



Episode 18 – What Influencers Need to Know About Gifted Campaigns

Karan: [00:00:00] Today we're talking about gifted campaigns and what you need to know as an influencer about gifted campaigns. Gifted campaigns [00:01:00] often mark the beginning of your career as an influencer, especially if you're just starting out in building your audience.

In the early stage of your career, gifted campaigns can serve as a valuable opportunity to showcase your potential and versatility. Gifted campaigns are not just about receiving free products or services. Gifted campaigns can be a testing ground for your personal brand and your creativity. They can challenge you to align brand messaging with your unique tone of voice and your audience.

This is where you learn the art of storytelling, crafting content that resonates with both the brand and your followers. It's also a crucial time for you to hone your negotiation skills, as you'll often [00:02:00] need to discuss expectations, content rights, and possibly future collaborations.

Gifted campaigns can be more than just a steppingstone. They can be a launch pad for your influencer career and lay the foundation for your professional growth and the potential for those paid partnerships. As your audience grows and your niche becomes more defined, the value of gifted campaigns tends to increase.

And this growth allows you to be more selective in choosing campaigns that really align with you, your brand, and your values. It's a natural progression. As your influence expands, so does the calibre of the opportunities that come your way.

Righto, what are the red flags on gifted campaigns though? And what's the process you should follow when offered a gifted campaign? We're going to get into [00:03:00] all of that in today's episode.



We probably all know what a gifted campaign is. It's when a brand provides an influencer with free products. It's usually products, but sometimes services in exchange for promotion or review by content posted on the influencers channel. Unlike paid partnerships where influencers receive payment for their content creation, gifted campaigns rely on the value of the product or the service itself as the payment.

In other words, you won't be paid for a gifted campaign.

And we know that there can often be a mismatch between the value of the product that the brand is offering and the deliverables that the brand is expecting in exchange for that gifted collaboration. We're going to talk more about this a little later on in the episode, as well as some red flags that I want you to think about [00:04:00] before accepting a gifted campaign.

For now, let's get started on the process that you should follow when considering a gifted campaign. These steps are taken directly from [The Business of Influence Campaign Pricing Framework](#). The reason for this is that the process we follow for all gifted influencer campaigns can be quite similar to paid campaigns.

If you haven't listened to [Episode 2 Pricing Your Influencer Campaign](#), do that once you've finished this episode. It's a really good companion podcast to what we're discussing today and it'll be linked for you in the show notes.

Let's get into the process.

Step # 1 Evaluate the Brand. Research the brand and the product to make sure they align with your personal brand and your audience interest.

For example, if you're a vegan recipe creator, it would not be a great alignment for you to [00:05:00] do a gifted campaign for eggs. A good alignment might be with tofu, for instance. So, think about how the brand alignment sits. Also think about does the brand present any reputational risk for you?

Is it a gambling brand, tobacco or maybe even a pharmaceutical brand? Often these brands come with some element of risk and you need to



consider any reputational risk that this might pose. And what's the overall brand value? By that I mean, is it a quality brand with a good reputation or is it a brand that's unknown or worse still one that has a dodgy reputation?

Step # 2 Evaluate Your Value. Take a moment to think about the value that you bring to the brand and the gifted campaign. Consider your audience size, your engagement [00:06:00] rate, your audience demographics. Do they align strongly with the brand's target market, their customer, their consumer, their audience?

Moving into **Step # 3 Evaluate the Campaign.** There are a few things you should consider here. Look at the communication between yourself and the brand. Has that flow of communication been easy and professional? Communication gives you an early insight as to what you'll experience when you work with a brand. So consider the tone, the timeliness, professionalism of the communication and see how that sits with you.

Now I want you to review the brief from the campaign. Here we're talking about all the deliverables that's expected of you from the brand. So does the brand expect multiple pieces of content across different platforms?

Are the key messages that the brand wants you to convey clear? What usage rights are expected? [00:07:00] Does the brand have a plan to use your content for UGC in organic or paid content through their channels? Do they want to boost the content on your channels? How long do they expect to have rights for? Do they expect ownership of the content and so on?

If you're unclear on any elements of understanding a campaign brief, we have a whole podcast episode dedicated to that. It's a bumper one. It's our very first episode, because that's how important it is. Have a look for [Brand Collaborations 101, Understanding the Brief](#), I'll link it in the show notes.

And this will really help you understand the steps of this early engagement with the brand.

Step # 4 Have a look at the **Value Proposition.** Consider the value of the product or service and weigh it up against the effort required for the deliverables. How do you feel about producing the [00:08:00] work that's



expected by the brand in exchange for receiving that gifted product or service?

Have a think about the actual price of the goods you're being supplied with and any other benefits you might be able to leverage from the campaign. Like - will you be able to build your portfolio, is there a good brand association from working with that brand? You might really, really want that product and don't have the budget to buy it. Does the gifted campaign represent value for you and not just the brand?

Step # 5, look for Red Flags. A lot of the content that I see in influencer and creator Facebook groups or just general discussion is around these red flags that I'm about to cover off. So, work through these before you say yes to any campaign.

1. First of all, look at the **email address or the communication [00:09:00] channels.** Has the approach by the brand come from a questionable or dodgy email address? If the email address doesn't match the brand's official domain name, or it comes through unprofessional communication channels, it can be the sign of a scam. Verify the legitimacy of the brand before you go ahead. It's really easy to do.

Just cross reference the contact details with those on the brand's website, or reach out to the brand directly through their established social media channels, just to confirm the authenticity of the offer. I constantly see messages in Facebook groups asking if an opportunity is a scam or not. Just do the legwork yourself first to confirm authenticity.

And then if you can't verify through a quick, Google or social media search, it's more than likely a scam.

2. Red flag number two, **a requirement to pay for [00:10:00] the product.** If the brand expects you to pay for the product they are offering, it is not a gifted campaign. I'm going to repeat that because this is something that pops up again all the time.



A gifted campaign does not mean you have to pay any money out of your own pocket. If the brand expects you to pay for the product, it's not a gifted campaign, it is a sale for the brand.

3. Red flag number three, being asked to **cover postage or any other cost** to receive the gifted product is a major red flag, no.
4. Our next red flag is a **request to return the product**. A request to return the product after the collaboration is not standard practice in genuine gifted campaigns. There would be very few exceptions to this rule, just consider it a red flag.
5. **Excessive deliverables for low value product**. If a brand is [00:11:00] expecting a high level of content creation or promotion in exchange for a product of minimal value, again, it's a red flag.
6. **Lack of clear guidelines or expectations**. So, is the brand being vague or have non-existent campaign guidelines? If they don't know what they're doing, it's going to be difficult to achieve success from a gifted collaboration if the brand doesn't even know what they want to achieve from that relationship.
7. **Unnecessary pre-approval requirements**. If there is an expectation to submit content for pre-approval on a gifted campaign, I would consider this to be excessive. It's fairly common for paid campaigns, but to request that for a gifted campaign, I would simply say no to.
8. And again, for **campaign performance reporting**, it is standard to provide some feedback or basic metrics to the brand after a [00:12:00] paid campaign, but you're okay to decline this request on gifted campaigns.
9. Next, I want you to look out for **pressure from the brand to provide unnaturally positive reviews**. If the brand is pushing for overly positive reviews or not allowing you to express an honest opinion, this can compromise your authenticity and the trust from your audience. And, also there might be some legal ramifications from that. So no go.



10. **Demanding rights for your content without payment.** If a brand is insisting on full or even partial rights to your content without offering any fair payment or attribution, again, that's a no. You want to have some sort of contract or formal agreement. Even an email outlining the terms of the campaign. Get the details of the campaign in writing.
11. And finally, if [00:13:00] there's **pressure to hide the sponsored nature of the post**, in many countries there is a requirement to disclose gifted product campaigns. If a brand is putting pressure on you to not disclose the gifted nature of the campaign it's a loss of audience trust. You know that people will spot #SponCon a mile away. So just disclose it. It's easy.

Now we've covered off some red flags that you should be looking for, and you've thought about the overall campaign. The next step (**Step # 6**) is to go through and **negotiate any terms**. So you're feeling comfortable that you want to go ahead with the gifted campaign. If there are a couple of things that you need to clarify, go back to the brand and negotiate any terms of the campaign to ensure that they're fair and beneficial for you as well as the brand.

So, think about those red flags we just discussed, as well as [00:14:00] steps one through to four.

Now, if everything's ticked off, you've got the product, you can go ahead and (**Step # 7**) **create your content, plan your content** and make sure that it delivers a great experience for the brand, a great experience for the audience and engage with your audience to support strong engagement on the content.

You want it to perform well. If you've agreed to do the gifted campaign, commit to it as if it were a paid campaign. Deliver what you're great at delivering: beautiful content, good engagement, and a great result for the brand.

Before we wrap up the gifted campaign, I want you to consider (**Step #8**) **exploring future opportunities**.



So, after the campaign consider the opportunity for ongoing collaborations with the brand, reach out to them, express your interest in future paid opportunities or ask for referrals to other brands.

When you do this, highlight any [00:15:00] positive outcomes from the campaign, such as really good audience engagement, perhaps some positive comments that were posted on the content, and perhaps even how you enjoyed using the product or the service.

This proactive approach might leverage a single gifted campaign into a paid campaign. So always ask, but similarly, don't be disappointed if it doesn't convert. You've still had a good experience through the brand relationship by developing your skills. And finally, as you should with each campaign, (**Step #9**) **review and reflect** on the campaign.

Think about what went really well and think about what you might be able to do differently for future brand campaigns. Wrapping all of this up, gifted campaigns can be more than just free products for influencers. They can be an opportunity for you to build your skills and [00:16:00] establish brand relationships.

Managed well, these campaigns can lead to more collaborations and open doors to future paid opportunities. So, this marks an important step in the growth of your influencer career. Just remember that before accepting gifted campaigns that you follow a clear process to make sure that you're also getting value from the gifted campaign.

Go back and review the steps that we've discussed in today's episode. They'll be available through our show notes at thebusinessofinfluence.com/ep18. And if you want a little more support to build your career as a professional influencer, join our [Facebook group, MOOTS](#). That's M-O-O-T-S. Search for it in Facebook groups.

And I'll see you there and on the podcast next week. [00:17:00] Until then, stay creative.

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