

Veronica Cool: You are the art of influence

By: Veronica Cool ⌚ March 18, 2016



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Influencers.

We scoff at the fact that we can be controlled, influenced or otherwise impacted by what others think ... Well, 81 percent of us intentionally go online, on Twitter in particular, to validate purchasing decisions, according to Hubspot. Seriously.

Case in point: When I purchased my laptop, I simply posted an open question to my peeps on Facebook and many of my brilliant, very tech-savvy friends chimed in ... And I saved myself tons of research and time; after all, I was duly educated and influenced.

Same thing with my cell phone. Apparently, I was the last Blackberry user (no comments, please!) and needed to upgrade. Again I went to the Facebook wisdom well and received plenty of counsel. I ended up with an iPhone. Welcome to the 21st century, Veronica! We are all very familiar with the concept of a spokesperson – say, Michael Phelps, so effective for Under Armour, or Oprah, the front person for Weight Watchers. But we've become cynical and tend to acknowledge, at least subconsciously, that these are paid advertisers. Which is why the social influencer is so much more powerful.

And influencers are more than just celebrities, journalists and talking heads. They are people like you and me, with a following and a network of friends and acquaintances, a network with a wide reach of influence. For instance, I just discovered The Paper Moon Diner (I know, I must have been living under a rock!) I shared my wonder and fascination with this iconic Baltimore locale on social media — and at least 3-5 friends have already visited the diner. I was an influencer.

Social intelligence, a term coined by Melinda Wittstock, CEO & Founder of Verifeed, helps you analyze online information to find the influencers for your cause, company, brand and so forth. She says "It's amazing the market intelligence you can find in social conversations. You can identify, get to know and understand your potential new customers. All those folks who want what you're selling but don't know you yet. And you can identify new markets you didn't know you had. You can improve your offering by understanding better how your existing customers are actually using your product or service. IF you do this ... you can keep your customers – and keep them happy."

Another study found more than half the companies surveyed found and converted their customers or members on Twitter and Facebook, especially business-to-business companies

and entities targeting business to business to consumer. Not surprisingly, business-to-business companies focus more on LinkedIn as a good source of influencers.

Although my niche is Hispanic strategy and how to engage Hispanics, this influencer phenomenon applies across the board to ALL AUDIENCES, obviously to different degrees, depending on the generations. But just to note, my mother is 68 and she is active on Facebook, learning about recipes, beauty products and department stores. Keep this in mind as you raise funds for your local charity, or political candidate: You actually influence others.

I strongly urge companies to consider who speaks on your behalf — who are your influencers? One astounding example Melinda shared: over a span of four weeks on Twitter, Verifeed uncovered 10 women who influenced 9,000,431 purchases for a skin care company.

That's a 10 to 9 million multiplier effect – crazy, huh?
And of course, that particular example may be an anomaly, but leveraging influencers does have tremendous impact.

Also consider how influencers drive the “second-screen experience.” Second-screen viewing involves using a smartphone, tablet, or computer along with traditional television watching. Per a Nielsen report, most people spend 6.5 hours monthly watching videos online. And Hispanic consumers spend an average of more than eight hours watching online video each month, which is over an hour and half more than the U.S. average. And then mobile phones and laptops are in the mix, so it is a powerful opportunity to engage folks, and in particular Hispanics, in conversation there and then about what they care about, to develop relationships and to use social media to drive purchases related to the content being watched.

So, who's speaking for you? Who are your influencers?
Till next time, amigos.

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