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## **Jersey City supplement company making massive revenue gains through social media campaign**

Ankur Garg has simplified the interview process.

“When job seekers approach Shredz to work as social media associates,” he said. “I ask them one question — on a scale from one to 10, how do they rate themselves on various digital platforms?”

"Before they answer, I remind them that one would be someone who's never driven a car and 10 would be a NASCAR driver paid millions to do his job."

It's an easy question for Garg, the chief operating officer at Jersey City-based Shredz, one of the fastest-growing brands in the health and fitness industry.

"I have met only one 10 in social media, and that man is Arvin Lal," he said.

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Arvin Lal is the 28-year-old founder of Shredz.

He's better described as the person responsible for creating an \$18 million nutritional supplement company in less than three years with zero capital investment — but a whole lot of social media marketing.

Lal says he started with Facebook fan pages, tweets and YouTube videos to connect with consumers through positive messaging on lifestyle choices.

When Shredz received outstanding customer feedback, Lal began using free apps such as Statigram and Kik to increase and analyze Shredz's presence on Instagram, a popular app for showcasing photos of ideal bodies perfectly attainable by using supplements in conjunction with eating clean and exercise.

Shredz currently has more than 15 million followers across social media platforms. Through the company's social media followers, it has the ability to reach 600 million people in a 90-day period.

And by the end of the year? The ability to reach one billion social media users.

But it isn't just a contest to be 'liked.' Shredz uses social media to stay in constant touch with its customers to provide personalized support in an attempt to set the company apart from other supplement companies.

"We don't want consumers to buy our products and move on," Lal said. "We want to be involved in their health and fitness goals. We want to work with them to find the best solution for their needs."

They clearly are doing just that.

Shredz products are on the shelves in GNC, with customers in more than 70 countries. In a few weeks, Shredz will complete the first of several international distribution deals and open new warehouses nationwide, including in Carteret.

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Patrali Chatterjee, an associate professor of marketing at Montclair State University, believes no company can thrive on social media alone.

"Every successful company needs to have an effective product, a competitive price point and solid market positioning before it can create a promotion strategy," she said. "Shredz supplements have tested well and are fairly priced relative to similar products. Also, the company not only employed direct distribution in both domestic and foreign markets but also through third-party channels such as GNC and Amazon. Social media promotion merely completes the puzzle."

Chatterjee also suggests social media is not totally free.

"Someone spent the time creating the Shredz website listed on its Facebook fan pages, shooting the photographs we see on Instagram and filming their YouTube videos," Chatterjee said. "Lastly, if you run a Google search on Shredz, their website is the first listed. That tells me they most likely made dynamic bids on SEO key words that people try when searching for weight-loss products."

But social media — especially the images on social media — does sell.

Chris Delany, the CEO of SEMGeeks, a digital marketing firm in Belmar, believes this is what contributed to Shredz's explosive month-to-month average growth of 25 percent.

"Pictures say a thousand words, which is one of the reasons Facebook bought Instagram," Delany said. "On average, Facebook users are 60 percent more engaged when a post includes a picture."

Chatterjee adds that the inherent sex appeal in Shredz's young male and female demographics doesn't hurt either.

"This strategy will continue to work well on image-based reflective media sites, such as Vine or Pinterest," Chatterjee said.

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Up until March 2013, Lal and Garg packaged Shredz in the basement of Lal's childhood home in East Brunswick.

Last year, Lal purchased 12 apartment spaces in Jersey City, providing penthouse offices for Shredz and housing 18 of his 24 employees to promote his "work where you live" mentality and a flexible schedule.

It's a swanky work environment that public relations director Josh Andrews sincerely appreciates.

"There's a lot more freedom in this job," Andrews said. "You don't clock in or out. You can spend hours in the gym, as many of our staff members do, as long as you accomplish assigned tasks for the week."

It's no wonder that job applications are on the rise. Of course, that's not a problem for Lal. Like Garg, he's got his one key interview question, too:

"I ask them, if they could have freedom, happiness or money, which would they choose?"

Only those choosing freedom or happiness move on.

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