

# UNDER THE INFLUENCE?

Watch out for the pitfalls...

**T**here is no getting away from it, social media is now a part of consumer advertising strategy whether you are a manufacturer, supplier or retailer. This explosion of coverage has also given rise to a massive amount of misinformation from misleading through to actually dangerous information. So how can you have a presence and still maintain not just the credibility of your brand but also avoid falling foul of the authorities?

It is easy to adopt the attitude of everyone else is doing it so why shouldn't I? But is that the most responsible option? As an industry we strive to support and educate our consumers and while it is tempting to add a few hashtags or have an influencer make suggested claims, it ultimately runs the risk of bringing the product and the industry into disrepute and under even more scrutiny.

The HFMA believes that as an industry, we are very highly regulated and doesn't agree with the calls that often appear in the press for increased regulations. Instead, we would prefer the authorities to take a firmer stance against rogue traders.

However, it is also important that we support brands who want to do it right while maximising the benefits of using social media.

At one of our recent online Coffee Mornings we discussed working with influencers; the key points to remember are that it is, in effect, an advert and needs to be labelled as an advert or a collaboration as well as considering the advertising guidelines regarding claims and product use. Working closely with your influencer, ensuring that they understand the regulatory constraints and implications, is also important. Having a contract with them that sets out your requirements and stipulations is also essential.

An easy test is, 'Does what they are saying sound like a health claim?' If so, then it probably is and they need to reword it. With the Advertising Standards Agency (ASA) using AI bots to look for keywords, it is very easy for them to detect posts using words and phrases such as immunity, weight loss, and coughs and colds.

The European Health Products Manufacturers (EHPM) recently produced guidelines for working



with influencers, highlighting the benefits of doing so as a powerful marketing tool while at the same time encouraging companies to act responsibly to protect the industry and the importance of self-regulation alongside the regulations.

We have also recently presented a webinar on the use of testimonials and how they can be a valuable marketing tool when used within the regulatory framework. Is it time for you to review how you use influencers and testimonials in your marketing? If so, it is worth noting that CLEAR CHECK® services are available to non-HFMA members too. Worth considering if you are looking to expand your content.

Looking forward, August sees the launch of the EU Packaging and Packaging Waste Regulation (PPWR). Most companies will be aware of what they need to do to comply, but this is

the start of a raft of new regulations around sustainability. It is a topic that is never far away at the HFMA and we will be launching a series of webinars to help identify what you need to do, which regulations apply to your sector and help direct business to the right experts. Look out for announcements in our mailouts and via LinkedIn.



**We are always happy to discuss how being part of the HFMA can support your business. If you would like to find out more or raise a topic for discussion, please contact us at [hfma@hfma.co.uk](mailto:hfma@hfma.co.uk).**