



**Meltwater**  
Outside Insight

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# The Communication Pro's Guide to Influencer Marketing



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# Why Influencer Marketing Matters to Communication Pros

There is so much great content available on the Internet today to help consumers make purchasing decisions. Unfortunately, the content you work hard to create about your company, products, and services is buried in it.

Google research recently revealed that the average shopper used [10.4 sources of information to make a decision](#) in 2011—a number that nearly doubled from 5.3 sources in a one-year span. Your company website is no longer a consumer's primary source of information about your brand. Instead, now you're competing with traditional media, word-of-mouth, online reviews, websites, blogs, and more. And while consumer trust of advertising continues to decline, [Nielsen research](#) has found that word-of-mouth recommendations to perform strongly, with 82 percent of those surveyed somewhat or completely trusting personal endorsements.

Now that having a business website and branded social channels isn't enough to compete, what can you do to ensure your customers and prospects know who you are and why your products and services are better than the competition? Leverage influencers in your content.

Consumers trust influencers more than they trust the information coming from a brand. According to the [2016 Edelman Trust Barometer](#), people trust academic or industry experts or a person like themselves more than they trust the CEO of a company.

Influencers also have a large network of people and can easily and quickly spread your content and story further and faster than you might be able to. So how do you find the right influencers and get them to work with you? And how do you make the most of those relationships once you've established them? This playbook will look at some examples and provide expert advice on working with the right influencers to improve your PR and content marketing.



# Defining Influence and Influencer Marketing

There has been a significant amount of [recent debate](#) as to how to define an influencer, and [if the big dollars spent on influencer marketing are worth it](#). But one thing there hasn't been disagreement on is its importance as part of the PR and marketing mix. Influencer marketing has been a critical piece of digital marketing strategy since the beginning and it shows no sign of diminishing.

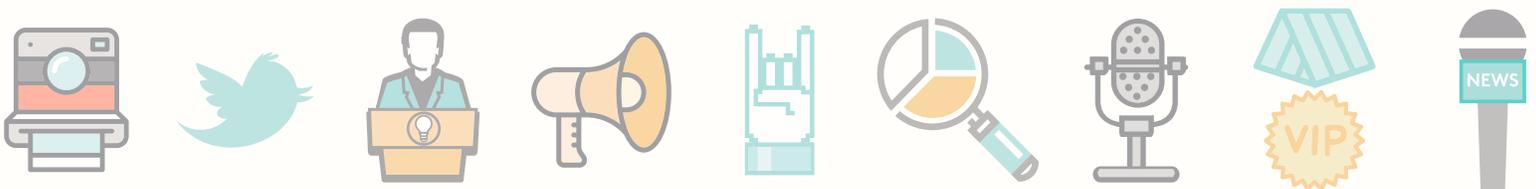
[Research from Augere](#) found that 75% of marketers were using influencer marketing as of 2015, with 84% planning to include it in their marketing mix in 2016. Further, the study also found that 76% consider influencer engagement effective in garnering customer loyalty, and 75% of professionals found it to be effective in lead generation.

## What Is Influencer Marketing?

In general terms, influencer marketing describes the act of partnering with people in your industry—bloggers, journalists, analysts, thought leaders, industry experts, social celebrities, etc.—who are willing to share your story and promote your products or services over social and digital media channels.

Often, the concepts of celebrity endorsement and influencer marketing are presented as one and the same, but a celebrity is not necessarily an influencer. Just because they have 1,000,000 social followers doesn't mean they can actually influence any of them to take a favorable action toward your brand.

"You would think the title of influencer would come with a clear definition—a person who can create action or sway opinions of others—but when we view that designation through micro and macro lenses it takes on more abstract and complicated forms," says Ben Noble, Communication Manager, NewVoiceMedia. "When most people think of influencers, they tend to lean on the archetype of the gregarious and likeable celebrity. The macro view of an influencer is a person that is largely in the public eye, viewed as trustworthy, proficient and authoritative. But really anyone can be an influencer."



## What Makes Someone an Influencer?

To get a feel for how communicators today define an influencer, I reached out to a range of marketers and communications pros and asked them to share their definition of an influencer.

“An influencer is anyone who has an audience with shared interests and passions who you want to attract,” says Michele Linn, Vice President of Content, Content Marketing Institute.

Amy Higgins, Head of Content Marketing, ZOZI, builds on this definition, noting, “An influencer is someone that can drive engagement and increase your reach within a targeted network.”

Heidi Cohen, Chief Content Officer, Actionable Marketing Guide, breaks down the definition of an influencer further: “Influencers are strongly associated with Malcolm Gladwell’s ‘The Law of the Few,’” she says. “The 3 categories of influencers include:

- **Connectors.** They know a lot of people across interests.
- **Mavens.** They’re ‘information brokers.’ They solve problems and distribute the information in a way that facilitates sharing and dissemination
- **Persuaders.** They’re charismatic idea salespeople. Their negotiation skills motivate followers to act.”



So what is the key element that enables influencers to drive action? Tatiana Beale, Head of Content, Traackr, says it’s trust: “An Influencer is someone who has earned the trust of his/her community based on relative subject matter expertise.”

Of course, to some extent, the perception of what makes an influencer varies based on who’s evaluating the person—a marketer or a consumer.

“When I hear the word influencer, I think about it from two perspectives,” says Maureen Jann, Director of Marketing, Point It Digital Marketing. “The first is from a marketer’s perspective (surprise, surprise!). When a marketer thinks of an influencer, they see them as an opportunity to share a message with an audience that has the potential to be interested in their product. If a marketer picks the right influencer, and the influencer has a clear view of who they are and what they stand for, a message that benefits both parties can serve as both a value-added experience for readers or followers and a fantastic platform to inform people about a product they might be interested in.

The second way of looking at an influencer is from a user's perspective, an influencer is someone who has developed a personal brand that represents a topic or an interest that they're committed to. Those influencers have a like-minded community. They offer a clear perspective on topics that are important to them and their community.

Finally, they have developed some sort of personal brand that has made them recognizable to a community."

Despite the varying definitions of an influencer, one thing is for certain: marketers are not sold on there being a definitive scoring system in place for identifying influencers.

"I define an influencer as someone who has proven deep domain expertise in a specific subject area with a willingness to share their knowledge, and educate and learn from others," says Hannah Kovacs, Community Manager, PostBeyond. "An influencer is not defined by their Klout score or follower count."

## How Can You Measure a Person's Influence?

Since influence can't be measured by number of followers, or assigned an agreed upon numeric value that is based in large part on that metric (sorry, Klout), how can you evaluate the level of influence one influencer has versus another? Ultimately, every brand and communicator has their own point of view when it comes to the qualities they look for in an influencer. With that in mind, I reached out to ask a handful of communications pros what their ideal influencer algorithm or formula would look like.

Sarah Nagel, Community Outreach Manager, Sprout Social, has three areas she assesses:

- **Years of experience in specified area, as well as other relevant areas** (Lightly weighted)
- **Knowledge around different aspects of field of expertise** (Somewhat weighted)
- **Connection to followers—how much influence do they really have on followers to take action? How do followers perceive their relationship with influencer? Do they feel close?** (Heavily weighted)

"One of the key words in my definition (of an influencer) is 'proven', meaning there must be evidence to back up their experience," says Kovacs. "Just because you've been on Twitter for 7 years does not



make you an ‘influencer’ or expert. I’m talking about years and years worth of hands on experience, that can then be translated into teachings and lessons for others.”

“In my opinion, an influencer is someone who thinks for themselves, who’s active on social and shares their unique viewpoint and insights on a consistent basis, through various mediums,” says Jason Miller, Global Content Marketing Leader at LinkedIn.

Many communicators have found that looking for influencers who regularly create authoritative—and popular—content is an effective way to identify influencers with the ability to connect with your audience.

“I might be biased but I believe content—whether online, print, live—is the essential way influencers change perceptions, give inspiration and compel people to act,” says Guillaume Decugis, CEO & Co-Founder at Scoop.it. “I would look at how often an influencer’s content is quoted or referenced by others—either on their own blogs, media properties, or on social media. And I’d make the (influencer scoring) algorithm recursive by giving a lower or higher weight to mentions based on the influence of the person quoting the influencer’s content.”

“I think the measure of influence is essentially their ability to gain traction with content across a network (size of influence (specific personas),” says Michael Brenner, CEO, Marketing Insider Group and Author of The Content Formula. “So I would measure common things like social shares, engagement, page rank, organic search and social traffic, number of subscribers they generate to their content, the relative influence of their audience, and also how targeted their content is to meet the needs of that audience.”

Often, due to the complexity of identifying and evaluating influencers, brands take a “me too” approach, reaching out to influencers based upon their work with similar brands. However, another brand’s top influencer may not have the same ability to mobilize your audience.

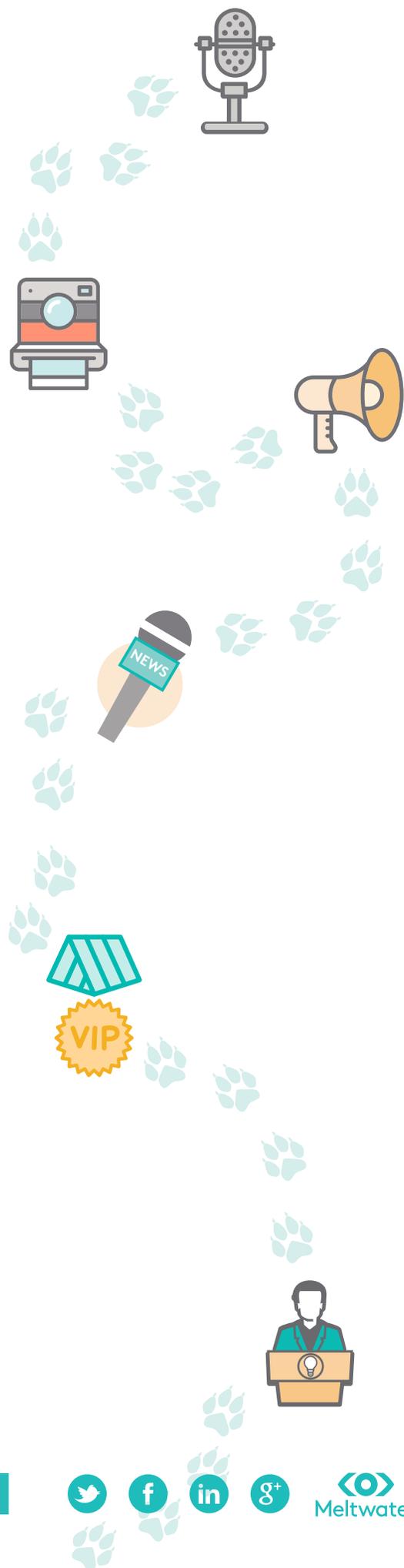


“With regard to influencers, there’s not a one-size-fits-all algorithm,” says Cohen. “You must understand your target audience and who sways their opinions related to your products and services. Depending on your niche, you may need to go offline to determine who the true influencers are. According to [Keller Fay](#), roughly 72% of word of mouth happens offline.”

Although much influencer evaluation is happening through a manual process, tools like Meltwater and Traackr can help you identify and engage with your key influencers. So how do these pro tools measure influence?

“At Traackr, we have created an algorithm to rank influencers based on their reach, resonance, and relevance,” says Beale. “Relevance carries the most weight out of the three factors.”

“There are a lot of factors that go into a good influencer algorithm, but I think understanding and incorporating scope is what actually helps a brand successfully partner with an influencer,” says James Li, Product Manager, Executive Alerts, Meltwater. “For example, if I were marketing for a baby products brand, I’d be ecstatic to have the tennis player Novak Djokovic give my brand a shoutout at the U.S. Open -- but, while the Djoker may easily convince thousands of budding tennis players to buy a specific racquet, I’d put my money on partnering local parents who actually have strong loyalty to my baby products and can influence their community circles.”



# How to Find the Right Influencers to Partner with Your Brand

It's clear that finding the right influencer is not simply about finding the people with the highest number of followers on Twitter, YouTube, or some other social network. So what do you look for?

Research by influencer marketing platform Traackr found that [3 percent of people generate 90 percent of the impact online](#). The key is understanding your customers' influence circles and whom they've defined as niche experts within their trusted communities.

"It's important to establish some context: identify the topic in which you wish to gain influence," says Dennis Shiao, Director of Content Marketing, DNN Software. "Next, define your objective. Putting the two together, one example might be: 'To encourage marketing experts to share our definitive guide to A/B testing to their social networks.'"

Within this framework, influencers are people that marketers follow and respect, because of their expertise in marketing. These people (i.e., the followers) will also take action based on the influencers' recommendations. They'll model their behavior. If influencers share their successes with A/B testing, their followers will try the same tactic for themselves."

Similarly, you're looking for an influencer who will be able to incorporate your brand into their usual style of storytelling—not someone who's willing to cut-and-paste your brand message ([and sometimes your instructions](#)) into a social media post for anyone who sends them a check.



## 5 Steps to Connect with the Right Influencers

1. Use social listening to follow keywords, trending hashtags, and topics related to your market, and get to know potential influencers that talk about these topics
2. Look for communities on social channels—such as Twitter chats, Facebook and LinkedIn groups—that center around topics that relate to your brand and identify their most active members.
3. Research media sites that talk about your market/industry and look for bloggers, analysts, and journalists who cover your market extensively.
4. Search across blogs, media sites, and even your competitors' websites to find analysts, bloggers, and journalists to reach out to.
5. Prioritize your list of influencers by their level of engagement on their social channels and with their audience. Listen to hear if these influencers talk about other brands in your market (not only what they say, but how they say it) to see if you have an opportunity to reach out.

BRAND MENTIONS

Influencer [@amalleolo \(62,206\)](#) just posted about [#wholefoodsmarket!](#)

This person has high reach and engagement, and should be a priority for you to build a relationship with.

**Austin Malleolo(62.2k)** posted

Community is what it is all about! The main reason why I really love [@wholefoodsdedham](#) / [@wholefoods](#) is because they get it - when people ask me what makes [@crossfit\\_one\\_nation](#) & [@crossfit](#) different or unique - I simply tell them it is the community that separates us from everything else & [#wholefoodsmarket](#) gets that and it fires me up! Here is a cool video of our communities coming together! [#CrossFit](#) / [#community](#)

329 likes, 0 comments

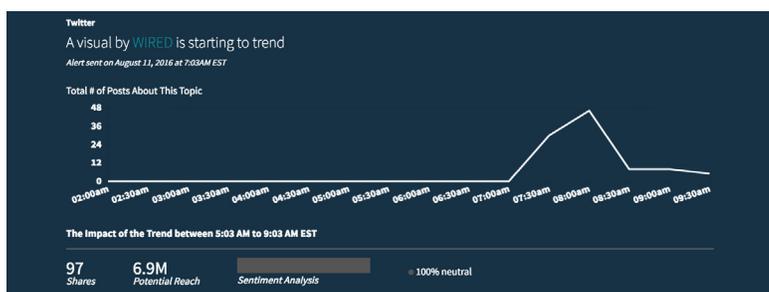
1:32 PM - 10 Aug 2016

**Austin Malleolo**  
(@amalleolo)

62.2k Followers

I am honored to do what I love, and love what I do. CrossFit is my Passion and Profession. For any Inquiries email: [contactaustinmalleolo@gmail.com](mailto:contactaustinmalleolo@gmail.com)

[Meltwater's Executive Alerts](#) uncovers top influencers on Instagram, Twitter, and Facebook who are either already your customers or are relevant to trending topics you'd like to join in on.



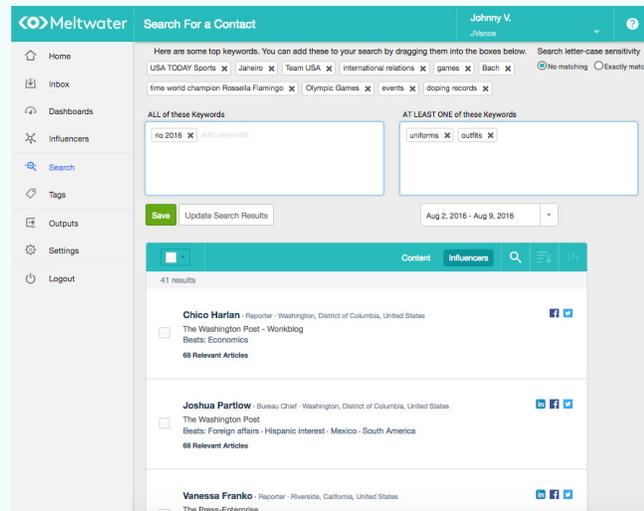
You can catch influencer messages in real-time and engage them while they're still trending.

“Online, influencers are typically characterized by large followings and high authentic engagement, but one dimension that is often overlooked is the ‘scope’ of somebody's influence,” says Li. “This is a huge oversimplification, but there are 1) global influencers (mega-celebrities like the Bieber), 2) niche influencers (the best in the world in a specific field/topic), and 3) local influencers (the person in your friend group who can convince anybody that “those” Korean tacos are worth waiting in line for). Generally speaking, global influencers reach far more people than local influencers, but local influencers can be much more effective in spurring action than global ones. “

When approaching an influencer about working with you, it can help to share a summary sheet about your company including any impressive content or media highlights, your reach and engagement across social media (Twitter, Facebook, LinkedIn, Instagram, etc.), number of blog subscribers, newsletter open and click-through rates, and other metrics that demonstrate your content reach and engagement.

Showing how you can promote them to your audience is important to show the relationship is a two-way street with benefits to both parties. If you fumble your initial pitch, you may not have the opportunity to try again.

“With influencers, you truly get one—and only one—chance to make a first impression,” says Beale. “So make it count! Whatever your platform of choice, make sure your engagement is personal, about them, and anything but ordinary.”



## Targeting Your Outreach

PR pros are known for often taking [the “firehose” approach](#) when pitching stories to journalists and other influencers. Using a media contact database lets you harvest as many names as possible with even the remotest connection to your topic and email or message them all. However, influencer marketing, as we’ve covered, relies on building mutually beneficial relationship based on understanding. Unlike a traditional media contact database—rooted in increasingly outmoded criteria, such as beat and publication—[Meltwater’s influencer tool](#) enables users to search by keywords and surface results based on recent and relevant content. (This might sound like the obvious approach, but today it’s the only media contact database with this modern search functionality.) You can now zero-in on influencers who are interested in the same topics you are.





## Key Takeaway

Know what social channels your customers and prospects are using, then look for influencers who know your industry well. Look at reach, expertise, credibility, and integrity in how they communicate and share content.

## Putting Influencer Marketing into Action: Brands That Are Getting It Right

### Lululemon

"I think what Lululemon did with local yoga instructors was a phenomenal grassroots campaign," says Caroline James, Head of PR & Communications - West Region, U.S., Cushman & Wakefield. "This campaign gave a global brand local edge. By photographing local yoga instructors wearing Lululemon and hanging these striking images in local stores, many consumers recognized THEIR yoga instructor."



### Docker

"I admire how Docker has been building its brand through the very rapid endorsement of the developer community," says Decugis. "One of the things they did early on was to [highlight the content this community's influencers produced](#) by curating and publishing it on their website (disclaimer: they're a Scoop.it client and they use our software for that). By doing so, Docker helps influencers build up their professional brands while receiving validation, visibility, credibility, etc."

### More Than Sport

"More than Sport is doing some very cool things in partnership with top athletes and [Omaze](#)," says Higgins. "They are currently doing a fundraising with Shane Dorian and Jaime O'Brien, two top surfers, to raise money through a contest to help the youth in Hawaii and the Maldives."

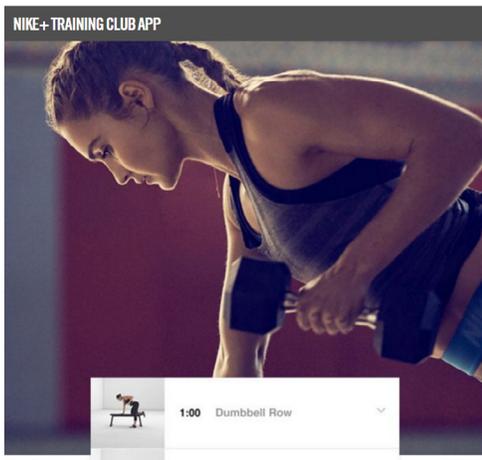
### Travelocity

"Travelocity has integrated influencer partnerships within its bigger marketing strategy," says Beale. "Travelocity leads with an influencer-first approach, building long-term relationships with influencers in order to make them feel like an extension of the Travelocity brand."



## Nike Training Club (NTC)

"It's been my favourite example for a while now," says Kovacs, "and it's surprisingly underrated. Nike developed the [Nike Training Club](#) (NTC), a free, full-featured fitness app that doubly serves as a marketing platform for their products. Not only does the app provide consumers with an experience that goes beyond the purchase, but also an opportunity to virtually train with top fitness influencers such as Serena Williams, Kevin Hart, and Simone Biles (Gold Medalist in gymnastics).



The NTC app has cultivated an entire community of fitness fanatics around the Nike brand, drawing users in through exclusive workout programs designed by the best in the business...for free. The platform is peppered in rich visuals of Nike-clad fitness pros (from head to toe)—a brilliant way to market their product without drowning the user in targeted ads. And I'm not going to lie, I take the time to admire their outfits before starting the workout program. I think this is one of the most powerful (and smart) influencer marketing examples to date."

## Monsters of Funnel

"Justin Gray and the very smart marketers over at LeadMD launched one of my favorite B2B campaigns of all time," says Miller. "It's called Monsters of Funnel and it pulls together video, influencers, Big Rock content, SlideShare, and of course influencers. They did a killer job bringing together the top marketing influencers to contribute their expertise to the project and even created really cool animated avatars which added a viral element. The results were quite astounding as well which you can read more about here. It was so successful that LeadMD recently launched the follow-up campaign called Back to Stack. These campaigns are everything that defines a great content marketing campaign; they educate, inspire, and entertain at the top of the funnel."



# Building Mutually Beneficial Influencer Relationships

You've done your homework and found the right influencer. Now how do you get them to work with you? A good way to start things off on the right foot is by making your first contact with a potential influencer about them, not about your brand. Comment on one of their blog posts or articles; share their content over social media. Show that you're informed about them and that you understand what they talk about and do.

The key is to start slowly building a relationship of mutual respect. If you're looking for more than a one-and-done endorsement (and you should be), only after you have built a relationship should you approach them about partnering with your brand.

Before you reach out to your influencer with a marketing opportunity, you'll need to decide what kind of opportunity is going to be mutually beneficial to both you and the influencer. A key part of this equation is whether or not you're willing to compensate your influencers.

If you're looking to partner with a celebrity influencer, an analyst, or an experienced industry consultant, there is frequently an expectation of payment. If you are paying an influencer, it's important to ensure they want to work with your brand, and are looking for a long-term relationship with you. You won't get much return on investment from a half-hearted plug from a paid influencer who never mentions your brand again.



Some influencers aren't interested in money, but would accept other incentives, such as free versions of software, sample products, paid trips to conferences, etc. And other influencers are interested in gaining exposure for themselves to your audience through working with your company.

In general, if you are looking to an influencer to put in a significant amount of work, such as co-authoring content, giving a webinar—you will want to provide compensation for the time and work that will go into that collaboration.

"Think WIIFM (What's in It for Me) for the influencer," advises Cohen. "Influencers work hard to create and grow their followings. These are relationships involving real value and engagement. Don't expect them to shill or respond to you on your timetable without compensation. I'm always amazed that content creators (with jobs or paid projects) reach out and expect me to answer endless questions without compensation for my time and effort."

A good rule of thumb is to start small with your influencer marketing asks, to see how good of a mutual fit there is between your brand and your influencer. Invite them to participate on a panel, contribute quotes or blog posts, provide a product evaluation, or another lower-commitment activity.

“The best way to create projects with mutual benefit is to ask how you can help the influencers grow their network and also how to make it simple for them,” says Brenner.

## Where to Put Influencer Content to Use

It's best to get an influencer involved from the beginning, sharing your specific business goals and getting their input. Influencers can be leveraged throughout the entire customer acquisition funnel. The key is to determine at which point in the funnel a particular influencer provides the most benefit.

For example, the top of the funnel is about building awareness for your brand. In this case, you'll want to demonstrate thought leadership, so look for influencers who are considered experts in your market and bring them in to help with content that can drive awareness (a webinar, whitepaper, etc.).

The middle of the funnel is where purchase preference is formed and potential customers are looking for more details about your product or service. This is where you will want to partner with influencers who can provide product evaluations, write about best practices around your specific market/product type, and help buyers evaluate if your product is the best choice to meet their needs. It's important to note that for a review to be authentic and trustworthy, it's going to share both the pros and cons.

At the bottom of the funnel, you may be able to partner with analysts or consultants with deep industry expertise to co-create calculators and buyer readiness evaluation interactive tools.

## The Pros and Cons of Paying Your Influencers

Of course, there are both pros and cons of paying your influencers.

- **PROS:** You'll typically know exactly what you're getting in regards to the promotion language. An influencer is more inclined to work with what your brand wants since they are collecting a paycheck.
- **CONS:** May seem disingenuous if it's not something the influencer would normally discuss or promote. If it's not a product they're not familiar with, they may use false statements or claims.
- **KEY TAKEAWAY:** If it's truly mutually beneficial, you should strategize with the influencer. Keep in mind what aspects are most important for your brand and be willing to budge on others in order to come to an agreement.

—Sarah Nagel



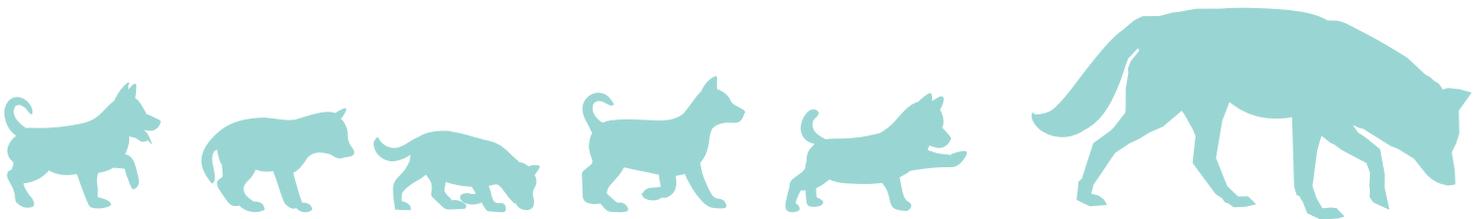


## Key Takeaway

It's not all about you. Successful influencer marketing requires an investment by both you and the influencer. For this to happen, it's critical to demonstrate what's in it for them. Involve influencers early on in your content creation process to take advantage of their expertise when planning your content, not just in helping you execute against your plan. Also determine where influencers provide the most benefit at each point in the customer funnel, and which influencers can support that content the best. Influencer relationships are built over time, not overnight.

## Managing Your Influencer Relationships for the Long Term

Managing influencer relationships is not exactly like managing PR contact relationships, but there are similarities. For instance, like journalists, you can keep your influencers engaged by offering them VIP access at your special events, keeping them apprised of brand announcements and product releases, making time to meet them in person, and inviting them to try out new products. Whether you are paying them or not, showing your ongoing support of your influencers by sharing their content and celebrating their success is another way to keep the relationship warm.



It's important that you are clear and direct about your ask for the influencer—if you engage in a bait-and-switch, it's unlikely they'll want to work with you again in the future.

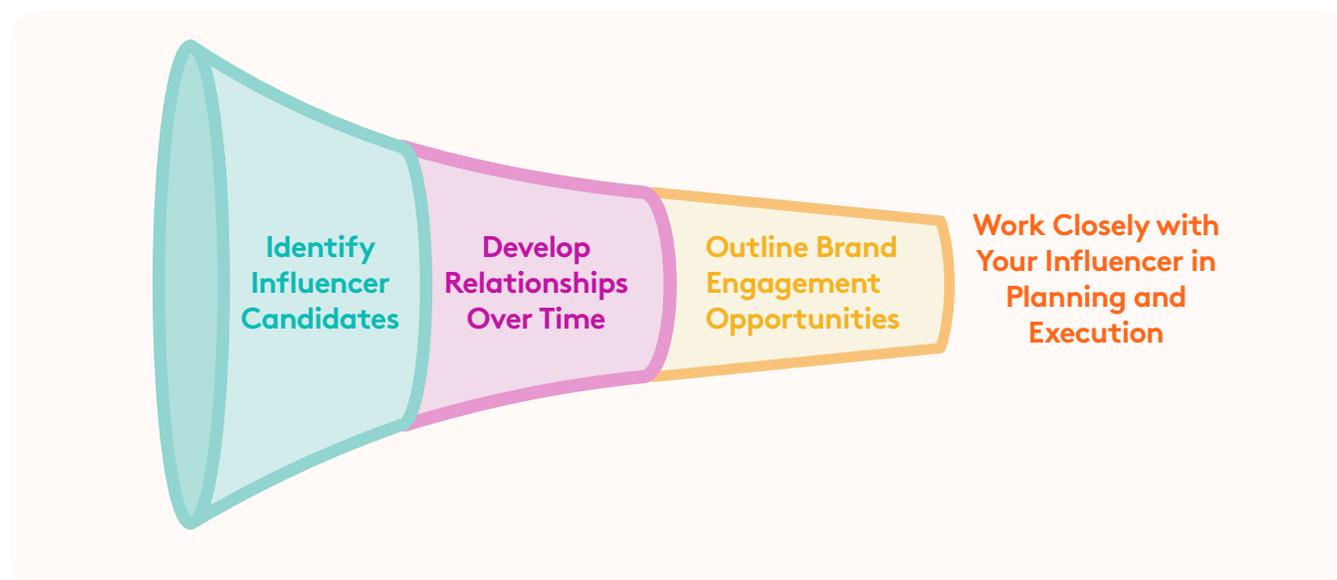
"Whenever possible, keep the ask specific and manageable," says Linn. "A pet peeve of mine is someone who asks for 5 minutes of my time and then presents me with 10 questions to answer. Don't undersell the time it will take the influencer."

On the same token, don't assume that an influencer is going to do more for you than they've agreed to upfront. If you are expecting an influencer to share their co-created content a certain number of times, on specific social channels, or to make themselves available to participate in your brand's activities at an industry event, make sure you have all of this outlined in your influencer marketing agreement.



It's important to recognize that you don't control how the influencer speaks about your brand. While you can provide guidance, the influencer must be able to speak in their own language, or anything they write will appear forced.

The strength of your relationship with the influencer is what will ensure their mentions are positive and ultimately enforce good brand and product discussions. In fact, if you build a solid relationship with an influencer, they may be more likely to give you negative feedback (from themselves or others) directly in a non-public channel, versus broadcasting it over social.



Influencer relationships are built over time, not overnight. Consider developing an influencer funnel, similar to a customer funnel, where you identify a pool of influencers you'd like to work with, then slowly engage with them and build relationships over time. Then as opportunities arise to leverage an influencer, you'll have a number of options available.



### Key Takeaway

You need influencers to help spread your story in an authentic and engaging way, not just copy-and-paste your brand messaging or a canned status update. While some influencers have sustained influence and reach, others will come and go. It's important to continually look for new voices to help share your story while maintaining relationships with longstanding industry influencers.

# Measuring the Impact of Your Influencer Marketing

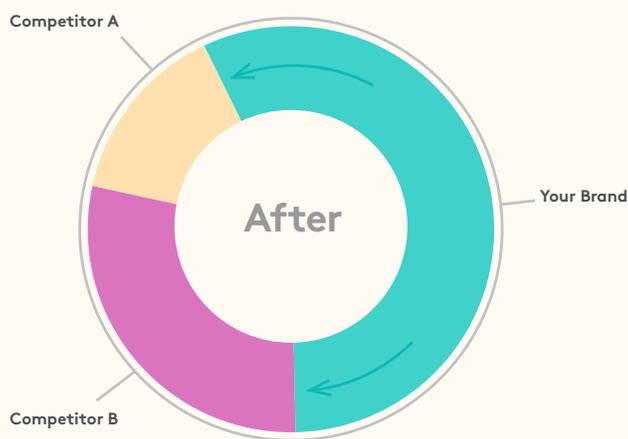
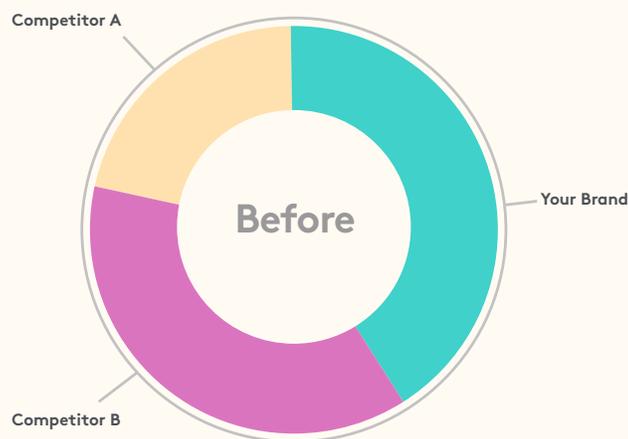
You've launched your influencer marketing co-created content, promoted it across your and the influencer's channels. Now, how do you show how this investment positively affects the company's bottom line and should be repeated?

"It's really quite simple," says Miller. "You just have to come to the table with a unique value proposition that benefits both parties. There needs to be an agreed-upon mutual outcome in the form of metrics for success. Without determining goals and outlining what success looks like before getting started, it's going to be difficult to determine the value of the collaboration and therefore make it difficult for buy in on the next project."

By providing the influencer with a unique shortened URL that uses [UTM parameters](#), you can ensure traffic that comes to your website will be properly attributed to their specific influencer marketing efforts. You can include the influencer's name, the specific piece of content, and the distribution channel in UTM parameters, thus providing significant insight into which influencer activities connected with your target audience.

A few of the metrics you should consider tracking and benchmarking against include:

- Engagement with the influencer's content and activities
- Change in share-of-voice
- Amount of referral traffic from the influencer's brand/content mentions
- Number of MQLs, SQLs, and closed business attributed to the influencer's content/activities



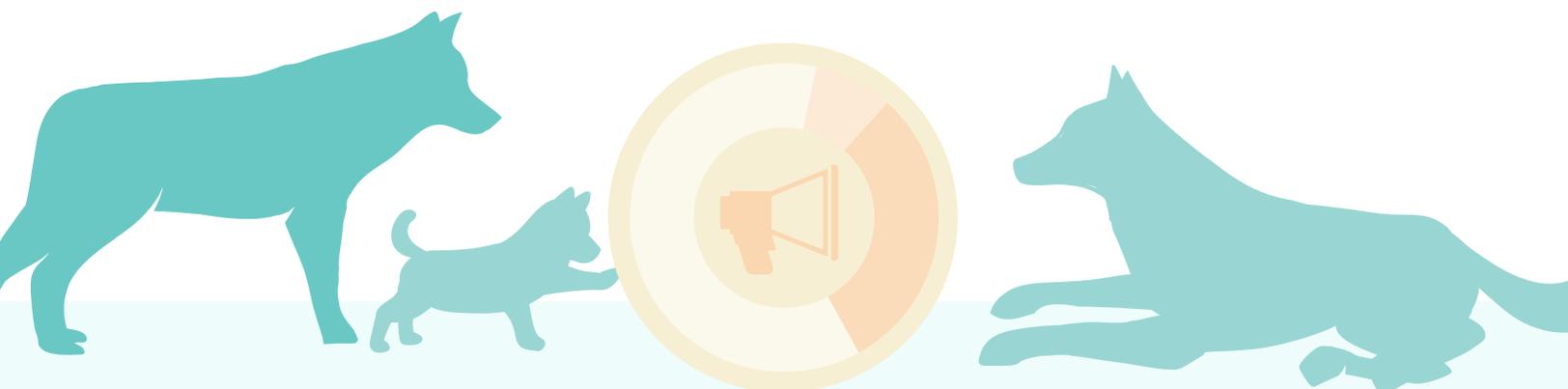
## Change in Share-Of-Voice

Establish a baseline share of voice comparison against your competitor(s) and benchmark yourself against it once your influencer campaign has run its course.



By using a listening platform such as Meltwater, you are able to readily see the impact of your influencer activities on your brand. For instance, you can track changes over time in the conversations that are showing up in your word cloud, by documenting it before and after influencer activities take place. Did the influencer's name show up? Did the topics being explored by them show up? These are good indicators that your work with an influencer is helping influence the conversation around your brand.

Similarly, these tools also allow you to measure an influencer's impact on public sentiment for your brand, and provide media monitoring for the coverage, both on social and in the news, that's generated by the relationship. One thing to consider benchmarking is the length of time that the influencer activities continue to have impact. You can do this by noting the difference between when you started your influencer collaboration and when the coverage started to get a sense of how long it takes to get pickup. Then, you can keep an eye on how long the collaboration continued to drive engagement to measure the longevity of the relationship's impact.



# The Future of Influencer Marketing

As influencer partnerships gain momentum, how will PR, marketing, and communications teams need to change to support them?

Some organizations may choose to become brand publishers, and work on promoting their executive team as industry thought leaders who themselves, over time and over the course of their interactions with industry influencers, become influencers. However, this takes an integrated approach between your PR and content teams, as well as a time commitment from your subject matter experts, to ensure the content created under their bylines reflects their unique perspective and expertise.

Many organizations, however, lack the budget and executive support to effectively pursue building their own brand thought leadership platform. They can still find value and drive marketing results through still work with influencers as part of their content marketing strategy, to help reach a wider audience.



As you plan your influencer marketing strategy, keep the following in mind:

- ✓ Prioritize the influencers you want to work with based on who will have the most impact in your preferred channel, or the largest reach and influence.
- ✓ Develop relationships over time—well before you have an ask.
- ✓ Make it easy for influencers to work with you by keeping your asks focused, and small.
- ✓ Involve influencers in your content process early on—leverage their experience to identify new opportunities for collaboration.
- ✓ Allow influencers to share your story in a way that's authentic to their brand—don't try to script them.
- ✓ Always make sure to provide enough WIIFM to make working with your brand worth the influencer's time. Clearly demonstrate what you offer them in return for working with you.

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## About the Author



**Erika Heald** is a content marketing consultant who has spent the past 15+ years helping technology startups and Fortune 500 organizations define content processes to drive lead generation and customer loyalty by leveraging compelling, shareable, targeted content. Erika led and grew high-performance content marketing teams at Anaplan, Highwire PR, and Achievers. Connect with her on [Twitter](#) or her blog [ErikaHeald.com](#)

