A Guide to:

Inclusive Influencer Marketing

Hear directly from creators and get their perspectives on content creation and compensation trends.
INTRODUCTION

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Introduction

At Mavrck, we understand that work needs to be done to represent greater diversity and inclusion in influencer marketing, and each of us can help pave the way. We admit that we are not perfect today, and also recognize that the conversation around diversity, equity, inclusion, and belonging must be part of our goals as an organization to strive to be better every day.

With so many influencers and consumers not represented what is preventing you from acting today and shifting your influencer marketing strategy in a way that’s more inclusive? Influencer marketing is designed to drive action from the audiences that follow creators — let’s point that towards advancing inclusion and equity.

Read this guide to help your brand when it comes to incorporating inclusive marketing best practices within your influencer strategy.
INTRODUCTION

An Intro from Our Co-Founders
Lyle Stevens & Sean Naegeli

As founders of Mavrck, we have always prioritized investing in our people, knowing that if we put people before profits and processes, the outcome will be the strongest, and we can focus on building a healthy and successful culture. To put people first acknowledges that it must be for all people and we believe this is done by creating a safe space for all backgrounds and developing a culture that encourages vulnerability. We know that investing in our people requires us to do it in a way that is fundamentally inclusive and recognizes the importance of diversity. We admit that we are not perfect today, and also recognize that the conversation around diversity, equity, inclusion and belonging must be part of our goals as an organization to strive to be better every day.

The Founder’s Mentality mentions founders have a “bias toward action.” At a startup, you are constantly pushing forward, against odds. Beyond the responsibility of our own business, we need to put our ‘bias toward action’ and push forward toward making change to combat racial inequality and social injustice. Being a passive observer is not an ingredient to prosper at a startup, nor is it acceptable today for our work at Mavrck and how we behave as an organization when it comes to social justice. There are two areas our team can influence and make meaningful changes to work toward, which are uniqueness and belonging - two important tenets of equity and inclusion.

Mavrck Work

The thesis of Mavrck’s product and services is rooted in acknowledging that influencers or creators are humans - not ad units. They have emotions, ideas, day-to-day lives, families and passions - just like the human marketers collaborating with them and the humans who are following and consuming their content on social media. This enables them to build trust with that audience and create amazing, authentic stories and content.

If we are to believe in the power and impact of human-generated marketing, we must also prioritize the just treatment of all humans involved and promote diversity within these partnerships. The importance of progress in diversity, equity and inclusion within the ecosystem of influencer marketing is critical, as it is within our four walls at Mavrck.
Mavrck Culture

At Mavrck, we built the foundation of our culture around growth by embodying two core characteristics to propel us forward: curiosity and hustle. Curiosity speaks to the drive to learn more, connect with people, and do it with humility, while hustle is putting all of that approach into practice through experimentation, innovation and hard work.

Today, we need that curiosity to force us to listen and participate not with the intention of being right, but with the intention of moving the conversation collaboratively. Our hustle drives us to be comfortable with the uncomfortable, to unlearn our biases, and be strong enough to admit when we are wrong. This will allow us to learn, relearn, and push forward to create change.

Mavrck Culture

Yes, our focus within the industry is just influencer marketing, but we are fortunate that the nature of this ecosystem centers around humans creating content that people trust, thus influencing ideas. If we work with our brands, marketers, influencers, and Mavrck squad members with more inclusivity, prioritizing diversity and delivering with equity, our impact within the industry can be far-reaching. At Mavrck, we are committed to being better and doing more every day - our team is excited to share with you how you can join along in the journey.
Why Representation in Influencer Marketing Matters
Why Representation in Influencer Marketing Matters

During one company-wide meeting, Mavrck hosted Dr. Stefanie Johnson, an associate professor at the University of Colorado, Boulder’s Leeds School of Business and author of the new book, Inclusify. Dr. Johnson teaches students about leadership and inclusion, and the role it plays in business and also in our lives. When she spoke to our team, we went through some simple exercises to start.

She asked us to picture a CEO. Who comes to mind?

Elon Musk, Tim Cook, Jeff Bezos, Mark Zuckerberg, are just a few names that were mentioned.

Notice anything? Our minds automatically picture mostly white men. And why wouldn’t that be the case? **Less than 1 percent of Fortune 500 CEOs are Black, and just over 7 percent are women.** This highlighted our own implicit bias, or how our attitudes or stereotypes affect our understanding, actions, and decisions in an unconscious manner. And this doesn’t just happen in the workplace, it infuses our everyday lives.

As influencer marketers, we are susceptible to this same dynamic. When people hear “influencer,” many envision a fashionista or a mommy blogger, or even a young content creator on TikTok. It’s also a reality that many will associate that image with a white person.

Creator and author Stephanie Yeboah wrote in an article in 2019, “**By exclusively using white influencers to tout holiday experiences, beauty and skincare products and fashion pieces, the story being told is that these experiences are only available to white people.**” And it’s a sentiment that is felt by many.
The focus on representation in our industry became louder after the tragic murders of George Floyd, Ahmaud Arbery, and Breonna Taylor. As a nation confronting its history of systemic racism, societal conversation naturally happened on social media. As a show of solidarity with the Black community, brands, influencers, and consumers alike posted a black square to their Instagram feed for Blackout Tuesday, a campaign created by two Black women in the music industry. But many thought this was performative — which was the case in response to travel luggage company Away’s post in support of Black Lives Matter, who were criticized for their lack of including Black creators in their campaigns.

It’s not just Black creators who feel this sentiment — other creators of color, LGBTQ+ influencers, and other influencers who identify with underrepresented groups are echoing their frustrations. While many brands work with LGBTQ+ creators during June’s Pride Month, that support falls short the rest of the year. Brianne Huntsman, queer blogger of The Huntswoman says, “LGBT bloggers all joke that Pride is like our holiday season. The emails come flooding in for Pride, but where are these socially-driven organizations the other months of the year?” Similarly, plus-size and disabled influencers see a disparity in opportunities and compensation. “Disabled influencers are paid less or nothing at all compared to non-disabled influencers with smaller platforms,” says blogger and entrepreneur, Alex Dacy of Wheelchair Rapunzel.
Representation in advertising has been a long-known, but less acted upon, conundrum. A 2019 study from Adobe found that only 26 percent of African Americans, 10 percent of Hispanics and 3 percent of Asians feel represented in advertising, compared to 59 percent of white people. By perpetuating harmful stereotypes of underrepresented people or excluding them altogether, we fail those people and perpetuate inequity.

GLAAD and P&G conducted a study on LGBTQ+ inclusion in advertising and found that non-LGBTQ Americans who had been exposed to LGBTQ people in media were more likely to accept LGBTQ people and be supportive of LGBTQ issues compared to respondents who had not been exposed to LGBTQ people in the media, highlighting the need for brands to lead the charge.

When BIPOC, women, LGBTQ+ individuals and people living with disabilities are ubiquitous in advertising and media, it not only builds a foundation for representation, it also impacts profits. For example, in 2017, female-led films earned 38 percent more at the box office, demonstrating that representation sells. Madeline Di Nonni, CEO of The Geena Davis Institute on Gender in Media says, “In advertising, if you place advertising in a pod next to appropriately diverse and inclusive programming, you will sell more stuff. It’s not just a nice thing. You get to make money.” This begs the question, why aren’t more brands focusing on diversity and inclusion in their advertising strategies, including influencer marketing?
Some brands are getting it right. Aerie, an American Eagle brand, is well known for their commitment to working with underrepresented influencers that represent real women, like *Iskra Lawrence*, a plus-size model, *Hari Nef*, a transgender activist, and *Brenna Huckaby*, a Paralympic snowboarder for their appropriately named #aerieREAL campaign. **Mavrck customer TomboyX**, whose gender-neutral underwear is made for all people, celebrates the uniqueness of the influencers they **partner with**.

It’s **up to us, as marketers, to continue to push the industry forward**. When we see ourselves in the Asian couple posting about their favorite home products, the Black beauty influencer creating a tutorial on YouTube, the non-binary TikToker jumping on the latest dance craze, or influencers working with brands to celebrate body positivity and diversity, we create an equitable space where all creators can thrive.

Get started with our **5 Steps to Make Your Influencer Marketing Programs More Inclusive**, in the next section.
5 Steps To Make Your Influencer Marketing Programs More Diverse & Inclusive
5 Steps to Make Your Influencer Marketing Programs More Diverse & Inclusive

The marketing and advertising industry had an important reckoning in 2020, with many advertising, marketing and PR agencies, as well as the large enterprise corporations that they serve, pledging they will do better in diversity, equity and inclusion. Many of those pledges were commitments to making the output of their work — the ads, content and marketing plans — more diverse and inclusive. As influencer marketers, we work with real people and not ad units, so we have a unique responsibility to ensure that the people we are working with are representative of the real world and modern consumer.

**Here are five steps to consider as part of your inclusive influencer marketing journey.**

- **Listen, learn, and then unlearn**

  **Unlearn your own biases.** “Unlearning” is a word that has come into popular culture in the last several years; and it means learning to think, behave, or perceive differently when there are already beliefs, behaviors, or assumptions in place. Don’t know where to start? Try this monthly self-paced learning collective, developed by author, speaker, and activist Rachel E. Cargle. And of course, do the work.

  **Involve your influencers or potential influencer partners.** Survey them. Talk to them. Solicit ideas from them. Ensure that the group you are surveying is diverse in ethnicity and race, gender identity, sexual identity, age, geography, and includes people with disabilities in addition to other identities and lived experiences.
5 Steps to Make Your Influencer Marketing Programs More Diverse & Inclusive

- Set progress markers & establish accountability processes
  
  Create ongoing accountability. Becoming an inclusive marketer is not a “set it and forget it” or a check-the-box approach. Inclusive marketing should be embedded in the fabric of your marketing efforts, from initial strategy and creative briefing, all the way to measurement and optimization. Every step of the process should have an accountability system for inclusivity.

  Representation matters. Proper inclusion and accurate cultural representation of multicultural segments and underrepresented identity groups is extremely important. Know where you’re currently starting from in terms of your influencer marketing efforts in areas of ethnicity and race, gender, body diversity, and people with disabilities — if you don’t have technology that can do this for you, this may require manual effort. After fully evaluating your current state, set benchmarks for where you need to get to in order to reflect proper representation.

- Look at your teams - both internal and external partners

  Representation matters. Yep, we said it again — because it matters! Who is at the table (and making sure that the proverbial table is a safe space) is important so that each member can express their points of view, perspectives, lens on life and inform a more inclusive marketing output. Are diverse voices represented at meetings and brainstorms? Or is it a homogenous group? Think of it this way: who ISN’T in the room and being heard?

  Hold marketing partners accountable too. If your organization is making diversity, equity and inclusion a priority in your influencer marketing efforts, so should your agency or technology partner. Have a conversation with them and ask them what commitments they’re making towards diversity and inclusion.
Evaluate your brand materials, processes, and practices

Do a deep dive. Through a diversity and inclusion lens, review your brand guidelines, brand book, brand briefs and any other materials with which you are using to communicate with influencers or your influencer marketing partners.

Are you being as inclusive as possible in your thought-starters, messaging asks, creative and aesthetic asks, and holiday/seasonal considerations? Remember that you may bring your own unintentional and unconscious biases to the table. Solicit feedback from colleagues or hire a DEI marketing consultant who specializes in implementing best practices for more inclusive and diverse marketing.

Make the mood board inclusive — or ditch it entirely. Think twice about the use of a ‘mood board’ as a mood board can end up being homogenous and exclusionary, and by omission can exclude identity groups or cultures.

If you’re going to use one, make sure it reflects the diversity of real people and includes underrepresented identity groups.

Create flexible briefs. Allow influencers to have the creative freedom to interpret creative briefs - it’s more authentic, supporting better content and creating more of an impact for your brand. It also helps to prevent the marketers’ unconscious bias to seep into the influencers’ content output.

Fair and equitable payment. Ensure that you are being equitable and fair in all practices and processes, including influencer payments. Are your payment and terms of use policies written out explicitly for influencers and are they clear and transparent?

Gather feedback, and listen some more

Remember that survey from step one? Field it again! Track your progress and solicit feedback from both influencers, team members and even end consumers if resources allow. Take the feedback into account and consideration for future campaigns.
How to Make Your Marketing Materials Inclusive
How to Make Your Marketing Materials Inclusive

As we all strive to better support diversity and actively fight against injustices, it’s clear that the influencer marketing space has a long journey ahead to become more inclusive. It’s also clear that a brand’s target audience — aka influencers’ followers — has an increased affinity to a brand if they feel like and see that they are represented by diverse creators who partner with the brand.

According to a 2019 consumer study by Google and Female Quotient, “64% of those surveyed said they took some sort of action after seeing an ad that they considered to be diverse or inclusive.”

Brand marketers have the opportunity to make sure that their company’s marketing materials — influencer generated content, mood boards, and brand books alike — are inclusive and support the idea that uniqueness must be embraced within all initiatives.

This guide outlines how brands can create inclusive influencer marketing materials that lead to more diverse and representative influencer activations.

Diversify your influencer persona types

To effectively diversify your influencer marketing activations, brand marketers should start at the campaign planning stage. While identifying your brand’s influencer persona types, you must make a conscious effort to include a wide variety of personas, each representing your consumer. Whether this consideration is in relation to ethnicity, gender, sexuality, disability status, age or other types of diversity, make sure to think through how you can authentically build each into your influencer personas.

During this process, consider creating a resource that showcases real-life influencer examples who represent your identified persona types.
On this page, you’ll see that the group of influencers that are highlighted as persona examples showcase a variety of creators when it comes to diversity of gender, ethnicity, and sexual orientation based on the target audience of the brand in question.

**Influencer Persona Examples:** Priority markets and audiences will be prioritized and reviewed in influencer selection, including but not limited to *age, ethnicity, HHI, location, and other demographic and psychographic data* that match the brand’s target audience.

<table>
<thead>
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<th>Dotan Ryder</th>
<th>Dorcas Quarshie</th>
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<td>(30-34)</td>
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<td>@stylepashion</td>
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<tr>
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<td>Lifestyle, Fashion</td>
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<th>Tessa Netting</th>
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<td>Tampa, FL</td>
<td>Los Angeles, CA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.6% Engagement rate</td>
<td>9.4% Engagement rate</td>
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<tr>
<td>Food, Lifestyle, LGBTQ</td>
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After you define diverse persona types and finalize your budget, you’re ready to start sourcing influencers. Influencer marketing platforms, like Mavrck, allow you to use different search criteria to easily identify the various types of creators you would like to include in your campaign. The Mavrck platform has filters for gender and age, as well as keyword searches — for example, “body positive” or “LGBTQ” or “Latinx” — to further hone in on a diverse group of creators. You can also create different lists of underrepresented influencers within the Mavrck platform — for example, a “Black creators” list such as this one — which will always be available to reference for any future campaigns as you build the lists and add to them over time.

As you start inviting creators to participate in your brand’s collaboration, you should keep an eye on the number or percent of influencers who are applying from each of your original personas. If you notice, for instance, that you only have a few LGBTQ+ creators who fall into one of your previously identified diverse persona types, then you’ll need to do more outreach to find additional influencers who represent this group. Once you’ve received enough applications from a diverse group of creators, you’re ready to finalize your partnerships and launch your campaign.

Provide creators with inclusive mood boards to inspire creativity

When finalizing your campaign brief that influencers will reference while generating their content, it’s important to give them just the right amount of guidance so that their genuine creativity and voice can be portrayed in a way that also aligns with the brand itself. Within your brief, it’s vital to provide them with an inclusive mood board that represents the diverse personas of your consumer.

Consider producing a holistic creator style guide that incorporates brand messaging, example imagery, content guidelines, plus any collaborations FAQs. For your example imagery within your mood board, look back at your past influencer campaigns and/or marketing materials to share content that will truly resonate with your creators and inspire them to generate inclusive, unique content for your brand.
Not only should these images portray the ideal background setting with the best color palettes and lighting options to align with your brand aesthetic, but most importantly, this content should showcase the diverse consumers and creators who represent your brand.

Here’s an example of a mood board that Reebok created for one of their campaigns revolving around their Club C shoes. The Reebok brand guidelines asked creators to make the shoe the primary focus of the shot while showcasing full-body imagery and expressing “west coast vibes” of a bright, sunny, fun style. Not only does their mood board portray this direction, but it also features a diverse group of influencers when it comes to ethnicity and gender.

If you’re looking for a place to start, consider using Mavrck’s campaign style guide template which includes a mood board section where you can insert your diverse imagery alongside other creative direction details.

**Repurpose diverse IGC across all marketing efforts**

By creating mood boards that embody diversity and inclusion, brands are subsequently able to successfully guide influencers to create IGC that also embodies diversity and inclusion.

This is content that brands can then repurpose across their other marketing initiatives, whether that’s within their brand books, in their customer emails, across their website, or on their social media channels - the possibilities are endless.
Here’s an example of how Glossier repurposes their user-generated content on their website on their ‘Glossier in Real Life’ webpage. There are many other brands who do the same with their UGC and IGC — repurposing the content across their website, on brand-owned social channels, within lookbooks, in out-of-home advertising, and for other types of marketing initiatives.

Not only is diversified marketing something that all brands should embrace, but it’s proven that consumers want to see this too. This Vogue Business article from June 2020 states that “Consumers have made their desire for more inclusive marketing clear for years, with 69 percent of Gen Z and Millennials saying they think it’s positive for brands to feature diverse models in an ad, according to research from Ypulse.”

It’s clear that brands have a long way to go when it comes to adequately supporting diversity in all of its forms. It’s also evident that influencer marketing provides brands with a huge opportunity to help with this overarching effort of making all marketing initiatives more inclusive by partnering with diverse groups of creators.

Read our next resource, The Creator Perspective: Diversity, Equity and Inclusion in Influencer Marketing, for some valuable insight to help your brand with this crucial endeavor.
The Creator Perspective: DEI in Influencer Marketing
The Creator Perspective: DEI in Influencer Marketing

Introduction

As Mavrck continues to prioritize diversity, equity, and inclusion in our company culture, product features, and brand marketer resources, we spoke with five influencers — primarily some of our Mavrck Copilots, Mavrck’s Influencer Ambassador Group — to hear their unique perspectives as creators on the importance of diversity and inclusion in influencer marketing.

These creators shared experiences of race, gender, or sexual orientation inequalities and unfair treatments of POC and LGBTQ+ communities within the influencer marketing industry that they have witnessed, and sometimes, even faced first-hand. They also spoke about brands who are shining examples of authentic inclusivity and shared ways for brands to take actionable steps in practicing inclusive marketing.

Meet the creators

Sarah Amann & Rachel Benson are digital content creators, but think of themselves as more than just social media “influencers.” From their home base in Chicago, they have built a worldwide community around bringing their ideas to life through video, photos, design and software development. Over the years, they’ve realized their dreams of reaching people with a message of inclusivity and empowerment for the LGBTQ+ community and beyond.

Trystan Reese is an established thought leader, educator, and speaker, focusing on issues of diversity, equity, and inclusion. He is a professionally trained anti-racism facilitator and curriculum designer, studying under Rev. Dr. Jamie Washington at the Social Justice Training Institute. Trystan has also been organizing with the trans community for nearly two decades and has been on the frontlines of this generation’s biggest fights for LGBTQ justice. The founder of Collaborate Consulting, Trystan provides customized training solutions for individuals, organizations, and communities interested in social justice.
Jamie Lynn, blogger and content creator, originally got her start as a mom sharing cloth diapers tips & tricks on Instagram, particularly with members of the Black community. After her first sponsored cloth diaper campaign, her influencer career took off and she is now a renowned creator in the parenting category. As her kids grew out of diapers, her content strategy and online presence evolved into a home decor, DIY, and lifestyle blog. She remains dedicated to empowering brands to prioritize diversity and working with influencers of color.

Stephon Mendoza is a fashion designer, milliner, host and content creator living in New York City. Stephon Mendoza is a brand that is limitless to the traditional perceptions of what fashion or beauty is. He believes that fashion should be an external voice speaking for internal feelings. Fashion has been a conduit for his identity and LGBTQ advocacy and wants to create a genderless lifestyle that creates a different dynamic in the everyday appearance of the world.

Konrad Sliwiak is an Instagram fashion blogger and an influencer who grew up in Poland and immigrated to the United States when he was 15. Konrad grew up in a very conservative community and moving to the U.S. exposed him to different cultures, allowing him to express who he really is. His platform has given him the chance to share his voice, experiences, and life lesson with his community filled with so many talented individuals.

What diversity, equity, and inclusion means to creators

On such an important, and sometimes emotionally-charged topic, I asked myself “where to start?” So I began each interview with the same question, “What does diversity, equity, and inclusion mean to you?” Despite varying backgrounds, ethnicities, and sexual orientations, each creator described the key to diverse, equitable, and inclusive marketing very simply.

In so many words, the key to authentic, inclusive influencer marketing is equality - treating all creators the same across the board. Jamie said that she has “noticed some brands who are willing to pay influencers of other races cash incentives, but will only send a Black creator, like me, product.” Jamie is describing a clear
example of inequity, where a marketer’s incentive model is not based on the quality of the content, but rather on the color of someone’s skin. When influencers of color are confronted with this type of injustice, Jamie urges her fellow creators to “speak up and ask for what you want and what you believe you deserve. Don’t let the fear of backlash or not being invited to a future campaign hold you back. Use your voice.” Related to the explosion of the popular Instagram account “Influencer Pay Gap,” (a topic our CEO, Lyle has written about) that works to expose and explore disparities in opportunities, pay, and visibility for Black and non-Black creators within the industry, influencers are keeping tabs on brands who practice unfair incentive methods and aren’t keeping quiet any longer.

Jamie explained that “brands also need to recognize that influencers are always talking, discussing rates, and comparing offers. Brands should be conscious that when influencers recognize a lack in equality, they see it has unfair treatment.” Although this is an unfortunate reality, it’s also an important lesson for our industry — other brands, marketers, and platforms alike — to learn from. In order to practice equitable influencer marketing, you need to offer all creators the same base incentive models driven by objective and fair data.

“Speak up and ask for what you want and what you believe you deserve. Don’t let the fear of backlash or not being invited to a future campaign hold you back. Use your voice.”

Jamie Lynn
@thejamielynnshow

Authentic, inclusive brand marketers doing it right

The reality is, many brands are just beginning their journey of becoming an inclusive organization and have a long way to go and a lot of learning to do along the way. But the important thing is, individuals and organizations seem to be waking up, having the tough conversations, and focusing on diverse, equitable and inclusive influencer marketing strategies.
It’s clear that we all have an important role to play in continuing and accelerating the progress to become more inclusive.

When asked which brands stand out as being diversity leaders in the influencer marketing space, Konrad shared that “there are few brands that I have found to be very inclusive. I personally am a huge supporter of recent Express campaigns, which created a diverse approach and established a connection with every audience in their niche.” Brands in the parenting/home category that Jamie identified are: Pottery Barn, Simon & Kids Books, Cuddle & Kind, Thirty Ink, Atkins, Fabletics, and FabKids. From the beauty industry, Stephon mentioned: Fenty Beauty, Savage X Fenty, and Pat McGrath Beauty.

What happens when brands don’t prioritize diverse, equitable, or inclusive marketing

Brands who are not equitable or inclusive not only run the risk of being pegged as unequal opportunists, but they also run the risk of missing the mark on important business goals and objectives.

When marketers don’t prioritize diversity and inclusion in their influencer marketing, they automatically close the door on a whole group of potential consumers. Trystan explains, “it is critical for brands to include diverse participants when they create campaigns, to better diversify the audience base they’ll reach.” This is a simple equation that leads to better marketing and better opportunities for reaching an untapped consumer market.

Said another way, Jamie touched on the importance of representation in marketing and shared that “brands need to have a diverse Instagram feed, because people need to see themselves in their social content to feel welcomed. Brands should want everyone to feel welcome, since you never know who is going to be interested in your product.”
“It is critical for brands to include diverse participants when they create campaigns, to better diversify the audience base they’ll reach.”

Trystan Reese  
@biffandi

In order to reach these untapped consumers, marketers not only need to diversify the influencers they work with, but they also need to expand the ways in which their product is perceived. Trystan described a phenomenon we see often in the tech startup industry. Companies set out to build a product that solves a specific problem for a particular audience. But by the time they have tinkered, innovated, researched, tested, and developed their product, they realize they have built an entirely different product that solves a different problem for a different audience. When Twitch was founded in 2005, it was not the video gaming platform that most people know it as today. Twitch started out as a “lifecasting” platform, where users would stream their life around the clock.

As the online gaming industry began picking up, Twitch recognized an opportunity to shift their strategy and create a platform for a new audience that focused on eSports streaming. Today, Twitch is the world’s leading live streaming platform for gamers. After discussing this example, Trystan added that “if [marketers] don’t innovate and test your [brand’s] products with other markets, if you don’t dig, you may never hit oil. If you don’t innovate, you might die.” It is clear that marketers need to shift their mindset to make sure they’re innovating to become more inclusive and target a diverse group of consumers.

When brands don’t prioritize diversity in their influencer campaigns, they also lose out on the opportunity to work with extremely talented creators. Sarah and Rachel pointed out that “there is so much quality content being made by underrepresented groups, which is an opportunity for brands to tap into and benefit from.” By diversifying the types of creators a brand works with, the brand is then presented with opportunities to re-share and promote content from influencers of various
backgrounds, ethnicities, and sexual orientations. Consumers then begin to see themselves in a brand’s marketing initiatives, and the opportunity to authentically reach new markets becomes possible.

**Brands have the responsibility to ensure their marketing is diverse & equitable**

When asked what responsibilities brands have to invest in working with underrepresented creators, Trystan described that right now, things still feel very transactional. A brand or agency will approach him with the deliverables, and ask him what his rates are.

“Sure that works... sometimes,” Trystan explained, “but the difference is treating the influencers like people, not ad units, where you want to invest in them and help them up their game. In the end, it creates a more marketable relationship, where a brand can confidently say that ‘we consistently work with X amount of trans creators and we are proud of the content they create.’”

Sarah and Rachel also described that when a brand chooses to work with a creator from an underrepresented group, like Black or LGBTQ+ creator communities, brands are not only giving them equal opportunity, they are also giving them a chance to grow their business. Collaboration for an underrepresented creator group is not just a pretty picture on Instagram, but a chance to reinvest into their business and jump-start their creator careers.

**Here’s how you can become an inclusive marketer**

One way to become an authentic, inclusive marketer is to invest in long-term partnerships with influencers from a diversity of backgrounds. Sarah & Rachel advised that brands need to avoid one-off campaigns during “peak diversity seasons,” and explains that “it’s always clear when brands are just ‘ticking the diversity box’ when they only work with Black creators during Black History Month or LGBTQ+ influencers during Pride.” The most straightforward way to ensure your inclusive marketing is authentic is to “make diversity a part of your overarching strategy...”
and not just during these ‘banner months.’ This shift in strategy is just a good business move.” In fact, Sarah and Rachel mentioned that the best, most successful campaigns they are a part of are with the brands who invest in long-term, meaningful partnerships with them.

“Brands can be more inclusive by hiring Black and Brown Queer people and constantly give those people in the margins a platform to use their voice.”

Stephon Mendoza
@mindofmendoza

Stephon shared that “brands can be more inclusive by hiring Black and Brown Queer people and constantly give those people in the margins a platform to use their voice.” Brands can repost diverse content and use their social media presence as a platform to amplify these underrepresented voices.

However, Trystan cautions that “if a brand re-shares influencer content from a trans creator on their own feeds, that is great, but there needs to be a commitment around monitoring negative comments on the post. Otherwise, that transgender individual becomes an anti-trans poster-person in the comments.” Brands not only have the responsibility to be inclusive, but also to create a digital environment that is safe, kind, and accepting of these creators.

When marketers look in the mirror and ask themselves, “how can we be a more inclusive brand?” it’s important to remember that it’s a good thing you are asking these types of questions and that we all have to start somewhere. Jamie shared that “if a brand looks at their Instagram feed and sees that it is lacking diversity, here’s where they should start: talking, really talking, with Black and LGBTQ+ influencers to understand their perspective, what content their community wants to see, and how the brand can authentically represent them.” Jamie believes assumptions are the brand’s biggest downfall to achieving authentic inclusive marketing. She shared that “many times brands just assume what these communities want to see, they
don’t actually take the time to have 1x1 meetings or a Zoom conference with a few influencers... Don’t just use Instagram polls, have a real conversation.”

**Ultimately, becoming an authentic, inclusive marketer happens first at the corporate level.** Companies need to prioritize proper diversity, equity, and inclusion employee training and establish strong corporate values that permeate from the inside out. Stephon shares that “influencer marketing representation has to start internally at the brand’s core. When there is diversity and inclusion behind the scenes, then the influencer market will reflect that and be authentic as well.” **Regardless of company values and efforts to embrace diversity and inclusion at the leadership level, brand marketers still have the opportunity to do what they can to make all marketing initiatives more inclusive.**

When asked what advice Trystan would share for brands who are just starting to prioritize diversity and inclusion in their marketing initiatives, Trystan mentioned that we’re in a culture of critique, so it’s natural to be cautious. He suggested that **brands partner with trusted leaders within these diverse communities to help identify opportunities, challenges, areas for improvement, and ultimately, help recommend a go-forward strategy.** These individuals can also help recruit other trusted influencers, creatives, leaders, and speakers in the community.

Trystan said that “it’s important to remember that just because you are a person of color, a trans person, or a woman in the office, doesn’t mean you have the skillset to dismantle prejudices that you personally see happening every day around you.” There are options for leveraging professionals to help navigate these challenges, conversations, and go-forward strategies.
To summarize the steps brand marketers can take to become more inclusive, we have learned from these five creators and their invaluable insights that it’s vital to:

- Treat all influencers equitably. Regardless of size of following, type of content, or otherwise, different influencers can play different roles and provide value to any campaign.

- Consistently choose to work with creators of varying backgrounds, ethnicities, and sexual orientations.

- Create long-term partnerships and invest in the development of these creators.

- Use the brand’s various platforms to amplify these underrepresented voices and create a safe environment.

- Continuously expand and adapt the brand’s products for varying consumers.

- Prioritize and invest in proper corporate diversity, equity, and inclusion training.

- Offer fair, equitable payment and visibility to all creators.

Read the next section about Our Philosophy on Influencer Compensation at Mavrck for more of our perspective.
Our Philosophy On Influencer Compensation
from Lyle Stevens
It has been nearly 10 years since I was working as a cybersecurity product manager, building an enterprise-grade identity service and social networking platform at a publicly traded aerospace company with 70,000 global employees. The questions that intrigued the data geek within me then, still fascinate me to this day: what makes someone a subject matter expert (aka an influencer or creator) and what motivates them to use their expertise, influence, and creativity to spread a message on behalf of others?

Since founding Mavrck in November of 2014 to pursue answers to those questions, we have accomplished some pretty remarkable things. We have helped nearly 3 million people collaborate with brands, serving as the private-labeled data and workflow engine underneath the hood of what has quickly become one of the world’s fastest-growing digital marketing disciplines for leading consumer brands. Those 3 million people have created nearly 7 million social media posts, which have earned over 35 billion impressions and engagements. In order to accomplish this, Mavrck has helped these people earn more than $200 million worth of cash, products, promo codes, gift cards, coupons, loyalty points or VIP experiences, with some very fortunate individuals earning well over six-figures for their collaborations with brands. That is 10 times more than what Mavrck has raised in venture capital funding.

We didn’t know it when we started out, but along the way, we discovered five guiding principles that shaped our philosophy on how to compensate people for their collaboration with brands. I’d like to share those with you, and welcome any dialogue on this topic so that we can push our industry forward, together.

1) Optimize for the Ideal Persona within the Spectrum of Influence, Not for the Most Followers

In 2014, influencer marketing was still a very nascent industry. Despite companies like Klout having already come and gone, the question we were asked most often from marketers was “why should I use influencer marketing over TV, programmatic, or paid social media?” I often felt like a digital marketing missionary, sharing a prophecy around an impending shift in how consumers would trust information from brands, all thanks to the democratization of content creation, brought on by the mass
adoption of smartphones and social media platforms.

It wasn’t until 2015, with the help of our newly hired VP of Marketing at the time, that she and I created a foundational framework that started to resonate with marketers, and established what would later become a new industry-standard: the “micro-influencer.” Along the way, we were surprised by how many marketers wanted very distinct definitions for each persona, usually in the form of follower counts, which still continues to this day. But what we quickly learned was that an individual’s follower count was merely a fraction of the compensation equation, and often one of the least important in the eyes of some marketers.

In order to guide marketers, we expanded upon our spectrum of influence framework, to provide guidelines for how to collaborate with each persona, including when to use activity-based compensation (i.e. compensate when someone puts in the effort for creating high-quality content) versus performance-based (aka via an affiliate link or coupon code) or a combination of both. For marketers who didn’t know where to start, we recommended the micro-influencer — the “triple threat” of all the personas, because they are able to deliver on many use cases, with the most trust, authenticity, and cost effectiveness.

2) Recognize that Motivators Are Dynamic, Can Vary Widely Brand to Brand, and Should Be Opt-in Based

I can still remember it like it was yesterday. It was winter of 2016, and we were helping a leading chocolate brand power an upcoming Valentine’s Day campaign. Our team (and the brand) was shocked by how many people with 500k+ followers were willing to partner for a box of chocolates and a $100 gift card. We’re talking hundreds of people, with a collective reach of more than 50 million. It was the first time we saw just how impactful brand equity could be in the compensation equation, especially when some of those same people with 500k+ followers would charge thousands of dollars for a CPG brand collaboration. We saw this playing out across several brand verticals: sneakerheads willing to collaborate for early access to a new pair of shoes, fashionistas willing to create content with an outfit from a new

 OUR PHILOSOPHY
seasonal line, or foodies willing to test new recipes in exchange for a kitchen appliance. In all cases, the average retail value didn’t exceed $250, yet those same people would charge 10x that for other collaborations they were less enthusiastic about. **Beyond just the brand or product, we know that influencers take many inputs into consideration when reviewing collaboration rates** — like time required, scheduling and complexity of content creation — and we want to ensure those opportunities are still made present to the creators.

It seems pretty obvious in hindsight, yet some critics are quick to call out brands offering their product as the only compensation without all of the context first. The reality is that there are tens of millions of influencers and creators out there, and plenty of people who love a brand enough to want to collaborate in exchange for a brand’s products. If you’re not one of those people, that’s more than okay, too. That is why every campaign we power at Mavrck is opt-in based and requires consent from an influencer or creator. Contrast this with many others who attempt a “surprise and delight” approach with a free “gift” that arrives with no contractual obligation, but is followed up by several annoying emails asking the creator or influencer if they liked the free product enough to post about it (a very common practice in the beauty industry, unfortunately). I’ve seen this practice way too often, even through the perspective of an influencer, ever since I helped my wife AlyssaKStevens launch her blog a few years ago.

3) **Prioritize People Who Know and Love Your Brand, Over Those Who Are Looking for the Highest Bidder**

Once we started to see how dynamic motivations were for people across different brands, we started investing in technology features to help marketers recruit their existing customers with influence first, and then expand via “lookalike” influencers who may not have known the brand previously. **This made the compensation structure inherently more effective for the brand because an existing customer who knows your brand and loves it, is more likely to accept products, loyalty points or VIP experiences in exchange for a piece of content.**

In fact, we would see many marketers start using Mavrck after spending years
working with a traditional influencer marketplace or agency, because those marketplaces or agencies typically asked influencers for their “standard rate” which was then applied in a one-size fits all approach (counter to principle #2 above).

Many marketers also shared how they felt the “standard rate” was inflated for several reasons: (1) The influencer was starting higher than they would accept as a negotiation tactic, (2) the influencer’s agent was taking a cut and marking up the price even further (3) the marketplace or agency was taking a cut and was incentivized to make the price as high as possible to maximize their own revenue, which has had even more detrimental side effects, such as a lack of transparency in influencer compensation.

At Mavrck, we take the payment of influencers seriously, and only take a percentage when we are acting as the “bank” on behalf of the brand — for example, floating cash to pay influencers before we get paid by the brand. In those situations, we charge a modest 10% processing fee to act as the “bank,” which some marketers are more than happy to pay in exchange for us making the process more scalable for them.

4) Provide Freedom and Flexibility to Brands, with Benchmarks, Best Practices and Fraud Analysis

In an effort to help many marketers across many verticals scale their influencer programs, we had to build flexibility into our platform. We do this by allowing several incentive types, including cash payments via PayPal, promo codes, gift cards via Tango Card, product, loyalty points, VIP experiences and affiliate commission. We also allow marketers to enable a Quote feature as part of any campaign application, where an influencer can counteroffer how much they would charge for the collaboration.

Additionally, we aggregate the average cost across historical collaborations that the influencer has participated in, in order to establish CPM, CPE and CPP (Cost Per Post) benchmarks per individual influencer that the marketer can review when selecting who they want to collaborate with. We publish those benchmarks, by industry vertical and by follower count brackets to provide best practice guidance to marketers.

We know that marketers also want
flexibility in how they measure the success of influencer campaigns. The performance of an influencer’s collaboration may also be valued by the conversions or purchases that it drives, as measurement moves further down the funnel and the intersection between Affiliate Marketing and Influencer Marketing deepens. Influencers should be prepared for compensation rates to reflect the impact that the marketer most cares about, and while sometimes that can be the high quality content, it can also be the actual product purchases made by followers.

If you are starting out as an influencer, or even transitioning from a micro- to a macro-influencer, it is becoming increasingly difficult to understand how to benchmark your compensation for collaborations. Mavrck acknowledges that a gap exists in a “standard” rate calculation that both aligns the marketer’s assessment of value and the influencer’s need to build and grow their business. A tool like this could help influencers more confidently ask for the right rate and spend less time negotiating over compensation and more time creating amazing content. Stay tuned for more from Mavrck on that front.

Lastly, and probably most importantly, we perform fraud analysis of an influencer’s followers and engagement to ensure a marketer is not overpaying for an audience full of bots. This is something many influencers fail to recognize is happening, as some may take the shortcut to 10k or 100k followers in hopes of making more per collaboration. I can assure you this flags a profile for fraud, leaving it up to the marketer to choose if they want to consider that influencer (unless they’re only seeking content assets/deprioritizing the quality of the audience).

On that subject, I’ve always wanted to collaborate with other influencer platform companies to publish a high fraud index, rooted in transparency for both marketers and influencers to find value in — with best practices to educate the industry and hold it to a higher standard. But I feel strongly it requires multiple platforms in the industry to make it fair and balanced, similar to how your credit score is compiled from multiple credit bureaus and consumers can contest their score. If anyone wants to collaborate with Mavrck on that, please let us know!
5) Build for Long-Term Relationships Versus One-Off Transactional Campaigns

The last principle for our philosophy on influencer compensation is the most important. **Because we’re collaborating with people, and not commoditized ad units, building a genuine relationship should be at the core of any influencer marketing strategy.** This could look like an ambassador program, an advisory council, an advocacy program, or even a creators club. The positioning can vary brand to brand, persona to persona, and can even feed into another, more exclusive program for the top-performing ambassadors. This approach rewards results, and allows an influencer to gradually earn more compensation from a brand, while also allowing marketers to achieve economies of scale, where the cost per post, impression, or engagement continuously gets more efficient. This win-win approach leaves all participants feeling fulfilled, and results in a healthy, vibrant influencer economy for the growing creator class.

**At the end of the day, despite all our learnings to date, several influencer compensation challenges are far from resolved, especially those faced by BIPOC creators.** The pace at which the industry is growing and evolving requires an open and honest dialogue on this topic with all stakeholders, and I more than welcome the opportunity to have that conversation with marketers, influencers and technologists alike. Feel free to reach out to me on Instagram, Twitter, or LinkedIn if you want to engage in that dialogue together.
Evolving Our Language at Mavrck
It’s very important that all brand marketers shift any inherently biased language that exists in our everyday influencer marketing vocabulary. This list serves as a glossary of inclusive business/marketing terms, and should aid in the conscious undoing of hurtful, exclusionary language.

CUSTOM or BRANDED EXPERIENCE or PRIVATE LABEL (use in place of White Label): The phrase “white label” has been used to refer to the customization of certain marketing efforts. This term associates “white” with a preferred, elevated, or better-valued experience, and is inherently racist.

MANAGED or PROFESSIONAL SERVICES (use in place of White Glove Services): The phrase “white glove services” has been used to describe high-touch, catered services provided to certain customers. This term originated from the attire worn by domestic servants or butlers, and also associates “white” with a preferred experience, so should not be used.

EXEMPT (use in place of Grandfathered): The phrase “grandfathered in” has been used to describe when customers are able to pay the same rate for services consistently, even after years go by. The term ‘grandfathered’ originates from a time when voting rights were tied to those of an individual’s grandfather, which carries both racist and sexist connotations. In the 1890’s, a half-dozen states passed laws that made men eligible to vote if they had been able to vote before African Americans were given the franchise (generally, 1867), or if they were the lineal descendants of voters back then. These clauses were known as “grandfather clauses”, originating the term “grandfathered”, as we have used it in recent years.

PRIMARY LIST or DEFAULT LIST or MAIN LIST (use in place of Master List): The phrase “master list” has been used to describe a main or priority list of items. This stems from the days of slavery, and is extremely racist in origin.

UNBRANDED CASE STUDY (use in place of Blind Case Study): It is common to refer to a case study that removes the brand name and likeness as a “blind case study.” This term is ableist and can be associated with a person’s identity or their challenges, and because of that, can be interpreted as insulting or hurtful.
ALLOW LIST or PRIORITY LIST (use in place of Whitelist): The term “whitelist” has been used to describe a list of influencers considered to be acceptable or trustworthy. This associates ‘white’ to a preferred or superior connotation or experience.

ALLOW LISTING or BOOSTING or BRANDED-PARTNER AD LISTING or PAID USAGE (use in place of Whitelisting): Similar to “whitelist,” the term “whitelisting” is commonly used to describe when a brand marketer is given permission by an influencer to run an ad from the influencer’s social media account, rather than the brand’s.

BLOCK LIST or DENY LIST or EXCLUDE LIST (use in place of Blacklist): The term “blacklist” has been used to describe a list of influencers we do not want to work with in the future. This associates ‘black’ as a negative connotation or experience, and reinforces a racist culture.

Other recommended terms:
- AUDIENCE (use in place of Peanut Gallery)
- BREEZE or EASY (use in place of Cakewalk)
- RESTRICT or BLOCK (use in place of Blackball)
- DIRECT or CONTROL or DISCIPLINE (use in place of Crack the Whip)
- REVEAL or OPEN THE BOOKS (use in place of Open the Kimono)
- ODD ONE OUT (use in place of Blacksheep)
- THE GENERAL RULE or AS A RULE (use in place of Rule of Thumb)
Brand Examples of Holiday & Diversity Awareness Campaigns

JAMRS Honored Veterans Through #TheirTomorrow Program

Joint Advertising Marketing Research & Studies (JAMRS) activated and engaged influencers who are veterans themselves or spouses of veterans to share how the Military has shaped their lives, the benefits of joining the Military, and why starting a career with the Military shouldn't be viewed as a “backup” option, and ultimately “soften” the Military via influencer-generated content. Though this campaign wasn’t specifically for Veterans Day, this is an example of one that would be great to tie to Veterans Day.

Roku Celebrates #HispanicHeritageMonth

The Roku Channel celebrates Hispanic Heritage Month with a curated list of free movies, documentaries, TV shows, and stories by partnering with influencers to promote the special collection in celebration of the month. Creators were requested to share how their families use Roku and the Spanish voice commands, while celebrating Hispanic Heritage Month by watching content.
Paypal #GiveBetter Campaign in Connection with Giving Tuesday

PayPal activated micro- and macro-influencers in the U.S. and the U.K. to inspire their followers to #GiveBetter during the 2019 holiday season by highlighting their passions and favorite causes and helping their followers discover gifts that give back and build PayPal’s #GiveBetter movement by encouraging people to shop thoughtfully, while simultaneously driving awareness around Giving Tuesday.

Luna Bar #SomedayIsNow Equal Pay Campaigns Tied to Women’s Equality Week

LUNA and TIME’S UP funded a study on the staggering impact that COVID-19 is having on pay equity for women, especially women of color. Their call-to-action: Inspire the community to take action now to Vote Equal Pay Every Day. Part one of the campaign had creators post during Women’s Equality Week, August 24th - August 28th, 2020 (with Women’s Equality Day on 8/26). Part two is in progress leading up to Election Day, encouraging everyone to Vote Equal Pay Every Day.
Veterans Affairs Supports Suicide Prevention Month

Veterans Affairs (VA) created a campaign supporting Suicide Prevention Month (SPM), a national month-long initiative to amplify awareness of suicide prevention and connect Veterans and their supporters with resources they need. The VA has identified Veterans and family/friends of Veterans to create YouTube videos around how someone can Be There for the Veterans in their life.

The Dallas Mavericks Celebrate LGBTQ+ Through #MavsPride Night

In December, the Dallas Mavericks collaborated with influencers who are part of the LGBTQ+ community in the Dallas/Fort Worth area to help promote their second annual Pride Celebration Night, to encourage friends and followers to purchase tickets to the special game. It doesn't have to be Pride Month to support the LGBTQ+ community - Celebrate Pride throughout the year!
A Planning Checklist for Your Campaign Calendar to Support DEI

Use this checklist so that your brand team can get ahead of event planning for your upcoming influencer marketing campaigns. Whether you’re activating influencers to promote Women’s Equality Day or in celebration of Hispanic Heritage Month, here are some recommendations on how your brand can stay ahead of the curve.

2-3 months before content live date

☐ Finalize influencer budgets.

☐ Determine influencer role in integrated holiday campaigns.

☐ Discuss goals and objectives for influencer activations.

1-2 months before content live date

☐ Determine content strategy, goals and KPIs.

☐ Create influencer briefs.

☐ Finalize influencer lists.
**4–6 weeks before content live date**

☐ Conduct outreach to influencers. Be sure to include:
  - Influencer brief including content strategy and brand objectives
  - Content requirements and due dates (always let influencers know if draft review is required)
  - Product review requirement (if desired)
  - Compensation
  - Relevant information about your brand and products - brand books, mood boards, dos and don’ts, etc.

☐ Finalize influencer selection.

**Content Launch**

☐ Monitor IGC via a platform like Mavrck.

☐ Engage with and re-share IGC on brand social channels.

☐ Repurpose IGC on social media, brand websites, and syndicate to e-commerce platforms.

☐ Analyze top-performing IGC to promote with paid media.
**Campaign Completion**

- Make sure all influencers have completed their contractual obligations.
- Send payment to influencers in a timely manner.
- Review results after the campaign wraps and allow for reporting to reflect continued engagement after going live. We recommend 1-2 weeks, depending on the channels.
- Create a report or share reporting with greater teams and executives through a platform like Mavrck.

**Beyond the Campaign**

- Analyze performance and work with Mavrck to receive recommendations on future campaigns with influencers.
- Incorporate influencers into an ambassador strategy that creates content consistently throughout the year and locks in influencers for the following campaigns.
Additional Resources

Bookmark this:

- **Influencer Marketing 101: Free Course**
  This course will teach you everything you need to know to run a successful influencer campaign.
  [Go to Course](#)

- **Influencer & Creator Rates Revealed**
  We surveyed over 500 influencers and analyzed over 31K Instagram and TikTok posts to find out exactly how much $$ they’re making from social media.
  [Read Report](#)

- **What Is an Influencer Marketing Platform? (+ Why You Need One)**
  Connect with creators, streamline campaign management, and report on results. Discover the benefits of having an influencer marketing platform for your next campaign.
  [Read Blog Post](#)