



INFLUENCE MARKETING: The New Tool in Digital Communication

The most credible advertising is word of mouth. As I have mentioned before, according to Nielsen 84% of consumers trust recommendations from friends and/or relatives and 66% trust what other Internet users say. This is a key aspect and a very interesting thing about Influence Marketing. Through others we can persuade our audience in a more effective way.



More than 80% of companies plan to launch a campaign to reach Influencers

[1].

In Fact, only in the US, advertising agencies were anticipating to spend 60% of their budgets on this sort of strategy. Due to the importance that this has - and that it will keep having -, we will talk about what this strategy is used for and what we obtain by implementing Influence Marketing.

First things first...what is an Influencer?

Think well!. If one of the things you thought of was the Kardashians, you are partially right. Celebrities have taken a piece of the cake when it comes to this kind of strategy, since the message they send reaches farther because of their fame; but they are not the only Influencers in this world. There are other groups with less exposure to the spotlight that still generate interesting content and foster such robust opinions that when other people are making a decision, they strongly value the comments of these Influencers. They can be blogger moms or fitness gym motivators among others, and might even be more influential than those we see on television. Remember what I said at the beginning: people trust the recommendations of others but it is not only about Kylie Jenner or Selena Gómez.

Influencers can have certain features but they are not always celebrities. So, what else is there? How to know who is who and which goals can we achieve with them? According to Malcolm Gladwell, there are three kinds of Influencers: *Connectors*, *Mavens* and *Salespersons*.



An Influencer can be someone who:

speaks passionately about a topic and becomes a connoisseur being or not a specialist; has developed a personal brand that generates trust; produces relevant content; has the ability to influence others about the topics he/she speaks about, as well as related issues; has a community interested in what he/she writes or publishes.

CONNECTORS: They have the ability to establish contacts with different kinds of people and they maintain enriching friendships. Due to their high social interaction they are trendsetters and according to Gladwell, they “are people who link us up with the world. People with a special gift for bringing the world together” [2]. In the social media environment, this kind of influencers are dynamic agents and the ones that can turn a product or an event into “It”.

This group of profiles varies according to the country where you develop the campaign and the community you want to connect with, but in general, the way to spot them is by the ability they have to interact with a broad audience or various audiences at once in an organic way. “They are everybody’s friends”.

Donald Trump, for example, was an important connector inside his campaign. The President-elect of the United States, had the capacity to create affinity with different audiences from various backgrounds and articulate them into one general feeling “Make America Great Again”. His content not only was successful in reaching a broad audience (as of today, he is the world’s third most followed leader), but he also made others deliver the message for him: Trump’s tweets were retweeted on an average of 12,2 million times.

If your candidate does not have this capacity it is a good option to team up with someone who has it. For example, if one of the goals of your campaign is the Latino community, it is interesting to see the generation of content or the support you can get from a representative of this community or a profile they can relate to.

For 2014 FIFA World Cup, Budweiser chose David Vujanic and Poet, two YouTubers and hosts of the soccer show ‘Comments Below’ from Copa90. This show is also a channel with a well-known motto (“we don’t love football, we live it too”), searching for testimonials from those who love soccer and live it with the uttermost passion: the fans themselves. For Budweiser, these YouTubers represented the ideal profile with the capacity to connect soccer-loving fans and generate a differentiating take to their campaign for this event. They asked them to show the atmosphere of the city, the Budweiser Hotel and the pre and post-game festivities.

During this period, publications from these Influencers reached from 600 to 1000 daily interactions, with even a local band teaming up with the campaign theme, all in an organic way.

SALESPERSONS: They are the charismatic individuals of our world, the centers of attention and characters we love; they are those whose lives we follow on Snapchat or Instagram, because they entertain us and their personality gets to us. They have the ability to excite us and this is why they are called like that, because they are capable of selling us anything.

The newest social media celebrity, Gianluca Vacchi, is one of them. Gianluca is a 49-year-old Italian entrepreneur with 4 million followers on one of his Instagram accounts, thanks in part to the fun way in which he shows his lifestyle. We see this singular Italian character dancing with his gorgeous girlfriend on the deck of his yacht or in a party with a fellow Italian Dj and later with some businesspersons.

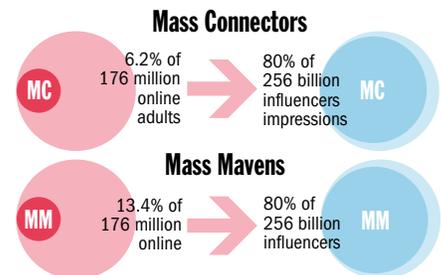
If you want an event to turn into a trend or a product to be considered as hype, you could use someone like him. In fact, he already proved it with a product under his name. Using the #GVLifestyle hashtag he launched a line of apparel through a website, specifically a t-shirt that reads "Resilienza" (Resilience in Italian). It was so successful that the traffic generated made the server collapse. The demand literally exceeded - technologically wise speaking - Gianluca's expectations.

MAVENS: They are also called specialists or content generators. They are the experts on a specific topic and generate specialized content. These profiles may not have a huge community, but do not underestimate them, since they have a high dose of credibility and the information they provide impacts the rest of the net.

The author of these definitions is one of them. Gladwell has written four books and they have all been Best Sellers. He is a strong collaborator in topics about virality and communication. He has a little more than 420,000 followers on Twitter and 269,000 on Facebook to the date. And when you check Instagram, there are more than 3,000 publications regarding his books and Google throws more than 441,000 results when we browse his name.

It is easy to think of him as a great communicator and influencer on different audiences. Malcolm has the profile of someone specialized who is able to generate interesting, relevant and highly compatible content in the field of social communication as a journalist and sociologist.

Just so you can have an idea of how they interact with each other, let's see part of the study from Forrester Research mentioning that 13.4% of Americans create content that impacts an 80%, and the remaining 6.6% replicates content to others - this is - the Connectors and the Salespersons [3].



When do we use Influence Marketing?

Influence Marketing can result effective to different kinds of goals you set, but in some activities its efficacy is even higher. According to a study on status and practices performed on Influencers by Augure (a Spanish firm focused in these strategies), companies consider these relationships more suitable for objectives such as:

- Creation of commercial opportunities and sales increase**
- Brand awareness**
- Content production**
- Product launch**
- Event organization**
- SEO**
- Crisis management**

On the other hand, the kind of Influencer depends a great deal on the type of campaign in which you want to include them. For example, Coors Light Beer used this strategy for the creation of a campaign addressed to Latinos in the United States. They hired Maven influencers to write about Latino culture and music among other subjects, while hiring a big Connector on this community, J Balvin, a famous urban musician who showed the beer in the video for his song "Ginza", publishing exclusive brand content on his website.





How to deal with an Influencer?

HOW DO YOU PAY THEM?

Most of the negotiation depends on what you are looking for. It can go from the combination of tangible and intangible values for both sides (brand-influencer) to a participation that allows the Influencer and the merge of such points to have a comprehensive, strategic and profitable exchange.

However, there are some recommendations for the relationship to be effective. Influencers are far more interested than you think in working with brands. For them, this is an opportunity to have a bigger exposure and to improve their content quality. These motivations come before any economic remuneration.

This is relevant because in order to create an efficient, lasting and credible partnership you need more than money on the checkbook and you need to make contact in an authentic and close manner. Keep in mind that an Influencer is a person as such, the principles of communication on human relationships apply.

From these small actions like sending product samples, making them special invitations, will improve the relation brand-influencer; all of this gives them enough content to work on and spread it through their channels keeping customers informed on any news about the company. Influencers are very careful (the good ones) with the brands they work with, since a bad choice can damage their digital goodwill, which is their main asset. So, as Lee Oden says, "Work with an influencer and he will be your friend for a day. Help him become an Influencer, and he'll be your friend for life". [5]

Last but not least, What's the ROI?

Nielsen Catalina Research and White Wave Foods conducted a joint study for a deep evaluation of an Influence Marketing Campaign on one of the company products, Silk Almond Milk. This campaign targeted and contacted 258 Influencers related to the fitness category and invited them to generate content about "Meatless Monday" while they showed the product. In this occasion there was no commercial exchange with the Influencers.

The results of the campaign were the following:

After 12 months, posts published by Influencers generated 11 times more ROI than digital banners.

The audiences from these Influencers purchased 10% more almond milk than the community in general.

It reached more than 1.2 million impressions on social media.

The brand kept an innumerable amount of original content that can be reused on their platforms.



These campaigns are highly effective, persuasive and ultimately profitable. **The Influencer appeals to a basic element of human beings which is trust.** If we listen to a recommendation from someone we care about, we will not only consider it but we will also remember it. In this society where consumers are loaded with different messages - both online and offline -, they go back to basics and increase direct and close communications with their connections.

As you can see, there are different kinds of Influencers and each one will have a different approach to your brand. I hope that after reading this you will not think about merely hiring actresses or models and you'll understand that the selection of one or the other depends on your goals. In other words, if your campaign needs awareness, sales and positioning, you must focus on teaming up with Connectors or Salespersons. If, on the contrary, you need to generate content around a brand, you better look for a Maven.

Finally, remember that Influencers generate successful content and have the ability to connect with others because they are people, so your contact with them must start from this premise: Tell them your story and let them replicate it in your favor.



Influencers generate successful content and have the ability to connect with others

[1] Estatus y prácticas de las Relaciones con Influencers en 2015. Augure <http://ipmark.com/wp-content/uploads/2015/06/Informe-de-las-relaciones-con-Influencers-2015-Augure.pdf>
 [2] <http://www.lifehack.org/articles/communication/know-your-strength-for-more-success-are-you-a-connector-a-maven-or-a-salesman.html>
 [3] <http://www.socialmediaexaminer.com/industry-influencers/>
 [4] <http://goshop.co/es/influencers>
 [5] Quote in English "Working with an established influencer makes them your friend for a day. Helping upcoming talent become influential makes them a friend for life." file:///C:/Users/cristabel/Downloads/201505InfluencerGuide.pdf
 [6] Captiv8. Taken from Gestión Perú

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