

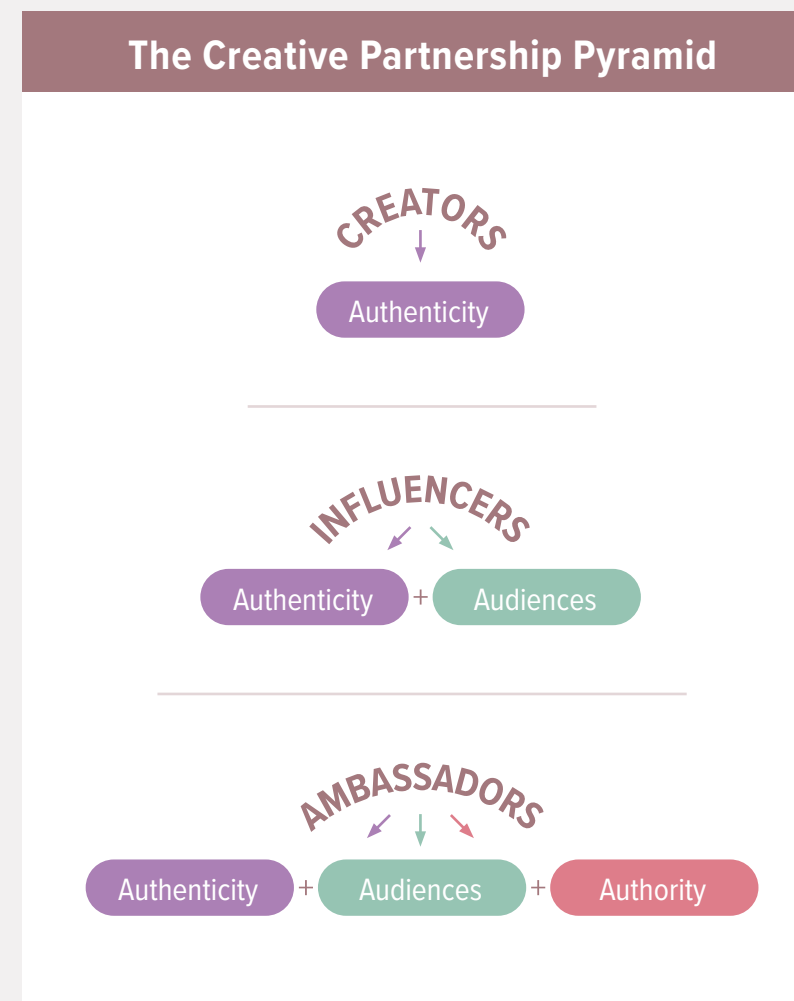
The Future of Creative Is Collaborative:

Build Creator & Influencer Partnerships Into Your 2023 Strategy

People trust people. When consumers are tightening the purse strings on essentials and discretionary purchases in a time of economic uncertainty, they want to feel confident about the things they are spending money on. The endorsement of an influencer or the opportunity to see a more personal side of a brand are quickly becoming deciding factors in the purchase decision for new and existing customers.

The future of creative is collaborative; the people you work with will be as important to your success as the products you're marketing.

There are three types of partnerships you should consider in your 2023 planning: creators, influencers, and ambassadors.



These different kinds of partnerships can deliver related but distinct benefits:

- ✓ **Authenticity:** expert creators can build platform-specific creative assets that help your brand establish an authentic, credible presence
- ✓ **Audiences:** influencers give you opportunities to make the case to their existing audiences as well as generating new creative
- ✓ **Authority:** brand ambassadors help your business build authority over time through long-term relationships with specific influencers

Whether your campaigns are built to drive awareness, consideration, conversion or retention, remember: media can only work so hard without powerful creative. To maximize your brand's effectiveness, you need an integrated media and creative strategy that incorporates more people-based collaboration than ever.

Authenticity

HOW CREATORS CAN ENHANCE & EXPAND YOUR BRAND

When you incorporate creator content into your brand creative strategy, your brand can unlock:

- ✓ Cultural relevance based on content, perspective, and tone of the assets
- ✓ Engagement with a broader audience still relevant to the brand that core brand creative may not be addressing
- ✓ The ability to advertise on platforms like TikTok where creator content is almost a requirement for entry

Your creator partners should be tasked with creating engaging content for specific platforms that feels unique, makes sense in the context of both the brand and platform, and connects with your target audiences on that platform.

Content creators augment and add to your production capabilities and can expand or significantly change your creative approach to a particular platform or audience based on your goals. They can help by:

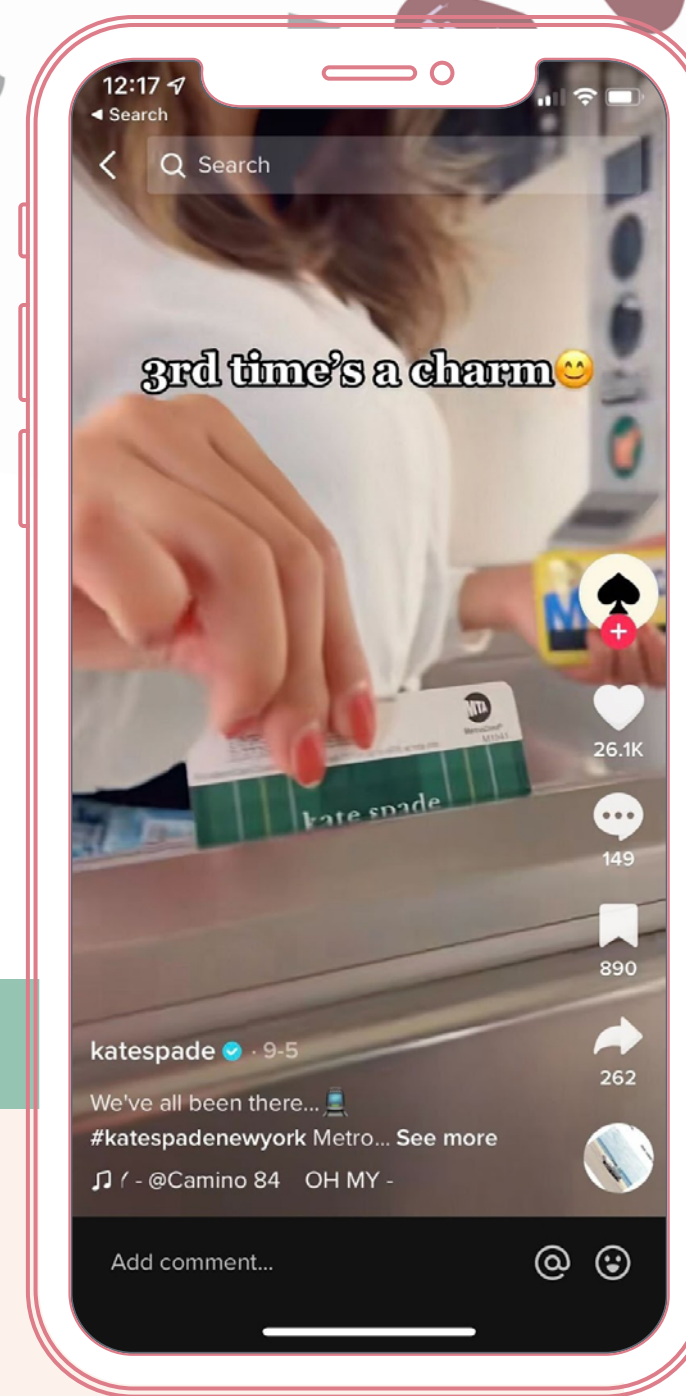
- ✓ Creating a high-quality piece of content
- ✓ Testing a less branded or polished approach to creative assets
- ✓ Tackling one-off creative projects for a particular platform
- ✓ Supplementing overtaxed in-house or agency creative resources


That last one can especially come in handy when you need a higher volume of creative assets to support a new campaign, launch your brand on a new platform, or need more variety in your creative strategy.

THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN CREATORS AND INFLUENCERS

“Creator” and “influencer” are terms that are often used interchangeably, but they refer to two different things. Content creators are individuals who create highly engaging content without necessarily having a following of their own to ‘influence.’ Influencers are often content creators, but they also bring an audience to the table.

Think of creator partnerships as a way to approach creative production and influencer marketing as a strategic media investment. One results in assets your brand can use; the other includes access to new audiences and is a “channel” in its own right. When you partner with a content creator, you should be considering them on their creative merits, not the size of their audience.



A woman with long dark hair and glasses, wearing a dark sweater, is sitting at a desk. She is looking down at a laptop. On the desk, there is a glass of water and some papers. The background shows a window with curtains and a framed picture on the wall. The entire image has a light pink overlay.

“So many people, especially younger generations, are really looking for a sense of belonging. Belonging to a community, building trust, being able to talk to one another are why creator partnerships are so valuable. To do it well, you need to provide a tremendous amount of creative freedom to the partners that you're working with.”

CECELIA WOGAN-SILVA
CHIEF BRAND EVANGELIST
GOOGLE

Brands are increasingly shifting their budgets to creator-driven marketing campaigns; 66% report that they spent more on content creators compared to previous years, [according to research by Creator IQ and Tribe Dynamics](#). Platforms like TikTok and Instagram have steadily added to their product offerings to both brands and creators to make it easier to find partners and produce content.

The Performance Boost from Creator Content

2x
higher engagement rates

+25%
stronger media efficiency

Source: Wpromote

The Value of TikTok Creator Partnerships

TikTok-specific branded content in partnership with creators



TikTok-specific but not in partnership with creators



Source: TikTok

Don't forget to build in the forecasted cost of creator partnerships based on your media strategy as part of your annual creative budget, especially if you know a new platform launch is likely or you've run into production challenges in the past. Even if you're not totally convinced, you should set aside money to start experimenting with

creator content, then analyze the impact of those campaigns against your benchmarks. The best partnerships happen when a brand lets a creator craft content that feels true to their audience AND the brand. Successful creators are already very good at building content that fits their community—that's why you want to partner with them in the first place. Start with a creative concept call to discuss your brand, product or service, and the goal of your campaign so that you and the creator can be on the same page. Your goal shouldn't be to restrict the creative thought process; creator partnerships should be truly collaborative. To get the best possible results, work with the creator instead of just telling them what to do.



All brands should have a couple of things prepared before reaching out to any creators:

- ✓ Defined business goals
- ✓ Existing educational materials that can introduce the brand's product or experience
- ✓ A campaign brief outlining the focus of the product or experience, your target audience (particularly any demographic or psychographic information), and intended action or reaction you want the content to drive

CASE STUDY SPOTLIGHT



How The Comfy Partnered With Creators To Drive Omnichannel Growth

THE CHALLENGE

The Comfy saw attention in their flagship product surge after their appearance on Shark Tank. They challenged Wpromote to convert that interest into long-term, sustainable growth for the business.

THE SOLUTION

Our experts worked with The Comfy team to develop a strategic plan focused on creating scalable, performance-driven campaigns that effectively filled the funnel with high-intent audiences ready to purchase.

We specifically leveraged TikTok's Creator Marketplace to build strategic relationships with creators who were the right match for The Comfy brand. TikTok CTRs improved by 15% after launch of UGC content from the Creator Marketplace, which also positively impacted purchase behavior across the web and created an additional halo effect on other channels like Amazon.

Based on that initial success, The Comfy ended up partnering with TikTok influencers with high engagement stats to produce and launch a series of branded videos.

THE RESULTS

102%
of The Comfy's
revenue goal

83%
increase
in Shopify
revenue YOY

Audience

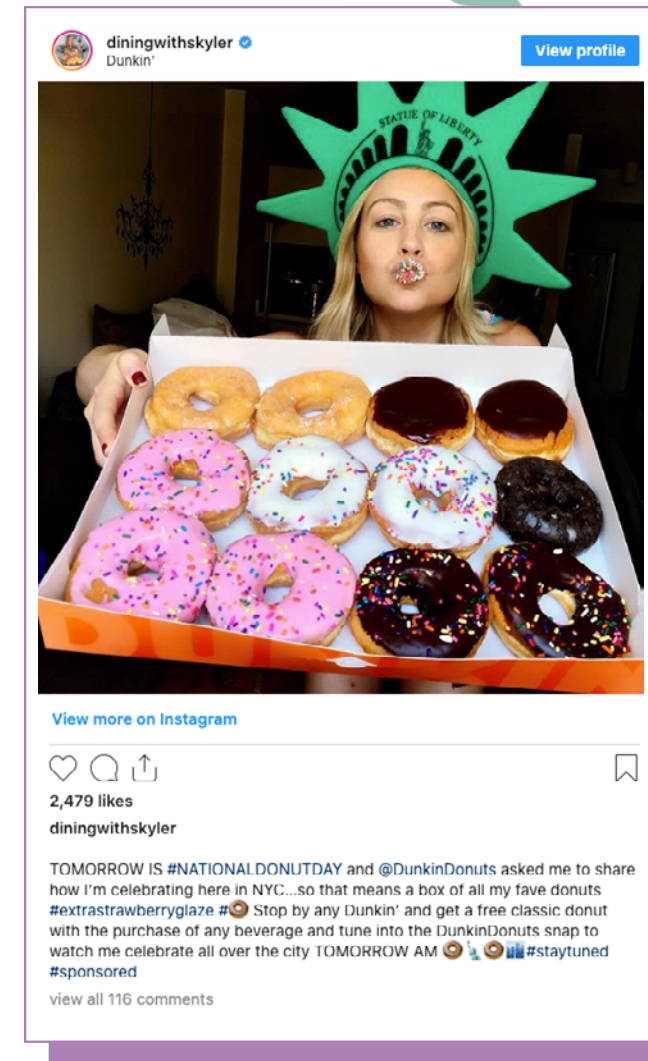
WHY INFLUENCER
MARKETING IS BECOMING
ESSENTIAL TO ACQUISITION



An influencer is someone who has cultivated a community by sharing and even showcasing their unique perspective to the world. They are often focused on a particular subject or niche. They are creators, but that's not all they bring to the table.

Critical to the value of an influencer is their audience. Fans view an influencer as a trusted voice and look to them for inspiration, validation, and entertainment in their area(s) of expertise. That influencer can be a person or even a publisher (think about blogs developed around a particular value proposition that have become invaluable to certain audiences, and in turn have turned individual authors into influencers in their own right).

Influencer endorsements of a brand, product, or service impact their fandom's awareness and perception of your brand and/or products, and can even drive purchase decisions. Influencer testimonials can be the




Source: Dunkin' Donuts

seal of approval a new customer needs to overcome a barrier to actually buying.

The right influencer/brand combination can drive:

- ✓ Brand awareness and reach
- ✓ New customer acquisition
- ✓ Sales and revenue
- ✓ Brand loyalty

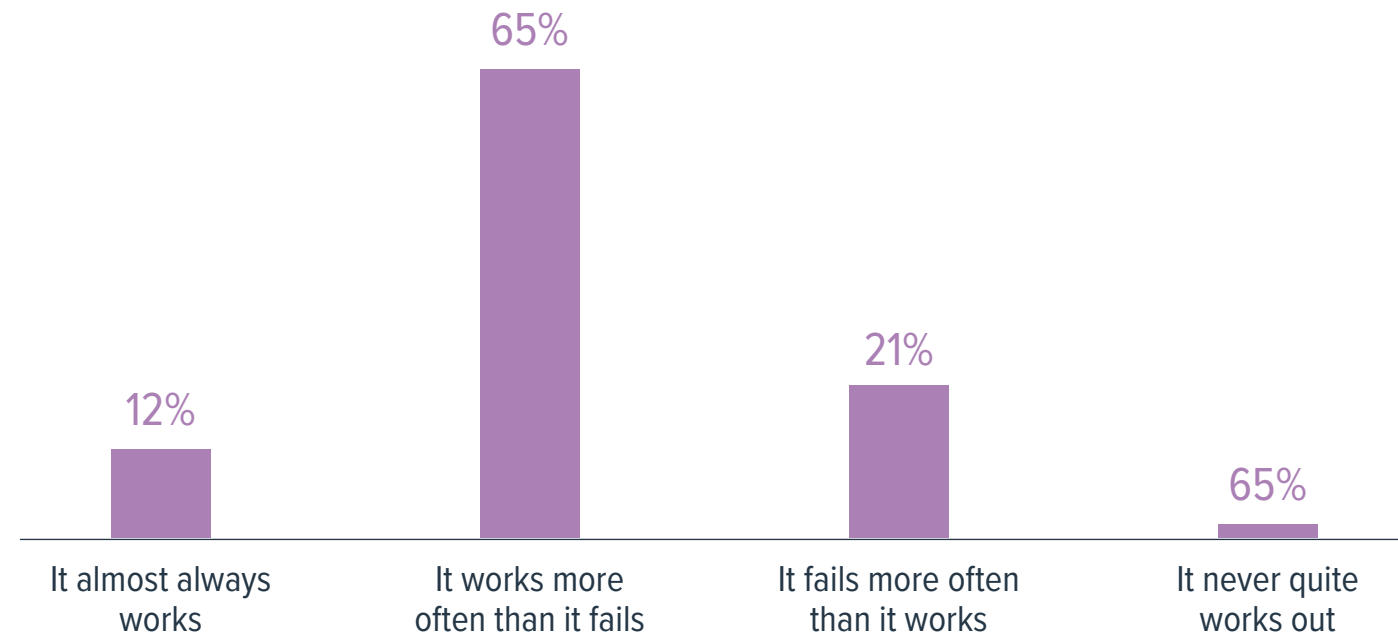


“Brands can’t create community; we can build an environment and guardrails within which our people can form community, then cultivate and nurture that. If you follow that logic, we must partner with creators and influencers because they’re who are facilitating that community within the bounds that we’ve created for them.”

ALLISON STADD
SVP OF BRAND MARKETING & CREATIVE
SHIPT

Marketers' Success Working with Influencers

"Which of the following statements best describes your experience working with influencers?"



Source: [Impact](#)

The benefits flow in both directions. These partnerships help brands get in front of new audiences and offer social proof to potential customers while helping the influencer monetize their platform(s) and continue to grow their following.

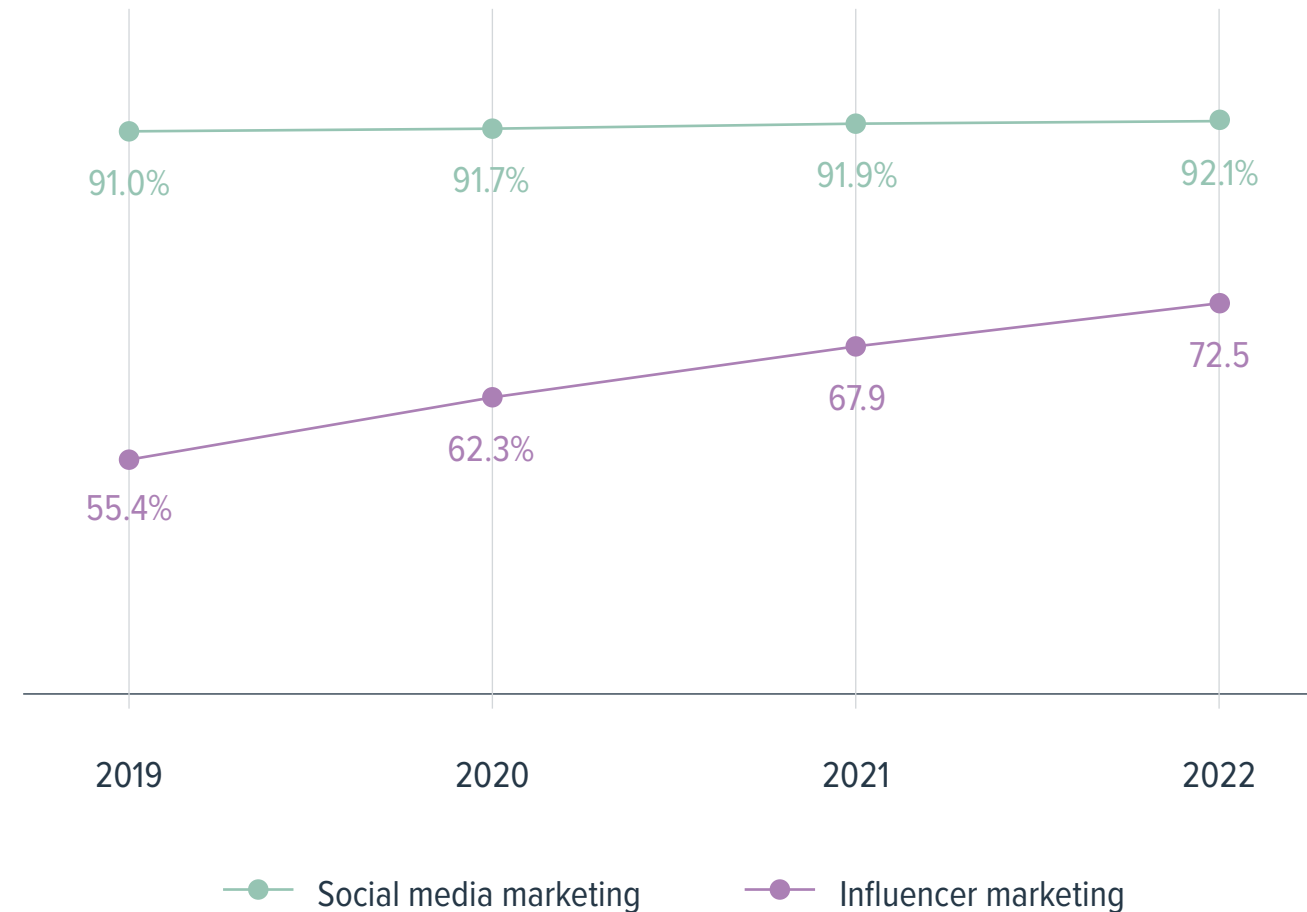
Influencers have a superpower: their credibility in their community. When brands

develop talent partnerships that feel organic, earned, and relevant to both the brand and their target audience, success follows. **According to data from Impact, 77%** of marketers reported that their experience with working with influencers was mostly positive when it came to efficacy.

**INFLUENCERS
HAVE A
SUPERPOWER:
THEIR
CREDIBILITY
IN THEIR
COMMUNITY.**

Share of US Marketers Using Social Media and Influencer Marketing, 2019-2022

(% of total marketers)



Source: [eMarketer](#)

That success is why influencer marketing has grown exponentially in recent years, taking up a larger share of the marketing pie even as the share occupied by traditional brand social media has remained virtually flat [according to eMarketer](#).

In fact, [Influencer Marketing Hub's 2022 Benchmark Report](#) revealed that two-thirds of marketers intend to spend between 10-30% of their marketing budget on influencer marketing, and 68% of respondents plan to increase their spend this year.

🔍 FINDING THE RIGHT INFLUENCER PARTNER

There are many different things to consider when evaluating an influencer as a partner: the size of their following, affinity with the brand, level of engagement on different channels, and more. Vetting is important. Start with a quick check of the influencer's follower count and average engagement volume on their organic posts. But the equation isn't just a numbers game.

For example, follower count isn't everything; it's even more important to find influencers that have built audiences and are creating content that align with what your brand needs. A popular influencer with low brand affinity tends to drive significantly less cost-efficient ROAS compared to a micro/nano influencer with high brand affinity. That's why [eMarketer forecasts](#) that investment in micro- and nano-influencer marketing will increase in the coming years, outpacing other influencer segments.

You should also keep an eye out for creators who court scandal or see all attention as positive—nothing says PR disaster like an influencer who's one step away from blowing up in a bad way in the public eye.





Influencer combined with paid media is an especially effective strategy for ecommerce and D2C brands focused on younger audiences. According to GWI, Gen Z consumers are more likely to discover new products on social media than through search, and 76% of those young consumers look to social networks and video sites to research brands, products, or services.

Influencer campaigns aren't limited to creator-focused platforms like TikTok or Instagram. There are also cross-channel integration opportunities with paid search, email marketing, content marketing, performance creative, Amazon, affiliate marketing, programmatic and more.

Those paid channels offer even more opportunities to amplify the impact of your influencer investment and help fill gaps across the customer journey. Influencer whitelisting means you can use organic, user-generated content (UGC) as ads to promote your brand and maximize results. With the appropriate permissions in place, you can also supercharge evergreen brand campaigns with influencer creative and use the influencer's followers to target lookalike audiences.

Key use cases include:

- ✓ Scaling brand awareness by introducing the brand/product to fresh prospects through a content creator's sponsored post featuring authentic, native creative
- ✓ Providing additional information and social proof to people in the consideration stage who are considering various products
- ✓ Pushing uncertain customers from consideration to purchase by surfacing creator content featuring a specific product to users with the same product in their carts
- ✓ Increasing customer loyalty by partnering with trusted creators and influencers with established audiences in relevant niches

CASE STUDY SPOTLIGHT



How Yummly Broke Records By Leveraging Influencer Marketing Campaigns

THE CHALLENGE

Yummly needed to generate brand awareness and drive purchases for their innovative new product: the Smart Thermometer. But the product's higher price point meant it was extra important to make the perfect case to consumers.

THE SOLUTION

Rather than wait for the next holiday season, Wpromote realized that the Smart Thermometer was a great fit for Father's Day 2022, zeroing in on short-form video content as the ideal way to showcase the product's unique features.

Yummly and Wpromote armed 10 diverse influencers with promo codes and Yummly Smart Thermometers to cook their favorite recipe using the product on Instagram Reels and TikTok and showcase the product as the perfect gift for dads in 2022.

Yummly was able to increase awareness, build excitement, and get the word out about the Smart Thermometer product to relevant communities ahead of the holiday, creating an authentic sense of community and connection that resulted in tangible results for the business across paid social, paid search, and other channels.

THE RESULTS

In a single month, organic influencer posts generated strong social engagement and revenue growth, including 15K website sessions and 1,354 promo code redemptions. The influencer whitelisted paid social ads proved more effective and efficient than traditional retargeting campaigns, achieving:

305%
Higher CTR

83%
Lower CPC

21%
Lower CPA

Authority

HOW TO SCALE WORD OF MOUTH THROUGH BRAND AMBASSADORS



There is another level you can unlock when it comes to these kinds of partnerships. That comes from building long-term relationships, not just contracting with someone for one-off ads.

A brand ambassador has an established, ongoing relationship with a brand and can actually act as an extension of the brand's


identity. It goes without saying that brand ambassadors should be people you have the highest degree of trust in, because your brand can end up inextricably linked with that person.



Source: [Instagram](#)

Rent the Runway: Building On-Campus Brand Ambassadors

Brand ambassadorship is based on a deeper level of connection; it doesn't only apply to well-known influencers or celebrities. Rent the Runway has established programs on college campuses that give students with an interest in fashion the opportunity to learn marketing and sales. It's a mutually beneficial strategy: students get experience while they work as brand ambassadors driving new customer acquisition for Rent the Runway through on-campus events, campus partnerships, and promotions.

A woman with long dark hair, wearing a striped shirt, is smiling and talking to a dog. She is surrounded by other people in a group setting, possibly a meeting or a social gathering. The background is slightly blurred, showing other people and what appears to be a wall with some posters or notices.

“The cultural characteristics of a community have a tremendous impact on commerce, and we leverage other people who are of the same community that we are: we leverage their equity, we leverage their trust, their intimacy with their community, to have them co-create on our behalf. We're coauthoring in a very authentic way with people who are of the same ethos, of the same conviction that the two brands have in common. And when they match really well, people go: that feels right, that feels real.”

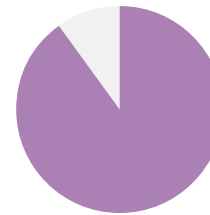
MARCUS COLLINS
HEAD OF STRATEGY
WIEDEN+KENNEDY NEW YORK

There are generally two types of brand ambassadors. The first is passive; almost everyone is a passive brand ambassador for something. You might love certain companies that make products you love or align with your values, but you don't go out of your way to promote the brand unless someone gives you a compliment or asks for a recommendation.

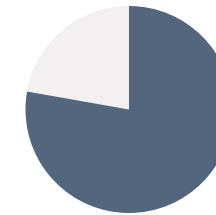
The real gold lies in cultivating active brand ambassadors. These people love your brand and show that love by actively promoting it across their networks. Brands can develop structured programs for influencers, creators, or superfans that are officially affiliated with the brand itself and incentivized either monetarily or through access to other benefits.

The most common style of official brand ambassadorship involves a long-term relationship between a brand and a person, whether that's a fan, an influencer, or even a celebrity. Those ambassadors have a deep knowledge of the brand, from values to products to long-term vision.

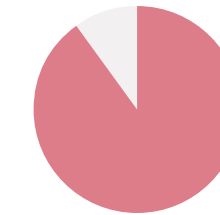
The Awesome Power of Word-of-Mouth



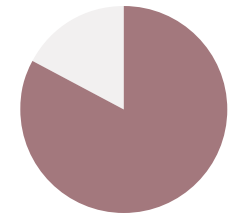
90% of people are much more likely to trust a recommended brand (even from strangers)



78% of people rave about their favorite recent experiences to people they know at least once per week



Word-of-mouth is directly responsible for **90%** of all purchases



83% of marketers use word-of-mouth marketing because it increases brand awareness

Source: [SEMrush](#)

They're empowered to speak for the brand, and should have a great pulse on what their audiences care about and respond to so they can speak about the brand in culturally relevant, authentic, and resonant ways. They may even provide valuable insights into product development or audience expansion.

But paid partnerships aren't the only option. The power of ambassadorship lies in the

humanization of a brand, and there are also plenty of organic customer-evangelists or fans who publicly advocate for a business or products of their own volition.

The next phase of brand ambassadorship is scaling that people power to get the full advantage of word-of-mouth marketing.

🔍 TURNING BRAND FANS INTO BRAND AMBASSADORS

There are a variety of ways to utilize existing customer touchpoints to increase engagement and transform engaged customers into advocates and ambassadors. These activities don't necessarily have to come with a high price tag, but they do require committing to establishing a two-way conversation with your customers. They need to have a seat at the table to convince them to become active ambassadors that directly drive business benefits.

Some tried-and-true engagement tactics that can kick off a scaled ambassadorship initiative include:

- ✓ Deploying organic social polls on topics related to products or company roadmap
- ✓ Encouraging ratings and reviews (and responding to those reviews)
- ✓ Conducting customer surveys to understand what they want or need
- ✓ Establishing loyalty programs that incentivize social or other engagement
- ✓ Actively cultivating opportunities to create UGC content
- ✓ Amplifying customer testimonials via marketing creative



You should track and measure the results of brand ambassador initiatives by assigning specific KPIs that will help you understand the return on investment for each activity. You'll quickly get an idea of what's working and what's not, and which activities are driving deeper levels of evangelism.

Incentives are essential; you can motivate your brand ambassadors by offering products, experiences, and even money. When you evaluate your ambassador program and how much of your marketing budget it will take, don't forget to consider the cost of rewards or payouts in two ways:

- ✓ How much will your business spend annually to fulfill rewards?
- ✓ How does that impact the price of customer acquisition?

Understanding what moves your most loyal fans will help you to decide how much to budget on a quarterly/yearly basis.

It's important to note that brand ambassadors on the influencer model are much more likely to put quick wins on the board; building a dedicated fan base takes a lot of time and effort.

But the long-term benefits that flow from investing in a customer ambassador program shouldn't be overlooked. Those include enhanced brand health, authority, and affinity; you'll also be creating an army of loyalists who will help you drive repeat sales year after year.



**MOTIVATE
YOUR BRAND
AMBASSADORS
BY OFFERING
PRODUCTS,
EXPERIENCES,
AND EVEN
MONEY.**

Harness People Power As Part of Your Creative Strategy



When you make a change or try something new in your marketing strategy, you need to factor patience and planning into your decision-making. But you can't afford to shy away from a more human-focused approach to creative because that's what consumers today are responding to.

Before you approach creators, influencers, or ambassadors, you need to establish how long it will take to plan, execute and measure each campaign. Get a handle on your marketing objectives, key messages, budget, and benchmarks.

No matter where you are in your 2023 planning, there's still time to incorporate people power into your creative strategy:

- ✓ If you're looking to build more marketing collateral that resonates with your audience, content creators can be the perfect addition to your creative strategy.
- ✓ If you're looking to expand your audience or create more awareness and consideration for your brand or product, influencer marketing is a strong media play.
- ✓ If you're looking to build a following and drive long-term growth, brand ambassadorship is an ongoing commitment that will benefit your brand's overall health.

ONWARD INTO THE COLLABORATIVE CREATIVE FUTURE OF MARKETING!

READY TO THINK LIKE A CHALLENGER?

Wpromote is an award-winning digital marketing agency with eight offices across the United States. Named the Leader in the Forrester Performance Marketing Wave, Wpromote helps brands Think Like A Challenger to drive transformational growth. Challenger clients include leading brands such as Whirlpool, Zenni, Adobe, Spanx, Frontier Airlines, and more.

CONNECT WITH AN EXPERT

 [866.977.6668](tel:866.977.6668)

 sales@wpromote.com

 www.wpromote.com