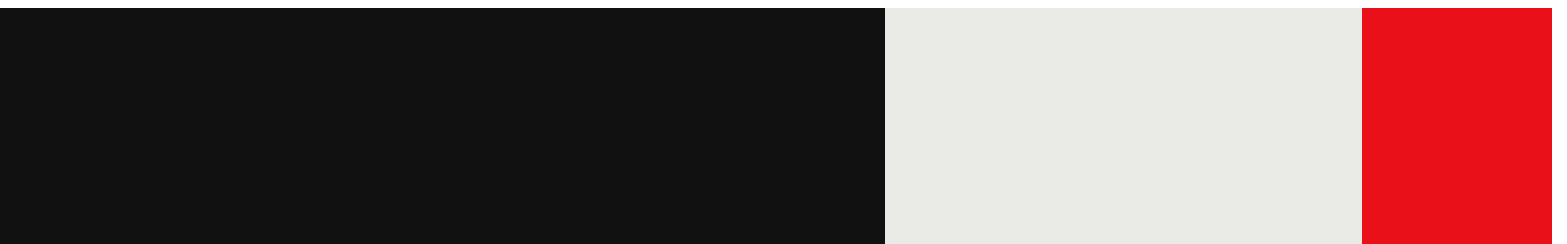


The Daily: Measuring influencer marketing efforts, a "people's" bid to buy TikTok, and Meta shuts 'Workplace'

Audio



On today's podcast episode, we discuss if influencers can actually deliver both upper- and lower-funnel outcomes, the common successes (and mistakes) brands make when blending influencer and affiliate tactics, and how best to align influencer content with a brands message. "In Other News," we talk about Frank McCourt's bid to buy TikTok and what to make of Meta shutting down 'Workplace'. Tune in to the discussion with our analyst Max Willens and Carissa Flinders, the team lead of influencer partnerships for AWIN.

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Episode Transcript:

Marcus Johnson (00:00):

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your brands advantage and drive impressive results. Visit awin.com/slash/eMarketer to learn more.

Carissa Flinders (00:25):

And I think a lot of that comes down to that initial vetting piece. I think that it really comes down to finding the right creators, finding those that will align with your brand and really trusting that they can create content that speaks well to their audience, but also can represent your brand.

Marcus Johnson (00:47):

Hey gang, it's Thursday, May 30th. Krista Max and listeners, welcome to the Behind the Numbers Daily, an eMarketer podcast made possible by a win. I'm Marcus today, I'm joined by two people. Let's meet them. We start with our senior analysts covering digital advertising and media based in Philly. It's Max Willens. Yo. Hey fella. And also joining us is the team lead of influencer partnerships for Awin based in Salt Lake City out in Utah. It's Carissa Flinders.

Carissa Flinders (01:14):

Hello. Thank you for having me.

Marcus Johnson (01:15):

Hello there. Thanks for being here. Of course, today we're talking about measuring influencer marketing and some other things, but we start with the speed intro to get to know our guests a little better. So got four questions for you, minute on the clock. Let's do it. So Chris, you are based in Salt Lake City, but where are you from? From?

Carissa Flinders (01:34):

I am from about 30 minutes north of Salt Lake City, so that not too far away. I went to the University of Utah in Salt Lake City, lived in LA for a couple years and somehow made my way back here.

Marcus Johnson (01:49):

Very nice. That's how homes work. They drag you back. Yes. Max, where are you based in from?

Max Willens (01:56):

Based in Philadelphia. Grew up in New York City.

Marcus Johnson (01:58):

Phil? Yeah, sorry, yeah, from New York City. Oh yeah, Nick's fan. Commiserations. Question two, Carissa, what do you do in a sentence?

Carissa Flinders (02:05):

I lead influencer campaigns from strategy down to execution to reporting.

Marcus Johnson (02:12):

How about you Max? Apart from hanging out with me sometimes

Max Willens (02:15):

I help people think more clearly about advertising and media trends.

Marcus Johnson (02:19):

Very good. Carissa, what's your morning drink?

Carissa Flinders (02:21):

Coffee. Usually Nespresso with a little bit of almonds. Milk. It's actually sitting right next to me.

Marcus Johnson (02:27):

Oh, very good. Max.

Max Willens (02:29):

As much black coffee as I can physically carry

Marcus Johnson (02:32):

As is socially acceptable. Last question, Chrisa your favorite trip you've ever taken?

Carissa Flinders (02:38):

I went to Japan with one of my best friends in 2018. It was cherry blossom season as well. So we did Tokyo, Kyoto in Osaka and I loved it. I want to go back.

Marcus Johnson (02:51):

Okay, so Krisa wins, but Max you might as well go for the sake of equity, equality, sake of fairness. Let's say max favorite trip you've ever taken. I

Max Willens (03:00):

Appreciate you indulging me. I definitely can't top Japan for my honeymoon. I went to the south of France and I went to, oh, that's a good one.

Marcus Johnson (03:09):

Hello. Great.

Max Willens (03:10):

Max came

Marcus Johnson (03:11):

To play. Very nice folks.

Max Willens (03:13):

Yeah, did a bad job of selling it to my wife though when I was first pitching it, I described Malai as the queen of Europe, which she did not think was romantic or sexy or interesting at all. But then we went there and she liked it.

Marcus Johnson (03:28):

This analyst thing doesn't work out. Max, maybe a job on France's tourism board. God. Alright folks, today's facts before we get into the episodes. Who invented the first vending machine? So it was invented in Egypt by an ancient Greek mathematician and engineer by the name of Hero of Alexandria, clearly a modest fellow and it dispensed holy water to worshipers. You could insert a coin into the machine, it landed on a pan connected to a lever, which would be heavy enough to pull the lever and dispense a small amount of holy water. Once the coin slid off the pan, the water would stop flowing.

Max Willens (04:04):

That is fantastic. Wow.

Marcus Johnson (04:06):

I remember trying to build one when I was a kid that dispensed Starburst English, like Starburst candy did not work. Not even a little bit, but I wanted to sit in action, so I would just sit next to it and just wait for my parents to come by and they didn't.

Max Willens (04:25):

You would say you stole a bunch of your friend's money and we're just like,

Marcus Johnson (04:27):

Oh, I'll go this one

Carissa Flinders (04:29):

Before you machine. Yeah,

Marcus Johnson (04:32):

That would've been more profitable than my design. But Chrisa last thing for you, since you said you went to Japan. Yeah. Did you ever see the lettuce vending machines in Japan?

Carissa Flinders (04:40):

I did not, but they do have a lot of beer and alcohol vending machines on the street, which I did take advantage of. Dangerous, dangerous. But yeah, that was a little bit dangerous. You'd just be out for a walk and be like, I'm going to get a little drink. Why not?

Marcus Johnson (04:56):

That makes more sense than this. So there's this lettuce stain machine called the Chef's Farm. It's kind of fascinating. You can grow 60 heads of lettuce a day using fluorescent bulbs, but we pick up a little spring mix for the commute home. Yeah, the drinks make more sense. Anyway, today's real topic, measuring the value of influencer marketing efforts.

Marcus Johnson (05:25):

Alright folks, we're in the lead now and we're talking about influencer marketing and affiliate as well. I mean tracking the performance of influencer campaigns, a bit of a moving target to say the least. Algorithms that change, figure out how they work, all kinds of different platforms as well you've got to pay attention to. And so today we're talking about trying to

measure the value of influencer marketing efforts and a little affiliate marketing. Two first question, Chrisa throw this at you. So people often think of affiliate marketing as a lower funnel channel, influencer marketing market as upper funnel, but can influencers actually deliver both upper and lower funnel outcomes?

Carissa Flinders (06:04):

Yeah, great question. So funny enough, I was sitting on a webinar panel last week and we were discussing kind of the same topic and I really loved what one of the panelists mentioned. She said, I think that there are content creators that can create really great content, but not all of them have influence, which I found to be really interesting and has kind of stuck with me. So kind of back to your question, can they do both? I think that you kind of have three buckets of creators. I think that you have some creators that create really killer content. They're really great at kind of driving brand awareness engagement. That content typically does really well when you boost it through paid media. Maybe you spark it on TikTok, you can repurpose those ads on orange channels as well. You also have creators that may not be amazing content creators, but they can really drive sales and they can drive those lower funnel outcomes. And you also have some of those creators that sit in the middle that can do both. So I think that when it comes down to it, it's really depends on the brand's KPIs, what they're looking to do with influencers. But to answer your broader question, yes, I think that influencers can absolutely drive outcomes all the way from top of funnel down to lower funnel. We've seen that with quite a few of our clients as well.

Max Willens (07:27):

I think what's so interesting about this question, Marcus, is the kind of nimbleness of a lot of creators and their openness to trying to do both. I'm sure most of the influencers out there initially got started when they thought about making money. They thought about it from more of an upper funnel mindset, but more of and more of them it does seem are at least amenable to trying out performance focused or lower funnel type campaigns and it behooves them to do that. I mean, one thing that I think is so interesting is over the last several years, legacy media companies, which often just got paid for raising awareness, were really not very interested in finding out whether they could actually drive lower funnel outcomes and didn't really feel that interested in being measured against them. So influencer willingness to try out lots of different kinds of compensation arrangements and deal arrangements is kind of a key component and understanding how this channel's going to evolve.

Marcus Johnson (08:23):

What do you make of them doing both though? I mean, should they do both or is this something to be said for being really excellent at doing one versus the other or versus doing too much?

Carissa Flinders (08:35):

I mean I think it depends. I think it all kind of comes back to what your goals are for the campaign or for the initiative that you're working on with the influencers. I'll give kind of an example. For one of our clients, we were planning a back to school campaign. We said we're really focused on content for this campaign. We're focused more on upper funnel. We want to repurpose a lot of these assets through paid. So we're just kind of focusing on those creators that are really good at content. We want them to drive more upper funnel outcomes. Whereas I think other campaigns we've worked on, same client, we've kind of changed our strategy a little bit and said we're going to do an Instagram story only pulse because that's a very easy way for followers to shop. Affiliate links are within the content. That's kind of the way that I think a lot of users of social are used to shopping and kind of what you've seen a lot of creators do that are really good with that affiliate piece is they do a lot through stories. They use affiliate links and stories, promo codes and stories. I think in terms of should they do both? Can they do both? I think there are some that can and some that I think kind of know what their niche is and they stick to that.

Marcus Johnson (09:48):

So let's talk about brands blending their influencer and affiliate tactics. What are some Chris common mistakes and successes that you see?

Carissa Flinders (09:56):

Yeah, I think in terms of common mistakes, I think that when you're blending influencer and affiliate, a lot of it is really important to promote evergreen and organic activity. I think part of blending influencer affiliate is that long-term relationship piece. You're wanting to build relationships with creators. You're wanting them to promote your brand over time. And I think that I've seen at times some brands get a little bit too prescriptive with their affiliate creators. I think that it's really important to set guardrails and brand guidelines as to what you're wanting them to promote to. Of course make sure that you're kind of safeguarding your brand, but also I think a big, big component of that is the organic piece. So they know how to

speak to their audiences, they know what's going to perform best, and I think letting them flourish in that way and do their thing. I think that that's definitely a common mistake we've seen.

Marcus Johnson (10:49):

Max, lemme grab a mistake from yourself that you see. Yeah, I

Max Willens (10:52):

Think Carissa kind of alluded to this in her previous response, but I think it's a hundred percent correct, which is just that it's important or one of the big mistakes is kind of having a lack of clarity in terms of what you're asking the influencers to do. One of the things that came up a lot in a report that I wrote on this topic late last year was that there's been this real interesting rise of PR firms getting into the affiliate space and trying to drive what's known as performance pr, but you then can get into this confusing place where you're not sure whether you're emphasizing the upper funnel or the lower funnel or whether different kinds of creatives should be solving for both variables at once. And that can create a lot of misalignment, which tons of creators point to as being kind of a chief stumbling block to success is misalignment around what the creative is supposed to accomplish. And so I think that just having that internal clarity around what the expectations are and how you're going to get there is kind of the chief stumbling block that you see a lot of the time.

Marcus Johnson (11:51):

Let's move to successes, common successes, Chris, that you are seeing brands make when blending the two influencer and affiliate tactics together.

Carissa Flinders (11:58):

Yeah, I think that in terms of successes, I think it's really a lot about internal alignment, which I know is not the most easy thing, especially when you're working with large enterprise brands. We see that there's a lot of silos within internal teams and departments, but I think those that are, I would say more forward thinking or more ahead of the game in blending their influencer and affiliate tactics is that alignment internally. One of our clients I think has excelled at this and they've really worked hard to blend those channels together. So their affiliate team, pure play affiliate team works very closely with their influencer team. There's a lot of crossover when working with influencer networks like LTK for example, because they are paper

performance, they're ran through the affiliate channel and so they've really worked closely together to kind of make those channels perform to their best ability.

Marcus Johnson (12:50):

It's such a fundamental part of it as well, but it seems so obvious, but so few companies do it, just get the two people working on the thing from different parts of the organization in the same room and then let the rest happen by itself. Max, how about you? What comes to mind when you think of successes of blending the two? Yeah,

Max Willens (13:07):

I think this is related to what we've been discussing already, but a lot of it is just kind of around communicating to the influencer that what you are trying to achieve with them as part of something bigger. A lot of times influencers can feel like when they do a campaign, there's just kind of a one-off quality to it, and sometimes that's fine. Sometimes it's just a simple momentary aligning of stars, but a lot of influencers do like the idea and are intrigued by the prospect of working on a deeper level with brands and whether that means doing things for upper and lower funnel objectives or something else. And so if you have that coordination and that clarity, then you oftentimes can get a more motivated influencer on board. And so I feel like that's a big component to success as well.

Marcus Johnson (13:52):

Let's end with this. So a struggle for brands to figure out where the line is between effectively balancing brand messaging with the creativity of influencers. Chris, how do you think folks should ensure that the influencer content aligns with their brand while still giving them the freedom to create something that resonates with their audience? How do they do that?

Carissa Flinders (14:12):

Yeah, yeah, I think that's a great question and something that I was actually discussing with one of my, not necessarily colleague, we work closely with her, but she works for a home design brand, which has a very beautiful aesthetic and they're very much controlled around their brand and who's promoting their brand and that sort of thing, but they've really been able to start working with creators at scale, and I think a lot of that comes down to that initial vetting piece. I think that it really comes down to finding the right creators, finding those that will align with your brand and really trusting that they can create content that speaks well to

their audience, but also can represent your brand in a great way. And I think that it can be done at scale. I think some brands are maybe afraid of doing it at scale, but I think that really it comes down to that sourcing and vetting piece and really just making sure that you're aligning with the right partners,

Marcus Johnson (15:03):

Finding someone you've got the chemistry with and then the trust. And it's similar to working with anyone, right? It's the same qualities that you're looking for. Max, what comes to mind for you?

Max Willens (15:12):

Yeah, I mean I think that what Chris pointed to was exactly right. I mean, I was looking at some research that got published, I guess it was the end of last month around basically a firm pulled a bunch of creators about just kind of building a saddle chain relationships with brands. And when they were asked what the most important criteria was in determining a successful partnership, and 79% of them I think said, fit with my audience. And so on some level, we've been talking a lot about the brand's perspective and whether they can trust influencers, but in some ways the trust question is sort of more important and considered more deeply by the creators themselves. A brand can very easily just pop back into a marketplace and find more creators if a campaign flops, but if a creator takes on a project that they know isn't going to work or is going to provoke an allergic reaction to their audience, the cost to them is a lot more substantial. And so I feel like on some level, the most important thing is to just trust that the creators know who they're talking to and what will speak to them and act accordingly.

Marcus Johnson (16:18):

No, it's a great point. Looking at it from the creator angle as well. Alright folks, that's what we've got time for the lead time now for the fourth quarter of the show today. In other news, a people's bid to buy TikTok and Meta shuts down workplace.

Speaker 4 (16:33):

One

Marcus Johnson (16:37):

Story, one billionaire Frank Quat assembles a people's bid, he calls it to buy TikTok writes Damn Primack of Axios, he explains that the former LA Dodgers owner has been a vocal critic of tech and social media stepping down as CEO of his investment firm to launch this effort to give users more control and ownership of their personal data. Apparently, interestingly, unlike other potential bidders, court says he doesn't want tiktoks algorithm. But Krista, what's your reaction to this McCort bid for TikTok?

Carissa Flinders (17:08):

I mean, I think it's really interesting in terms of the future of TikTok. I personally as a user do not want TikTok to go away, but also in my professional life, I think that so many creators have built incredible brands and followings through the platform. I think that brands have really done a lot with creators through TikTok, so I think it'd be a huge loss if anything happened to TikTok. But the point around the algorithm, I don't know a whole lot around what he's alluding to, but I feel like a lot of that is why users love TikTok is because of their for you pages and the content that's being served to them. So I mean, it's kind of a double-edged sword, right? You don't want TikTok to go away, but it also comes down to who's going to buy the platform and what are they going to do to it if it does get acquired by someone like Frank McCort.

Marcus Johnson (17:57):

Yeah, max,

Max Willens (17:58):

Yeah, I think it's very, very strange. I mean, I understand from a sort of messaging standpoint, McCort signaling that he's fine with buying it without the algorithm attached, but to me it's a little bit like saying you're interested in buying a Ferrari, but you don't want the engine or the tires or the leather seating. And at that point you have to ask yourself what you're buying. And to Carissa's point, if the for you page starts functioning radically differently, which based on what McCort is saying, it will, I think that it'll very quickly turn into something where people might start revolting and navigating away from the platform. Because so much of what people love TikTok for is that kind of serendipitous quality. And it's possible that Frank McCort, even though he's not a tech guy, could somehow magically create something that's just as entertaining. But I would also feel comfortable betting against that happening.

Marcus Johnson (18:52):

Yeah. Story two, meta Shuts Down Workplace, it's Microsoft Teams and Slack rival. This version of Facebook was built to help business teams and wider organizations communicate rights. Ingrid London of Tech Crunch noting the platform will stick around until September of next year and then will be read only for the following nine months before being completely decommissioned. After a 10 year effort, meta is throwing in the tout to focus on building AI and Metaverse technologies they believe will fundamentally reshape the way we work. Carissa, what's your take on this move by Meta to Sunset Workplace?

Carissa Flinders (19:25):

Yeah, I think that we've seen Meta do this a few times, right? Specifically within the Instagram app. We saw them do this with shopping. They took away the shopping tab, we saw the same thing happen with affiliate. They thought that that was an avenue they were going to explore. They beta tested affiliate, didn't turn out the way they wanted and took those features away. So I feel like this is something that we've kind of seen Meta do time and time again as they try to expand their efforts. I also think that it's just really tough to compete with giants like Microsoft Teams and Slack. I feel like you kind of have, slack has this cult following people that use Slack, love Slack, and same thing with Microsoft. Microsoft just makes sense because a lot of people have Microsoft suite of products used by their company. So I think that ultimately it's something that's just too difficult to compete with.

Marcus Johnson (20:12):

Yeah, max.

Max Willens (20:13):

Yeah, I love all those points. It made sense when they launched it initially, it felt like a very novel play at stickiness in addition to being part of the tried and true meta playbook of stealing other people's business ideas. But I also feel like it was just fundamentally too different from the kinds of selling that they're used to. The way that they make money is by building self-serve tools that can be used at scale while also catering to enterprise at a certain level. But this would be like if Aramark started selling meal kits or something or going the other way, if Blue Apron decided it would start offering food services to stadiums and universities, it's too different a business and it's pretty common for radical changes like that not to pan out. And especially when you focus on how laser-focused meta has become on homing in on things that

work. It's not surprising that they cleaned this off after giving it. What I would to their credit say, is a pretty good faith effort. They had this in play for a really long time by their standards.

Marcus Johnson (21:13):

That folks, is all we have time for. Thank you so much to my guests for hanging out with me today. Thank you first to Carissa. Thank you so much for having me. Absolutely. And thank you of course to Max,

Max Willens (21:21):

Always a pleasure, Marcus. Thank you.

Marcus Johnson (21:22):

And a huge thank you to the team Victoria who edits the show, Stuart, who runs the team and Sophie who does on social media. Thanks to everyone for listening in. We hope to see you tomorrow for the Behind the Numbers Weekly Listen and e-Marketer video podcast made possible by Awin.