

# The 'hired help' brand building hoax



By [Ruth Golembo](#)

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The old adage of content is king rings true now more than ever, given the information overload faced by today's consumer.

It therefore begs the question of how credible it is to pay so-called influencers to punt your products, especially when the price keeps rising depending on how large their online following is.

## Sponsored products

Consumers are fast cottoning on to "sponsored" content generated by brands' hired hands, who are paid to talk up products or services on their personal Facebook, Twitter and LinkedIn profiles.

Many friends and followers get irritated by receiving emails they never signed up for, or finding that the ostensibly interesting link they clicked on led them to no more than a blatant product push.

Even worse are the pseudo-celebrities whose brand boosting and boasting are underpinned not by the quality or value of a product or service, but by the dosh that comes their way.

These *schlebs* guarantee sponsors a specific level of exposure, in terms of the number of times they will blog about a brand and talk about their supposed "delight" in a product. Savvy consumers know they have been paid to do so, and it does not reflect well on a brand's intrinsic value if they need shills to make it attractive to the public at large.

## Measuring ROI

One also has to question how one can effectively measure the return on investment they generate - especially when they demand hundreds of thousands of rands for associating your brand with their name.

There is no proof that their followers are anything more than an arbitrary collection of bored clock watchers who might have nothing better to do with their day than to follow their various idols' social media updates.

To be credible, content has to add value and be sincere. Gone are the days of push marketing. Branded content can actually turn brand adorers off your products.

As the late David Ogilvy is famous for saying: "The consumer isn't a moron. She is your wife." He also said something along the lines of a brand being built like a bird builds a nest - with sticks and mud collected from all over.

## Building your brand

Clearly the more channels through which the message is repeated can add value in building a brand. But using paid human channels as your 'voice' in an effort to create a buzz around your product or brand can badly backfire.

Especially if the voice you choose is punting booze today, hair products tomorrow and a new brand of denim jeans the day after. And particularly if the personality attached to that voice cracks or falters, and your brand becomes associated with this former idol with his feet of clay.

### ABOUT RUTH GOLEMBO

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