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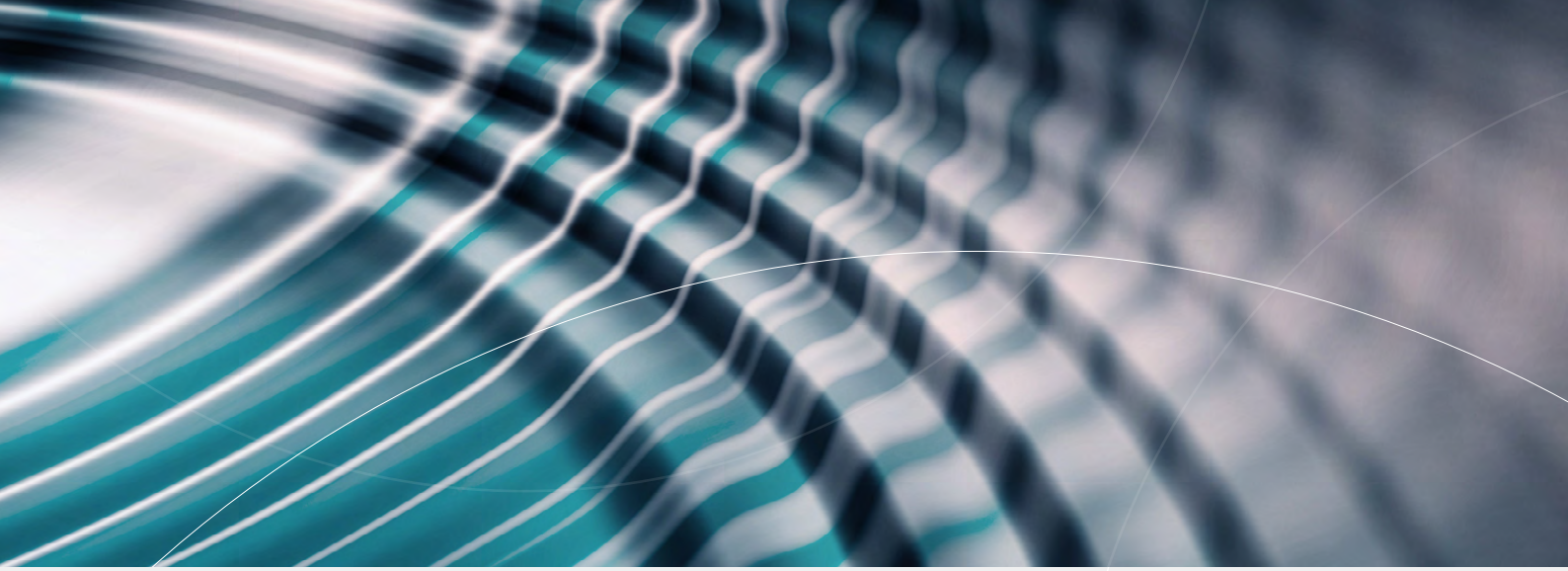
Harnessing the power of influencer marketing in B2B

Your ultimate step-by-step guide



B2B Marketing

Insight · Development · Training · Events



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Introduction



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If marketers were to take all the industry hype seriously, they'd only just about have time to adopt the latest marketing fad before another one took over. And influencer marketing is yet another example of something they're constantly told they should be doing. Vendors, of course, have also muscled in on the action, telling marketers their expensive tools are supposedly a prerequisite for successful influencer marketing (they're not, by the way).

The majority of marketers are very much aware that influencer marketing should be a part of their strategy: according to recent research by Altimeter Group, 83% of brand marketers cite influencer marketing as a top priority and 71% see it as a strategic activity. On the other hand, almost half (49%) of marketers are just 'experimenting' with influencer marketing, while the rest (51%) have some sort of programme in place, even if it's just campaign-driven.

In reality, influencer marketing is something most marketers are probably already doing, at least a little. It might just be in the form of engaging with the odd influential follower on social media or sharing posts by relevant thought leaders in the industry, but it still counts as a form of influencer marketing.

The principle of this guide is to help you formalise whatever influencer marketing you might be doing – it doesn't have to be a huge commitment if you don't want it to be, but having a clear understanding of who your most powerful influencers are (or could be) and ensuring you're engaging them and collaborating with them effectively can go a long way in providing your brand with more credibility and extending your reach to previously untouched audiences.

This guide defines B2B influencer marketing, and provides you with a seven-step plan to getting a great influencer marketing programme up and running in your organisation. We've also provided a run-down of the latest influencer marketing tools, and along the way you'll find practical illustrations and examples (including a case study from Workfront) to help you understand how to put theory into practice. Finally, we've included the 10 golden rules of influencer marketing that all B2B marketers should follow in order to ensure success in the future.

The experts

This report was written with insight from the following experts:



Luke Brynley-Jones
MD, OST



Tim Gibbon
Head of global content and campaigns, MetaPack Group



Lee Odden
CEO, TopRank Marketing



Chris Palmer
Regional marketing manager, ServiceMax from GE Digital

Section 1
What is B2B influencer marketing?

influence

[noun] The capacity to have an effect on the character, development or behaviour of someone or something, or the effect itself.

influencer

[noun] Someone who has the power to change others' thoughts, behaviour or actions because of their (real or perceived) authority, knowledge, position or relationship.

Influencer marketing, specifically in B2B, can therefore be defined as the following:

A brand's strategic collaboration with individuals who have influence over their audience with the intention of meeting certain marketing objectives.

"Influencer marketing is all about demonstrating your credibility in an industry. Obviously you can do that through advocates, and the strongest advocates are also the ones that have influence."

Luke Brynley-Jones

"If people have credibility and an audience that overlaps with your brand's target audience, why not find a way to collaborate and work with them? That's the DNA of B2B influencer marketing: the fundamental hypothesis of what should happen."

Lee Odden

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1.1 What results can you expect?

The results you can expect from influencer marketing will naturally depend on your objectives and therefore the scale of your influencer marketing programme, but can include the following:

- Increased brand awareness/brand reach
- Amplified positive brand sentiment
- Higher customer lifetime value (via cross-sell/upsell)
- Reduction in the length of the sales cycle
- Lead generation (through content marketing).

1.2 What are the other benefits?

It's authentic: telling everyone how great you are is much less powerful than a respected industry figure telling the world how great you are; the huge advantage of influencer marketing is the fact that respected industry voices are advocating for you.

It's cheap: influencer marketing doesn't have to be expensive – influencers, especially in B2B, often don't need to be paid to collaborate with you (although there could be some exceptions), and while certain influencer tools do cost money, you certainly don't need to spend a lot to get started.

It's simple: influencer marketing can mean engaging and collaborating with a few key influencers – it doesn't have to be a hugely complex programme that requires extensive technology (although it can be). It also means you can start small and scale up without having to make a huge initial investment.

It can – and should – be tied into your existing activities: you can make influencer marketing a part of what you're already doing – you don't have to sacrifice existing marketing activity. You're probably already publishing content – if you're not collaborating with influencers in your content, why not?

> *"At first glance, influencer marketing looks like another tactic – like search, email or ABM. And in the early stages, to develop your competency, it might be just that. However, the pay-off comes from an integrated approach. The real opportunity for B2B marketers is influencer integration in many different communications and many different departments across the company."*
>
> Lee Odden

Every industry has influencers: every industry, no matter how narrow, will have experts and recognised names pushing the discussion forward. All sectors and verticals – from aerospace and defence to manufacturing – will have their own influencers. Whether you operate in manufacturing or aerospace and defence, there'll be influential members of that specific community. They may not be professionals with huge personal brands, but working with them in a mutually beneficial manner can be hugely powerful.

> *"Every B2B marketing department should absolutely consider influencer marketing. I'm quoted as saying: 'No niche is too narrow for B2B marketing' because every niche has its influencers. I don't think there's an industry that doesn't have influencers. The challenge is refining them down to the ones that are most relevant to you and your customers."*
>
> Luke Brynley-Jones



1.3 Are there any drawbacks?

It can take time: it's true that starting any type of influencer marketing from scratch can take time – you'll need to put a strategy/plan in place, identify your influencers, engage with them (or wait for them to engage with you) – and it can be a matter of weeks or months before you see any meaningful results.

But think about the drawbacks of not doing it – if your brand doesn't engage with influencers in your industry, the chances are your competitors will, which will give them a pretty powerful edge over you.

Tracking can be tricky: admittedly, it can be hard to track the direct results of influencer marketing – for example if an influencer tweets about a specific piece of content, you won't have access to their Twitter analytics (although there are tools that can do this).

There's no guarantee of success: as with any marketing activity, success is not guaranteed – but with a strategic approach and a clear action plan, you can hugely reduce your chances of failure.

Some customers are starting to see through influencer marketing: consumer brands have done B2B brands no favours when it comes to influencer marketing – as an increasing number of professional influencers – or 'brandividuals' – emerge, so do generic, see-through promotions. But don't let this put you off; just make sure you focus on authentic, genuine collaborations with your influencers.

It's likely to have an impact beyond the marketing department: this can actually be seen as a positive aspect of influencer marketing, but it's worth being aware of before you get started. You may need to draw on the expertise (and influence) of people across your organisation – you might need your CEO to pitch in to engage with a particularly hard-to-reach influencer, for example.

"As an increasing number of professional influencers – or 'brandividuals' – emerge, so do generic, see-through promotions"

1.4 The B2B influencer marketing maturity index

Many B2B marketers may well be doing some form of influencer marketing already, perhaps without even realising it. We've identified five different levels of maturity when it comes to influencer marketing – ranging from 'nothing' to 'expert':

Nothing	No form of influencer marketing is happening at all, at any level. The brand isn't engaging with influential names in its industry and may not even be aware of who those people are.
Novice	At this level, you can barely call it influencer marketing – any results seen (e.g. increase in social following) as a result of influencers mentioning a brand are probably a 'happy accident', while any other activity is likely to be highly sporadic and opportunistic, and probably unplanned.
Basic	Brands at this stage have relationships with some influencers, but are not yet harnessing their full power or approaching influencer marketing with a strategic mindset. They may be collaborating with the odd influencer as part of their content strategy, but with no long-term strategy or view.
Advanced	Brands at this level have a clear influencer strategy in place that supports their marketing objectives. They have a solid awareness of who their best influencers are (or who they want them to be) and are collaborating successfully with a number of influencers who are engaged with the brand and happy to share co-created content among their audience. They are measuring some key metrics at this stage, such as influencers' level of engagement with the brand.
Expert	Brands in this category have a full understanding of what their influencer marketing is set to achieve, both within the context of marketing and the wider business. They work with influencers across different parts of the organisation, and influencers will want to work with them because of their credibility and authority. They're also able to fully measure the success and ROI of their influencer marketing campaigns.

Section 2
Your seven-step influencer marketing plan

2.1 Set your objectives

This is an obvious first step but an important one, as it will have a huge impact on your overall approach. Think about what you want to get out of your influencer marketing programme in order to set objectives. Is it increased brand awareness, positive brand sentiment, lead generation or increased sales? Making sure you're clear about this right from the start is crucial to ensuring your success.

Remember:

- As with any marketing activity, make sure your influencer marketing objectives not only align with the rest of your marketing strategy, but also the wider business strategy (for example, see below). Aligning your objectives with corporate goals is important not only for ensuring everything is moving in the same direction, but for securing c-level and management buy-in.

- Again, as with any marketing activity, your objectives need to be tied to tangible metrics – in many cases these will be measurements you're already familiar with (such as website conversions, leads generated, brand share-of-voice uplift or simply sales) that you can use to directly measure the outcomes of your objectives.

> *"If it's about building your reputation, you can do that by starting influencer relationships and measuring success through their engagement with you on a sliding scale. Some brands are a bit hard-nosed about it and might look for specific reach, brand mentions, positive sentiment, web traffic or leads, for example. In that second category you end up needing to scale it more and will need a process in place to deliver quantifiable returns – that's when you have to talk about a programme, tools and systems. Overall it's about defining what success looks like with senior managers before you kick it off, because everyone has a different opinion."*
>
> Luke Brynley-Jones

> *"Most people are opportunistic from the start and they'll take advantage of an opportunity with a particular influencer, but there will be no follow-up. They'll get a spike, but there'll be no momentum. If you have a plan, it might take a little longer to get that upward movement, but you gain momentum and there's a cumulative effect. So that's the difference between short and long-term thinking with influencer marketing."*
>
> Lee Odden



2.2 Allocate your resources

Once you've set your objectives, you need to figure out what you can allocate in terms of resource: who is going to take responsibility for coming up with your influencer list or engaging with influencers themselves? How much budget will you put aside? This will of course depend on the objectives you've already set. The fundamental question you should be asking is this: what is this programme worth to your business in monetary terms?

> ***"You have to decide what it's worth for your business. I've worked with a client before where one deal would be hundreds of millions of pounds, so in that case it was worth investing in the best technology and software and spending £100k to run a programme over a short period of time."***
>
> Luke Brynley-Jones

Remember it's a long-term commitment: it may be hard to know in advance the exact scale of the resource required, but influencer marketing should not be treated as a one-off engagement or campaign. As an ongoing process of building relationships over time, there will need to be regular touchpoints with influencers, as well as a schedule of content production to fuel your strategy. As such, responsibility for functions such as opportunity surfacing and discovery, influencer engagement, content production and programme management and measurement should be determined in advance in order to map out your influencer marketing workflow.

Think outside the marketing department: in terms of internal resource, you may have domain experts, thought leaders or senior management within your organisation who are well positioned to deal with certain types of influencer engagement, whether through their specialist knowledge, contacts or their own influence. While these colleagues need not necessarily be involved in the day-to-day running of your programme, it's worth considering how relevant engagement opportunities may be passed on to them and actioned in a way that's consistent with your overall workflow system.

"The fundamental question you should be asking is this: what is this programme worth to your business in monetary terms?"

2.3 Identify your influencers

Once your objectives are set and your resources allocated, you can begin identifying your influencers. This is essential – after all, there's no influencer marketing without influencers – but it can be an overwhelming task. There are a number of influencer identification methods available, ranging from the scientific (social network analysis and influence scoring algorithms) through to the less-so (gut feeling and intuition). These different methods also bring with them varying levels of resource requirement, and some will yield more reliable results than others.

Before jumping in, take a step back and define the type of influencer you want to engage with.

Types of influencers

In the broadest sense, an influencer can be defined as somebody who, through their expertise, thought leadership or track record of success within a sector or topic, has sway among a wide network of one or more audience groups.

Influencers can be categorised into different groups, ranging from professional influencers to micro-influencers. And you shouldn't just strive to work with professional influencers – underestimating the power of other types of influencers could cost you, as there are advantages and disadvantages to working with all of them.

Celebrities: we're not necessarily talking about a partnership with Brad Pitt here, but there is certainly scope for B2B brands to use the celebrities to engage and influence their audience. (Take a look at Knorr's award-winning campaign with celebrity chef Phil Vickery, for example.)

Professional influencers (or 'brandividuals'): people who have successfully created their own personal brand and who make a living out of being influencers. They're likely to be keynote speakers at industry events, and/or published authors, and often significant social media following (tens of thousands of followers).

General influencers: people who aren't yet published authors or keynote speakers, but who do have a significant level of influence. They're likely to be journalists, bloggers or perhaps senior employees at big industry brands. You may even have influencers in your own organisation!

Subject matter experts: experts on a particular topic area who haven't necessarily focused their efforts on building a personal brand. They're more likely to be academics, for instance.

Micro-influencers: people who are building their level of influence but who haven't yet reached their potential in terms of reach or authority. They will have a smaller social following but are likely to have a more engaged audience (as explained here).

Customers: your customers could also be influencers – they will certainly have authority among your audience – but they won't necessarily have focused on building their authority or social following publicly. However, it's worth keeping an eye on particular customers whose voices resonate within your sector.

> *"Brandividuals are professional influencers who make choices that result in them being seen in an influential way. There are also subject matter experts who have influence and who've earned it, but who don't necessarily want to amplify that fact. They don't have a problem receiving the recognition, but they absolutely have a lot of influence. Both are very valuable for B2B influencer marketing. It's a recipe that works."*
>
> Lee Odden

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"You should also look at micro-influencers – they could be great because they haven't matured yet, so you can grow with them. I think it's nuts that you'd always go to the top and not think about who the influencers of the future could be."

Tim Gibbon

Your influencer criteria

Now you're aware of the different types of influencers, you can start putting together your influencer list. There are multiple ways to do this, some of which are more straightforward than others. And you will, of course, be able to refine your list later (as we'll see next), but it's worth bearing in mind what your ideal influencer(s) look(s) like. There are three widely accepted aspects to consider here: reach, resonance and relevance.

Relevance: how relevant are the influencer's areas of expertise/interest to the topics that you want to be talking about with your audience?

Reach: how big is the influencer's reach, and how much of an overlap is there with your audience? How big is their social following and how well known are they across the industry?

Resonance: how much does the community care about what they say? Do they tend to lead and shape industry conversation?

These three tick boxes should help you evaluate whether an influencer is the right fit for your brand – and of course there may well be other factors you want to keep in mind, depending on the objectives you've already set.

"How big is the influencer's reach, and how much of an overlap is there with your audience?"

"Before investing in expensive tools and technology, start making your list by keeping the reach, relevance and resonance questions front of mind"

It may well be, for example, that you've found an influencer who's the perfect fit for your audience and a true subject matter expert, but their biggest presence is on YouTube, which isn't a strong channel for your audience. Identifying what you want from your influencers is just as important as identifying who they are – don't skip this step, as it could prove costly later on.

Identify your existing influencers

Before investing in expensive tools and technology, start making your list by keeping the reach, relevance and resonance questions front of mind, and asking yourself the following simple questions:

- Who influences your customers?
- Who are your top customer advocates?
- Who recommends you most often within the industry?
- Who do you wish recommended you within the industry?

"Asking all of these questions is influencer marketing – if you're taking advantage of the individuals you've identified by asking these simple questions, you're taking advantage of some form of influencer marketing."

Lee Odden

Monitor social media

Social media will inevitably play a significant role in any influencer marketing programme, first and foremost when it comes to identifying your influencers. It's likely you're already doing some degree of social media listening/monitoring to inform your marketing and/or content strategy, in which case you should already have an idea of the sorts of discussions that take place around topics relevant to your audience, and any influencers who regularly get involved.

There are numerous social monitoring and listening tools out there, with the most straightforward free option being a simple Twitter hashtag search. Many social media monitoring tools such as BuzzSumo offer simple search tools for free (with more advanced tools part of their paid offering).

The key thing to remember here is that not all social networks are equal – while the majority of influencers have a strong presence on Twitter, LinkedIn might actually be a more important network for your particular audience. Or it might be that you're more interested in influencers who are regular bloggers, in which case a tool like GroupHigh (a tool used to find influential bloggers) might be the best option for you.

- Click here for more detailed information on tools

"I'd also look at analytics – if a brand is running the right analytics on their site then they should look at key words and key phrases, what customers/prospects are arriving on the site with, and what they're doing when they leave. This is where social listening and intelligence comes in. You could use those key words and key phrases to build really strong queries. Obviously you'll have the top people talking about certain things, but then you'll have conversations that might be hashtags; you need to make sure you're tuning in to the right conversations. Have a look at who's talking about you – if they have a blog, what are they discussing, for example?"

Tim Gibbon

"You've got to find the 'low-hanging fruit': of all the people you've surfaced in your research, which of them are already talking about your brand?"



Don't lose sight of the real world

Though it may seem old-school in an increasingly digital world, events can also be a good way of identifying influencers, especially those who use public speaking to develop their own personal brand. Even if you don't do this at the beginning of your influencer marketing programme, regularly attending industry conferences or other events can be a great way of finding new and upcoming names in your sector.

> ***"You can find influencers in a variety of ways, whether it's by attending industry-relevant events and making connections at conferences or using social media listening tools to find content and discover the key influencers your prospects are listening to. You need to take an always-on approach to this, because the content that's trending today may no longer be relevant in six months' time."***
>
> Chris Palmer

Refine your list

Once you've created your initial influencer list, you'll need to refine it in order to identify which influencers are truly the best match across the reach, relevance and resonance points mentioned above, as well as any other factors you might want to bear in mind. This step is important as you can't expect to engage and work with your entire list of influencers at once.

Select those who have the closest relationship to your brand already – who's already talking about you and who has influence with your audience? While you may not have a direct relationship with these people yet, it'll be much easier than engaging influencers who haven't heard of you.

> ***"You've got to find the 'low-hanging fruit': of all the people you've surfaced in your research, which of them are already talking about your brand? Which of them are talking about the topics your brand cares about? Who is talking about these things and the channels where you're already very strong? This identifies opportunities fairly quickly."***
>
> Lee Odden

The importance of 'background checks'

It may seem tedious and time-consuming (and it probably is), but it's likely that you'll need to do a bit of work to check out the influencers on your list. The first reason for this is because some influencers may not be genuine (this is not something social monitoring tools can always detect), although a quick Google search will soon clear up whether or not somebody is who they say they are. The second reason for doing background research on your influencers is to explore channels where they could have a presence that might not have been picked up by your social tools (e.g. their own blogs), as well as any existing connections they might have with competitor brands.

> ***"Use the tools as a really strong indicator to guide you to influencers, but then you've got to drill down, and go granular, and the tools don't allow you to do that – you should be visiting those different social environments and platforms that they're across, and reading what they're about, to see if they're a really good fit."***
>
> Tim Gibbon

2.4 Engage with your influencers

Now you've identified your influencers and refined your list, you can start building relationships with them with a view to collaborating in the future.

What's your proposition?

Rule number one here is not asking influencers to collaborate with you out of the blue before they've even heard of you. Why would they say yes? You need to develop a relationship with your selected influencers over time, ideally so that they come to you, rather than the other way around. Do this by:

- Following and engaging with them on social media.
- Resharing and commenting on their blogs, LinkedIn posts or tweets (if necessary, message them to let them know you've shared their content).
- Getting involved in wider industry debate that your influencers are also taking part in.
- Writing about their blogs.
- Supporting a current project they're working on.
- Giving them free invites or press passes to events.
- Inviting them to Christmas or summer parties.

Be authentic and take a genuine interest in your selected influencers – remember that they're humans rather than 'sharing machines', so make sure you try and understand what their priorities are so that you can help them with whatever it is that motivates them.

> *"You should approach influencers on a peer-to-peer level; the best way is for them to find you by publishing high-quality content and making sure you're in the conversations they're in. You shouldn't reach out to them before they've even seen you."*
>
> Luke Brynley-Jones

> *"When you approach influencers you need to make it clear that any co-produced content or campaign would not be an endorsement of your product, ensuring that the influencer remains completely impartial."*
>
> Chris Palmer

Tailor your communications

Different types of influencers will require a different level or type of engagement – do not look to engage with brandividuals and micro-influencers in the same way, as you run the risk of damaging those relationships. For instance, if you're approaching 'professional' influencers (brandividuals), don't expect them to create content for you for free or without any clear return. At the same time, don't approach a micro-influencer with an offer of £500 to write a blog post (you'll leave them confused, if nothing else!). It's important to understand that not all influencers are equal, so you need to adapt the way you work with them accordingly.

Why your authority counts

Don't rely on influencers as the sole means by which to increase the authority of your brand – if you're not an authoritative, respected voice in the industry already, influencers are not going to be particularly driven to work with you. Focus on building your brand's authority and profile within the industry by producing high-quality content that your audience will want to engage with. This will make working with you a more attractive proposition for influencers, who can then play a role in increasing your authority further.



2.5 Collaborate with your influencers

Once you've done all this preparatory work and started to develop relationships with your influencers, you can begin collaborating with them. The most rewarding way of doing this is co-creating content – this means they've got a stake in something you've worked on together, and will then have a reason for sharing it among their own followers (which is, ultimately, likely to be your primary influencer marketing aim).

Co-create content

> *"Any kind of content you create is an opportunity for some level of influencer collaboration."*
>
> Lee Odden

The co-creation of content with influencers should be at the forefront of your approach. If you have a solid content marketing plan in place, great. (If you don't, you may want to focus on developing one before you focus heavily on influencer marketing). Look at all of the content you already produce and think carefully about where influencers have the potential to add the most value (and influence!) – whether this is through providing comment for blog posts or contributing to a section of a whitepaper. It's worth thinking about the 'quick wins' – the easy ways to get influencers involved in your content without too much time taken on either side. Lee Odden sees three main levels of influencer involvement in content:

1. **Microcontent**: gathering pull quotes – this is easy for influencers to do, and you can either get original quotes from them or ask for permission to curate them from the web.

2. **Campaigns**: getting influencers involved in a series of content as part of a campaign. For example, if you're running an event with different speakers, identify who the most influential and appropriate are, and invite them to contribute and collaborate in a way that shares their expertise. This would normally mean contributing more than just a quote.

3. **Community**: inviting influencers to be part an exclusive community, where they're aware of each other and know they're in a 'special' club. You can then work on content with the whole community, or just a subgroup. There's a common purpose and mission for the club, as well as individual interactions and collaborations.

While there are many more ways to collaborate with influencers, these are among the most common – and you can get an influencer involved initially by asking for a few quotes and then coming back to them for further collaboration, before eventually inviting them to be a part of your influencer community.

In practice: Webinars and LinkedIn groups

Chris Palmer explains how LinkedIn groups can be a great way of sharing content: "You can produce results by leveraging influencers' social media channels – we've worked with a number of LinkedIn groups in the past to send out email invites to webinars that are hosted by influencers – this is a highly effective way of generating leads, especially if the content is relevant and useful for your prospects in their line of work. If you were to simply package up content that's focused around your product and sent it out via these channels, not only would you see weak results but you might risk damaging your brand as your prospects would simply tune out."

What about social media?

We have, of course, already discussed how to use social media to find and engage with your influencers, but what about social media? Again, you should be thinking about how influencers can become involved in any social media activity you already carry out – and of course when it comes to content you've co-created (as discussed above) – but the main thing to remember here is that you should never ask influencers to post sales/marketing messages on your behalf; this will immediately undermine successful collaboration and your audience will see straight through it.

Rewarding your influencers

While in the consumer market it might be sometimes best practice to pay influencers, this isn't so common in B2B (and, arguably, shouldn't be encouraged).

> *"In terms of reward, it really depends on the influencer – many of them do it for free. If there is remuneration, it needs to be discussed and made clear."*
>
> Tim Gibbon

> *"Typically our approach is to try and bring value to influencers in some other format than direct payment. The key to this is to research the companies they work for and understand their priorities – we work with a number of universities in the UK and abroad that are creating amazing research focused on the industry we work in. Several of these universities run courses for industry executives or are looking to promote their brand overseas, so by producing content such as blogs and webinars it's a mutually beneficial relationship where we can help them to broaden their reach."*
>
> Chris Palmer

Relinquishing control

To collaborate successfully with influencers you'll have to be prepared to relinquish some control of your brand, which can naturally be hard for marketers to accept. But it's crucial to the success of your influencer marketing programme; firstly because it'll quickly become apparent if influencers are regurgitating your marketing messages, and also because maintaining successful relationships with most influencers will require respect for their own creativity and the way they want to operate.

> *"If becomes quite clear and apparent if you're forcing brand messages through your influencers, and it doesn't make for good campaigns. This is where a lot of brands go wrong (in B2B and B2C); they're not very good at relinquishing control, but you have to do this with influencers because they'll want creative input and have their own personal brand to think about. I'd strongly advise contracts in order to ensure everyone's happy."*
>
> Tim Gibbon

> *"Whenever I speak with influencers we work with, I always say: 'You own the content we're co-producing, we won't have any influence on the end result'. It's crucial to maintain impartiality and stress that whatever you co-create isn't an endorsement of your product – without this, your target market will simply tune out."*
>
> Chris Palmer



2.6 Maintain momentum

Once you've identified your influencers, engaged with them and starting collaborating, you should begin to reap the rewards. The challenge now is keeping it going, so that you avoid 'spikes' in activity with no follow up. In order to ensure your influencer programme keeps moving, consider the following:

- Constantly stay on the lookout for new influencers.
- Be prepared to 'ditch' influencers who aren't working for you.
- Continue to be creative about the different ways you can collaborate.
- Get influencers involved across all aspects of your wider marketing strategy.
- Think about involving influencers across other parts of the business.
- Continue to review your programme and make sure you're always testing and learning.

"Once you've identified your influencers, engaged with them and starting collaborating, you should begin to reap the rewards"

2.7 Measure your success

Measuring influencer engagement

The first thing to measure is the level of engagement you have with your influencers, which is most often done on a scale of 'awareness' to 'advocacy'. It's important that you identify which influencers are at which stage, as this will determine how you interact with them and when you consider approaching them to collaborate on something together. Metrics here could include:

- Influencer mentions of your brand on social media
- Influencer shares of your content.

Measuring the rest of your programme

How you measure your influencer marketing programme will depend on the business objectives you identified at the outset. If your goal was just to get a few more influential people talking about your brand, success may be measured against brand mentions, for instance. Here are some of the most common metrics you might want to consider:

- Brand mentions
- Overall share of voice
- Social following
- Influencer-driven referral traffic
- Brand sentiment.

At a higher level, depending on the business results you expect to achieve from your influencer programme, you may want to measure the following:

- Leads/marketing-qualified leads generated
- Opportunities created
- Overall revenue generated.

The challenges of measurement and ROI with influencer marketing are much the same as those faced by marketers no matter what type of activity they're conducting. The key thing to remember is that influencer marketing should ideally be seen as an 'always-on' activity – while you could emphasise your collaboration with certain influencers for particular campaigns, you should be tracking how well this content is doing and the extent to which it's contributing to your marketing objectives (lead generation, for instance).

"Influencer marketing should ideally be seen as an 'always-on' activity"



"Definitely do some social listening – if there's a hashtag you use then you can measure that. If it's email marketing… everything you would normally do, you should. They should also look at influencers' social accounts and the impact of those in addition to your own."

Tim Gibbon

"If you're going for more outcome-oriented measurements, you can look at positive advocacy (positive brand mentions), increases in improvement in sentiment (if you've got large numbers of influencers talking about your brand), and then obviously web traffic and lead gen. You do need to have tracking in place to associate this with specific mentions and tweets, but it can be done, especially if influencers are one of the primary parts of a campaign."

Luke Brynley-Jones

"To convince your stakeholders of the campaign's effectiveness you really need a sophisticated marketing automation platform in place to measure hard metrics that link back to ROI."

Chris Palmer

"Platforms like Traackr have influencer analytics, so when there's content created you have all of the measurement opportunities you would with any content marketing programme. If you throw advertising money at content that was co-created with influencers, you'll have all the measurement opportunities you would have normally. But there are also metrics specific to working with influencers. To what degree are they effective at amplifying to their community? To what degree does their community do what you want them to do? There are a lot of influencer-specific metrics."

Lee Odden

Section 3
Influencer marketing tools: What are they and what do they do?

There are hundreds of influencer marketing tools out there, so you're forgiven if you feel overwhelmed. To add further confusion to the matter, there's an increasing number of tools aimed at influencers themselves, which help them connect with brands.

> *"Your level of sophistication is what determines your need for tools. There are very low-cost or free tools people can use. But if you don't use a tool, you're at a disadvantage – even a free tool. Even using search.twitter.com will give you an advantage."*
>
> Lee Odden

Here we've done the research for you, and picked out some of the most notable tools and put them into different categories according to what they do and how much they cost.

But first, a few key rules to remember before you consider splashing out on the latest technology:

- Don't rule out tools altogether – you'll need to use at least some of the basic, free tools out there to identify influencers you're interested in working with.
- As mentioned already, the amount you invest in influencer marketing technology depends on the scale and importance of your influencer marketing programme and what you're hoping to achieve.
- Don't necessarily expect tools to integrate with your existing marketing technology; there may be some integration but most are standalone.
- Many influencer marketing tools are designed with consumer brands in mind, but it doesn't mean they can't be used in B2B – you might have to do a few free trials to find the ones best suited to your needs.
- It may be worth considering working with a specialist agency that has access to the right tools and the expertise to use them to their full potential.

What do influencer marketing tools actually do?

Influencer marketing tools provide a range of simple and more advanced functionalities. From the simplest to the more complex, this includes:

- Finding influencers by scanning social media as well as the wider web.
- Evaluating the influence of selected people (according to the size of their social following or amount of shares their content receives, for example).
- Assessing how engaged your influencers are with your brand.
- The management of influencer relationships, which will help you to react appropriately when they engage with your brand (e.g. what to do when they've retweeted you).
- Tracking and measuring the success of your influencer marketing programme.

Top influencer tools

We've identified some key influencer tools you might want to look at, ranging from basic tools to those that offer just some of the functionalities outlined previously to more advanced tools that will aid you across your influencer marketing programme, but will cost significantly more.

Influencer identification

BRAND24 | COMMETRIC | crimson hexagon

followerwonk | Hashtagify | hootsuite

HYPR | LinkedIn | listed

NinjaOutreach | Outreachr | Social Crawlytics

sproutsocial | synthesio | sysomos

TERKEET | TweetDeck |

The above, plus influencer ranking/scoring

DemographicsPro | KLOUT | LITTLE BIRD

talkwalker | zoomph

All of the above, plus influencer engagement/relationship management

brandwatch | BuzzStream | Buzzsumo

inkybee | klear | Kred

Meltwater Outside Insight | mention | SocMetrics

SURGGE | Upfluence

All of the above, plus programme management, measurement and tracking

GroupHigh | insightpool | onalytica scale your influence now

pitchbox | sideqik | Traackr

Section 4
Case study: Lessons learned from Workfront's influencer stories

Find out how Workfront created original new content to reveal previously untold stories about its influencers and capture the imagination of its audience

In a bid to engage marketers young and old who were looking for practical advice, Workfront collaborated with marketing influencers it already had a good relationship with (Robert Rose, Ann Handley, Mark Schaefer, Viveka von Rosen and Jason Falls) to create original content that its own audience and followers of these influencers wouldn't have seen before.

Having worked extensively with influencers over the past couple of years, Workfront identified those who came from diverse backgrounds and who would have different stories to tell. Ensuring the content spoke to different audiences was also a priority, as well as producing a fun awareness piece that hadn't been seen or done before.

Each influencer was asked to share a story about their first job and lessons they learned, and what advice they'd impart to their younger selves (and to other marketers). They were also asked to provide a picture of their younger self (which probably hadn't made the social rounds), which Workfront's creative team used to produce caricatures (as well as versions of how they look now).



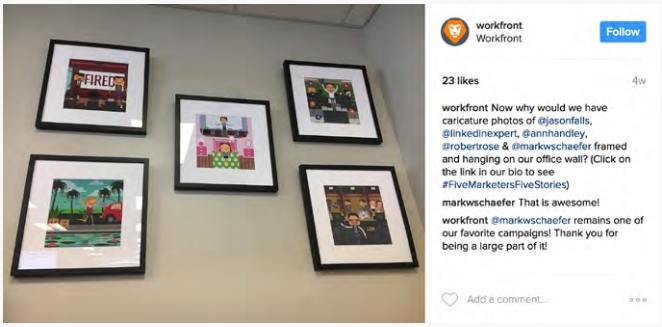
Viveka von Rosen's caricature



Mark Schaefer's caricature

SlideShare was selected as the optimum platform to host the content because of its visual components and interactive features when shared across other social networks, including Twitter, Facebook, LinkedIn, Google+ and Instagram. The brand also included a foreword by CMO Joe Staples, calling out some of the most valuable snippets of marketing advice.

The caricature portraits were also framed and sent to each influencer, providing them with something tangible and personal and ensuring the continuation of their positive relationships with Workfront. There's also a set hanging in the Workfront office:



The aim of the campaign was to get 10,000 views of the SlideShare page, which would be achieved through social sharing on Workfront's social channels as well as influencers' own networks.

There are now nearly 12,000 views of the SlideShare, and the content has been shared and commented on multiple times by each influencer. The brand received multiple social responses to mailed pictures and feedback from other influencers it has worked with, highlighting how much they enjoyed this particular asset.

Harnessing the power of influencer marketing in B2B © B2B Marketing 2017

Section 5
The 10 golden rules of influencer marketing

You should now be armed with most (if not all) the information you need to get your influencer marketing programme up and running successfully. But we thought it'd be worth highlighting the 10 golden rules of influencer marketing – come back to these if ever you're in doubt:

1. **Be authentic:** do not pay your influencers to push out bland sales messages. Be authentic – get to know them and understand their priorities, and collaborate to create genuinely useful content that will benefit their audience and yours.

2. **Do not rely solely on influencers to make your brand look authoritative:** your authority will also be reflected in content you produce and the customer experience you deliver. If you don't focus on building your own authority in the market, influencers won't want to work with you.

3. **Identify influencers based on relevance, reach and resonance:** remember these three key elements when seeking out your influencers, and prioritise working with those who tick all three boxes.

4. **Look for easy wins:** identify the influencers that are already talking about you and build a relationship with them first. You should also look for the easiest ways to get influencers involved in content you're already producing.

5. **Collaborate:** focus on collaborating with influencers to produce high-quality content that they'll want to share just as much as you do.

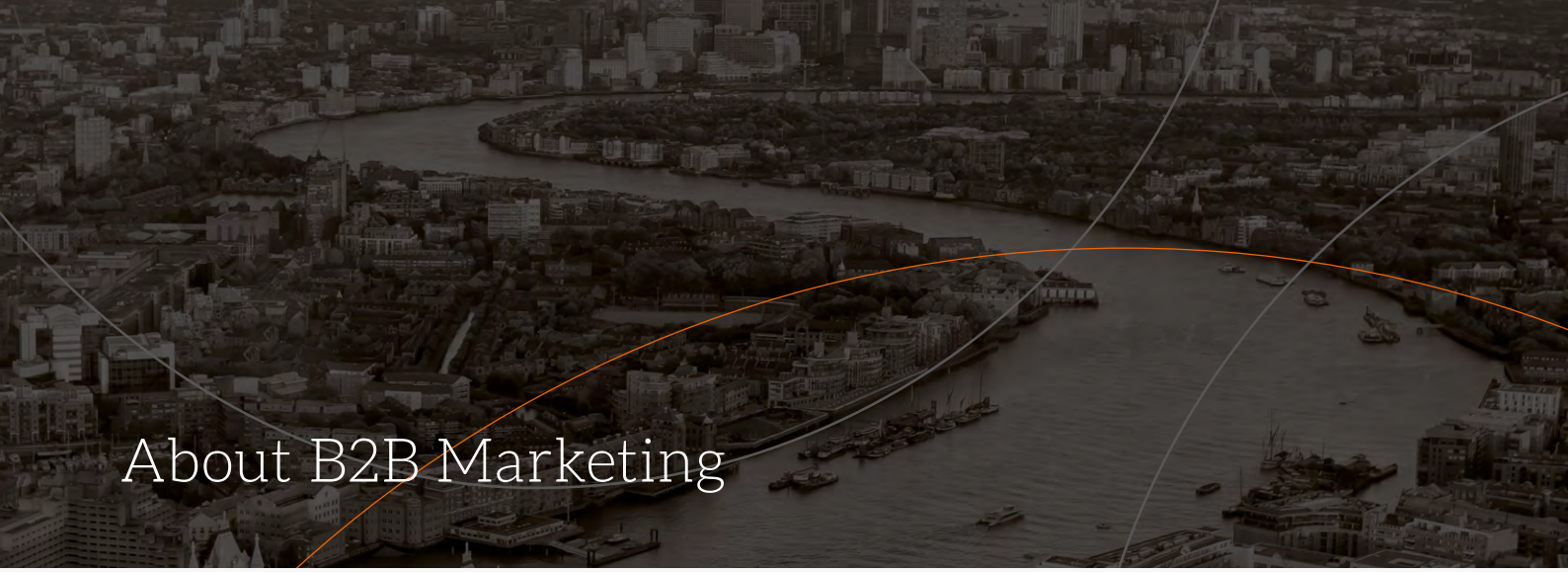
6. **Personalise your influencer communications:** professional influencers might expect to be paid, while others will be happy to use your brand's authority to build their own profile. Make sure you understand what their needs and expectations are and adapt your engagement with them accordingly.

7. **Don't take the same approach as consumer brands:** this speaks for itself, but the focus in B2B is much more about collaboration, rather than paying to get a product featured on a blog or YouTube channel – but this is no bad thing!

8. **Take a long-term approach:** remember that it should be a long-term, always-on strategy, not a short-term activity. This will limit the results you can achieve from effective influencer marketing.

9. **Once you've got them, take care of them:** treat your influencers well! If you don't put enough into your influencer relationships they won't reward you. Be prepared to give them a bit more than they'd expect (if they're attending an event, maybe give them an upgraded hotel room?).

10. **Don't begin with tools and technology:** there are some hugely useful influencer tools available – and even using the free ones will give you an edge – but don't prioritise buying expensive tools that you may well end up under-using.



About B2B Marketing

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B2B Marketing members are kept up to date with the latest strategies, insight and inspiration from the B2B marketing space, through our dedicated:

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- Call us on +44 (0)207 014 4920 if you'd like to discuss your specific business needs.

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