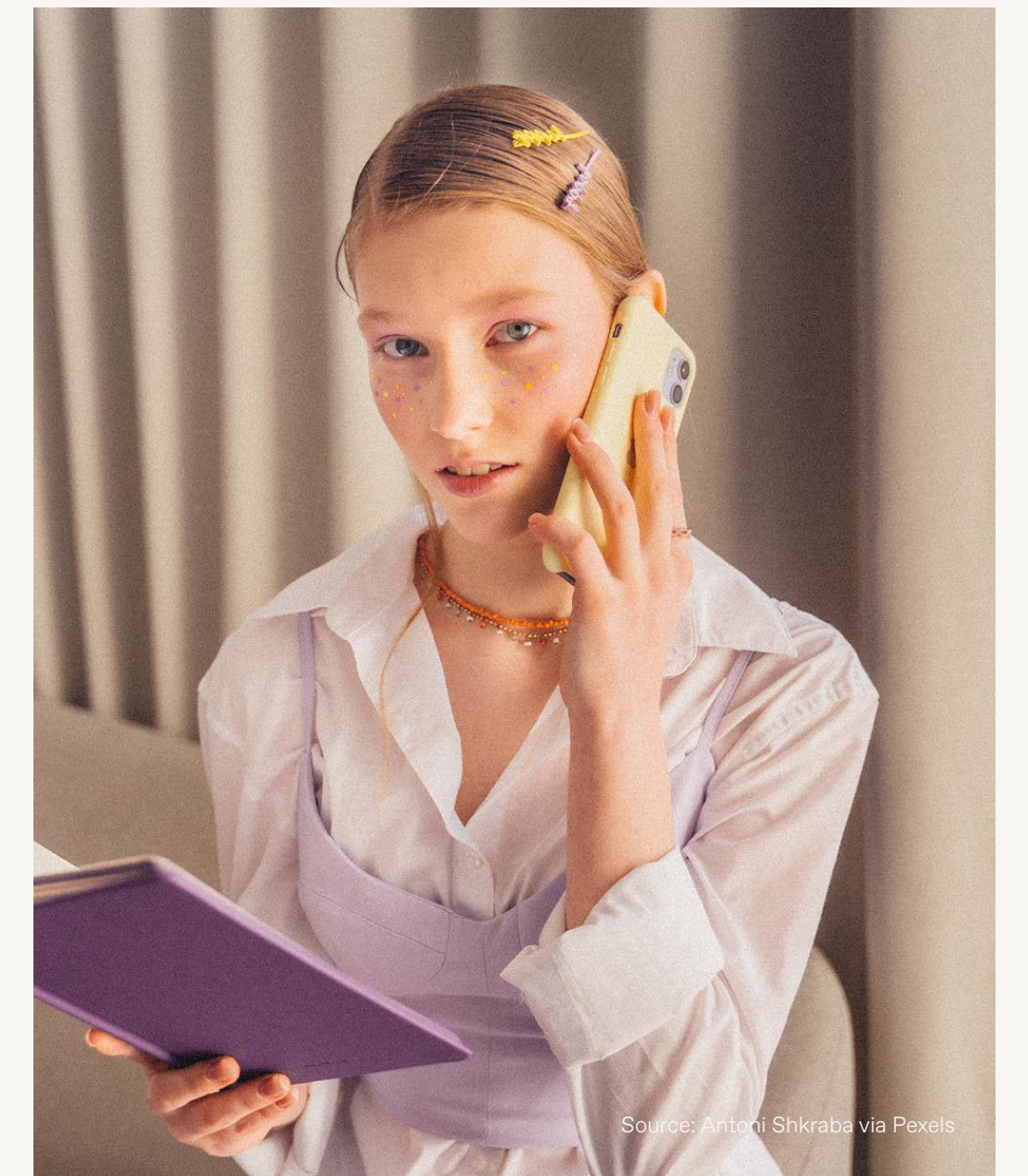
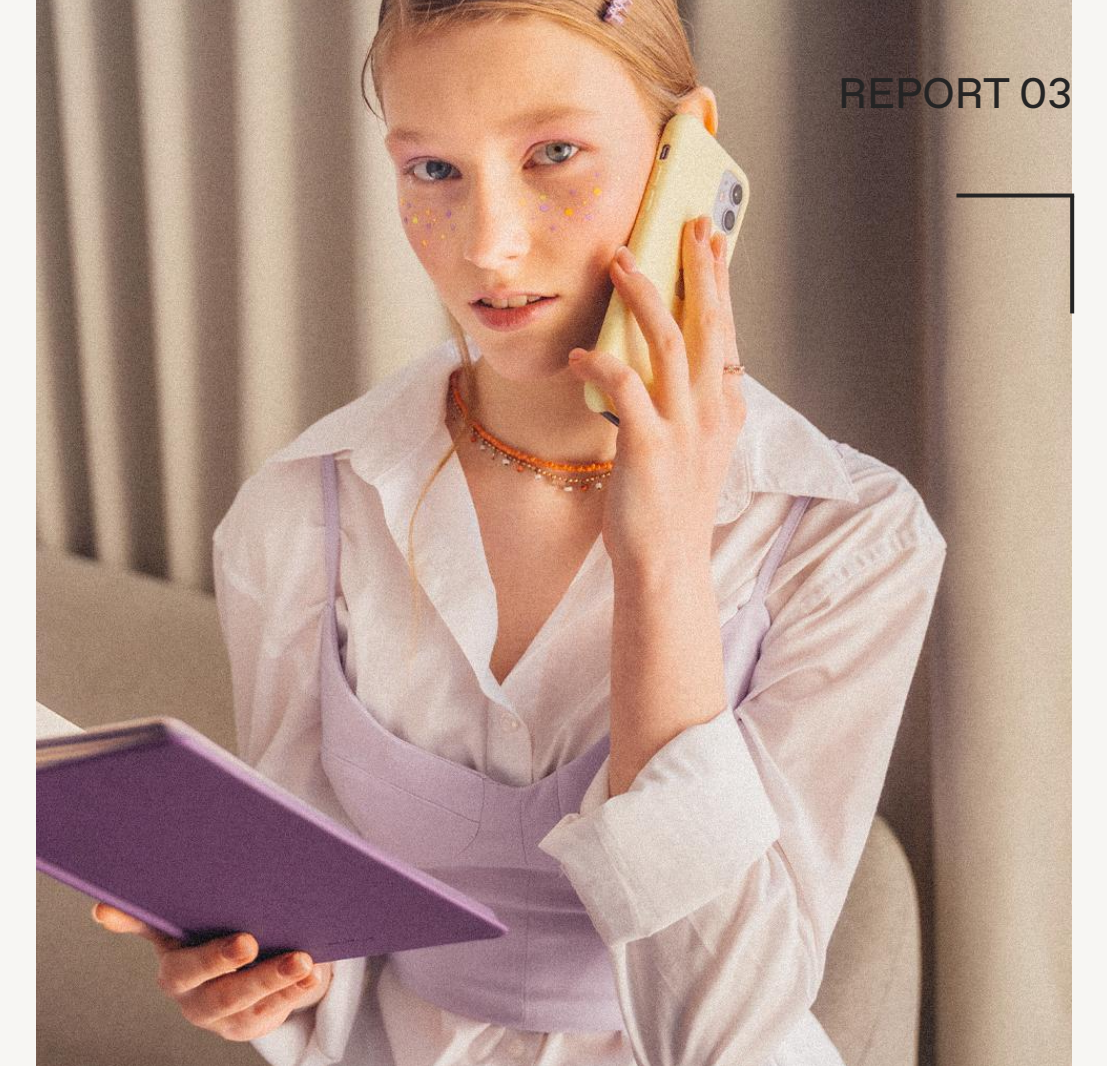
Reworking 9 to 5

With role models ranging from Greta Thunberg and Malala Yousafzai, to Molly-Mae Hague and Kylie Jenner, Gen Z has access to a diverse set of influences and perspectives that generations before simply didn't. Their attitudes to issues such as climate change, social equality, and mental health, combined with how open, ambitious, and tech savvy they are, means they're about to become a disruptive force in the world of work. In fact, this demographic is expected to make up 27% of the global workforce by 2025, making them an important demographic to pay attention to now.

Gen Z isn't afraid to approach work differently – and they're often challenging the existing systems. This quit-happy generation takes a highly values-driven approach to their careers and job prospects, with top talent looking for meaning, not just money, as a key driver of *where* they choose to work. For companies that want to attract talent, it's essential they show how their work can ladder up to something more impactful than a quarterly profit goal.

There has been a broader generational shift in attitudes towards work, with more Gen Z rejecting the 9 to 5 and adopting a more diversified approach to earning money. Digital economies are creating new earning opportunities for young professionals, and judging by our Move community's attitude toward their careers and job prospects, it's fair to say that the likelihood of having a single job for life is pretty low, with more and more people rejecting the idea of having a single job title for 10+ years, leaning instead towards working in multiple ways at once on their own terms.

Speaking, writing, content creation, and live streaming are some of the most popular types of simultaneous work-streams. Having the opportunity and the know-how to make money in alternative ways has redefined Gen Z's relationship with the traditional work spaces and the classic understandings of hustle.



So what does this
mean for brands?

WHAT DOES THIS MEAN FOR BRANDS?

01 Be a balance champion

Don't glorify hustle culture to the detriment of work/life balance – remember, for Gen Z, hustle is about choice rather than expectation or necessity. If you want to connect, you need to show your support for this shift, advocating for the 'work smarter, not harder' attitude.

02 Get your house in order

What's your take on hustle culture? Are you practicing what you preach? Gen Z are laser-focused on brands that share their values, so make sure your internal practices around hustle and success reflect your outward value gestures – and be willing to update them if they aren't.

03 Discover what 'hustle' means to your audience

To build digital communities, brands must determine what they are willing to do to engage with communities. How will they contribute? Brands must be willing to be vulnerable, transparent and open to learning the rules of engagement in the form of co-creation from Gen Z groups.

04 Spotlight different avenues of success

Brands have a responsibility to show that there are different routes to 'success' and being 'successful' – so normalise this by contributing to the narrative, often and actively.



Want to dig deeper or have a chat?

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themove@weareimpero.com

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Researched and written by
Zuhur Mohamed

Edited by
Melissa McWhirter

Designed by
James Parkinson

Managed by
Rebecca Crockford

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