

BLOG

COLLECTIVE

A need for standards

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Purpose

To establish a simple set of easy-to-abide-by standards for all stakeholders in the blogging industry to agree upon and adhere to. This, in turn, will create clarity and consistency for bloggers and industry suppliers (agencies, brands etc) at all levels and abilities. The standards, integrity and trust in blogs and bloggers will be increased, which benefits all parties.

Reason

A current lack of consistency in approach to disclosure from bloggers and no impetus for brands or other suppliers to adopt a standardised system.

Process

Round table discussion(s) with bloggers and suppliers to agree upon a set of standards based on the below and the creation of a central website which outlines what these guidelines are and how they work. Press materials for magazines, newspapers and websites to publicise and 'quality assured'-style badges for bloggers' and suppliers' websites which link back to the central website.

The standards

- All blogs and brands/agencies/suppliers to carry a badge with a link to the standards website OR publish the standards on their website.
- Bloggers are sent items free of charge to review – these should be identified either in the copy ('I was sent...') or at the end ('Product was sent to me to review').
- Agreeing to the standards means reviews are honest and not unfairly positive or dependent on receiving future 'freebies'.
- Free items/services received by bloggers should never be labelled as self-discovery or any other terms which suggest the item(s) or service(s) were not sent for the purpose of review.
- Links to suppliers' websites or online shops that have been requested by the supplier make the post a sponsored post, as does regular payment.
- All sponsored or paid-for posts and reviews should be disclosed in writing clearly on the same page of the post, along the lines of: 'This is a sponsored post' or just 'sponsor post'.
- Advertising on the website should not be related to the positivity of the content associated with the advertiser's product or service.
- Social media links to paid-for posts, and paid-for social media posts should be labelled with *SP (Sponsored Post) *SL (Sponsored Link) *ST (Sponsored Tweet) *AL (Affiliated Link).
- Bloggers should not expect payment for reviews they have written independently of their relationship, or otherwise, with a brand. Likewise, brands should not expect bloggers to undertake work (reviews or otherwise) without fair compensation.
- Suppliers should not pressure bloggers to breach the standards, this includes financial or product/service incentives or adopting intimidating behaviours or practices.
- External interests in the subjects or content being blogged about should be disclosed along the lines of 'I work for Company X' or 'My parents own Company X'.