

To what extent your loyalty to the brand should go?

There are a couple of ways to approach and acknowledge the situation. Every blogger has a voice and what PR relationships need to discover is how seasoned is this voice. If there is an anti-aging skin care product or regime to be reviewed, who would be the best sources to resource? The relationship between a PR representative/vendor and a blogger or journalism source is one to be maintained in balance.

To approach a product/brand as a blogger/journalist takes complete objectivity. Objectivity seasons with education and experience. Not everyone will have the same experience with each product. Being able to identify WHY a certain product may not have worked for you and being able to provide a solution as to why and who can successfully benefit from the product may be your ticket to heightened visibility. Trash-talk opinions of earlier years are not what serious consumers are looking for.

One great example would be a situation regarding a product I reviewed over the past year. The product was a regeneration product. There is much controversy that surrounds this type of product, so going into the review, I made sure I had the time to allot to sample daily for 30 days. The time of year I chose to review was one that triggers major allergy symptoms for me and while the results were very good, I was not responding well to the product. For the rest of that season, I held off on my trial and picked it up again a couple of months later. During that time, I reached out to the product vendor and explained to her my situation, reaction to the product and of course my desire to re continue the trial. I also shared with her my successes so she knew I was sincere...in addition, I requested a copy of the clinical trials to find out more about the product. My vendor relationship strengthen and we to this day respect each other as professionals. My blog post reflected my initial intent to trial the product, my halted trial status and an objective conclusion. I will also add in favor of the vendor, MANY others used the product with success. What I like about the beauty industry is that there is something for everyone. When a product of a certain genre does not work for you, there are many others to sample and other opportunities to experience success. Expressing sincerity and objectivity for a product or brand is not selling out your integrity as a blogger or journalist, it simply means you have opened yourself

up to a larger world of opportunity for consumer engagement. Being able to recommend what kind of consumer would be best suited to use a product without attitude and harsh opinions creates a more solid base for building a reputation with staying power...or even being recognized as an expert in the field.

There is another facet of this that is not often approached. Approaching objectively means asking questions. (1) What was the condition of the product at the time of shipping? (2) Was there an issue with that particular run of products and you ended up with one that did not work!?!?! (3) As a blogger who samples products for review, are you allergic to any of the ingredients in the formulation? (4) Is the product heat or cold sensitive? Be sure to follow storage instructions before application. If the product has been oxidized due to weather exposure during shipment, request another product at a different time. (5) How is the product best used? Follow instructions if your experience with products is limited. (6) Share your experiences and do not get caught up in someone else's. Everyone's body chemistry is different. While some may have "genetics of steel" not everyone does. Having children, monthly chemistry and the amount of acidity and alkalinity of diet are major contributors to how successful a product will respond to our bodies.

What kind of relationship do you wish to create with your PR reps and brands? How much value can you create when you receive products to review. As a digital PR professional, I am certain to create as much value as possible. What does this mean? I post everything sent to me on photo sharing platforms with some information about the product and of course some sort of gratuity. I am grateful for everything vendors send to me. To send products costs money. These costs involve manufacturing and shipping to start. Additional costs include being objective and sharing information that will highlight the actualities of the product and who it will best serve. Photo sharing platforms are great because they allow for a more personable approach to sends. Introduction videos do the same thing. Media as a general rule has been a platform for sensationalism. Creating an authentic approach to products makes them more real in the eyes of your audience and therefore a candidate for purchase.

IF you are a beauty editor for any publication as well as representing a beauty brand as a PR professional at any capacity, always find out the specific

guidelines for the publication you represent AND make yourself familiar with the *SPJ Code of Ethics*. Now its time to approach each situation objectively and with passion. Would you represent a brand who is highly credible and marketable to a wide audience? How will you market or fuse the two entities successfully into your journalism culture once they are securely in place? Here's a very good example on how to handle this type of situation: I represent Kalea Rose Hair Care in digital PR and communications. I also blog beauty for a top online magazine in Orlando, the only one with a Five-Star rating on Yelp.com. I asked my publisher about creating a post on the hair care brand since they recently launched new keratin based products. My publisher's answer was yes and I had to recognize the fact that I represented the brand early in the post. Always be mindful of these types of situations and never cross the line of integrity on any level.

My best advice as a beauty blogger, digital PR professional and from a PR stand point is to approach each situation as objectively as possible. Brand loyalty should never violate your professional integrity. Bloggers have a wide berth to express their opinions and an audience who will listen. Be open to growth as a blogger/journalist by understanding the various factors that affect a report. Always have your personality shine through your post, that's why you have the audience you have. **As I have stated, there is something for everyone in beauty!**

Some PR people can be very aggressive. I am not and work with great bloggers. When someone sends you something, you do not owe them anything. The question is though, are you (bloggers) in it for the right reasons? I was in the beauty industry for over 20 years before I segued into blogging...so I take an educated approach to everything I publish even if it is a short introduction. I have been writing beauty since 2003 and have been published as creating ghost content and have written articles with industry professionals since then.

The American market is different in that they weed out whoever does not work with them by not sending anything...the silent approach is powerful. This is our culture. This culture is based on relationships as oppose to "owing." There are many reasons a blogger may not approach a product and none of them have to do with the product. If a PR rep is rude or does not follow through on an element, this can hurt the situation. If elements are not in place, this too can hurt the situation.

There has to be value across the board. There is no compromise. Brands are getting wise to bad bloggers who are in it for free stuff! I recently sampled a product from a Russian aesthetician who is incredibly seasoned in her craft. She is amazing in my opinion and immediately, I was secure in writing about anything she sent me based on her experience and mine. She has devoted a good portion of her life to what it is she does and even practices aesthetics. She with no doubt is a marketable asset. Since I understand the value of creating value, I wrote about the product she sent me, had her on my pod cast, wrote about the product in a Canadian publication where I am a beauty editor and pitched her to another publication where I blog beauty. I see her value. She is a marketable commodity...CLEARLY! I even used her product in a photo shoot on a male model for the hair care company I provide digital PR for. All this for a \$78.00 product plus shipping. Not everyone approaches this with a business mind...it is the responsibility of the PR rep to maintain relationships that will feed the visibility of the brand they represent. Don't get me wrong, I have been bamboozled and even as recent as Friday. They reached out to us, made promises to place us in online and pod cast and never followed through at the last minute changing direction. I don't know why anyone would want to do that being a new publication and having the opportunity to have their publication promoted to about 30K new people. The relationship pool alone is valuable in terms of loyal consumers, celebrities and visible others...not a good move on their part. That's not the way to build a business. There was no reason given to us as to why they decided to do this. One thing you do not want to do when you initiate a situation is to do that...ouch! Not everyone does this, though. They are not a credible publication in terms of industry branding and no product was sent...we really would have been helping them in the long run...between us all there are 100 years of experience in the hair care team...incredibly valuable. Delay happens at times across the board for various reasons.

I make pitches to people all the time for video and blog interviews. I spend all but maybe 2 hours a day away from a computer. I have to live my life and have responsibilities that make it possible for me to function at all. Creating relationships, maintaining them and researching for new ones is a constant task. There is no easy way around it!