

Satisfying the Appetite for Authentic Content

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9/29/2017

I recently spoke at the Inmar annual Analytics Forum on the subject of authenticity when it comes to working with influencers. Hopefully, no one needs to be reminded that authenticity is absolutely critical to successful influencer marketing. But, just to be sure: messaging that doesn't ring true – no matter how strategic the distribution or artful the display – will not engage nor activate those exposed to the content. And, nowhere is this more true than in the food and beverage category.

So many issues and emotions surround this category that sensibility, seasoned with sensitivity, must be the essence of any influencer campaign. For all of the focus on food in both marketing and the media, there is still tremendous uncertainty regarding nutrition and proper diet, as well as widespread misunderstanding of the meaning of terms such as “all natural,” “organic,” and even “healthy.” The International Food Information Council Foundation's [2017 Food and Health Survey](#) revealed that 80 percent of those surveyed found conflicting advice about what to eat or avoid, and, as a consequence, doubting the wisdom of their food choices.

Despite the confusion, shoppers continue to push on in their pursuit of healthier food. Organic sales in the U.S. totaled [around \\$47 billion in 2016](#) – including new sales of almost \$3.7 billion over the previous year. Organic food now accounts for 5.3 percent of total food sales in this country.



While the growth in the organic sector is impressive, it's not where most CPGs, or shoppers, “live.” Shoppers are hungry for guidance on purchasing and preparing more nutritious and tasty meals with the brands they know and see every day. Food manufacturers can build brand if they deliver the goods on how to eat better. Influencers, by pairing education with engagement, can drive healthy behaviors and healthy returns for advertisers. Content that helps clear the confusion and makes it easier to set a better-for-you table, or fill the snack tray free of guilt, will move

shoppers off the page and into the aisle.

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It's a significant challenge for marketers and manufacturers but an incredible opportunity for the influencer community.

So, what are the ingredients for influencer marketing content that can serve up sales?

1) Recipes. Posts with recipes perform 1.7x better than those without recipes. Shoppers want a road map to their next good meal. Show them the way and they'll show their appreciation through purchase.

2) Original photography. What's more visual than food? (Hint: Nothing.) Personal photographs accompanying personal storytelling will whet the reader's appetite and help with authenticity.

3) Nutritional information. Shoppers want to know what they're eating. The Hartman Group's most recent research found [72 percent of those surveyed read the nutritional panel](#) on product labels. There are tools available that influencers can use to add nutrition information to posts. They should be put to work.

4) Promotions. Helping make better foods more affordable is a great way to engage, activate and retain shoppers. Including relevant offers with informative content is the perfect blend for accelerating shopper activation.

It's not a complex recipe. But it needs to be followed carefully for maximum authenticity and impact.