

# Revlon's cautionary tale: the changing nature of influencer marketing

By  Brigitte Majewski

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Cosmetic giant Revlon is exploring the sale of all or some of its business amid lacklustre sales and a crushing debt of \$3bn. The iconic company's 2016 acquisition of brand Elizabeth Arden apparently isn't rescuing it from the Sephoras and direct-to-consumer businesses (DTCs) of the world.



Image credit: Revlon South Africa.

Revlon's tale is cautionary for leaders in all industries: Don't rest on your laurels (or, in this case, your lashes).



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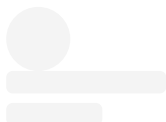


## A pioneer in influencer marketing

An R&D innovator that saw its first successes with revamped nail polish formulas, Revlon also revolutionised cosmetic marketing when it hired famed Richard Avedon to photograph first brand ambassador Lauren Hutton in 1973.

In the '80s, Revlon then pioneered a new era of influencer by stoking the phenomenon of the "supermodel", making the mass-adored faces of Iman and Cindy Crawford inseparable from the Revlon brand. These instantly recognisable supermodels had their aura only enhanced by Revlon's incredibly-sized contracts. Revlon mastered riding the culturally relevant for its own marketing purposes.

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Tatjana Patitz, Iman, Talisa Soto and Jerry Hall, REVLON ad (1987). • • • • •

#talisasoto #jerryhall #iman #tatjanapatitz #revlon #ad #90s #90sbabe  
#90sfashion #80s #80sfashion #topmodel #supermodel #fashion #model #vogue  
#vogueus #voguemagazine #voguefrance #catwalk #runway #photoshoot  
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#ellemagazine

*A post shared by [NOVANTA PROJECT](#) (@novanta\_project) on May 9, 2018 at 10:48am PDT*

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## A new era of influencer marketing takes Revlon by surprise

That MO worked for years, making it ironic that the company was slow to recognise and adapt to the next influencer era — one defined by self-made experts who build followings (and brand relationships) on social foundations. This era made Kylie Jenner a billionaire in three years.

Revlon trialled influencer campaigns relatively recently. Late to the game means late to insights and optimisations.

And Revlon's size and complexity certainly don't help it adapt quickly to what it's hearing from fans and influencers the way DTC cult brand Glossier does when it pivots product and packaging based on community feedback. The influencer game

changed, but Revlon did not change with it fast enough.



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## Change continues, making adaptability and agility keys to success

Even as you read this, influencer marketing is changing again. Our latest research shows that leading brands are skipping big-reach influencers for those with smaller followings but more authenticity. Some even have no followers. Some are not even human, like Lil Miquela.

Brands use influencer marketing systems to find, vet, contract, use, amplify and monitor pools of influencers for marketing purposes across the whole customer lifecycle.



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Revlon's situation is complex and the company's slower adoption of modern influencer marketing tactics is likely one of many challenges contributing to its current struggles. But its influencer strategy signals a failure to keep pace with consumers, to recognise new trends, to change existing processes.

The lesson learned: While remaining unchanged works for Cindy Crawford, it does not for business — adaptability and agility do.

## ABOUT BRIGITTE MAJEWSKI

As the VP Research Director of Serving B2C Marketing Professionals at Forrester, Brigitte serves B2C Marketing Professionals. She leads a team of analysts who help clients develop strategies to master and coordinate digital and traditional marketing channels using new media and technology to win, serve, and retain customers.

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