

Social media strategies beyond content plans: Nurture advocacy

By  Mike Saunders

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Building advocacy has always been a priority for brands in the past, and today is no different. Brands engage social media influencers to become brand ambassadors or to help distribute content to a wider audience.



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Social media strategies beyond content plans: Apply the 80/20 rule

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However, social media provides a more valuable opportunity for brands. As Meghan Whalen Turner says,

“*Sometimes if you want to change a person’s mind, you have to change the mind of the person next to them first.*” ”

Social media presents the opportunity to build and nurture relationships at various levels of advocacy for the brand. The common plan is to look towards recognised social media influencers, which is akin to celebrity marketing albeit, more cost-effective. We can and should look further though. When looking to building and nurturing brand advocacy online we should look towards:

Mega and minor celebrities

1. Social media influencers
2. Journalists
3. Our customers
4. Our employees

All these people and more can provide and nurture brand advocacy. Outlined below is a framework that looks at how you can start nurturing your social media influence, instead of always having to buy it through campaigns, influencer fees and

giveaways.

Step 1: Identify

To identify the influencers with whom you wish to build a relationship with, you first need to identify your ideal target audience:

- Who do you want to be speaking to?
- How old are they?
- What are their interests?
- What are their online behaviours like – which social platforms are they on?
- Which part of the consumer journey would you like them to influence?

Once you find your target audience, then it's actually pretty simple to find your influencers. They will be the ones that your target market is already avidly listening to, and actively engaging with on a regular basis.

Step 2: Nurture

This is the step that is often ignored. It's glossed over because it takes too long or is simply just not thought of. You need to approach the influencers you've found with the view to work with them – to nurture their creativity around your brand message.

True influencers are themselves content creators. It will be instantly obvious to their audience if you craft their content for them, and then ask them to simply post an “advert” to their timeline. They have influence because their audience trusts their authentic voice and opinion – if your collaboration takes that away from them, then their influence in that space will plummet. You won't only risk their reputation but void the whole experiment.

If you want an influencer to build your brand into their content, then you need to offer them support in order to incorporate your brand into their normal content in their own way. They have to keep their own voice and opinion – that's when the magic happens. If the audience can believe that the influencer truly enjoys your brand, then they will treat it as an authentic review and in turn become well-disposed towards your brand.

Step 3: Measure

This step is, in actual fact, a continual practice throughout the process. In order to effectively find the right influencers with a properly engaged audience around relevant topics, you will need to measure them on the right metrics. Metrics such as conversation sentiment and growth, as well as, the vanity metrics – reach and engagement.

On the nurture side, it's important to also keep a measure on where each individual is at all times on their relationship with the brand. When you first find an influencer, you should assess how they already feel towards your brand – whether they

are oblivious to it, seem to be positive towards it, or are a negative influencer. Once you know this, then you know how to nurture them further. In the case of the negative influencer, you can take the right steps to nurture them towards thinking of your brand in a positive light instead.

By building a relationship with influencers, you are ensuring that they actually become personally invested in your brand. This will then shine through their content to their audience – your target market.

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