



THE **DOS** AND **DON'TS** OF SOCIAL INFLUENCER OUTREACH

[TIPSHEET]



INTRODUCTION



Influencer marketing is by no means a new phenomenon, but PRs are still making common mistakes when it comes to outreach. Sending blanket emails and expecting social media influencers to work for free is still common practice. And YouTubers, Instagrammers, influencers of all kinds are fed up!

If you want to get influencer marketing right and make it a key part of your social media strategy in 2017 there are rules you will need to play by.

The landscape of influencer marketing is changing. It isn't the Wild West that it used to be. There are now strict laws when it comes to sponsorship disclosure, common codes of conduct and expectations of how and what sort of content should be created. So don't give PRs a bad name, get in the know, and get influencer marketing right with our essential guide of the Dos and Don'ts of Outreach.



DO GET CREATIVE

Look at creative ways in which you can work together. Influencers who have built up a name for themselves are savvy business-minded people and will have many ideas of their own in relation to creating campaigns that will resonate with their audiences. Embrace this and use it to your advantage.

"I love to work with PRs on an individual basis and put together bespoke campaigns for their clients", said travel blogger Jessica Gibson. "Depending on the client's objectives, I can put together a list of multi-media deliverables to document my experience. This could include blog posts, photography, video and social media. The content is then created as part of an experience or press trip, and then pushed out through my blog channels."

DON'T DISRESPECT BLOGGERS

Contact a blogger to work on a partnership and then decide at the eleventh hour that you no longer want to work with them. Bloggers operate in a tight knit community. If you've not treated a blogger well, the word will spread, potentially doing irreparable damage to your reputation.



DO EXPECT TO PAY

Be upfront with bloggers. Let them know what your budget is from the outset. Whatever you do, don't expect influencers to work for free. For social media influencers who have amassed a large online following, many are now turning social media into full-time careers and as a result will expect remuneration of some kind for their services and expertise. This does not always mean money, and many influencers will explore alternative forms of payment, such as exclusive partnerships, product samples or unique experiences.

"It's about knowing that there are costs, a lot of bloggers now do this as a business and I think the biggest thing they can do is come to the table with an understanding that we are legitimate methods of marketing for them and that there are costs involved with that, so they shouldn't come with the expectation that we should write for free" says lifestyle blogger Laura Agar Wilson.

Influencers not only have the reach of big audiences but also good quality relationships which enriches the content they produce. If statistics are anything to go by people really do value what bloggers have to say. For instance, if a blogger recommends certain makeup products and if the audience trusts that person then they are much more likely to make that decision to purchase it¹.

When it comes to building relationships with their followers and creating consistent content, it's usually a multi-year investment to become an influencer. If you want to tap into their audience you need to recognise this.



1. see for example [research conducted by Research Now](#).

DON'T HIDE YOUR SPONSORSHIP

Hide the fact that you are collaborating with an influencer. We've seen what happens when bloggers don't disclose that they are being sponsored by a brand so it's really not a risk worth taking. If you want influencers to promote your client's brand, they will need to be transparent about it with their audience, or you both could be in big trouble. It might sound like a cliché but honesty is best policy.

"I think that it's genuinely important for audiences to know what content is paid for and what is not" says vlogger Bogdan Alexe. "I can see how it may negatively affect the bigger YouTuber. Putting myself in the viewers' place I'd hate to not know that what I'm watching is sponsored."

Audiences are much savvier these days, and will let you know how they feel about you paying an influencer to advertise a particular product or brand. If you are open with your audience they are more likely to accept promotional content.

For best results, use influencers who have a connection with what you're trying to promote because it will give your campaign more credibility.

"There is nothing more awkward than reading through the comments section of a sponsored post on YouTube or Instagram and seeing dedicated followers discussing why they have been subjected to a random advert" says YouTuber Ben from the YouTube channel Our Swirl Life. "Whereas, there is nothing better than seeing the opposite; a well-targeted campaign, with followers mentioning how beneficial the post has been, or will be, to their lives. Whilst it's the responsibility of the content creator to filter the campaigns they are approached with, PR agencies should also appreciate that sometimes creators are blinded by money; both parties need to realise how a badly targeted campaign can affect them in the long run".

DON'T SPAM

It should be obvious, but whatever you do, don't send blanket emails that aren't relevant to most recipients. Influencers who have a substantial following will most likely receive a high volume of press releases every day, but for something to stand out, it has to have a unique selling point. Too many PRs make the mistake of sending press releases (often with no prior contact or personal note whatsoever) to bloggers in the hope that they will copy and paste it onto their blog. It's not going to happen!

DO YOUR RESEARCH

Know who you're targeting and pitch specific influencers that work with your target market. This will save both you and them time. Too many PRs approach influencers to promote or review products that have no correlation to the area they specialise in.

"I sometimes receive emails asking if I'd like to try out some new makeup or publish content about a new line of clothing" says interiors and lifestyle blogger Laurretta Wright. "As I don't write about fashion or beauty these are not of interest to me (or my readers)."



DO GET PERSONAL

Personalise your outreach. Invite a blogger out for coffee to sample a product. Nowadays it is very convenient to keep communications online but meeting in person will add a more human touch to your outreach efforts.

"I like to keep things personal. I'd much rather meet up with a PR in person and have a chat to see how we could work together", says travel blogger Victoria Philpott. "In my experience, that's what has produced the best results for a destination and for us. If I understand them and they understand me, we can work together on a plan and itinerary that suits both of our needs and goals."

DON'T [INSERT NAME HERE]

Before you press send on that email, make sure you've addressed it to them personally. Nothing frustrates a blogger more than a PRs who reaches out to them with no idea of who they are.

Sure you're busy, and yes it does take a little more time to personalise an email but using an influencer's name goes a long way.

"I have to admit on most occasions when I get an email not addressed to me directly, I delete it", says mummy blogger Aby Moore. "If it's addressed to my blog name, You Baby Me Mummy it will definitely get deleted. I also don't feel great about the emails which mention my 'kids', when it's obvious from my blog I only have one."



CONCLUSION

When it comes to outreach always personalise your approach. Make influencers feel special and show them why you want to work with them specifically. By doing your research and identifying the things that they are interested in, a blogger will be much more likely to respond positively to your outreach.

Influencer marketing is here to stay. So invest in building long-term relationships. Give your bloggers the freedom to interpret your brief rather than making them work to overly-prescriptive guidelines.

Be upfront about your budget and what you expect from them as this will help to build trust. Be upfront with the audience as well and be transparent about your relationships with influencers.

And please, please get their name right!

With this in place, a blogger will go that extra mile for you, producing unique and interesting content that pleases both you and your audience.



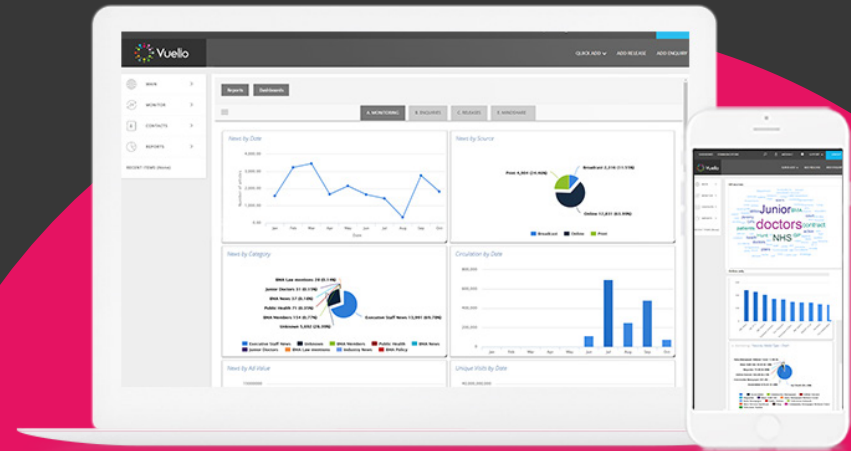
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