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A tactical guide to creating click-worthy user-generated content

User-generated content isn't just for B2C brands and influencers. Any company can add a UGC arrow to their quiver. Just ask Taylor Swift. In this article, we're giving you six ways to level-up your UGC game.

Pop quiz: What do Patagonia, one of the world's best-known outdoor lifestyle brands, and Taylor Swift have in common?

The answer: Both have mastered the art of creating personalized connections with their target audience through user-generated content (UGC). UGC encompasses everything from case studies and product reviews to viral videos and memes, all created by fans.

Patagonia's Worn Wear campaign is a prime example of this methodology in action. It leans on user-generated stories to communicate the importance of repairing or trading in clothing instead of continually buying new items.

As far as T-Swift goes, she's built a veritable army of devotees by continually making them a part of her live shows and promotional tours. From paying off a fan's student loans in the most on-brand way possible to incorporating viral fan videos into her choreography, it's no wonder her Eras tour is set to become the first concert series to top $1 billion in revenue.
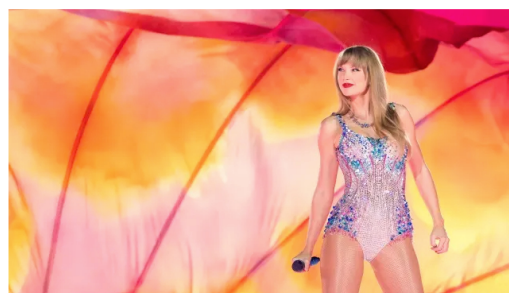
UGC isn't just for global B2C brands and influencers. It's an underappreciated and underutilized brand marketing tactic that anyone, even B2B marketers, should capitalize on.

This article takes a look at UGC from all angles. You'll learn why UGC is a crucial part of successful branding in 2023, how it can fuel an explosion in brand trust and visibility, and how simple tweaks can get your content seen and heard by the right people.

and heard by the right people.

If you have a blank space in your UGC branding strategy, read on.

The state of UGC in 2023

There's a hunger for authentic, people-centric branding. Establishing your client base as your most prominent evangelists is more important than ever. If recent data is any indication, it's a demand that won't ebb anytime soon.

According to a recent Stackla report:

- 90% of buyers believe authenticity plays a critical role in determining which brands they support (up from 86% in 2017)
- More than three-quarters (79%) of consumers say UGC "highly impacts" their purchasing choices
- Consumers find UGC nearly ten times more impactful than influencer content in shaping buying decisions

To top it off, 83% of consumers want retailers to provide "more authentic shopping experiences" to earn their business.

Consumers seek more authenticity from brands

83%

of consumers believe retailers need to provide more authentic shopping experiences to customers like them

Stackla

The message is clear: The average person is no longer buying products. They're investing in an organization's values by voting with their dollars. The more a brand is willing to engage in authentic conversations with its target audience via UGC, the more likely it is to become a trusted name consumers want to be associated with. By comparison, if organizations *can't* be honest with consumers and offer the kind of inside-out transparency Patagonia does, they'll be overlooked.

You can't fake your way to UGC nirvana, either. The Stackla report revealed consumers are 2.4 times more likely to view legitimate UGC as more authentic than any content created or curated by a brand.

All this means that the time to invest in a robust UGC brand marketing strategy is now. However, it's easier said than done for many organizations, especially if you have a finite amount of time or resources to do the job.

Don't fret—we're ready to help. Keep scrolling to get the skinny on the most important UGC best practices to get you started.

6 tips to get started with UGC

A strong UGC strategy can mean the difference between a consumer seeing your product or service and saying, "You belong with me!" versus clicking away and developing bad blood with your brand.

Whether you're starting from scratch or hitting the reset button on your UGC campaigns, keep these essential tips in mind.

1. Know your audience

To have productive, engaging interactions with your customers, you need to know who you're talking to.

Step one: Know your target audience(s) and persona(s). If you're unable to

step one: know your target audience(s) and persona(s). If you're unable to pinpoint which stories will resonate with your target demographic, no amount of content production, no matter how slick, will connect.

Don't try to be everywhere and talk to everyone at once. Instead, ensure you have a deep understanding of your audience and where they spend their time online using data-driven insights. With this knowledge, you can base your customer voice on facts, not guesswork.

If you've never performed an audience analysis to determine your Voice of the Customer (VOC), short responses to a quick survey sent to clients via Typeform could be hugely beneficial.

2. Choose your UGC objective

Once you've got the "who" settled, focus on the "why"—as in, why does your UGC exist?

Justin M. Nassiri, CEO of Executive Presence, believes that a strong UGC strategy should be built around one of the following:

- Brand awareness

- Brand building

- Customer acquisition

- Fundraising

- Recruit and retain talent

All of these in-points can improve your customer acquisition and loyalty long-term. But, like determining your audience, don't try and accomplish every objective in every piece of content you create.

For instance, including a recruiting pitch in a high-level product overview video that's geared toward brand awareness will sound irrelevant and confuse your target audience. Pick a single goal and use it as the north star guiding every facet of your UGC campaign.

3. Choose your brand's persona or content creator

Next, pick a brand persona and a content creator to feed it. Your persona should reflect your organization's actual values and empathy for your audience, not what you think your audience wants to hear or will identify with.

Take Patagonia as an example; you could define their brand persona as socially conscious, adventurous, and self-reflective. A few key ideas or traits are often all it takes to form a consistent brand persona.

Finding the right content creator to fuel the brand persona will differ based on company size, industry, and other variables. SMBs may require one high-level individual, like the CEO, to act as its chief brand ambassador. Larger corporations will typically lean on a diverse group of voices to lead the charge.

Whichever path you take, make sure the brand persona you're trying to shape and the content creators you choose to feature are compatible.

4. Understand the channel(s) you choose

To publish click-worthy content that'll make your UGC campaign shine, keep in mind the critical nuances between your desired distribution channels. What delights your audience on LinkedIn will vary from the winning formula you use on Instagram, TikTok, Threads, and so on.

The most common mistake many brands make at this stage is they copy-paste their content across all digital channels and hope for the best. This "spray and pray" strategy isn't recommended because it comes across as robotic and recycled rather than personalized to your audience.

Instead, create content unique to each platform according to best practices or branded content you love from other big names in your industry. In short, embrace the differences between channels,—it's an effective way to stave off a stale customer experience (CX).

For more on how you can take your CX to the next level with a few simple fixes, check out this article on customer experience strategy.

5. Develop a content strategy

With audience, objective, persona, and channel specifics in tow, developing a winning UGC strategy will be easier than you think. It's all about listening to the data and focusing on what'll deliver the best brand experience.

For most organizations, this process involves creating something your audience can see and hear. According to a study from Tint, 66% of consumers believe audio and video-based content stands out more in an increasingly crowded digital marketplace. However, less than 20% of marketers have the resources to produce audiovisual content.

As a result, it's important to know your limits. Video, in particular, can get complicated if you're unsure how to proceed. Alternatively, a more personal text caption to a relevant, user-generated image can work wonders.

One great way to create engaging content is to implement forms as part of the creation process. For more on adding this to your repertoire, check out this Typeform article.

6. Don't wait—just start and fail upward

Here's the hard truth: Finding your voice and niche can be painful. Not every piece of content will resonate with your target demographic. Some content will fall flat. Others will totally resonate.

This shouldn't stop you from publishing new content regularly and with conviction.

Think of it like stand-up comedy. Some jokes bomb, others get huge laughs. The trick is understanding which lines fall into the former category and using audience feedback to punch up your material so it can eventually get some giggles. Start creating and interacting with your audience, learn from your mistakes, and fail upwards.

UGC: (Still) an unsung marketing fundamental

UGC is far from a "nice to have" in a broader marketing strategy. It's a fundamental component of successful brand awareness and user engagement.

Back in the "before times" (let's say from 2009 to the global COVID-19 shutdown), UGC meant handwritten letters, discussions over cups of coffee, and maybe a stilted corporate video testimonial. It's safe to say relying on these and other outdated channels isn't a recipe for success.

These days, there are so many more ways to connect with consumers and leverage those interactions to scale your brand and grow your earning potential. The best places to start are channels your audience already knows

and loves, like LinkedIn, Instagram, and TikTok.

Even in a post-social media world, UGC will still be a difference-maker. As content platforms lose market share or evolve with communication trends, the core tenets will remain the same:

- Know your audience inside and out

- Create your KPIs, strategy, and persona accordingly

- Don't wait—start publishing and learning

Rinse and repeat until your content boosts the authenticity and connectedness your audience feels with your brand. By making their voices heard and their opinions on your product or service matter, you'll be well on your way to building a Swiftian army of devotees ready to sing your brand's praises to anyone who will listen.

About the author

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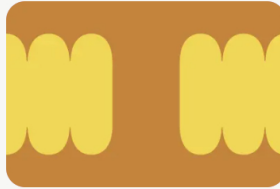

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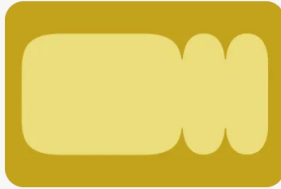
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