

Andy Latimer:

I've also noticed that a lot, in the social side of it and the platforms, whether it's Instagram, Facebook, or Twitter, wherever you are, they want to engage. They seem to want to have an insight into being part of it, not being a viewer of it or being a consumer of it. I think with Blackstone and others, and I keep referencing Blackstone, sorry about that, but with many of the brands we've seen that giveaways, coupons, special offers, special deals, limited time deals, I mean, do all of those work inside that audience?

Amber Craft:

I think so. I think it's a... I'm a pro shopper, right? And I think it's a big deal when someone follows that brand and that becomes part of their persona. And how do you maintain and build that relationship? I love getting offers and sign ups and feeling like I'm saving something. So I think it's a big part of it.

Andy Latimer:

Say I'm a local mom and pop shop in, I don't know, middle of Georgia, and I sell SEC, or sports memorabilia, or whatever, but I got a good following because I've been building an audience that likes the exclusive things that I get. If I throw that offer out there and I have a limited offer, I only have 10 of them, should I expect to sell those 10, and then hopefully, do I get more out of that? Am I going to get more followers? Am I going to get more opportunity for people to come in? What's the expectation? And what goal would you be setting inside that?

Amber Craft:

I think it's definitely going to depend on the brand, and that brand's following, and how popular they are within their community, and also, their target audience and how they interact and engage on social media. So I would want to have realistic expectations that it may work and it may not work. And we don't know, and we're just going to have to try it. And once we try it, we'll have the data. We'll try it a few times, anyways.

Andy Latimer:

Once you find that a giveaway works, or a coupon, or a discount code, or whatever, once you find that that works, how often? Is there an exhaustion of offers? Is there an exhaustion of deals that you're giving to that audience? I mean, can you give it to them every day?

Amber Craft:

I wouldn't say every day, but I think you definitely want to add it to your marketing strategy and make it probably about 25%, maybe, of your overall strategy in regard to how often you're implementing it monthly, or at least seasonally.

Stephany Gil:

Yeah. Seasonally. That's a great point.

Andy Latimer:

I think incorporating content into the marketing campaigns in conjunction with the brand content, like you look at Adobe showcasing their user photography, or Apple using customer videos off the iPhones in their commercials, these are real examples of brands doing well in a blended approach and that marriage of the two. How can these types of ads increase first time and continue purchases? How do these types of ads drive initial sales, and then, of course, long-term sales, when you start to integrate user content throughout?

Stephany Gil:

Absolutely. There are different ways to create or to leverage UGC content at different stages of the marketing funnel. So I would say the good old testimonial. Have your customers do selfie videos, promote that. And those are great for prospecting purposes. You can also take a couple of UGC videos or photos and create a montage with those, and it looks very interesting with so many pieces of content out there.

Stephany Gil:

You really want to find something that stands out and that makes people stop scrolling, so UGC is great for that. And then, in terms of how well it's working, I would say, in our case, we have a brand is in the kitchen workspace, and we saw huge improvements in the campaign after we implemented UGC. It was a little different. It was using testing testimonials as part of the creative, but we definitely huge improvements in terms of click through rate, and engagement, and of course, return on ad spend.

Andy Latimer:

Is there any demographic differences that come across there? Are you seeing different... Because obviously, in the post-COVID era, we're seeing much more digital engagement from seniors and baby boomers. We're seeing, again, continued growth across all platforms. But is there a demographic difference or any cultural differences that you see in engagement, or is it pretty much across the board?

Stephany Gil:

I would say it's pretty much across the board. Maybe the way someone speaks in a video targeting an 18 year old is obviously going to vary from someone targeting a more mature demographic, but yeah, UGC can work across the board, for sure.

Andy Latimer:

So the messaging has to be slightly different?

Stephany Gil:

Oh, yeah. Yeah. Absolutely.

Andy Latimer:

That's the great thing about the social side of it, and in social media in general, is the ability to target, right, and really, to get down to that consumer that is the right consumer for you with the right content. How important is that segmentation when it comes to it? And do you look at segmentation of your UGC content, both pieces you're using, paid and non-paid? How important is that segmentation in being able to identify exactly who you're targeting and really hitting that audience appropriately with the message?

Amber Craft:

I think the right message, at the right time, for the right people is extremely important. And if your content creators are in the younger demographic, then you send that message to your younger demographic. If they're older, then you find your UGC content that's made for people that are relatable. UGC content is partly successful because it's relatable and it's trustworthy. And when you see someone that looks like you, or is part of your own demographic, and they're talking and speaking to you about this product, I think it's going to definitely help push the buttons.

Andy Latimer:

That's certainly one way to make it feel not forced or disingenuous, right? Are there other ways that we can make content that feel unforced and genuine?

Amber Craft:

I think it could also come across in the captions that we use. Because when you have those more hard selling captions, "Buy now," or whatever, versus something friendly and fun. Stephanie and I were talking about a brand that we were working on, and a campaign we were working on just a month ago, and we wanted it to be able to speak to the audience, and terminology, and make it a little more fun. We made it more fun and we used testimonials and reviews in this particular post, and it performed much better than some of the other content.

Andy Latimer:

So kind of like getting that mix right of the UGC and brand content is what works? Is there a right mix? I mean, is there... Or is it really trial and error?

Amber Craft:

I'd say trial and error. But I mean, it could be about a 50/50 thing.

Stephany Gil:

Yeah. And I would say when we look at the platforms, for instance, Facebook, you can create campaigns that are specifically targeting people through Instagram stories only, so that you can share that UGC content to the younger demo on Instagram with that specific type of content, and then see how that performs without mixing it with other placements. So that's an interesting way to test UGC.

Stephany Gil:

And also, when you create UGC, test different things. I mentioned the collages earlier, but you can also have UGC-like pictures. You can also add stickers in them, and you can also use the native fonts from Instagram so they look more like what the users would create themselves. So take a look at what the platforms offer, and use that for your ads. And also, make sure that you always have a title, so even though you're using UGC type of content, people know what they're looking at all the time.

Andy Latimer:

How important is it that the brand that we're working with has a message beyond just the product? How important is it for the customer, the consumer, the follower, the tribe, to be like, "Yeah, I believe in them because of A," or, "Because of B," or, "Because they're doing this good for the planet," or, "Because they're giving food away," or, "Because they're giving free glasses away," or, "Free shoes away." How important are those types of things to building that relationship with the customer?

Stephany Gil:

So, so important. No matter your specialty, you can't escape the fundamentals of marketing. You have to know your consumer. You have to know them better than the palm of your hand and understand what motivates them, understand what they think when they first wake up in the morning. Anything you can do to get to know that consumer better. And I think that when you get to that point, that you really know what motivates them, what kind of language they prefer, how they want to be spoken to, at that point, then you're talking about a true and authentic relationship.

Stephany Gil:

And when you have, as a brand, a personality, then consumers respect that as well. And that personality, if you think about it, also includes social causes, and things you care about, and things that you want to advocate for. So I think that marketers, digital marketers, no matter your specialty, have to think about, go back sometimes to the fundamentals. We can talk about UGC all day, but if you don't understand what kind of consumer you have and what makes them happy, then none of these tools are going to help you. So make sure that you know your consumer as much as you can, and then that UGC is going to create that effect that is going to drive more UGC for your brand.

Andy Latimer:

Yeah. I think Coke, several years ago, they had Share a Coke planned, which was a UGC campaign. But at the same time, it was built off of a message that was from the brand side. The brand was Share a Coke brand, but then they interlaid this. They attributed that to having a 2% increase in overall global sales, or US sales. So you take a step back from that a minute. That wasn't just because of the user generated content. That's because for years, they laid a seed of Share a Coke.

Andy Latimer:

I mean, we've all seen the Christmas commercials, and the holiday commercials, and years, and years and years of experience that are about sharing a Coke. And now they come with UGC and they see this spike. That's because they seeded the basis of it with a brand message, and then they used user-generated content to give it validity, and authenticity, and the realism that we're looking for today.

Andy Latimer:

And I think from that standpoint, the connection, and we talk about it here all the time at Bluewater, the convergence side of it. And convergence is across platforms for us here. It's from TV, and television

advertising, and buying, and strategy, to digital buying, and creative strategy, to content distribution strategy, whether that be on broadcast, whether that be on social media, whether that be on OTT. However, we're getting that message out there, you have to look across the platform, but it all has to come back to what is the brand's message? What are they trying to say? Who are they, and what's the ultimate goal?

Andy Latimer:

A lot of brands, we see them, they aren't brands. Some brands just aren't brands. They just want to sell a product, get in, get out, make their money, and be done. But if you want to have lasting impact in today and today's market, you need to look at, one, you got to look at what's your brand story. You got to make sure you're driving a direct consumer relationship, because the way that consumers buying today and engaging today is completely different than it was last year.

Andy Latimer:

And I'm talking last year, I'm not talking about 10 years ago. I'm not talking about five years ago. I'm talking about the last six months, radically different consumer behaviors than what we've seen ever in the history of the world, really, truthfully, because it's happening globally around the planet, right? So making those adjustments, and seeing what's going on, and then finding ways to engage across all platforms is incredible, but the brand tie-in to user generated content is huge.

Andy Latimer:

Well, I want to thank you all for joining us on Bluewater Talks. I'm Andy Latimer, the chairman and founder of Bluewater, and we're certainly looking forward to the next time that you're able to sit down with us and take a listen. And I would not be doing my job if I did not give you a call to action, because all advertising at some point in the direct consumer space should. So if you want to know more, you can go to bluewater.tv to find out more and find access to these incredible women that we have working here, and really reach out to find out what's next and what's coming in 2021, right here on Bluewater Talks.