

Meet KBubblez, The 22-Year-Old Who Made \$500,000 Gaming

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One quarter of the Earth's population are gamers, according to Microsoft. Gaming revenues were forecasted to top over \$159 billion by the end of 2020 before the pandemic. That prediction has swelled to a staggering \$170 billion, according to an August 2020 Simon-Kucher report. According to analysts at Rakuten Securities, the PS5, which just went on sale, is expected to sell over 200 million lifetime units, nearly *double* PS4 sales.

Meanwhile, Twitch, the leading live streaming platform for gamers, is expected to surpass 47 million views a month, according to a 2020 eMarketer report. In an industry so vast, with revenues so large and eyeballs so plentiful, it should come as no surprise that the gaming market has spawned scores of full-time gamers and streamers.

Kailey "KBubblez" Hankins is one example.

Since she left her job at Geek Squad five years ago, she's been streaming regularly via Twitch and Caffeine (in the beginning, it was "12 hours a day, every day," Hankins says). Now, at just 22 years old, she's made over half a million dollars through donations, subscriptions, deals and endorsements. Hankins will be on an episode of MTV's *Revenge Prank* this month and has plans to do more television work, too.

So if you've ever been curious about what it takes to become a

full-time gamer, watch our full interview below. Or, keep reading for a selection of my favorite takeaways from our talk.

[embedded content]

Hankins' responses have been condensed and edited for readability.

1. Consistency is everything

“Do the same thing every single day,” Hankins says. “Don’t make big goals; make small goals, and crush them every single day. When you do that, it’s a lot easier. Staying consistent and building a community is important. Stay active with the people that watch your streams, ask them what they like, and focus on that. I streamed every single day for a year and had, like, five people watching me. But that didn’t put me down. I still kept it up every single day. And I went from five to hundreds, then thousands of viewers.”

Considerable research supports this advice. Focusing on long-term consistency and small, incremental change is paramount, whether you want to be a better parent, live a better life or, like Hankins, be a successful gamer. Another part of consistency is not overburdening yourself too early on or getting distracted, leading to takeaway number two.

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2. Commit to one platform, then set yourself apart

“Being all over the place, doing a bunch of different things can be bad,” Hankins says. She started on Twitch, like many other gamers. “You want to pick one place and grow there first... then build your brand, because there are so many things

you can do once you have a brand; you don't have just to play video games."

But it's not enough to pick a platform and stick to it. You have differentiate yourself. In Hankins' case, she did IRL, or "in real life," streaming. "I wasn't just playing video games, [I was] cooking, doing make-up. It was everything."

Maybe you wouldn't be comfortable sharing your life with the world like Hankins. But you might have noticed a surge in demand for this type of content. It's because viewers are becoming less trusting of the polished, big-budget content à la TV, Hollywood and famous influencers.

Instead, they seek out "real life" content like Hankins' as a way to find community and form connections, according to a 2019 study by Google and Omnicom Media Group. Even if you don't plan to stream your life, remember: To get what others don't, you have to do what others won't – or can't. Think about how you can stand out in a way that works for you, then stick to it.

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3. Turn negatives to positives

Although she's had some incredible experiences – global travel, lucrative brand deals and the ability to make a generous income doing what she loves – it hasn't been all rainbows and rosebuds. Everyone on the internet has been on the receiving end of negative comments. For gamers, one of the most common problems is persistent teasing.

Hankins was called "KBelly" and trolled with photoshopped pictures of herself with a massive belly after gaining weight. "It wasn't easy at first... I would get affected," she says. "I would cry, I would freak out. But I decided not to

let it get to me, and if something was being said about me that bothered me, I'd do something about it."

In this case, the experience made her take her eating and exercise habits seriously. "I lost a bunch of weight, and now people are very nice about it and say, 'Wow, look what you did. You took all the negatives, and you turned it into something positive.' So it turned into a positive."

Michael Jordan is a famous contemporary example of a person who used criticisms to his advantage. In Jordan's case, he used every slight – big or small, real or perceived – as fuel to push himself, work harder and outplay everyone else. The internet is like the Wild West (election year or not), where people lobby crude comments back and forth without thinking.

As your star rises, so will the frequency of teasing and insults. Choose to use them to your advantage instead.

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