

Peace Out Skincare CMO talks TikTok, international expansion plans, and post-pandemic retail experiences

Article

The past year has been a whirlwind for many brands as they readjusted their marketing efforts to keep up with the changing landscape. One such brand, direct-to-consumer (D2C) company Peace Out Skincare, learned to be more nimble as it navigated a then-emerging platform—TikTok—and the Gen Z customers it caters to.

We recently spoke with Junior Pence, CMO and creative director at Peace Out Skincare, about what the brand is doing to reach younger consumers, what its social media efforts look like, and its recent plans to expand internationally.

What were the past 12 months like for Peace Out Skincare?

We learned that communication was key for us, and being flexible and nimble was important as well, because what we experienced during the rise of the pandemic was the rise of Gen Z.

During the pandemic, we were very much focused on this group as being a new consumer. With the rise of TikTok, they came to be such a force to reckon with. So the nimbleness of adjusting a whole entire marketing program strategy and PR strategy, that was fun and exciting.

Adjusting was not very difficult. It was really, “How do we incorporate more messaging?” whether it was through ecommerce, SMS, etc. We learned the value of TikTok. We learned that Instagram became what we like to call “your lazy uncle at a party,” and TikTok was the new frontier.

We also learned that the adjustment or segmentation of social media was beginning. What I mean by that was YouTube basically went on hold, if you will, unless you were looking for a movie trailer. Beauty tutorials—especially even skin tutorials—were no longer relevant. People, who were now primarily on their smartphones or tablets, were really looking for bite-size, digestible content.

And we adapted everything we did for mobile. That channel became our primary source of outreach not only to our Gen Z consumer but also to all of our demographics because we saw a humongous shift in our demographics searching on or with their phone versus the computer. That really changed a lot of what we did in terms of how we created content, how we spoke in our content, and how we laid out our content.

As more states begin to open up and consumers become comfortable again shopping at physical locations, have you thought about what the brand’s post-pandemic efforts will look like?

There's definitely a significant change in consumers' shopping habits, and there's a couple of different ways in which that's happening. Brick-and-mortar sales are definitely increasing, and we're noticing a shift in ecommerce. That is slowly lowering, but it was something we predicted. For us, it's finding the balance.

Consumers will start to spend once again, but they're really focused primarily on getting out of the house and going somewhere and socializing with their friends. What we're looking at is how do we change the way in which we talk about our product to fit more of a travel lifestyle, more of a social lifestyle, more of a lifestyle that is post-pandemic.

Are you going to take any 2020 learnings and incorporate them into this post-pandemic retail experience?

For one, we'll be driving more to [our retail partner] Sephora versus what we were doing in the pandemic, where we were driving predominantly to our D2C site and to Sephora's ecommerce site. But now that Sephora is open, we want people to go back into Sephora and refind our products, especially now that we're so routine-based.

We will be moving differently on all the platforms that we are currently on. TikTok will be different—we're going to put more money behind it, driving specifically probably to Sephora in the beginning as it opens so we can build that business back up.

In terms of working on Instagram, that will definitely morph into a more advertising Sephora-based business, as well. But again, we are continuing to grow our ecommerce business, so finding the right balance.

June 15 is a day on our calendar that's circled because out in California, the biggest state in the union, the mask [mandate] will be lifted that day. We are kind of going, "OK, if June 15 is going to be our jumping point into trying new things, how are we going to adjust and pivot accordingly?" And it's going to be a week-by-week basis. How did we perform this week? What has performed well, how many people were in store versus ecommerce on Sephora, ecommerce on our site.

With Sephora being our No. 1 partner, it's vital that we help them and work with them to continue to drive our consumer back into the store. At the same time, we know that we have a secondary clientele that doesn't shop at Sephora. They're not a prestige beauty buyer, but they still buy our product. So we will need to continue engaging with them and driving them to our D2C site.

Tell us about your recent international expansion.

We launched in Boots [in the UK] and we have expanded into UAE. We'll be moving into Southeast Asia in 2022. Right now our focus is on the UK because we're seeing such a strong response to our business. We're focusing on how to build those businesses, how to make them stronger, because the UK is a market unto itself, not like the EU, and they have a very robust acne influencer base, which we have tied into.

Our Canadian business is on fire, too. We've expanded more into Canada in terms of hiring a PR agency there.

Overall, the expansion of our businesses is really focused on communicating to the consumer, because each consumer has his own voice and is a very different client for us. It's also figuring out how to use things: How do we use SMS in the UK if we even can? How do we do email in the UK because they have very different consumer protections?

What's next on the horizon for the brand?

Growth, for sure. We'll be expanding our team, and throughout the rest of 2021 into 2022, we're going to be looking at building a global team, which will definitely be part of how we're going to be expanding our operations infrastructure, our sales team, our brand team.

We have our pipeline basically built out to 2023. It doesn't jump back and forth, but for us, routine is key right now. Subscription is also going to be another big focus for us, and we're working to expand our rewards program with our consumer, driving them back.