

FRAGRANCE AND PERSONAL CARE

Revlon's cautionary tale: The changing nature of influencer marketing

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Cosmetics giant Revlon is exploring the sale of all or some of its business amid lackluster sales and a crushing debt of \$3 billion.

The iconic company's 2016 acquisition of brand Elizabeth Arden apparently is not rescuing it from the Sephoras and direct-to-consumer businesses (DTCs) of the world.

Revlon's tale is cautionary for leaders in all industries: Do not rest on your laurels or, in this case, your lashes.

A pioneer in influencer marketing

An R&D innovator that saw its first successes with revamped nail polish formulas, Revlon also revolutionized cosmetic marketing when it hired famed Richard Avedon to photograph **first brand ambassador Lauren Hutton** in 1973.

In the 80s, Revlon then pioneered a new era of influencer by stoking the phenomenon of the "supermodel," making the mass-adored faces of Iman and Cindy Crawford inseparable from the Revlon brand.

These instantly recognizable supermodels had their aura only enhanced by Revlon's incredibly sized contracts.

Revlon mastered riding the culturally relevant for its own marketing purposes.

A new era of influencer marketing takes Revlon by surprise

That MO worked for years, making it ironic that the company was slow to recognize and adapt to the next influencer era one defined by self-made experts who build followings and brand relationships on social foundations. This era made **Kylie Jenner** a billionaire in three years.

Revlon **trialed influencer campaigns relatively recently**.

Late to the game means late to insights and optimizations. And Revlon's size and complexity certainly do not help it adapt quickly to what it is hearing from fans and influencers the way DTC cult brand **Glossier does when it pivots**

product and packaging based on community feedback.

The influencer game changed, but Revlon did not change with it fast enough.

Change continues, making adaptability and agility keys to success

Even as you read this, influencer marketing is changing again.

Our [latest research](#) shows that leading brands are skipping big-reach influencers for those with smaller followings but more authenticity. Some even have no followers. Some are not even human, like [Lil Miquela](#).

Brands use influencer marketing systems to find, vet, contract, use, amplify, and monitor pools of influencers for marketing purposes across the whole customer lifecycle.

REVLON'S SITUATION is complex, and the company's slower adoption of modern influencer marketing tactics is likely one of many challenges contributing to its current struggles. But its influencer strategy signals a failure to keep pace with consumers, to recognize new trends, to change existing processes.

The lesson learned: While remaining unchanged works for Cindy Crawford, it does not for business [adaptability](#) and [agility](#) do.

This post originally appeared [here](#). Read Forrester's call-to-action for marketers [here](#).

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