

INFLUENCER MARKETING GUIDEBOOK

PRNews'

INFLUENCER MARKETING GUIDEBOOK

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Foreword

Dear reader,

There are two ways to view plunging into influencer marketing: necessity, or opportunity.

It's clear enough that now the world is too wide to be filled up by traditional communications departments, ads and news media; the messages they create and disseminate may be passing unnoticed by the multitudes looking in other directions entirely. And yes, when it comes to harnessing the authenticity and presence of influencers to fill the gaps, it's too late to be a pioneer; nearly every well-known brand is already doing it to some extent.

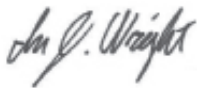
So if you're a communicator or brand just now getting into influencer marketing, you have an important choice to make. You can begin with a mindset of playing catch-up, but you can also do it with an attitude of excitement and adventure. You could reach audiences that have never heard of you before; audiences that are familiar with you could see a side of your business that the public has never seen before; even your own colleagues and employees could become newly energized and integrated into your communications efforts like never before.

In this first edition of PR News' Influencer Marketing Guidebook, Kara Hendrick of **Velcro Companies** points out that influencers are "the ones with skills, audiences and creative craft that we as a brand don't have." Tapping into those resources unleashes a wealth of possibilities. And though she shares with readers how she has been burned by mistakes, her results include initiatives that wouldn't have been possible if she hadn't set out to break new ground.

This extends far beyond marketing efforts to reputation, CSR and internal messaging. "The culture is what the employees say it is," observes Carmen Collins of **Cisco**—so why not amplify employee voices to cast them in the role of influencer and boost your messages' authenticity? Her story is an example of how becoming fluent with influencer marketing models can inspire new ideas that you apply to various facets of your communications.

We thank Hendrick, Collins and all our expert authors for their ideas, and we hope that however you apply them, we'll be seeing your brand pop up in delightful and unexpected places as we browse our feeds.

Sincerely,



Ian Wright
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1

Finding and Vetting Influencers

How Smart Google Searches Can Help Your Influencer Effort in 5 Steps

By Missy Voronyak and Katie Schutrop

Everywhere we look we hear about influencers. YouTubers, Instagrammers, bloggers and more are building online communities.

Working with influencers is not as simple as merely finding someone to write about your brand. It's critical to think through your business goals, discover where your audience lives online and find a select group of influencers who will drive conversation and are relevant to your brand.

There are many ways to approach finding influencers, such as hiring agencies to use sophisticated analytics programs to comb the internet, investing in subscription-based influencer software programs or contracting with an influencer network that can recruit and contract with influencers on your behalf.

While all of these approaches can be effective, the most cost-conscious and accessible way to find influencers is through manual research. Of course, this also is the most time-consuming.

Step 1: Find Where Your Audience Lives Online

You already know your target audience and are reaching it through social channels. Think about which of your channels has the most engagement. Is it Instagram, YouTube or Facebook? Where else do your audience members spend time online? Do they read blogs? Who writes the blogs, industry leaders or peers? What Facebook groups do they join? What hashtags do they use? Search for

message boards, forums and YouTube playlists your community may visit frequently.

Monitor the conversations your target audiences engage in. What problems are they trying to solve? How can you help? Finding where your audience lives online and monitoring conversations can help you be strategic about the influencers you approach and the content you ask them to create.

Step 2: Finding Influencers

Now that you have determined where your audience consumes media, the next step is to find voices that are relevant to your brand or space. This is where you can utilize free tools, especially Google, to scavenge the internet.

The following tips can help shape your search and put you on a path toward the best voices for your brand.

Keywords and Hashtags

The first place to start is with a basic Google search, using keywords to identify the type of influencer you're seeking. Consider topics influencers might discuss, platforms they use or their geographic location. Some examples: "Fashion bloggers in Minneapolis," "YouTube creators covering European travel," or "Blogs about diabetes and weight loss."

A basic search likely will surface influencers and point you in a direction to dig deeper. Take time to look through the types of posts these influencers share. What keywords are they using in their headlines? What hashtags do they use within their posts? Do they men-

tion other influencers in their space? Take note of any initial clues to help shape how you continue your search.

Hashtags your target audience uses might represent a category or topic area, a popular event or a common phrase. Try conducting a Google search for each. Your results could surface additional people using the hashtag across social media or blogs. For example, if you're looking to find pet enthusiasts, try searching #AdoptDontShop.

Don't get too caught up in working with influencers who have very high social reach. An influencer's interest in and relevance to your category is more important.

Once you've done this search, consider who else is using these hashtags. Who are the top voices? Who is receiving engagement on posts with these hashtags? The answers can help identify influential people across communities.

Common Search Phrases

Another approach is to take on the mentality of the audience you're trying to reach. How would one search for content influencers share? Consider searching phrases a user might type into Google to find posts around these topics.

For example, if you're trying to find travel influencers, search a topic relevant to that space, such as "How to visit Spain on a budget." Look through your results to find blogs, articles, YouTube videos or posts from people who answer that query. Where the post appears in lists of results is indicative of how well a post matches your query and the traffic a post receives. Use this lens to determine whom the top voices are in your space.

Use Google Advanced Search

Employ Google's Advanced Search tool to augment your search. Look for certain keywords while excluding others. You also can specify the time period you want searched.

Search for Lists

For broad topics, there likely are articles and blog posts that gather influential voices in a space. Conduct a search such as "Top Diabetes bloggers" or "Best organic food blogs of 2017." This is a great way to check what research exists and is publicly available.

Search Related Sites

Perhaps you find a blog you love and want to see similar sites. One way is to conduct a related search. In Google Chrome type "related:" into the search bar, then add the URL of the blog you're trying to find similar sites to and hit enter.

View Google Tab Results

As you go about searching topic areas, blogs and influencers, don't forget to look through the tabs located at the top of your Google results. Clicking through to Images, Videos, News and more can provide insight about those publishing content around your topic area.

Set Up Google Alerts

Another great way to stay on top of the latest content being published relevant to your brand is to set up Google Alerts. Head to [Google.com/alerts](https://www.google.com/alerts); type in a keyword, phrase or name. You will have the option of receiving email with links that contain your phrase as they're published, weekly or monthly. This can help you identify if there are new blogs or articles published on an area of interest, which can help surface influential content creators.

Utilize Insights from Google Analytics

If your brand has a website that uses Google Analytics, consider referencing top keywords and search terms that users search that lead them to your site. It's possible this could identify topics or phrases related to your brand that you could search and cross-reference as you find potential influencers.

Step 3: Vetting – Deeply Researching Influencers

Deciding which influencers to approach requires more research. Review each influencer using these steps: Check their social media handles, following and blog. Is their audience engaged? Do they publish frequently? Do they use social channels to drive traffic to content? Do they write about your business/category? Have they mentioned your brand? Do they work with brands? Do you have contacts in common?

A tip: To search easily for content within a blog, open Google Chrome, type the website URL and hit the space bar. This will alert Chrome you're searching within this URL only. Then type your keyword or phrase, hit enter. Your results will show posts or pages for the URL containing your search term.

The results will help you determine which influencers are right for you to approach. A word of caution: Don't get too caught up in working with influencers who have very high social reach. An influencer's interest in and relevance to your category is equally, if not more, important.

While you'd like all the influencers you found to work with you, some may not be interested. Compose a list of influencers two to three times the number you'd like to work with, ranked in order of those you feel are most relevant to your brand.

Step 4: Engaging With Influencers.

Before you reach out to influencers, think

through your engagement plan so you're ready to fully present the opportunity and be prepared to answer any questions. What are your campaign goals? Are you trying to drive awareness of your business? Sell a specific product? Register people for an event?

Now consider content that can help you achieve those goals. Put yourself in the influencer's shoes. The benefit of working with influencers, of course, is they bring an authentic voice to create content that's interesting to their community. Brainstorm how you can leverage that. Recall we mentioned observing topics and questions your audience discusses in online communities. Now is your chance to use that research. Create three (or more) angles to propose as content prompts for the influencer. Be open to hearing their ideas and evolving the plan to make it work for both of you.

Consider key messages you'd like them to build into their content and a simple call to action. Be prepared with a timeline of when you would like their content to be published, possibly aligning with a marketing campaign. You'll also want to give them the option of using existing or new assets, such as images, videos, infographics, etc. Last, you'll want to know your budget for paying influencers for their time and access to their community. You should plan your offer, but be prepared to negotiate, as many influencers have rates based on reach and previous partnerships.

Approaching Influencers

Typically brands approach influencers via email. You'll want your message to be personalized, including greeting the influencer by name and referencing his/her recent content and how much you enjoyed it. Also, plan to note early in the message that this is a sponsored opportunity; too many brands flood influencers' inboxes asking for free publicity, which is a thing of the past. To avoid ending

up in the spam folder, make sure your message is free of links or attachments.

Create a spreadsheet to track your communication with each influencer. Note the date of the communication and what was discussed. If you don't hear back from your first message, politely follow up in one week. If you still don't get a response, move on to the next person on your list.

Craft an Agreement With Influencers

You'll also want to create a partnership agreement, which can be approved via email, or a formal contract requiring a signature. Make sure you include everything you expect, such as the number of posts, sharing to social channels, payment and how long the content must live on the influencer's channels. Be sure to share disclosure copy for influencers to use in all of their posts to be compliant with FTC guidelines.

Step 5: Amplify Influencer Content

Working with influencers can help you reach new people within the influencers' communities, which should align with your target audience. But what if you could amplify that content to reach even more people? Many companies promote earned and owned content with paid media, and influencer content is no exception.

Consider investing in paid media options,

including promoting content on your social media channels and pulling it into your search engine marketing. If your influencer creates video, consider promoting it through YouTube ads. Link amplification, such as Outbrain or Taboola, can drive additional traffic to YouTube and traditional blogs with a fairly small investment. With a larger budget, consider leveraging native ads to drive traffic in a more targeted fashion.

On Your Way to Working With Influencers

Influencer marketing can be a great way to drive word-of-mouth and help achieve marketing goals, but finding the right influencers for your brand can be challenging and time consuming. The tips for manually searching and vetting influencers give you a roadmap to get started on this journey.

Building a solid engagement plan, and collaborating with influencers, can make a big difference in the engagement you receive and overall success of your campaign. ■

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How to Attract the Right Influencers for Your Brand, and Navigate the Risks

By PR News Editors

One prevalent piece of advice to brands is to, at the very least, monitor social media platforms, such as Twitter and Instagram. The thinking: People are speaking about your brand on these platforms whether or not you are participating in the conversations.

The advice is very similar regarding influencers. Love 'em or hate 'em, they're out there, talking about your industry, your competitors and your brand. In some cases it's a good bet that a lot of your customers are listening to them.

Of course some of this is old news to PR pros in industries like beauty and fashion, where influencers, mostly of the paid variety, hold tremendous sway. A Fashion and Beauty Monitor poll of 300+ professionals in those industries in the U.S. and U.K. found that budgets dedicated to influencers would rise nearly 60% in 2017. And 60% of the respondents said their companies already work "closely" with influencers. Working with paid and unpaid influencers is far from a simple matter of finding people with a hefty social media following and compensating them, either with money or something else of value, to tout your brand. Almost three-quarters (73%) of pros surveyed in the Fashion and Beauty poll said it's a challenge to find the right influencers. It's also a significant time investment, they said, and a task generally put on in-house staff.

To help your brand decide on a strategy

regarding influencers, we spoke with veteran PR pros with experience in this realm: Michael Brito, head of U.S. digital at **LEWIS Global Communications**, and Mary Grady, former managing director, media and public relations, at Los Angeles World Airports.

Finding the Right Influencers

Like PR measurement tools, there are plenty of influencers. The critical thing for Brito is finding the correct one(s) for your brand.

Smart brands are listening to the whole conversation, influencers and everyone else.

In fact, there are tools that will help you find influencers by topic; Brito mentions **Traackr** (traackr.com) and **Little Bird** (getlittlebird.com). In addition, his filter for influencers uses 3 R's: Reach, Relevance and Resonance. Reach: While the influencer must have a significant following, this is only one component, he says. For Brito, Relevance is whether or not the influencer talks or writes about "my industry" (and how often the influencer does so). Resonance concerns engagement; how many likes, retweets, shares does the influencer generate with a post?

While Brito isn't totally against paid influencers—he admits they can be useful for certain brands and demos, particularly millennials—he prefers unpaid influencers. "Their voice is more authentic," he says. "When I

read something written by a paid influencer, it has very little credibility with me.” In short, Brito says, “there are better ways [for brands] to spend their money” than paying for influencers.

Using Paid Media to Target Unpaid Influencers

So, how does one find the kind of influencers that will be useful? One approach, particularly with B2B brands, he says, involves using paid media to target influencers.

There are thousands of people who mention enterprise security online, Brito says. “What’s cool about social networks now is you can target just those people who have mentioned that subject.” Imagine 3,500 people have mentioned enterprise security in the last six months. “We then upload that list to Twitter and we target those people with branded content” prepared by the company we are representing, he says. But that content cannot be marketing material, “it has to be valuable content. It could be a blog post written by an engineer from the company [we’re working with] about the challenges of enterprise security.”

The Co-Ownership Approach

Another way Brito has cultivated influencers is co-creating a white paper with them. While the content the influencers created was branded by a particular company, the company “had no editorial control” over it. The quid pro quo for the influencers was that the company promised to broadcast the white paper to its followers, invest in search and share it with media. In turn, the influencers shared it with their networks.

Other Incentives

Once you’ve found influencers, Brito recommends traditional media relations tactics: Invite them to launch parties, send them

information about products, get on the phone with them. While these outreach approaches still should be done to attract paid media, they can be useful to build relationships with influencers, he says.

Risks

Companies must understand that unpaid influencers also may write negative things about your brand, he says. When the brand agrees with the criticism and has plans to address it, Brito urges the brand to respond to the influencer, using the platform where the criticism was made. “Smart brands are listening to the whole conversation, influencers and everyone else,” he says. On the other hand, “if there’s no true effort from a brand to change [something in response to an influencer’s critique], I’d recommend no response from the company.”

Fear the Honesty

Mary Grady and Brito agree on many points regarding unpaid influencers, particularly about the risks. In addition, she says, “not all brands trust that influencers can be your best brand ambassadors.” She suggests these brands are not using “performance metrics to understand the value [influencers] add to a brand.” Still, she understands some brands’ hesitancy. “While [influencers’] content is organic, authentic, real and honest, it’s the honesty that [some] brands fear.”

No Money, No Problem

For Grady, however, influencers are an effective way to get a lot of traction on a small budget. She’s working with unpaid influencers who travel from and through LA often, urging them to converse on social platforms about a multi-year, multibillion dollar capital improvement program underway at LA’s airport, LAX. “Word of mouth and peer recommendations are trusted by consumers who see

influencers as credible opinion leaders with engaging content,” she says. Grady says the second campaign LAX did touting the capital improvement program, which included influencers, did far better than its first, which was devoid of influencers.

The influencers she’s working with, chosen by an agency, are concentrated in three areas: Navigation (around LAX), Food and Beauty. She and her team engage the influencers in conversation on their social sites; send them insider tips about navigating through the air-

port during construction and invite them to enjoy LAX’s new cuisine and retail offerings.

While Grady’s audience is vast—75 million passengers used LAX last year—so is the field of influencers. She prefers influencers who have a distinct personality and knowledge of the LAX brand; have an authentic voice that matches well with your brand’s identity; and those who remain true to your campaign strategy. Like most PR initiatives, “you must do your homework,” she says. ■

7 Steps to Influencer Selection Success That Flows From a Strong Strategy

By Ashley Butler

Influencer marketing should be a staple in any social media strategy. Traditional models of disseminating content no longer work in today's always-on, digital landscape. Social media platforms like Instagram, Facebook and Twitter have enabled a swift rise in the everyday user's ability to cultivate a following—blossoming into what is now known as the influencer landscape.

Any influencer marketing program begins with a strong strategy, which should include goals and objectives, target audiences, content themes and guidelines, as well as key performance indicators. All of these elements should directly inform the influencer selection criteria.

Doing your homework upfront to identify the appropriate people to partner with is critical to success. The participants not only reflect on your brand, but also directly impact the performance of the program. Following are seven influencer selection tips for developing effective partnerships and content that send your brand's message to the right people.

1. Build a Long List of Influencers

Once you define your influencer parameters, consider using tools such as **GroupHigh**, **TapInfluence** and **IZEA** to tap into influencer databases. These tools can help you parse the digital landscape to get access to influencer names, social footprint, personal performance metrics and contact information.

Profile	Location	Age	Employment	Total Reach	Avg. Rate	CPE
1	Midland, MI, United States	28 yrs	Self Employed	93K	\$270	\$2.20
2	Brooklyn, NY, United States	31 yrs	Self Employed	18K	\$180	\$7.48
3	Kailua Kona, HI, United States	35 yrs	Self Employed	16K	\$60	\$0.36

Tools such as *TapInfluence* house extensive databases of influencer information, allowing you to search, select and categorize potential partners.

2. Apply Reach to Your Selection Criteria

To build a loyal influencer network, brands should start first by evaluating candidates based on reach, which is defined by the audience size. Consider the following categories:

- Celebrity:** well-known superstar with mass reach and a high price tag. Celebrities tend to be effective due to their audience size, but tend to have a less engaged audience. A recent study by influencer marketing platform **Markerly** surveyed 2 million social media

influencers, showing that as follower base increases, engagement rate decreases.

b. Macro-influencer: has a large following simply from building their online personal brand. Also known as a taste-maker, macro-influencers have a significant presence and are often approached by brands for sponsored posts. These folks have a distinguished voice and brand aesthetic and speak to a niche topic such as veganism, military life, or shoe fashion. If you can dream it, there's likely a group of influencers talking about it.

c. Micro-influencer: someone with a following of less than 10,000 and an engaged audience. Like macro influencers, micro influencers are building an online following by sharing specific content that speaks to their audience.

Be vigilant when vetting influencers' content for profanity, highly political posts, obscenity, and competitor mentions, otherwise your campaign could quickly backfire.

d. Everyday brand advocate: your average fan who engages with your brand frequently online. These users may not have a high follower count, but have a voice due to regularity of interaction. You can grow this community quickly with minimal effort if attended to properly. This list may not be worthy of a big campaign push, but you're wise to keep these people happy by regular engagement and personalized programs or discounts. Community management goes a long way.

3. Categorize Your Influencer List Based on Relevance

Relevance measures the contextual fit for

Quick Keys to Selection Success

- Build a long list of influencers
- Consider reach of network
- Categorize for brand relevance
- Understand audience engagement level
- Vet their content
- Personalize your outreach to partners
- Have a backup plan

your brand. With a large list of influencers, assess who would be most relevant to your audience based on your brand. This can be done through applying brand personas to determine who is appropriate to engage with based on the categories and topics they are discussing. Whether you're looking for a food blogger, fashion Instagram star, or a money-saving centric Facebook feed, define the appropriate buckets for your organization and campaign's purpose and then slot influencers into those categories based on their content themes, persona and audience engagement. Find people who naturally connect to your mission, topics, product or service.

4. Identify the Level of Engagement to Determine Resonance

Focus on influencers who have a committed and engaged following as this is a strong indication of authenticity. A strong influencer posts content that is consumable, likeable and often commented on. As they say, it's not how many friends you can count, but how many friends you can count on to create engagement and build brand awareness.

5. Vet the Content

As many followers as they may have, sometimes an influencer's content doesn't fit your

brand. For example, does the influencer have a strong following and post beautiful photos that would speak to your audience, but also employs controversial commentary? Might not be a good fit. Be vigilant when vetting content for profanity, highly political posts, obscenity, and competitor mentions, otherwise your campaign could quickly backfire.

6. Personalize Your Outreach Approach

Once you've selected the right partner(s), tailor your invitation for participation to what you've learned about them. Did you choose this person because she or he is making amazing #avocado toasts every day? Make that a part of your outreach strategy. You've worked hard to select influencers who fit the mold, now use that research to solidify the relationship.

7. Have a Plan B and C

Cast your net wide initially to account for influencers who decline to participate, which could be as high as 80% depending on the

ask. There are many factors that play into influencer participation including, level of effort of the request (are you asking for a video or a text-based tweet?), turnaround time (influencers have personal lives too; make sure the production schedule allows for at least a week or ideally two) and content topic (is it sensitive in nature?). Just like your brand on social media, many influencers follow a strict strategy and content calendar in order to build an engaged follower base. Your organization may or may not fit into their plan.

There's a science to selecting influencers. Align the evaluation process to your overall social media strategy to ensure you identify partners who will elevate your brand message, rather than dilute it. Once you've found a handful of good social media mavens, nurture the relationships to ensure it's the start of a long-lasting and authentic partnership. ■

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In the B2B Tech Space, It's All About Your Niche and Your Micro-Influencers

By Sylvia Laws

B2B tech marketing used to be pretty straightforward—a good mix of advertising, trade shows and a PR program in place was all you needed to be set for success. But there has been a huge shift in the B2B tech marketing landscape recently, creating cracks and gaps in those reliable marketing strategies.

The B2B customer and buyer journey is now more complex than ever with communication channels being fragmented into thousands of pieces. How and where customers find their information is no longer uniform or linear. Cue influencer marketing, which has been an extremely successful strategy for B2C brands for some time now. The increased use of brand influencers is one of the most impactful strategies in content marketing. Today, B2B tech brands are recognizing the resounding success these influencers can have on their marketing strategy and they want a piece of the action too.

When 84% of B2B buyers start the purchasing process with a referral, it is easy to see that your next customer is not going to find you without a lot of help from your advocates—the influencers. Third-party endorsements and sources of information that are trusted and influential can create a huge advantage for B2B tech brands ranging from shortened sales cycles to larger deals and to an increase in leads and revenue.

You may be thinking that this all sounds great and you are ready to take the next step

and identify your brand's influencers, but this is where the hard work comes in. Many people assume influencers can be found easily and reached out to on social networks. This is true if you are talking to consumers, but what about if you are trying to pinpoint influencers in niche markets such as engineering? How do you distinguish influential engineers? After all, a large Twitter and Instagram follower base is not the best validation for reach and engagement levels, nor do clicks or likes equal a change in perception or indicate any action taken.

Micro vs. Macro and Identifying the Right Influencers for Your Brand

When it comes to identifying the right influencers, there is one very important thing to bear in mind: Do not be distracted by the macro-influencers. Although they may seem extremely appealing due to their millions of followers, these influencers are often too expensive, busy and difficult to engage—unless you have a state-of-the-art piece of technology, in which case they may just show an interest. Instead, focus on identifying micro-influencers who are very influential amongst your customer base. This group of influencers are truly knowledgeable, passionate and authentic and are seen as a trusted source when it comes to recommendations. Although their follower numbers may not be as high as a macro-influencer, their engagement levels are often strong.

In the B2B tech space, many of the most powerful conversations are not taking place on public social platforms like Twitter or

LinkedIn. The most influential conversations may be between small groups of highly-specialised experts and the fans who follow them. The journey to finding the right influencers for a product or service category is both art and science. In a recent report on influencer marketing by **Traackr**, Dr. Konstanze Alex-Brown, who leads social & academic B2B influencer relations programs and influencer content co-creation at **Dell**, explained that “Many of the most influential conversations may be taking place in closed forums and discussion groups and so tracking is more difficult to do compared to B2C. They are influencing a very small, very technical audience and that may be hard to measure. Finding those influencers may take months of careful work.”

When compiling your list of niche influencers, begin by noting down all of the thought leaders, analysts, bloggers and regular contributors that are featured in your target media. Look at their online presence, who they are engaging with, what technical forums and communities they are a part of, what books they have written and what topics they are covering, and who they are following—the latter is a good indication of the direction you should be heading when searching for new influencers.

In addition, constant monitoring of online conversations is required to identify emerging influencers, understand their points of view and surface topics that matter to your brand. If you want to broaden your horizon and find new influencers that are topically relevant whom you might not have come across before, it is worth looking to use specialty software. There are many influencer marketing platforms in the market that allow you to search influencers using a specific topic, for example: **BuzzSumo**, **Traackr** and **Followerwonk**.

Once you have your list of influencers, start creating deeper relationships with them

Your Niche Influencer Marketing Takeaways

- The B2B customer and buyer journey is now more complex than ever, with communication channels being fragmented into thousands of pieces
- 84% of B2B buyers start the purchasing process with a referral
- When identifying the right influencers, do not be distracted by the macro-influencers. After all, a large Twitter and Instagram follower base is not the best validation for reach and engagement levels
- Although micro-influencers' follower numbers may not be as high as a macro-influencer, their engagement levels may be strong
- Many of the most powerful conversations are not taking place on public social platforms like Twitter or LinkedIn, but in closed forums and discussion groups
- When compiling your list of niche influencers, begin by noting down all of the thought leaders, analysts, bloggers and regular contributors that are featured in your target media
- Constant monitoring of online conversations is required to identify emerging influencers
- Create deeper relationships with your influencers so your brand gets to know them and the influencers get to know the brand and products intimately
- An influencer relationship will work best if there is a common cause—an individual passionate about something recognises passion in someone else
- When creating content for your brand, be clear about your goal before you start, be creative, engaging, and passionate about your technology. And remember, don't sell but educate; nurture the customer towards you
- Engaging with key micro-influencers in your industry can be a differentiator between your brand and its competitors

so your brand gets to know them and the influencers get to know the brand and products intimately. Also, this relationship will work best if there is a common cause—an individual passionate about something recognizes passion in someone else. With this in mind you have a head start.

Remember: Always evaluate the value of an influencer based on the relevance of their audience to your buyers.

Micro-Influencer Collaboration: Do's and Don'ts

Whether you are looking to engage with influencers for a particular campaign or just to introduce your brand to them, it is best to start targeting a good half-dozen influencers at a time and pitch them the concept. By doing so, you will get greater insights into how they operate, what topics and causes they are passionate about and how they like to engage with brands. As you start seeing success, then this is when you start to introduce other influencers to the mix.

Remember when it comes to your marketing content, always consider where you can best incorporate your influencers. These collaborations can be anything from interviews, blog posts, whitepapers, events or simply just providing tangible quotes. You should always have influencers at the back of your mind whenever you are creating new or repurposing old content—just like you do when optimising your content for SEO purposes or thinking about the social or advertising channels it can be promoted on.

And now the important question: Are the micro-influencers really going to engage with your content?

In B2B tech marketing we are spending thousands of dollars daily on creating content for our customers. There are many rules and guidelines available to us all from trusted sources on how best to do this:

- Be clear about your goal before your start—is this about qualified leads or brand loyalty?
- Be creative, engaging, passionate about your technology
- Be persona-driven—what are your customers' pain points?
- Don't sell but educate—nurture the customer toward you

Ultimately you want your content to be shared and, most importantly, you want influencers to share it.

For example when selling to engineers, to the technical engineering mind, research shows us that information can be sourced almost anywhere and it also shows us that the engineers are either blocking content or the companies they work for block it for them. This means we have a smaller window through which to reach our audience and this space is highly populated by our competition. So how do we stand out?

An influencer relationship will work best if there is a common cause—an individual passionate about something recognizes passion in someone else.

Nothing impresses the technical mind more than innovation, ingenuity and expertise and they will listen to those who have a proven track record or knowledge in their field. So we need these influencers to respect what we do, to recognize where our technology can help. Now the simple truth is, these influencers will not share anything that is out of context or poorly written/created that is technologically incorrect and has no vision. No amount of creative genius will persuade the technology influencer to interact with a brand that does not invest in giving the market quality technology reporting and analysis.

Invest in content that comes from the knowledgeable—don't just farm it out to the local wordsmith, because context is what makes the difference. Do this well and the influencers will reach out to you.

Final Thoughts

Engaging with key micro-influencers in your industry can be a differentiator between

your brand and its competitors. It will increase your brand's visibility, develop brand advocates and build trust—not only amongst your customers but also from those who are truly respected in your community. ■

Sylvia Laws is managing director, Technical Associates Group. @tpsylvia

Partner With Influencers Outside Your Industry and Reach New Audiences

By Nancy Vaughn

When it comes to selecting influencers for a brand, there is an art to collaboration as well as a healthy dose of experimentation. Depending on your goals, the strategy usually involves thorough research, relationship building and creative content creation. For many influencers, the internet is not only a promotional tool but also an online journal covering their professional pursuits and personal lives. This means with proper research and authentic relationship building, there are opportunities for brands to cross-pollinate their products and services into other industries that they may not initially pursue.

It's typical for fashion brands to pursue fashion influencers, beauty brands to pursue beauty influencers, food brands to pursue foodie influencers and so on. A missed opportunity can occur when you always stick to an industry or niche. Looking to other industries can lead to new trends and innovative ideas for your clients. Plus, connecting with cross-industry influencers and their audiences can lead to new customers and more opportunities for revenue as well.

Identify Your Goals & Research

You'll want to start with identifying the goals for an influencer campaign, along with what you'd like to promote and why you'd like to explore cross-industry collaborations.

- Would you like to reach a new audience

or demographic?

- What are you trying to accomplish?
- Is your current content in need of a refresh?
- Are you seeking feedback from a different target group?
- Is your business moving into this niche or is there a new product/service offering that you're considering?
- Is this simply something you'd like to try?

Once you identify why you'd like to launch a campaign, you'll be able to set realistic expectations and your preliminary goals. (They're preliminary because you may change your focus based on the influencer you partner with, or the influencer may have ideas that changes the scope and expands your goals.)

It's important to look at various platforms because sometimes an influencer will have minimal engagement on one platform, but a great deal on another.

Look for Clues

Now it's time to research influencers who would be a good fit for your brand. Start with the obvious ones that may work for your industry (i.e. fashion brand with fashion bloggers, beauty brand with beauty Instagrammers, etc.) and look for clues. Many of the

influencers are not only talking about a variety of brands and topics on their platforms (i.e. blogs and social media), they're also open to working with different brands if it serves their goals and their audience. It allows them to reach a new demographic, increase their readership and have greater influence beyond their niche/industry.

For this reason, their content may appeal to a different audience and you can see those individuals who are commenting and interacting with them. You want to look for engagement on these sites, not just followers. Not only does the engagement allow you to get to know the influencer a little bit better (and possibly what/how to pitch), but also which other influencers may be possible partners for your brand. Look for who your typical influencers are connecting with, who they are following and who is following and influencing them and what they're commenting on across a variety of platforms. It's important to look at various platforms because sometimes an influencer will have minimal engagement on one platform, but a great deal on another. This will also help to inform you if they're a fit based on where you're looking for your brand to be visible.

When you're really paying attention, you may find that your product or service isn't ideal for the influencer but actually beneficial for someone who makes a guest appearance on their channel, for instance a spouse, kids and/or friends. In participating and observing conversations with influencers, you may find that your client's product/service isn't an ideal fit for them, but great for their husband, loved one, or teenager instead.

And finally, ask for recommendations. "It's a small world" applies to influencer circles as they form a small, tight-knit group in the digital world, and they also tend to be a bit more collaborative with one another. So, if you have had success with an influencer, ask

How to Find Influencer Relationships

- Like traditional media, working with influencers requires an ongoing commitment to establishing, cultivating, and maintaining relationships. When the relationship-building is done correctly over time, you'll know just whom to contact for specific client stories and collaboration opportunities.
- Set target goals of how many influencers you want to connect/interact with weekly.
- Search various platforms to identify where to best find possible "fits" for your clients, and make a contact/spreadsheet noting these contacts with their associated brands.
- Search keywords and hashtags to identify new possible leads and contacts
- Seek recommendations from prior successful influencer relationships and industry or cross-industry connections.

them for recommendations and feedback on the best bloggers, their favorite Instagrammers, Snapchatters to partner with and who might be a good fit outside of your industry/niche. If you have a good relationship with the influencer, they may help to make the intro and connection for you.

Segment Your List

Another way to consider another industry niche influencer is to segment your list. List industries that are obvious fits for your brand, but also those that may be aspirational (what your brand may want to be associated with). Perhaps your client is in the food space and you want to connect with tech. Or your client is in the tech space and wants to investigate the fashion space. The same way that you

may tie these industries together through traditional media pitches, there are select influencers who will know how to implement a variety of content for their audience without looking like a paid/staged piece.

You also want to segment your list by status. When you're exploring a new industry, you (or your client) may want to take the "go big or go home" approach. It's a good idea to identify which influencers may take a bit more time to cultivate a relationship with versus an easier ask. Since you may be entering a new market, it's OK to test it out with a smaller influencer first to see if it's actually a good fit. Especially if the target is secondary or unexpected. Another thing to keep in mind is that some of these influencers find quick success and tend to have a commitment to the brands and respect for the PRs they build a relationship with early on in their influencer journey, which can be beneficial to both parties as they both grow.

On the other hand, if you have clearly outlined goals, solid content and in many cases, the budget, then go for the bigger fish. Regardless of size or status, be sure to vet the influencer you're partnering with by securing media kits, success rates (from previously tracked metrics) and/or recommendations.

Once you have your wish list down, explore these types of influencers on various platforms. Perhaps you see a technology expert whom can be dressed in your client's garments. Or your beauty brand that can partner with a fitness expert who discusses her favorite post-workout products. Keep in mind that these cross-industry influencers don't necessarily have to be an expert in your industry. They're an expert or enthusiast of their niche and ultimately have expertise and knowledge about their audience. While they should authentically connect with your brand and its message, a solid influencer will know what will work and resonate with her/

Quick Ideas for Partnering With Influencers

Once you've identified the influencers you'd like to connect with, there are a variety of ways to partner with them and your campaigns should be custom-tailored to the distinct needs of your brand, and in a way that makes the most of the influencer relationship.

In addition to simply having an influencer take a photo with your product and post it on Instagram or do a quick Snap, other opportunities may include:

- ☐ Hosting a Facebook Live or Instagram Stories series
- ☐ Share behind-the-scenes footage
- ☐ Sample products with select influencers and conduct giveaways with their audience
- ☐ Hosting a webinar
- ☐ Creating a product or service offering together
- ☐ Establish a "limited time only" initiative
- ☐ Hosting a small dinner gathering or meet and greet with your audience and theirs
- ☐ Invite the influencer to attend or host an established event for your brand
- ☐ Engage in Instagram takeovers (this can involve the influencer on the brand's channel, or someone from the brand taking over the influencer's channel)

his/their audience content-wise, so be open to their suggestions in the new niche you decide to explore.

Be Prepared to Make the Connection

Cross-pollinating industries isn't as simple as "Everyone eats, let's do food!" or "Everyone wears clothes, let's do fashion!" When you opt to explore another industry, neither your audience nor theirs should be confused by the partnership. Your brand doesn't want to

look like it's simply attempting to pay for cool points (as opposed to really connecting) and the influencers don't usually want to appear as if they (or their audience) can be bought. You'll want to be prepared to show and tell why it makes sense for your brand and the influencer to work together.

Venturing into another industry may take a bit more work and research because it may be new. Your goal will be to share stories that establish a genuine connection between you and the influencer. This can often make for captivating and unique content, and work that your brand can be proud of producing.

If the connection isn't super obvious, it doesn't mean that it can't be done, but it does mean you and the influencer will need to

work closely together to produce realistic and reliable content that will make sense for both brands. If you can't find that common ground, then it may not be the right partnership or the incorrect time to work together.

When partnering with influencers, be open to looking beyond the apparent picks within your brand's industry. With the digital landscape providing endless opportunities for both brands and influencers, exploring and experimenting with partnerships may allow your brand visibility in front of a new audience, a chance to create compelling content and new possible revenue streams. ■

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Without a Net: How a Hilton Resort Pulls Off Influencer Relations Sans Contracts

By PR News Editors

In this Q&A with Amanda Harris, senior director of PR & marketing at **The Diplomat Beach Resort** in Miami, a **Hilton** hotel, we find out how her team prizes authenticity over paperwork.

PR News: What are the unique qualities of your brand that affect what you look for in an influencer?



Amanda Harris,
Senior Director of
PR & Marketing,
The Diplomat
Beach Resort

Harris: We really look into the authenticity of our influencers. We work with PR agencies locally nationally and globally who constantly present people they have relationships with. We stay away from celebrities and look more for micro-influencers. We look for an authentic voice rather than paid promotion. I think that society today is getting oversaturated with digital influencers and everybody is looking for somebody that's legit and real. Consumers today are more educated and can call out something fake or staged. It's not a one-off experience for us where the influencer takes a picture in our pool and leaves; we want them to come back and have a long-term, real relationship.

PR News: What does your vetting process entail? How do you weed out those who won't be a good fit, might cause problems or are fraudulent?

Harris: We use a lot of digital analytical tools. We specifically work with a social media agency that helps us from an analytic

point of view, but we also just use common sense. On Instagram if a person says they have 500k followers but get one or two likes, we look at the kind of engagement they get and see if the comments look like robots. We haven't been spoofed yet; it's something we put a lot of thought and time into.

PR News: What is the "onboarding" process like for an influencer you work with? Any important guidelines that make life easier for everyone?

Harris: We try to avoid too much of a "process." We feel it's not a "real" experience when you put it in a contract. We take a real risk with influencers; we hope they will write a great story about us, but if someone doesn't feel we're worthy, we respect that. We don't want it to be forced.

The biggest thing that sets us up for success is that we personally meet every single member of the media that comes to the property. Whether we host them for a night or a dinner, we welcome them with handwritten welcome cards and a gift bag. Our GM typically does a property tour as soon as they get there and then I might have dinner with them; there's a lot of personal face time spent rather than "here's a contract."

PR News: What do you find that influencers usually expect from you, the brand?

Harris: There's a whole slew of expectations, but the ones we work with are not paid. They typically expect a complimentary stay with amenities included. We have a relation-

ship with an airline so sometimes we can offer a flight in; sometimes we can work with the convention bureau to offer a city experience.

PR News: What tools do you use to measure the success of influencer campaigns? Any key metrics?

Harris: Our PR and social media agencies have value metrics they use for digital and print ROI. They send us alerts daily on coverage we're getting and at the end of the month we compile a report that I use in my meetings that help me say how much reach and value we got out of our efforts. We especially measure circulation and reach; those are the two big ones.

PR News: Do you have backup plans in place in the event that an influencer goes badly off message or becomes tarnished to the extent that it looks

bad to be partnering with them?

Harris: When you go more micro and not at the celebrity level there's a lot less risk with that. There's less publicity on a major scale. No, we don't have a crisis plan per se, but as someone who deals with crisis management for the property, if it got to that level we would politely ask them to leave and maybe even use tools on our side that block us from being tagged. Thankfully that has not happened.

PR News: Can you think of a particular influencer post or effort that worked really well for you? What made it work?

Harris: Something we're super into right now is video content and animated GIFs. Even if you're just filming the ocean waves going back and forth we're finding better engagement with video and animated content. ■

How Virginia Captures New Audiences and New ‘Lovers’ Through Influencers

By PR News Editors

These days, you can get valuable advice from nearly any kind of brand or organization on the state of influencer marketing—even an actual state. With this in mind, we spoke with Caroline Logan, director of communications for Virginia Tourism Corporation, whose famous slogan “Virginia is for lovers” is a brand in itself.

PR News: What are the unique qualities of your brand that affect what you look for in an influencer?

Logan: As a travel brand, we are seeking influencers that can paint a vivid image of a Virginia vacation experience that makes their followers say “I want to go there and do that.” Since travel is a pretty universal interest, that generally gives us a pretty wide net to cast with influencers who cover a variety of topics: travel, lifestyle, food, outdoors, fashion, history, health, music and more. Working with influencers also gives us the opportunity to share travel experiences with audiences we may not have reached otherwise.

PR News: What does your vetting process entail? How do you weed out those who won’t be a good fit, might cause problems or are fraudulent?

Logan: We have a careful vetting process that involves team members from every discipline of our marketing department: PR, Brand and Digital. We of course look at metrics such as number of followers on social and Google



Instagram influencer @dcfoodporn's post emphasized the facet of Virginia tourism that his followers are particularly interested in.

Analytics, but we also dive a little deeper to look past the numbers. An influencer may have a large following on social media, but are there followers engaging with their content? Are they commenting, sharing and clicking? Are they engaging with their audience regularly? Does the tone and style of their content match what our target audience is looking for? How often do they post? Is there one social media platform they lean towards over another? Are they or their audience located in a target market? Is their audience similar to our target audience? Those are important questions to ask each time we are vetting an influencer.

We also do some digging to see if their personal preferences would match up with the kind of experience we want them to write about. For example, we wouldn't ask a blogger who doesn't drink to cover Virginia wine country or our craft beer scene. We also

wouldn't want to ask a blogger who hates seafood to come cover the Virginia Oyster Trail. It takes time, but gathering thoughtful intelligence on an influencer early on will save both parties time and potential headaches if you make sure that you're mutually well-matched from the get-go. At the end of the day, you want to make sure that the partnership is beneficial for both the influencer and your brand, so doing your homework ahead of time is key.

Gathering thoughtful intelligence on an influencer early on will save both parties time and potential headaches.

Also, don't be alarmed if during the vetting the process an influencer requests to be accompanied by their personal photographer and canine companion (who is an influencer in his own right). Most do not travel alone. After all who would take those amazing shots of them?

Also keep in mind, they are vetting your brand too. Be prepared to answer any concerns or questions they may have about your brand.

PR News: What is the "onboarding" process like for an influencer you work with? Any important guidelines that make life easier for everyone?

Logan: We share our policies and guidelines with influencers very early on. We find that this sets the stage for expectation management on both sides. It is important to be flexible, if you're able, and work with the influencer to make sure their needs are being met, as well. You are hiring them to create content, yes, but it's also a partnership you want both parties to walk away with a positive experience, so leaving some wiggle room for negotiations is always important.

In terms of logistics, we share our logos, hashtags and social media links with them before they travel to Virginia. This gives them the opportunity to familiarize themselves with our brand and also give easy access so they are not searching for a hashtags while on the road.

PR News: What do you find that influencers usually expect from you, the brand?

Logan: Content alignment is key. It's important for both parties to share content on social channels, while also using agreed-upon handles and hashtags to align the brand and the influencer.

PR News: What tools do you use to measure the success of influencer campaigns? Any key metrics?

Logan: The way we measure success really depends on the influencer and the campaign. Of course, sometimes it will be a win for numbers: likes, shares, comments, new followers, etc. But there are long-term, intangible results that can also be viewed as huge successes. For example:

- Earned media coverage
- Repeat partnerships in the future
- Connections to other influencers or media
- More coverage than contractually agreed upon

PR News: Do you have backup plans in place in the event that an influencer goes badly off message or becomes tarnished to the extent that it looks bad to be partnering with them?

Logan: Thankfully, we haven't run into this issue. This underscores the importance of vetting as well as setting expectations early on in the partnership, so that you both know what you are getting into and what is expect-

ed out of the partnership. If an influencer was to go badly off message, there are two silver linings here: If it's content (e.g. a blog article) it can be edited. If it's on social media it can be deleted. Additionally, consumers' attention spans are extremely short these days, so if something were to go awry, it would hopefully fade out of memory fairly quickly.

PR News: Can you think of a particular influencer post or effort that worked really well for you? What made it work?

Logan: We have worked with many influencers in the past year and a half. Some were Grace Atwood, The Stripe; Cathy Anderson, Poor Little it Girl; SORTEDfood; Justin

Schuble, DC Food Porn; and Kelly Rizzo, Eat Travel Rock and even musician Jason Mraz. Each brought their own style and flair, but the most valuable of their posts were the authentic, in-the-moment, "OMG, this is so awesome!" posts.

One of our favorite stories was when Justin Schuble traveled to Virginia for a "Birthplace of American Booze" familiarization tour. He actually needed to be excused from a final during his senior year at Georgetown University. Justin came back to Virginia a few months later with his family to explore Virginia's wine country. ■

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Why Velcro Sticks to Working With Legal When Dealing With Influencers

By PR News Editors

In this Q&A we asked Kara Hendrick, manager of global digital strategy at **Velcro Companies**, to let us in the “loop” about how she handles influencers.

PR News: What are the unique qualities of your brand that affect what you look for in an influencer?

Hendrick: Given the versatility of our brand and the fact that we are integrated into so many different spaces, this really allows us to work with a variety of different influencers. In the last few years the idea of “influencer marketing” has become quite large and sometimes fluffy, but to us, influencers can come in the form of a “traditional” blogger, vloggers, lifestyle personalities, employees, or my personal favorite—our actual consumers themselves (as they’re the original influencers).

We work with influencers in a variety of ways, including brand awareness campaigns, new product launches, content creation, and trademark education. On our B2C side,

our product categories have also guided our various influencer relationships, focusing on the worlds of home, DIY, education, crafting, gardening, outdoors and travel.

While number of social followers, website traffic or relations with our retail partners are always nice to see, it’s quality and not quantity. As we have a lean marketing team internally, the ability to receive community insights, thoughts and content from influencers is invaluable. With that being said, given the wide scope of our brand, it’s very important to pinpoint objectives and goals (for both parties).

This past year, we additionally launched our own internal influencer platform, “The Velcro Brand Ambassador Movement,” consisting of brand enthusiasts, content creators, product testers and social media personalities.

PR News: What does your vetting process entail? How do you weed out those who won’t be a good fit, might cause problems or are fraudulent?

Hendrick: The vetting process varies on the type of influencer relationship. Deciding what the expectations are from both parties are and making sure the relationship feels natural and organic is always the best first step. Many influencers have their own brand and their own communities they



Velcro's team-up with Sabrina Soto can be viewed at youtu.be/5OP0VcT3RL8

have worked hard to build. If there is not a right fit, there is no point in trying to force it, as this benefits neither party.

Discussing expectations pertaining to costs and compensation up front is vital. While it may perhaps work for some brands, paying \$100,000 for a “one and done” video by a YouTube personality is not something that we are able nor strategically want to do. Driving conversations about rates and costs upfront can be very helpful. We then work extensively with our legal team to make sure we’re adhering to industry rules and contractually are in a good place. I cannot stress enough the importance of working with a legal team. There is a method to their madness.

Influencers have established their own communities and relations; stay mindful of that.

Case in point: I once decided to forego legal assistance with a technology “influencer” because I trusted him and we seemed to have a very good rapport. Big mistake. Ultimately, he went radio-silent, did not produce any of the brainstormed content or fulfill any of the agreed-upon promotions. I got burned and it most likely could have been avoided. Legal also assists in doing a bit of double-checking to make sure that prospective influencers do not have a shady past or that their opinions are not extremely different or misaligned with our brand’s mission.

PR News: What is the “onboarding” process like for an influencer you work with? Any important guidelines that make life easier for everyone?

Hendrick: The Velcro brand trademark is our company and brand’s most important asset, so we always start with educating influencers on our fun history and how to use the

trademark correctly. Having already prepared brand and logo guidelines has allowed for smooth onboarding and a better understanding of our overall brand requirements.

PR News: What do you find that influencers usually expect from you, the brand?

Hendrick: It’s essential to let influencers do their own thing—they’re the pros, they’re the ones with skills, audiences and creative craft that we as a brand don’t have. Don’t try to squash that. Reiterate the important and non-negotiable expectations (in our case correct usage of our trademark and product usage)—then it’s go time. When working with influencers it’s important to remember that they have established their own communities and relations, and to stay mindful of that. Depending on the type of relationship, a contract will be put in place pertaining to the level of compensation and key expectations.

PR News: What tools do you use to measure the success of influencer campaigns? Any key metrics?

Hendrick: Our key metrics totally depend on what our campaign objective is. Are we trying to help spread the word about a new product? Are we hoping to work with a new audience unlike anyone we have worked with before? Are we looking for new imagery, assets and really great content? The objective will depend on our KPIs.

PR News: Do you have backup plans in place in the event that an influencer goes badly off message or becomes tarnished to the extent that it looks bad to be partnering with them?

Hendrick: It’s imperative to always be proactive, and aware of all possibilities. Making sure everyone is on the same page internally (marketing, legal, consumer teams)

and externally (PR teams) is a helpful way to stay prepared in the event of anything going haywire. Pertaining to content creation and promotion, we always double-check and work with influencers before anything is posted and promoted.

PR News: Can you think of a particular influencer post or effort that worked really well for you? What made it work?

Hendrick: In addition to our amazing ambassadors within our Velcro brand ambassador community, we have worked with

lifestyle expert Sabrina Soto in the past. She is a fantastic example of a brilliant influencer: smart, savvy, fun and creative, with a strong work ethic and a great understanding of our brand and products. She produced multiple pieces of content (blogs, videos, imagery), hosted Twitter parties, demos and private DIY events, while also helping lead our Classroom Makeover initiative across the country, giving deserving teachers and communities in Joplin, Missouri and Flint, Michigan a brand-new classroom and learning environment. ■

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How to Select the Data You Need to Find the Right Influencers for Your Brand

By Danielle Lewis

I would like to propose that we need to rethink influencer marketing. Let me explain.

When the wonderful world of influencers arrived on our doorstep, we considered it the new word-of-mouth advertising. Just like giving a recommendation to a friend, but now we could do it en masse. Word-of-mouth however, is traditionally an unpaid format. So while the brand could do their best to provide an amazing product or service and give their customers a fantastic experience, they were left at the mercy of the customer as to whether they would speak kindly to their friends and family, or even mention it at all.

Enter influencers who speak to huge audiences and suddenly not only could a brand get access to word of mouth at scale, but they could control the message as well.

However at some point, between all the chatter about followers, engagement and bikinis, the customer that we are ultimately trying to reach has all but been forgotten about.

Now if we contrast that with advertising, when you engage a media agency to run your ads, or even if you are self-serving in Google Ads, the customer target is the first thing that we think about. So what happened with influencer marketing?

The good news is that the data a brand needs to determine who the audience of an influencer is before they work with an influencer is readily available, and I'm going to give you some practical strategies on how to get it.

What Data Are We Looking For?

So what data is available, and what is important? Well firstly, what is important? Important data is the data that's going to help us ensure that when the influencer posts, it gets seen by a consumer that is going to buy into our brand message—and buy your product or service. We want to know as much as we can about those followers, including:

- Follower count
- Engagement rate
- Audience age
- Audience gender
- Audience ethnicity
- Audience location (Country, State, City or Town/Suburb)
- Interests - what topics does their audience care about?
- When are the followers most active online
- Content alignment

Before we go on, let's dive into what each data point means, so you know why it's so important.

Follower count

While it's still a top-line metric, it is important to know how many followers an influencer has as it will help to calculate the exact number of people that might see your campaign. Influencers also price on how many followers they have, so it's a handy way to create a campaign budget.

Engagement rate

The engagement rate is the % of an influencer's followers who take some kind of action on their content. For example: liking, commenting, sharing, etc. We suggest making the calculation on the last 30 days of their content for accuracy. Once we have the engagement rate, we can understand how many followers will see the campaign.

Audience age

This is how old the audience is, not the influencer. If your product or service is more suited to a particular age group, or there are advertising restrictions for your product (for example: alcohol), then it is critical to understand how old the audience is that will see your campaign.

Audience gender

This is what gender the audience is, not the influencer. If your product or service is more suited to a male or female specific audience, then it is critical to know what gender is seeing your campaign.

Audience ethnicity

This is what ethnicity the audience is, not the influencer. If your product or service is more suited to a specific ethnic group, then it is critical to know what ethnic group is seeing your campaign.

Audience location—country, city, suburb

This is where the audience lives, not the influencer. If you have a product or service that is affected by geography—e.g. you are a physical retailer or you can only ship to a certain location—it is critical to understand where the audience lives.

What topics does their audience care about?

This is not the topic the influencer posts about. These are the topics that the audience

Influencer Search Hot Tips

- Audience data for influencers is readily available; you can find out whether they speak to the customer that you are looking to attract to your brand and product before you work with them.
- Don't be afraid to ask. It's your brand and it's your campaign money; don't be afraid to ask an influencer for screenshots of their data from their Google Analytics or social media. If they say no, maybe that's a sign that they're not right for you.
- Tap into technology. There are a bunch of tools now that give you access to this kind of data. The time you will save yourself on research and analysis is far more than you'll spend on a monthly subscription.

posts and cares about. Sometimes influencers change their content topic as they mature, which can put the audience out of synch and result in a drop in engagement. Additionally there are some complementary topics that audiences are more likely to care about when they follow an influencer in a particular niche. This enables brands to tap into a larger pool of influencers to hit the right audience.

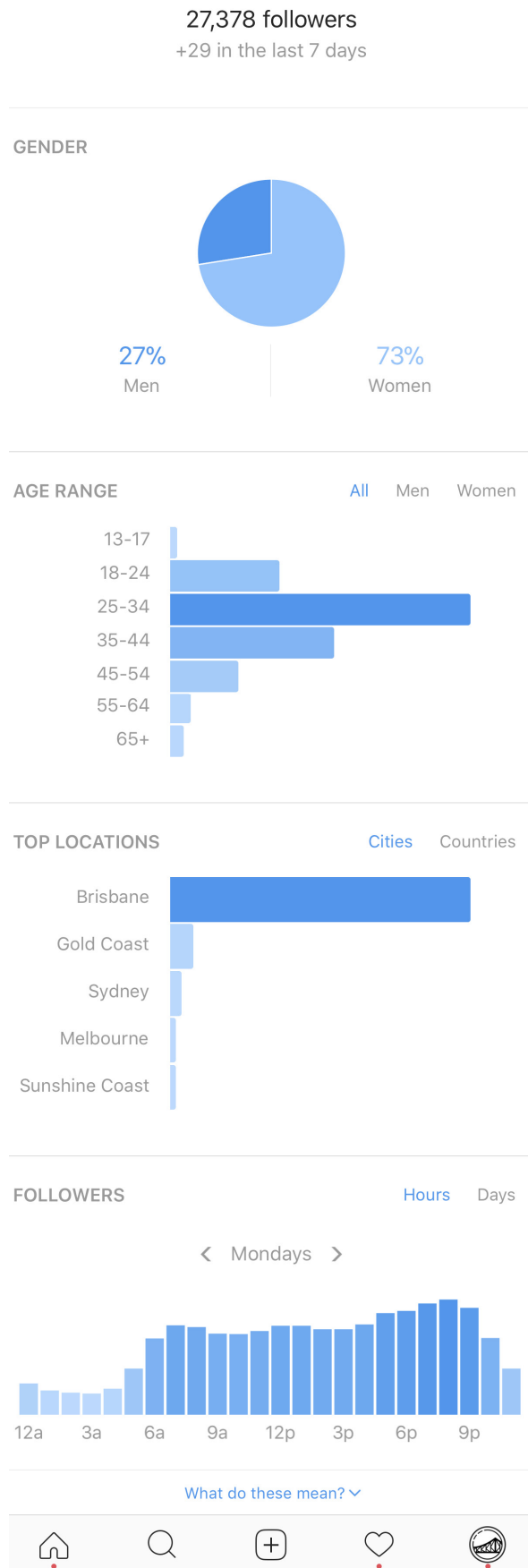
When are their followers most active online?

It is important to understand when an influencer's followers are most active online. This will indicate when the best time is for the influencer to post to ensure you receive maximum exposure.

Content Alignment

Finally, this one is up to you. And a quick flick through an influencer's content will highlight to you whether they will produce content that aligns to your brand identity.

And where can you find these data points?



Demographics from an Instagram business account.

Yes, there are technology platforms that automate this insight collection for you, but I want to show you how you can get access to all the data you need without a subscription to a tool. The information you want is stored in the account of each influencer you plan to work with, in their social media insights or Google Analytics that should be installed on their blog. If you've just put two and two together and realised that you need to reach out to every person on the planet and assess their metrics, don't panic—we can shortlist first based on their top-line metrics. Number of followers, engagement, the influencer's location, and whether their content aligns to your brand are all publicly available metrics that you can find without actually contacting the influencer.

We recommend shortlisting three times the number of influencers that you plan to work with to allow for influencers with metrics that don't align to your demographic, influencers that have conflicting arrangements or that are unresponsive.

Now that you've got your shortlist, the number of people you need to reach out to to get their deeper follower metrics should be manageable. While it may seem confronting to ask someone to screenshot their follower insights and send to you, remember, it's your money, you are in charge of who you work with. But you can ask delicately.

We recommend emailing the influencer and exciting them about the prospect of working together. Keep it short and sharp, but tell them how you are researching for your upcoming campaign, that you would love them to be a part of. Then ask if they wouldn't mind sending through their follower insights and that a quick screenshot will give you all the info you need to ensure they speak to the audience you are trying to reach. One thing to note here is that the influencer will have to have a "business account" enabled on a platform like Instagram to have access to these insights.

Similarly if you are working with a blogger and want them to write an article on their website, they should have Google Analytics installed and be able to share their metrics.

Convincing Your Boss

If you are going through this whole process manually, it can be quite tedious. However, there are tools on the market that automate both the insights and the campaign management to make the influencer marketing process less risky and more efficient. Now it's time to convince your boss.

Influencer marketing has picked up a bad reputation from the horror stories of events like the Fyre Festival and brands that have been burned by investments that didn't amount to anything. On the flip side, many brands across a range of industries are reporting huge ROIs - some up to 20:1 return. So if your boss is a little gun-shy, here are five points to ease their mind:

1. Influencer marketing is here to stay and brands across a huge range of industries are seeing massive returns.
2. It's not all Instagram bikini models. Influencers vary across industries so you can target your content and your platform to people who are most likely to be your customers. The data you need to make informed influencer selections is available, and you know how to get it.
3. Just like other marketing channels, influencer marketing can be tested, optimized and scaled in a controlled way.
4. Your time is much better spent on creative, strategy and managing the campaign, invest in a tech solution to do all the insights collection so you can run an efficient, successful campaign. ■

Danielle Lewis is the cofounder & CEO of Scrunch. Danielle@scrunch.com or @scrunch

Inside Influence: Creator Discovery and Vetting for Brand Marketers

By Lauren McGrath

At least 70% of marketers have some level of budget dedicated to influencer marketing initiatives today, with influencer marketing on Instagram now representing a \$1 billion dollar industry. For a side of the business that barely existed just a few years ago, those numbers are staggering. But with the digital landscape growing increasingly over-saturated with sponsored content, and many influencers buying followers or engagement to garner attention from advertisers, brands are being challenged to rethink how they evaluate and approach their influencer partners. An advertiser's success with influencers ultimately hinges on the right engagement strategy and a commitment to continually push the conventions of content creation. It's also a race to get there first, with discovery and relationship building with micro-influencers more important now than ever before.

So how can one surge ahead of the competition? It all begins with casting.

75% of marketers report that identifying influencers is the most challenging aspect of influencer engagement. Identifying the right talent pool should leverage two elements: 1) analytics and 2) relationships. Though there is no shortage of influencer database tools available in the marketplace, brands should ultimately take a diversified strategy to discover new creators and not rely solely on one platform for influencer identification. Beyond tapping into database tools, marketers should

begin by following and engaging with key opinion leaders in the space, taking care to understand who those tastemakers follow and engage with. Respected influencers are often great casting resources, as they themselves are focused on identifying and building relationships with like-minded creators. They're also easy entry points into more niche influencer "pools" or communities. Marketers that commit to embedding themselves in a particular influencer pool are able to more rapidly develop relationships with creators and benefit from highly coveted referrals and introductions.

Metrics and Analysis

Once the ideal pool of influencers has been discovered, selecting the right creator is a balance of qualitative and quantitative analysis. Brands often make the mistake of considering reach and forgetting the importance of relevancy and resonance (61% of brands measure the success of their influencer programs by reach), opting to partner with the creator who has the largest following possible within that brand's given budget.

Of course reach is a factor that should be considered when evaluating an influencer. But to truly quantify potential impact to a brand, marketers must go beyond the size of following and consider other key metrics, including: Engagement (the proportion of social actions to the views, impressions and reach of the influencer), audience sentiment and momentum (specifically month over

month growth of reach and engagement). Brands should also understand what level of influence these creators have over other influencers. Having a grasp of these metrics will help advertisers drive more ROI, understanding which influencers bring the potential of future growth, and, at times, can signal which influencers are buying fake followers and engagement. The data points don't end there, though.

Many brands set their sights on influencers who represent the target demographic of a brand without looking deeper into who comprises that influencer's audience. It's imperative to consider the audience demographics (namely age, location and interest of followers) of an influencer before approaching them for a partnership, especially if there are specific parameters around where, or to whom the target brand or product is available. There are droves of influencers whose audiences unexpectedly vary in terms of geographic origin and life stage, which is important to consider for brands or products with strong regional distribution.

Is the Feed Too Crowded?

Another key factor marketers should take into account is how much sponsored content the influencer is already producing and the results that content is delivering. Many creators succumb to running oversaturated feeds, often posting two or three sponsored pieces of content in a single day, thus losing the authenticity, engagement and credibility that helped them build their dedicated audience and influencer status in the first place. In other instances, influencers are creating a leaner stream of sponsored content but aren't driving engagement numbers comparable to their organic content—that's a telltale sign that their followers aren't buying into the authenticity or messaging of the partnership.

Influencer Vetting: Top Metrics to Consider

- ❑ Engagement Rate - What are the influencer's average likes and comments as a proportion of their overall following?
- ❑ Momentum - Is the influencer's audience and engagement growing month over month? Are there any offbeat upticks or losses in reach or engagement?
- ❑ Sentiment - What type of comments is the influencer receiving on their content? Is the influencer reciprocating that engagement with their followers?
- ❑ Sphere of Influence - How much of the influencer's audience is comprised of other influencers?
- ❑ Content Quality and Cadence - How often is the influencer publishing content? How strong are their visuals and their writing?
- ❑ Audience Demographics - How much of the influencer's audience fits within the brand's target demographic?
- ❑ Tonality - Does the influencer's tone and relationship with their followers align with that of the brand?
- ❑ Saturation of Brand Partnerships - Has this influencer previously partnered with other brands in the same category?
- ❑ Relevancy - Is the influencer credible in the category related to your brand or product? Do they possess relevancy in an adjacent category that is important to your target audience?
- ❑ Upswing - Does the influencer have relevant projects in the works? Are there parallel opportunities to capitalize on existing or mounting buzz around that influencer?
- ❑ Ease of Collaboration - Has this influencer been difficult to work with in the past?
- ❑ Pricing - How does this influencer (or their agent) price themselves compared to others in the marketplace?

Qualitatively Speaking

On the qualitative side, marketers should focus on aligning with influencer partners who are on the upswing or looking to build credibility in the category related to the advertiser. Those who have not yet been oversaturated with brand partnerships are usually prospects to increase in reach, engagement and content relevancy in the months to come. These are also the influencers who find the strongest value proposition in aligning with a brand partner and are most likely to yield long term benefits for that advertiser. Marketers should identify influencers who have interesting projects in the pipeline, from a new content platform to a book or product line. This creates a chance for the advertiser to tap into additional opportunities for exposure and cross promotion.

Brands should consider influencers who have mentioned the brand in their content (without sponsorship) previously.

Authenticity is becoming a hotly contested factor in influencer marketing, with consumers more easily picking up on telltale signs of sponsored content. The partnerships that ring most true with consumers are collaborations in which influencers selected have an authentic love or respect for the brand or product they are promoting. Brands should consider influencers who have mentioned the

brand in their content (without sponsorship) previously. Keeping tabs on influencers who are organically mentioning the brand is also a great basis to identify and build relationships with micro influencers. Community managers should consider engaging with those influencers or offering product as a sign of encouragement and appreciation.

Established influencers are often dominant across multiple platforms such as YouTube, Instagram, Facebook, Twitter or a blog. There are efficiencies that brands can tap into by approaching creators who are active across multiple platforms. It gives the brand a chance to reach unique audiences across channels, tap into different content approaches (photo versus video, for example) and syndicate original content for additional reach.

If approached and executed correctly, influencer identification and selection serve as the foundation for a successful influencer strategy that will garner a strong call to action, cultivate creator relationships and drive word of mouth exposure. The best partnerships feel authentic, natural and transcend one-off transactions. By employing a solid vetting process, brands are betting on long term advocates that can yield results and deliver strong ROI for years to come. ■

Lauren McGrath is the head of talent and influencer engagement at Lippe Taylor. Previously, she was the vice president of talent partnerships and influencer strategy at Refinery29 and launched its dedicated influencer division.

5 Tips From an Agency Pro for Brands New to Influencer Marketing

By PR News Editors

Getting your brand covered fairly or favorably by a respected journalist in a respected media outlet—that’s what perceived authenticity used to be. It was the brass ring for communicators. Then the pool of full-time journalists and the outlets that employed them began evaporating as the internet hacked away at B2B and B2C media brands’ business models.

Yet the very same technology that put that old brass ring of authenticity out of reach also put brands in direct contact with their intended audiences. In the early years of social media, brands and individuals experimented freely, unrestrained by standards and expectations. In time, individuals resented having their social media feeds crowded by obvious marketing ploys. Smart brands on social media now try to offer fun experiences that upstage their marketing messages, and/or invest in influencer marketing. The hopefully authentic word-of-mouth value of influencer marketing is particularly enticing to brands right now.

Brands that haven’t yet tried investing resources in digital-based influencer marketing face a host of unknowns, the first one being whether it’s suitable for a particular brand or nonprofit organization. Tony Balasandiran, managing account supervisor for **Ketchum**, shares some of the advice he offers clients that have yet to make the leap to influencer marketing.

When trying to determine if influencer marketing is right for your organization you must first understand the motivating factors that drive your core and prospective consumers. “If your target audience behavior is not motivated by influencer endorsements of a product or brand, then influencer marketing is likely not the most effective strategy for your organization,” Balasandiran says. “If your brand’s key audience behavior is influenced in this way, identify who those particular experts and influencers are, and also why, along with associated costs and ROI to determine the value.”

The best way to make contact is to be where the influencers are, whether it’s on Twitter or at the SXSW or CES shows.

Research the common mistakes made by other organizations. First among those common mistakes is not ensuring that the influencer aligns with the organization’s culture, and also with the culture of the target audience. “Impactful influencers are not always celebrities—they are also experts and thought leaders within their industries,” Balasandiran says. “Brands and organizations must properly source, vet and assess influencers before including them in marketing campaigns. Alignment and authenticity are key, and the biggest mistake an organization can make is not vetting the influencer and strategy before

initiating it, which is why organizations always need to have diverse voices at the table.”

The best way to find the right influencers is to have a pulse on the culture of your industry, from the organization to the key audiences. “Brands that are doing influencer strategy right remain in the know when it comes to identifying the leading voices in their field of focus. Relationships are invaluable when it comes to influencer engagement. Identify who they are, make a connection with them, foster the relationship and then utilize the partnership to maximize ROI for your brand.”

Determine how much to spend on an influencer campaign by evaluating the priority, opportunity and potential engagement the influencer can bring to your campaign. “With celebrity influencers, the price tag is always going to be higher because your brand is leveraging the influencer’s brand name and network. With a more niche influencer campaign, the associated fees may be more

manageable and you may be able to engage a collective versus one influencer if it makes more sense. The reach, resonance and engagement of the influencer should determine how you prioritize your overall marketing budget.”

When attempting initial contact with a potential influencer, remember that you miss every shot you don’t take. “Influencers and brands provide a mutual benefit to elevate both profiles with key audiences. The most credible influencer marketing campaigns are built around influential figures who make the most sense for the brand, its consumers and media targets. The best way to make contact is to be where the influencers are, whether it’s on Twitter or at the SXSW or CES shows. Engage with their tweets or send them a direct message. Attend their panel and follow up afterward to directly connect. Invite them to your organization or activations to experience your brand. Developing relationships with influencers is the foundation of impactful engagement.” ■

How Much Influence? Tips and Tactics to Measure PR Influencer Success

By Margot Savell

There is a lot of buzz about influencers at the moment. The word has become ubiquitous in PR and marketing circles, particularly when we talk about building valuable relationships in social media.

Brands are increasing their development of influencer programs. At the same time there is a growing demand to measure PR influencer success.

But reaching out to influencers in PR is not new. PR practitioners have been pitching influencers, and measuring the success of their efforts, since our profession was established more than 100 years ago. The strategies and tactics have evolved over time, but a major tenet of media relations always has been to target influential journalists, industry analysts, newsmakers, subject-matter experts, academics and other thought leaders.

The more recent trend of paying attention to online media influencers dates to 1994, when the web-hosting service GeoCities was created. Influence was measured by the number of page views on a website. Many sites featured counters to proudly display their traffic numbers in a transparent effort to showcase influence and attract even more views.

From a personal perspective, 1994 was also the year that I joined AOL, which offered searchable “Member Profiles” to help determine influence. At the time, this was considered a forward-thinking feature.

In 2002, social networking came into play with the launch of Friendster, followed by

LinkedIn in 2003. In 2006, Facebook opened up to the general public and Twitter launched.

With each new social media milestone, the movement to cultivate relationships with influencers has grown. As we know, modern-day social influencers are prominent people, often bloggers, who have the reputation and power to sway others with their opinions. They represent opportunities to shape perceptions about your corporate and brand reputation, in addition to your products and solutions. The long-term goal is to convert them into brand advocates.

A meaningful measurement program can help get you there by:

1. uncovering influencers who have the most significant voice and are passionate about your brand and your industry;
2. analyzing what resonates with influencers; and
3. finding insights to drive future strategy.

Where to Begin?

As with any measurement program, your first job is to define your business and communications goals. Once you’ve done so, choose metrics that matter, based on your goals. And make sure they are measurable.

Is your goal to increase the number of brand mentions by influencers in social media and if so, by what percentage each month? Are you trying to enhance your social footprint in specific channels that are most important to your target audiences? Do you

hope to increase the engagement of influencers with your content in those channels?

Once you know your goals, key metrics and the most important channels, conduct a media analysis to find relevant online influencers.

Tools such as Traackr and Simply Measured look at three criteria to determine the foundation of influence: the people who can influence your business and hopefully bring you closer to your customers.

1. **Reach:** What is the size of an influencer's audience? Of note: An influencer doesn't necessarily need a large number of followers. In some cases, reaching a smaller, better-targeted audience is more valuable.
2. **Resonance:** How much do influencers' audiences engage with their content?
3. **Relevance:** How closely does an influencer's original content match the keywords that are important to you?

In addition to Traackr and Simply Measured, there are many tools that can help you find influencers: Appinions, Brandwatch, NetBase, Radian6, Sysomos, Talkwalker and Signal, to name a few.

After you've identified influencers important to your brand, evaluate their conversations and develop insights to inform future strategy. Look to the data for the answers to the questions below:

- How many influencers mentioned your brand name in a month?
- How many mentioned your messages?
- What are they saying about your company, your brand and your products?
- Who discussed the topics most important to you?
- Who discussed those topics most frequently?
- Are influencers showing brand preference?
- Do they have strong opinions about your competitors?
- Who is most engaged with your content and social channels?
- Who generated the most engagement with followers?
- Did they share your research, infographics, fun facts, photos, videos or other creative content?
- Did they share links to your news?
- Are they using your unique URLs to drive referral traffic to your website?
- Do your influencers have followers who are influencers also, and who might not be part of your outreach program yet?

A close examination of reviews by influencers is important, too. These days, many studies suggest that online influencer reviews and recommendations increasingly guide consumer decision making.

After you've analyzed the data, use these findings to adjust your messages, craft content, refine your strategies and engage further with your influencers. But keep in mind that the media landscape shifts quickly—new influencers enter, existing influencers exit, and topics of interest shift.

Ongoing measurement will help you stay on top of these changes. Even more important, measurement demonstrates the success of your PR influencer programs and helps find ways to further refine your strategies and tactics. ■

Margot Savell is a media analytics consultant and a member of PR News' Measurement Hall of Fame.

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Influencer Relations

Survey of Diabetes Influencers Reveals How Brands Can Build Stronger Ties

By PR News Editors

We've seen surveys of influencers—about pay, working conditions, their lifestyle, the types of platforms they like to use, whether or not they use contracts, how often they post—but a new study we just saw is a bit different. It seeks to understand how brands can build better relationships with influencers.



Kelly Kutchinsky,
EVP, Global
Insights &
Innovation,
Tonic Life
Communications

Tonic Life Communications, a Philadelphia-based PR firm specializing in health-care, conducted a survey of influencers in the diabetes community. Although Tonic no longer works with brands in the diabetes field, it had relationships with diabetes

Major Findings From the Diabetes Online Community

What are the benefits of partnering with industry?

91% Ability to share opinions to inform business decisions

82% Access to leadership/decision makers

82% Making connections with others in the community

What must industry better understand about working with patient advocates?

- We are not your sales force
- Value dissent and other opinions even if they conflict with your expectations
- Get us involved earlier... we have experiences that should be taken seriously and listened to
- Many of us have “day jobs”... consider this when planning events

Major Concerns

“I am concerned about the blurred lines and gray areas that exist when advocates are enticed by free travel without a clear objective and follow-up to show that objectives were met and advocacy-driven changes occurred. I’ve seen a lot of talk and no action when companies have brought advocates together claiming to be interested in their thoughts about pricing and then raised prices anyway.”

“We’d like to be involved much earlier in the process... to collaborate together, to think of solutions and ideas together and to overcome challenges together.”

“I want industry to be very realistic with us about things they can and cannot do. It doesn’t feel good when we come up with a bunch of

collective ideas but don’t see any progress.”

Best Practices

1. Involve advocates and influencers early in campaign planning, offer access to decision-makers and leaders to create collaborative outputs.
2. Help elevate advocates’ causes via company/brand social channels, enlist them as partners to share ideas and information...both yours and theirs.
3. Don’t just engage when a company or brand campaign is underway; continue to keep advocates aware of charitable causes supported, underserved populations your company seeks to reach and services provided to people in need.

Source: Tonic Life Communications (October 2017)

influencers from previous campaigns.

Tonic restricted survey participants to influencers in the diabetes community with significant followings, mostly on Twitter, the diabetes community's platform of choice. In fact, diabetes was chosen in part due to the community's long history of social media activity compared with other disease communities, says Kelly Kutchinsky, EVP, global insights & innovation at Tonic Life. Most of those who responded to the survey are not paid influencers, she adds.

We removed findings specific to the diabetes community from the sidebar you see

here. We were struck, though, by how many takeaways can be applied to brands working with influencers in a variety of industries. The main takeaways include: 1. If a brand doesn't pay an influencer, it should not treat the influencer like a member of its sales force. 2. Keep influencers abreast of brand news as early as possible. 3. Working with influencers is a two-way street. Avoid interacting with influencers only when you need something from them. 4. Should a brand seek an influencer's opinion, provide evidence that the influencer's thoughts were integrated into some aspect of the company's operations. ■

How to Hone Your Message-to-Influencer Match for Pitches That Pay Off

By Michael Smart

You know how bloggers have invented a writing subgenre of mocking the PR pitches they get? Recently I saw a lengthy take-down of a PR firm's effort to publicize what the blogger felt was a hollow startup. The blogger portrayed the PR firm's pitch as comically superficial. I'll forego linking to the post because I prefer to avoid boosting ad revenue for crass blogs that bully people.

Admittedly, the pitch material was superficial. It went against every principle of clear writing that I teach. All things being equal, the PR firm's staff should have pushed back on the startup to get more concrete facts about the new company's goals, what it does and why it's credible.

What you pitch is secondary to whom you pitch.

But that wasn't the main problem, and it didn't prevent the startup from ultimately succeeding elsewhere; more on that below.

The biggest problem is where the startup's material landed: in other words, where the material was pitched. Granted, the pitch was directed to a blog that's well read among the startup's target market: millennials. But this particular blog also is known for snarky opposition to PR outreach. It was like putting red meat in front of a gaunt, stray dog.

The pitcher fell victim to the same type of thinking I used to struggle with often. It still afflicts many PR pros. When I'm asked to review pitches, anxious clients generally start by inquiring about their subject line, their opening sentence, or their call to action. But there's a factor that has way more influence on the likelihood of success than the language and phrasing of the actual pitch.

That factor is what I call Message-to-Influencer Match.

And that's why the first thing I ask when looking at any pitch is: Who is the target, and why?

Detailed Research Is Critical

When you've done your research and you know you have the right journalist or blogger to target, the pitch almost writes itself. While it's always good to be careful with wording, you can avoid stressing about the precise phrasing. Your target usually will find the information useful regardless.

One of my clients represents a hotel that was hosting a special exhibit of Titanic artifacts. She did her research carefully and found a USA Today reporter who seemed to love all things Titanic. If you look at her official beat as listed in a media database, you would never know that, however. But sure enough, she jumped on the resulting pitch.

Similarly, another sharp PR pro I trained was tasked with pitching a high-end hair stylist to national morning shows. When is the last time you saw a \$5,000-per-visit stylist

on mainstream TV? Well, this pro refused to settle. She hunted until she found her target: a producer who'd written a book about dealing with bad hair days. The producer responded encouragingly to the pitch, and ended with, "Boy, do you do your research!"

I'm not saying it was easy after that. The segment still required months of tireless follow-up to resurrect it after it had been killed twice. But when I asked the pro how she knew all the effort would pay off, she said, "I knew I had the right story for the right person—all I had to do was work out the details."

Those are great successes. Please realize I'm not talking about simply identifying the topics a reporter or blogger are likely to cover. The cases above, and one you'll read about below, demonstrate detailed research.

Tone, Style and Goals Count, Too

In addition to strong research, when masters of media relations choose targets they will think through the style, tone and goal(s) of the article they want to emerge. They ask: Is awareness, persuasion or branding the outcome I am seeking?

That's why you consider the overall Message of the piece you're suggesting and weigh whether it's a likely Match to the Influencer you're pitching.

Remember the startup that was mocked as comically superficial by the popular millennial blog? It also landed a positive placement on the site of a respected business magazine.

Don't Waffle a Pitch, But Pitch Waffles

Another case study: The business of senior care centers is growing fast. It's also becoming increasingly competitive. These companies now are turning to PR pros to earn them distinction. But what's unique or exciting about this business?

The PR rep for a solitary center near Brooklyn, N.Y., noted that a particular columnist for the WSJ employs a quirky voice in exploring novel topics. So she pitched him on her center's annual Waffle Day. Believe it or not, the pitch's subject line was: "Waffles as Aromatherapy."

It was a hit. The journalist actually attended Waffle Day, along with a photographer. The resulting column named the PR rep's care center in the headline, which, of course, is a huge success.

Again, note that the journalist never would have turned up on a media list of influencers who typically cover this topic.

Takeaway: What you pitch is secondary to whom you pitch. Add this to the hundred other reasons not to rely on blasting the same email to everyone in your database. Instead spend 80% of your outreach time on the top 20% of your media list. That allows you to hone your Message-to-Influencer Match and land the coverage your brand deserves. ■

Michael Smart is the media pitching coach PR pros turn to when they want to boost media relations success. He advises everyone from Fortune 10 brands to nonprofits and sole proprietors. Learn more at: michaelsmartpr.com

How to Build Relationships With Influencers That Endure Beyond One Communications Campaign

By PR News Editors

When Instagram announced it was testing a feature that will allow users to buy what they see in their feeds directly from brands, many a question was raised. The beta involved 20 brands, including J.Crew, Macy's and Levi's. The user clicks on a button and up pops the product's name and price. Another click provides a more in-depth description of the product. Then there's the ever-popular "shop now" click, which takes the user to the retailer's website. Seems simple, right? Actually, the implications could be enormous. For example, how much will Instagram charge brands for this feature? Or should Instagram take a percentage of sales that emanate from the platform?

Questions arise concerning influencers, too. For example, wouldn't it be in Levi's interest for your daughter to see a sponsored post featuring Kim Kardashian wearing a Levi's denim jacket, and then have the ability to buy the jacket with a few taps on her phone? Of course it would. Should that come to pass might not the Federal Trade Commission (FTC) increase its scrutiny of brands that employ influencers, insisting on crystal-clear disclosure that a post is the product of someone who has been paid for his or her endorsement? The argument, a good one, would be that influencer posts no longer are enticements, but lead directly to sales.

Another question: Wouldn't it be useful for brands to be able to place product tags

on the Instagram feed of your daughter's best friend, which she follows religiously? Clicking the product tag would inform your daughter that her friend is wearing a new Levi's denim jacket in her Instagram post. Eventually your daughter clicks and heads to the Levi's site. The point: Some brands may choose the consumer-generated route over working with celebrity influencers. It's more authentic, right? Of course this seems to open up more FTC questions. Is your daughter's friend an influencer? What if she has 10,000 followers? What if Levi's gives her a discount on her next purchase?



John Walls
Director, Brand PR,
Luxury & Lifestyle
Brands
Hilton Worldwide

OK, we're probably overstepping. It's likely that social media influencers will be around for awhile. As such, we asked communicators how to build relationships with social influencers that endure beyond a single campaign.

Step One: Trust, Respect, Common Ground

"Developing a relationship with a social influencer...is just like dating," says John Walls, director, brand PR, luxury & lifestyle brands, **Hilton Worldwide**. "You have to find common ground" and learn "what [the influencer] needs," says Walls, who has worked with food, fashion and hospitality influencers globally. While he says the needs of influencers vary from country to country, he also points out differences in the needs of social media influenc-

ers and traditional media. This comes into play for Walls since social influencer and traditional media are grouped together on media trips the brand organizes to locations in the Hilton portfolio. Social influencers tend to request moments...immediacy...significantly different visuals...they may not need the whole press package” that traditional media wants, he says. Despite the differences, all influencers—social and traditional media—need “timely delivery” of content and “consistency” from brands. In addition, the best relationships are based on “mutual benefit” and “a significant amount of trust.”



Lisa Osborne Ross
Managing Director
APCO Worldwide

Lisa Osborne Ross, managing director, **APCO Worldwide**, agrees. “I appreciate questions that begin, ‘In a digital age how do you do...?’ But it’s really very simple. All relationships, whether professional or personal, are based on some of the same principles...you establish quickly and authentically what you have in common... you establish what you bring to the table and you are clear what you want from the relationship...[the relationship] works if the influencer has as much invested in a positive outcome as you do.”

Step Two: Expression of Mutual Benefit



Caitlin Romig
Senior Manager,
Digital Marketing
Rosetta Stone Inc.

How do brands translate the concepts of trust, respect and mutual investment into practice? Since we’re talking about translation, let’s begin with **Rosetta Stone’s** Caitlin Romig, senior manager, digital marketing. Seriously, she says the brand keeps the nearly 100 influencers it works with happy by giving them “creative liberty...we don’t ask for specifics,” she says. This equates to the trust that Osborne Ross and Walls mentioned above.



What a Gig: Rosetta Stone sent influencer Peter Bragiel to enjoy Italy to promote the brand’s language-learning tools. Here he enjoys Lake Como at the start of his trip.

Rosetta Stone also keeps influencers happy by leveraging its resources. The brand, Romig argues, is at “the edge” of language-learning technology. Providing its smaller influencers, who are unpaid, with early access to new products helps maintain the relationship, she says.

In addition there are a few big influencers whose relationship with the brand is enhanced through immersive trips. For example, Rosetta Stone sent influencer Peter Bragiel from the top of Italy to the bottom of the boot. While there, he, a photographer and videographer, created content about the joy of being able to converse in Italian with natives as he made frequent stops to indulge in cheese, wine and other delicacies. Content was posted on several of Rosetta Stone’s social media platforms and accompanied by enticements to experience a free taste of the brand’s language courses. Now the social face of the brand, Bragiel’s experience in Italy and a trip to Cuba, where he conversed in Spanish, also was meant to emphasize that “anyone can learn a language” using Rosetta Stone, Romig says.

Walls and Osborne Ross emphasize mutual benefits as key to an enduring relationship with social influencers. Both also prefer building long-term relationships with influencers as opposed to one-campaign agree-

ments. Says Osborne Ross, “It’s a more responsible use of resources.”

Walls adds, “We love our influencers...[but we also] give them unprecedented access... and opportunities for great stories...on an ongoing basis.” In addition to the trips to Hilton properties, Walls points to Taste of Waldorf Astoria, a yearly competition for chefs at five Hilton properties who attempt to create a unique dish. The contest celebrates the Waldorf salad, the culinary icon conceived at a Hilton property. A pair of influencers, plus a photographer and videographer, were given access to the kitchens of the five Taste chefs,

Wall says, which provided a “fantastic” opportunity for behind-the-scenes stories, photos and video footage.

Osborne Ross notes APCO provides its clients’ influencers with a combination of access to valuable research and “tangible information they can use” as well as people. She says, for example, certain influencers will gain access to its International Advisory Council, which includes former diplomats, ministers and lawmakers. ■

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Survey: Influencers Abound, But Brands Still Need Help Managing Them

By PR News Editors

The tactic of using influencers to deliver messages that will drive consumer action has matured to the point that it's become an accepted practice in most of the marketplace. Yet finding and working with influencers is far more complex than it appears at first glance.

Those were some of the conclusions reached in a **Nasdaq Corporate Solutions/PR News** survey of PR pros and brand communicators.

The widespread use of influencers is apparent in that 75% of survey respondents say influencer marketing is part of their brand's communications strategy today.

Another sign of the tactic's maturation is that nearly 80% believe the ability to get people to take an action was the most important characteristic of an influencer. The survey asked respondents to name the top three characteristics of an influencer. After the ability to motivate people to take an action (79%), popularity of content (66%) and the reach of an influencer's network members (63%) are the most important characteristics, respondents say. (More than 400 respondents participated.)

Regarding whom brands seek as influencers, responses were mixed, with 61% saying industry professionals were the top choice, 57% picking industry personalities and 55% saying bloggers, while 55% choose customers to be their influencers. Just 15% say celebrities were their top choice for an influencer.

Respondents were allowed to make multiple picks.

No difficulty dominates for what brands see as their biggest hurdle when working with influencers. Again, respondents were allowed to make multiple picks. 21% say getting the attention of influencers is the top issue; for 19% measurement was the main challenge; 18% say identifying influencers relevant to their business is the toughest problem. A total of 17% pick creating appropriate content for influencers as the most difficult issue and 15% say maintaining a relationship with influencers that lasts more than a single campaign is the biggest burden.



Sanjay Kulkarni,
Global Head of PR
Solutions,
**Nasdaq Corporate
Solutions**

One of the survey's pleasant surprises for Nasdaq Corporate Solutions' Sanjay Kulkarni, global head of PR solutions, is that "nearly 80% [of respondents] understand that at the end of the day, influencer marketing is not primarily about content or reach or the size of an influencer's network. It starts with the ability to drive action and...actual results."

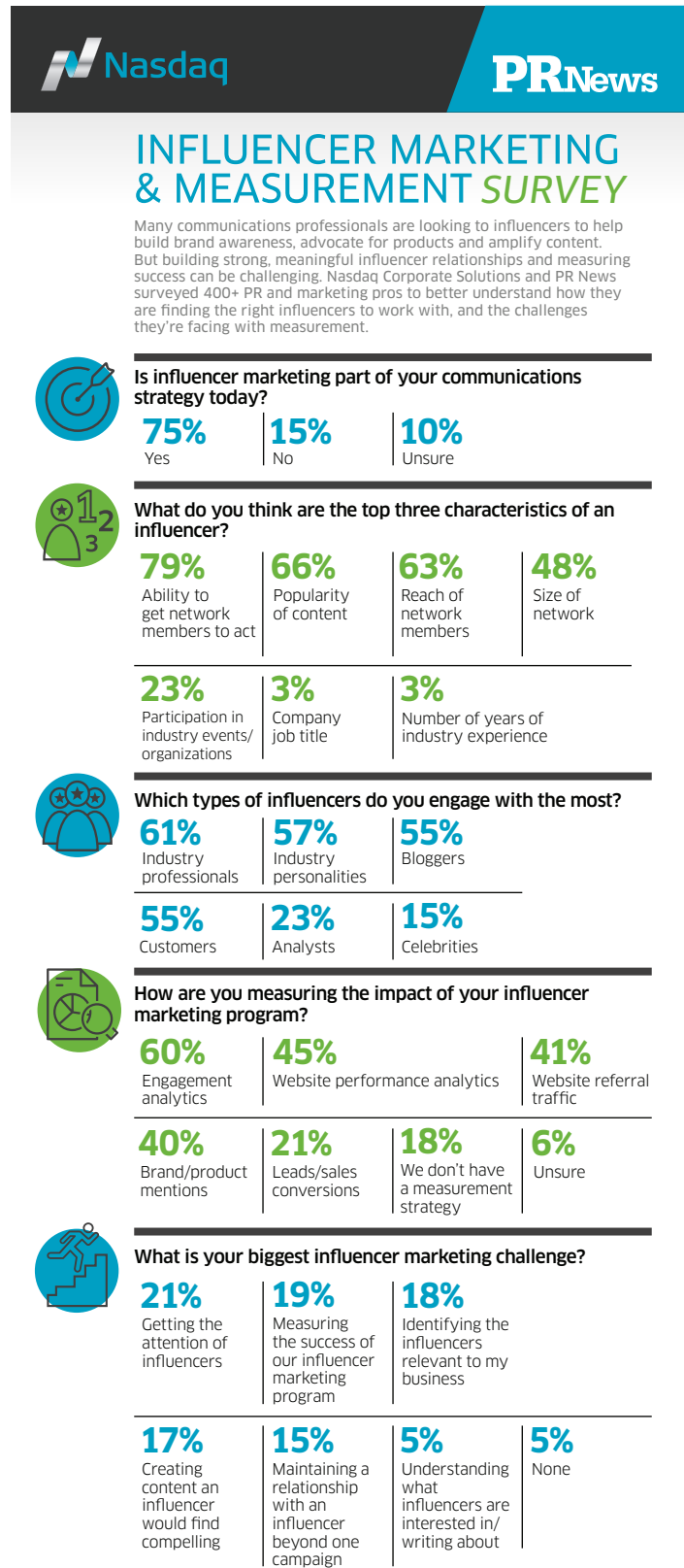
Those less experienced with influencers tend to see them as a way to "perhaps just more rapidly amplify their message across social channels, which tends not to work as well as you might think," he says. A successful collaboration with influencers "requires up-front work and planning." Finding influencers who are correct for your business and who can drive results is just a preliminary step, he

says. You can't just find an influencer "and then hit go."

This idea segues to the survey's final question, which asks about the most difficult influencer marketing challenges. "Ironically, that [no one problem] stands out is what stands out," he says. "What this says to me is that challenges...are equally spread across the influencer-marketing workflow, which starts with defining your goals and figuring out how you will define success, but then flows pretty seamlessly to identifying influencers and beginning to engage" with them. It then moves to the other challenges listed in the question, such as creating content that complements influencers' content. "Influencer marketing is about their content coming through you so that it's more trusted and comes across as earned media."

For Kulkarni, the survey indicates brands are "still looking for some help and a better understanding of how to fit all these pieces [listed in the last question] together," he says. "It's not enough to just look at influencer marketing as identifying influencers and then you just go...you need a set of interconnected tools and processes that help you manage across challenges, and you need to have that plan from the start." ■

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Source: PR News Pro and Nasdaq Corporate Solutions, 410 responses, December 2016

Why SAP Likes to View Influencer Marketing as a Long-Term Relationship

By PR News Editors

As a communications professional, so much of the job is based on building relationships, whether it's creating trust with journalists or speaking directly to your audience on social media.

The same applies to influencer marketing—building relationships is key, but it's just as critical to maintain those relationships over the long haul, says Amisha Gandhi, head of global influencer marketing for enterprise software giant SAP.

We sat down with Gandhi to talk about how different companies, whether B2B, B2C, large or small, can utilize influencer marketing.

PR News: How has your social media strategy at SAP changed over the past six months?



Amisha Gandhi,
Head of Global
Influencer
Marketing, SAP

Gandhi: Recently, we've really taken a look at how we use social media for our influencer efforts. We're always looking at how we can increase our footprint and share of voice. We've also been looking at paid efforts more and more, and how we can use that to further amplify our message. Specifically, we've started boosting our influencer posts to their audience. It's one way to make our influencer efforts more sophisticated and targeted on social media.

PR News: What are some of the biggest pros and cons of influencer marketing?

Gandhi: The biggest pro is the ability to increase your share of voice, reach new audiences and expand your brand. In the B2B space, it's estimated that 70% of B2B buyers have already made up their minds by the time they come to your website. We also know that most consumers rely heavily on reviews and testimonies, and that's where influencers can have the biggest impact on your consumers.

As a brand, the more transparent you are about your relationship, the better.

As for cons, people are starting to think that influencers are inauthentic, especially when it looks like an influencer works for too many brands at once. People are really starting to be smart about it, especially in the B2B space. There's definitely a line between affiliate marketing and influencer marketing, and that line continues to get blurry. As a brand, the more transparent you are about your relationship, the better. The FTC is also getting very strict about having clear disclosures, and I think that's a good thing.

PR News: Do you think influencer marketing can work for a company of any size? Why or why not?

Gandhi: I think it definitely can. If you're a

small business or just starting out, it's a great idea to bring in an influencer just to hear their feedback. Influencers can also give startups a great boost to get them going. On the B2B side, influencers can really help not just in spreading the message, but offer feedback to build up your company in the best way. There are many tools out there, both free and paid, to help you find the right influencers. It all depends on your size and budget, but there is a way to make it work.

PR News: Can you briefly describe the timeline of any given influencer marketing campaign? From finding the right influencer, to the campaign being live and the analysis afterwards?

Gandhi: The relationship piece of it should be ongoing. At the end of a campaign, you can't just say "thanks" and never talk to them again. It's about always keeping a relationship. All campaigns are different, but if the end of

the campaign is an event, I'd say to find your influencers about three months ahead of time. Usually, it's about three months on the short side, and six months for a larger campaign. But the most important piece, I can't stress enough, is to keep that relationship alive after the event.

PR News: What do you hope readers bear in mind as they embark upon their campaigns?

Gandhi: That influencer marketing is a two-way relationship. It's not about using them, but working with them. If the relationship has the right give-and-take, influencers can be a true business partner. Also, that the audience will notice if it's not authentic. I hope communicators learn that influencer marketing can be a strategic piece to any campaign, if done the right way. ■

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Influencer Marketing Is a Team Sport: The Risks and Rewards of Ambassadors

By Shawn Kallet

As an influencer marketing company representing brands since 2008, **Branded Entertainment Network** has executed thousands of campaigns and seen every trend to come along. One trending request we're hearing from our brand partners is that they want to focus their work with influencers on signing a few as their ambassadors. Where they once sought celebrity talent to help boost recognition among fans, brands that understand the value of influencers want this new generation of socially relevant creators to help them build credibility with influencer audiences.

While working with influencers is important and valuable, brands focused only on direct ambassador relationships are exposed to risk and miss the bigger opportunity to build a team of influencers that can win over time.

Why Ambassadors?

Let's start by understanding why influencer ambassadors became a popular trend.

When influencer marketing works well, the benefits for brands are unlike any other type of marketing. Influencers can very efficiently persuade large groups of people to change their opinions, behaviors or actions by sharing trusted word-of-mouth recommendations people find relevant.

Brands with experience know these benefits are valuable, but they also know discovering the right influencers can be time-consuming, contract terms lack any standardization,

creative development can be challenging and, without the right measurement solutions, the impact of the program on business goals can ultimately be unclear.

This understanding leads many brands to the conclusion that working with only one or just a few influencers will be easier to manage and then the brand can scale its efforts by developing a lot of content with the same creators.

Unfortunately, that strategy leads to risk from a variety of factors.

Exploring the Risks

What kind of risks come with only using one or a few influencers as ambassadors in a long-term campaign? Let's review some that happen regularly.

Risk #1 – "I Love You, Now Change"

The way social platforms constantly tweak algorithms means creators can struggle to stay relevant and sustain the audience growth they once enjoyed. Brands risk overpaying for creators who built large audiences creating content that worked for an old algorithm but can't figure out how to change with the times. Brands that work with these influencers will see diminishing returns over time. If their audience isn't growing and their fans haven't bought into the brand by fifth, 10th or 27th time an influencer uses a product, it's likely a lost cause. That overexposure could likely result in negative sentiment toward the brand and influencer.

5 Steps to Building a Successful Influencer Team

1. Talent Selection
 - a. Follower and subscriber counts are nice but can be bought or built on yesterday's algorithm
 - b. Track recent average video/post organic performance metrics as a better indicator of what to expect
 - c. Each creative genre is different so be aware of what works best within the categories your audience cares about
2. Creative Development
 - a. Agree with influencers on key message points and let them integrate your story authentically into their content
 - b. Influencers know their audience best so listen if they push back because something feels too commercial
 - c. Be open to their ideas but be clear on what your do's and don'ts are for brand safety
3. Deal Terms
 - a. Agree upfront on distribution, licensing and ownership terms for the content
 - b. Require proper FTC disclosures
 - c. Be aware that creative changes, promotional asks or anything that requires the influencer to do more than they agreed to in the contract could come with additional costs or be refused
4. Production Management
 - a. Clearly define deadlines and the required approvals at each stage of the process
 - b. Make sure the influencers have all brand assets they need at the start of production
 - c. Understand each influencer approaches their production process differently so be flexible to their needs
5. Measuring Success
 - a. Define KPIs and ROI based on specific campaign objectives
 - b. Request weekly reporting on publicly available metrics and a final recap with deeper insights
 - c. Create unique trackable links whenever possible

Risk #2 – “But It’s Not a Competitor”

Another risk for brands is when influencers sign deals with brands in non-competitive categories but those deals create conflicts because of demands on the influencer's time. An influencer who thinks it's a great idea to sign a year-long deal with a beauty brand in January might have to think differently about the value of that commitment if they're offered a bigger deal from a travel company in May. If the travel company asks them to go backpacking through Asia for the summer and travel is their passion, the demands on their time might prevent them from fulfilling their responsibilities to the beauty brand.

Risk #3 – “It’s Not You, It’s Me”

There has never been a better, more profitable time for creators to make and sell origi-

nal content. The proliferation of streaming platforms and the money being spent by the biggest players has thrown influencers into the development spotlight. Influencers starring in or creating shows are attractive options for networks and platforms because they come with built-in awareness. For the travel brand in our previous example, it might sound great at first that their influencer ambassador will get more promotion for starring in a new show. But if making the show means starting production on a closed set for three months, it also means the influencer no longer has time to go backpacking through Asia for the summer.

Building a Championship Team

Thinking of influencer marketing like a team sport means looking at the role of

individuals differently. If working with a few influencers is good, working with a team of influencers can be great for brands.

The best teams always outperform the strongest individuals. Even Michael Jordan, the greatest basketball player of all time, who started winning individual awards during his rookie season in 1985, didn't win his first NBA championship until he had the best team around him in 1991. Jordan the individual was defensible. The Chicago Bulls as a team were eventually able to dominate the competition thanks to their scouting, player development, coaching strategy and the unique value each player brought to their role on the court.

Great teams build their rosters with a focus on winning championships each season while simultaneously trying to sustain success over time. Just like brands, they factor budget issues and current trends into the makeup of their team. Core players may last for several seasons but rosters change around them regularly, and even the biggest stars get traded or fade away prematurely sometimes.

Brands working with influencers should take the same approach to winning audiences. Think of seasons in sports like campaigns for brands. Each has a specific goal to achieve over a set period of time but the ultimate goal is long-term success. Brands should build influencer teams based on their current campaign objectives and industry trends, but measure performance with an eye towards the long term.

Different players have their roles and everyone adds something special to help the

team win. Creators with big audiences can deliver reach and status but charge more for their services. Emerging creators add targeted engagement, which brands can activate in support of specific initiatives or to provide lift in search rankings for evergreen content. Micro-influencers usually cost the least, so they make a lot of content efficiently and can be groomed as emerging star players of the future.

Just like in sports, brands need extensive resources to keep the team focused on winning. While a brand manager, CMO or CEO wants to see the results, they have more than just influencer marketing to worry about and don't have time to manage it on daily basis. That's why it's important to find the right influencer marketing partner to build your roster and manage winning campaigns. Think of this as your scouting and coaching team. The best partners, like the best coaches and managers, have extensive experience developing winning campaigns. Their relationships with creators and process will benefit brands who need help taking their influencer marketing game to the next level.

The payoff for brands using a team approach to influencer marketing will be getting the best performance out of campaigns while building towards long-term success. We're still in early days of influencer marketing. Start building your team now to get ahead. ■

Shawn Kallet is vice president, brand partnerships at Branded Entertainment Network. Shawn.Kallet@bengroup.com or @skallet1

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Employees as Influencers

7 Questions to Ask When Seeking Influencers in Your Own Ranks

By Lisa Apolinski

Investing in influencers can be a great way to bring in new customers and revenue. At first, you might assume this means hiring someone from outside of your organization, but what if you looked within your own company for those influencers, and made the investment in your own staff? It may seem like a daunting task, but there are several questions to ask to guide you in choosing the right person on your staff to cultivate him or her into an influencer star.

Why are you seeking an influencer in the first place?

This is an important question as you need to consider your own expectations in bringing on an influencer, even someone who is already on staff. Are you looking for better engagement with your customers? An expert on staff to chat with your clients and prospects? Trying to get better lead conversion? You should also decide what data points will be measured, and what will constitute a successful influencer engagement.

The importance: Expectations are everything, and even the best influencer may not be successful if your expectations are unrealistic. If you are just starting out, keep your goals simple and measurable, so that both you and your staff influencer can see some early successes.

What tasks are you expecting the staff member to do?

Once you have your expectations in place, next determine what assignments are appropriate.

For this exercise, be very specific as to what the person will be doing, including frequency. For example, one task may be producing a 400-word blog twice a month.

The importance: If you are looking for someone who will be blogging, you will need a natural writer. If you are looking for someone to respond through social channels, your influencer will need to be comfortable in those social channels, such as a good photographer who can post on Instagram or Snapchat. And keep in mind—you are asking someone to add responsibilities to his or her plate, so some shifting of work may be in order.

Where will your influencer be active? Which digital channels?

You may be compelled to shape your digital channel strategy to the potential influencer, dependent on what channels he or she is comfortable with and actively engaged in. A better choice is to pick digital channels where your prospects and customers are.

The importance: By determining digital engagement based on where your potential customers are, you can use that as your “digital base.” Your in-house influencer should either be active in those channels, or have the capacity and interest in learning those channels. Don’t bend your customers to your influencer—be where the customers are.

How will you manage messaging?

In managing messaging, there is a tricky

Working With a New Influencer: 10 Lessons Learned

1. Have clearly defined expectations on responsibilities and deadlines. By defining expectations at the beginning, you know you are both on the same page.
2. Encourage your new influencer to find his or her voice and style of writing. That is what will make him or her unique and help attract a solid following.
3. Having an opinion is actually a good thing. Readers want to know what your influencer thinks.
4. Respect the opinion of the influencer. That is why you are having the influencer engage your customers in the first place.
5. Measure, measure and measure. Data points are key to determining success, so be sure to measure early and often.
6. It is OK to start small and grow. Your influencer can gain small successes and build from there.
7. Not everyone will like everything your influencer says. It still gets the conversation started.
8. Include video or photos in your posts. We all know that posts with some sort of visual get better engagement.
9. Share and amplify. As your influencer works to gain some ground and followers, she or he will need some assistance with getting content out and read.
10. Things can and will change, so keep evolving with your audience. As your influencer learns and gains experiences, the engagement with prospects will also change. All the more reason to keep using your influencer and see what happens.

balance of allowing your influencer to voice his or her opinion and wanting to keep control over what is being said and how the influencer is saying it. Remember, however, that your prospects and customers do not want marketing. They want information they can use and given to them in an interesting and clever way.

The importance: This is where personality comes in. While it would be easier to pick someone who is a company spokesperson or who is good at “following the rules,” it won’t make for a good influencer. It is critical to have someone who is a bit more outspoken and in some respects, opinionated. Readers don’t want content that plays it safe, but rather content that pushes conversation, piques thought and provides a base to have provocative engagement. Keep in mind as well: What separates a good influencer from a great one is the person’s ability to transcend the company brand to become his or her own. Are you comfortable with that?

What expertise should that influencer bring to the table?

Your influencer needs to be a subject matter expert. If you are going to him or her for help with customer engagement or if you see that prospects ask more detailed questions, and get good answers, from him or her, these are good indications of appropriate knowledge base.

The importance: Your influencer needs to understand the issues the customer faces and have enough knowledge to provide some quality solutions. The person should also have a propensity for learning about the subject matter outside of their normal job description. Staying on top of new information provides value to your customers, and simply put, some people have that drive and some do not.

When will you have the influencer start, and how will you determine if and when the engagement should stop?

Having a launch date for your in-house influencer gives your entire company a way to rally around him or her. What will happen if the influencer leaves the company? What if the influencer cannot or does not want to continue the engagement assignment? Have a Plan B ready if a scenario appears that is outside the norm.

The importance: Any businessperson will tell you having an exit strategy is as important as an entry strategy. Picking someone closer to retirement age means you will have to activate a back-up plan. A new employee may or may not have longevity, so keep that in mind as well. Know how you will either transfer the influencer engagement to another, or how to transition out of a digital channel as you put in place a potential back-up. NOTE: a new employee may not yet have enough expertise or depth in your specific business to be a good choice.

Will there be additional compensation for this staff member?

Asking a staff member to take on another responsibility that has a significant time commitment should not be without some kind of additional compensation. This does not necessarily need to be monetary, and can come in many forms.

The importance: People like to have recognition for going above and beyond their job duty. And having recognition and appropriate compensation (i.e. compensation that matters to your staff member) can affect how committed he or she is to this assignment. Do you truly understand what motivates your potential influencer and what compensation you are prepared to offer? Make sure those two items align.

By taking the time to consider each of these questions, a profile should start to emerge, and hopefully you will have a short list of potential influencers from right within your own organization. ■

Lisa Apolinski is CEO and founder of 3 Dog Write Inc. @LisaABlogger

How PR Can Play a Role in Training Employees to Be Brand Ambassadors

By Morry Smulevitz

Last year, I moved. That meant along with changes to my billing address, my favorite coffee shop and my go-to dog park, I also switched cable TV providers, sending me down a month-long rabbit hole of technician visits, troubleshooting phone calls and frustrations of every kind.

Technicians would show up on the wrong day. When they arrived, they'd have the wrong equipment. Installers visited who couldn't troubleshoot followed by troubleshooters who couldn't install. Even complaining was difficult: I couldn't tell a cable company employee from a third-party contractor.

At the end of my rope, a friend advised that I needed to have my malfunctioning cable boxes rebooted.

So I poured a Grey Goose, took a deep breath, dialed the 800 number and settled in for another evening of agony. This was it, I told myself. If the reboot failed, I would opt out of cable TV for good and settle for a life of Netflix. Assuredly this was a First World problem.

As I learned from the woman with a lovely Southern accent who answered the phone, the call center was located in Alabama. While we waited on the technology—rebooting a cable box is the technological equivalent of watching paint dry—we swapped stories about our kids and aspirations about life. She had recently completed an MBA in health care administration (my business), and she wanted to quiz me about my work in the pharmaceu-

tical industry.

After two reboots and more than one hour, we hung up. Not a single technical problem had been solved, but my issues with the company had vanished. No, it wasn't Zappos, but it was the best corporate PR I have ever been on the receiving end of.

Employees as Ambassadors

In an era of social media, news fragmentation and always-on communication, it is hugely naive to believe that a company's executives can or should remain the sole face and voice of a company. Yet that is how many organizations view PR.

We invest in messaging sessions and coaching for those atop our companies, but beyond routine onboarding with new hires or educational sessions on the company mission, organizations too often forget that every employee, every team member is an ambassador, as critical to the brand as a celebrity spokesperson or executive.

Give an Inch, Get a Mile

There is a rich history of companies that have up-leveled by training their employees to serve as ambassadors of the brand they represent:

Dell has trained 9,000 employees to use social media via its Social Media and Community University that focuses on helping employees build a personal brand while, at the same time, reflecting the values of the company. That effort has paid off, particularly

in recruitment, as would-be hires have 9,000 more windows into the company.

Southwest has long been lauded for allowing staff more than a little leeway, especially around in-flight announcements—some of which have gone viral. That's paid off, not just in customer loyalty, but employee loyalty, too: Southwest made last year's Forbes list of companies most beloved by its employees.

Every employee at **Zappos**, no matter where they land at the company, spends two weeks in the call center where the primacy of the customer—the core of the company's magic—is illustrated firsthand. Customer service isn't just part of the company. At Zappos, it is the whole company, and training efforts are oriented that way.

This isn't a new trend. In the pre-internet age, the venerable outdoor catalogue company **L.L.Bean** established a reputation based on customer service. Legend has it that its call centers had one persistent source of inefficiency: People who called just to chat with the army of friendly souls who manned the phones. That's the kind of problem that you want to be known for having.

Investing in Your New Agency

Empowering employees as the public face of a brand is not just an opportunity for companies with strong customer-service chops, though. Any organization can benefit by ensuring that employees have the tools to fly the company flag any time they interact with stakeholders. And while the specifics vary across industries and companies, there is a handful of actions that will enable employees to convey to others why the company they chose to work for is, in fact, the greatest.

- Make communications a part of the onboarding process. Getting new staff on board is more than reviewing corporate policies, it's an opportunity to teach new faces to identify their audiences and

equip them with the tools to convey why they are dedicated to the company (and their role within it).

- Make social media policies about permission, not prohibitions. Social media presents a unique opportunity to arm employees with the skills and power to use social networking in a positive way. When listing do's and don'ts, spend more time on the do's.
- Encourage expression. The same voices too often seem to dominate company intranets or group chats. Communicators need to work with HR to make sure that these online gathering places are welcoming to all, so that critical voices are heard.
- Explicitly ask for help. Communications and public affairs departments should be unafraid of asking a broad range of employees for help plugging into their network. If there is a glowing article about the organization or an insightful blog post from the C-suite, that's an opportunity to ask staff to consider sharing. If employees are proud of where they work, they'll welcome the chance to highlight the good work being done.
- Avoid being stingy when it comes to company logo swag. Yes, it's a small thing, but while the goal is not to create human billboards, employees deserve a shirt, water bottle or even backpack adorning the company logo. They usually return the favor by sporting their wares with pride.

When we think of raising the public profile and image of our companies, the reality is that it doesn't always take executive-level spokespersons or big-idea consultants to make a difference. Sometimes, all that's needed for game-changing PR is a committed call center employee who really cares. ■

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How Trust Helped Cisco Turn Employee Voices Into Its Best Recruiters

By Carmen Shirkey Collins

Who do you trust? At the Social Shake-Up Show in May 2017 I asked this question of attendees. Who do you look to for recommendations on things from buying a car to deciding if you should go see Wonder Woman this weekend?

If you take off your marketing hat and put on your human being hat (which shouldn't really be that different, if you're doing it right), your answers likely will be the same as those that came from the **Nielsen** Global Trust in Advertising survey.

A little more than 50% of the people surveyed said they would trust a review site to help them make a decision. Closer to 60% would trust their professional networks for advice; however, an overwhelming 86% said they trust their personal networks. Basically, your family, your closest friends, those you meet for drinks Friday after work, the people who take the yoga class with you—those are whom you look to.

Trust in brands is pretty far down the list and only slightly above trust in government. Especially when you're talking to members of the millennial and Gen Y generations. They don't want to be marketed to and they can smell it coming a mile away.



Snapchat or Bust: Cisco displays these shots of employees posing with board chairman John Chambers as part of its Snapchat Stories series. Source: Cisco

Turn Inward for Recommendations

So what's a brand to do?

If you consider the fact that personal networks are trusted the most, your best vehicle for sharing a message might just be your brand's employees.

Their networks trust them more than anyone else.

Need more convincing? The 2017 edition of the **Edelman** Trust Barometer had a juicy tidbit in all its data, which said employees are trusted more than the CEO of a company by 16 points!

A CEO is expected to say, "My company is great, my products are great, and my people are great." But the employees, for the most part,

don't have that expectation written into their job description, so their voice on the subject lends a little more authenticity.

No matter what you're trying to market, whether it be a product, or in the case of my job as the social lead for Cisco's Talent Brand, a culture or experience, first trusting in your employees to help tell a brand's story will lend more trust to the story you're trying to tell.

Now, I'm not just talking about getting employees to share your pre-written tweets and posts to their networks. There's value in a share, for sure, but the same exact post shared over and over again starts to become noise.

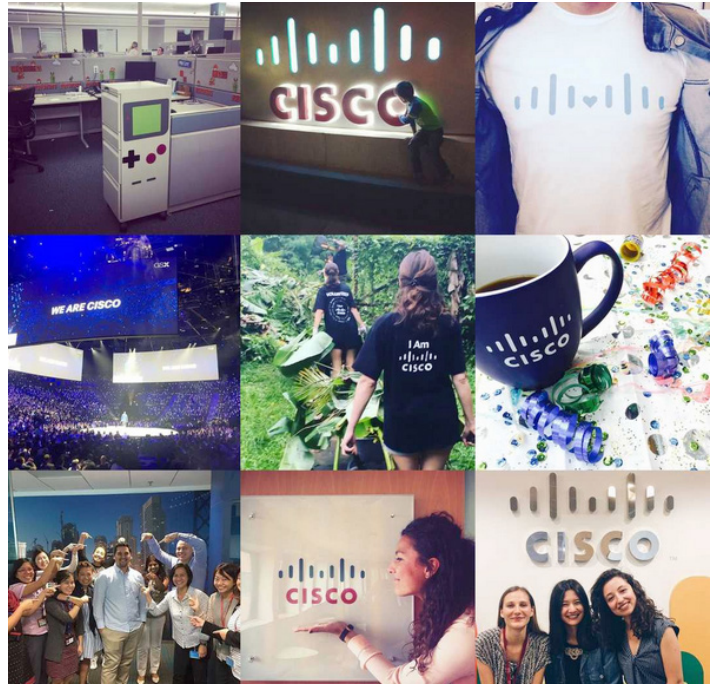
Employees in Their Own Words

Pitch your story to employees and let them be your ambassadors using their words in their way.

The WeAreCisco social media channels have been built from the ground up employing this idea of user-generated content, which we now call employee-generated content.

We could PR our way to a culture story, but that could come back to haunt us the minute it doesn't live up to the hype. Unlike some companies, Cisco has an employee value proposition that details what the brand aspires for its culture to be, but really, the employees own it. The culture is what the employees say it is.

So instead of creating content full of marketing-speak, we go out onto social media and listen to the #WeAreCisco hashtag to discover the content that employees are creating. Photos, tweets, stories: We reach out and ask employees (as the owners of said content) for permission to use them on our channels. We've gone as far as to take this strategy to our new Careers website—every photo on the site is either of an employee or by an employee.



They Are Cisco: The best 9 #WeAreCisco Instagram posts of the year give the technology company a more human face than one normally finds from a B2B. Most important, though, is that these photos originally were posted on employee accounts. Source: Cisco

Takeaways

1. The voices of your employees may be your brand's most trusted sources.
2. Shelf the usual marketing-speak copy and listen instead to what your employees are saying about your brand on social media. Curate this content despite the fact that it might not look glossy and produced.
3. Trust is critical. Trusting in your employees to help tell the brand's story will lend more trust to the story you're trying to tell.
4. Trust employees, but provide them with an idea of what's expected. Avoid implementing too many procedures and hoops.
5. Similar to any other effort, provide structure and measurability to an employee-ambassador program by establishing goals up front.

Trust Is Key

The metrics back up the strategy. Our social media channels outperform engagement standards by anywhere from two to six times, depending on the day and the channel. The new website has seen drastic decreases in bounce rate and increases in time on site.

The reason it works is (here's that word again) trust. It looks authentic, it feels authentic, it's shared on employee networks, so it's accepted as a reliable source.



Snappy Dressers: It's clear these humorous snaps from employees frame Cisco's culture as a fun place to work. The brand appreciates a favorable image when it is recruiting members of the young demographic, who are heavy Snapchat users. Source: Cisco

Employee Voices Can Sell the Company

We're selling much more than culture; we're selling the Cisco brand. We're selling what the company does, how it innovates, the technology it powers and the world it has changed. Candidates are customers and customers are candidates, so by having employees talk about why they love working at Cisco, they are helping sell its products and services along with the experience of life at Cisco.

Here are several keys to our success using employee voices and integrating them into employee networks.

1. Trust. As I mentioned earlier, trust is critical. You have to learn to let go of total control to reach the authentic tone.
2. Build in process and guidelines for protection. Communicate what is expected—you'll be surprised (if your employees have bought into what you're selling) how much they want to please. Avoid building in so much process, though, that there are too many hoops.
3. Treat them like the VIPs that they are. A little recognition goes a long way. Share

metrics, share results, share insights. They're an extension of your team.

4. Prompt them, but don't script them. WeAreCisco has a mission for what we want our programs to accomplish. Still, our employee ambassadors directly determine how we get there.
5. Have goals. Without goals, you'll never show success in an employee ambassador program or any program. Measure, rinse, repeat.

It's also key to this formula that you have something that your employees want to talk about. I can't tell you how often I've heard, "I want our employees to say how much they love this initiative." My answer always is, "Me too! But I can't make them love it. It's got to be something that matters to them."

There's no doubt it takes a little trust to get that trust back in marketing value. Not everything will have polish and poise. It may not look glossy and produced, but that might be what adds the most value. ■

Carmen Collins is social media lead at Cisco's Talent Brand. carcolli@cisco.com

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Activating Grassroots Brand Advocates

One Type of Influencer You May Have Overlooked: Your Customer

By David Reimherr

Influencer marketing is a fantastic tie-in for many marketing plans, be it for large corporations or growing brands. It's a great way to get a big push to further any content marketing or audience building plans, as well as general awareness. The only problem I see out there with influencer marketing is the misperception of what makes an influencer.

The bigger names, the LeBron James and Taylor Swifts of the world, are obviously influencers and can logically be associated with huge companies. Then there are the other names, and while they are lesser-known influencers, they still have huge followings on their social platforms. For medium-sized brands, there are micro-influencers, who also have nice niche followings. I know there are many experts who are going to give you some great advice on how to find, utilize and strategically incorporate influencers into your marketing scope, but I want to add another level of influencer to the list who isn't talked about very much when it comes to influencer marketing: Your customer.

For local/smaller businesses, it's challenging to find ways to implement and incorporate influencer marketing. Sometimes, it's impossible to find a person who has a niche following in a certain part of a city, which is what would be needed for a vet, a dentist, accountant, lawyer, etc. Budget constraints also limit the options that smaller companies have.

Our team at Magnificent has taken a unique approach to influencer marketing

when it comes to smaller companies. We look at this as micro-micro influencer marketing, and we work with our clients to get their customers involved. Their customers know and live around other potential customers, so when they are involved, and sharing out the posts they are involved with, it organically reaches other customers. The options range from collaboration posts, posts that highlight client achievements and involving customers in evergreen posts.

Highlight an individual client for something notable they've accomplished—community service, starting a new company, winning a competition, etc.

Collaboration Posts

Many people are already familiar with this term and have likely seen these posts. They typically include marketing experts, or other industry thought leaders sharing their top takeaways on certain topics. The reason for the popularity of collaboration posts is the huge initial boost a company or blogger gets from participant's shares. It's natural for someone to share a post they are involved with, which is why these work so well. Not to mention, the potential for back-linking, which is really helpful for SEO growth). A small business might assume this type of collaboration is out of reach, but it isn't! You

Example Questionnaire

Below is an example of a questionnaire we use. Of course, the questions vary from client to client and situation to situation. Notice that we are also getting some potential opportunities to tag other local businesses:

Name:

Year in school:

How long have you lived in Westlake:

What makes you awesome? (Tell us about your school accomplishments and/or your charity work)

What's your secret to happiness?

What makes you smile?

What keeps you smiling? (Maybe a health and wellness tip)

TELL US A LITTLE MORE (Answer as many of these as you can)

What is your favorite Westlake hangout?

What is your favorite Westlake eatery?

Any Westlake hidden gems? (What makes Westlake unique?)

Give a shout out to your favorite Westlake business! (Aside from XYZ BUSINESS of course!)

Do you have any tips for people just moving to the neighborhood?

What's your favorite thing to do when you are out of school?

can collaborate with your own clients. Say you are a tax accountant, and your client base is mainly made up of business owners. You could ask them the number one thing they do that makes them successful. This sort of content piece will then resonate with other professionals, and again, your clients will be apt to share through their social networks.

Make sure you flatter your clients when you ask them to participate. Let them know that they've been selected because they're insight will be valuable to others. And when

your post has been published, notify the people mentioned, and make it easy for them to share. Provide them with a well-crafted post or tweet to send out, and of course, make sure they are tagged in your post. When the participants engage, you'll want to engage in return. The more engagement going on within a post, the further the organic reach. Also, it's not a bad idea to think of other people who would benefit from reading these tips and tag and share to them. And if you have a staff, having them like and share will also help. All of these engagement efforts are paramount to success, and they only take minimal staff time.

Highlighting Achievements

Another idea we've come up with is highlighting an individual client for something notable they've accomplished—community service, starting a new company, winning a competition, etc. Not only will you gain a social ambassador for your company, the subject of the post will be thrilled to share it with their friends, colleagues, and family members, getting you in front of potential new customers.

Apply the same strategies for sharing and engagement that you would use for collaboration posts. Alert the client, your team, and tag anyone you think would be interested in reading and sharing your post, including the participant's family. For smaller businesses, this is a great way to give back to the community that supports you. A small gift of appreciation like flowers or a plaque would be a really nice touch, too.

Evergreen Posts

This is a term we use when talking about creating a social post that will live forever. It needs to be pointed out that the original post can never change. Even a punctuation mark moved or slight image adjusted will reset the

post in Facebook's eyes. The idea behind an evergreen post is to get your customers and community involved, and you yourself will also engage with this post forever. Over time, and as engagement increases, is this post will continue to show at the top of organic feeds because Facebook will identify it as something that's of interest to many people. The initial strategy for these posts needs to be carefully considered because again, you can't ever change the original copy. Suppose you run a festival. You can engage with event goers (i.e. your potential influencers) and ask them what they love best about your event.

You can even ask through a large email blast, but it's also encouraged to tag and ask

specific people who you personally know. This will help get the ball rolling. When the festival happens the following year, you will direct people to this same exact post again. Over time, you will garner a ton of free and super valuable organic reach.

I realize this is a different way to look at influencer marketing, but I hope I might have given some smaller businesses a few ideas. You really can employ this awesome marketing tactic, regardless of the size of your company. Best of luck out there! ■

David Reimherr is founder of Magnificent Marketing. david@magnificent.com

How to React When Your Fans Speak for Your Brand (Without Being Asked)

By Kira Clayborne

The Trend: Recently, **Church's Chicken** has discovered a behavior among our social media fans. In short, they're managing the community for the brand—particularly on Facebook, where our guests will step in and help answer questions. These brand advocates have begun to speak with and for us in a positive format; this word of mouth has helped support our message deeply among our communities and through grassroots and organic means. Guests like these demonstrate meaningfully how our message is making inroads into communities in meaningful ways.

These examples of the results of creating loyalty through one-to-one communication illustrate what it now means to be a brand on social media. It's no longer as much about funny tweets and witty comments as it is about connecting with these guests, their particular communities and their experiences.

Our Reaction: Keeping authentic and genuine communications between our guests and us requires insight into what we mean, as a brand, to our communities. How do we help support them? How can we better understand them?

We started by ensuring that all of our digital vehicles were interconnected. This allows our communities to have an immersive brand experience from one platform to the next, and has increased loyalty and support of the brand among users. If you can drive guests to

the right places for the right information at the right time, you've created an experience that is unparalleled.

Adapting to the way people want to communicate and hearing their narrative will open us as a brand to a deeper connection with these communities. The result will be more quality followers.

Adapting to the way people want to communicate and hearing their narrative will open us as a brand to a deeper connection.

As a brand in the digital space, we create technologies, participate in conversations and deliver content to make our communities feel connected. Whether as a distraction or true emotional connection, we want to provide for our guests and their families. Connecting through these common platforms seems like step one.

As a brand, you must take the time to build communities and relationships so they develop into offline or “in-restaurant” experiences for your guests. With that relationship, brands genuinely can provide targeted and meaningful messaging to customers, which we think should be a brand's purpose on digital. ■

Kira Clayborne is senior manager, digital media at Church's Chicken.

How to Deploy Brand Advocates When Promotions Are Crowding Social Media

By Larissa Von Lockner

The Trend: We've all been there. You're scrolling through your social feeds wondering what your friends and family are up to and you just can't escape the those targeted ads. Those shoes you found last week during your lunch break—the ones you added to your shopping bag but never bought—they're haunting you.

So, naturally, you ditch that social platform and vow to never buy the shoes out of pure spite. Instagram is supposed to be a sacred space, after all.

All jokes aside, this scenario is not an uncommon one. While many brand advertisers believe that their targeted promotions will lead to a higher sales number or an increased following, the reality is that this world of inescapable promotion proves frustrating to consumers.

How then, you ask, can a brand effectively market itself in an environment where paid campaigns aren't what they used to be?

The Reaction: Don't spam your followers. Instead, be selective with your campaigns and invest in developing brand advocates.

That's right, focus on your most powerful and most valuable asset: your people. Whether you work at a firm that spans the globe and has thousands of employees, or you're a tiny non-profit working out of a garage with a force of five, this theory holds true: In our modern day, information that comes authentically from the heart of a trusted source is content that will be readily consumed and engaged with.

So, how do you make sure that you're trusted? How do you establish that voice?

The key is authenticity. Train your people. Even more important, empower them. Establish a strict social media and communications policy, then make sure that your staff receive the training and education that is needed.

Don't spam your followers. Instead, be selective with your campaigns.

Once people understand what they can and can't say, and you are comfortable having them at the forefront of your brand strategy, they'll start sharing key messaging in their own voices.

I agree with Carmen Collins who wrote in the previous chapter about the payback a brand receives when it empowers employees to act as ambassadors on social media and speak in their own voices. And let me tell you, the voices, videos and photos of your employees always are going to be funnier, more genuine and more relatable than those of a faceless brand.

Just remember: Less is more when you're running promotions. People turn to social to be social, after all. And when they see other people speaking positively about your product—even if those people are your employees—they'll respond more positively than if you toot your own horn and spam their favorite channels. ■

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How GoDaddy Is Building an Expanding Tribe of Brand Advocates

By PR News Editors

It's no secret that audiences respond more readily to their peers' brand engagement than they do to messaging that comes directly from brands themselves. But what can communicators do to convert those engaged users into brand advocates?

Stacey DePolo, who manages social media and advocacy at domain and business services provider **GoDaddy**, considers that question often. She works daily to build GoDaddy's community of brand advocates, which she defines as "a group of people who are passionate about a brand, product or cause that promotes their community either in person or online." We talked to DePolo about what communicators can do to grow their own group of brand advocates.

PR News: What brands are doing a good job at building community on social?

DePolo: Brands that build a tribe around a cause, action or service other than the original product. **REI** is a great example—they're passionate about getting people outdoors. For their "Opt Outside" campaign, they shut down on Black Friday and encouraged customers and employees to go outside. They ended up making more money than in previous holiday seasons.

Brands taking a stand make us want to talk about them, as opposed to those who don't make waves or push the envelope. At GoDaddy we're trying to level the playing field for small businesses; I would love to see GoDad-

dy become a hub for net neutrality, to tell our community, "join this movement." That's the tribal mindset.

PR News: How do you convert a follower or customer into a brand advocate?

DePolo: The first step is to do some social listening to find out who's already talking [positively] about your brand, product or service. Ask those folks, "What can we do to promote you and what tools do you need?" Some advocates are frustrated if they're not empowered with tools. These people are waiting out there to do your work without compensation, and will move onto another brand if you don't reach out.

If you can form a tribal movement around your brand it becomes easier. Customer stories are a great way to stimulate that tribalism. You can take a group of customers who relate to each other or to a specific story, and hit the segments that are likely to resonate with that story arc.

Look at who's buying the most and see if you can contact them directly. And if you look at the verbatim feedback in customer comments, you'll find new and unique language and wording to use to describe your product (or cause).

PR News: What kinds of tools can you offer potential brand advocates?

DePolo: A blog or Facebook group can make sure potential advocates are the first to know about a new product or release. Ad-

vocates love having news to share. They also crave any kind of direct access to leadership—that two-way channel is important.

Have good video and photo content to share, or ask advocates to create the content. Then they feel like they're part of your brand. They then can go out and share with their networks: "Hey, I got to sit down with Go-Daddy's CEO and find out..." That's a story you want to tell before it hits the wire.

PR News: Any missteps to avoid in recruiting brand advocates?

DePolo: They're not asking to be compensated the way an influencer would, so there needs to be disclosure if there's no quid pro quo. If you start to compensate them in any way you have to disclose that [in the assets they share] to avoid the FTC coming down on you. ■

5

Influencer Tactics

How Influencers Can Enhance Nonprofit and Political Fundraising Campaigns

By Joshua Habursky & Brian Kaissi

With the growth of social media and digital communications, the intersection between our civic and social communities is becoming increasingly interwoven. More and more, Americans turn to platforms such as Facebook or Twitter for both entertainment and educational purposes. As a result, social influencers are uniquely positioned to serve as brand advocates for issue and political campaigns, and can utilize their vast personal networks to both communicate an organization's message and scale up their fundraising potential.

Celebrity endorsements are not a novel concept, but the prominence of social influencers in the crowdfunding space has increased dramatically in the last few years. This “how to” article will showcase case studies of creative social influencer campaigns for both brand communications and online fundraising, and will outline best practices for both small and large organizations to cultivate social influencer partnerships.

Background

Online fundraising and “crowdfunding” is fundamentally different from other forms of fundraising because of its unparalleled ability to scale out quickly. Whether or not an organization or campaign solicits engagement from celebrity influencers, all online fundraising initiatives should aim to reach as many people as possible and as quickly as possible.

This allows organizations to solicit short-term small-money contributions, as well as cultivate personal information from advocates for long-term fundraising and advocacy outreach.

Social media influencers are trusted voices that drive connections and action within their communities. Similar to supporting a company's brand to sell a product or service, influencers can make a major impact by endorsing a political candidate's or nonprofit's brand to solicit contributions, and will do so, occasionally free of charge.

1. Choose Ideal Social Channels for the Campaign

The first step in launching any fundraising program is to understand the complexion of your target audience. Each prominent social platform has unique outreach capabilities and may or may not cater to an organization's target donors. Good questions to consider are:

- Where do you already have the most followers?
- Where do your prospects tend to converse and share content?
- Which platform has the strongest capability to go viral?

The most effective channels for these efforts tend to be Facebook and Twitter. The former is especially effective for promoting organic social interaction; in other words, users value the opinion of their peers (which

Case Study No. 1: Alyssa Milano

Alyssa Milano is a perfect example of an effective celebrity influencer, and has over 3.2 million followers on her personal twitter account. During the Georgia 6th Congressional Special Election, Milano served as an influencer for both the Jon Ossoff for Congress Campaign, as well as for a number of prevalent issue advocacy campaigns.

Specifically, Milano tweeted support for an organization called My Ride to Vote, which funded free Uber rides to the polls on Election Day. Specifically, her post on Election Day reached a number of other influencers, such as actor Bradley Whitford (128k Twitter followers) and actress Debra Messing (416k Twitter followers). Ultimately, the organization raised nearly \$90,000, nearly half of which occurred in the final week before the election.

they see through likes and shares) and tend to be willing to voice their opinions and participate in a growing movement. Twitter, on the other hand, has the greatest tendency to “go viral.” One tweet by a celebrity influencer can receive the attention by several other celebrity influencers, compounding the potential of your small money contribution campaign exponentially.

2. Research Influencers That Impact Your Advocates

This research can be industry-specific and must take into consideration important factors such as age, gender and other demographic metrics. An important distinction, and what makes this topic unique, is that this type of social influencer marketing strategy is not simply about using the influence of a celebrity to participate in your organization’s messaging, such as an online video or email campaign. Rather, this is about finding

a social influencer who already has their own network of followers on social media in their respective industry, and asking them to share your content on their platforms to directly, and organically reach new audiences.

Make sure the ask is crystal clear. Campaigns should not list multiple ways to help.

Your organization should be thinking about all geographic and demographic factors that play into your prospective influencers’ network. Do they have ties to a specific state or city, congressional district, or an illustrated interest in your issue? Have they historically demonstrated an interest in civic participation and/or utilized their platforms to promote nonprofit or political messaging?

Because nonprofits and political organizations are promoting civic messages aimed to improve public life, and a simple share or tweet is an almost effortless measure, your organization can solicit thousands, if not tens of thousands of dollars simply by connecting with the right social media influencers and aggregating small contributions online.

3. Conduct Outreach to Influencers

To find the right influencers to promote your message, your issue or political campaign must:

- Find what social influencers appeal to your target donors
- Reach out to these individuals directly via social media
- Tweet at and tag these influencers to peak their interest

4. Have a Defined Ask and End Date

Your campaign cannot be indefinite. To be successful, individuals must feel compelled to

contribute before a specific time, and likewise, influencers must feel a sense of urgency to take action. If Election Day is Nov. 6, your team must aim to go viral in the last week before the election, and must be ready to aggressively post on social media the day before the election. If natural deadlines do not exist, create deadlines and fundraising goals such as an arbitrary timeframe to reach a designated amount. Each social media user has a multitude of campaigns, advertisements, and social content thrown at them constantly, and needs to feel a sense of urgency to support your efforts.

Similarly, make sure the ask is crystal clear. Campaigns should not list multiple ways to help (example: give money, volunteer, etc.). Each online solicitation should have one simple ask, coupled with a brief and compelling explanation.

5. Create a Hashtag

Create a hashtag unique to your organization, campaign, or event that will ensure more people see your social content. Platforms such as Twitter and Facebook are coded intentionally to make the most popular posts appear on the most user's news feeds. In other words, they recognize and knowingly distribute the most widely sought-after content—based on impressions (views), likes, and shares—metrics that are increased by the use of hashtags.

6. Pitch Your Campaign to Journalists

When fundraising via email or social media, a campaign's goal is to get people to click on hyperlinks to visit its fundraising portal. Therefore, anything that incurs social media users to engage with your post will increase the likelihood that they contribute.

Case Study No. 2: Gronk Nation Youth Foundation

The Gronk Nation Youth Foundation, led by celebrity and NFL All-Star Rob Gronkowski, is a nonprofit organization that leverages the star athlete's status to raise money for youth charities. Gronkowski, who has 2.46 million followers on Twitter, launched the "Gronk Nation T-Shirt Fundraiser" and posted support on social media in tandem with his brothers. Ultimately, this creative campaign sold over 2,500 shirts to support the F**k Cancer Foundation. Following the aftermath of Hurricane Harvey, you also saw a similar influencer driven fundraising campaign led by Houston Texan Defensive end J.J. Watt who as of Sept. 8, 2017 raised \$27 million for victims in a matter of days. Both examples showcase the fundraiser and awareness potential of influencers. Watt's geographic celebrity certainly compelled the fundraising campaign to greater success.

Articles drafted by reporters or op-eds and opinion pieces produced by your team serve as great materials to include in social media posts. Whether it be an article focusing on your organization's efforts, or outlining the issues your organization aims to address, your nonprofit or campaign should use content marketing pieces for brand promotion and to direct users to your online fundraising portal. ■

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Why and How to Make the Move From Mega-Influencers to Micro-Influencers

By Jim Hopper & Peter Wells

The world of social media moves fast. So, it was particularly noticeable how slow brands were to shift their thinking from “major celebrity endorsement deal” to “social media influencer campaign” over the last several years. This shift happened only after they began closely observing who their customers were following, and realizing that there was a whole new world of social media trendsetters with thousands to millions of engaged followers, who customers were looking to for recommendations on everything from what to buy and where to go, to where to eat and who to pay attention to.

Now that most brands have finally got the memo—they’re just in time for the next social media renaissance. This new phase of social media is defined by a more discerning consumer, an increasingly educated brand, and a new type of influencer.

The More Discerning Consumer

While customers are still impressionable, they’re far more attuned to the sausage-making process of influencer marketing. They can easily distinguish an authentic brand recommendation from a thinly veiled product endorsement, and they’re less inclined to believe that every product an influencer recommends is truly their “fave.”

The Increasingly Educated Brand

Brands have also gotten smarter, realizing that not all influencers are created equal.

With the rise of bots, fake followers and paid engagement, it’s difficult to determine upfront which influencers are influential, and which are just playing the part. But what they do know is that a large following and a high engagement rate do not always equate to more eyeballs or conversions for their brand.

This is important considering that when brands initially shifted their dollars from celebrity to influencer, the influencers they most often engaged were those with millions of followers—in other words, the celebrities of social media. In other words, brands’ big leap from celebrity to influencer wasn’t that big.

Knowing that customers are influential, and that liking your product is a motivator for their influence, brands officially have permission to reconnect with their creative roots.

A New Type of Influencer

That brings us to the rise of the micro-influencer: social media users who have relatively smaller audiences but are influential within their respective circles. And, bonus, they legitimately like the brands they talk about and work with.

This increasingly influential group ranges from everyday users to burgeoning social media personalities, with anywhere from less than 1,000 followers all the way up to 100,000.

Brands have realized that level of influence

isn't a function of followers; it's a function of engagement—real likes and comments—with posts. And users that fall into this range are shown to have a higher engagement rate than Instagram users with more than 100,000 followers.

According to a survey of 2 million social media influencers conducted by influencer marketing platform **Markerly**, there's an inverse relationship between number of followers and engagement. For unpaid posts, Instagram influencers with fewer than 1,000 followers have a like rate of approximately 8%, while those with 1,000 to 10,000 followers show a rate of 4%.

As followers increase, influencers' like rate continues to decrease. Instagram influencers with 10,000 to 100,000 followers, for instance, see a 2.4% like rate, compared to 1.7% for those with 1 million to 10 million followers. Comment rates follow a similar pattern.

So what does all of this mean for influencer marketing? For brands, there's a new set of rules.

1. Brands must play a different type of numbers game.

When engaging mega-influencers, the numbers brands look at, in order of priority, are: followers, engagement and rate of engagement. The general thinking has been that, even with a lower rate of engagement, an influencer with millions of followers still reaches way more people and gets far more likes and comments than one with less. When working with micro-influencers, the order of priority is exactly the opposite, where rate of engagement > engagement > followers.

Instead of focusing on one mega-influencer with a ton of followers, but a relatively low engagement rate, the idea is to engage with multiple micro-influencers with lower follower bases, but disproportionately higher likes and comments. Depending on how budget

Are Your Influencers Really Influencing?

Brands are shelling out more free product than ever, in hopes that unpaid influencers will blanket social media with branded posts. Here are a few tips for increasing the odds that they do.

1. Establish in advance what you want influencers to do when they post, rather than relying on them to guess.
2. Create opportunities that make influencers want to influence, such as inviting them to special events that they can't help but post about.
3. Turn your brand into a lifestyle that influencers want to align with.
4. Regularly share influencers' posts with your audience so that new influencers realize that posting your products has its benefits—namely, social currency and increased exposure.
5. Maximize your ROFS (Return on Free Swag) at VIP areas or gifting suites by turning them into photo-capturing, photo-friendly influence hubs.

and resources are spread out among them, chances are brands can achieve the same level of awareness and engagement they did with one or two mega-influencers with a lower investment.

2. It's time to master the art of turning loyal customers into motivated influencers, once and for all.

Most brands value their customers' loyalty and invest heavily in increasing it. As the definition of influencer shifts, however, brands will begin seeing that their loyal customers are well positioned to be their new base of social media influencers. The trick is figuring out how to leverage these customers' loyalty on social media.

Melissa Shoes, a global brand with 85 store

locations worldwide, is doing exactly this. The brand used to work primarily with top influencers with millions of followers and a global reach, but recently realized it's able to achieve similar reach and increased ROI by paying closer attention to fans and real customers who come into its stores and post pictures of their favorite shoes or moments to social media. So, it introduced interactive social media displays into its stores to encourage this type of social media activity.

Part marketing program (customers can view digital lookbooks and other materials) and part social media tool (customers can print branded keepsakes of the photos they've posted using the store's hashtag), Melissa Shoes is encouraging more social posts by triggering real-time rewards and having customers compete for highest social influencer status. This isn't just motivating way more social media activity than ever before, it's driving more traffic back to its site and giving Melissa Shoes insights into what styles shoppers are gravitating toward, what styles their followers are engaging with and a clear view of who their most influential customers are. Knowing this, the retailer can consider introducing more formal collaborations with the fans behind them.

3. The brand story, lifestyle and experience are more important than ever.

One of the primary hallmarks of a micro-influencer is that they actually like the brands they're endorsing on social media. For many brands, this means a return to their creative core. We often see that things like product design and creative storytelling can suffer when brands' focus shifts too heavily toward awareness and promotion. Knowing that customers are influential, and that liking your product is a motivator for their influence, brands officially have permission to reconnect with their creative roots—without fear that doing so will take away from their awareness and promotion efforts. And, in fact, that it will enhance them.

This customer-focused shift in influencer marketing is good news for brands. Making customers their priority and giving them the same treatment as coveted influencers will benefit the brand in more ways than they could ever imagine. ■

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How Influencer Marketing Can Transform the Small Business on a Small Budget

By Simon Staib

The concept of word of mouth in marketing has been around for as long as brands have been advertising to customers. With the advent of more formalized methods of marketing, and eventually the rise of digital marketing, we have found ever more creative ways to reach prospective customers. But ultimately, the truest principle of advertising still applies; that recommendations are king when it comes to customer acquisition.

Influencer marketing is word of mouth advertising for the digital age. In a time when information is so easily accessible online and companies find it harder to control their brand image, having the backing of trusted digital influencers provides brands with a new way to control the narrative.

Despite its potential, thanks to its visibility and reach, influencer marketing is often viewed as the reserve of global brands. Those with the resources and reputation to attract Instagram or YouTube stars that in turn command an audience of hundreds of thousands of followers. Similarly, with the reported rates for a celebrity social media post now estimated to be anywhere from \$25K to a cool \$1 million (source: **MediaMix**, Top 10 Highest Paid Celebrities on Instagram, 2017), how can small to medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) hope to compete?

In this article, we will outline how, with a targeted strategy, core key performance indicators (KPIs) and the right tools, SMEs can tap into influencer marketing and transform

Influencer Marketing 8 Point Guide for SMEs

1	Set budget
2	Outline goals
3	Select KPIs
4	Identify target customer segment
5	Choose suitable micro-influencers
6	Choose best digital channels for audience
7	Content creation process & publishing
8	Performance, tracking & measurement

their approach to customer acquisition.

The Approach: Relational vs Technology-Driven Influencer Marketing

The first thing an SME should consider is the different branches of influencer marketing. Let's call these relational and technology-driven. Both involve brands providing influencers with products and giving them relatively free rein to create content that fits their channels and audience. The real difference occurs after the campaign is over.

Relational influencer marketing takes a more qualitative approach, where the impact of the campaign is assessed based on factors

such as the influencer's network and assumed benefits of partnering with a particular influencer. Relational influencer marketing is often used by big brands, where bigger budgets and multichannel campaigns allow more room for campaigns based on trust and relationships, rather than data.

Like other areas of digital marketing, technology-driven influencer marketing is all about what can be measured before, during and after the campaign. Using digital tools to track and assess campaign data enables companies to more accurately assess the impact of a campaign. It is this data-driven, targeted and scalable approach that enables brands, with big or small budgets, to undertake successful influencer marketing campaigns. And what lies at the center of this is an effective strategy, particularly goal setting and KPIs.

The Strategy: Choosing the Right Goals & KPIs

As part of a wider marketing strategy, influencer marketing is an excellent way to increase brand awareness, target a new customer segment and create new leads. This principle applies to companies regardless of size. The trick to influencer marketing for the SME is understanding its strengths and limitations.

When working with a more restrictive budget, goals have to be more than S.M.A.R.T. Rather than going wide, go narrow. Which stage is your company at? Which goal would have the most impact in your company's development? If it's a new product launching, then brand awareness is likely to be the most relevant goal. If you want to generate leads, then focusing your influencer marketing campaign on increasing traffic via referrals would be a targeted goal. Whatever the ultimate aim, ensure that this relates closely with your wider company goals for the next quarter.

Influencer Search Checklist

- ☐ Select the right niche for your product or company
- ☐ Find micro-influencers (~10K - 100K followers)
- ☐ Check ratio of followers to likes & comments to estimate engagement rate
- ☐ For bloggers, use SEO tools to assess their credibility and authority
- ☐ Use platforms to find influencers that match your criteria

The next step in developing an effective strategy is to decide on your core KPIs based on your aforementioned goals. Outlining clear KPIs at this stage will help to determine which influencers to collaborate with, as well as whether a campaign has been a success. Important KPIs to measure can include referrals, traffic, page impressions, click-through rate (CTR) and cost per engagement (CPE).

Once you've determined goals and what you want to track, you should have a clear idea of the audience you want to target.

The Audience: Targeting Your Prospective Consumers

Influencer marketing can be executed across many channels. This is great as it gives you various opportunities to build awareness around your brand or product.

Your choice of influencer and key channels should depend on your goals and target audience. Different channels attract different users, dependent on key demographical information such as age, location and habits. Understanding your consumers will help you

to know which channels to target and in turn, which influencers are most suited to reaching them.

The Influencers: The Rise of the Micro-Influencer

Brand juggernauts and influencer stars that conduct highly visible campaigns have created the impression that this is the status quo in influencer marketing. Of course, influencer stars have earned their reputations for good reason. With a high number of followers, a company can almost guarantee that their product will reach a large audience. But what does that mean for an SME that would struggle to attract a big name in the influencer sphere?

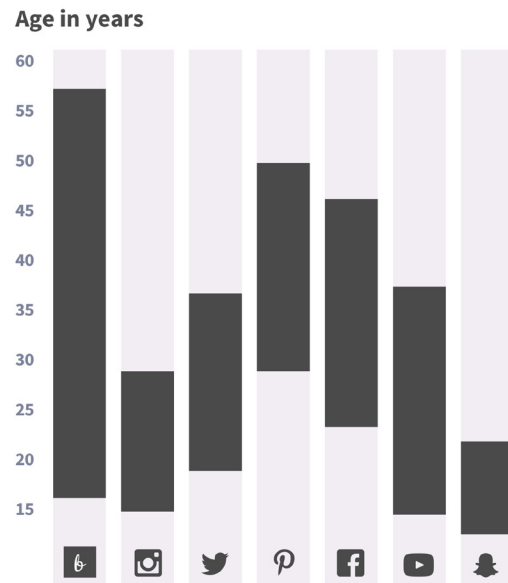
As influencer marketing matures, it has become apparent that size isn't everything. A large following may indicate reach, but it is not a good indicator of engagement or success. When it comes to selecting the right influencer for your campaign, SMEs wanting to maximize impact should think micro.

Micro-influencers are digital influencers with approximately 10K and 100K followers. But their smaller following is to their and a savvy SMEs advantage.

First of all, selecting several micro-influencers that have a collective reach rivaling that of one star influencer is the best way for companies with smaller budgets to maximize the impact of their campaign. Rather than opting to work with one influencer with 500K followers, selecting five to 10 influencers with follower numbers ranging from 10k to 70K would achieve the same impact, if not more. This is also a more affordable option as a key benefit of working with micro-influencers is that while rates for star influencers are skyrocketing, micro-influencers are both more accessible and more affordable.

This is also a strategically smart approach given that micro-influencers are proven to

Social Media Use Across Different Demographics



have more engaged networks. Engagement rates for micro-influencers are reported to be up to 60% higher than star influencers (source: **AdWeek**, Micro-Influencers are More Effective with Marketing Campaigns than Highly Popular Accounts, 2017). It's even been argued that influencers can reach a critical mass (source: **Digiday** UK, The Rise of Micro-Influencers on Instagram, 2016) of followers, after which engagement begins to decrease.

Finally, micro-influencers often have niche audiences, so the likelihood that they will be interested in your product is higher than that of star influencers, who may have a large but highly varied audience.

The Data: Measuring Success

The wonder of data is that it allows marketers and those engaged in marketing activities to really assess how a campaign is performing. Metrics enable us to measure the performance of a campaign against the goals

we outlined. In influencer marketing, the success of a campaign will be tied to these goals, but there are two factors that determine success: the short-term impact and the long-term effect.

Immediately after a post, there will be a number of markers that indicate whether a campaign is being received well. This will be apparent in the first few hours and days. An SME wanting to measure how well a campaign is performing can look at how many likes, comments and shares a post receives in relation to the influencers' other posts to gauge initial success. In a coordinated micro-influencer campaign, posts from multiple influencers will help to boost this effect and create the desired social buzz around a company. This is known as the branding effect.

But the real impact of an influencer marketing campaign should be measured over time. The long-term effect of an influencer marketing campaign is how an SME can measure the successes and failures of their strategy. This can be measured in overall reach, engagements and clicks. Over time the CTR, CPE and leads that were generated from a targeted influencer marketing campaign can be measured against goals in the same way other marketing plans are assessed. It is this measurable data that SMEs can use to scale their influencer marketing campaigns.

This can also be used to foster long-term relationships with influencers whose audience is a good fit for your company. Remember,

the key to influencer marketing success is authenticity and this can best be achieved by maintaining relationships with influencers that believe in your company and brand.

The Benefits

Successful influencer marketing has little to do with the size of a company or their marketing budget, and is more closely related to goal setting and a targeted strategy. By understanding and outlining what you wish to achieve with your campaign and staying focused on the data, you are more likely to achieve these aims in the long-term.

With a reported 80% of marketers having incorporated an influencer marketing strategy into their marketing mix in 2017 (source: **Smart Insights**, *The Rise and Rise of Influencer Marketing*, 2017), it's crucial that SMEs don't get left behind. Big budgets and star influencers are not needed to make influencer marketing a success. For SMEs, targeting your budget and going micro can have a significant impact on the outcomes of a campaign. Influencer marketing is in fact a great way for SMEs to create a big impact with a small budget and can help you to reach your target customers in an authentic way that resonates with them. ■

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How to Use Trends and Platform Insights for Successful Influencer Campaigns

By Danielle Wiley

Great influencer marketing content can sway opinions, spark conversations, increase brand loyalty and boost sales. It's the critical difference between a potential customer tuning out your message or embracing it wholeheartedly.

Regardless of whether you run your campaign in-house or outsource the work, the key ingredient to every successful influencer program is a strong content strat-

egy. Creating top-quality, highly engaging content may seem like a shot in the dark, but there are tools and tactics for getting it right. Your strategy should be built on four key criteria that drive success in influencer marketing: platform insights, social and search trends, a strategic content calendar and trust in your influencers. When everything comes together, it's a win for consumers and brands alike.



An example of a branded graphic that was distributed by influencers across a variety of social platforms on #NationalBagelDay as part of a sponsored promotion by Einstein Bros. Bagels.

Content Strategy in Action

The Brand Goal: Position a line of herbs and spices as a kitchen must-have during the holidays.

The Plan: Incorporate brand messaging that celebrates nostalgic memories into the content and share modern recipes for the holiday cooking season.

Influencer Content Tactics:

- ❑ Targeted food-focused influencers were engaged to create seasonally relevant content that showcased brand ingredients in unique, original recipes
- ❑ Eye-catching, shareable photos with a nostalgic theme meant that each post included emotionally compelling stories and visuals
- ❑ Influencers' creations were amplified across multiple social channels, with a special focus on Pinterest where recipe how-tos have evergreen appeal

Platform Insights: The Right Content, in the Right Place

Your campaign objectives will determine which social media platforms to use, and those choices will drive the content strategy for each platform. For example, beauty content is always going to perform better on Instagram or YouTube than on Twitter, and a product targeted to teens is better suited to Instagram or Snapchat than Facebook.

If you plan to use Instagram, your content obviously needs to have visual appeal. Facebook posts do well with eye-catching images or video and short, compelling stories. Twitter is key for taking advantage of current trends and announcing short-term deals or contests. Sponsored blog content offer flexibility; blog posts can tell a longer story, include visuals and be tailored to the blogger's audience demographics.

While platform trends are an ever-changing landscape, they provide critical information. When you know that visual content is more than 40 times more likely to get shared on social media [<http://bit.ly/2yW7Jt3>] than other types of content, you understand the importance of including high-quality images or video in your campaign. When you learn that pinners start searching for holiday gift ideas twice as early as those on other platforms [<http://bit.ly/2ipeuMX>], you realize that you should likely start planning your holiday Pinterest campaign as early as August.

In addition to selecting the right platforms, consider what sort of content works best for a particular audience. Printables are popular among craft enthusiasts while foodies respond well to professional, easy-to-follow recipe demonstration videos. New parents tend to relate best to raw, personal stories from those who are also in the trenches of babyhood, while tech-focused readers gravitate towards content presented via podcast or video.

At **Sway Group**, we use reports and analytics to understand how consumers are reacting to content across multiple platforms. We are continually testing content to see what works and what doesn't on individual platforms by tracking traffic, views, social shares, likes, comments, repins and follows.

Then we use this information to determine not only the success of a given campaign, but to help shape future content strategies.

Ever-Changing Trends

Posting the most appropriate content on the perfect platform may fall short if your timing is off. We know that health content is popular after the new year, childrens' activities are popular leading up to summer and holiday content starts trending on Pinterest as early as September. In fact, Q4 is Pinterest's highest-performing season.

Leveraging popular trends will boost the results of an influencer campaign by piggy-backing on the content people are already searching for.

These days, you can find new trends everywhere...

- Hashtags: #MotivationalMonday, #ThrowBackThursday
- Clothing and Make-Up: Adidas, Yeezy, Kylie Cosmetics
- TV Shows: Game of Thrones, Riverdale, The Bachelor, and pretty much anything on Netflix
- National Events: “The Big Game,” political elections, the Olympics

Many brands miss out on the opportunity to capitalize on a conversation around media trends because they don’t believe that it makes sense for their vertical. In our experience, a thoughtful strategy and creative thinking can make it work.

The biggest way for brands to capitalize on trends occurring within their vertical is to listen to and watch their audience. There is no easier way for a brand to find out what their audience is talking about than to manage the conversation around brand hashtags and social handles.

Take **Elmer’s Glue** [www.elmers.com], for example. The DIY slime craze is sweeping the internet. Elmer’s found itself at the forefront of it all—with skyrocketing brand awareness and a twofold increase in sales—without having to push out their own marketing strategy. By doing nothing at all, Elmer’s is seeing its brand name across YouTube [<http://bit.ly/2xbq5S8>], Instagram [<http://bit.ly/2irKPCR>], Facebook [<http://bit.ly/2yEp0FT>] and Twitter. [<http://bit.ly/2yCuhxA>]. That is the power of social search. Building influencer campaigns in tandem with existing trends can deliver significant results. Timing is a key component of a

successful content strategy.

Your Friend, the Content Calendar

In this rapid-fire social media landscape, you need to have an editorial content calendar that will help you stay abreast of both social and search trends and keep you organized. The calendar will serve as a repository for future content which can be planned weeks, or even months, ahead of time, while also capturing emerging trends you may want to leverage.

Many brands miss out on the opportunity to capitalize on a conversation around media trends because they don’t believe that it makes sense for their vertical.

Holidays and national days are always certain to trend across social platforms. It’s the easiest way for brands and businesses to connect with their audience since it’s content that everyone can usually relate to. Christmas, National Bagel Day, National Dog Day, May the Fourth (also known as National Star Wars Day)—the list goes on and on. Using holidays and national days provides an easy segue into any conversation happening online. And the hashtags are almost always readily apparent. Think of the opportunity as a real-life encounter with a stranger. It’s the common ground to get the conversation started.

Want to take this strategy even one step further? Check out this calendar [<http://ti.me/2hS37ZO>] that details all the days during the year when you can get free stuff, and use it when developing your program strategy.

Trust Your Influencers

The single most effective way to get the kind of compelling, viral content that your influencer’s audiences will respond to? Allow

the influencer to create the content.

Brands don't need to give up control over messaging and identity, but a crystal clear strategy and general guidelines work better than putting words in an influencer's mouth. Influencer marketing is all about authenticity, because today's audiences want natural-sounding recommendations from real people, not blatant advertising. Sponsored content that doesn't match the influencer's tone or language will come across as fake, which can alienate audiences and damage the reputation of both influencer and brand.

Developing trust with influencers can take time, just as it took time for the influencers themselves to build trust and credibility among their audiences. Existing agency/influencer relationships often drive better communication between all parties, as well as streamlining project management details.

Creators know how to tell stories in a way that keeps audiences coming back for more. Plan your content, and work your content plan, but when you find the right influencer, encourage them to use their own voice.

The most strategic marketers and agencies will look into their influencers' audiences, so they can target niches within verticals. Let's say you're looking to market a home decor product or service. Is your ideal audience in-

terested in DIY, high-end, eco-friendly, modern? When you have the ability to drill down to find the right influencer, your brand aligns with their personal brand, and the result is an authentic (and persuasive) content experience for audiences.

Platform insights, search and social trends, content calendars and trust in your influencers will help you develop the kind of strategy that needs to be in place before launching your campaign.

Don't make the mistake of disrupting the user experience with an ill-timed, boring or off-tone promotion. When you provide audiences with sponsored content that feels genuinely interesting, useful and relatable, the results are powerful messages that aren't just passively consumed: They're interacted with, shared and become sparks for brand-boosting conversations.

There is no one-size-fits-all answer for how to produce a great influencer marketing campaign, but understanding your goals is always the first step. Research the trends, pay attention to what works (and what fails), and partner with expert influencers who know exactly how to make your message come to life. ■

Danielle Wiley is CEO of Sway Group.

How to Become an Influencer and Set Yourself Up for Optimal Opportunities

By Dannie Fountain

Influencer marketing is an incredibly complex subset of the marketing and advertising industry. Brands see influencer marketing as a way to reach consumers through people that they look up to. It tends to be less expensive than traditional forms of advertising while also providing a really interesting way to tap into the market.

All that being said, influencer marketing is a largely unregulated type of advertising and there is a wide variety of costs and offerings that happen. This makes it difficult not only for brands to get involved, but for influencers to seek out opportunities.

What does becoming part of the influencer marketing industry look like? What do you need to understand, to prepare and to offer? For influencers, being strategic is the way to best be a partner with brands and companies. Many companies have no idea how to work with influencers, but they know they need to be doing it. Coming in with a strategic approach is one of the best ways to set you apart from the crowd.

Let's break things down.

Understand Your Offering

Are you a traditional influencer (typically in the 100K+ followers range on Instagram) or are you a micro-influencer (under 100K followers but offers the best combination of engagement and broad reach)? What is your niche? Are you in one specific niche or do

you straddle two different industries or areas. Do you have the power to influence your audience or are you simply popular with your audience?

Clearly articulate this offering in a few sentences.

If you're a more traditional influencer, your offering might look something like this: *My name is Jane Doe and I am a travel influencer specifically focused on luxury travel to Europe. My audience is 250K strong on Instagram and totals 775K across all social platforms. I partner with hotel and travel product brands to highlight the ways they enhance the luxury travel experience.*

Do you have the power to influence your audience or are you simply popular with your audience?

If you're a micro-influencer, your offering might look like this: *My name is James Doe and I am a lifestyle influencer specifically focused on rugged aesthetics for the modern home. My audience is 25K strong on Instagram and totals 57K across all social platforms. I partner with home decor brands to highlight the ways you can bring the wilderness into your home.*

Once you understand what you have to offer to brands, it's important that you're able to articulate your value and your expectations.

Whichever platform you have the most followers on will be your core focus throughout this. What kinds of campaigns are you willing to take on? Understanding the sales funnel will help you decide—will your focus be on brand awareness (upper funnel) campaigns or product sales (lower funnel) campaigns? This also depends on the way you talk to your audience normally—does your “voice” allow for lower funnel campaigns? Or would your audience be more receptive to upper funnel campaigns?

Start to build out your offerings based on your answers to the above. Regardless of whether you’re a traditional influencer or micro-influencer, this can be similar. You’ll need to express your value to brands in three major categories:

Context: Are you a contextual fit for the brand. Does your audience have a strong affinity for products or services that the brand sells? Define your niche and clearly state which industries you are the best contextual fit for.

Reach: Which platform do you have the highest reach on? What is your frequency of posting? What does your engagement look like? Of course, after we establish someone as being a contextual fit for our brand, we do want them to have reach so they can share their awesome content or positive recommendation in a manner that actually will be heard. If your online business sold clothes for “tweens,” then maybe a mention to 37 million girls from Justin Bieber wouldn’t be so bad after all...

Actionability: Can you deliver against the brand’s desired actions? Does your audience trust you enough to take action? Depending on what part of the consumer decision journey (CDJ) they are advertising in, your goals will vary:

- Awareness: reach and views (low hanging fruit, easy to achieve)

Micro-Influencers Have Value

Brands often want to work with influencers in the 10,000 to 100,000 follower range, as these influencers often offer the best combination of engagement and broad reach. Understanding how to position yourself if you fall in this category will be critical to your success. Don’t be afraid to niche down even further than you would typically. Focus on a specific market or location (i.e. be the premium micro-influencer for lifestyle brands in Chicago).

- Consideration: clicks, votes, content views, brand study participation, comments
- Preference: sharing, liking/following, data capture, social listening
- Purchase: clicks to e-commerce, conversions to sale, coupons / exclusive offers
- Loyalty: sharing, referrals, creating user-generated content (i.e. using a hashtag)

Once you understand your offering and are clear on your position to brands, you can start to build out your communications. Depending on your follower count, brands may reach out to you directly, you may pitch brands, or it could be some combination of both.

When a brand reaches out to you: You’ll want to have a clear understanding of what your costs are to produce branded/sponsored content. These costs need to be covered by the brand (directly, via a spend budget, or indirectly, through a portion of total compensation). You’ll also want to understand what their desired outcome is, and if you do not feel confident about your success, politely decline. It is better to be upfront with a brand about hitting their metrics than to burn the bridge by missing them entirely.

When you pitch a brand: You’ll want to specifically explain what your goals are and

what you're offering. Many brands will ask for a media kit as well as performance from past campaigns. If you've never done a campaign before, you may have to be willing to do your first few campaigns for product or experience only and no financial compensation.

Sending the pitch isn't the only part of the equation—consistently updating your pricing and delivering a great client experience is key as well. Don't forget that these brands are your clients too, not just people giving you cool product or experiences.

For pricing, many brands go with the "\$1,000 per 100K" rule of thumb and offer influencers under 50K followers around \$250 for a post on Instagram. This is a starting point, and if you're able to prove additional value (for example, you have a highly engaged audience, you've driven major value for brands in the past, or you create truly

unique content), you can command a higher price. A great example of this is @alishylish. Her content is truly unique (she often creates stop-motion videos for her branded content) and as such, she is able to command a higher influencer price.

For client experience, consistency of work and quality communication are the key non-negotiables. Don't be afraid of overcommunicating and help your brand contact feel empowered to show his or her higher-ups your clear value (this is how you get repeat opportunities).

Influencer marketing is not as scary as it seems; don't be afraid to prove your worth and deliver amazing content. ■

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Win and Win: The Double-Sided Coin of Social Media Influencer Takeovers

By Erica Gatlin

An influencer takeover can be extremely beneficial for both brands and influencers alike. Many of the benefits to each are identical in purpose, with a few very obvious advantages on both ends. An influencer takeover can be extremely beneficial for a brand, if only to add a level of humanity. In advance of the opening of her film *Song One*, actress Anne Hathaway took over **InStyle** magazine's Instagram account for a day to boost awareness and attendance of her latest movie. Hathaway took followers through her busy schedule of press events and film promotions and posted numerous photos, including herself with a puppy. InStyle said its Instagram followers couldn't get enough of the celebrity.

Not only did the activation boost the publication's connection with current followers, InStyle was also able to gain new followers as engagement went through the roof. While not every brand can work with an A-list celebrity, almost every brand or organization can benefit from an endorsement by a like-minded influencer.



Dos & Don'ts of Social Media Takeovers

Agency/Brand	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> DO know your goals before launching a program DO choose an influencer who best represents the essence of your brand DO ask the influencer for their metrics at the conclusion of the Takeover DO build a complete strategy, including cross-platform promotion plan DON'T have influencers post blindly- give them guidelines DON'T forget campaigns when they end. Determine what content can be reutilized DON'T give out your account passwords without a secure plan in place DON'T have your social team post to the account during the takeover
Influencer	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> DO research the brand and understand their goals DO interact with brand followers as yourself DO include videos if it's an option DO send the agency/brand metrics, even if they don't ask for them DON'T forget to disclose on your own promoted posts DON'T respond on behalf of the brand unless previously discussed DON'T use foul or off-brand language DON'T forget to appeal to the larger audience

According to data from **eMarketer**, 92% of consumers trust recommendations from others over branded content. Beyond traditional advertising channels, consumers are increasingly relying on first-person recommendations from trusted sources. Brands are tapping influencers to create authentic content and to persuade consumers to try their brand through a first-person account of their experience. Social media takeovers are one way that brands are working with influencers

to communicate those messages and boost awareness. The benefits to both brand and influencer are significant, and in many cases shared, in what can be a symbiotic relationship.

Benefits for the Agency/Brand

A social media influencer takeover can be a strategic tactic for a brand that has historically relied on traditional advertising or public relations to spread awareness. While those channels remain vital to an integrated campaign, brands may find a whole new audience of consumers who are less apt to buy into messages that come directly from the brand or traditional media. A social media takeover brings a credible outside face to the brand as a takeover consists of a real person who can talk about their relationship with the brand and include their own personal ideas about how they use or experience it in a way a consumer might not otherwise see through traditional avenues. An influencer can show their audience how they might incorporate the brand into their everyday life and speak to brand qualities in a unique way from personal experience.

A takeover might just be one tactic in a larger campaign, but it is an important one in reaching a target audience. One way to capitalize on a takeover strategy is to promote a contest for a product launch or to increase a brand's social following. A takeover can also be used to drive web traffic to a specific landing page.

Benefits for the Influencer

It isn't always about getting paid for an influencer. Free food, gift cards and free hotel stays are just a few of the incentives that entice influencers to participate in a takeover. Many are not really in it to get famous, but if they can get something they would most likely buy anyway, that can be enough. Get-

Quick Brand Guide to Social Media Takeovers

- ❑ **Benefits** A takeover's main purpose for a brand is to reach a new audience of potential consumers and to engage its current followers. Increase in followers are a close second with increase in engagement third.
- ❑ **Expectations** Make sure the influencer taking over knows exactly what is expected of them. Communicate your timelines, brand guidelines and goals beforehand, and make sure you are available to answer questions before the event.
- ❑ **Promotion** Use your other brand platforms to promote the takeover and ask your host to post about it on their own personal accounts prior to launching the takeover. This will ensure eyeballs from both audiences! Also be sure to use a unique, pre-determined hashtag for easy following and tracking post event.
- ❑ **Eliminate** approval process. Allow an influencer to insert their personality into their takeover posts. Chances are your agency or brand has chosen or worked with someone who embodies the brand and there is already a level of trust established. If the influencer has been briefed on your goals and has signed a contract, everything should go smoothly.
- ❑ **Security** Give the influencer a unique password that was updated specifically for this event. All passwords should be changed to something complex immediately after the takeover as to minimize risk of an accidental post to your brand page later.
- ❑ **Contract** A contract is the key to making any takeover successful. Your contract should outline brand expectations such as number of posts and pictures, compensation or incentive and disclosure guidelines.

ting paid or perks are often just a bonus if the product or experience is something an influencer might be interested in regardless.

It isn't always about getting paid for an influencer. Free food, gift cards and free hotel stays are just a few of the incentives that entice influencers to participate in a takeover. Additionally, if brands are offering influencers something they'd buy anyway or giving them a unique opportunity to document an experience, that can sometimes be enough.

However, when working with influencers with significant followings or in cases where there is an extensive approval process on the brand side or significant effort required, such as an influencer recipe creation, compensation may be the best route considering how much time goes into these efforts.

A huge benefit to influencers outside of payment or other perks is the ability to reach a new audience. They are always looking for ways to grow their following, and a takeover could be enticing if it reaches a vertical they want to develop.

Why It's a Win for Both

In fact, exposing both the brand and the influencer to a new audience may be the most compelling reason for both a brand and an influencer to participate in a takeover. Both are measured in part by their following, and both are looking for ways to increase it and reach new consumers or audiences.

Influencers and brands we have worked with have seen increases in followers on each side. For the influencer, a bigger audience can lead to more lucrative opportunities, while the brand gains more potential customers.

Other benefits of a takeover include:

- **Increased Engagement** – Who doesn't need more of that? Engagement affects algorithms in most social platforms, boosting posts to hover at the top of a user's feed or appear repeatedly in a

social feed.

- **Brand Building and Credibility** – Our influencers have stated they will work with a variety of brands that fall under their vertical, or even move a little outside of their vertical, if it means it will help them establish and grow their own audiences. The right influencer will know when to play up their uniqueness and when to tone it down to appeal to a wider audience. Brands, on the other hand, gain credibility within a targeted audience with the ultimate third-party endorsement.

Takeover Execution From Both Sides

A few of the influencers in our agency have participated in social media takeovers, namely on Instagram and the following are insights from them:

Influencer takeover campaigns work best when the agency or brand provides influencers with a takeover guide in advance, including examples of posts, clear deliverables and incentives. When a brand can provide detailed instruction to an influencer, it makes expectations clear and minimizes the likelihood of misunderstanding and frustration on either side. With a platform like Instagram, there is very little room for error, especially when posting Instagram stories.

When a brand can provide detailed instruction to an influencer, it makes expectations clear and minimizes the likelihood of misunderstanding and frustration on either side.

When possible, a brand should feel comfortable enough to hand posting access over to the influencer, as it makes posting on the

spot much easier and authentic. The downside to this arrangement is the brand will not be able to approve posts beforehand, so it adds an element of risk. But the posts will be more authentic as a result. Our influencers agree that it's important for brands to let influencers be themselves and use their own voice. Most would not like to execute a takeover with too many rules or limitations.

When running a live takeover of a restaurant or hotel Instagram page, in addition to a guide, a “shot list” would be beneficial in highlighting important features of the venue and number of photos expected, while also recognizing that the structure of certain events can provide a level of unpredictability. One of our in-house influencers had the pleasure of participating in a takeover for two hotels in Boston, and both times she was provided with a list of clear deliverables and number of posts required. Both hotels left a gorgeous gift basket in her room which motivated her to bring her takeover A-game, proving a little goes a long way in building an influencer relationship.

On the agency/brand side, a takeover works best with an influencer in which you already have a relationship, but that doesn't mean an agency or brand can't reach out to an influencer who works within the same space as your company. It may just take some time to not only research the influencer to make sure you have a full understanding of their likes and style, but then build a relationship.

A recent Instagram takeover for one of our clients, a juvenile product manufacturer, with a mom/lifestyle blogger, not only increased followers on the brand page, but increased click-throughs to brand website for the new line of baby-safety products mentioned in the posts. Not only did our agency manage the brand's social platforms, but also the digital advertising, giving us access to the back-end analytics and the ability to track site views re-

sulting from this takeover for a longer period. When possible, see if you can work with the brand's web team for a deeper look into the back-end results.

Hashtags are also an important element to add to any takeover. The hashtag can be part of a larger campaign, or a specific to the takeover to measure direct results. Providing a hashtag in advance can really help to build buzz and create a viral effect in promoting the event.

Let's not forget about disclosure. The FTC has been cracking down on influencers recently for lack of properly disclosing their relationship with a brand. With a takeover, an influencer does not need to disclose when posting from the brand platform, as the relationship is implied. However, when posting from their own platform to promote an event, they must disclose with a the full #sponsored hashtag. Abbreviated and vague hashtags meant to assume sponsorship are no longer sufficient. There can be no question as to the relationship.

Finally, a contract is the key to making any takeover successful. Your agreement should outline brand expectations such as number of posts and pictures, any compensation or incentive and disclosure guidelines. If a brand is choosing to incentivize the influencer with product or services, a value for those items should be provided in the contract to make sure the incentives are fair and equitable. Quantitative goals are also a great thing to set in advance of the takeover so both parties are aware of these expectations.

Follow-Up

Brands should realize that influencer marketing is not a one-shot deal. Just as it takes time to build a relationship with an influencer, brands should not forget to nurture that relationship after an activation by providing feedback following any campaign.

An influencer is most likely looking for more than a “thank you” and will value feedback and be willing to provide metrics and analysis post campaign. This provides an important opportunity for insight from a consumer who worked intimately with your brand. It’s critical that an agency ask for these insights, as they will need to report feedback to the brand.

In the end, both brands and influencers can reap the benefits of campaigns that are well thought out, well defined and that generate excitement for new customers and new audiences. ■

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3 Quick Fundamentals for Building an Influencer Program on Instagram

By PR News Editors

Instagram might be the best social platform for reaching people who actually like to engage with brands on social media. According to a study from **GlobalWebIndex**, 53% of Instagram users say they follow their favorite brands on the platform, a higher percentage of brand engagement than that indicated by users of Twitter, LinkedIn, Pinterest, Tumblr, YouTube, Reddit and Facebook.

There's only so much a brand itself can do on Instagram, though, to win followers and inspire engagement. Third-party endorsement from Instagram influencers can make a real difference. The question is, where to begin?



Karen Do, Senior Manager, Brand Social Media, Adobe

"The fundamentals of building an influencer program, whether for PR or social purposes, are generally the same regardless of media," says

Karen Do, senior manager, brand social media, for **Adobe**.

"For Instagram specifically, there are a few ways you can to build your network that I recommend."

Do lays out these fundamentals here:

Extend Existing Relationships

If you have an influencer network already (e.g., on Twitter, Facebook, Snapchat), there's likely someone who's highly active and who's built a following on Instagram. Build off exist-

ing relationships you have and extend them onto Instagram. The big benefit? Crossover across social networks versus just on one.

Organic—Getting Hands On

Follow influencers creating content relevant to your brand. Engage with what they share and consider direct message outreach if there's more you want to say. If you simply love the work, consider asking their permission to regram with full attribution and share the context in how you'd use the image. Or, engage with them to ideate ways to get them involved with your brand, whether it's a channel takeover or simply a sponsored post they share on their profile. The Instagram community is creative. Work with them on ideas that would make sense for the brand and that would remain authentic to the individual.

Influencer Agencies

Let's face it—it takes time and effort to find, engage and nurture the influencer relationship. So some help from an influencer talent agency may be the way to start or grow your efforts. The number of agencies marketing their influencer network is on the rise. Influencer agencies have expertise in negotiating the cost and terms of engagement, and can sustain the relationship on behalf of the brand. ■

6

Case Studies

How Health Prevention Campaigns and Online Influencers Can Work Together

By Amelia Burke-Garcia & Ari Adams

The role of influencers in marketing is skyrocketing. **eMarketer** reported that paid posts made by influencers are dwarfing engagement levels of brands' owned posts [bit.ly/2wscIIIT]. Because of this, leveraging these trusted voices to promote brand messages is becoming more and more common. In fact, eMarketer reported that brands are planning to ramp up their influencer budgets and activations moving forward.

This trend should not be surprising though. eMarketer analyst Nicole Perrin

writes, "Consumers have always been more likely to engage with other consumers than with brands; social media has just brought that to the forefront of digital."

The growth of this industry opens up an opportunity to tap into these influencers to spread health messages and improve health-related decisions made by individuals. Working together, health communicators and online influencers can ensure that important conversations about health topics can take place in online environments where people are consuming and engaging with content on daily basis and are open to receiving the information.

However, for health brands, figuring out how to work with these influencers—especially when much the current interactions are paid yet health brands may face substantial budget limitations—is paramount to disseminating vital health information.

Moreover, influencers may be motivated to write about health as a way to connect to important issues with social impact. Colleen Patterson, content marketing manager for influencer platform **Muses**, writes, "There are times in which brand identity suddenly becomes secondary to community identity."

Bridging these two worlds is critical to a successful partnership and improving lives—paid or unpaid. This is the aim of this article. Perspectives from both the health marketing and influencers worlds are shared and strategies and approaches for working together are presented.



Amelia Burke-Garcia

"From the health marketer perspective, much of the health work that I do does not include large—or any, for that matter—media budgets. So we had to find common ground

that worked for both us. I strove to syndicate critical health messages across a variety of topics. What I could offer was access to health experts, my personal support to help research resources and creative assets, and the possibility of future paid collaborations. I also made it clear that as an officially unpaid relationship, she would be able to decide what her level of engagement was, cherry-pick the topics and issues she cared about most, and that we would not review her posts. Ari has free rein to write about what and how she wants. Finally, we are working on a webpage that would drive back to her content, thereby supporting her brand and increasing its visibility."

Keys to Creating a Mutually Beneficial Relationship

There are numerous implications for marketers and influencers alike for how to advance mutually beneficial relationships that can advance healthier lifestyles for all individuals. A few ideas are below.

- Look at working with these influencers as not a one-off ask, but a lifetime relationship. Maybe you cannot pay now, but in the future, you might be able to. Highlight what might be coming up on your initiative in the future and how working together can help build the foundation for the future.
- Make to sure to highlight how working with your campaign will strengthen the influencers' brands. This can be through links from your website, highlights on social media, and invitations to speak.
- Make sure to offer exclusive opportunities to influencers if you cannot pay. This could be access to celebrity or expertise that no one else can offer. It could also be an early screening of a new informational video or access to new creative that no one has seen yet. These exclusive opportunities give influencers the ability to share with their readers something special—and are currency online.
- Finally, do not expect to get to review posts before they go live. Whether paid or unpaid, these platforms are the influencers'—not the brand's—and as such the content that they put out is their own. Part of the benefit of building those lifelong relationships is that as marketers, you get to know with whom you feel comfortable working and whom, maybe not so much.

Bridging These Worlds & Finding Collaboration

The authors of this article, Amelia Burke-Garcia and Ari Adams, met about a year ago and since then, have been working on supporting health topics collaboratively. Amelia



Ari Adams

“From the influencer perspective, providing exceptional and relevant content to my readers is paramount. Maintaining respect for my audience, staying true to the art of storytelling, and leveraging brand relationships to produce substantial content are among the key reasons I am able to add the vital credibility needed to garner the trust of my audiences and provide a platform of genuine interaction and relatable discussion of pertinent issues. While I do rely on my blog as a primary source of income, I also allow for a limited number of unpaid or in-kind partnerships that offer a particularly significant contribution toward the growth of brand and platform. As Amelia mentioned previously, certain exclusive opportunities for intel, pertinent resources, creative control, as well as an established long-term partnership opportunity, help to insure that my blog can continue to serve as an unequivocally unique source of information and content for my readers.”

is a health marketer and Ari is an online influencer who runs the blog Peace, Love and Tiny Feet. Their perspectives on how to bridge the worlds of health marketing and online influencers is below.

Implications

Working to support health initiatives through the use of influencers is not something new. The Accidental Amazon writes about her struggle with breast cancer, Mama's Mission has written about child development milestones, and CafeMom has written about vaccination. These worlds are not so far apart, but as influencer marketing has become a business and posts, shares and activations are all monetized, for health initiatives with smaller budgets, the window to work with these trusted online voices at little or no cost may seem to be closing.

Conclusions

The health care and prevention industry is one of the largest in the world with expected growth in spending projected to reach 8.7 trillion dollars by 2020, yet few health marketers have considered—not to mention actually used—the inimitable authority of influencers to promote campaigns via online and social media. The latest data suggest that 70% of audiences visit internet platforms such as blogs and social media to seek some form of health information—from a possible diagnosis to recommendations for physicians. However, health prevention campaigns have been slow to incorporate such outlets

with such intrinsic and intangible value into their annual marketing budgets. Bloggers and influencers often rely on this line item inclusion in order to maintain the costs required to keep their platforms afloat and continue to provide the relevant and indispensable content readers have grown to expect from them. ■

Amelia Burke-Garcia is Westat's senior director of digital media and director of Westat's Center for Digital Strategy & Research.

*Ari Adams is an Atlanta-based blogger and author, known for the blogs *Saver in the City* and *Love, Peace, & Tiny Feet*.*

How Barclaycard and JetBlue Used a Three-Pronged Influencer Approach

By Nicole Dye-Anderson

Last year, JetBlue and Barclaycard partnered to launch the new JetBlue Mastercard portfolio, consisting of a suite of credit cards with benefits to appeal to the JetBlue traveler. As the new card issuer, Barclaycard needed to create awareness for the credit card products to drive applications and build excitement with existing and potential cardmembers around the enhanced card benefits.

Our strategy for the PR campaign utilized influencers as a primary vehicle to reach our target audiences. Prior to JetBlue, Barclaycard had successfully partnered with influencers on several card launches and has made influencers a core part of ongoing media relations and outreach efforts across Barclaycard's portfolio. Influencers provide the Barclaycard brand and products intangible benefits, like authentic voice, unique point of view, deep storytelling and the reach of an engaged and highly targeted audience.

As a PR practitioner, you should never limit the scope of where and how influencers can be brought into your PR campaign. For this launch, we used a three-pronged influencer approach that integrated influencer activities into other media relations efforts. The approach included 1) a cardmember experience trip, 2) press conference and 3) satellite media tour (SMT).

Understanding the program's objective will inform which influencers you engage. Outlining how you want to collaborate with them and what support you'll need from them will



Welcome goodies for influencers in Costa Rica.

create parameters to help you home in on who makes the most sense.

The Cardmember Experience Trip

During our first phase, we wanted to treat a select group of influencers to an experiential JetBlue cardmember getaway in order to highlight the benefits associated with the credit cards. Through conversations with the JetBlue team, we decided this exclusive trip would be focused on Costa Rica, a popular JetBlue destination.

While it's not possible to plan for every

circumstance, it's important to have flexibility when faced with obstacles. For example, the Zika outbreak quickly became a concern just prior to our Costa Rica trip and several interested attendees had to decline participation due to the potential health risks. While this complication could have put road blocks into our plan, it allowed us to expand our network and secure participation from influencers we hadn't worked with before.

The Zika virus concern provided one parameter of who to invite on the trip. Another important consideration was the audience of each influencer. For this JetBlue Mastercard program, we knew the product offering would be appealing to a variety of markets, we simply had to find who these audiences trusted and verify that they'd be able to speak about our product authentically. Audience, tone, expertise and platforms utilized should all be considered when choosing someone to represent your brand. For our program, we also considered access to an airport with JetBlue service, complementary group dynamics, and an overall interest in planned activities—as determined by influencers' historic posts and social content.

Our final group of five influencers for the trip included a representative from credit card-savvy consumer-focused website NerdWallet, business travel expert Ramsey Qu-bein, and travel credit card experts Angelina Aucello of the blog Angelina Travels, Jason Steele and Brian Kelly aka The Points Guy. This group was a well-rounded mix that reached all of our target audiences both on and offline.

Another key consideration is social media and how to harness an influencer's social power to accomplish your goals. Our trip to Costa Rica was scheduled to take place immediately before the product launch press conference; as such, everything they experienced and learned while on the trip was



Giddy up! Influencers explore Rincón de la Vieja National Park on horseback prior to zip-lining and soaking in the hot springs.

under embargo until then. For social media, this meant no posts in real time. In 2017, this would have been unfortunate because we would have missed opportunities for live social shares, like Instagram stories or Facebook Live. In this instance, our influencers simply held their images and posts about the trip to share after the embargo lifted.

As the Costa Rica trip came to a close, the five influencers returned home and our team executed the second phase of our strategy.

The Press Conference

We held our press conference in New York City—as it's close to JetBlue, Mastercard and Barclaycard's headquarters, is a main base for JetBlue service and hosts the highest concentration of our target media—and at the restaurant Saxon + Parole, which provided food for JetBlue's Mint Class. We invited and



Personalized and interactive dining experience at Rio Bhongo restaurant in Costa Rica.

secured attendance from top travel and credit card media, but we didn't want to stop there. We saw opportunity to include industry influencers as well, given mainstream media rely heavily on them for their expertise. We made it easy for influencers across the country to take part by organizing a virtual press conference. This provided another touchpoint that allowed us to broaden our network and strengthen relationships.

Once the embargo lifted, news quickly spread with a flurry of coverage from influencers on the Costa Rica trip, those who joined the press conference and those we pitched via traditional outreach.

The Satellite Media Tour

To keep the travel credit card top of mind and extend the story past launch, we executed an SMT with The Points Guy Brian Kelly, which aired throughout the country over the

next month. Brian is one of the most respected voices in the travel rewards industry and a natural partner to share the benefits of a travel credit card. As a voice trusted by both the media and the public, our team knew Brian was the perfect partner. The SMT was also a way for our team to deepen our relationship with him.

Results

All three phases of our influencer approach concluded within six weeks of the launch announcement. During that time period, the JetBlue Mastercard earned nearly 300 million media impressions (excluding press release pickup), thanks in large part to our influencers. We earned more than 100 million impressions from stories shared by the five influencers we took to Costa Rica, in outlets including Yahoo Finance, The Points Guy, Credit.com, NerdWallet, AFAR and Travel +

Checklist: Traveling With Influencers

When organizing travel for a group of influencers, it's important to provide all necessary information beforehand. Review this list taken from our international trip to Costa Rica of what we provided:

- ❑ Copies of all travel confirmations (air travel, ground transportation, hotel reservations, etc.) so attendees can confirm all information is accurate. The influencer should also have this on hand in case they get separated from the group.
- ❑ Complete itineraries that are personal and specific to each attendee. If the influencer is bringing a guest, they should also receive an itinerary, outlining their personal travel information and schedule.
- ❑ Packing list with recommendations. This is helpful if you're keeping itinerary details quiet until the influencers arrive, so they can feel secure they're bringing all the right supplies. It's also nice to let influencers know whether they should plan to leave extra space for any gifts or anticipated takeaways.
- ❑ Contact information for everyone going on the trip and a "home base" contact that all attendees can get in touch with for questions throughout the trip.
- ❑ Overview of attendees, including influencers and guests. Influencers within the same space are often friends with each other – or interested in getting to know each other – so it's nice to let them know who will be coming.
- ❑ Social sharing details including all attendees' handles and relevant brand tags they should be using.
- ❑ Welcome gift with food and drinks as well as items influencers may want to use on the trip, for example, a portable phone charger or CamelBak. This is also a great way to share branded swag with the influencer.

Leisure, among others. We earned nearly 10 million impressions from our SMT with Brian Kelly.

Most important to the success of our campaign was finding the right influencers to engage for each phase. This approach allowed us to form and strengthen relationships that continue to this day. As a PR pro looking to form partnerships with influencers, always

consider how just one campaign can impact and lead to future collaborations. A well-planned and executed relationship can have long-term benefits for both the influencer and brand partner. ■

Nicole Dye-Anderson is assistant vice president of media relations at Barclaycard US. ndyeanderson@barclaycardus.com

How Trusted Influencers Motivated African-Americans to Get Vaccinated

By Patricia Green

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's (CDC's) National Influenza Vaccination Disparities Partnership (NIVDP), launched in 2011, responded to low flu vaccination coverage among African-Americans. This multi-city campaign, that had expanded to 30 markets by 2013, was an outgrowth of low flu vaccination rates among at risk African-Americans. **Walgreens**, through a partnership with HHS, offered the vaccinations free and did so in communities where the target populations lived.

There were no campaign benchmarks for the required number of vaccinations. Any increases were sufficient to the CDC when considering historic barriers. With data showing African-Americans with chronic illnesses predisposed to greater complications when they contracted the flu, there was an urgent call to action.

Disease management within African-American underserved communities must compete with other pressing concerns. Prevailing threats, owed to unhealthy living environments, and other social risks are often priority. Yet increased hospital stays can correlate with higher incidences of asthma and diabetes, diseases known to increase the risk of flu complications.

Change can be daunting. African-Americans have unique commonalities with respect to acceptance or rejection of messages, even when health is at stake. Stereotypes create

SOMEBODY DIDN'T GET HIS FLU VACCINATION

I get my yearly flu vaccination.
Next time, he will too!

The flu vaccine

- Is safe
- Does not cause the flu
- Protects the ones you love

GET VACCINATED!



flutalk

For more flu facts go to
www.cdc.gov/flu
800.232.4636



An example of material targeting older adults made available through influencers.

barriers. Planning for, rather than planning with, invites non-participation. Disrespect disrupts consensus-building. Though this ethnic group, like others, is not monolithic, shared viewpoints are apt to be influenced by situational biases that bring to mind historic wrongs.

Harriet A. Washington's book *Medical Apartheid: "The Dark History of Medical Experimentation on Black Americans from Colonial Times to Present,"* is a comprehensive history of medical experimentation on African-Americans. "Southern physicians supported the slave system with racial theories and diagnosis and derived most of their money through these practices," she notes. "Black residences of inner city communities are used for medical research in nearby teaching hospitals without consent or knowledge of medical risks," she adds.

The Root of the Problem

It's not just a matter of distrust and misconceptions. Race and place are social determinants that impede healthy outcomes for many African-Americans. Whether community leaders, health departments, immunization coalitions, or other interest groups, joining African-Americans around common ground solutions, is a significant pathway. Listening, understanding and then acting shows African-Americans that their thoughts are valued. Yet even with these efforts, distrust remains and stories of inequities span generations. Any negative action, presumably linked to race, is a reminder of generational pain. Mind pain can override physical pain concerns. The Tuskegee Experiment is a significant reason why many African-Americans do not trust the health care system and the government. That story is passed within families, whether impacted directly or not.

The Tuskegee Syphilis Experiment, conducted by the U.S. Public Health Service in collaboration with Tuskegee University, a historically black college, from 1932-1972, is the most infamous of medical abuse studies. Impoverished black men from rural Alabama were untreated for syphilis and merely observed. They didn't know they had the disease, however, the medical researchers knew.

"They were told treatment was for 'bad blood,' a local term for illnesses, such as syphilis, anemia and fatigue," according to the CDC. Even when research showed penicillin an effective cure, the subjects were not given this curative. Rather, they were provided free health care, burial insurance and meals. The result was deaths and illnesses and led to federal laws and regulations to protect human subjects in studies involving them.

Many years have passed since the Tuskegee Experiment. However, old wounds remain that pose barriers to meaningful dialogue between non-African-American doctors and African-American patients most at health risk. Successful doctor patient communication is a partnership. The patient is educated on preventative care and the stage is set for trust and improved health outcomes. Understanding concerns enhances the patient's view that the doctor is empathetic. Perception is everything.

Dr. Winston Price, an Atlanta-area pediatrician who was one of the campaign's strongest influencers, builds trust during the initial patient encounter. Dr. Price educates, pointing out that the flu can be life threatening for the young and elderly and where chronic health conditions are present. "Building awareness of the link between the flu and diseases that are familiar to African-Americans, or that affect them, is significant to understanding the importance of the vaccine and can allay fears," offers Dr. Price.

Integrating Disciplines: On Mind Adjustments

When ideas are tried and nothing seems to work, it's time to get out of the box. What happens when two unlikely pairs pair? Magic! Public relations and social work are not the usual partners. However, consider this: Design communications strategies that resonate with who target populations are culturally

Learning Objectives Specific to the CDC Flu Vaccination Campaign

The African-American community is comprised of communities within communities, each with a cultural framework that shapes values, beliefs, attitudes and behaviors with respect to the flu vaccination.

African-Americans are not monolithic; a successful flu vaccination campaign fosters communications strategies specific to African-American sub-cultures.

Certain segments of the African-American community are more predisposed to have misconceptions that fuel mistrust of the flu vaccination. Understanding causal factors is central to campaign success.

Grassroots partners speak the language of the community and can be suspicious of institutional motives; trust is gained by listening, understanding and acting upon their suggestions where in alignment with campaign goals.

The Black church is pivotal to outreach and influencer/partner recruitment; this institution has capacity to reach and influence varied demographic and psychographic groupings in-

side the church and within the broader African-American community.

Many African-Americans are linked to multiple organizations, all key to the campaign, i.e., churches, social service organizations local and national in scope, HBCUs (Historically Black Colleges and Universities), trade union organizers, Black doctors and other health professionals, Black businesses, Black Chambers of Commerce, the Black press, sororities, fraternities, the Links, the Girlfriends, the Frogs, and related civic groups. Leaders within these networks are valued messengers. Knowing who they are and understanding their needs and motivations is vital to measurable flu vaccination uptake.

African-American outreach for the CDC's National Influenza Vaccination Disparities Partnership (NIVDP) blends community organizing and public relations acumen, ensuring messages reach and influence the target population through a uniquely collaborative process that is newsworthy.

(and sub-culturally). Make engagement the primary outcome of the communications mix. Transcreate messages such that they resonate with diverse publics. Show the value of affiliation. It doesn't matter that there are differences. Present a convincing reason for common ground. Poor health impacts the stricken, their families, communities and a nation.

Now to frame this scenario into an action step:

Researching, cultivating and galvanizing key community influencers (social work community organizing) guides the development of culturally appropriate messages that stream through culturally acceptable communications channels (public relations) to target audiences (varies depending on the audience)

using agreed upon media channels (that are balanced in reporting).

Try it; the process works!

How to Recruit and Engage Trusted Influencers

People do things for people, not for causes.

No public relations expert should be without a database of relationships, categorized by specialty, passion, purpose and their affiliated networks. Traditional contact details and every way to reach out via social media are vital. For the flu vaccination campaign, each influencer was recruited via phone or email. Phone calls were most effective; the personalized nature and ability to counter doubts, nicely of course, had value. Those initial recruits used similar methods to engage their networks. This accounts for the campaign at-

tracting more than 300 influencers within 30 communities where African-Americans were high in population and low in flu vaccination rates.

The success of NIVDP was owed to the influencer/partner network, diverse in composition and willingness to engage in strategic collaborations of common interests and shared goals. Central to success were communications strategies that enhanced partner engagement across sectors: grassroots/community based, health departments and immunization coalitions, to name some.

Influencers signed NIVW pledge sheets and noted their engagement level, significant to internal planning. The NIVDP toolkit, available for download from the CDC website, included information on garnering press and staging flu vaccination events. Influential News, the campaign newsletter, the NIVDP Facebook page and educational posters, targeting African-American seniors and young adults, were also available on the CDC website for download. At one time, the campaign posters, targeting seniors and young adults, were the highest number of orders from all CDC flu vaccination products. Influencers suggested distribution sites in consideration of target audiences and accessibility to locations.

Influencers were also provided a questionnaire to complete. Responses showed how they perceived challenges and opportunities. These initial talks enhanced knowledge in a spirit of collaboration and knowledge sharing.

The following case studies show some of the lessons learned.

- A radio station owner in Lafayette, Louisiana used her airways to promote flu vaccination events. The outcome was measurable during National Influenza Vaccination Week (NIVW), held in December of each year to draw attention to the importance of vaccinations into the

new year, a time when some think the threat has ended or that vaccinations are in short supply. Media was ubiquitous and interviews with trusted community leaders were informative and stimulated on-air questions. When the influencer announced her NIVW event on air and invited low income residents to come to the station parking lot for free flu vaccinations and gumbo, more than 100 arrived. Many were vaccinated for the first time, some homeless, all disparate. A replicable model expanded to several nearby rural communities with the greatest health needs. The events drew long lines that expanded outside.

- Lesson Learned: Rural communities have special needs pertinent to access, whether transportation, medical services or financial concerns. When planning rural health events, think outside of the box and consider recruiting teaming partners, from diverse sectors, including businesses, to fulfill community health needs.
- The Assembly of Petworth, a Washington, DC campaign partner, with a broad reach among health departments, churches and community organizations, reached out to the area's African immigrant community, a population with similar trust issues, as African-Americans, resulting from medical experimentation in their countries. By partnering with several African health organizations, including a mobile health unit, an organization that organizes yearly health missions to the Cameroon and the Mayor's Office on African Affairs, he exceeded his goals and brought light to health issues impacting African immigrant communities.
- Lesson Learned: African-Americans and African immigrants have similar chronic

health conditions and trust issues rooted in historic mistreatment. Yet trusted African-American and African influencers, working together, can transform perceptions.

In addition, serving as campaign spokespersons in their local communities and organizing National Influenza Vaccination Month activities gave influencers significant presence as subject matter experts. The goal was empowerment such that when the campaign ended, efforts would continue through them. Influencer achievements were highlighted in the campaign's online newsletter, Influential News. Three influencers received awards two years in a row at CDC conferences. Presentations on successful doctor patient relationships, facilitated by the campaign's medical subject matter experts, also occurred at CDC conferences.

Campaign Evaluation

Success metrics are as simple as counting statistics from monthly reporting. Where were vaccination rates prior to the campaign

and at the time of reporting? That more African-Americans were vaccinated than ever reported by the CDC was a measurement of success. However, the missing link was an African-American Risk Communications Model. A similar model for Hispanics that had proven effective. Success variables could link to the effectiveness of educational resources. How did the promotional materials transform beliefs and historic perceptions? How many decisions to be vaccinated were based on those messages? Risk Communications Models guide the development of strategies and materials that could be used to interpret behavior change among at risk African-Americans. A key issue is how to reach desired audiences with messages that work best for at risk populations where trust is a factor. Such a model could be of value to future study. ■

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Executing Successful Influencer Marketing Strategy in Small Markets

By Digna Joseph

It is an irrefutable fact that in the last two or three years, influencer marketing has become a significant facet of digital marketing. Adweek reports that 75% of brands engage with some type of influencer as part of their marketing strategy. **Mediakix** noted that “Marketers are discovering that one of the best ways to target audience groups, drive awareness and elicit engagement across social channels is by creating innovative advertising partnerships with select social media influencers.”

Influencer marketing is predominantly synonymous with social media. More specifically, it is often synonymous with celebrities and social media influencers with large, million plus followers who charge steep prices to use their platform to promote one’s business or brand. Many view influencer marketing as a luxury option for well-known brands and billion dollar companies that can afford to pay significant amounts to promote their products and services.

But what about those businesses that don’t have million dollar budgets? Or businesses that exist in markets where the population is much smaller than that of global nations like the U.S.? Where large-scale social media presences are not as commonplace? Markets where the use of traditional media is still as, if not more important? Can one still effectively use influencer marketing? Is it a concept that is even relevant in these markets? The answer to both questions is yes. It simply requires a little creativity and thinking outside the box.

The above scenario was the challenge I faced as the content marketing specialist for a company based in the Caribbean, representing a number of markets across the region, many of which have a population averaging 150,000 to 250,000 total (some even less than that). And while internet penetration is fairly high and the use of social media commonplace, traditional media is still the predominant medium. The reality is that in many ways, digital marketing is still in its infancy in many of these markets. So how then were we going to make influencer marketing work within the scope and tradition of these markets? As noted above, it simply required a little creativity.

1. Adjust Your Expectations

While it is good to have lofty goals and dream big, sometimes the reality simply does not align with those huge expectations. In that case, it helps to adjust those lofty goals. Start by redefining what success for your influencer strategy within your specific scope will mean and look like. For example, what is considered successful for a business targeting a population of five million will be significantly different for one targeting a population of 200,000. Similarly, success for a million dollar brand will likely look much different from that of a small business. Like any communication strategy or campaign, it’s all about knowing exactly what you want to achieve, why you want to achieve it and how you’re going to achieve it with the resources

Tips for Picking the Right Influencer

One of the most important factors in achieving a successful influencer marketing strategy is having the right influencer. Here are a few tips for picking the right influencer.

- **Relevance** – Unquestionably the most important factor. Finding an influencer who is relevant to your business or brand means knowing and understanding what your goals and objectives are for your influencer marketing strategy, knowing and understanding your audience and knowing and understanding that it is not a one size fits all with influencers.
- **It's Not All about the Big Numbers** – While the number of followers a potential influencer has is important, it is not always the most important thing. An influencer's follower count indicates their reach but it doesn't indicate the level of engagement, which is key. Because engagement is a true indicator of an influencer's power. It is no use for a brand or business to work with an influencer with a million followers but they are inactive followers.
- **Credibility** – Another important factor in picking the right influencer for your business and brand is the influencer's credibility. It is important to vet any potential influencer to ensure that there has not been any questionable social media behavior by them, e.g. offensive or derogatory language, attempts to mislead or defraud followers, etc. Also, have they been advocates for brands or businesses that do not align with the kind of message you stand for? Were they advocates for one of your biggest competitors? Because if so, your audience will likely not trust their sudden change of heart in advocating for your business. Also, the influencer may lose credibility with their own audience and by that token, no longer be as effective.
- **Know What Type of Content You Want to Create** – It is important to know exactly what type of relationship you want with your potential influencer and/or influencers. For example, do you plan to hand over complete creative control to the influencer, or are you looking for someone to share content that you create or will it be a collaborative partnership? Knowing where you stand on these issues is key to picking the right influencer and avoiding a potentially negative experience and partnership.

available, both internal and external. So while it is highly unlikely that your business will gain hundreds of thousands of new followers from your influencer marketing strategy in the space of a few months in a small and traditional market, that does not mean it was unsuccessful and not useful. It just means success within that market is different than a larger market.

2. Keep It Simple

Piggybacking off the previous point, it is important to remember that sometimes simple is better. And in a market where the population is small and influencer marketing as a concept is still in its infancy, keeping

it simple is definitely best. That may include having a goal that seeks only to increase your social media followers by just 10% or just increase your social media engagement by 5%. Or perhaps you're having a one-off company event, such as an expo, and looking to spread awareness and increase attendance by using a local influencer or two to spread the word. Keeping things simple will likely increase your chance of success.

3. Micro-Influencers Are Your Best Friends

As the concept of influencer marketing continues to dominate the industry, the term micro-influencers has also crept into the

conversation. Micro-influencer has become a very important term as more and more businesses realize the power and potential need for influencer marketing but are concerned about not having the budget that larger brands do. The fact is, a small business owner is not going to have the budget to pay a social media star with 10 million Instagram followers, who will likely charge upwards of hundreds of thousands of dollars. And that is even less likely for a small business owner in a small market with a very small population. And that is where micro-influencers come in.

Micro-influencers are essentially influencers with number of followers within the range of 1,000 to 10,000. They might not be famous entertainers and social media stars but they have enough of an engaged following to positively impact a business and brand they choose to promote. Micro-influencers also work well within niches. As the saying goes, “you can’t be all things to everyone.” In keeping with the point of keeping things simple, sometimes your goal for a specific influencer marketing campaign is to attract a very specific audience. In that case, going to an influencer within that niche is a safe bet.

4. Influencer Does Not Always Mean Social Media Influencer

It is true that the concept of influencer marketing in many ways was borne out of the rise of social media and more specifically, social media stars. As such, most only think of social media influencers when thinking about incorporating an influencer marketing campaign into their digital marketing strategy. But in a market where traditional marketing is still a dominant medium, the influencers you need for your influencer marketing campaign may not be on social media. In small, traditional markets, radio and television personalities, with or without large social media followers are still highly influential and

can be significant assets to your campaign and overall influencer marketing strategy.

5. Word of Mouth Is Influencer Marketing

While the term influencer marketing seems to have been birthed only a few short years ago, the concept itself is not entirely new and didn’t start with digital marketing and specifically, social media. Much like when content marketing became the industry’s buzzword some years ago, despite the concept of using content to drive business success being around for decades, influencer marketing has existed for a long time. It was just called something else.

Essentially influencer marketing leverages an individual or organization with the power to influence others’ purchasing decisions for their benefit. Word of Mouth marketing is grounded in the belief that people are more likely to purchase something based on hearing about it and getting positive feedback from people they know and trust. That includes family, friends, customers, etc. And it is a concept that it is still very effective. Hubspot reports that 90% of consumers believe brand recommendations from friends.

So what does this mean for your influencer marketing strategy, particularly in a small and traditional market? It means consider customer testimonials as part of your strategy, rewarding loyal and influential customers to help make them organically become influencers for your brand. You can also run promotions asking customers and followers to say why they love your brand and business. It will get the word out to others and help you identify potential brand influencers you may not have previously recognized and known about.

6. Strategic Alliances

Another method to have an effective influencer marketing strategy in small and

traditional markets is to consider strategic alliances with other businesses that may have a strong local presence and in many ways are influential. The right partnership can not only help increase your own brand awareness, but increase your credibility, open you up to a new audience, etc. And in reality, influencer marketing is a type of strategic alliance as the business is making a strategic partnership with a particular influencer often with the hope of increasing brand awareness, brand engagement, leads, etc.

For example, if you have recently opened up a vegan restaurant, a strategic alliance with a very popular gym can reap significant rewards for both businesses. It is important to remember that payment for influencers does not always have to be in the form of monetary value. Offer special meal promotions that the gym can give to their members in exchange for their mentioning your restaurant across their promotional channels, including both digital and traditional. In this instance the gym is your influencer.

7. Be Your Own Influencer

Finally, your influencer marketing strategy does not always have to be focused solely on an outside, third-party influencer. Positioning your business and your brand as an expert can make you an influencer. A very common method businesses use to achieve this is by guest blogging for popular and influential blogs, websites, etc. In a traditional market leveraging the local media, including radio or television, is a very powerful way to increase

brand awareness and position your business as an authority.

When people start to view you as an expert, they are far more likely to trust you, at which point you can influence their purchasing decisions. This is also effective in small and traditional markets because there is often a communal type of culture. That is, that feeling of everyone knows everyone. And in such a culture, having a familiarity of being seen on important and popular television shows and heard on radio shows helps to foster a feeling among consumers of being someone important and an authority.

It must be acknowledged that certainly there are many businesses within these markets that cater to a more global target audience and therefore, naturally have a fairly robust social media presence. Particularly, businesses within the tourism industry, such as hotels, booking agencies, etc. And of course, the internet and well, social media has made the world significantly smaller in many ways.

However, one of the challenges of working on a global scale is that you will work with markets where culturally, economically and socially, what works in one part of the world, simply will not work in that geographic space. At least not without some adjustments to the mindset of how it should always be done. That is definitely the current case with influencer marketing within many of the small and traditional islands of the Caribbean. ■

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The Power of the Nano-Influencer: ‘Scampers’ as a Microcosm of a Market

By Christie M. Kleinmann & Kevin S. Trowbridge

For years communication professionals have implemented strategies designed to get the biggest bang for their bucks. That typically meant targeting influencers with the greatest audiences.

At first, the predominant strategies involved earned and paid message placements with traditional media outlets that reached hundreds of thousands of consumers. The advent of social media forced strategic communicators to shift their thinking about how to reach their audiences.

In 2007, Paul Gillin unpacked this phenomenon in “The New Influencers: A Marketer’s Guide to the New Social Media.” A decade later, our communication mix still includes traditional outlets. But now our radar is deluged with individuals who have created a sphere of influence through ubiquitous social networks.

Hoping to get a stronger ROI, you might think you have to focus your strategies on the micro influencers (10K – 100K followers) or the big influencers (more than 100K followers). Just like we had to expand beyond traditional media gatekeepers, now we must take into account the new nano-influencers. By sharing authentic and relevant content, they earn the trust of their followers and build a community where they are granted the authority to guide. Rarely do they set out to become an influencer. Instead, they are simply sharing their lives, interests, and passions through social media. Others begin to follow

them, and a small community is formed.

Defining the Nano-Influencer

Nano-influencers go by many names: diehard fan, trusted friend or reliable family member. Researcher Duncan Watts calls them everyday people, unassuming, ordinary folks. They are rarely concerned with conventional marketing tactics. Rather, they are motivated to share their personal experiences to help others.

One noteworthy group of nano-influencers dubs themselves “scampers.” They express a nearly fanatical devotion to **Scamp**, a family-owned fiberglass travel trailer manufacturer. Through the years, these scampers have developed into a strong nano-collective through their Facebook group, Scamp Travel Trailers.

According to their Facebook group description, these influencers describe themselves as “an open group with no direct affiliation with Scamp manufacturer, Eveland’s, Inc. All who frequent the group simply love these functional, efficient, and extremely long-lived fiberglass travel trailers, and don’t mind telling anyone as such.” In this space, ordinary people post pictures, ask questions, offer product innovations, raise concerns, and share their experiences. The group is adamantly against the use of conventional marketing within this space. In the May/June 2017 group update, the Facebook administrator reiterated the group’s purpose. “The group is NOT intended to be a target for Marketers, it’s intended to serve as a meeting place for

A Relational Approach to Leverage Your Nano-Influencers

No matter your business, leveraging your nano-influencers may require a shift in your thinking:

1. **Discover.** Every organization has nano-influencers. Don't assume they are the loudest voices. They may be quiet, unassuming consumers. You must take time to look for them. See who's sharing content more regularly about your industry, organization, product or service. They are not the once-and-done folks—the ones who will rave or complain about a specific experience. They are in it for the long haul.
2. **Listen and learn.** Once you've discovered them, begin to follow them. Watch them. Listen to them. Read what they are saying. It's OK to eavesdrop on the conversations. Before you engage, you have to know what's being said. As you listen, learn. You can glean insights for your organization simply by listening.
3. **Respect their space.** Even if they are talking about you, you are still a guest in the community. When it's appropriate chime into the discussion. But, let the community the nano-influencer has built govern itself without your involvement. Don't treat them like you do other influencers using pitches to try to shape their content.
4. **Support them.** Don't try to compete with their content. Complement instead. If they are doing it well, let them do it. Recognize them and amplify their content by sharing it (e.g., retweeting) with any commentary.
5. **Appreciate them.** Remember it's a relationship. Everyone likes to be acknowledged and appreciated for the unexpected. Express your gratitude with a simple message. And, occasionally, reward them with something unexpected that will help them. It may be something as simple as giving them access to information about your organization, product or service. For example, you might offer them a behind-the-scenes tour or even a conversation with someone inside your organization.

those who enjoy their Scamp Travel Trailers, or to inform and educate the public who are interested in this travel trailer too.” Marketers, no, but these individuals are certainly influencers.

The Power of the Nano-Influencer

Traditionally, the “Law of the Few” guided most marketing efforts. Marketers identified big influencers who could place strategic messages before their large groups of followers. That prevailing wisdom is evolving. According to Brian Solis, 70% of consumers were influenced online by family or friends compared to only 32% who follow a big influencer online. They are certainly influential, but how? These nano-influencers, or “everyday people,” create influence in three ways.

1. Interchanging ideas and innovations.

User-generated content is a keystone to digital marketing, but it's also a key way to share personal experiences. Scampers routinely post pictures and videos of their Scamps. “How to” content often generates robust discussions and idea exchanges. #Scamphacks is another common area of discussion. Living in 13 feet or even 19 feet for any length of time brings storage concerns. These nano-influencers share creative solutions to the storage challenge by posting pictures of their solutions, such as hanging wire baskets and by sharing hidden storage areas in the travel trailers.

These conversations often turn into product recommendations. For example, one individual needed to move her Scamp by herself, so she posted a picture of her travel trailer with an extended trailer dolly. The post

received 102 likes and 61 comments. Within these comments, individuals provided product suggestions, posted product links, offered personal product reviews, and shared their purchasing decisions. In essence, these scampers provided important guidance on product purchasing.

This wealth of user-generated content also brings to its page those who are just learning about Scamp. One individual explained that he did not post to the group but routinely uses its content to learn about the best products and ideas for his Scamp. “I was looking for the best trailer wax and cover for my Scamp, and instead of looking on camping retail websites, I went to the Scamp Facebook group. They offer good advice based on personal experience,” said one new Scamp owner. “They’re not trying to sell me anything. They are people just like me sharing what they know.” Thus, the interchange of ideas and innovations creates a robust arena of unintentional marketing influence as users share and make product decisions.

2. Sharing Dissonance

Products are rarely perfect. Scampers acknowledge these imperfections and provide a “safe zone” where people can share frustrations and receive/give helpful feedback. For example, one post on a water leak in the kitchen window led to nine comments that expressed the same problem and offered solutions. Not a single post commented on manufacturer deficiencies; rather, the focus was on a solution to the problem. That is not always the case.

Another individual posted that Scamp had poor quality control and that she was returning her new Scamp travel trailer. The resulting



replies affirmed her frustrations, but did not engage in negative product bashing. Rather, one individual shared her own story of how Scamp had helped her and she encouraged the frustrated camper to contact a specific Scamp employee. Other posts offered tips and product suggestions on how to correct the noted problems.

For many, the inclusion of negative experiences enhances scampers’ credibility. “I feel like you get the whole story with this group, the good and the bad,” said one follower of this group. “And because of that, I trust them.” The added assurance that the space is a “no marketer” zone further empowers users. Scampers empower one another to fix problems and share that knowledge with others. That can only happen in a space that first allows dissonance.

3. Creating Community

Have you ever been #scamping? It’s camping in a Scamp, and is the predominant focus of the Scamp Travel Trailer Facebook group.

The group regularly organizes #scamping excursions where scampers from across the United States and Canada come together and camp. In doing so, these influencers create an engaged community that extends beyond the digital realm. Marketers have long acknowledged the importance of community engagement, think **Harley-Davidson** bikers gathering for a ride. These Scamp nano-influencers are creating the same type of community, but one that extends from the digital to the face-to-face.

The group's Facebook feed is also cluttered with "Scamp selfies," as scampers document their latest excursions. Through pictures on the road and at campgrounds, scampers are sharing adventures with their virtual community. Curiously, in Scamp selfies, the Scamp travel trailer is the focus, not the people. Scrolling through the newsfeed, viewers see Scamps on the road, in the mountains, at the beach, tied down for a hurricane, or in the driveway. For scampers, the Scamp travel

trailer is most important.

Scampers would never identify themselves as nano-influencers. Arnab Majumdar, co-founder at Peersway Nano-Influencer Marketing, said that nano-influencers could very well be the most powerful people in the world of social media, but scampers don't know this. And if truth be told, scampers don't care. Rather, these nano-influencers will continue to do as they've always done: share their experiences, offer help wherever needed, and create community—and inadvertently, have immense influence. ■

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How Micro-Influencers Had a Massive Impact for Dirt Devil Vacuums

By Hailie Meyer-Warren

Over the past five-plus years, influencer marketing has changed the way brands communicate and build trust with their consumers. With unlimited access to reviews, conversations and opinions on social, humans are way more likely to take a product recommendation from a real human sharing their opinion versus an ad. With brands understanding this and leaning on influencers to help share their story, bloggers from every category you can imagine are now making a living off of sharing their opinions on specific products and services. However, as brands get more strategic about the ways they leverage the social media stars within their category, consumers are getting smarter and more observant about the differences between an influencer who makes a living off of sponsored posts versus a local acquaintance giving an “honest” review.

There are several instances where partnering with a mega-influencer (celebrity status) or a macro-influencer (established blogger/social media star) makes sense and is effective for brands, and that is another article for another day. In addition to those two categories, there is another that is starting to prove effective in terms of generating real brand testimonies in a specific market or region. Micro-influencers are real people with an average number of social followers (closer to the 1,000 range) with a lot of engagement. While they may not have the masses following, those who do follow them have similar

interests, engage with the regularly and trust their opinions. The use of micro-influencers can truly have a massive impact.

In a campaign with **Dirt Devil** vacuums with minimal budget for sponsorships and promotions, a handful of micro-influencers were called on to contribute to a Back to Campus social media campaign that was made up of 3 key components:

- An online Back to Campus social media sweeps
- A brand partnership with two other established brands.
- Micro-influencer social activation

Back to Campus Sweepstakes

Social sweepstakes have proven to generate a lot of engagement for the brand; however, we wanted to get creative with how the sweepstakes worked in an effort to get some fun UGC (user generated content) that we could potentially repurpose throughout the campaign. In other words, we didn't want a simple comment to be how one would enter the sweeps, but rather something more themed and tied in with the campaign concept.

The theme for this Back to Campus Campaign was “Adulting” and those who participated had the chance to win the ultimate “Adulting Accessories Pack” from Dirt Devil. The accessories pack had quirky, techy and edgy products that every college student would love to take to their dorm or apartment. The way students could enter the

Three Ways to Identify a Micro-Influencer

Identifying a micro-influencer can be a bit tricky. They don't have a massive following, they're not famous, and they are likely not listed in any influencer networks or software.

1. **Use social listening.** There are several social listening tools/dashboards that will help you search and select the perfect influencers. By tracking specific key terms, trends and brands being tagged, you can narrow and refine your search.
2. **Don't be afraid to do a little creeping.** Are you hoping to find someone in a specific community or geographical area? Use other social pages to find active and influential people. For example, in our Back to Campus campaign, by searching certain university pages and groups, we were able to identify some influential students who were very involved in social conversations.
3. **Leverage the leaders** you know. Call on leaders, such as business owners, coaches, teachers, etc... in the specific category you are working in to help identify who might be a quality micro-influencer. They have a large network of people and would likely be happy to help someone in their own community be a part of a unique opportunity like this one.

sweeps was to simply post a photo on our sweeps page of themselves sporting their college logo and in the caption, say what they were going to be when they grow up including the hashtag #DDAdulting. With this, we would then spark a massive conversation of students across the country.

Brand Partnership

These "Adulting Accessories Packs" needed to be sweet—something a college student

would take the time to snap a pic in hopes of winning. So we set out to find some brand partners that had some edgy products that would look lovely next to our new Dirt Devil gadgets. First, we found a very trendy, high quality blanket and textile company that had large cozy blankets with the most interesting patterns on them—surely something a college student would love to add to their set-up.

Next we found a brand that offered quirky computer accessories, one of which was a USB-powered, donut-shaped coffee warmer, a total conversation piece for students to use during long study sessions. Both brands were excited about the partnership and agreed to provide products for our sweepstakes prize as well as one of each for our micro-influencers. In addition to product contributions, both brands agree to amplify all of the campaign content through their own social channels and email lists. By simply partnering with these brands with a mutually beneficial agreement, we were able to amplify our content drastically with no additional out-of-pocket costs.

Micro-Influencer Social Activation

Once we established the rules of the sweeps and what the prize would be, we then set out to find some quality micro-influencers to help us spread the word. These influencers were real college students, with majors that aligned with social media and PR skills. Through their existing social content, we could see that they were appropriate, quirky and had a lot of engagement on their posts.

We then sent each of the influencers an "Adulting Accessories Pack" with specific guidelines on the type of content we were looking for. Each influencer created an Instagram story and Snap story showing the unboxing of their accessories pack and included a fun explanation of what was included. Next, they added some clever, in-use videos to both

stories and finished with one overarching post that explained what they got and how others could win a prize pack by entering the sweeps that was published on their actual channels as a permanent post. Of course, all of the content tagged the Dirt Devil and partner brands, and included the hashtag #DDAdulting.

With these three components aligned to

work together, we were able to amplify our brand message immensely while also creating clever and engaging content for our brand. ■

Hailie Meyer-Warren is social and PR manager at Gatesman Agency. HMeyer@gatesmanagency.com

Influencer Lessons for Nonprofits From the Susan G. Komen 3-Day Walk Initiative

By Melony Shemberger

When the **Susan G. Komen Foundation** announced a goal to reduce the number of breast cancer deaths by 50% in the United States by 2026, the nonprofit turned to its social media influencers to boost registration for the Komen 3-Day, a 60-mile walk over a three-day period in various cities.

The 3-Day event is part of Komen's More Than Pink movement, which kicked off during National Breast Cancer Awareness Month. More Than Pink celebrates the heroes who have made a significant impact in the fight to end breast cancer, according to a news release posted on the organization's website.

Komen's Strategy

With the help of **Attentive.ly**, a social marketing platform enabling organizations to identify their most influential customers and supporters and engage them as ambassadors, the Komen walk organizers pinpointed 27 social media influencers and asked them to spread the message, in their own words, on their digital channels about registering to walk. By providing them with a registration incentive code, over five months, those influencers recruited 105 additional participants, who raised more than \$200,000 for the foundation.

Social influence marketing helped Komen to notice that social wealth can be measured in influencers' shares. Plus, the organization exercised social proof to its influencers, show-

WHY KOMEN?

susan g. komen
3-Day

A NEW BOLD GOAL

In 2016, Susan G. Komen announced a Bold Goal to reduce the current number of breast cancer deaths in the U.S. by 50 percent by 2026.

MORE RESEARCH

Komen has touched many advances in breast cancer research, including discoveries such as tilmancept, molecular breast imaging, ultrasound tomography and a new breast cancer predisposition gene (RECQL).

MORE COMMUNITY OUTREACH

Komen's network of Affiliates fund nearly 1,000 community organizations providing education, screening, patient navigation and treatment assistance to those facing breast cancer each year.

MORE HOPE

Early detection and effective treatment resulted in a 38 percent decline in breast cancer mortality (deaths) in the U.S. between 1989-2014.

MORE SURVIVORS

Today, there are more than 3.1 million breast cancer survivors in the U.S. and more than 6 million in the world.

©2017 Susan G. Komen®



OUR WORK IS NOT DONE. WE WILL NEVER GIVE UP.

- Worldwide, breast cancer is the most frequently diagnosed cancer and the leading cause of cancer death in women.
- In 2017, more than 250,000 new cases of invasive breast cancer are expected to be found in women and more than 2,400 new cases of breast cancer in men in the U.S. **That's one case diagnosed every 2 minutes.**
- In 2017, more than 40,000 women and more than 400 men in the U.S. are expected to die from breast cancer. **That's one death every 13 minutes.**
- About 1.7 million new cases of breast cancer were diagnosed around the world in 2012. **That's one case diagnosed every 19 seconds.**
- An estimated 522,000 women and men died from breast cancer around the world in 2012. **That's one death every 60 seconds.**

Photography contributed by Genetica Media

An example infographic from Susan G. Komen

ing potential donors that others have supported the cause and that money has been raised. In this article, Komen's efforts are woven into discussion of best practices in influencer marketing that will be useful to nonprofits of various budget levels.

According to a study by the **Nonprofit**

Tips to Recruit and Engage Social Influencers

Here are a few tips that nonprofit organizations can follow to engage social media influencers and recruit them to be a voice in a campaign:

1. Share influencers' content

Initiating a relationship with a social media influencer can start with something as simple as retweeting. Nonprofits should share their influencers' content regularly. Reblogging an article or posting on Facebook or other social media networks also is encouraged. This way, influencers will see that an organization appreciates them or has an interest in their work and is engaging with it.

2. Educate influencers

Nonprofits should tell their influencers more about themselves—why and how they operate, and how they are making a difference in the field or community. Plus, helping influencers understand a nonprofit's core values and giving them the tools to educate others as well are key for this part of the campaign to work.

3. Engage influencers with the audience

Asking social media influencers to write a guest post for a nonprofit organization's blog

is an effective tactic, as well as hosting a question-and-answer session on Twitter or Facebook. Having a social media influencer engage with the audience on a platform will lead an organization to expand its audiences and strengthen relationships.

4. Give influencers incentives

Because social media influencers are sacrificing their time and energy to help advance an organization's cause, they should be rewarded. To give a social media influencer an incentive to engage with the organization, nonprofits could offer special benefits such as company tours, client meet-and-greets, interviews and other exclusive opportunities. In addition, invitations to premier fundraising events with VIP benefits would be embraced by influencers.

5. Appreciate influencers

Nonprofits can show their appreciation after an influencer engages with them by sending personal notes in the mail and thanking them publicly on their website, blog, Facebook or Twitter. Giving influencers merchandise and other perks also is beneficial. These also act as incentives for further engagement.

Technology Network, each “like” to an organization's Facebook page has an average value of \$214.81 over 12 months, and some likes from supporters may be worth much more. By getting those who “liked” the page to share donation information, the opportunities to boost donations could increase significantly. Therefore, social media is ideally suited to growing a nonprofit organization's potential donor lists. Many donors use social media, and donors' friends are likely to be interested in supporting them. Messages from friends often are more persuasive.

The Power of Infographics

One of the most powerful ways to increase the reach of an organization's content is to engage with allied influencers, those who are

message catalysts on social media and speak passionately about the work an organization is doing to their many friends and followers. These influencers can get an organization's content read and spread. One way that Komen achieves this is through shareable infographics. Three of these were produced and can be found on Komen's 3-Day web page. Social media influencers can post these on their digital channels and platforms to show donors, friends and teammates the work that Komen does with fundraising dollars.

Nonprofits can begin to build their influencer marketing communication with their email databases. An organization that has email addresses of its donors and supporters can craft an outreach email message that

acknowledges the individual's value, reminds the person of his or her relationship to the nonprofit, and asks the individual to share content and messages. For example, a nonprofit could ask influencers to encourage their friends to join them in a fundraising event.

Not everyone on an organization's email database will be a social media influencer. An influencer needs to care about a nonprofit's cause for the campaign to be effective. It's important to remember that social media influencers are people. Therefore, influencer marketing acts as a type of partnership. When approaching influencers, a nonprofit should look for individuals who would take a sincere interest in an issue—not someone who seeks

personal benefits.

Conclusion

Social media is a means for an organization to increase awareness and lead its followers to action through the help of its donors and advocates. With influencer marketing, nonprofit organizations can help their donors and advocates to become not just philanthropic fundraisers but positive change agents. ■

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Nutritious or Delicious: How to Use Influencers to Increase Your Cool Factor

By Dean Taylor

Telling your customers to suck eggs is better coming from someone else.

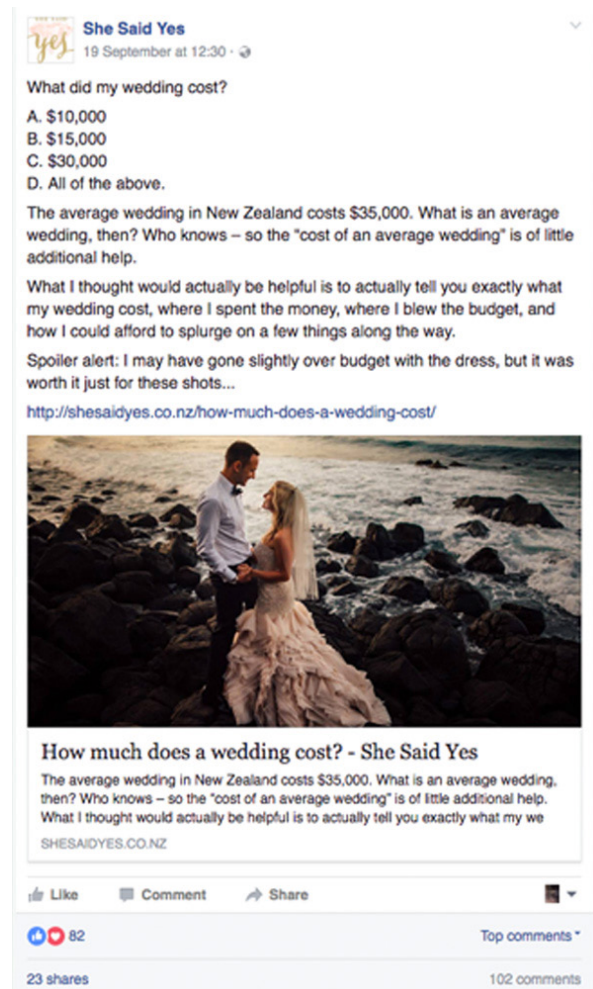
When DDB founder Bill Bernbach said in the '60s that “word of mouth was the most powerful medium of all”, he probably didn’t have social media channels like Facebook or Instagram in mind. But with the sheer volume of online conversation today, that saying is more relevant than ever.

As Nielsen’s Global Trust in Advertising Report stated, 92% of consumers trust word of mouth more than all other forms of advertising.

If even half of that is true, then it makes sense for marketers to allocate time and resource to developing positive commentary from others in a space where most people are accessing information: social media channels.

This case study looks at how it’s not just what you say but who says it and how, that’s important. This influencer marketing program was created for a New Zealand bank that had previously done no work with influencers in the social media space.

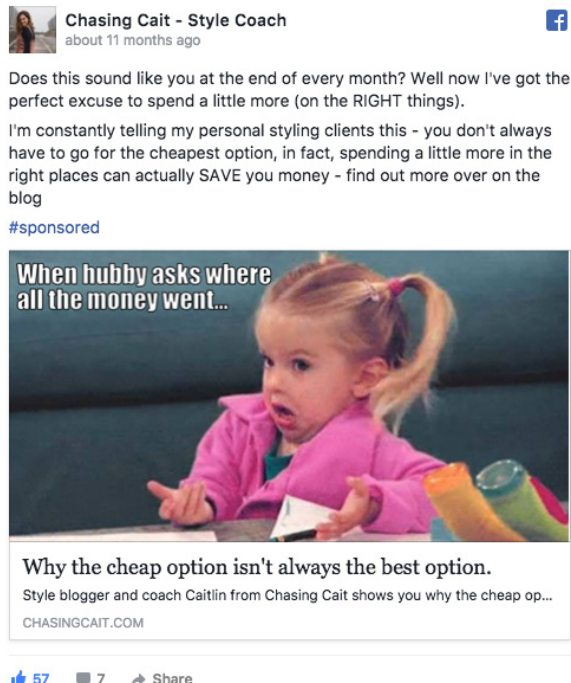
New Zealand has a nascent but rapidly growing influencer environment. While many millennials and Gen Xers follow international bloggers and Instagrammers with huge followings, the pool of local talent is small covering limited interest areas—primarily favouring beauty, health & wellness and food. However, they are still influential, as we will show.



Personal content works. Wedding blogger Megan Hutchinson shared her own wedding budget.

The Brief

One of the Big Four Australian-owned banks dominant in New Zealand wanted to promote a new mobile application that helped customers track their spending. Awareness of the product was a key objective along with an underlying desire to increase likeability. Its primary target was millennials.



Lure readers in with popular, but relevant, pop culture memes.

When you have an organization, like a bank, that is generally a low-care category, asking someone to like you has a high degree of difficulty.

Our solution was to partner with a small number of influential people that appealed to the target audience and had a genuine reason to be interested in the app.

Nutritious or Delicious? Different Objectives, Different Content

When selecting influencers for a campaign, it always pays to look at the objectives as well as the target audience to determine who you want to work with.

Importantly, it is worth understanding what would motivate the target audience to consider the brand or product. These consumer insights should inform your influencer selection, just as they would media or channels.

The overall campaign to promote the bank's app talked to the "spend vs. save" paradigm. We knew that our audience often spent on items that they felt were necessary

but were in reality purely discretionary. Our communications—via influencers—need to reset their thinking.

In choosing our primary influencers, we decided to highlight those spending categories that are commonly seen as must-haves, such as fashion, food and fitness.

We also selected influencers who would resonate with our audience and provide authentic and believable content. And because it was a slightly more complex topic than say, a new beauty product, we wanted it to be 'nutritious', so selected those who could provide richer, long-form blog content.

For this campaign, we also wanted a wider audience reach so elected to balance our "nutritious" blogger content creators with some "delicious" general influencers who provided breadth of topic areas and audiences.

When developing an influencer strategy, it's worth considering whether your campaign needs a balance of substance over reach. Ask yourself if there is a place for more in-depth content. If so, look to use the expertise of specific bloggers and content creators in their chosen niches.

Equally, what proportion of your influencer pool should be those who have amassed large followings for reasons such as their lifestyle or their level of attractiveness.

The answer can generally be found in the brief, the objectives and the KPIs. Neither is better than the other; they all have a part to play in the make-up of an influencer campaign.

Understanding Value From All Three Sides of the Equation

Too often we see influencer campaigns where there is a value imbalance.

This imbalance can swing both ways.

1. The influencer has completely sold their soul and crams multiple brand mentions into their content, making it a

very grating experience for the fan, and offering little value to anyone

2. The influencer has created content with little connection to the brand's product, making for a social post with very little substance. This also offers no value to anyone

When partnering with influencers who know how to make good content, it's imperative that all components come to rest in happy equilibrium:

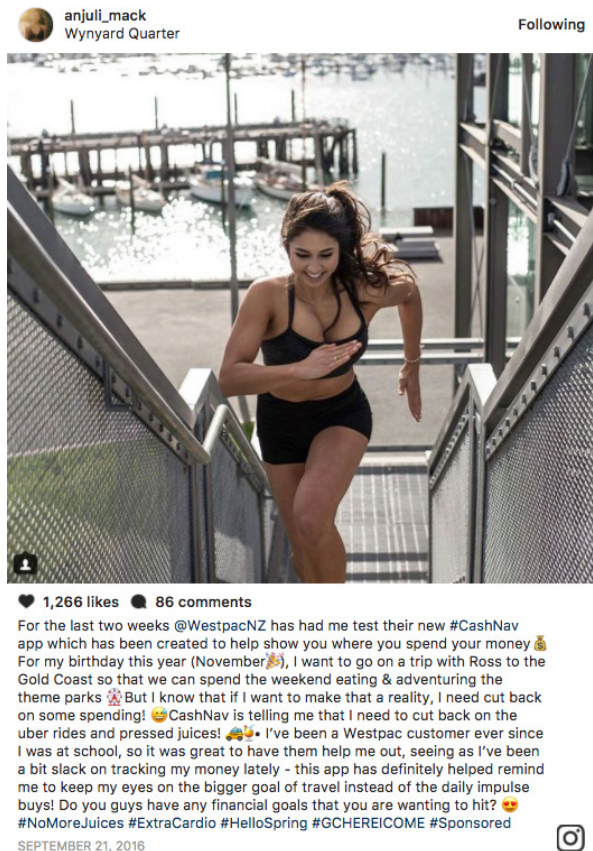
- The brand messaging is correct and on point
- The content theme is relevant to the influencer's channel
- The content is interesting to the influencer's audience
- The brand/product message is not fighting with other's for space. Category exclusivity is ideal

With the banking campaign, we challenged the bloggers to create content that would highlight those items that people spend money on each month and encourage followers to think about how the app could help them make better spending decisions.

For example, we asked a high profile celebrity cook and food blogger to develop content that would encourage people to stay home and make a group meal, rather than spending lots of money eating out. The resulting content included recipes on how to throw a pizza party or prepare an at-home weekend brunch.

In another example, a fashion blogger advised that it would be better to buy more expensive, quality garments less frequently than making rash purchases every weekend on cheap clothes. The blogger also provided options on what those 'investment pieces' could be.

These two bloggers were chosen because they are known for their expertise in their respective areas. They bring value to their audience which provides value for the influencer and, in turn, value for the brand.



Have your influencer include themselves in photos where relevant.

If you aren't considering all three sides of the value equation, then you might be jeopardising a key element of success in your influencer programme.

Becoming Cool by Association

It's fair to say that the cool kids have always been the trendsetters, the people that influence the wider group.

Influencers have taken on that mantle online, and it's that coolness rubbing off on our clients' brands and products we are attempting to leverage.

This halo effect is very real—if you choose the right influencer and manage their briefing carefully.

Shifting brand perceptions can be a long drawn-out process, with significant resources and well thought through comms needed to move the needle.

4 Elements to Consider When Constructing an Influencer Campaign

1. How different content can achieve different objectives (e.g. deeper messaging via blogs and long-form content vs simple Instagram images)
2. How valuable the content will be for all vested parties (e.g. the value for the brand vs. the influencer vs. the fan)
3. How will the roll out of content over time affect your message (e.g. short term vs long term)
4. How can you use post-campaign research to prove success (e.g. can asking survey questions provide the prove points needed to prove success)

The banking app campaign was promoted over a three month period, with content carefully planned to drop strategically throughout that timeframe. It is important not to flood the internet with too many brand mentions from our content partners over a short space of time. Not only does this compromise the authenticity of the influencers' posts but runs counter to the natural flow of influence, which tends to unfold over time.

Post-Campaign Research for the Win

With the majority of influencer campaigns having awareness objectives, it can be hard to judge at the conclusion of the campaign whether or not it has been a success.

1. A pretty big number of people reached? Tick.
2. Lots of engagement on the influencer content? Tick.
3. Pretty low 'cost per engagement' result? Tick

But What Does It Really Mean?

Have you ever thought about asking the very audience that your influencers have been

talking to?

At the conclusion of our banking app campaign, we did just that—and reached out to the bloggers' fan-bases, serving up social content that featured a survey with five short questions:

1. Had they seen that the blogger had been working with a bank?
2. Could they name the bank?
3. Could they name the mobile app?
4. Did they find the advice given helpful?
5. Did the bloggers content change their perception of the bank?

While the survey sample size was only a fraction of that reached by the actual campaign, it provided a strong representation of the impact of the work.

The results were eye opening, showing the content had a high penetration—92% had seen the bank content while nearly half were able to correctly name the mobile app itself—unprompted.

Other Results Included:

- 79% found the advice in the blog helpful, which proved to us that the bloggers selected and the content themes were great matches
- But the most important measurement taken was that around the brand's likeability: 37% of those surveyed thought of the bank more favorably

Over the course of a three-month period we changed helped change perceptions of our client's brand through using third-party social content. Importantly, more than a third of the survey respondents felt that the bank was just that bit cooler than before.

And we thought that was pretty darn cool too. ■

Dean Taylor is head of digital PR at Mango Communications. @dnoze

How Princess Cruises Works With Influencers to Tell Stories Authentically

By PR News Editors

The infamous Fyre Festival was a boon to those in the anti-influencer camp. A slew of influencers endorsed what was supposed to be a luxurious event on a secluded island featuring a fabulous concert. What followers of well-compensated Instagram influencers found when they arrived at the festival were blown-down FEMA tents and cheese sandwiches. Fyre spent lavishly on high-priced influencers, but failed to make the same investment in the event itself. While this incident may not in itself be an indictment of the practice of using influencers to support brands, it prompted us to think about why brands collaborate with influencers and some best practices associated with them.

The Why

We spoke with Sara Dunaj, social media manager, **Princess Cruises**, who acknowledges the chatter that the influencer bubble is ready to burst for many brands. Still, Princess believes in the judicious use of influencers “as a way for us to get out messages that we might not be able to authentically disseminate as a brand.”

For example, she says, “if we were to put out an ad that says, ‘On a cruise, you’ll never get bored,’ no consumer is going to buy that, because it’s so strongly biased.” The result of her brand’s work with influencers is social content “that shows, not tells” how enjoyable a cruise can be, she says. [Influencers] show “themselves authentically having non-stop

fun...and transformative experiences [on our cruises and at the destinations we sail. And they do this] in ways that we as a brand cannot...it’s far more impactful than if we were to tell a consumer what’s going to happen” on a Princess cruise.

The Compensation

Since influencers are working full-time on content creation “we absolutely believe in compensating them.” When negotiating, Dunaj looks for the “sweet spot...where the brand gets the ROI it needs and the influencer feels he or she is being compensated fairly.” With “so many influencers in the marketplace with sky-high fees, most brands are not going to be able to get” a proper ROI. “It’s really about looking for those right partnerships where you will get the ROI” you need. Dunaj feels brands should hold influencer marketing “to the same standard they hold other types of advertising, PR and social media.”



Sara Dunaj,
Social Media
Manager,
*Princess
Cruises*

Finding Them/Message Control

Princess works with its agency **MMGY** to find influencers “who have the right audience that will impact our bottom line.” These are not necessarily influencers with “the biggest audience,” she adds. Selena Gomez has the largest Instagram following, yet “her audience of tweens” are unlikely “to book a cruise” so

“we wouldn’t work with her, even if we received a good rate.”

Dunaj also seeks influencers “who will truly enjoy our brand...when influencers are creating content, it’s very obvious when they don’t have a passion for your brand.”

“We don’t require our influencers to submit their content to us for review before posting. We don’t want it to be in our voice. We want it to be in their voice. We want them to be sharing their authentic experience and what they know will matter to their audience. We’re willing to give up that bit of control because we realize the influencers know their audiences better than we ever could.” Yet “we absolutely do have discussions [with influencers] about priority messaging, what aspects of our product we’re trying to push, but we leave it to them” to convey these messages to their audience.

Delicate Dance

Having just returned from an 11-day, seven-country Baltic cruise with influencers, Dunaj has plenty of tips for communicators charged with overseeing an influencer effort. The main themes revolve around two-way communication and scheduling. Communicators who are comfortable working with traditional media will need to adjust. The biggest conundrum



An Authentically Good Time: Influencer-created content from Princess Cruises. Top: Catherine’s Palace, St. Petersburg, Russia (Instagram of sweetcsdesigns); middle: ceviche and shrimp (itstartswithcoffee.com); bottom: food, deck life (newdarlings.com). These high-quality photos show why influencers need flexible schedules. Source: Princess Cruises

is creating a schedule that is flexible but also loaded with potential experiences. Influencers need flexibility on trips, since “it takes longer to set up an Instagram post...with the perfect

cake and cappuccino than you'd expect." A packed schedule can result in a lower ROI for a brand since influencers will lack the time required "to push out as much content" as they need to, she adds.

Still, it's important to give influencers plenty of content possibilities, she says. With the advent of Instagram Stories, social influencers "have to push out a very steady stream of content...they're filing 24/7...it can be exhausting."

In addition, "keep in mind their peak engagement times...they have a content cadence and a scheduled posting time just as any brand would. Their social presence is highly strategic." And don't forget about time zone changes as they relate to influencers' posting schedules. "Working with influencers is a true partnership." As such communication is key, she adds. ■

Contact: @saradunaj

How a Major Brand Told a Relaunch Story Without Paid Media Support

By Jennifer Reilly

Content is king” has been a consistent mantra within the digital marketing landscape for several years. This has remained constant; however, the landscape around content has been evolving.

It’s the communicator’s job to know how and when to leverage content in order to tell your brand’s story.

Short-form social videos are a very popular form of content, and continue to be a preferred medium for consumption among target audiences. But you must consider the costs associated with distribution of the video, not just the production of it.

I faced this very conundrum while working on a project for **Glad Press’n Seal**. Glad was looking to relaunch marketing behind the product and felt short-form video was the best way to do it. The problem was we had no paid media dollars to support distribution of the content.

I’ll explain how the team conquered its funding hurdles and created a viral video that, 18 months later, continued to drive awareness and consideration for the product.

Objective

Glad identified a significant growth opportunity around Press’n Seal, a product in the food storage category. Looking at purchasing habits we found that while household penetration was very low, once con-



It’s A Wrap: Dad’s First Day Alone with Baby, the hilarious video Glad and What’s Up Moms created, sticks to a key learning presented in this case study: the brand message must come through in the content organically, not be the content. In short, dad finds his home duties a snap and ends up enclosing nearly everything in sight with Press n’ Seal.

sumers purchased the product they became extremely loyal users.

The objective was to create a digital campaign that would communicate the product’s benefits and differences (against other food wraps) in a way that compelled viewers to try the product.

Challenge

As I noted above, Glad had limited funding, no media dollars and only PR and digital to lean on.

Solution

Partner with YouTube influencer group What’s Up Moms to create co-branded content highlighting how Press’n Seal can make a parent’s life easier thanks to its unique ability to seal to almost any surface with an airtight, leak-proof seal.

Process

Choosing an influencer partner is far from easy; there is a plethora of potential collaborators out there and they all come with trade-offs. Knowing that we wanted an influencer to serve as our main distribution channel (in lieu of paid media dollars to push it out on Glad's channels), we based our decision on the following criteria:

- Audience: Does this influencer already have the attention of our target consumer?
- Reach: How large and engaged is that audience?
- Creative Look/Feel/Tone: Would the final creative work within the look/feel/tone guidelines for brand communications?

After you settle on your influencer selection there are still a lot of unknowns that inherently surround an agreement to co-create content. Structuring the agreement in a way that gives both parties creative input is crucial. Again the balancing act continues; as in-house communicators we want content that captures the brand's message, but it needs to be done in a way that feels authentic to the influencer so that his or her audience will engage with it.

Once there is a signed agreement, move on to concept and script development. The script must allow organic product integration in a way that doesn't feel forced. When we got to this stage, we worked with What's Up Moms to identify areas where our audiences' interests overlapped. Life stages of motherhood soon emerged as a great intersection for both parties to tell the story of Dad's First Day Alone With Baby. The video can be found at: youtu.be/eptIimg96qk

Results

Going into the execution of this project we had set a goal of 120K video views, which we quickly achieved. Shortly after that we real-

Factors You Should Consider When Structuring an Influencer Agreement

- ☐ Level of branding and product integration
- ☐ Asset ownership
- ☐ Final creative approval
- ☐ Pre- & post-production review, incl. proper disclosure
- ☐ Script collaboration and/or approval
- ☐ Set/wardrobe/prop approval

ized we had a viral video on our hands. As of this writing the video has received:

- 4 million+ YouTube views
- 750+ comments
- Plus many, many shares on other social channels, taking the total number of video views well over 20 million

Almost 18 months after the video was released, we continued to see sales and awareness lifts from it. That led to the brand licensing the full rights to the video so it can be leveraged digitally beyond the What's Up Moms social channels. The brand is also looking to leverage this video with retail and international partners.

Key Learnings

1. There are no guarantees when it comes to producing content. No one can or should promise a video will go viral. Still, there are things you can do to increase your chances. Here are a few:
 - A. Make sure you have a strong distribution strategy. If you don't have paid media dollars to get the momentum going, look to influencers and PR to help spread the word.
 - B. Make sure your content is relevant to the target audience. Does it hit on a cultural tension or relevant pulse period

or connect on a shared belief or reality?

C. The brand message needs to come through in the content organically, not be the content. Rarely will you see a successful social video that is anchored on a brand benefit or claim. Use a relevant story to weave in those messages.

2. Working with influencers to co-create content is a partnership; both parties need to participate in forming that story.
3. Ownership of the assets is critical. If you're leveraging your influencers for their audience and distribution, then you may find it beneficial to publish the content on their owned and earned

channels rather than yours. On the flip side, if you work with an influencer for the content creation alone, you would want to have full ownership of the assets to push out over paid, owned and earned channels. Either way you will want to have a clause in your contract that outlines ownership and what happens in the event one party wants to buy out rights (much like Glad did after seeing the unbelievable success of the video). ■

Jennifer Reilly is group manager, digital/PR, at The Clorox Company. jennifer.reilly@clorox.com

The Secret Sauce for the Cranberry's Social Media Win With Millennials

By Michelle Hogan

The Issue: Reinventing the Cranberry. It's an age-old issue for communicators: How do you create content for your brand that can break through the noise and find its way to new audiences?

In the following case study, we added a few more conditions. First, can your content take a fruit—the cranberry, which is associated mostly with its peak harvest and holiday season—and make it trendy with millennials? Cranberries contain vitamin C and fiber and may help maintain urinary tract health, but with many other foods touting benefits, how could this superfruit stand out from the crowd?

Those were some of the issues facing the **Cranberry Marketing Committee** (CMC), a federally created entity (more on this below), before the end-of-year holidays.

As “America’s Original Superfruit,” cranberries are a staple at many Thanksgiving feasts. Yet we noticed millennials reinventing the traditional celebration with a newer, trendier holiday: Friendsgiving. In turn, we believed the beloved cranberry also needed to reinvent itself and claim its place at this swanky holiday table. As you might know, Friendsgiving is Thanksgiving’s young, chic alter ego, a millennial-driven trend where party hosts celebrate the holidays with friends in the days and weeks before and after Thanksgiving.

An idea the CMC and **Pollock Commu-**

nications settled on to raise the cranberry’s profile with millennials called for the fruit to break free of traditional associations a bit and become a part of the emerging holiday. Creating a breakthrough social media campaign also was on the agenda. Piece of (cranberry) cake, right? The CMC and Pollock decided to create a strategic social media campaign to engage a young, millennial audience through a creative cranberry-focused photo-sharing contest timed to Friendsgiving.

The aim of the campaign was to meet millennials where they socialize—on social media—and capitalize on an existing millennial-focused event. The campaign captured the interest and attention of this important new audience, cooked up cranberry buzz, encouraged cranberry trials and generated contest entries (in the form of creative, millennial-inspired cranberry dishes, drinks and décor) on Facebook, Pinterest and Twitter. But with every success come a few challenges...

Bogged Down With Hurdles

As noted above, the CMC has a federal pedigree. It was established as a federal marketing order in 1962 to ensure a stable, orderly supply of good quality product. In addition, the CMC conducts cranberry promotions on behalf of its members, including cranberry farmers and marketers.

Since the CMC’s inception, Thanksgiving has played an important role in our promotions. As generations and technology have evolved, though, we realized the cranberry

and the CMC needed to keep up with changing behaviors and new media so we could reach key audiences. The risk of not moving with the times was listless sales figures. Understanding the millennial generation and how to reach this social-media savvy, food-focused audience became paramount in order to engage with it, stand out from the crowded holiday food space, create a new generation of cranberry lovers and ultimately increase cranberry sales.

While the CMC had a presence on Facebook, Twitter and Pinterest, we were absent on Instagram; we were not actively engaging with millennials and relevant social influencers. To reach the coveted millennial target and expand cranberry consumption, the CMC needed to augment its social media activities and forge relationships with millennial influencers. With a tight timeline of only a few months to gear up (planning began in the summer) and a modest budget, we needed to find a creative way to make a powerful impact.

Soliciting a Solution

Pollock had plenty of knowledge about the behavior of millennials; still, the agency undertook a research effort, diving deep into relevant studies and articles. From this activity it concluded:

Millennials' Affection for Food Rivals Their Interest in Social Media

They love to post photos of food, cocktails, crafts and DIY wins (and fails) on social

Millennials enjoy celebrating, and their self-created holiday, Friendsgiving, is no exception

Friendsgiving is focused on food and friends, but there's a significant amount of social media buzz surrounding the celebrations

Social media influencers motivate millennials



Berry Creative: The CMC urged online contestants to be creative in their use of cranberries in recipes.

The research guided Pollock's planning to: develop a social media photo-sharing contest focused on creative recipes and décor to create news of the versatility of cranberries and their myriad uses; time the contest to peak harvest season and Friendsgiving to maximize interest and social media buzz; and partner with social media influencers to motivate millennials to try cranberries and enter the contest.

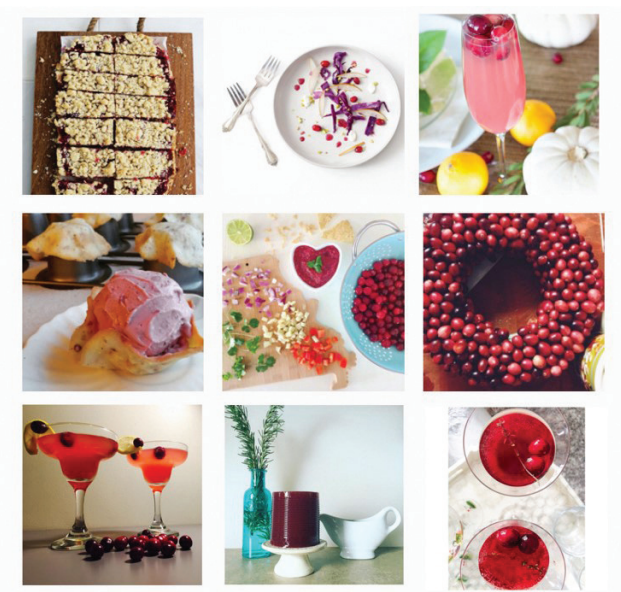
These three factors were equally important to the campaign: The influencers drove awareness of the contest; the contest motivated millennials to create and share social buzz about cranberries; and the backdrop of Friendsgiving provided the optimal time and place to drive cranberry relevance, engagement and sales.

The CMC and Pollock collaborated on targeted media and blogger outreach, identifying the right influencers, creating a compelling contest microsite (CranberryFriendsgiving.com), launching an Instagram account (@uscranberries) and designing attractive promotional materials, including the Ultimate Friendsgiving Guide, with tips and informa-

tion for hosting a Friendsgiving dinner party highlighting cranberry dishes, drinks and décor. Since millennials are passionate foodies and appreciate unique recipes as well as high-quality photos, we were careful to select ultra-trendy tips and unconventional recipes as part of our resources, to pique interest, resonate with this audience and drive interaction.

In addition to targeted media and influencer outreach, Pollock recommended the CMC create a 360-degree marketing campaign. The CMC mobilized its members to help support and create awareness of the contest and encourage marketing initiatives to promote the social campaign within their own programs. Several members tweeted, posted and added the contest website URL and hashtag to their branded sites and materials, further boosting exposure. Pollock tapped its network of retail dietitians to implement an in-store promotion at Redner's Warehouse Markets timed to the contest. The promotion included an in-store circular, an article in its *Healthcents* publication and TasteStation cranberry recipe sampling events in 30 stores during November, timed to Friendsgiving.

The contest microsite elicited entries, but also doubled as a resource of cranberry information, with links to a variety of sweet and savory recipes and relevant websites showcasing the versatility of cranberries. The contest hashtag, #FriendsgivingCranberryContest, helped increase social buzz and allowed us to track contest entries across all platforms. Consumers were encouraged to share how they featured cranberries in their Friendsgiving celebrations for a chance to win a \$2,000 dinner party. That we challenged millennials to get creative with cranberries, a traditional holiday food, motivated them to think outside the box and helped inspire entries while positioning cranberries as a versatile fruit that belonged at the Friendsgiving table.



Fanberry: The CMC contest microsite did double duty, offering traditional and unusual cranberry recipes.

We also found influencers who met our strict criteria. The CMC teamed with Friendsgiving experts and millennial social media influencers Elsie & Emma of ABeautifulMess.com and Carlene Thomas, RDN, LD, of Healthy Ever After.

Our criteria for the influencers: Were they foodies and millennials with large followings? Active in celebrating Friendsgiving? Unique and creative in their recipes and décor items? Active on social with targeted followings? Successful with similar activations?

The influencers proved to be a cost-effective and relevant means of communicating our messages with pre-approved cranberry-focused posts, tips and contest shout-outs. In the absence of advertising, the influencers were crucial in helping to drive cranberry awareness and contest entries.

The Results

The campaign resulted in hundreds of contest entries, significant social media chatter about cranberries and impactful sales increases across all cranberry products, helping to create a new generation of cranberry lovers

and expand cranberry consumption. We measured success by the number of contest entrants, media impressions and increases in social media followers for CMC pages, as well as sales increases for cranberry products at retail, including:

- 211,317,802 impressions in traditional and social
- 190,115 impressions through multiple retailers' social channels
- 20%-138% increases in followers of CMC social pages
- 1.2 million shoppers reached through Redner's partnership, resulting in the following:
 - 11% sales increase for fresh cranberries
 - 64% sales increase for dried cranberries
 - 22% sales increase for cranberry sauce
 - 14% sales increase for cranberry juice

Lessons Learned

Based on the success of the social media campaign, the CMC recently launched the second annual Cranberry Friendsgiving Photo Contest to continue to raise awareness

of cranberries among millennials timed to harvest and the Friendsgiving holiday season. Using lessons learned in year one we've expanded this year's contest. Some of the lessons learned:

- Enlisting targeted and relevant social influencers is a strategic way to reach millennials.
- Utilizing a unique hashtag allows you to track and monitor social buzz and entries and engage with contest entrants.
- Developing social media-ready promotional graphics and materials makes it easier for industry members, media, influencers and consumers to get involved in marketing activations and initiatives that spread your product message.
- Amplifying social media efforts with tools such as a Twitter party or Facebook Live help ignite interest and spread the news about your campaign. ■

Michelle Hogan is executive director of the Cranberry Marketing Committee. She can be contacted via EBlasi@pollock-pr.com

7

Advice From Influencers

An Influencer's Perspective on the Tricky Art of Managing Influencers

By Jeff Kagan

Managing influencers is a new and a very important piece of the marketing puzzle. Yet few companies do a good job in this area. Influencer relations, or IR, is becoming an important as analyst relations, media relations and investor relations. Each are very important, but are very different and must be handled correctly in order to see value. Let's take a closer look at what good programs and good companies do so well.

Today only a few companies focus on the influencer opportunity. Even fewer do a good job at it. But going forward, the influencer will play an important role in a company's success, so building a rock-solid brand-influencer relations program is necessary for winning companies use today.

This is something every company will focus on, but those who act now can have a competitive advantage if they do it well. Fortunately, there are plenty of examples you should either follow or avoid.

A company's success with their various analyst relations, media relations and investor relations are not guaranteed. Some do a much better job than others. And to tell you the truth, I expect nothing different from influencer relations.

In fact, some companies won't even play in these waters at all. That will be harmful to them going forward. Some don't even have a media relations or analyst relations program. And the results have almost always been poor.

Tell the Story You Want Told About Your Company

The reason is simple. Like it or not, a story about your company will be told. What that story focuses on matters and you can have a real impact. If it focuses on what you want it to, you will get good results. If you do nothing, the media, analyst and investment community will find and tell their own stories. And to say it bluntly, these will never be as positive or as helpful.

Successful companies don't expect the influencers to play by the company rules. Instead, they learn then play by the influencers' rules.

In fact, they often get in the way of the real and good news or stories companies should be focused on telling. So, companies should participate in the process because directing the conversation matters to their long-term success.

So, how do you best manage influencers? First, realize there is more than just one category. Different influencers often play by different rules. For example, entertainers, analysts, columnists and the news media are all important in the marketing world. They are all influencers. However, they provide different types of benefits and must be dealt with differently.

Plus, there is often a mix which gets con-

7 Tips for Working With Influencers

- ☐ Don't try and direct the influencer.
- ☐ Think of influencers as partners, not employees.
- ☐ Learn how each thinks, works and earns.
- ☐ Understand influencers are small businesses.
- ☐ Understand different influencers work in different ways.
- ☐ Don't try and direct thinking and comments.
- ☐ Educate the influencer and let them handle it their way.

fusing to manage as well. Yet managing this mix well makes an important difference for many companies.

More Than One Category of Influencers

Let me explain what I am talking about with the mix. As a wireless analyst or telecom analyst, you would think I fall into the analyst relations category with the companies I follow. That's true, however I also write columns and am quoted by the media, so companies also include me in their media relations as well. Plus, over the years I have developed a brand as an influencer. So, I am also part of many companies' influencer relations.

Do you see the complexity? This means I am part of multiple programs within each company. Now, multiply that by as many individuals you work with and you can see, it can get quite confusing. Now, multiply that by all the analysts, media, investors and influencers and you can see the size of the challenge.

You may want to ignore this area, but you can't if you want to grow. You must be a successful player in this space if you want success in business.

Break Influencer Relations Into Two Parts

That's why I have found the most successful companies typically break each program into two parts. With regards to the influencer relations program, these two parts are specific individuals which the company has a working relationship, and the larger more generic group. The way these two groups are addressed are very different.

I have been a part of both groups, so let me explain from the influencer's perspective. I have found some companies do a good job, but most struggle with this.

There is often a smaller group of key influencers important to each company. Sometimes companies work with these influencers. Sometimes they don't. There is an individual working relationship with each of these. I have worked with more companies than I can count on this basis for more than 30 years. This is a long-term relationship, so take care in building it.

There is also the larger and more general influencer universe. These influencers must all be addressed, but since they are not as important to the sector or the company, working with this group is more general in tone.

With that said, it's vital that you set the tone for the conversation about your company in the marketplace. The reason is simple... there will be a conversation and you want to manage it to get best results. If you set the tone, then the conversation often stays within those parameters. If you don't set the tone, then you are entering a drag race without a helmet or seat belts. Good luck.

Learn and Play by the Influencers' Rules

Successful companies don't expect the influencers to play by the company rules. Instead, they learn then play by the influencers' rules. Company executives in charge of the

program typically learn the way each works and bends around them. They learn what the influencer does, how they do it and how they earn income and then play by their rules. This typically has the most successful results.

The reason is simple. Influencers are a cottage industry. They must organize their thoughts and their business into a model. Just like you they need to earn income. Except they don't work for a company, are not on salary and don't get company benefits. They are independent and in business for themselves. They have something of value they want to sell. They must earn income to keep their business alive. The same as any company or individual.

So, understanding how each key influencer works, and giving them what they need and the way they need it, is often an important key to success. I often get calls from companies offering me something they think is important, but has little or no value to me. This is a mistake they are making, yet most don't understand where they are missing the boat.

Executives should spend time and learn about the key influencers they are interested in working with. They should develop personal relationships and have conversations. After both sides feel comfortable with the other, they can talk about an agreement. They can hammer out the details with a better understanding of each other.

Influencer relations is a relatively new area that most companies are either already working in or are considering. However, this has also been around for decades. I know because I have been an influencer for more than three decades. It's just that we didn't have a name

for the category back then. It was just an idea of a few key business leaders.

Today, it's more commonplace. With that said, remember only a few companies actually do a great job with influencers. Most struggle. However, it's important to learn about what works, what doesn't and why. Learn from companies that do this well.

It's Important to be Successful With Influencers

...and the reason is simple: Your competitors are already focused on the influencer path and will gain a competitive advantage over you if you are not prepared.

So, the question is simple. Will you lead, follow or not even play? If you lead, you can set the rules. If you follow, you can be a player, but the rules are already set. However, both paths can lead to success if you do a good job at understanding the influencer opportunity. With that said, which path are you on?

IR is still uncharted territory, but is growing in importance and cannot be ignored by any company. The first step is always to get your feet wet. Learn what works and why. IR is both an opportunity and risk. If managed well it will pay off. However, don't think you can sit out this dance. You can't, because your competitors are already embracing this new wave of marketing. Your choice is either to be a leader, a follower or a non-participant. So, which one are you? ■

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What Google and Other Brands Do Right and Wrong When Dealing With Influencers

By Hilary JM Topper

With 88,000 unique visitors on my blog NY Lifestyle Blog, 50,000 unique visitors on my blog A Triathlete's Diary, 233,000 listeners on my radio podcast show Hilary Topper On Air and more than 1 million followers on my social networks, one may classify me as an influencer.

I've been active in the digital world since 2006 and my community perpetually grows. There are many who have larger communities than I do, but what sets me apart, is I've worked on both sides—I've gotten pitched by major brands to become a brand ambassador and I've pitched bloggers to help brands I represent connect with their target influencers. This puts me in a unique position to help you learn best practices when it comes to influencers. Here are my experiences with various brands:

Google Glass Explorer

Google Glass was one of the first companies in 2011 to establish an effective "ambassador program," using influencers. To do this, they held a contest on Twitter. The contest asked influencers to tweet out why they wanted a pair of Google Glass using the hashtag #IfIHadGlass. Once the influencer was selected, they had the opportunity to buy Glass for \$1,500. Nearly 8,000 people were selected. I was one of them.

Those 8,000 people took Glass and showed the world what they could do with it by tak-

ing photos, taking videos, talking with friends on Google Hangouts and surfing the internet using voice commands. They shared this with their communities and Google spent little money on advertising, PR and social media because they had 8,000 Google Glass Explorers doing that for them for free.

I created "Glasslandia," the first reality show on YouTube. We shot, edited and produced six episodes in the series and posted on YouTube. Episode 1, released in October 2013, has nearly 40,000 views. Interestingly, when Google saw the series, they loved it. When it was over, they asked when season two was coming out. That's when I told them, "when you pay for it, we will produce another series!"

I was also part of a "Google Glass expedition" to Fort Myers/Sanibel. There were five "Google Glass Explorers." We each had to post videos and still photos using Glass on Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn and G+. As a result, nearly 70,000 impressions were gained for the tourism board and the area reaped the benefits.

Although Google Glass has changed its focus, the campaign was a huge success, with millions of people hearing and learning about Glass through these influencers.

What They Did Right:

- Google Glass provided a private community where Explorers could network and be part of something bigger than themselves.

- They had communities on Google Plus which were very active and Google Glass Explorers became instant friends with each other, cross-promoting each other's activities on social.
- They had one person who curated the group and brought the group to another level.

After Google Glass successfully used influencers, other brands followed in a big way.

Base Performance

Base Performance is a brand in which I have always been interested. They sell Himalayan salt and they pre-package it in a branded container. They say the salt has other nutrients in it besides Himalayan salt. For their influencer program, they select triathletes to be on their “team” and these “team” members are asked to promote their product.

These team members are extremely convincing that Base Salt is exceptionally better than any other salt on the market. You may ask yourself, what's so great about salt? For endurance athletes, salt is imperative because of the electrolytes lost when doing these four plus hour races.

Base attended many of the Ironman events and got to know many of the athletes through these long-distance triathlons, which consisted of 140-mile swim, bike and run event. Matt Miller, the spokesperson for this group is highly regarded in the triathlon community and he has made connections with people around the world. He was instrumental in gathering and recruiting ambassadors.

Base Performance had an employee cultivate the brand ambassadors and provide them with content. She picked up where Matt left off and continuously provided information to the community. By doing this, she brought us into the community and made us feel part of the “team.” After she left, there was no one to take her place and the ambassador program,

although still going on today, in my opinion, isn't as strong without her leadership.

As a Base Influencer or Ambassador, I was asked to post at least twice a month on my social networks and endorse the product. I was also asked to staff a booth at an Ironman event or at any other events that I attended. I staffed the booth at the LI Marathon Expo. In return, I received lots of free products, a tri kit and more.

What They Did Right:

- They had two instrumental components to their program—Matt Miller at the Ironman events cultivating potential ambassadors and the woman who led the group of ambassadors.
- They gave the ambassadors lots of free goodies for their hard work.

Balega International

Another company, I became involved with was **Balega International**. They are the makers of running socks and they have a nice group of ambassadors who love their socks. As an ambassador, I was given a box filled with socks and other items to use while running and I recorded a video and blogged about the socks. Along with that, every month I post at least two posts using the hashtag #balegalove or just #balega.

Interestingly, Balega instituted an activator program, which enables them to pick and choose which projects they wanted to fund. After becoming an ambassador, I pitched them the idea to give out socks to my group of beginner runners in Team Galloway Long Island. Everyone received a pair of socks and were thrilled. Each person that got a free pair, went on to buy three more pairs and they shared their love on social.

In addition, I held contests with my triathlon team, WeRTriathletes, where members could win two free pair of socks for winning

How to Choose the Right Ambassador for Your Brand

Before embarking on a brand ambassador program, you need to ask yourself “Who is it that I want to target?” Think about your “buyer persona” and create a profile for that person.

Listed below are some guidelines to use when developing your buyer persona:

- ☐ How old is the person? Is he/she a millennial? A baby boomer? A senior?
- ☐ Is it a woman, a man, a transgender, gender neutral?
- ☐ What does the person do for a living?
- ☐ Where does the person live?
- ☐ Does he/she live in a house? Apartment?
- ☐ What motivates the potential ambassador?
- ☐ What are some of the ambassador's goals or aspirations?
- ☐ Why does that person want to be an ambassador?
- ☐ How big is that person's social reach? Blog? YouTube reach?
- ☐ Does the person's blog correlate to your brand?

a contest. Everyone was so excited to participate and more excited to win.

What They Did Right:

- The folks at Balega brought the ambassadors into their world by providing contests every month and making the ambassadors feel wanted and part of the team. They have an active Facebook page and they send out monthly newsletters with new contests.

Instavit

Not all companies have a great brand ambassador program. **Instavit** makes vita-

mins that are easy to swallow because they are sprayable. You spray in your mouth and you get the benefits of your daily vitamin intake.

When they put out a call for ambassadors they selected me as one of them for my health and wellness blog. I accepted. I loved the idea of a sprayable vitamin, since I have a hard time swallowing pills.

They sent me a package. I reviewed the product on my blog and they put my photo up on their website and then nothing. They never reached back out. I tweeted and retweeted various tweets that included them and they never said anything. When I asked for more product, they told me they would send it out but then I never received anything.

This non-responsiveness did not keep me engaged. I liked the product, but the ambassador program person never followed up.

What they did right:

- They recruited the right ambassadors with the right buyer persona for their brand.

PacificHealth Labs

I recently got involved with **PacificHealth Labs** after I approached them to be a brand ambassador. I love their products and endorse them anyway, so why not approach them and see how we could work together?

They immediately agreed to the partnership and every quarter they provide me with \$150 worth of nutrition/hydration supplements and in return, I post on social about their products at least twice a month.

In addition, I love that they have testing and sampling programs. Since I run the Team Galloway Long Island group, I asked them if I could provide samples to my members and test drive some of their products. They were thrilled. They sent me dozens of Accel gels to distribute for the long run and Endurox 4 to be given after the long run for recovery.

Again, my beginner runners were so excited and Pacific Health Labs created new ambassadors that will be lifelong buyers of their products.

What They Did Right:

- They welcomed their ambassadors with open arms and retweeted their tweets on an ongoing basis. They had a structured program that worked and generated results.

Zensah

I've noticed that a few of my Instagram/Facebook "friends" are also ambassadors of **Zensah**, so I looked into becoming an ambassador myself. Zensah makes compression socks, sleeves and sports bras.

I saw on their website that they had an open invitation to become a brand ambassador. Anyone was allowed in. I signed up on the website and received an automatic response that welcomed me into their team. After that, I was instructed to download an app on my iPhone.

I did so and followed the instructions. The app was quite interesting. It enabled me to take photos and automatically put in hashtags recommended by the brand—#zensah #with-outlimitz #xc #running #fitlife #teamzensah #athlete. It also showed me other ambassadors and if I accumulated enough points, I could unlock and receive prizes.

Interestingly, the Zensah folks generated a contest. The more you post using their hashtags through their app, the more points or coins you receive—and the more points or coins you receive the more free stuff you get.

What They Did Right:

- Athletes love competition and Zensah created a competition using the point system to generate rewards for their ambassadors.

General Do's and Don'ts

Do:

- ☐ Research your community and find the influencers that you think will rally behind you and promote your brand.
- ☐ Make sure to keep in contact with them, develop a relationship. Don't just pitch once. If the influencer uses your product, don't forget about them. Keep up the relationship.
- ☐ Keep the ambassadors connected with you and with each other.
- ☐ Make them feel like they're part of your family.
- ☐ Find someone who can spearhead the leadership process.
- ☐ Create a community for ambassadors on Facebook in a private group.
- ☐ Send them information on an ongoing basis.
- ☐ Ask them to pitch ideas to you that could generate big interest, like Balega and Pacific Health Labs did.
- ☐ Show them love because that love will come back twofold.
- ☐ The personal touch works. Make sure you reach out and develop a relationship with the blogger/ambassador.

Don't:

- ☐ Send anything that is irrelevant to a blogger or an ambassador.
- ☐ Not respond!
- ☐ Promise and not deliver.

Blogger Outreach

While we're on the subject of outreach to ambassadors, I also get a ton of pitch letters from public relations firms. Most send me information and have never looked at my blog nor know what I write about. It is important to research each blog before you pitch to them. I understand everyone is busy, but why would someone think I'm a "mommy blogger" with my New York Lifestyle Blog? This

indicated they did not read my blog before pitching to me.

The other thing that I find amusing is, there is little to no follow-up. In my PR business, we follow up at least five times. When I get a pitch, the most I've seen follow up was twice, maybe three times. And at that third time, I generally respond either in a positive or negative way. One thing that PR

folks don't understand is, the world doesn't revolve around us and everyone is super busy. Follow-up is imperative in getting your story placed, especially on a blog. ■

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8

Dangers and Legal Considerations

How to Prevent Influencer Programming From Damaging Your SEO Strategy

By Alayna Palgon

It is no secret that influencer marketing has made great strides in the industry as brands look to build credibility, relevance, and awareness among their key target audiences.

While these performance indicators are highly coveted, the bottom line for any brand will always be return on investment (ROI) and converting sales—we're in the business of selling, after all. As a result, influencer marketing professionals would be remiss if they did not require partners to link back to the products/brands in sponsored content.

Many agencies have teamed up closely with their client's e-commerce departments or have leveraged influencer marketing software to develop trackable links and assess the impact of partnerships. This is a worthwhile way to measure the value of influencer programming based on site traffic as well as revenue; not to mention, it helps the brand's Search Engine Optimization (SEO), right?

While the natural answer to this question might be "of course," a dive into SEO basics, the Federal Trade Commission's sponsored content disclosure requirements and Google's sponsored content policy proves otherwise.

Our agency discovered the impact of this issue after launching a highly successful influencer campaign in 2016. The brand was thrilled with the engagement, impressions, content, etc.; but in early 2017, the brand's SEO team flagged an unanticipated impact on their SEO efforts.

Why Exactly Did This Happen?

Let's break it down:

SEO Basics

- Search engines assign a ranking to websites based on two criteria: 1) keywords embedded as part of the metadata on your brand's website and 2) reputable sites that link back to your website (known as backlinks.)
- Bots crawl the Internet in search of these keywords and backlinks and use what they find to assign a value to your site.
- Google then uses this data to determine your PageRank within Internet searches (whether your website appears as #1 in search results or #101.)

FTC Disclosure Requirements

- To protect consumers, the FTC requires that influencers and brands disclose partnerships where money or goods have been exchanged for online endorsements.
- To be compliant, influencers typically mention that their post was "sponsored by X brand" or use #sponsored in their social content.

Google's Sponsored Content Policy

- Not all backlinks that Google bots find will help your search ranking.
- After noticing an uptick in purchased backlinks, Google began deprioritizing websites with backlinks where the word "sponsored" also appears.

Sample Scenario

Here is a sample scenario to illustrate the issue. Let's say X Company partners with Susie Influencer to review their products. To help Susie's audience find the products she is reviewing and to (seemingly) help improve their SEO, X Company asks her to 1) include backlinks to their website in her blog post and 2) disclose that the content was sponsored.

Once Susie Influencer's content launches, Google's bots scour the internet and come across her blog post about Company X. Google bots analyze the blog post, notice that it links to Company X's website and also uses the word "Sponsored." As a result, Google bots automatically default to counting this content against Company X's PageRank deeming the backlinks to be sponsored/spam.

So, on the one hand, influencers must disclose their paid endorsements to be FTC compliant and straightforward with their audiences. On the other hand, brands will not be willing to partner with influencers if doing so will lower their PageRank. So, what's a brand supposed to do?

How Extensive Is This Issue for Overall Programming?

Here's the good news. Without you even knowing it, social platforms have evolved to prevent this issue from impacting brands. Facebook and Twitter automatically shorten any links or convert them into rich media before posting. Beyond simply condensing the link or converting it into something more visually compelling, this process helps prevent Google bots from counting sponsored content against your brand. It does this by giving the links a "nofollow" HTML tag (more on this later.) That said, the only area where you'll need to address this issue with influencers is for blog content.

How Do We Ensure Blog Content Doesn't Cause an Issue?

Google recommends giving influencers URLs with a "nofollow" attribute. This HTML attribute signals search engine bots that a hyperlink should not impact the link target's ranking in the search engine's index. Essentially, it tells Google's bots to bypass the link so that it does not negatively impact PageRank. A "nofollow" link is created by adding the "nofollow" HTML tag to an existing URL, which looks like this:

```
<a href="http://www.website.com/"
rel="nofollow">Link Text</a>
```

How to Ensure Influencer Programming Won't Hurt Your SEO:

The following steps can make the process easier.

- Work closely with your SEO/e-commerce team to develop URLs with "nofollow" attributes. Develop an excel grid with functions that automatically generate a "nofollow" URL when the original URLs are input.
- Carefully negotiate influencer contracts and be forthcoming with necessary obligations:
 - Flag the requirement to use brand-produced links early on for influencers and include it in the contract.
 - Enforce FTC compliance, but encourage influencers to use language in blog posts that shows their excitement for the relationship, i.e., "I'm thrilled to partner with X brand to ..." or "I've teamed up with X brand to ..."
- Ask influencers for all the links they would like to include in their blog post before they launch the content.
- Develop a "nofollow" link for each of these URLs.
- Share the updated links with the influencer for inclusion in their blog post.

While the backend of the URL will very obviously contain the “nofollow” attribute, the consumer won’t be impacted. The links will still be 100% functional to anyone who views and clicks them. It will not negatively impact your brand’s PageRank and will not require you to ask influencers to breach FTC compliance regulations. Win-win.

A Lesson in Working Smarter Together

When planning programs, it is crucial to have all the key players in the room to evaluate the impact a particular approach will have on other areas of the brand’s marketing

strategy. If this example has taught us anything, it’s that digital ecosystems are complex and movement in one area almost always impacts another. That’s not to say that digital marketers should be stagnant. Rather, it’s a cautionary tale to agencies and brand owners alike to always consider the larger picture and the delicate connections between one digital arena and another. ■

Alayna Palgon is director, digital strategy & influencer management, at Kaplow Communications.

To Disclose or Not to Disclose: What You Need to Know About FTC Regulations

By PR News Editors

Brand communicators beware: The Federal Trade Commission (FTC) has declared open season on social media influencers who fail to disclose that they are paid for endorsing a brand's products and services. Not only that, disclosures must take a specific form; they also should be ubiquitous in some cases.

In late 2016 the FTC issued a long-awaited policy statement regarding native advertising and influencers, which was a follow-up to an earlier FAQ on the topic. Not even three months after it issued the later document, it “put industry on notice,” says Allison Fitzpatrick, partner at **Davis & Gilbert** in its marketing, promotions and PR practice groups, by slapping a penalty on high-end retailer **Lord & Taylor**. The brand tried to blame its missteps—failing to disclose that it paid for a post to appear in an online fashion publication and neglecting to have 50 fashion bloggers disclose they were paid to wear and later endorse a paisley dress on Instagram—on an outside agency it hired to handle its influencers. That wasn't good enough for the FTC, which blamed the retailer nonetheless. “If [a brand] hires an agency, [the brand] is not off the hook; it must follow-up with the agency,” she says.

After speaking with Fitzpatrick, an attorney, and Josh Habursky, adjunct professor at **West Virginia University** Reed College of Media, the rules seem fairly straightforward: If an influencer is paid to endorse a product or receives a free product or service, the FTC re-

Three Tips About Influencers And Disclosure

1. **When in Doubt Disclose:** “It's better to be safe than sorry” with disclosure, Habursky says. While influencers and marketers sometimes balk, the prudent brand communicator should recall the FTC's edicts that disclosures be “clear and conspicuous.”
2. **And Do It Often:** Particularly with larger works, disclosing more than once is advised. As noted above, the FTC has recommended placing disclosures on videos at several points throughout a video, and at least at the beginning and the end.
3. **Explain the Rules:** Fitzpatrick and Habursky stress it's important for brands to, at a minimum, have a 15-minute phone call with its paid influencers at the start of employment so that FTC rules can be explained. Fitzpatrick adds that a copy of the FTC guidelines should be included in the influencer's onboarding package and that regulatory language appears in the influencer's contract with a brand. Habursky says, “it's essential” that brands create their own written rules for influencers as well as observe the FTC rules.

quires disclosure in a resulting blog, Instagram post, tweet or YouTube video, for example.

Regulatory Rage

Where things get a bit tricky is in deploying the disclosures themselves. In the Lord &

Taylor example above, influencers donning the paisley dress used the retailer's hashtag, but that failed to meet FTC regulations. They should have used #paidpost or #sponsored-post. While #paid #ad or #sponsor are acceptable disclosures in a tweet, Fitzpatrick says, #spon doesn't cut it, for example.

Along the lines of word shortening, a favorite device on social, using #sweeps to denote a sweepstakes or contest on social won't suffice. Incidentally, there are a plethora of regulations when it comes to sweepstakes and social media, both Fitzpatrick and Habursky add.

Oh, and let's say your paid influencer takes a photo of your product, and posts it, sans words, on his or her Instagram account. This photosharing is tantamount to an endorsement and proper disclosure is required, Habursky says.

Video

The FTC is particular here, too. While an influencer must disclose that he or she was

paid to endorse your product at the start of a video, the FTC says the disclosure should occur several times, as viewers might miss it at the beginning. On the other hand, Habursky notes having a single disclosure on a homepage or a webpage "is not sufficiently conveying an endorser-to-advertiser relationship."

An Education Issue

Why are brands running afoul of FTC regulations with regard to social? There are several answers. For Fitzpatrick, some marketers, advertisers and influencers "just don't like to disclose" that there's a paid relationship. "There's a conception of the internet as open...that you can do what you want," Habursky says. In addition, until March the FTC hadn't enforced its regulations on influencers and native advertising. Beyond that, influencers who began doing a blog that suddenly caught fire and attracted advertisers "genuinely don't know about these regulations," Habursky says. ■

Tips to Work With Influencers & Agencies in the Aftermath of the FTC-Warner Bros. Case

By PR News Editors

It happened again. The Federal Trade Commission (FTC) has upended a major brand for failing to comply with regulations concerning influencers. This time it's **Warner Bros. Home Entertainment Inc.** Its online influencers failed "to disclose adequately" that the brand paid them to provide favorable coverage during a marketing campaign for video game *Middle Earth: Shadow of Mordor*. The brand settled with the FTC, the agency said.

Brands in the Target

In the cases of Lord & Taylor and Warner Brothers, the brands outsourced their influencer work. Yet the FTC went after the brands only. "The FTC once again is holding" brands "responsible for violations...by doing so, it's reminding" [them] they are responsible for ensuring FTC compliance with their influencer campaigns, even when they delegate their duties to an agency," says Allison Fitzpatrick, partner at the law firm of **Davis & Gilbert**.

Essentially acting as temp agencies for brands, influencer companies locate, vet and pay the influencers, says Stephanie McCratic, founder of **Acorn: The Influence Agency**, which has supplied influencers to brands such as **Walmart** and Kimberly-Clark. "They do all the H.R. things" with influencers for brands, including apprise them of disclosure guidelines, she adds. Influencer companies are growing in number, Fitzpatrick says. "Brands



Stephanie McCratic,
Founder, Acorn

are not recruiting their own influencers," she adds.

While not charging influencers in either case with infractions, the FTC, in its press release, for the first time called out an influencer. Its choice was the "wildly popular" PewDiePie. As it did with Lord & Taylor and Warner Bros., the FTC went after a large target, Fitzpatrick says. "Perhaps the FTC is warning very popular influencers" that they will be scrutinized and they need to be compliant, she adds.

Born Felix Arvid Ulf Kjellberg, the 26-year-old Swede failed to adequately disclose that he was one of many influencers paid "thousands of dollars [by Warner Bros.] to post positive gameplay videos on YouTube and social media," the FTC said. PewDiePie's Mordor video "was played more than 3.7 million times," the FTC release said. In all, influencer videos for Mordor were seen some 5.5 million times, according to the FTC.

PewDiePie, in a YouTube video responding to the Warner Bros-FTC announcement [<http://bit.ly/29AbFPd>], says he disclosed his Mordor video sponsor was Warner Bros., although he admits, "I could have" disclosed



PewDiePie,
Influencer

it more prominently. He also charges his name was mentioned in the press release "because I'm big" and would serve as clickbait. In between foul-languaged tirades, PewDiePie correctly points out his video was produced prior to disclosure guidance the FTC released

in May 2015. That guidance clarified questions about the agency's definition of conspicuous disclosure.



Allison Fitzpatrick,
Partner,
Davis & Gilbert

In the Warner Bros. case, the FTC says the brand “instructed influencers to place...disclosures in the description box appearing below” their videos. Disclosures were “visible only if consumers clicked on the “Show More” button in the description box,” the FTC said.

What Do These Cases Mean for Brand Communicators?

1. Brand communicators need to be extremely careful when choosing the companies they delegate their influencer work to, says Fitzpatrick. As these incidents illustrate, influencer companies can hold a brand's reputation in their hands.
2. Communicators should insist that contracts with influencer companies include strong language regarding compliance with FTC regulations. Insist also that you receive detailed descriptions of how the company will monitor influencers, Fitzpatrick says. Ask questions such as how often will it be done? Who will do it and how will it be done? McCratic says her company uses a combination of technology and “human eyeballs” to monitor influencers under its purview. She says every piece of work an influencer creates is monitored. Brands that work directly with influencers, Fitzpatrick says, should likewise insert strong language in their contracts about compliance.
3. Communicators need to ask for reports from influencer companies that include updates on monitoring and compliance,

No Disclosure No Pay: An Influencer Speaks

Sara Welch may not be your typical influencer. But with 31 million people blogging in the U.S, who is?

A former government employee and a mother of three young children, Welch blogs about food that's quick and easy to prepare. In addition to her blog, *dinneratthezoo*, she writes nearly one dozen sponsored posts monthly for brands. She has been working with influencer agencies for years.

While she admits that when she began blogging nearly eight years ago, “we didn't know about” FTC disclosure rules, the situation is different today. When you work for an influencer agency you must put your disclosure in your copy “or you don't get paid. It's as simple as that,” she says.

Are brands exerting more control over her work? Yes, Welch says, noting that typically her longer writing is submitted to a brand or an influencer agency several weeks before it's posted. Things are more relaxed for tweets and Instagram posts, she adds.

Is she surprised when large brands get caught up in the FTC thicket? “Yes. The blogger community talks about disclosure regularly” in Facebook forums, she says. “It's on our minds.”

Fitzpatrick says. Whether they're issued weekly, monthly or daily, the reports should make it clear that influencers are “actually following protocol,” she adds. On a positive note, Fitzpatrick sees an increase in brands requesting reports on influencers. On the other hand, she sees influencers becoming more powerful and gaining in negotiating power.

4. When communicators have the opportunity to review influencers' posts, they should scrutinize them vigor-

ously. This seems obvious, but it eluded Warner Bros. The FTC says Warner Bros. reviewed influencer posts and at least once allowed an inadequate sponsorship disclosure to be posted. “If marketers are able to review their influencers’ posts, it is imperative that they only approve posts with adequate sponsorship disclosures, as this was likely a factor that impacted Warner Bros.’ liability,” Fitzpatrick says.

5. Communicators can’t relax, Fitzpatrick says. While the FTC has acted against fashion and video games, this doesn’t mean it won’t target other sectors and their use of influencers, she says. In addition, while large brands have taken the FTC’s heat so far, small and mid-size brands should be vigilant, too, she says.

Looking ahead, Fitzpatrick sees large brands becoming more aware of FTC regulations regarding influencers. She’s concerned

with smaller and mid-size companies, though, as they generally have fewer people charged with overseeing compliance.

Despite continuing FTC oversight, Fitzpatrick and McCratic agree that more and more brands will be turning to influencers. “Influencer marketing isn’t going away anytime soon,” Fitzpatrick notes, adding she spends nearly all her time working on influencer issues, including influencer agreements with brands. McCratic, who has a stake in seeing influencer marketing grow, believes eventually it will replace traditional PR. Her advice for communicators just beginning to work with influencers is to begin small. Try working with a few influencers in a single geographical location, she advises. “See which ones you are comfortable with,” she says. Should you decide to work with an influencer company, do your homework and “align yourself with the right people.” ■

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