

The dos and don'ts of user-generated content:

10 shocking facts you need to know



UGC and influencer marketing changed how marketers see prospects – and they have forged a relationship with our target audience before we have. Sometimes, a better one.

Because of this immense connection, education marketers have learned how to use user-generated content in their marketing strategy to build trust with an influencer's followers using authentic content.

User-generated marketing can increase revenue by 18%. Trajectories see this figure increase to 25% in the next four years!

UGC - simplified!

UGC is any content created by customers, usually just like you and me! These customers produce engaging and insightful content for followers - in different formats like reviews, videos, reels, stories, and social media posts, sharing it with their online audience.

What sets it apart

So instead of brands forcing their way into a prospects feed, we have a trusted community of people who become established brand advocates, using their creativity and honesty to produce authentic and relatable content, connecting with followers on behalf of the brand. Genius? Yes, it is.

A brief history in marketing

The general history of marketing is one wild ride. As a human race, marketing influences have dominated our buying habits for centuries. Material success became paramount, and the term "keeping up with the Joneses" came from our tendency to want something others had.

Marketing was inherently viral

The foundation of the marketing world was viral campaigns - designed to influence buyers everywhere. Stories were not always authentic - and as the years progressed, the fictional weaving of a marketing narrative wore off. Enter 2023 - where consumers value transparency more than ever.



UGC changed the landscape

Today, consumers wield the freedom and power to use online platforms to read reviews, watch videos, and explore social media before buying a product. All within a few minutes. And so, the game changed.

While public contributions are nothing new - the explosion of technological advances to create high-quality images and videos gave creators the ability to make the same content marketers had been producing for decades - on a device in their pocket.

It's wild.

UGC vs. influencer marketing

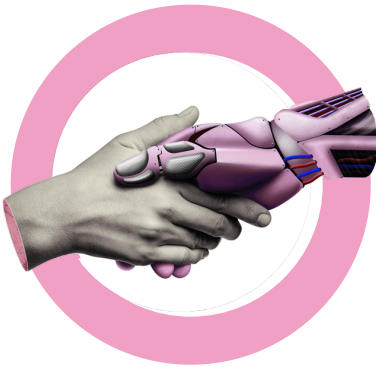
User-generated content creators are an extension of influencer marketing, so to speak. The definition of influencer evolves constantly, and for some brands, the term influencer has dropped away due to what the term infers.

Brands are also veering toward micro-influencers to reach a relevant audience instead of using expensive celebrities without a targeted audience. It's cheaper, more authentic, and builds trust with prospects.

It's an all-in-one solution!

How AI is helping UGC

AI enters the room. Wait - it's already in the room. And everywhere else! AI seamlessly integrates with UGC by supporting more personalized content - and captivating an audience. AI trains algorithms to power up UGC - analyzing the many facets of user behavior. It then uses it to optimize engagement by suggesting UGC content tailored to you. The images, videos, and even languages you see across your feed aren't there by mistake - AI and UGC collaborated to give you the content you keep watching. AI has powered an immersive experience online - like never before.



Hey, TOFU, we don't know you!

Not yet anyways. But UGC can change that! UGC is highly effective at nurturing prospects that aren't too sure about you. How is it effective? Well, it comes from an inherent, universal necessity to know everything, including what others think about something. And because the creator isn't the brand but someone just like them, it builds that trust marketers seek and does the nurturing FOR YOU! It can also answer questions without them contacting a brand - saving you time and money - and turning fans into loyal conversions.



Do you see
the power yet?

The dos and don'ts of UGC



While the idea behind UGC is to use ethical, authentic, and engaging marketing tactics, risk management factors come into play when choosing to use it in your strategy. As education marketers, we are responsible for releasing honest content that inspires, informs, and of course - increases conversions for the target audience.

Here are some dos and don'ts when using UGC in your strategy to ensure you get the most out of influencer marketing:

Do this

Get permission first

Always get permission before using content. A permission request is called "content rights management" and is essential to avoid legal issues. Reach out to the creator, get their permission, and ensure you have it in writing. Respecting the influencer and you can secure loyalty amongst their followers.

Not that

Don't fake ownership

You don't own the content - so don't claim to! Clearly credit the creator and make sure the message is clear - you are only sharing it. You can make connections with the creator's followers and build brand loyalty and trust. The creator's audience translates into your prospects, and are more likely to engage with you if you acknowledge the creator they trust.

Do this

Use only the best and fresh content

Just because it's out there doesn't mean you should use it. Choose your UGC carefully, and approach teammates to get input. Ensure the content aligns with your brand tone and is appropriate. Maintaining your values is essential! Don't use outdated content, unless the content draws attention to recurring campaigns or events.

Not that

Don't use old content

Content is seasonal - programs and courses evolve, and the UGC can be more relevant to a previous campaign. If you have a similar campaign coming up, or do the same one annually, go ahead and ask for permission - giving you the freedom to use it later. If not - leave old content behind.

Do this

Engage with users

Your favorite content creator's followers can see everything! A little bit of engagement can go a long way. Like the post, leave a comment, or even share their content to build a community of followers that value your interaction. Engaging at this level humanizes your brand, building recognition and loyalty around it.

Not that

Don't ignore the feedback

Unless your brand is a unicorn, you will receive negative feedback about your brand at some point. If a user creates UGC that criticizes your brand in any way - address the complaint immediately. Leaving an issue unresolved diminishes brand trust and shows a lack of care from your side. Leaving an open commentary will help you analyze where you are going wrong and allows you to engage with the community. Use it!

Do this

Allow creative freedom

First up - you are a marketer - and the creator is an influencer. The creator has amassed a following because of the content they put out there - trying to influence how they reach their audience through your brand will hamper your authenticity efforts. Followers can sniff fake content from a mile away. Let the creator do their thing - if it's off-brand - again, you don't have to use it.

Not that

Don't change the content

The whole idea behind UGC is that the content is authentic. Allow the user creative freedom, and don't try to edit the content or manipulate it to fit the brand tone. Remember - you have a choice to use it or not. Flex that right rather than change things. If you still want to change it, collaborate with the creator - never alter the content without the permission of the creator. NEVER!



Do this

Brush up on rules and regulations

UGC has opened up a whole playing field of guidelines. The rules and regulations evolve constantly and can change between platforms. Do your research before using UGC to ensure you won't land yourself in hot water with the law.

Not that

Ignore the law

Avoid inappropriate content or content that violates any laws. It's a minefield out there - always ensure you protect the brand. Any user-generated content you use, share, store, and collect falls under a privacy law - violating this may lead to criminal penalties. And then you'll be using your marketing spend elsewhere.

10 shocking UGC facts



UGC can be a marketing gold mine if executed correctly, and branding remains consistent in the messaging. But if you still aren't sure, let's explore facts about the marketing trend overtaking the digital and social media landscape.

Fact 1: They trust creators over brands

Brands work hard to make a service or product. While this process is happening, content creators are working hard to build a connection with their audience. When brands enter new markets, the main objective is to build trust with prospects, which takes time and money. But they already trust the content creator - in fact, research suggests that 92% of consumers trust UGC over brand messaging - WHOA!

Fact 2: Reviews are part of a beautifully wrapped UGC package

We love reviews! It's natural - want to know if a product will work for you before investing? We read reviews. And if you have them on your website, it can increase conversions by up to 74%. That is no small figure when looking for ROI.

Fact 3: Go small for serious engagement

You may think that a celebrity with 20 million followers could sell your product better, and you may be correct, but they are expensive and, because of their price tag, a lot less trustworthy. No - consumers are putting their faith in creators they trust.

Micro- and nano-influencers have small but loyal audiences. And the reach is still quite impressive! Nano-influencers have an audience of less than 10 000, while micro-influencers are a bit more robust, with a margin between 10 000 and 75 000 followers. The kicker? Micro-influencers can generate around 60% more engagement on content than your macro-influencers.

Fact 4: Better return on investment

Data shows that partnering with an influencer can help brands convert - but what if we told you that the real power lies with UGC? Because UGC creatives are more authentic and less regulated and edited, consumers trust them more and are more likely to "add to cart" through UGC content than influencer content - 5 times more likely! And because UGC is much cheaper - it can give you a better ROI.

Fact 5: No really, UGC is cheap

If you STILL want to book a big influencer, that's up to you. Just be prepared to pay a hefty price tag of \$20,000-\$30,000 per post. Yep, that's how much it could set you back! Compared to the nominal payment of \$200-\$600 for a smaller influencer, you can see that if you want to invest the same amount of money and hire MANY nano and micro-influencers, you could end up reaching more prospects with a better-targeted approach.

Fact 6: It's actually just a digital copy-cat of traditional marketing

Remember good old word of mouth? UGC is basically that but on digital steroids. Instead of people telling you about a product or service, we now have creators endorsing products on digital platforms. Instead of a friend telling us about a product or offering, we're getting 10 pm dm's with a reel, post, or video from our connections. The simplest part? We don't even have to start a conversation with that connection to get an endorsement if the creator has done their job well!

Fact 7: UGC is especially important in education marketing

Higher ed sells you dreams, with the power to inspire someone to make the life-changing step to pursuing that dream. And because of this inspiration, students are more than willing to share their testimonials and journeys with their counterparts and your prospects. Millennials and Gen Z value UGC in particular - and it gives education marketers the ability to hit two generations with one creator. Genius.

Fact 8: UGC isn't always positive

We are coming back to reviews - because they're free. And all reviews are good, even the bad ones. Hear us out!

If you go to a site to make a purchase and you get to read honest reviews, you quickly realize pain points across the board. You also see if the product solves these pain points. Brands can use this to improve products, and you can target your marketing efforts to these pain points.

Education marketers can also resonate with the insights provided by everyday people, allowing us to collaborate with brands and adjust our marketing strategy to increase conversion rates by catering to the audience.

Fact 9: UGC videos have more impact

We have already spoken about the power of videos - but in case you missed it - here is the tea on it. Your brain processes videos 60 000 times more than text. And while videos created by brands are crucial for telling your story - they are viewed 10 times less than UGC videos. You heard right! The marketing video you spent bucket loads of funds investing in will probably have less reach than the one from the creator you just hired. Madness!

Fact 10: UGC eradicates irrelevant audiences

We want to reach our target audience. Wasting marketing allocation on an audience uninterested in higher ed would be a loss. Choosing the right influencer will eliminate this audience for you with little market research. You can assess the demographic and interests of their followers with one deft stalking of their profile.

Did you enjoy exploring the shocking facts and stats on UGC?

This is what we took from it:

So we have established the dos, don'ts, and shocking facts on UGC. But minus the stats, what do we really think about it as a marketing strategy?

User-generated content ticks so many boxes for the education industry. It's honest, which helps us build trust with a targeted audience. It's authentic, which is an ethical approach in education marketing. It's inspiring because hearing stories and testimonials from students enjoying their journey sells better than branded content ever will.

And it can pack a mighty marketing punch - reaching into the cracks of hyper-engaged, trusting audiences that know their favorite creator won't sell them a song without an orchestra behind it. UGC is the perfect symphony of the modern digital realm.

And because we are passionate about selling inspiring and authentic possibilities for people to reach their dreams - we're here for it!

Education can change lives and UGC provides the perfect channel to do it.

