



UNDER INFLUENCE THE

YOUR EVENT:

There's probably no more topical topic right now in the world of social media and marketing than influencers.

Typically, the bastion of the major brands, influencers are starting to filter their way down to the local, community level where the tried and true techniques of major brands have cleared the way for the rest of us in the arts and events space can benefit from the experiments executed by the Fortune 500 brands to figure out the pathway forward.

A Definition of Influencers

By means of a definition, an influencer is a person who has the power to influence many people through social or traditional media. Brands and organizations pay social influencers to recommend products/services/events to people who trust and follow their advice.

There have always been influencers, those with style or brand that others follow. In school, they were the cool kids. A generation ago the term "early adopter" was in vogue. Spokespeople have been around as long as there have been products to be sold and individuals to be emulated. With the movies, television, popular music and sports, celebrity endorsers became the name of the game.

Now, with the advent of social media a whole new echelon of social media stars have come from the blogging, podcasting and YouTube worlds to be the trend setters along side their superstar companions.

As of 2016 the top six celebrity influencers were Selena Gomez, Rihanna, Beyoncé, Taylor Swift and Kendall and Kylie Jenner. Each typically earn millions on their endorsements on Twitter or Instagram, sometimes collecting \$500,000 or more for a simple post. (Google "Coke and Selena Gomez" for the most popular and lucrative post of all time).

But add to this list those who have tremendous followings on YouTube in the world of fashion, beauty, food and home design and there are entire segments of the influencer market devoted to them.

Needless to say for the typical event, influencers of this magnitude are beyond our normal scope of budget and reach. But it does get us to thinking about who are the Selena's, Rihanna's, Taylor's and Jenner's of our community?

The answer is micro-influencers.

Micro-influencers are where it's at for the event organizers, planners and arts organizations.

What is so ironic is that the major brands who have invested in influencer marketing with these top line stars have come to realize that for some targeting and creation of real grass roots energy, it is sometimes best to focus on micro-influencers to deliver their message.

Yes, there's nothing like the pull and reach of the superstars of our culture, but the impact of those who are closest to us in our community generally have better rates of engagement and provide us with an unmatched level of authenticity.

By definition, regular influencers have 10,000-100,000 followers and command several thousand dollars per post while micro-influencers by definition are those who have under 10,000 followers and sometimes post for a few hundred dollars or in exchange for exclusive access or rights to an organization and event.

As the industry continues to define itself and mature, more emphasis is being put on the micro-influencers because of the amount of engagement their posts garner. Sure, they might not get the raw numbers of an uber-tweet, but it is more meaningful when coming from a neighbor or friend or someone you trust.

How is Success Measured?

Measurement of success from your influencer choices comes not from the number of followers, but the level of engagement. This may seem a little counter-intuitive after what so many of us crave is the big numbers of reach, but as we're learning every day a little more, is that engagement is really what we need.

According to a Markerly survey of two million Instagram influencers, those with fewer than 1,000 followers had a much higher engagement rate of 8% than the influencers with counts of 1,000-10,000 that only measured 4%.

So how do we calculate the rate of engagement? The easiest way is to add the number of likes and number of comments and divide by the number of followers.

Takeaway: Just because an individual has a large number of followers, doesn't mean they will be successful for you. Focus on engagement first.

Where Do You Find Your Micro-Influencers?

Finding micro-influencers is not an easy task. It takes a bit of commitment to research and track who might be a perfect candidate for your event's partner.

On a large scale, it might be easier when you can use influencer platforms such as Upfluence, Blogfoster, Buzzsumo, Traackr. However, the most effective way to begin locally is to start searching through your organization's social media followers to determine who already has an interest in what programming you bring to your community.

As with any deep dive on the web, you'll find yourself going down a few pathways that lead to a dead-end or two, but you will want to keep your eyes and ears open not only to the social media impact of these individuals but also the bloggers who spend a good deal of time curating and creating content for their audience.

Look at those individuals who are driving conversations that are relevant to you and your event. Those are the types of conversations you want to be part of and may be able to provide insight, context or information that would be welcomed.

Three Quick Tips

Here are three quick tips on how to find the micro-influencers near you.

Tip #1: Post a few campaigns on your website or social media pages and filter responses by location, age and category. If you see the same folks coming up again and again, this might be an indication of an interested party you never knew of who might be able to help you to grow.

Tip #2: Determine the platforms your target personas frequent and monitor them for activity and engagement. If you see the same individuals engaging, reposting, retweeting multiple times take a look into their profile, follow them back or otherwise use the tools on that platform to see whether there is a match.

Tip #3: Search for keywords and hashtags relevant to you and your events to see who are the most engaged individuals. After following for a short time, narrow a list of the top 20 or so that seem to resonate most with your organization and schedule a time to chat.

In summary, it is important to recognize that the business and the activity of these influencers is in your best interest. As practitioners of social media, they are constantly looking for win-win partnerships that allow them to build their following by providing exciting, thought-provoking and exclusive content to their audience. By building relationships with these individuals,

they will connect their loyal following to you in exchange for more, better and different content making them more valuable to their followers and provides a point of differentiation.

The marketing world has become a vastly different place over the past few years and social media continues to evolve and change sometimes on a minute-by-minute basis. As event marketers that have to keep up with the pace of change, it is important that we look towards micro-influencers as an opportunity within our grasp of engaging and leveraging for the consistent growth of our audience base. At the outset, it may appear to be a daunting task, but the payoff in the long run will provide you with more followers and a more substantial engagement with your audience thanks to the work you put into developing relationships with this vibrant new medium, the micro-influencers in your community.

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