

COLUMNS

Influencers must adhere to FTC guidelines without losing personal brand

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Influencer marketing is the hottest new tool when it comes to ad strategies. It is a resourceful and effective method for brands to grow their audience and engage new consumers beyond traditional methods of advertising.

But just like traditional ads, there are guidelines brands and influencers must follow during any influencer marketing campaign to protect consumers from deception.

Recently, companies such as Lord & Taylor and Machinima have been under fire from the Federal Trade Commission for deceiving customers by misrepresenting paid endorsements in influencer marketing campaigns.

While the brands may ultimately be at fault in situations such as these, it is important that both companies and influencers are aware of the exact regulations to build a strategy that is both successful and legal.

Let us explore a few ways that influencers can stick to these FTC guidelines while maintaining their personal brand.

Keep your captions consistent

When influencers post on behalf of a brand, it is essential that they clearly disclose to their audience that it is a sponsored post. This is not just a best practice, but a guideline put in place by the FTC.

Traditional advertisements must be identified in this way and influencer marketing posts are no exception.

That said, it is important for both the success of the campaign and the overall integrity of the influencer that the posts maintain brand personality.

With this in mind, influencers should do their best to keep their typical caption structure and content the same.

If this means using personal anecdotes or multiple hashtags, do not be afraid to continue to do so. Just be sure that #ad is part of your content.

If hashtags are not your thing, throw in, "paid advertisement" or "sponsored advertising content" at the beginning or end of your caption.

This is a key step to ensure you will not be considered at fault for deceiving consumers or going against FTC guidelines.

Stick to your content style and voice

Just as with any social media users, influencers tend to have their own particular flair when it comes to the content and style of posts.

Whether you use the same filter or the same background in every post, it is clear when you visit an influencer's social channel that she or he has a specific aesthetic.

Staying in line with that style is one of the easiest ways to stay consistent and continue to build trust with your followers.

Most often, brands choose their influencers not only because of their notoriety and popularity, but because their style appeals to their customers and matches their brand personality.

There is no reason to change the content or design of your posts and risk impacting the integrity of the campaign.

Incorporating the product or service that you are promoting into an everyday post is usually the best course of action. If a special post is required, do not stray too far from your typical photo setting.

Choose products or brands that you are passionate about

Staying true to your personal brand is most easily achieved when you choose to work with products or brands in which you believe.

This means striking partnerships with companies that produce products and services you would actually use whether it is makeup, clothing or otherwise.

It is OK to be selective when choosing to partner with a brand for endorsement.

For instance, if you only use natural products in food, beauty products or clothing, it would not make sense to promote a product or brand that is known for its use of chemicals.

Consistency with the products you recommend helps build trust with your audience and makes the process more enjoyable for you.

Do not shy away from creativity

When it comes to incorporating promotion disclosures into your post, do not be afraid to be creative and write in your own voice.

As long as you are following the FTC guidelines, there is no need to have mechanized wording when you can bring your own style, and even excitement, into every post.

Including phrases such as, "Was so excited to partner with [brand] on this post, and all opinions expressed are my own," shows consumers the partnership was a choice, not just a monetary exchange. This ultimately allows consumers to trust and value your opinion as an influencer.

Although to some consumers, sponsored and organic posts are of equal value, it is still essential to disclose that influencers are being paid to create a post to abide by the legalities currently in place.

WITH THAT in mind, keeping sponsored advertising posts personable, creative and in your own voice, while also including the mandatory disclosure, will ensure that your campaign goes off without a hitch and without a lawsuit.

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