Knowledge Exchange: Working with influencers

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Rosie and I will tell you about our own experience at MGS as a comms team working with influencers. We'll share some of our key learnings with you. And before handing over to Julie from Dundee Heritage Trust. You'll see there, Julie Cumming. And then on to Kay, the chaotic Scot, who works as a travel writer, blogger and influencer. And they'll both provide us with some really good insights and useful tips to working with influencers. So thanks for coming along today, guys, then we'll have time at the end to answer any questions you might have. So next slide. Here we go. So how did we get started working with influencers at MGS? so following the pandemic, to support the sector, we ran museums are go marketing campaigns to raise the profile of museums and galleries to the public and help welcome people back. So we were aware at that time that we weren't always reaching the right people through the more traditional channels. For example, those who perhaps have never considered visiting a museum because they felt it wasn't for them that it had no relevance for them, or they felt excluded due to various barriers. So we wanted to work with people who not only reflected but would also give us access to a target audience to our target audiences. So we really recognise the need for a more diverse voices promoting museums. So that's what led us to work with influencers. So I'll pass over to Rosie.

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Louise, I thought I'd just go through a few of the highlights over the last couple of years of working with influencers just to show kind of a range of the platforms we've been working on, and who we've been working with. And so this is life of Hadiya. Who is a tik tok influencer and she also uses Instagram a bit as well. And we worked with her with VisitScotland, we did a joint influencer marketing campaign with them to really kind of promote visiting museums in cities. And what I loved about this Tiktok is that Hadiya hadn't visited many museums before and she and her partner went off to Aberdeen Art Gallery, and just had an absolute blast like it's such a fun, encouraging video of why you should go out and visit a museum even if you maybe hadn't thought they were for you before. And so excuse me, so on to something quite different. So this is Diana from growing green fields who writes quite a popular blog and it's quite big on Instagram, it's very kind of lifestyle orientated. I think it like this content looks like it's out of like a glossy, like interiors kind of magazine, and I find it kind of fun, but this is actually a blog format. And Diana and her daughter went off to the Burrell collection and the content was kind of more aimed maybe slightly older audience than Hadiya's, Hadiya is like Gen Z-ish It's a bit kind of find those terms a bit more fluid than set ages but um, yeah Diana's audience kind of maybe a bit older, maybe has a family maybe doesn't live in a city. And so this was quite fun kind of someone going from a rural area, and just having a day trip with their daughter. And then this is Emma from simply Emma blog. And we worked with Emma last year, doing social media content, which but then she also did an interview and some paid advertorial with us and the Skinny magazine, Emma blogs and uses all platforms, to talk about travel and accessibility. And this is her at the Scottish fisheries Museum. Yeah, so just kind of like a real range there. I would say none of these influencers have massive audiences, but they have very engaged audiences. And they were really able, for us they were really able to kind of meet certain target audiences that were in our marketing campaigns. Okay, back to you, Louise.

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And right I'm back again. Yeah. So our key learnings from working with influencers we've got here influencers are not just the Kardashians, they're certainly not. They're often called micro influencers you might have heard that term being used before. And that really just means it's thousands of followers on social media as opposed to millions. They're usually skilled and versatile individuals who might work as writers, photographers or videographers who just have a real passion for a subject matter. And they write their own content, as well as paid for content. Influencers help you reach different audiences through different perspectives, we found that through our own work with influencers, and influencers have developed a really close bond with their followers. And they'll share similar interests, and they'll just be naturally more engaged. And that allows us to be more targeted. Another key learning was that money goes directly to the influencers. So this supports the growth of diverse voices in the media, in media. So it's also a really good place to experiment. You can get to know the right influencers that work for you and your museum or your gallery. And engagement can be easily tracked online, so it's easy to kind of measure, how a campaign went, and you can tweak it for next time as well. It's also a very low cost, high impact approach, which is really good, where budgets are tight. And also, capacity as well, compared to social media advertising are paid for advertorial and traditional newspapers that much more cost effective way to reach new audiences, as well as your current audience with a much greater engagement. And the message just is more authentic and credible coming from a trusted source. So going forward, we will continue to work with influencers at MGS directly, as well as through third parties such as VisitScotland. We've developed some really good relationships and have a better idea for options that are out there. And what makes good content to promote museums and galleries. But we are still learning. But what I'll do now is I'm going to pass over to Julie, who works in the sector, who will share her experiences of working with influencers at the Dundee Heritage Trust.

07:05

Hi, everyone. So I'm Julie, and I'm a white woman in my late 20s. With browny blond hair let's say, and a blue jumper on. So I work in the Dundee Heritage Trust marketing department. And for anyone that doesn't know Dundee Heritage Trust is an independent charity. We care for two Recognised collections so a polar collection and the Jute collection. And we operate the verdant works Museum, which is on the left and discovery point and the RRS discovery in Dundee. So next slide, please. So verdant works Museum is set within a refurbished mill that dates back to the 1830s. Straight in the heart of Dundies industrial area. And we tell Dundee's Jute and social story through this museum. We've got volunteers, interactive galleries, demonstrations, we host exhibitions each year, and we have events and we've got a cafe and gift shop. And we've got community outreach programmes and things. So it's, it's quite a lot of varied things that we do at verdant works. Next slide, please. And discovery points is home to Captain Scott's first Antarctic research ship discovery. And as well as our newest addition, the discovery dome, where people can see a 360 view of the city. That's Yes, it's stunning, especially now when we've got these early sunsets in the day, it's very nice. And again, we've got volunteer guides, we've got galleries, interactives, programme of exhibition and events, and we have a gift shop as well. So that's kind of just a wee bit of a background of where we are. And we're an independent charity. So that's a bit of background about us. And I've worked with the Trust for about 18 months now. So we've worked with, like third party visiting influencers, but also a bit of directly getting in touch with them. And like MGS that's something that we're hoping to build on this year is put more investment into actually influences coming along. And because we've seen the positive impact that they have and how nice it is to work with them. So yeah. So I thought I'd tell you about my experience with the third party influencers about our kind of top tips for when you're working directly with influencers just to make sure that everything works out really well for everyone. And kind of like how you can use social media groups as a as like a space for promoting as well. So we've been lucky to have visits from lots of different third party visitors. Whether they're through like the local tourism boards or VisitScotland. And usually what happens with us is that whoever's organising and paying for the influencer visit will just get in touch a few days before and say, look, we've got this person coming along. They want to come at this time and you know, could you give them something so we'll because they're already their visits already paid for by VisitScotland, whoever will give them free entry in depending on what time their visit is we'll give them a coffee or lunch in the cafe. And one of the things I always think is really useful is to start researching the influencer, just so you know who is coming along, see what kind of content they'll be making, you can get in touch with them and say hi, and you can point out certain parts that they might find especially of interest, if they've got like a certain visual style, or if they've got like a certain you know, if they bring their children along with them or something, it just to make their visit a wee bit more, like relaxed for them, and just to make that connection, and make it really worthwhile for everyone. So next slide, please. We make sure that the influencers tag us in their content. I mean, obviously, everybody does anyway, but just you know, make sure that you're kind of on your socials that day, where you tell your social media team that this is happening so they can be looking out for it and sharing it. And one of the nicest things I find is that it's really inspiring to see how other people see your venue. Because I don't know what everybody else is like, but you know, it's quite easy to just, when you're looking for a social media post, you think of the same view or you think of like the same spot to take a picture of, whereas if you've got an influencer coming, who they all have a great eye for what is creative and what works for audiences. So it's just really nice to see what they spot. So likes we were lucky to have Kay come and visit as part of her Dundee trip that she did. So it was a day of our Winter Fair. And it was really nice to see how Kay had, you know, illustrated our winter fair, because we were so immersed in the fair she can see it from an outside view. And also what her audience kind of engaged with and what kind of things they picked up in the comments and what parts of the building they were enjoying and stuff like that as well. So yeah, it was really nice in that kind of sense as well, as just getting the exposure and things. So next slide, please. And as I say, if you get visited by an influencer, be sure to start engaging with their content. So like, share it to your stories, like it, you can put comments on. If other people are starting to comment I find especially on Facebook, you can get a good conversation going with people and kind of drive them to your page a little bit as well. And once they start engaging with you, you can send them an automatic invite to like your page. So you're expanding your reach that way, as well as people just physically seeing it and becoming aware of it. And yeah, send them a little message afterwards to say thank you, I mean, either on email, or in DM. One of the really good things about social media is you can pretty much get in touch with anyone through a DM, whether you've got your email address or not, you can just send a little thing, wave and say hi. So that's nice. So next slide, please. So when we're working directly with influencers, the most important thing is to do our research beforehand. So we have to think about what kind of campaign we're running, what kind of audience we want to reach, as Louise and Rosie said, kind of what are our goals of, you know, having an influencer, why are we doing it? And then you can, once you've started doing that, and you've kind of picked who you want to get on board possibly, and things and start reaching out to them. Think about what kind of brief you'll have. And just put together some kind of signed contract so that you can both come back to it and say, Look, this is what we're looking for. This is what we'll pay you and things like that. And yeah, just thinking about what kind of content so like even even things seems really meticulous, but down to what social media channel, because you know, the audiences on Facebook are totally different Instagram and there's like a different reach on Twitter compared to Tik Tok and things. So, I mean, there's influencers that work with all of them, but some prefer others over certain ones. So just think about that as well. And yeah, think about the relevancy of the influencer as well. So I mean, you might get somebody coming along, you might have your budget, and then there's somebody that could use up all your budget, because you've got half a million followers or something. But then actually, when you look at the content that they post, the kind of area that they cover, and the followers that they have, maybe you'd be better to strategically pick influencers who match with your audience. So especially like sort of for museums, you do get influencers that have got these niche audiences but then you get wider reaching so it's quite nice to experiment and see what works best for your kind of I mean, every venue will be different, but definitely think about would you be better, you know, finding a couple of influencers with smaller reach than just splashing all out onto one who might not be so relevant. And next slide please. So this one, I kind of say influencers but I suppose it's more about like key characters within Facebook groups and things like that. So we're in a lot of local Facebook groups for verdant works. There's a lot of Dundee history groups and things like that. And we're starting to post a lot into there and you start to see like the main influential characters within that group. And that's the same with discovery. There's all these different Shackleton and Captain Scott groups and things like that. So it's nice to just immerse yourself in those groups and start making connections with people there. Because you'll find people that aren't necessarily employed as influencers, but say, they'll write blogs and things. So you can say, Look, can we collaborate kind of would you do this, what are your fees and things like that. So it's a nice kind of root into working with other people online if its, you know, if you feel quite daunted by straightaway going for influencers that have got, you know, other top spec and things like that, just making these little connections is really nice. And again, it's really authentic. And you, you know, some of them run pages and some are in different groups and things. So it's just a nice way to kind of, yeah, find influential people online, because there aren't a lot of them online. So yeah, I think that is mostly, that's all we've got see, really the most best thing is that it's fun. And that inspiration thing as well, the creativity that comes out of it. So yeah, thank you. I'll pass you on to Kay now. Thank you.

16:02

Thank you so much, Julie. Hi, everyone. I am Kay. I'm a mid 30s female with long, fairish hair, an orange jumping on which is very on brand for me. And I use the pronouns she and her. So for anyone that's not familiar with my online escapades, I am better known as the chaotic Scot by name and by nature. I have been blogging for over 10 years now, which actually makes me feel a lot sorry, sounds a lot older than what I feel. When I first started blogging. It was before influencers were even a thing. It was before selfies, were even a thing and I'm now an absolutely huge fan of selfies. And back then, really, when I used to say that I wanted to do this full time, for a living people looked at me like I was nuts. So sorry. Next slide, please. Yeah, people looked at me like I was absolutely bonkers. Whereas now, I am well known for my public transport and Scottish Island adventures. And I've kind of evolved with the industry. I've obviously seen lots of changes in social media over that time. I started off old school with just a website and Facebook that no one was reading back then. And now I've got far too many social media channels. I've amassed quite a big following. Some of them have been around since the beginning and have been suffering my chat for the full decade. I also have an online shop, I help people plan their adventures in Scotland, and I've appeared on lonely planet, and on TV, and radio, and all of those very exciting things. I've worked with dozens of businesses, brands, destinations, organisations in Scotland, museums and galleries being one of them. And right after the pandemic, I worked on a lovely campaign with Louise to promote museums and galleries in Fife and Perthshire. So I hope that I can give you guys a bit of insight from my perspective, a Next slide, please. So first of all, just some of the key benefits of working with influencers. And this echoes a lot of what Louise and Julie have already said, first of all, it is one of the most powerful and impactful marketing tools available nowadays. We are living in a digital world, we are all you know immersed in our devices, for better or for worse. But it does create this great opportunity for exposure for the sector. And I think what makes it so effective is that it really brings experiences to life, and in a very personal and relatable and immersive way more so than just say a static advert in a magazine. And also, you know, it's much cheaper when you think about the potential reach a campaign with an influencer can have the cost versus traditional TV, radio or print marketing is considerably less. And not only does it allow you to potentially well, you will definitely reach a new audience through your influencers. It allows you to re engage with your existing audience. And that's really important because these are the people who had already sold, it's about reminding them and enticing them to come back to your venue. And also, it's just a great opportunity to breathe new life into your social media channels. So, you know, maybe you've been feeling a bit uninspired or you post the same kind of posts or maybe you're not posting really consistently by working with influencers, like what Julie was saying, it can give you a totally new perspective on your venue. And also they can potentially give you content which you can repurpose, and reuse on your channels. Next slide please. So these are some of my top tips for maximising your partnerships with influencers from start to finish. Next slide please. So before you even consider approaching anyone You need to start with your own plan your own marketing plan, and really visualise what it is that you would like to get out of it. And by doing that, it's going to heighten your chances of finding the right person for you, and also reaching the right audience and meeting your objectives. So while influencer marketing can help you deliver your objectives, it's only one piece of the puzzle in a much wider marketing strategy. So these are some of the things that that you can think about, you know, what are your short term and long term goals? Do you want more eyes on your social media? is it about growing your audience there so that you can then engage with them? Is it to get people into a specific event? Also, think about the type of visitors that you're looking to attract? Because that will very much dictate what influencer you you're working with. So are you looking to target the same demographic that you already know? know and love your attraction. Or are you looking at target a completely new audience? Are you looking to get families in? Are you looking for couples? solo travellers? young people? all that sort of stuff. Look at your event calendar and plan your your marketing activity around that, as I'm sure you already do. What do you have coming up? Are you looking to create awareness around that? also think about what kind of content will be best suited to your venue. Do you have a really stunning, visually attractive venue that will translate well into video and photography? Or is it somewhere that's just got a really amazing, interesting story to be told that would work well, in words or with a voiceover reel which are em yeah, they're they're kind of bang on trend right now, as I'm discovering, but I'll get into that in a wee bit later. And also, what other experiences or local businesses can you build into the campaign? Because from my point of view,

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I think it's nice to have a kind of holistic view of a campaign and give people extra incentive to visit a destination. So do you have a cafe on site? Or is there an amazing, an amazing coffee shop next door or over the road, or a beach walk that's nearby or, or something like that, so that you're giving people like extra incentive to visit. From my point of view as an influencer, if I can tell people, you can visit this museum or gallery, go for a walk here, eat here, you know, you're ticking a lot of boxes, and it's gonna encourage people to visit. And also just thinking about what channel you want to focus on, as Julie was saying, some people only focus on one channel, I'm now spreading myself very thinly across multiple I'm even on tik tok now. But we've not quite mastered that yet. So it's really about thinking where your audience are. And are you looking to, to grow on another channel? And think about what content you might need. So do you have gaps in your photography that you would like to be able to use on your channels? Could you make use of video clips to create your own reels? So build that plan. And then start doing your research into influencers. Next slide, please. So I do love a wee analogy. How do you find a cowboy tradesman? Choose someone at random, don't check any reviews, and don't ask for examples of previous work. And I'm definitely speaking from experience, because that is how I got caught short with a dodgy joiner a few years ago. And exactly the same applies to influencers. And influencers have had a really bad rep in my 10 years of blogging, you know, businesses that have publicly shamed influencers who have not followed up on their deliverables because they were perhaps not professional influencers, there was no contract or anything agreed. And so really, I do think the onus is on the business or organisation as well. So at the very least, you should be requesting a media pack, testimonials, and audience demographics. Anyone that's doing this professionally will know that information I could tell you it quite quickly and would have access to testimonials. The other thing to consider when you're you're window shopping for an influencer is not to get shiny object syndrome over the number of followers and that's something that's that I do think is changing a lot but it was that was always the primary focus was on was on the the quantity of followers rather than on the quality. And you're really much better to have a micro influencer, although that goes up to 100,000 which I don't think it's a small following at all, but but a smaller audience that are engaged and that are within your target demographic, than someone that's got hundreds of thousands of people that maybe hit the like button, but don't actually engage. And just something else to bear in mind. And this is something that I do for inspiration from my own posts. Even if you're not at the stage yet that you're ready to approach an influencer. I always think it's good to have a wee bank of people on the back burner for when you're ready to approach so create a saved folder on Instagram if that's the channel that you use. And whenever you're scrolling as we all do, if you see any ideas for reels or content that you think would work really well at your venue, or if you stumble upon bloggers and influencers that you'd like to work with, save them into that folder. I think that's much better than then going out blindly and sort of, you know, scrambling to find someone. And also the algorithm will pick up on the fact that you are looking at a certain type of influencer, and then it will start to show you more people. Next slide, please. So these just very quickly, these are some examples of my different styles of high performing content just to give you an idea of what you know what different people can offer. So this is my kind of bread and butter, my old school, very long winded, written Facebook posts. I am a writer first and foremost, but I've had to kind of pivot, with static images. So that's how I started and those posts still do well. But as you probably all know, reels and video content are the best way to increase your reach and target a new audience. This was my first viral video. It's a burger van in Dunkeld. The gentleman that runs it got 1000 followers within about three days of me posting that reel, which was just bonkers. I've now also started doing voiceover reels, although I do cringe at the sound of my own voice, would you believe. But that is, I've noticed straightaway that they are drawn in a whole new audience. And actually, my audience has grown by about 10,000 In the last two weeks, which is crazy. And also competitions that are a great way of creating wide reach and engagement on a campaign. Is there's something that you can do? Could you team up with a local tourism board or local businesses and run a competition? That's a really effective way of growing your audience through influencer marketing. Next slide, please. So the next step, you've got your your plan and your visualisation of your goals and everything that you're looking to achieve. You've done your research, you know what, what kind of influencer you'd like to work with, or indeed exactly who you'd like to work with. It's now time to get in touch. And this is the approach that I think works best. Start with a wee informal message on social media, like Julie was saying, it's a quick way, you know, sliding into someone's DMS, a lot of us have got too much email traffic and emails will set you know, gathered dust. So start with a wee informal message on social media, the benefit of that, as well as that you can see when someone read it, and it also gives you a quick, easy route to nudge someone, if they if they don't get back to you. So start with that. Give them a you know, see that you're interested in working with them. I would mention straight away that it's a paid campaign. I've been approached by brands, before that, have asked me to send them a proposal, I've spent quite a lot of time sending them a proposal by email, and they've then come back to me and informed me that they had no intention of paying me. So that's what not to do. So I think it's good straightaway. Hi, I really love your content. We're working on a campaign to do X Y, Zed, it's a paid opportunity, do you have an email address, I can contact you on? And that will gauge that person's interests straightaway, they'll come back to you, you can then move on to an email exchange. At this point, I would probably be requesting their media pack and having a look at testimonials if they're not published on their website. Specify your budget if you have one. So if you know that you can't spend over a certain amount, and you've allocated a part of your marketing budget, be really honest and transparent about that and say this is what we're working with what can you do for that. Otherwise, if you don't know where to start, and you just really want to work with this person, ask them for a quote, but let them know that you have budget. I think transparency is key here. And most people won't be open to a bit of negotiation. Although most of us feel really strongly about being well not being paid at all or being underpaid. I then think suggest a call or a video call, rather than the back and forward ping pongs of emails, go on the call, discuss your brief in more detail, share some ideas, agree on deliverables and get the dates in the diary. Next slide please.

29:06

Following that, I would get absolutely everything that you've discussed on the call confirmed in writing. I love a detailed brief. So for me, utopia is a really detailed belief of what the brand or the destination are trying to achieve, but also giving me creative freedom to deliver that. So I would and this is just good practice to set this up, create a standard template for a briefing document. So campaign objectives, deliverables and timescales, your terms and conditions and the agreed fees and expenses that will be covered and send that over to the influencer, get them to sign off on that, which also backs you up. And this means you can hold an influencer to account if they are not delivering what was agreed. And they will probably also have terms and conditions that you would need to sign off on as well. And then after that, you're kind of good to go. And I think you can you can leave it and then check in again. maybe two or three days ahead of the campaign, just to confirm that everything is all set to go. Next slide, please. Now get ready. And by this, it's not even just getting ready for the influencer to be at your attraction, you need to prep your social media. So if the campaign goes well, you are potentially going to get lots of new eyes on your social media pages. And some people might just click the link in an influencers post to see what your page and what your venue is all about. So you really want to have your your bio, if it's on Instagram, or on Facebook, optimised, are you, are you doing what it says on the tin? You know, are you spelling out to people exactly what your where you are, what you do? And also, what content do you have on there? Are you ready for new people to see it? When was the last time you posted 10 weeks ago? Because I know, you know, as someone, I would potentially not follow a page if I thought it wasn't an active page. And that's a missed opportunity. So get your social media channels ready, and maybe even have a welcome post ready for after the campaign so that you can you can introduce or reintroduce yourself to all the new people. Make sure someone's available and on your social media channels when the influencer is there. And this should it seems really obvious. But actually, quite a few times it's happened that I've spent a long time curating stories, and no one's been there to reshare them within the 24 hours. So that is really important. And Julie set a great example of that. And how will the Heritage Trust, engage with the people that have been at their attractions and I also think it's really nice if you've got a member of staff there, if possible on the day to welcome the influencers and potentially even offer a wee tour. Because it's the wee, it's those personal interactions and probably the wee nuggets that someone will tell the influencer, those are the things that we love to share, and that we'd love to write about. So yeah. Next slide, please. And then following the campaign, this is a great opportunity to get feedback from the influencers on what went well, especially if it's one of your first influencer campaigns, you know, get their feedback on the actual campaign itself, but also on your venue, and anything that they've spotted, you know, good or bad. Agree on any changes to the content, it's often the case when I go away. After I've been at a destination, I'll come up with different ideas for maybe how I want to what the slant that I want to put on the content, so just reconfirm what content is going out. And when it's going to ask that influencer for that invoice straightaway, so that you can get that processed because that's another huge bugbear. You know, sometimes we're left waiting for up to three months for payments, so I think it's really good to set a good example with that if you can. Next slide, please. And just with any other marketing activity that you do, it's really important to go away and reflect on it, look at the stats, I mean, something that you will want to request from the influencer is a report, I would usually say two to four weeks afterwards, so that the engagement has time to settle down. And they'll provide everything, you know, reach, engagement, I also think it's really good to take screenshots or copy and paste any engagements that you get from that campaign, because your DMS might start kicking off during the campaign, and it's really good to be able to, you know, just gather evidence that the campaign worked. So people are saying, Oh, wow, this looks great, I really want to come now, screenshot that and keep it. That's the type of thing that I keep for my clients to show them the success of the campaign. And also, just remember that the results might not be immediate. So yes, you might see a wee spike in your followers and in your social media activity during the campaign. But travel isn't always super impulsive. So depending on where you are, or what the experience is, people aren't necessarily, you know, going to jump out of bed and come straight to your attraction the next day. But influencers it's all about planting the seed. And our audiences really trust our recommendations. You know, we've spent years building this trust and rapport. So there's a good chance that people will follow our recommendations that might just not be immediately. So that's maybe one that you could track at the attraction. How did you find out about us? So, but yeah, it's really encouraging to see the sector embracing working with influencers, and it's brilliant to see the work that Julie and Louise have done. I think you're setting a really great example for lots of other sectors. So yeah, thank you so much, and I hope that you guys are all feeling inspired. And if you've not worked with influencers yet, will seize the opportunity.