

Q&A: How food hacks and giveaways help cultivate an online community with W&P

Article

Kate Lubenesky

President at W&P



Insider Intelligence spoke with Kate Lubenesky, president at W&P, a food and beverage essentials brand that sells sustainable packaging for everyday food items. Started from a Kickstarter campaign 10 years ago, the brand has since amassed a following among consumers striving to attain a more sustainable lifestyle.

Insider Intelligence: How are you carving out a physical presence as a digitally native brand?

Kate Lubenesky: As an omnichannel brand, we don't just do direct to consumer, but we also partner with a lot of retail partners and other brands who have physical stores or pop-up experiences or coffee shops.

During COVID, we had to shift to D2C, which was a luxury in that it allowed us to focus on that singularly. It allowed us to hone back in on our audience so that, as the world opens back up, we have a much deeper connection and a stronger direct-to-consumer presence than we ever had. Now if customers go into a Nordstrom's or an Anthropologie or an independent gift shop, they already know the brand.

II: What barriers have you encountered when trying to foster a community with consumers?

KL: Our biggest barrier has been not having any in-person interactions. As we were going into COVID, we had lots of plans for pop-ups and activations and working with other brands to appear in real life with our customer base and that shifted overnight.

One of the fun things that we did during COVID was giveaways. Some of our most successful giveaways were during Earth Month—we gave a free, reusable silicone bag with every purchase. Once a consumer experiences that product, then they come back and purchase additional units. It is important for somebody to experience the product in real life, and we couldn't do it during COVID, so we had to do it virtually by gifting or putting products on sale.

II: How do you use social media to better your products?

KL: Social media is great because it allows us to have a very direct one-on-one connection. Some of our best inspiration comes from our consumers—for example, they will freeze leftover coconut milk in an ice cube tray, and then everybody goes nuts about it. We look at these trends and then we can incorporate that into our content, whether we're reposting from an influencer or looking at TikTok trends.

It's not just thought leadership on how to make a grain bowl or how to preserve the life of your fruits and vegetables by using a silicone bag and tenting it in water, but it's also watching and listening to our community and asking them how they're using the products and what they love about the products that we can then echo back out to our community. It's a give and take rather than us pushing content down people's throats.

II: What is your current TikTok marketing strategy?

KL: With our community, it's very much recipes and sustainability and food hacks. TikTok a newer medium for us, and one of the things that we wanted to make sure that we were doing is creating content that's just for TikTok. We didn't want to take Instagram Reels and force them into TikTok or take snippets of our highly produced videos and put them on. We look to our community to help us with that platform a lot because it's very fast, fun, and people are spitting up a ton of content.

We moved into TikTok a bit more slowly simply because it's a platform that unless you're native to that platform, you can come across as too much like a corporate brand, which is not our ethos.