The Definitive Guide to User Generated Content
The explosion of user generated content is changing the fabric of the web.

Innovations in mobile technology have given rise to the always-connected consumer, who is constantly creating, sharing and consuming content.

User generated content (UGC) is not only popular, it’s influential. Customer photos and videos have become the new version of ratings and reviews — offering online shoppers a tangible experience of items comparable to what they’d get in store. Millennials report that UGC is 20% more influential on purchase than any other type of media.

At a time when ecommerce is on the rise — Bigcommerce predicts it will hit 2 trillion dollars in 2015, up 30% year over year — retailers are fighting to stay competitive and find innovative ways to measure social ROI. Yet, despite the huge opportunity, only 3.3% of today’s top 500 retailers are using user generated photos (RJMetrics). But that number is poised to change — a recent Offerpop poll indicated that 76% of marketers plan to increase their usage of UGC as a marketing tactic this year. Retailers that learn to harness user content drive ROI will achieve unprecedented results.

In this ebook, we’ll demonstrate how leading brands leverage authentic consumer content to drive sales and fuel revenue.

Read on to learn how in just four easy steps.
1. Tap Into Your Audience to Build a Library of User Generated Content

Whether they’re posting selfies in their new boots or shooting mini makeup tutorials via Vine, consumers are already sharing digital content about their favorite products.

Through UGC marketing campaigns, marketers can capture this content at scale, creating a valuable library of influential photos and videos that compel consumer purchase.

UGC marketing campaigns are the most powerful tactic for getting value from consumer content. Campaigns prompt and incentivize content sharing, spreading your product photos and messages across channels. In an age when organic social impressions are shrinking, this word of mouth strategy is a critical factor in capturing digital reach.

UGC campaigns automate the content collection process. They eliminate the need to reach out to individual consumers with requests to reuse their content — a manual, time-consuming process. And they augment the valuable feedback and ratings that retailers collect during customer surveys. While surveys are a great tool for gathering a critical mass of endorsements and data, they don’t tap into the shareable, eye-catching visual content that users share organically on social media.
Many online retailers now enable user reviews and photo uploads to individual product pages. This gives shoppers an unbiased view of item quality and fit, and leads to an 18% uplift in sales (Reevoo). But most retailers bury this compelling content at the bottom of product pages, where it drives the very end of the buying journey, but fails to engage the casual shopper. UGC marketing campaigns engage consumers at multiple stages of the buy cycle, from early stage awareness through conversion and customer loyalty.

**So how do you run UGC marketing campaigns that power ecommerce?**

Collecting UGC through hashtag aggregation is an excellent option. This makes it easy for consumers to enter campaigns simply by tagging their content with the designated campaign hashtag. And because hashtags are a common feature across Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, Pinterest, Vine, and Tumblr, they allow fans and followers to participate in the campaign through whichever channel they prefer. Branded hashtags have proven to be powerful CTAs across all marketing channels, including TV, social and print. During last year’s Super Bowl, commercials that included hashtags led to 42% more tweets than those that didn’t.

You can also run UGC campaigns that allow consumers to upload their content directly to your website or Facebook. Offering multiple submission options helps build participation. Meanwhile, in-channel promotions like Facebook photo contests or Pinterest campaigns allow you to grow audience size and engagement for a specific channel.
Quick Tips for Getting More UGC Entries

- Incentivize it: offer compelling reasons for fans to share their content, whether it’s a high-value prize or the chance to get featured on your homepage.

- Promote the campaign through in-store displays if you have a brick-and-mortar presence.

- Put a CTA on or inside your packaging or receipt.

- Launch retargeting ad campaigns for your most engaged customers.

- Include a callout in purchase confirmation emails.

- Routinely promote the campaign across your social, website, and digital channels.

- Highlight the best consumer entries on your social channels to drive more entries and engagement.
Using Offerpop’s Platform, SoulCycle set out to acquire new male riders, increase brand engagement, raise awareness for the “Movember” Initiative, and change perceptions of SoulCycle being a “women only” experience. SoulCycle leveraged the Offerpop platform to create customized landing pages, deploy interactive UGC galleries, collect user images and content, and capture user data. The results they were able to achieve were off the charts!

They effectively leveraged visual UGC to shift perceptions, and drive increased male membership.

48,000+
UNIQUE VIEWS ON THE #NOMOEXCUSES GALLERY

CAPTURED 4,500
UNIQUE EMAIL ADDRESSES FROM THE “REFER A BRO” CAMPAIGN

5,530
NEW MALE REFERRALS
→ 35% INCREASE OF NEW RIDERS
2. Capture Data and Permissions from Campaign Participants

Marketers should do more than collect content — they should embrace the huge opportunity it provides. Brands can leverage UGC experiences to deepen relationships with participants. By including data capture forms or activating an auto-responder as part of the campaign entry process, marketers enable a number of objectives, including:

A. **Complying with legal guidelines by confirming that consumers accept terms and conditions**
B. **Rewarding entrants with incentives**
C. **Gaining consumer permission for content reuse**
D. **Getting actionable insight about consumers by capturing data**
E. **Enabling opt-ins for communications and promotions**
A. Complying with legal guidelines by confirming that consumers accept Ts & Cs

When it comes to terms and conditions, many marketers are balancing guidelines from a host of sources — including national and local restrictions, terms of use for multiple social networks, and individual company policies. Marketers should incorporate these in a single set of campaign terms and conditions, and ensure that participants are exposed to them through the promotion entry process.

Suave’s #RadiantWishes UGC campaign, held to promote a new product launch, required contest participants to tweet with a hashtag to enter. Post-tweet, entrants received a custom response directing them to a form to “claim their entry” and demonstrate that they accepted the campaign terms and conditions.

B. Asking permission for content reuse

Custom responses allow marketers to combine the reach of multi-network hashtag campaigns with the closed-loop marketing experience of sign up forms. And they’ve proven effective: for Offerpop campaigns, they have an average submission-to-entry conversion rate of 37%.

Auto-responses serve another purpose: giving consumers a way to grant permissions for content reuse across other channels. By automating this process, you make it easy to integrate consumer content across your website, advertising and other marketing channels, lending your messaging credibility.
**C. Rewarding entrants with incentives**

For some consumers, the chance to appear on your website is incentive enough. But a compelling prize can accelerate submissions and sharing. Whether you choose to reward the entry with the most votes, a few entrants chosen at random, or every participant with an offer or coupon, prizing brings UGC campaigns to the next level.

**D. Get smarter about your consumers by capturing data**

Leverage data to learn more about your consumer base. Understand their interests and preferences, and use your knowledge to inform future marketing campaigns and promotions.

Capture individual consumer data, like addresses, phone numbers, and email addresses. These can be used for follow up marketing, retargeting campaigns, and future promotional outreach. Of course, this can only be achieved with one final step in the sign up process.

**E. Enabling opt-ins to communications and promotions**

Ask consumers to opt into your mailing list and receive updates about future promotions. Through this step, you’ll build an owned audience and a deeper relationship with your social fans and followers. With relevant communications, you’ll move them downstream, win more conversions, and deepen customer loyalty.
3. Turn Your Website Into a Social Hub

You already know that social content is a valuable ecommerce tool. Consumer reviews are trusted by consumers for their authenticity. And consumer photos act as implicit consumer recommendations, lending your products a stamp of approval. They spark consumer imagination, allowing them to picture themselves in your products.

UGC can be used across all of your marketing channels, from email to digital ads to organic social posting. But all roads lead to your ecommerce site — where you should deploy UGC strategically to convert visitors into customers. The goal is clear: transform your website into a dynamic, consumer-centric destination, where your most engaging contest entries become fuel for your sales engine.
House Party utilized the Offerpop Platform to capture consumer data with the goals of increasing their customer engagement, optimizing paid spend on Facebook and driving the acquisition of high-value members. By utilizing this valuable data, House Party was able to increase their click-through rate, decrease their CPC, and increase consumer actions on both desktop and mobile significantly.

They harnessed the powerful data they uncovered through engagement to drive true ROI.

229% INCREASE IN CTR
43% DECREASE IN CPC
238% INCREASE IN ACTIONS
Quick Tips for Showcasing UGC Across Channels

- Create displays that promote seasonal collections and offerings. Retailers do this with everything from winter recipes to items from a spring/summer fashion line.

- Put a display in your brick-and-mortar store with a prominent site URL.

- Put reviews, comments, pics, vids, etc. on specific product pages.

- Pull UGC and quotes from your users and showcase them across your social channels.

- Feature UGC on all related product pages.

- Run an email marketing campaign featuring customers wearing/using your product. Drive traffic back to a branded campaign landing page. Users will see the full gallery of your UGC, interact, and be enticed to submit their own.

This face happens when my favorite box full of vitamins lands on my doorstep and I can hardly contain myself! My go-to online source for vitamins and natural food supplements, #pureformulas. I have yet to find another company that can beat their quality and prices.

#PureFormulasLove
4. Drive Commerce and Measure Results

Don’t just display user-generated content — employ tactics to actively drive sales. ShoeDazzle, an online fashion subscription service, demonstrated the power of linking directly to product pages from their fans UGC. By simplifying the buying process, they were able to drive users directly from product discovery to purchase. Activate Shoppable UGC galleries allow consumers to click through user content to buy directly from your brand, helping you accurately measure the impact of UGC on ecommerce sales.

In addition, Featured Units can be included alongside your UGC to drive users to products, discounts, brand-specific content and more. Featured Units are pieces of brand-generated content that can be dispersed within user content galleries. In their #BeVIP campaign, ShoeDazzle included Featured Units that drove fans to their featured products.

Traditionally, measuring ROI from social has been challenging. But by including unique, trackable links with each piece of content, you make it easy to track visits, shares, sales and ROI — all the metrics that matter to you. By tracking content on an individual level, you can make decisions about what content is working and how you should use it as part of your ecommerce strategy.

Learn more about Offerpop at offerpop.com
Offerpop is a consumer engagement marketing software-as-a-service platform transforming how global brands connect, engage and convert today’s mobile and social consumers. Leading enterprises and agencies use Offerpop’s integrated platform to power campaigns, user-generated content and commerce, and provide marketers with rich consumer data for smarter marketing decisions. The company is headquartered in New York, with offices in London and San Francisco.

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