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THE SIGNAL PAPERS

Essays on the Creator Governance Gap

No. 3

A Marketing Executive May Spend Years Earning The Right To Speak For A Brand.

A Creator Can Be Given The Same Responsibility In A Week.

Employees Earn The Right To Represent A Brand. Creators Are Often Granted It.

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Large organisations are often extremely careful about who is permitted to speak on their behalf.

That trust is rarely granted quickly.

A graduate entering a marketing department may spend years learning the business, understanding the brand, working through approval processes and demonstrating judgement before they are trusted with significant responsibility. Even experienced marketers operate within governance frameworks that define what can be said, how it can be said and who has authority to approve it.

Consider a major rebrand. The public may see a new logo, a new visual identity and a launch campaign, but what they do not see are the months of internal work that took place beforehand. Marketing teams develop proposals, agencies contribute research and creative concepts, legal teams review materials and senior stakeholders assess the commercial and reputational implications. The final decision rarely sits with a single individual. A Global Marketing Director may oversee the process, a Chief Marketing Officer may approve the recommendation and, depending on the scale of the change, the Chief Executive and Board may become involved before the brand is presented to the public.

Nobody considers this excessive.

The brand is one of the organisation's most valuable assets and decisions affecting that asset are treated accordingly.

The same principle applies across countless everyday activities. Press releases are reviewed before publication, advertising campaigns are approved before launch, public statements are scrutinised before they are issued and employees representing the organisation externally are trained, supported and governed through established processes.

Trust is earned through experience, judgement and demonstrated responsibility.

Responsibility is granted gradually.

Authority is rarely assumed.

> *Yet creator marketing often operates according to a remarkably different standard.*

A creator can be entrusted with access to a brand's reputation after a review process that may involve little more than audience demographics, engagement rates, recent content and a discussion about campaign fit.

A contract is signed.

A briefing document is shared.

The creator begins communicating with millions of consumers.

The contrast is difficult to ignore.

The marketing executive who spent years earning the right to represent the organisation publicly may still operate within extensive approval processes. The creator who joined the programme last week may be communicating directly with an audience larger than the organisation could reach through its own channels.

That is not because creators matter less than employees.

In many cases, they may have a greater influence on how the brand is perceived by the public.

> *The creator may be more visible, more influential and more directly associated with the brand than many of the people employed by it.*

Yet the governance surrounding those relationships is frequently lighter.

This is not an argument against creator marketing.

Nor is it an argument that creators should be treated as employees.

It is an argument that organisations should consider whether the level of trust being granted is reflected in the processes surrounding that decision.

Because trust itself has value.

Organisations understand this instinctively when dealing with employees. Trust is earned through experience, judgement and demonstrated responsibility. It is rarely granted immediately and almost never without oversight.

The question is why creators are so often treated differently.

A creator may not work for the organisation, but they can influence how millions of consumers perceive it. They are also often left to their own devices for fear of stifling creativity or content authenticity.

> *That responsibility deserves governance equal to its significance.*

We believe creator due diligence will become a standard business function for organisations that work with creators at scale, in much the same way supplier due diligence, cybersecurity assessments and privacy reviews became standard business functions before it.

The organisations that recognise that shift early will be better positioned than those that wait for regulation, litigation or public controversy to force the issue.

Trust takes years to build.

It should not be given away lightly.

Employees earn the right to represent a brand. Creators are often granted it.

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