

FTC's Proposed Plan Would Hold Bloggers Liable for False Brand Marketing Discourse

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The FTC (Federal Trade Commission) has proposed a plan to start regulating viral marketing and blogs.

The FTC's plan proposes that word-of-mouth marketers and bloggers, as well as people on social-media sites such as Facebook, be held liable for any false statements they make about a product they're promoting, along with the product's marketer.

This may present a significant issue for marketers, including the likes of Microsoft, Ford and Pepsi, who spend billions on word-of-mouth and social media. It is estimated that marketers will spend \$3.7 billion on word-of-mouth marketing in 2011.

Many of the commissions guidelines are more than 30-years-old, so they do not address current marketing techniques. They need to be bouty to datee so they can address current marketing techniques, particularly the issue of whether or not the disclaimer that's currently allowed, "result not typical" is still warranted."

The FTC guidelines only apply to bloggers and others who are paid to review a product.

"The FTC is ... putting out guidelines to make it clear to people who are involved in social media and viral marketing that the same rules apply in this context as they do in the more formal context of paid advertising and infomercials." There are no legal implications for social-media sites such as Facebook or marketer sites such as Amazon, where consumers often post product reviews."

The keys for online communicators to stay out of trouble is **authenticity, integrity and responsibility**. When these attributes are put in the forefront, know what to say, when and how becomes exponentially simplified. [Read Michael Bush's complete article in Advertising Age.](#)