

SMWNYC: Creative Brands and Reliable Influencers Are the Future of Advertising

Alex Marin,
Content
Manager, [WHOSA](#)
[Y](#)



It is “very, very difficult to build a relationship with people on a six-inch screen,” opined WHOSAY CEO Steve Ellis to open the highly attended Social Media Week New York (SMWNYC) panel.

Ellis highlighted one of the main challenges faced by brands and marketers nowadays, namely, that mobile advertising suffers from poor performance and a poor user experience—but that talent-driven creative content outperforms in every campaign.

Joined onstage by [Improv Everywhere](#) founder [Charlie Todd](#) and [The Game Theorists](#) creator [MatPat](#), Ellis explained how WHOSAY, recently acquired by [Viacom](#), approaches working with talent to develop creative influencer content.

“There is an amount of mathematical affinity that you can look at between a person and a brand you work,” said the WHOSAY CEO. “But [...] increasingly more important are what we call the qualitative attributes, which is, ‘Does the person show up and do as you ask, will they contribute to the creative storytelling and are they going to be someone that can work with a brand and you can depend on them to stay safe beyond the campaign itself?’”

On the creator side, the focus is not so different when pondering whether to work with brands. “First and foremost, does the brand fit with what we’re looking to do,” said MatPat, adding that the venture should feel like an “organic push” instead of a “reach.” Influencers also think about their audience, specifically, what’s the “added value” to the fan about incorporating the brand into their experience. “The last one is, does the brand have clear KPIs,” added MatPat.

“For our audience to be totally on board with it, it has to go above and beyond what we normally do,” said Todd. The founder of the New York City-based comedy collective added that the projects that are most successful are the ones when the brands come to him and say, “We like what you do, we wanna help you do what you do.”

As MatPat added, creativity is key. “Not just on the video itself but also in the packaging around that video.” Namely, a quality thumbnail and title “thought out well in advance.” Otherwise, the video is going to underperform, even if it’s the “Citizen Kane of YouTube.” Todd then added to the importance of format by highlighting that sponsored content must follow the same format and script “that you normally

have.”

The panelists then veered onto the subject of analytics and the importance of rigorous testing of content formats, types, lengths and distribution. “We’re very invested in the analytics behind the scenes and we’re constantly running tests on the platform to see how the social media networks are distributing content,” said MatPat. “You can’t count on just throwing a video on an influencer’s platform [when] the algorithms of YouTube, and particularly Facebook, are rigged in a way now that you have to pay them to reach your own audience,” highlighted Todd. “But there’s still a smart way of doing it,” said Ellis, who added that, “We’re on the early stages of realizing that there are smarter ways to spend your money.”

Lastly, Todd, MatPat and Ellis addressed one of [social media’s](#) elephants in the room: fake followers and brand-safety issues. “I’ve never done it,” said MatPat when asked whether he at an earlier point in his career ever felt the pressure to buy followers. “It’s going to be counterproductive to your goal because, at the end of the day, I think one area where we have seen this industry move forward is: people are becoming savvier [about the fact] that large numbers don’t equate success.”

“It’s definitely not a long-term strategy,” said Todd. “You can fool someone once with a number like that but I think brands are savvy and they look at the engagement numbers.” “There is no quick way anymore [...] now you have to be consistently committed,” added Ellis.



About the Author: Alex Marin is a media and communications professional with 7+ years experience researching, reporting, writing, editing, curating and distributing organic and sponsored content across verticals and platforms. Since 2013, he works as Content Manager for brand-trusted influence marketer WHOSAY. Born and raised in Caracas, Alex loves to travel, eat food and drink wine—as documented on his Instagram @elalexmarin. LinkedIn: [linkedin.com/in/elalexmarin](https://www.linkedin.com/in/elalexmarin)