

ALLISON +PARTNERS' STUDY UNCOVERS THE DIVIDE HOLDING BACK INFLUENCER MARKETING

Improving the Marketer and Influencer Relationship is a Must to Unleash its Full Potential

SAN FRANCISCO (February 11, 2018) – Allison+Partners' [latest study](#) on influencer marketing suggests that despite becoming a staple in today's marketing mix, there is a divide between marketers and influencers holding back the true potential of influencer marketing. The divide spans the spectrum from the length of an ideal engagement to the essential question of return on investment. The qualitative study also sheds new light on what each think will bridge that gap, as well as how putting more rigor around process and measurement will help increase effectiveness and credibility for the craft.

The study reveals a clear gap between marketers and influencers about marketplace challenges that are critical to address as influencer marketing evolves.

Some key themes they were divided on include:

- **Approach to Identification:** One of the biggest challenges identified by marketers was the inability to confidently identify and select effective influencers. However, most influencers in the study stated that they don't provide audience insights unless asked, nor do they map their potential to a marketer's needs. Many also said they have their own media kits that marketers rarely ask for.
- **Authenticity:** Most influencers reported that marketers generally only ask for reach, unique page views or monthly blog views, but the most value is found in the authentic comments to and interactions with their posts.
- **Testing:** Just as they would in traditional marketing disciplines, testing, learning and revising need to be an integral part of the influencer marketing strategy. However, the study found that only some marketers conduct testing with influencers to see what type of content works best. Furthermore, influencers said they generally stick with the approved content over the course of the engagement regardless of the outcome, citing that they don't feel comfortable offering their opinions about how posts can be improved.
- **Measurement:** Influencers continue to struggle to show their value in a comparable way to how marketers think about other marketing mediums. Yet, marketers are under increased pressure to prove the business impact of influencer campaigns. The challenges stem from several factors on both sides including defining the basis for influencer marketing, lack of benchmarks and myths about standard metrics.

“This is a critical year for influencer marketing where it must mature and evolve to meet the standards of other marketing disciplines,” said Cathy Planchard, global president of All Told, a division of Allison+Partners that combines research, content, creative, digital and measurement expertise to deliver integrated storytelling for clients. “By communicating better, implementing more process and developing concrete methods to show value, marketers and influencers will be able to see the full and realized potential of their partnership.”

Allison+Partners’ Influence 360 approach to achieving influence takes a broad view of influencer marketing strategies, starting with the understanding that an influencer is anyone who has the ability to carry a message. Based on the study’s findings, the agency further enhanced this approach by recommending a series of industry best practices for influencer marketing, with particular focus on the implementation of advanced analytics and technology to show its value.

While the study revealed some key divisions between marketers and influencers, both groups lamented in the difficulty of proving value for campaigns. There are some simple solutions and best practices that can address these challenges

- **Scoring Parameters:** A clear solution to influencer identification is to employ a set of standards, such as influencer scoring parameters. For example, Allison+Partners’ proprietary [Influence Impact Score](#) uses the equation $[\text{Reach} + \text{Authenticity}] \times \text{Power}$ to identify the influencers that will have the most impact for a campaign.
- **Optimization:** While some influencers voice their opinions during the creative planning phase, the majority said they generally don’t provide additional suggestions for improvement in the execution phase – something they need to take responsibility for. Influencer marketing must mature and evolve to a place where the consultation, relationship-building and optimization occurs as it would in other parts of the marketing mix.
- **Data Capture and Practices:** The simple act of gathering, structuring and storing data is a fundamental best practice for measurement. But the study revealed that this, too, is lacking in influencer marketing efforts. Marketers need to look at their own internal data, such as coupon codes redeemed or website visits, while influencers need to provide more back-end metrics with marketers, particularly on paid campaigns.
- **Understanding Impact:** Marketers and influencers must look beyond a "moment of time" in reporting and understand things like time to impact content life span and holistic data capture. This can be done through correlation analytics on the marketers’ side, which determines the statistical correlation between two factors. On the influencer side, they need to report on the full range of success indicators, such as direct messages asking for more information from users, to better understand the impact of campaigns beyond direct sales or website traffic.

- **Deploying Existing Technology:** An abundance of technology used in other digital marketing media can be applied to influencer marketing measurement. For example, the use of pixels or tags is largely non-existent, even for mediums that readily accept them. This implementation would allow for retargeting, boost conversions and create great depth of understanding for those who interact with influencer content.

“The underlying current of our study — a communications and relationship gap between marketers and influencers — comes to light in measurement perhaps more strongly than any other topic we explored,” said Brent Diggins, managing director of measurement + analytics at Allison+Partners. “Despite the challenges, a pragmatic approach that combines measurement and analytics best practices with technology can help show value like never before.”

ABOUT THE STUDY

Allison+Partners conducted qualitative interviews with 31 influencers and 20 marketers in the travel, consumer electronics, lifestyle, food/CPG and fashion/beauty verticals. Marketers were internal employees, with a manager title or above working at a company with revenue of \$50 million or more in the U.S. Interviews were conducted in October 2018. The influencers must have engaged in a paid influencer program with a brand in the vertical set. The influencer panel was sourced by Allison+Partners, and the marketer panel was conducted by Qualtrics. This is the fifth study in Allison+Partners’ Influence Impact Report series, which is an ongoing exploration of the dynamic forces that shape and drive consumers in an active ecosystem of influence. To download the Influence Impact Reports, visit www.allisonpr.com/insights/.

About Allison+Partners

Allison+Partners, an [MDC Partners](#) company, is a global marketing and communications agency driven by a collaborative approach to innovation and creativity. The firm was named The Holmes Report’s 2018 “Best Agency to Work For,” PRWeek’s 2018 “Best Place to Work,” The Holmes Report’s 2017 “Digital Agency of the Year,” The Holmes Report’s 2016 “Asia Pacific Corporate Consultancy of the Year,” PRWeek’s 2015 “Midsize Agency of the Year” and In2 SABRE’s 2015 “Most Innovative Agency.” Allison+Partners has 30 offices worldwide and is organized around six practices: Consumer Marketing, Corporate, Global China, Healthcare, Public Affairs and Technology. All Told, which combines research, content, creative, digital and measurement expertise into one offering, works across these practices to deliver integrated storytelling for clients. The agency also has a network and deep affiliations with firms worldwide through MDC Partners (NASDAQ: MDCA), a progressive marketing and communications network, championing the most innovative entrepreneurial talent. For more information, visit www.allisonpr.com.