7 KEY INFLUENCER MARKETING STRATEGIES FOR FOOD BRANDS

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## Influencer Marketing Overview

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Influencer Marketing is the idea of partnering with social content creators, those with key audience’s on networks like Facebook, Twitter, Pinterest, YouTube, Instagram, and others, to help satisfy the consumer’s insatiable appetite for stories and opinions about products they buy. The exploding industry is attracting millions of dollars from brands and agencies looking for solutions that help them scale the creation and distribution of consumer content. Food and beverage brands are uniquely poised to have better success with digital influencers than other verticals for several reasons:

1. Food is one of the most popular subjects on social media.
2. Not every consumer is a runner, cares about fashion, or watches movies but every single person on the planet eats food.
3. Eating is profoundly social and is culturally an occasion for sharing, giving, celebrating, and expressing.
4. Food is very visual and visual content generates 94% more engagement than text alone.
5. Food and recipe influencers are one of the fastest growing sources of food-related content.

“In the last year, views of food and recipe content grew 59% and social engagement (likes, comments and shares) on food channels rose by 118%”

– ThinkWithGoogle
WHY WORK WITH INFLUENCERS?

One of the most effective ways to build trust and engagement with your audience is collaborating with key influencers to create relevant, quality content. Some key reasons why influencers make powerful partners include:

- They have the trust of their audience.
- They reach and engage a very targeted audience.
- They represent an authentic consumer experience.
- They sometimes have bigger reach than brands themselves.
- They are an army of content creators that are better, faster, and cheaper than what brands can do themselves.
- Their content is already shareable.

Influencers have some distinct advantages that are difficult for brands to replicate, including large communities of followers, consumers’ trust, authentic personal experience, and social network expertise. Social influencers are effective at starting, sharing, and spreading online conversations, which is incredibly valuable to brands.

When it comes to consumer spending, online content and social conversations have a significant impact on how consumers choose what to buy. While product information and brand-crafted messaging is valuable, consumers want information that comes from like-minded people they trust. Content from third-party experts and their personal networks is often more trusted than content from advertising or brand websites.
Do an online search for the best influencer marketing campaigns and you’ll get lists that include a disproportionately high number of consumer food brands. Leveraging bloggers and collaborators on social media is paying off big-time for food brands like Kraft, Whole Foods, Horizon Organics, Coca-Cola, Black Box Wines and hundreds of other brands as they see lifts in awareness, customer engagement, and sales.

But just being a popular topic doesn’t guarantee success. There are seven KEY strategies for food brands that can help ensure success. They include:

1. Find the Right Influencers
2. Make Creating Great Content Your Top Priority
3. Make Visual Content a Dominant Part of Your Content Strategy
4. Get Creative and Take Some Chances
5. Let the Conversation be About the Consumer Experience with Your Food, Not Your Brand
6. Repurpose Content on Owned Media
7. Track and Measure Performance

65% of top US brands participate in digital influencer marketing — eMarketer
KEY 1: FIND THE RIGHT INFLUENCERS

Marketers have started to understand that leveraging the influence of bloggers and other powerful social media users can maximize the ROI of online marketing activities. But for many industry professionals, accurately identifying the right influencers for their program remains a challenge. When it comes to selecting the best social media partners, use the following guidelines:

HIGH QUALITY CONTENT
Focus on people that regularly post high quality content. That means that they create authentic content that resonates with their readers, creates discussion, and is shared across social platforms.

AUDIENCE ENGAGEMENT
Look for indications that readers interact with the influencer content. That could be commenting on the food discussion, voting in contests, and sharing to other social sites.

AUDIENCE DEMOGRAPHIC
An Influencer’s personal attributes do not necessarily represent the demographic of their audience—frequent content generation in a specific brand-relevant topic is a better indication of a blogger’s audience demographic. For example, when trying to reach moms with children between the ages of 1-3, target bloggers who talk about parenting toddlers, etc., rather than recruiting bloggers who have toddlers.

PRESENCE ON THE RIGHT PLATFORMS
Look for influencers who maintain a presence across multiple social channels to get more impact. For instance, if you choose to work with food bloggers who can create user-generated recipes, be sure they are sharing that content on visual platforms like Pinterest and Instagram as well.

74% of global marketers expect to include influencer marketing as part of their strategy in the next 12 months

- Social Media Today
STORYTELLING HIERARCHY - SELECTION FUNNEL

- Topical Relevance (MUST-HAVES)
- Demos / Lifestage (MUST-HAVES)
- Reach (MUST-HAVES)
- Platform (MUST-HAVES)
- Rate / Value (NICE-TO-HAVES)
- Engagement (NICE-TO-HAVES)
- Design / Voice (NICE-TO-HAVES)
- Experience (NICE-TO-HAVES)
- Frequency (NICE-TO-HAVES)
KEY 2: MAKE CREATING GREAT CONTENT YOUR TOP PRIORITY

Great content isn’t an accident; it comes by deliberately seeking the intersection of three equally important elements:

**AUDIENCE NEEDS, WANTS, DESIRES**
- Things they can use or be amused by

**INFLUENCERS’ POINT OF VIEW**
- The attitude, beliefs, convictions and interests that make your influencers interesting to their audiences

**BRAND STORY**
- The special qualities of your brand that give it a unique position in the mind of customers
One of the things that the food industry has going for it is that people love talking about and tweeting, liking, pinning, collecting, tasting and sharing food. A lot. As soon as consumers tweet what they had for breakfast, they are planning dinner and searching Pinterest and blogs for ideas for ideas. Done right, visual content is visceral, inspiring, entertaining and delectably sharable. Rich content like photographs, videos and infographics get more engagement and click conversions than text alone.

90% of information transmitted to the brain is visual, and visuals are processed 60,000X faster in the brain than text.

– 3M Corporation and Zabisco

When International Delight launched their new line of Cold Stone Creamery flavors, they leveraged food bloggers to create and share creative recipes. One blogger alone garnered over 28,000 pins on Pinterest for a picture of her White Wedding Cake Milkshake.

Most buying decisions about what to have for dinner happen 2 hours before mealtime.

– Hartman Group

Source: WillCookForSmiles.com
Embrace social platforms that are visual like Pinterest, Instagram, YouTube and Vine to exponentially increase consumer engagement.

74% of consumers rely on social media to inform their purchasing decisions

– OMD Group
KEY 4: GET CREATIVE AND TAKE SOME CHANCES

Food brands seem to take more chances when it comes to influencer marketing. While blunders abound, don’t seem to be afraid of the high-risk, high-reward model. For example, Lays launched a hugely successful social media campaign where they asked fans and influencers to create a new chip flavor for a $1 million prize. They attracted over 3.8 million submissions, manufactured and tested 25 flavors, and pushed the top three flavors, Cheesy Garlic Bread, Chicken & Waffles, and Sriracha, out to stores for consumer to taste and vote for on social media. They experienced a 12% increase in sales and the Cheesy Garlic Bread flavor was added to their family.

SoyVay launched a chicken into space in a capsule, cooked it there, and sent it back to earth for influencers to try and share on social media. They targeted Millennial foodies who created hundreds of pieces of content that garnered over 40 million earned media impressions, including engagement for their YouTube video of the event.
Influencer marketing programs work best with content that provides value to the target consumer. It should be authentic and thought provoking with subtle references to the brand, instead of being just about the brand. Marketers have to change their mindset from telling the customer about how great their products are to letting the conversation be about the consumer, their experiences, and their happiness. Consumers love content that makes them laugh, cry or learn something and the best source of this kind of content is often from another consumer. The food industry gets lots of mileage from this approach since people love talking about recipes, restaurants, deals, entertaining, etc. It’s much harder to get consumers to talk online about their finances, birth control, health issues or auto repairs.

“A word-of-mouth recommendation is the primary factor behind 20-50% of all purchase decisions

– McKinsey & Company
Brands spend significant time and money working with influencers to create interesting blog, Facebook, and Twitter posts. That influencer content should be re-purposed onto owned media sites as well. Brands need to make sure that this content doesn’t just live on the influencer site, but is also shared on branded sites. Influencer content should also be easy to share with social sharing buttons embedded in the posts. Black Box Wines garnered extra attention for their influencer content when they aggregated videos, posts and images to a branded hub page and gave visitors a way to further engage right from the branded page.
The real key to metrics is making sure they’re aligned with what really matters: customer behavior. No one number provides sufficient insight. Instead, metrics should be tracked within categories that reflect the consumer’s decision journey: awareness, consideration, preference, purchase and loyalty. By measuring multiple behaviors assigned to different stages, you can ensure your strategy is succeeding across the entire buying process.

**Food brands aren’t the only companies doing influencer marketing well but they do seem to have more success creating entertaining, engaging, and sharable content that keeps people talking.**
TAPINFLUENCE HAS MORE CPG CUSTOMERS THAN ANY OTHER SOLUTION

Want to learn more about how leading brands are influencing their audiences? A TapInfluence brand strategist can help you determine if influencers are a good fit for your content strategy.

For more information on finding and utilizing sources for influencer marketing, connect with us online at www.tapinfluence.com/contact or contact us directly at: info@tapinfluence.com (720) 726-4074

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