

Building better relationships between brands and influencers

By  Ofentse Maloba

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There are many articles on the internet exploring the very dynamic relationship that exists between brands and influencers. In recent times, the rise of Youtube superstars, Twitter famous personalities, Instagram models, vloggers and bloggers has encouraged brands to look outside of traditional notable personalities such as celebrities and sports stars to endorse their brands.



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I think it started off fairly well for example, a tech savvy vlogger who dedicates a huge part of his/her time enlightening their audience with informative and entertaining content, teams up with a major smartphone brand to launch a new product – sounds great.

Lines became blurred

But somewhere along the way, the lines became blurred and everyone who's anyone with a decent following regardless of background, industry knowledge, or quality of content was trying to cash in on being an influencer and brands hungry for reach just lapped it up too by not following due diligence and properly researching the content of the influencers they were working with. These are some of the things that have led to muddy waters in influencer/brand relations.

Another issue is quality of proposals. I can't even count the number of times I've received collaboration request's from "influencers" with not so much as a simple native analytics report from their profiles. All I would basically get is a "Hi, I have x amount of followers, work with me".

Brands also regrettably are not completely innocent. Trying to get influencers on the cheap by offering product or “exposure” in exchange for influencer campaign work is not fair. I have seen many influencers complain about this and quite frankly, they are right. Some marketers may have tighter budgets, but you can’t expect to receive the financial reward of a personality opening up their audience to you solely in exchange for brand association and some free stuff.

There are a few simple solutions for these issues.

For brands

If you want to work with influencers you have to factor in their cost into your budget. You pay models for your product shoots, pay your influencer’s for campaign work too. Do your research and find the right mixture of micro-influencers, big name influencers, taste-makers and creative content producers.

Build relationships with them over a period of time, because that will ultimately create a more flexible environment for negotiation based on trust and familiarity. Audiences know when they’re being marketed to and as a brand you can’t treat influencers as subliminal marketing tools. The relationship should feel natural to your audience.

For influencers

When influencers work with brands, the audience wants to feel that the relationship is genuine and that it makes sense, because winning the TRUST of your audience is one of the key parts of these collaborations. Relevancy is key, you need to be on top of trends.

Be prepared at all times, because brands that know what they’re doing will ask you what your stats are and where they come from. You need to be able to quantify your audience, how and what you charge and have insight on the marketplace.

You don’t want to be that travel blogger who doesn’t know what’s happening in the tourism space, right? You don’t have to get complicated, a simple one or two pager PDF will do. Do your research and see what the top influencers out there are doing. Learn the industry language, remember you work in social media now. Work on your value proposition, because that is ultimately what clients want.

To close off, people trust influencers and want their favourite online personalities to prosper and collaborate with brands they have an affinity to, and the same rings true the other way around. The strategic partnership between brands and influencers is one that will be around for a very long time, we just need to take time to time as marketers to do right by our audiences and the businesses we market for.

ABOUT OFENTSE MALOBA

Ofentse is a social media manager and content producer who holds a Diploma Animation from Boston Media House, with skills in photography, video production, video editing, animation, community management and strategy development. He started off his career as a marketing intern working the roles of video content producer and social media community manager at Montecasino and was then later promoted to Digital Community Specialist at the Tsogo Sun Group. He now handles everything digital at Zanenza Holdings.

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