

# HFMA Bulletin

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## What the VMS industry can learn from beauty brands

Working in VMS, there is no escaping the fact that we operate in one of the most complex and regulated industries in the world, and sometimes this can mean that we are focusing on what's urgent, rather than the bigger trends vital for growth. So it is often good to take a step back and look at what some of the cutting-edge brands in other industries are getting right. In particular, I've been inspired by the natural beauty market of late, which has been championing two areas traditionally associated with the natural health industry: word of mouth recommendation (now, of course, through social media) and the needs of the new eco-conscious consumer.

One of the key ways the natural beauty market has been leading the way is in its use of social media. By showing a strong brand purpose through its channels, many companies, such as NZ-based zero waste beauty brand Ethique, are able to foster an engaged and loyal community of fans online. As well as a focus on beautiful imagery, they often repurpose user-generated content on their channels, which is a brilliant way to get authentic content and help convert new consumers to the brand.

This authenticity is clear in the way that natural beauty brands work with influencers, too. Influencer marketing has come under huge amounts of scrutiny of late (and rightly so) for posts not being disclosed as paid-for, and certain influencers promoting irresponsible products. However, in natural and organic beauty, there is a clear shift towards using the

right hand-selected influencer for the job: one who is highly engaged and genuinely believes in the brand's values. Not only is this a better way of utilizing the platforms, but it also helps develop longer-standing relationships with talent who are more likely to feature the product organically. Anyone working in influencer marketing in VMS must be aiming to work like this.

Another trend I am excited about in natural beauty is the innovation in sustainable packaging. Particularly at Natural & Organic Products Europe this year, it was inspiring to see so many beauty brands looking for more environmentally conscious ways to package their products.

Paper, biodegradable and reusable packaging was widespread and offered real food for thought for how we can adopt this more in VMS. The rise of conscious consumerism is hugely positive and brands who are fast to react to this will undoubtedly reap the rewards, as consumers continue to turn away from plastic and products which don't meet their criteria.

While it is mainly small and nimble businesses at the helm of the conscious packaging movement right now, it is something we should all be striving for – and quickly!

Natural and 'conscious' beauty is clearly having its moment, and it's a credit to so many innovative people working in this space that this is happening. VMS can take great inspiration from many of these trends, and I'm excited to see it already happening.

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