3 Unexpected Lessons From the ‘Dreams’ TikTok

On Sept. 25, Nathan Apodaca took a ride on his longboard, casually sipping a jug of Ocean Spray Cran-Raspberry juice and lip-syncing to Fleetwood Mac’s “Dreams.” The resulting video and mood it evoked took the internet by storm, garnering 28.7 million views on TikTok and inspiring copycat videos from everyday people and celebs. Naturally, Tom Hayes, CEO of Ocean Spray, and Fleetwood Mac drummer Mick Fleetwood got in on the fun as well.

We now understand that products, people and concepts can all go viral on TikTok, sparking action from consumers in unexpected ways. So, what can brands learn about social marketing from a moment like this?

Be vigilant

It’s impossible to replicate the exact circumstances of Apodaca’s video. We may never understand why this particular post, out of millions of others shared that day, resonated with people so strongly. However, we can explain how it took off once it caught people’s attention. Add to the equation the fact that most popular TikTok trends inevitably end up on Instagram, Twitter and Facebook and there you have it—a cross-platform, viral moment that started the moment another TikToker found the video funny and shared it.

Once you’re on the right platforms, it’s not enough to jump in on relevant fads, like the Ocean Spray CEO’s copycat response. Before you can start producing sponsored content and activating influencers, you need an understanding of how your target customers use social media and what sort of content resonates best with them. Each platform has its own lingo, tactics and even multiple subcultures, depending on the

demographics of the users you want to engage with. And popular trends, challenges and posting styles can change nearly every day. This can be a daunting task, but it’s worth the effort.

Look for leaders and personalities among your target audiences. Who are the popular voices in these groups? On TikTok, microinfluencers who started as virtual nobodies can ring even more true.

Earn the community

If you want to try for an authentic moment that’s primed to go viral, involve influencers in all facets of your campaign development. By creating a reciprocal relationship with influencers and everyday customers, you can participate in discourse taking place in their communities. Your strategy will then shift from waiting for your creatives and influencers to alert you of the next trend to being there, watching it develop alongside them and identifying ways to authentically enter the conversation.

Embrace the absurd

Any brand looking to achieve even a fraction of the success of the “Dreams” video must be willing to step out of their comfort zone and consider unconventional themes and ideas. Influencers know their peers best so, as you make an effort to engrain your brand into their culture, give them ample opportunity to suggest ideas for campaigns, content and messaging.

Some ideas might seem foreign or odd to you but remember: Often, that’s the content that catches customers and users in the perfect moment and performs best. Encourage creative, silly and relatable concepts and work with talent to involve

your brand in these efforts in a way that’s unexpected, unique and persuasive.

TikTok is a launchpad for viral moments. Apodaca’s video wasn’t the first, and it surely won’t be the last. A certain popular song may put it best: “It’s only right that you should play the way you feel it.”

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