

MARKETING

Unifying influencer marketing strategy can unlock growth potential: Inpulsus CEO

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Italian model, influencer and designer Chiara Ferragni showing a look from Versace's spring/summer 2020 collection. Image credit: Versace

By SARAH RAMIREZ

Influencer marketing has taken on more relevance amid the coronavirus pandemic, but many brands still face challenges in leveraging sponsorship strategies.

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Veterans of the digital marketing and technology industries have launched a global marketing consulting firm to help brands close the "strategic gap" with influencer marketing. Inpulsus will work with companies to create more unified influencer marketing strategies and improve audience engagement.

"What I often found was in conversations with senior level folks is influencer marketing generates fairly binary response," said Robbie Vann-Adib, founder and CEO at **Inpulsus**, London. "You're either a massive fan of it, or you're not.

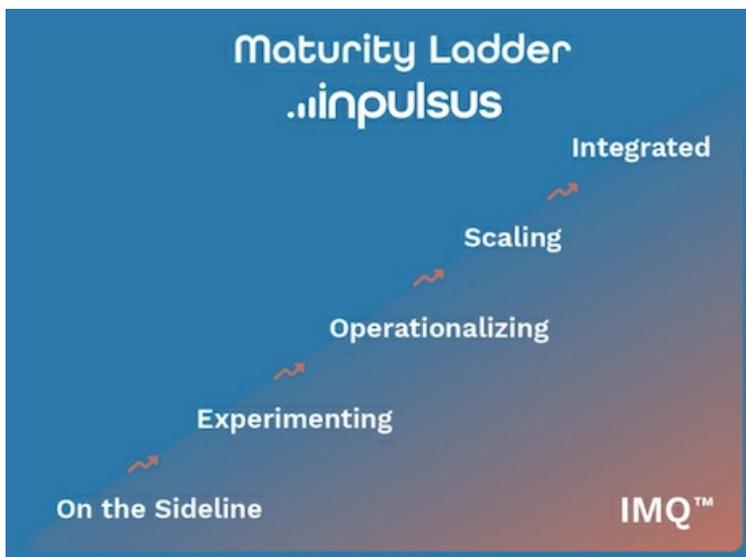
"When you talk to people about it, you often find they didn't do [influencer marketing] in a way that was optimal to goals that they were trying to achieve," he said.

Influence Maturity Quotient

According to Gartner's 2020 CMO Spend Survey, marketing executives have reallocated almost 32 percent of agency work to in-house teams during the pandemic, with more than half being social marketing.

This gives Inpulsus an opportunity to guide the in-house teams and consult on how to best approach influencer marketing.

According to Mr. Vann-Adib, one way the firm sets itself apart is with the Inpulsus Influence Maturity Quotient.



The IMQ Maturity Ladder. Image courtesy of Inpulsus

The IMQ is the first step of the consulting process and evaluates a brand's existing influencer marketing. A brief multiple choice questionnaire reviews a brand's program scope, sponsorship level, ability to execute, influencer relations, budget and resources.

Prospective clients are assigned an IMQ rating ranging from "on the sideline" to "integrated." Inpulsus also offers brands a set of recommendations based on their rating.

"That score tells you what level of maturity your influencer marketing program has," Mr. Vann-Adib said. "The notion is that based on some of the insights that these actions give you, we can then sit down and determine the very specifics for your situation.

"The thing about influencer marketing, like many other business disciplines, is, it is not really possible to go from zero to 100 miles an hour," he said. "No matter how capable your people are in your organization, no matter how much money you have to spend, there is a process of growing into doing this correctly for your content."



Inpulsus CEO Robbie Vann-Adibe. Image courtesy of Inpulsus

An organization's goals whether generating brand awareness or driving lead generation as well as how a brand measures success for instance, a campaign's reach or earned media value will present different challenges and result in different approaches to influencer marketing.

Influencer evolution

During the last several years, what constitutes engaging and effective influencer market has evolved.

"The days of simply saying, I'm going to give you \$100 say something nice about my brand' are over," Mr. Vann-Adib said. "People are also not really interested in me take a picture of me holding my Birkin bag on the beach."

Mr. Vann-Adib cited U.S. automaker Tesla as a brand that uses influencer marketing in the form of client feedback on social media to engage others and improve its vehicles.

Collaborations between brands and influencers can also be successful, particularly when both parties work together to co-create products.

Mr. Bags, one of the most-prolific influencers in China, has partnered with Western luxury brands including Longchamp and Tod's to create limited-edition handbag collections ([see story](#)).

In October, fashion house Hugo Boss introduced a new collection designed by the German fashion blogger and model Caroline "Caro" Daur.

The unveiling of Ms. Daur's capsule collection will advance the German brand's appeal to female buyers and underlines its attempts to innovate amid the pandemic. The collaboration stems from a long-time friendship between Ms. Daur and Ingo Wilts, chief brand officer at Hugo Boss ([see story](#)).

"The process of choosing the correct influences is a delicate task, and one I don't think all brands are necessarily taking the care they should be," Inpulsus' Mr. Vann-Adib said. "Choosing who you're going to collaborate with is a non-trivial thing."

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