Professor: Justin Blaney, D.M.
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Office Hours: Email for an appointment.

Course Materials: Required textbook
Influencer: Building Your Personal Brand in the Age of Social Media

Recommended additional reading
The Art of Social Media: Power Tips for Power Users

Canvas: Lecture slides, descriptions of all the assignments and guides for the cases are provided on canvas. The lecture slides posted prior to class are stripped down versions of the actual lectures. Electronic copies of the full lectures with all examples and annotations from our discussions will be posted after each class period.
MKTG 579: Influencer Marketing: Profiting from social media.

COURSE OBJECTIVES

Billions of dollars in revenue is being generated each year through the power of social media influence. This course will examine what it means to be an influencer, how to become one, and how to use the influence of others to build a powerful and profitable brand. Students will create two marketing plans: one to build their own influencer platforms and a second to harness other influencers to drive sales growth for a business.

Learning objectives:
• Understand what an influencer is.
• Conduct a social media marketing campaign through the use of social media influencers, including how to pick the right influencer to reach your target market.
• Explore organic and paid methods for building your own social media influence.
• How to analyze the effectiveness of influencer marketing.
• Strategies for negotiating an appropriate contract with an influencer at various stages of reach including micro influencers and nationally famous personalities.
• How to contact and build relationships with influencers.
• Methods for accurately measuring the influence of your own brand and individuals you may wish to partner with to forward your brand.

COURSE ORGANIZATION

Building brands through social media influence is a marketing elective that is designed to add to a student’s previous marketing courses to create a wide-ranging knowledge across marketing tactics and disciplines. Influencer marketing is made up of two primary angles, one from the point of view of an influencer who is attempting to build her audience and generate income from her influence, and the other from a brand’s perspective that is focused on gaining the most profitable exposure by partnering with the right influencers to reach new consumers and cement their brand in the minds of current users.

This course will be organized in relation to this dual angle approach, with one project for each side of the influencer relationship. The first project will approach this subject from the influencer side where students will create a marketing plan that is designed to increase a person’s influence, build a personal brand that attracts the best companies for that individual, and maximize revenue. This project will be an individual effort since most influencers are likely to be undertaking such a plan without a team. The second project will be group based and will focus on how a brand would approach influencers in order to accomplish their business objectives. The students will learn through the text book, classroom discussions and supplemental materials everything needed to accomplish the section of their marketing plan due that week with a midterm and final exam designed to ensure all students have retained the important elements of the course.

Students can expect to hear from and engage with respected guest speakers including both sides of the influencer relationship, brands and individuals.
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Schedule:
Week 1 - Intro, what is an influencer, and finding your niche.
Week 2 - A survey of options for networks, and choosing your options.
Week 3 - Content strategy, consistency, growing your audience and engagement.
Week 4 - Metrics/evaluation/iterative improvements.
Week 5 - Midterms, selected presentations and a panel discussion from distinguished guests.
Week 6 - What is influencer marketing, power of the medium, choose a brand to promote with other influencers, what kinds of brands work best with this, and evaluation criteria.
Week 7 - Identify influencers who will be ideal for your brand and know your customer including how to get the attention of influencers, small, medium and large, then create a strategy for your business plan.
Week 8 - Hiring the influencer, negotiating contracts including how much to pay. Then execute your strategy.
Week 9 - Metrics, evaluations and iterative improvements.
Week 10 - Selected presentations and panel of distinguished guests.

COURSE ASSIGNMENTS AND GRADING

This course include a combination of individual and team assignments. Individual assignments include the weekly quizzes, midterm, final, class participation, peer feedback assignments and project 1, and individual influencer marketing plan. The team assignment will be project 2, a marketing plan for companies who wish to work with influencers.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Assignment</th>
<th>Points</th>
<th>Percentage of final grade</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Individual Project: Personal influencer marketing plan</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>20%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Group Project: Working with influencers</td>
<td>150</td>
<td>30%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Take home midterm</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Take home final</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Class participation</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>20%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Peer feedback on project 2</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>500</strong></td>
<td><strong>100%</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
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Grading scale:

- 95% and above 4.0
- 94% 3.9
- 93% 3.8
- 92% 3.7
- 91% 3.6
- And so on...
Class participation (20%)

Class participation is critical to your learning process. Lively discussion makes class more interesting, fun and rewarding. It can be difficult to speak up in a class full of people, either for fear of being wrong, or the worry of coming across as a know-it-all. That is why we will make every effort to keep our classroom safe for participation without judgement or criticism. In our class, there truly are no bad questions or answers.

In order to provide a final component of motivation to participate, your final course grade will be based in part (20%) on how much you contribute to the class discussions and your team project. The following is a description of the components of participation that students will be evaluated against for this component of your grade. One who could be described according to the following would earn full points, where one who does not meet any of these descriptions would receive a minimum grade for class participation.

Outstanding contributor. Regular participation in most or all class conversations that includes insightful and thoughtful answers. Arguments are substantive and well thought out. This person never makes anyone else in the class feel bad about their answers, but instead encourages their peers to participate. When this person is absent, it creates a noticeable downgrade in the discussion quality. In a group work setting this student makes valuable contributions to the quality of the team’s deliverables. They are supportive of their peers, making an effort to draw ideas out of others. They are positive and work toward solutions. They accelerate the project toward success. Finally, their peers would say that the project would not have been as quality if this student wasn’t part of the team.

Midterm exam (10%)

The midterm will be taken via computer and will consist of 20 multiple choice questions. These will cover topics from the first 5 weeks of this course including principles from the text book, discussions and any other supplemental materials covered.

Final exam (10%)

A take home final will be assigned as the final component of each student’s grade that will consist of 3 short essay answers, chosen from 5 possible prompts. The essays will be based on a cumulation of all topics taught during the term including principles from the text book, discussions and any other supplemental materials covered.

Team Formation and Projects

Teams will be formed in week 5. Each team will be responsible for creating a marketing plan according to the requirements set forth in project 2. Team members should begin to sit near each other to collaborate on the learning and application of key principles. Students within each group will be evaluating each other as part of your final grade, based on participation and value added by each
team member. This is intended to be a positive method by which we can encourage all students to participate equally.

ABOUT THE INSTRUCTOR

Dr. Justin Blaney D.M. pioneered research on influencers as a doctoral student, and has been working with influencers for more than a decade. He is the #1 bestselling author of 14 books. As an entrepreneur, he founded and sold multiple companies to become a millionaire by the age of 25, and currently runs a venture-capital funded agency that generates sales leads for Fortune 500 companies. He is followed by more than 1 million people on various platforms such as Facebook, Instagram and Twitter.