

WHAT IS INFLUENCER MARKETING?

Do I need to know a Kardashian?

I recently read a book about Harry & Meghan and found it interesting that Meghan Markle made moves early in her career to align herself with influencers, and then became one herself, launching *The Tig*.

So, the answer to the question above is NO, you do not need to know a Kardashian or a Megan Markle to align yourself with influencers.

Over the years, influencer marketing has become an immense part of the marketing landscape. Honestly, I had to do my due diligence to learn more. Influencer marketing often sounds too good to be true, but the numbers don't lie – on average, for every \$1 businesses spend on influencer marketing, they make \$18.

New to influencer marketing? Confused as to exactly what it entails? You're not alone. It is something new to my range of services too. The term "influencer" is tossed around a lot, and it's not always clear what it means, so let me share what I have learned.

First, what's an influencer? The term "influencer" is shorthand for social media influencer. A social media influencer is a person who has gained credibility in a certain niche. Today, influencer marketing is a method of choice for top-tier brands around the world, but it wasn't always this way. For a while, it was considered to be nothing more than a passing trend.

One thing you need to know: you do not need to be a national company to benefit from this type of marketing. It can be done on a local level, using local influencers. Simply stated, local influencers are bloggers, reviewers, and social media personalities who are based in the same area as your business.

Going to in-person events can help you put a face to a name. Of course, we are still in the midst of a global pandemic. And now is not the time for me to talk about networking to meet influencers. Of course, there are plenty of other ways to meet influencers. One option is to use an influencer marketplace or platform. These let you search for creators and influencers within a certain distance of your region. You can further narrow your search by looking for influencers who are in a certain age range, and who are interested in certain topics.

Using a marketplace makes it easier to actually connect with a potential influencer. You can find local influencers with a simple search. Plus, you can reach out to him or her directly through the platform. You also have a good idea of what type of opportunities the influencer is looking for. And you can immediately judge whether your brand would be a good match for that influencer.

Working with a local influencer has a number of benefits for your brand. More importantly, it helps build a sense of community and purpose in your area. Hiring local influencers doesn't just get area residents jazzed about your company. Your whole community will likely see an economic boost.

You are probably wondering now why you would use this marketing and will it increase awareness of your brand.

1. INCREASED SALES

This is the ultimate benefit of influencer marketing, but to understand exactly how effective it is, it's helpful to look at influencer marketing statistics. Remember that businesses earn about \$18 for every \$1 they spend on influencer marketing.

And for many brands, that number is far, far higher. The exact figure will depend on how much influencer marketing you invest in and how successful each particular campaign is, but it's clear that the ROI is high.

2. SOCIAL PROOF

No matter what type of business you are, you absolutely need to gain social proof. As humans, we want to fit in, and that means we often go with the crowd. In other words, we have an innate need to be socially accepted. By extension, when we see something that other people are interested in, we're automatically interested in it, too. That's the essence of social proof.

This is especially true when it comes to influencer marketing. Influencers are able to magnify the effect of social proof. Just as you'd trust the opinion of a friend over that of a stranger, followers will trust influencers' opinions more than most other people.

Perhaps surprisingly, influencers can have lots of social proof without having a huge audience. Smaller influencers, known as micro-influencers and nano-influencers, often have high levels of social proof even though they don't have millions of followers.

3. DIRECT AUDIENCE CONNECTION

You need to get your message in front of your target audience, and that hasn't always been easy. Especially now. Influencer marketing practically solves this problem by allowing you to place your message right in front of your customers on a platform that they use every day.

Influencer marketing is also much better than regular social media advertising because the people who follow influencers in your niche are the same people you're trying to target. Even better, since influencer marketing is super organic, it doesn't feel like marketing, which means people will be more receptive than usual to your brand.

INFLUENCERS GET PERSONAL

Many influencers engage their followers in comments and even in their content. This one-on-one interaction creates a positive, long-term rapport between influencers and their followers. As a result, followers trust influencers more over time.

THE EFFECTIVENESS

How does influencer marketing compare to the traditional ways of marketing? I was surprised to find out that influencer marketing can be more effective than other types of marketing.

INFLUENCER MARKETING VS. CONTENT MARKETING

Content marketing is still the top method of choice for many brands and for good reason. It's a proven method with a great track record. I've stood by that for years. But it's worth noting that both influencer marketing and content marketing can be insanely effective and can both be part of your marketing mix.

That's largely because these two types of marketing benefit your brand in different areas. Influencer marketing raises brand awareness and generates social proof while content marketing builds authority and adds value.

INFLUENCER MARKETING VS. USER-GENERATED CONTENT

As I noted, one of the big benefits of influencer marketing is that you can have an everyday person representing your brand. In this way, it's similar to user-generated content.

User-generated content (UGC) has seen increasing levels of use in recent years. On average, UGC is trusted 12 times more than branded marketing. For a while, this trustworthiness was unique to UGC. There weren't many other channels where customers and their peers were able to create and distribute content.

Influencer marketing changed all that by offering something potentially better than UGC. Since influencers are so relatable and trustworthy, customers' attitudes toward influencer content are similar to their views of UGC.

The key difference is that while UGC can build trust, influencer-created content builds trust and spreads the word. Usually, user-generated content won't have large reach unless you share it on one or more of your channels.

Influencer content also has the potential to be trusted more than user-generated content. Remember that many people feel that influencers understand them better than their friends do. At the same time, UGC is absolutely free and still contributes to your credibility. If you don't have any user content at all, your prospective customers could be scared off.

Ultimately, customers are going to look for both influencer content and UGC when researching products and making purchasing decisions. Influencer-created content won't completely replace UGC, so don't write it off. Just like the question of influencer marketing versus content marketing, the answer is balance.

INFLUENCER MARKETING VS. SOCIAL MEDIA MARKETING

It might seem strange to compare influencer marketing to social media marketing. After all, isn't influencer marketing just a form of social media marketing? Well, yes in a way, but influencer marketing has grown so much that it can be considered an independent form of marketing.

While both types of marketing happen on social media, they have vastly different approaches and results. With a branded social media marketing campaign, you control everything. All the messages you send are crafted in your brand's voice.

But with influencer marketing, the content is in the hands of the influencer. They bring their unique voices, approaches, and perspectives to the table. Influencers also have a lot to offer that you can't get with traditional social media marketing.

Overall, social media marketing is still effective, but it can't replace influencer marketing. With influencer marketing, you generate buzz and hopefully increase credibility.

THE PARALLELS WITH WORD-OF-MOUTH MARKETING

One of the biggest reasons why influencer marketing is so effective is because it's very similar in nature to word-of-mouth marketing.

And here's the thing – **word of mouth is the most-effective marketing strategy of all time.**

That may seem like an overstatement, but the statistics back it up. Nielsen found that 82% of customers trust word-of-mouth and personal recommendations over all other forms of advertising.

Word-of-mouth marketing strategies have been a part of every successful campaign ever, whether it was planned or just happened spontaneously.

Influencer marketing has taken word-of-mouth marketing and increased its impact exponentially. As a result, organic word-of-mouth can happen at a much faster rate, drawing more people to your brand.

INFLUENCER MARKETING – MASSIVE POTENTIAL FOR BUSINESS GROWTH

It's obvious that influencer marketing is much more than a trend. It's a way of marketing that is transforming how people interact with brands. Case studies and statistics paint a very vivid picture: Influencer marketing is extremely effective, and it's here to stay.