

Forget macro, micro or nano, 2019 is the year of 'internal-influence'

By  Mike Sharman

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The socialverse has been inundated with one Fyre meme after the other and thanks to the Hulu and Netflix - albeit through the skewed FuckJerry lens - exposés, there has been an amplified discussion about the pros and cons of the influencer marketing space.



© Screengrab from [Fyre Festival announcement](#).

The sordid world of buying followers, stealing content and passing it off as one's own (#FuckFuckJerry, #JustSaying) and selling the perception of value through inflated, faux metrics has tainted a marketing tactic that is an effective string in a mixed-digital-media bow.

This post aims to introduce an alternative view to the cacophony of thought-leadership and 'expert' opinion pieces littered across the web like the tears of rich kids moisturising the beaches of Pablo-not-Pablo's exotic island destination.

Marketers struggle to identify influencers and to gauge their effectiveness. This is one of the reasons Murray Legg, David Philip and I launched webfluential.com - in 2013 - to weed out the 'Charlottes' from the charlatans and use a proprietary algorithm to determine legitimate reach, resonance and relevance of individuals hoping to monetise their audience.



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35,000 unique sign-ups later and a collective, global audience size of more than 1.4 billion (with a B), we have been able to analyse enough data to ascertain how important influencer marketing can be when brands pair remarkable content with the right audience.

Unlike Cremora...

However, as an industry, we've been missing a trick. What if we could tap into thousands, tens of thousands or even

hundreds of thousands of influencers?

Well, I'm glad you asked. Sometimes the answer is unlike Cremora - it **is** inside... your organisation. Your staff offers you the opportunity to leverage a high percentage of people who - for most parts - actually like you and depend on you for a steady income, they are more susceptible to saying nice things about you, and they have a captive micro-audience on social media of friends, family and others who double as consumers. To use a Facebook Ads analogy - these people are the perfect lookalike audience.

Last year we built an internal communications platform for one of South Africa's most successful financial services brand. Like other players in its space, this company has struggled to keep up with the pace of the modern world and is being disrupted by agile new entrants into the market with bigger marketing budgets and trendy pantones. We utilised the trend of podcasting to create an ecosystem for us to disseminate near-realtime communication and data to an increasingly sceptical workforce, confused by restructuring and other consultant-friendly euphemisms.



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The power of the internal-influencer

Within four months, 50% of the organisation - or 3,000 people have signed up, proactively, to a platform that is not without its corporate security barriers-to-entry. These people have viewed more than 120,000 pages worth of content on this platform and 5% have engaged even further by asking questions pertinent to new strategies and work-streams that are being rolled out internally. These individuals can ask questions anonymously or add their names and we combat fears and uncertainty in new podcasts and via a FAQs section on the site.

We decided to take things a step further. Brands are obsessed with the Fourth Industrial Revolution fads and impacting real behavioural change on their market and/or organisation. We have built a brand advocacy component for this ecosystem. Now, we are able to provide updated, approved messaging (corporate comms loves this part) about new products or services via the platform.

Staff can then share from in-ecosystem to their social networks and the outside world and we can utilise the various APIs to determine who is the brand's biggest advocate (relevance) or who is delivering messaging to the greatest audience (reach). Learning from Discovery, we then reward these advocates with instant gratification - smoothies and cappuccinos (flat whites for your staff, Cape Town) ideally from your own canteen, which you are subsidising for staff happiness anyway.

It's the circle of brand advocacy. It's the power of the internal-influencer.

ABOUT MIKE SHARMAN

Mike Sharman is the owner of Retroviral Digital Communications, an online communications consultancy specialising in communication strategy, social media and content creation.

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