



Jake Hay spends his days corraling influencers.

PHOTO COURTESY OF POPSHORTS

Capitalizing on influencers

Jake Hay's career in publicity began in the glitzy, no-nonsense world of the high school superintendent's office. At 16, Hay was writing press releases for the Folsom Cordova Unified School District, and suggested the app the district now uses to communicate with students.

Now 24 and living in Orange County, Hay works at PopShorts, a company that utilizes social media influencers in marketing campaigns. He's head of business development, reaching out to new clients and new influencers and making headway into new fields. They're primarily promoting movies, working with just about every studio in Hollywood—but Hay is helping them branch out. SN&R talked to the former Folsom resident about the wide realm of social media marketing.

When did influencer marketing take off?

There are some people who will tell you it's been going on for 10 years. They count blogs mentioning brands as kind of the birth of it, and I think that is probably where it began, but it's such a different beast now. I'd say probably 2013 is about the time when it became defined.

What's your job at PopShorts?

Sales is a strong capacity of it, that's probably the core of my day-to-day, talking to clients, talking to prospective clients and trying to get us into new verticals. We just signed a new deal with Ford that activated over Fourth of July, and that's our first time working with an automotive brand.

Do you have a favorite campaign you've gotten to work on?

One of my favorites would have to be *American Assassin* ... *American Assassin* is the classic kind of action film, right? This kid gets recruited to become this assassin and he thinks he knows it all, but he has to learn along the way, because he doesn't actually know it all. You've seen 100 films like it. But what we did for it was really cool—we created a one-day action crash course that

walked through the actual training that the actors did for *American Assassin*. So we took these influencers to Taran Tactical, which is a really famous action combat training facility in Los Angeles. And there, we taught them how to do hand-to-hand combat for the movies ... they learned to throw axes ... and all of this content was then distributed across different channels.

What's it like working with those influencers?

I've worked with 7-year-olds, and I've worked with all the way up to George Takei, who's obviously a bit older, and everything in between. The kids are awesome. You've never met kids more mature. They've been taught that this is a business. ... You have some divas, there are some people who think that they're A-listers because they have a million followers on Instagram—but they're few and far between. Audiences can smell an influencer who's full of himself.

What's your background in?

If you rewind all the way to growing up, I'm from Folsom ... and when I was in high school, Folsom Cordova Unified had a really special program they put together. It was an internship program for high school students to work within the superintendent's office of the school district. So when I was 16, I got recruited because I was the leader in our district for speech and debate, and they wanted me to work in kind of a PR capacity under the PIO at the district. So at 16, I was making press releases and doing media interviews ... that was the opportunity to set my path. From there I went to Cal State Fullerton.

There's some line on the PopShorts website about activating influencers that reminds me of in *Jason Bourne*; how they call in those assets.

Sure! I mean, it's not so different. ... For example, when we do action films, working with young male audiences, we're always working with Steve-O. We have a great relationship with him. ... We'll put him on an action film, and it's really easy for us to call him—and in that case it is like *Jason Bourne*. We just say, "Hey, Steve-O we've got one for you," and he says, "Alright. I'll throw myself through a window." And he does all his own stunts, too. □

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