Best Practice Guide

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B2B Marketing

Influencer Marketing



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About B2B Marketing



B2B Marketing is the comprehensive information resource for B2B marketers. Its mission is to provide practitioners with the information they need to perform better and achieve more, whatever sector of the B2B space they are operating in.

Launched in 2004 as *B2B Marketing* magazine, it has since evolved into a multi-faceted resource, delivering a broad range of content in a variety of different forms and formats.

Its key products are:

Magazine: The essential monthly guide to B2B marketing, with a key focus on best practice guidance, plus monthly features looking at current trends, regular research and profiles.

Awards: The showpiece event for brands and practitioners, attracting over 800 people. Former winners include a host of top-tier B2B brands, including Amex, Barclays, Cisco, Dell, Fujitsu, IBM, KPMG, Nokia, O2, Oracle, Orange, SAP, Thomson Reuters, Vauxhall UK, and many more.

Research and reports: A library housing the best in B2B practice, in-depth practical guidance and research into specific channels or industry issues.

Training: Comprehensive, integrated and flexible training programmes enabling client-side and agency marketers to boost their skillsets and confidence, improve their effectiveness and increase impact on their brand.

Events: Quarterly headline events providing essential learning and networking opportunities, including the B2B Summit, the Annual B2B Conference and the B2B Leaders Forum.

Membership: Become a member and receive all research and reports for free. You will also receive exclusive invites to members-only networking events, get discounts on training seminars, workshops and conferences and receive a subscription to the monthly magazine. There are different levels of membership available.

For more information on any of these products or services go to b2bmarketing.net or call +44 (0) 20 7438 1370

Executive summary

Section 1. Introduction

In the B2B world, influencer marketing could be described as a collision of lobbying, public relations and, increasingly, the socialisation of the internet. It speaks to the power of powerful people, but the power itself is no longer defined by traditional hierarchies. Networks, not corridors, are changing the way that influence works in the B2B world.

The biggest challenges for B2B businesses addressing new models of influence are the transparency and openness needed to engage influential people, 'hubs' and the business case for investing in such strategies. Companies are complex, conservative and cautious. Networks are abstract, volatile and sometimes gregarious. To get influencer marketing working, these worlds need to be aligned. To show value to the bottom line requires sustained, bold and considered engagement.

Section 2. Research and planning

This chapter will go through how B2B marketers can establish an influencer marketing framework that will allow them to successfully manage, measure and scale their strategy. It will cover setting objectives, such as lead generation, increased sales or brand awareness, and aligning these goals with overall marketing and corporate objectives.

In addition, this section will look at the different ways in which businesses can identify the ideal influencers for their strategy, using tactics such as social scores, stakeholder network analysis and online listening. Having identified influencers, planning an engagement strategy is crucial to determine how workflow will be handled internally, as well as the questions businesses should ask when structuring influencer engagement best practice. How to leverage content for influencer engagement, focusing on how to plan a content creation and distribution schedule that takes into account a company's influencer marketing goals, target audience and resources.

Section 3. Marketing to influencers

Influencer marketing is, fundamentally, a more commercially-focused form of PR. This chapter will look at why you need to do your homework and understand your influencers' messages and channels. Research them precisely to find out what makes them tick and where and when they appear on media channels. The most important point to articulate is how you can help each other. Influencer marketing works best where there is mutual benefit in the activity. To get in front of them and start a conversation – shift from monologue to dialogue – so they can recommend you. Mirror their marketing activities; if they send out lots of physical direct mail to their prospects, don't try and approach them via Twitter. Show them you are on their wavelength.

Section 4. Measuring success

Understanding influencer measurement should no longer be considered a dark art. Nor should it be thought of as a luxury to be afforded by the few. The emergence of free tools that work well alongside established tracking methods means that any brand can demonstrate return on its influencer investment. Social media has allowed us to identify those with influence and to build plans to engage with these individuals in an open and monitored environment. It has taken the dark art of influencer marketing into a more enlightened place where metrics can be applied and where campaigns can be modified quickly using insights gained from interactions.

Contributors' biographies

Billy Hamilton-Stent

Director
Octopus Group



Billy has over 16 years' experience in PR and marketing, working across a range of tier one B2B brands. Billy is a lateral thinker and creative marketing professional who adds strategic value to group insight and marketing services. He has worked with seven of the 10 largest IT companies in the world, including Forbes, in the past five years. As a researcher, he regularly contributes to customer-facing client events and is also a media spokesperson for client-commissioned research campaigns.

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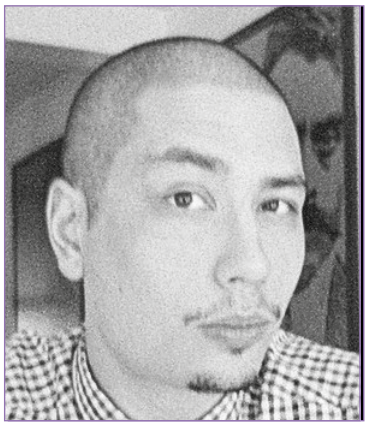


With over a decade of experience in B2B technology PR and marketing, Rich has worked with some of the world's largest tech companies and a host of specialist players. Rich's colleagues and family think he spends too long thinking about the future of marketing, but understand he's never happier than when he's at a conference, researching a whitepaper or sat in a darkened room 'processing'.

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Introduction

1

BILLY HAMILTON-STENT
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If you accept all marketing is directed towards influencing the behaviour of customers, it could be said that influencer marketing has been around for a long time.

In fact, the dynamics behind it are commonplace. We all experience influence and are influenced by others through indirect sources. Any child that gets one parent to do something through the influence of the other parent understands and practices influencer marketing. Anyone who has gone to colleagues to gather momentum on a call that involves the boss or approached friends in a certain order to win over the obstructive member of the gang is an exponent of influence.

It is an approach that resonates more and more, with 92 per cent of consumers around the world saying they trust earned media, such as word-of-mouth and recommendations from friends and family, above other forms of advertising. This trend has also been recognised by businesses, with 74 per cent reporting a budget item for 'influencer marketing' in the next 12 months.

Essentially, influencer marketing is the practice of influencing a network or group of individuals to affect the behaviour of buyers, customers or stakeholders.

It occurs wherever the currency of networks, connections and referrals has value and requires a dedicated effort to maximise the impact on your business. It also plays a role in PR, lobbying and, most recently, social media. In fact, it is the advent of social media, the internet and the measurability these technology changes have brought that are creating a wave of interest in influencer marketing among B2B brands.

To understand this change, we need to understand the areas where influencer marketing already exists and how the burgeoning number of influencer networks has changed the playing field. This involves dissecting some of the most significant themes within it and driving principles that give influencer marketing structure. Finally, it is important to understand what best practice influencer marketing looks like and how B2B companies can embrace it in a way that adds real value.

1.1 A brief history

As long as networks have existed, so has influencer marketing. On a micro-level, the examples of how it works in the nuclear family, friendship groups or an office environment demonstrate what influencer marketing is all about.

Understanding the layout of a hierarchy, identifying what an influencer looks like in that structure and working with them on a reciprocal basis are all key factors. But if we extend this model of interconnected groups onto a larger scale, some examples from history stand out.

1.1.1 Influencer marketing through history

While we could look back as far as ancient Greece and the classical orators that swayed public and political opinion, there are neat examples dotted throughout history.

For example, the King's Court and Privy Council of the medieval period would have been exactly the sort of breeding ground where influencer marketing flourished. It was a close-knit network of highly influential courtiers all with established and valuable links to the most important and sought after person in the land.

"Organisations, just like people, are influenced by the behaviour of a market and its operating environment"

1.1.2 Lobbying

From the King's Court, influencer marketing moved to the Palace of Westminster when our parliamentary democracy was born. In a stroke, it took its place in the world of lobbying and access to the MPs that pass our laws.

Lobbying is the most time honoured and established tradition of influencer marketing. All the ingredients are there – an exclusive network, individuals with influence and a significant prize at the end.

What's really interesting about lobbying, especially with the benefit of hindsight, is how difficult to quantify it is in terms of commercial success. While it would be wrong to reduce lobbying to an intangible art, it is opaque in nature and stands out in an increasingly transparent world. Nowadays, the corridors of power are not the only routes to persuasion, be that for social change or a simple sale.

1.1.3 Public relations

In addition to lobbying, it would be very tricky to talk about the evolution of influencer marketing without considering the role of PR.

Companies using PR recognise that the media has a significant influencing effect on buying habits and trends. PR also bears the hallmarks of influencer marketing in that it targets media-focused groups, creates a reciprocal relationship with publications and builds a dialogue with a stakeholder group.

What links all these examples of influencer marketing is the importance of exclusive networks. The King's Court only included a handful of influential individuals, while lobbying is focused on a few hundred MPs. Even PR, when it dealt solely with print publications, was about influencing a core group of relevant journalists.

The major shift that has edified influencer marketing over recent years is that exclusive networks have been surpassed in importance by inclusive ones. And the driving factor behind this shift has been the socialisation of the internet.

1.2 How the internet changed things

Why has the internet had such a profound effect on influencer marketing? The most obvious reason is that it allowed so much more of the commercial world to interact in a quantifiable and dynamic fashion. As more and more people live a commercial life via inclusive and exclusive networks, the opportunity for influence increases.

1.2.1 Measuring, monitoring and tracking

As the internet began to change the commercial world, Google and its patented search engine algorithm became the hottest new measure of influence. The basic premise that a webpage with a lot of links is more authoritative than one with very few, set a new benchmark for what influence looks like online.

In addition, the analytics packages that helped us to decipher internet traffic shone a light on how links, clicks and page views affect the bottom line.

There are, of course, sensitivities about how this process works. It's naïve to think of influence as some mind-bending act of manipulation.

The compelling business issue is that organisations, just like people, are influenced by the behaviour of a market and its operating environment. Both these zones are affected by the opinions and actions of groups and individuals that are increasingly accessible and connected.

"PR, lobbying and the digital world have collided and this confluence has made influencer marketing a reality for the B2B environment"

1.2.2 Social networks

The democratisation of information, combined with the recognition of social media as an effective channel for business communications, creates a great digital foundation for building influencer relationships. The fundamental value social media brings is a transition from exclusive networks to inclusive ones within the business community.

The nature of how we conduct business and communicate has shifted. There will always be a need for confidentiality in commerce and this should never be confused with access and inclusivity. But all markets are more public, accountable and transparent these days as a result of the social internet.

In essence, the worlds of PR, lobbying and the digital world have collided and this confluence has made influencer marketing a reality for the B2B environment.

1.3 Basic principles

While the internet's effect on influencer marketing can't be denied, some basic principles remain the same.

I've already touched on the importance of reciprocity, with a prime example being PRs' efforts to supply journalists with the ingredients for a good story. In terms of best practice though, it's difficult to identify a step-by-step guide for influencer marketing. So much depends on a particular business' aims, objectives and the market they operate in.

Having said that, influencer marketers can take their lead from related fields. In Robert Cialdini's 1984 book, *Influence: The Psychology of Persuasion*, he looks at how recruiters, fundraisers, salespeople and advertisers use influence to affect the behaviour of consumers.

1.3.1 Cialdini's principles of influence:

1. **Reciprocity**
   People return favours and help those who have helped them. In terms of influencer marketing, reciprocity is about understanding what you want from an influencer and what you can give them in return.

2. **Commitment (and consistency)**
   Cialdini hypothesised that human beings have an in-built and longstanding desire for consistency. To interact in a meaningful way with an influencer, get on their radar early and make them feel like a stakeholder.

3. **Social proof**
   This principle relies on people feeling safe doing what others are doing. Within influencer marketing, it manifests itself as using case studies and customer quotes to support your proposition.

4. **Liking**
   We tend to be influenced by people we like because they're similar to us; we trust them or they praise us. When targeting influencers, this means building trust, being complimentary and behaving consistently.

5. **Authority**
   Human beings often feel a sense of duty to people in a position of authority. Influencer marketers should try to get influential and powerful people either using their products or talking about them.

6. **Scarcity**
   Products or services are more desirable when they become more scarce. In other fields of marketing this manifests itself as a sale closing date or limited availability. A similar special offer restricted to a group of influencers might also do the trick.

"Now that influencer marketing can be measured and monitored in some way, it provides validation of an approach"

While influencer marketers can use Cialdini's work, it would be wrong to think of it as a guide to influencer marketing. After all, his focus was always on direct sales scenarios. The key difference with influencer marketing, which businesses must understand, is that it is not a direct approach.

For a company focused on the binary dynamics of direct sales, this can be difficult to buy into. To combat this, businesses, agencies and consultants must be able to define what success looks like from the start.

1.3.2 What is successful influencer marketing?
It's testament to Cialdini's insight his principles still resonate with influencer marketers today. But while the principles are the same, most companies, agencies and consultants are still grappling with how to best implement them in the digital age.

Best practice influencer marketing in an internet world is still nascent. Having said that, the first hurdle in a successful influencer marketing campaign – mapping and scoping – is where most progress has been made. Apart from the fact that you could quite easily Google 'the 10 most influential people in' a particular industry, there are many online tools out there – including Klout, Kred and Appinions – to help you scope out a particular market or individuals within it.

A word of warning though. While many businesses have used automated influencer identification tools, 94 per cent do not fully trust them. This is an area where specialist influencer marketers can still add real value.

Once you've mapped your network and market, what do you do with this information? Influencer marketing is a long game that requires strategic planning at the start and hard work over time.

Take a hypothetical example of an influencer marketing campaign. You might map 100 influencers that could matter to your business and the market it operates in. But influencer marketing isn't a simple model of 'deal closing' to establish a presence within a network.

Therefore, many principles of marketing have to be reconsidered. For example, there is not an end point or a contract to sign with another party. Also, the importance of any influencer will oscillate over time and the influencer group will morph. People, opinions and actions are transitory.

Even when you have identified an influencer, their real value can take longer to work out. This is especially true in a social world, where large numbers of followers can cloud the issue. In fact, studies suggest that fewer than five per cent of a brand's fan base generates 100 per cent of the social referrals (Technorati). This small minority are actually the advocates that really influence others and bring results, whether that's converting on a campaign or taking up an offer.

What influencer marketing requires is patience, flexibility and a strategic approach. It is not easy for a business to get all three of these in play at one time.

1.4 Influencer marketing in B2B

With this in mind, it might seem strange that B2B companies have taken more of an interest in influencer marketing in recent years. But the step change is measurability.

People may work on the basis of relationships, but businesses function by numbers. From a business point-of-view, the model of influencer marketing is changing and there's a technology shift underway. Now that influencer marketing can be measured and monitored in some way, it provides validation of an approach.

1.4.1 Getting started
While mapping tools can help businesses understand where influence exists online, it's what they do with this information that counts.

"There is one mantra businesses should keep at the heart of their strategy: be transparent"

Most B2B businesses need to start at an even more basic level with influencer marketing and ask themselves what an influencer in their market looks like. Just because someone is big on Twitter doesn't automatically make them relevant to your business. Moreover, many influential nodes on a network exist away from the social radar. Businesses can fall into the trap of putting too much emphasis online. The social internet is a tool that provides influencer visibility but it's not one that enables connection alchemy.

This is where B2B businesses need a rounded and strategic approach – what does an influencer look like? What channels do they use? What timeframes are involved? How do we judge success? Only then can they start to look at the processes involved in influencer marketing – reciprocity, trust building, likeability and consistency – to develop an appropriate engagement plan.

1.4.2 The importance of transparency

Whatever approach businesses decide to take, there is one mantra they should keep at the heart of their strategy: be transparent. Companies need to take the next steps in a sustainable way that is considered and not exploitative. Only then can they really hope to nurture an audience of truly engaged individuals.

This can be a really tricky process for businesses to embrace. Traditionally, companies are complex and conservative but influencer marketing requires that all levels of a company are open to the process of engagement. This can require significant operational and cultural change.

It also requires a company to embrace content and to value the public dialogue it provides as much as they value close-knit relationships with influencers in the market. Having mapped out the hubs of influence in any network, the next obvious step is to stand out in some way.

This requires imagination; joining a debate is a worthy goal, but owning a debate has a higher value. Your company's opinions need to come to the forefront but they can't just be opinions for opinions' sake. To succeed with influencer marketing, they must always be relevant, worthwhile and consistent.

1.5 Summary

- The core principles of influencer marketing have been around for many years.
- Lobbying and PR are two great examples of how influencer marketing works.
- The rise of the social internet has changed the playing field.
- Reciprocity, relevance, consistency and commitment remain important.
- Influence must be conceived in a strategic context.
- Mapping and scoping networks for influencers is the first step.
- The hard work comes in making a valuable connection.
- It is a long game.

Research and planning

2



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Research and planning is an essential part of any influencer marketing strategy, as this is the stage where your objectives are set, engagement and content strategy are drawn up, and the influencers you plan to engage with are identified.

Mapping out all of these elements allows you to set up an influencer marketing framework that can scale and evolve as your engagement develops, and increase your chances of getting a better ROI from your activities. However, kicking off an influencer marketing initiative can be a daunting prospect (particularly if the concept is a new one within your business), and different companies will face different challenges depending on their objectives, available resources and business areas.

This chapter will break down the various steps involved in creating the foundation for a successful influencer marketing strategy, addressing the challenges involved and posing the questions organisations should ask when outlining their influencer marketing objectives, identifying influencers, creating an engagement plan and producing content.

2.1 Setting objectives

It may be an obvious place to start, but knowing exactly what you want to achieve with your influencer marketing is an important point of departure, as it will help inform your engagement strategy and content planning, and determine the types of influencer you will identify and target.

Primary objectives for B2B firms typically revolve around lead generation, raising brand awareness, improving thought leadership and boosting sales. Understanding the implications your objectives will have for your engagement strategy is important, as – depending on your aims – you will be variously marketing via influencers, with them or directly to them.

- **Increasing sales and lead generation.** If you are trying to encourage sales growth or generate leads through influencer engagement, you will need to bear in mind that you are not selling to your influencers in the traditional sense – rather, you are enlisting them to sell on your behalf. Doing so will require a different tact than traditional sales, which will affect both your engagement and content strategy.

- **Raising brand awareness.** If you are seeking to raise brand awareness among your target audiences or markets, you are using influencers as a proxy for amplifying your message. In this case, the influencers are the conduit of your marketing, not the final destination, so again it is important to remember this distinction when planning your engagement.

- **Improving thought leadership position.** If your goal is to elevate your company (or individuals within your company) to a position of thought leadership, your method of engagement will be marketing to influencers and thought leaders. You can achieve this by becoming part of the conversation, focusing more on how you can contribute to discussion with your expertise.

- **Developing brand advocacy.** Though converting influencers into advocates should always be a goal of influencer engagement, if brand advocacy is your primary objective your engagement will involve working directly with influencers to promote your brand in a mutually beneficial arrangement.

"Before jumping in and trying to find your influencers, take a step back to first define the type of influencer you want to engage with"

Of course, most of the objectives described here are interrelated (for example, increased sales and lead generation may be outcomes of raising brand awareness), and in real-world scenarios you are likely to employ a variety of the tactics above in achieving your goals. However, when setting your objectives it is a useful exercise to think about how the nature of your strategy affects your engagement, and how this fits in with considerations such as your internal resource and content assets.

2.1.1 Aligning objectives

Influencer marketing is just one of many tactics B2B firms can employ to achieve their objectives, and as such should not be siloed within its own category. When setting your objectives, it is important to consider how they tie in with wider marketing objectives, and those of the company as a whole.

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. Though the concept itself is nothing new, the relatively recent emergence of influencer marketing as a marketing category can make it seem like a fad or passing trend, so being able to demonstrate how it feeds directly into the company's direction is key to demonstrating its value.

By the same token, the objectives you aim for should also be tied to tangible metrics in order to measure the results of your engagement. In many cases these will be existing measurements (such as website conversions, number of leads generated, brand share-of-voice uplift and sales) that you can use to measure directly the outcomes of your objectives.

2.2 Identifying influencers

Identifying (the right) influencers is an essential stage in the planning and research process, and it can also be the most overwhelming. There are many methods of influencer identification available, ranging from the scientific (social network analysis, influence scoring algorithms) through to the less-so (gut feeling and intuition). These different methods also bring with them varying levels of resource requirement, whether money or time, and some will yield more reliable results than others.

Before jumping in and trying to find your influencers, taking a step back to first define the type of influencer you want to engage with can help you navigate the ins and outs of these methods, and give you a picture of who it is you are looking to identify to begin with.

2.2.1 Defining influencers

First off, what actually is an influencer? In general, an influencer could be described 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 are a gateway to these audiences, and successfully engaging with them allows you to amplify your messaging throughout their networks, delivering it to a greater number of people via a trusted, third-party source. According to Forrester Research, B2B buyers may be between two-thirds and up to 90 per cent of the way through their sales journey by the time they contact a vendor – the stakeholders providing your prospects with the information about your brand during this portion of the buying cycle are influencers, as they are directly influencing sales of your products and services among their audiences.

2.2.2 Defining your influencers

Going beyond the general definition, you now need to define the criteria with which you will identify the influencers who will have the biggest impact for your brand. You are probably already aware of who the main influencers are within your industry – perhaps you consume their content, or see them regularly participating or mentioned in conversations around your key business areas. But are they the perfect fit for your particular influencer marketing strategy?

"Someone who talks about a subject a lot is not an influencer if their discussion doesn't drive any further engagement or content-sharing"

Below are some points to consider when defining who is influential for your programme. Your influencers...

- **... are influential within the subject or business area in which you want to have an impact.** Are they key participants in discussion around the topic? Are they referenced regularly as an authority on the subject, and by whom? For example, Justin Bieber is probably not the best person to target with your B2B influencer marketing strategy, despite his high number of followers and apparent reach, he's unlikely to be interested in sharing your whitepaper on virtualization, and neither will his Beliebers. Finding people that have topical influence within your key areas (as opposed to general popularity) will ensure your message is being broadcast to the right people.

- **... are connected to your target audience, whether directly or via other influencers.** Do they have the necessary reach to spread your messaging? Someone who talks about a subject a lot is not an influencer if their discussion doesn't drive any further discussion, engagement or content-sharing beyond their own immediate circle. As with the previous point, you need to know that your influencers can reach your target audience – and this could be via several layers of connections, not just their direct following.

- **... are engageable.** The influencer marketing arena is a hotly-contested battleground, so be aware that your competitors may also be engaging with the same influencers as you – depending on how successful they've been, the person you're trying to talk to may already be an advocate for a rival, so do a little research to find out if any of the influencers you've identified are working with competitors.

Asking these questions will not only help you identify the most relevant influencers for your objectives, but will be useful when it comes to the engagement stage, as the research carried out here will help you build up an influencer profile for each stakeholder identified. Adding questions of your own here that are relevant to your brand and objectives will help you refine your approach further.

2.2.3 Identification methods

Having built up an outline of your ideal influencer, it's time to dig deeper and find your influencers. The methods described below range from free to paid services, and from manual to more automated processes:

Social media following and website analysis

Looking at an influencer's social media profile or blog can give you at-a-glance information about how influential they might be. What is their following on platforms such as Twitter or Google+? Does their blog have a good Google PageRank or Alexa Traffic Ranking? How often and in what volume does their content get shared across social media?

Though the questions above can help give you an idea of whether someone is an influencer or not, these methods are not ideal for influencer identification, as they don't take into account who your potential influencers are connected to. Someone with thousands of Twitter followers isn't necessarily reaching your target audience, while someone with a seemingly low social media following may have a greater ability to propagate your message across a wider network and among more relevant people as a result of their influence. This reach may not be immediately apparent using this method, so this should ideally only be used as a preliminary research tool.

"Influencer marketing should not be treated as a one-off engagement or campaign – it is an ongoing process of building relationships over time"

Social scores and influencer lists
There are a number of well-known companies such as Klout, Kred and PeerIndex which employ a scoring system algorithm for identifying influencers. The validity of such measures continues to be debated ad infinitum, but they remain a useful tool for a top-level overview of how influential an individual is, as they give an indication of a person's general standing within social networks and certain topics. However, as with the previous method, generic lists should be regarded as a starting point for influencer identification as they won't necessarily help you in finding the right people for your particular goals. Furthermore, scores which don't take into account factors such as topical influence will not reveal relevant influencers, and severely limit the effectiveness of your programme.

Network maps are useful for visualising how impactful an individual's influence is across a network on specific topics or Twitter hashtags. They can be a powerful and useful tool for influencer identification, as they let you see the connections between stakeholders, and how far and where their influence extends.

In addition to the methods above, there are a number of companies providing services that will use some form of online or data analysis to identify influencers on a given topic. They will use different methods (for example, PageRank or citation analysis) and may variously discount or include social media platforms, blogs, forums and other websites in their influence calculations.

All of these have their benefits and limitations, and there is no one universal measure of influence. However, having a robust influencer identification method behind you will help ensure the influencers you are engaging with are the best for your company, and that your efforts will have the desired effect.

2.3. Planning a strategy

Having defined your objectives and identified your influencers, you will need to plan out how you're going to handle engagement opportunities, both internally and with influencers. This will involve creating influencer engagement best practice guidelines that will set out how engagement opportunities are actioned, as well as an internal workflow that governs this route to action. This holds true for companies both large and small, as it sets up a framework that can scale as your influencer marketing expands.

Every company has a different internal departmental structure. Furthermore, engagement should be handled on an influencer-by-influencer basis, and will be nuanced depending on who you're engaging with, the results you wish to achieve via the engagement and your existing relationship with your influencers. So, in order to avoid being too prescriptive about this stage, here are some questions which companies can use as a starting point for determining their engagement strategy:

Who should own the strategy, and how many people should be involved? Establish who will be responsible for managing and running the strategy. Where does it sit within the firm – marketing, PR, digital or online? Is a cross-functional team the best way in which to approach engagement? How many people and hours will be dedicated to discovering opportunities and handling engagement?

Though it may be hard to know in advance the exact scale of the resource required, it is worth remembering that 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.

"Influencers are people too, and getting in touch too often or with duplicated or irrelevant messaging may be construed as annoying"

What company assets can we use as part of our engagement? Many B2B companies are well positioned when it comes to having assets they can leverage to amplify their influencer marketing. Your primary assets in this case are content (which will be covered in greater detail in point 2.4) and people. There may also be budget set aside for activities such as paid or sponsored engagement and influencer-oriented events.

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 is worth considering how relevant engagement opportunities may be passed on to them and actioned in a way that is consistent with your overall workflow system.

What is it we want influencers to do? This relates back to the objectives you have already set for your strategy, and is a good question to keep in mind when determining how engagement is actioned. Do you want influencers to share links to your content or messaging? Are you looking to set up a brand advocacy programme? Understanding the outcomes you wish to result from your engagement will help you structure how you leverage your internal assets, and determine the best type of engagement to choose.

2.3.1 Engagement checkpoints and influencer profiling

Most of you will be familiar with the concept of lead scoring, whereby the quality of marketing or sales leads is assessed based on various buying cycle checkpoints. In a similar way, you will be approaching influencers who are in various stages of the engagement cycle with you, and knowing where they sit within this process will help you to understand who to engage with and the best way in which to do so. While some of these questions may already have been answered as part of the influencer identification process, your influencers will move through different stages of the engagement pipeline or funnel as your engagement develops, meaning this should be assessed on an ongoing basis. The following questions will help you build up influencer profiles, as well as develop a set of best practice engagement principles for dealing with opportunities when they arise:

Are they interested in your industry or subject matter? If you've already identified a focused list of relevant influencers, then your influencers should all be in some way related to your key topics and objectives. However, a key tenet of influencer marketing is relevancy, and within a broad subject area or sector there may be a number of niche subtopics or segments your influencers are focused on – hitting them with the wrong message is not an effective use of this strategy and may, in the worst case scenario, actively turn an influencer against your brand.

Maintaining different programmes within your overall influencer marketing initiative (whether based on influencer groups, objectives or topics) is one way of ensuring your messaging and engagement remains relevant and targets the right people.

What is your current relationship with the influencer? When did you last get in touch with them? Have you had a prior engagement with the influencer? An existing relationship can be a good basis for deeper engagement, as they will already be aware of your products and services.

As with any relationship, regular contact is essential to building affinity, and a schedule of regular touchpoints will help keep you front-of-mind among your influencers. However, influencers are people too, and getting in touch too often or with duplicated or irrelevant messaging may be construed as annoying. This is particularly true within larger organisations, where engagement may be managed across a number of stakeholders.

"For a top-level overview, services such as Google Trends are useful for seeing which topics are trending or rising in prominence"

Tracking interactions using a CRM system or another tool will help you keep track of how frequently you are getting in touch and with what messages, and feed into your influencer profiling and results measurement.

Is there somebody else in the organisation better positioned than you to action this opportunity? If a colleague has an existing personal or professional relationship with the influencer in question, or a higher level of expertise about a certain subject, these opportunities should be assigned to others within your organisation where possible.

What is the best channel to engage on? There are a number of ways to engage with influencers, whether online or offline, and the channel of engagement should match the opportunity. For example, Twitter is great for quick engagement, but may not be the best medium through which to communicate a more complex message. On the other hand, sending an email may, at times, be less effective and immediate than a tweet if it lands in a cluttered inbox. Knowing how far along the engagement pipeline an influencer is (as well as a dash of intuition) can help determine the best course of action.

2.4 Content planning

B2B marketers can often feel hard done by in comparison to their B2C cousins when it comes to producing compelling content, but the reality is there are always good angles and stories that any brand can draw on to create successful content for influencer marketing – even if you think your brand or product is too 'boring'. Content is a broad term which encompasses whitepapers, case studies, presentations, video, infographics, website messaging and blog posts. These can be leveraged across a range of channels such as your company blog, social media properties, platforms such as SlideShare or Visual.ly, and through third-party engagements such as syndication, guest-blogging and advertising. It is likely that your company already has a wealth of such content behind it, as well as the potential to create much more.

While it is unlikely that your company will be producing content that doesn't in some way communicate your key messaging, it is important your content planning builds in the considerations already discussed in this chapter to make sure it is being communicated in the right way. As well as being relevant, what you say has to be useful – that is, aligned to both your influencers' and audiences' needs and interests in order to encourage sharing and position your brand as one worth listening to. This means that any content containing overtly 'salesy' messaging is less likely to be successful content.

To this end, the tone of the content you produce (or at least, the content designed for influencer marketing purposes if you are operating across multiple channels) may need to shift slightly or be re-assessed, based on your objectives and influencers. But to know this requires an understanding of what your influencers and customers are talking about – their pain points, their concerns, and how these can be addressed through your content and engagement.

2.4.1 Listen to the market

For a top-level overview, services such as Google Trends are useful for seeing which topics are trending or rising in prominence, as well as those which are beginning to wane in attention. On top of this, free tools such as TweetDeck or Twitter lists can be used to hone in on keywords and individuals to get a real-time stream of content focused on your influencers and topics. This will give you an understanding of current debates, hot topics and the kind of messaging trending across the marketplace at any one time.

"Getting involved in the debate within your industry not only keeps you relevant, but encourages engagement with influencers and prospects"

For more granular insight, there are a variety of paid online listening tools available which can give you a deeper understanding of individual- and market-level trends across social media and the wider web. Such tools can help you track keywords and surface trends and themes you may not have thought about in previous planning, and can also help you measure the impact of your influencer marketing efforts to refine your strategy further.

Understanding what is front-of-mind among your influencers and audiences will give you an idea of how you can add to the conversation with your content, or fill an underserved niche with your particular expertise. Getting involved in the debate within your industry not only keeps you relevant, but encourages engagement with influencers and prospects. All too often, companies produce content in a bubble because it serves their needs – thinking of the needs of your influencers (and, by proxy, their audiences), foments a dialogue which will make your content more likely to be shared across networks as it becomes part of a wider conversation.

2.4.2 Set a schedule

Getting on a content marketing schedule can help you to create regular engagement opportunities. The first step is to think of how your existing content may be used. Perhaps a whitepaper could be broken down into a series of blog posts, or summarised in an infographic or a SlideShare presentation. Making the most of what you already have, and focusing on 'evergreen content' that stays relevant indefinitely, will cut down on the precious time taken to flesh out a piece of quality content, allowing more time for engagement.

The second step is to identify any areas in which your content is lacking (this could perhaps relate to an industry discussion or topic you wish to have a voice in but have no marketing collateral), and plan a content production schedule which helps you address your content deficiencies and produce regular content in your key areas. While the emphasis should always be on creating quality content (as opposed to producing content for the sake of fulfilling a quota), producing content regularly is a good way to keep influencers engaged. Again, consider how internal experts may be used to produce or feed into interesting content.

2.5 Summary

Following the steps above will help you lay out a solid foundation and framework for a successful influencer marketing strategy. Like any strategy, this framework should be flexible and adaptable – your objectives, influencers, and what your customers want will continue to change over time, meaning your tactics and content need to be assessed on a regular basis. This will be based partially on the results – namely, which tactics and channels are working, and which type of content has the greatest impact on your objectives – but your results will also stem from the decisions made during the research and planning stage, so revisiting and refining any of the steps covered here will also have a positive impact on your activities.

Marketing to influencers

3



RICHARD FOGG
MANAGING DIRECTOR
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Before any form of influencer marketing plan can be devised, some fundamentals must be understood. Influencer marketing is about people and relationships, it is not about brands talking at individuals. It is about individuals starting and solidifying a two-way dialogue and relationship and later establishing mutual benefit from it.

There are clear parallels here with traditional PR activities. Content production, audience identification, tailoring and persuasion are all skills that are equally applicable to PR as they are to influencer marketing, making the latter really a more commercially aware version of the former.

That said, there are still striking differences between influencer marketing and PR. Relatively speaking, PR campaigns can deliver far more immediate results, while influencer marketing is a long-term activity. It requires an investment of time and resource, and plenty of patience. So what are the steps?

3.1 Be realistic

As the later points will make clear, there is plenty of work required in order to appropriately target and engage each influencer. The overriding theme is to understand them in intricate detail and then tailor your activity appropriately and individually. It is therefore a marketing tactic that does not scale easily. Rather than trying to start by engaging with 100 influencers and not being effective, it's better to pick your top 10 and put in concerted efforts for each.

Don't bite off more than you can chew. As marketers, we're generally social animals. But how many friends do you have that you communicate with, directly, a few times a week? 10? 15? The process of building a relationship – a quality, productive relationship – is as time-consuming as making friends. And it requires as much thought. So even selecting 10 influencers to focus on might be a stretch.

3.2 Do your homework

This is yet more research I'm afraid. In addition to identifying the most appropriate influencers for your industry and commercial goals, you now need to understand how each of them chooses to operate and the context in which they operate. Unlike most other areas of marketing, influencer marketing is entirely a one-to-one activity, not one-to-many.

This research demands legwork and, as helpful as online tools like Traackr can be in pooling information feeds, a human being has to follow, read, process and understand influencers – there are very few shortcuts. There are many questions this research must try and answer.

Who do they talk to?

If you have identified the individual is a key influencer for your business, then he or she most likely talks to at least part of the audience that you are trying to approach too. But who specifically? Is it a subset of your whole audience? Do conversations sit around issues more applicable to certain job titles, roles or departments? What niches interest them? Where are they most influential and what can they reasonably influence? This will help you decide how much of a priority this influencer is.

Sam Fiorella at Sensei Marketing talks about 'macro-influencers' and 'micro-influencers', a concept that can help you understand the potential impact of certain influencers. If you are trying to drive sales conversions then perhaps focusing on building a relationship with a 'macro' influencer – someone with enormous reach, but less relevance – is not appropriate. Instead, you may want to spend more time

"Your chances of successfully engaging with an influencer rocket once you understand their motivations and activities"

developing a relationship with a 'micro' influencer. An individual with lower reach, but more relevance could be more effective in driving purchase behaviour.

How do they communicate with their own audiences?
Which channels do they use? Make sure you expand your research beyond social and online media. Are there particular times when they are most active? What sort of content do they typically distribute? Is it their own content, such as their blogs or articles in the media, or do they predominantly curate other content sources? If the latter, is it from the industry media or particular types of company? When they share other peoples' content, do they simply circulate it or do they offer their own views too? Understanding an influencer's modus operandi is critical. If you do not mirror the way in which they choose to communicate, you risk a jarring, uncomfortable exchange. Your mother told you that first impressions count and she was right. You have to adapt your behaviour to the influencer, not the other way around.

What are they trying to achieve for themselves?
Are they using their influencer status to help them with their business development and their own profile, or are they aiming for something more particular, like writing a book? Understanding and appreciating influencers' motivations will underpin your dialogue with them and focus your efforts on helping them, not just pitching to them. Influencer marketing is all about reciprocal exchanges of value – what do they want that you can offer, in exchange for what you need them to give you?

What are they interested in?
It is not enough simply to know they are influential in your industry. You have to understand which facets of the industry they are most interested in, and indeed what agenda they might also have. This really is a matter of getting to grips with their arguments and any common themes in the content they share. Bear in mind if the influencer has their own website, they may well have, in addition to a blog or news area, plenty of SEO terms hidden within it that will offer their own additional insight.

Any PR professional will recognise these rules and questions as essential intelligence before approaching a journalist with a story. And this is no coincidence. Much of the success in pitching PR stories often comes down to the relevance and suitability of the story to the journalist, publication and its audience. Similarly, your chances of successfully engaging with an influencer rocket once you understand their motivations and activities.

3.3 Listen

The next stage is to start to act and evolve the intelligence you've built through your initial research. You have to listen to them for a while. And in order to do that you have to start to 'follow' them using the channels they understand and value.

If they distribute their content through email newsletters, sign up to receive them. If they prefer Twitter, follow them. Request to join the LinkedIn group they administer. Follow them on Google+ (it's a network that many influencers will use, as many understand the SEO benefits of the platform). Subscribe to their YouTube channel. Read their blog. This may sound like stalking, but it's critical in building your understanding of them and what matters to them.

There is also a fringe benefit to this phase. Most influencers enjoy the attention their efforts attract. They value follower numbers, subscribers and readers. Though a pro-tip might be to avoid following every platform within 30 minutes – you'll look like you're trying too hard.

3.4 Start to engage

Once you know who they are, what they're about and what they're thinking right now, it's time to engage so they know who you are. And the first step in the process is to demonstrate

"Influencers attract influencers, so do your best to look like you have the potential to be one"

you're a) genuinely interested in what they're doing, b) have something interesting to add to what they're doing and c) are able to help them.

Which means you need a personal profile that 'fits' with them. So, make sure your social media bios, profile pictures (seriously) and recent comments are appropriate. This doesn't mean scouring all personal details and personality from your online identity, no one wants to engage with that guy, but try to limit the references to cats, or 'hilarious/ironic' pictures or passionate rants about the X-Factor.

It may well be that you decide to recruit a couple of members of your team to help you. Or focus your influencer marketing programme on some key execs. The same applies to them, and they will also need to spend time researching and listening – though more than likely with your assistance.

It should be reasonably quick and easy for an influencer to understand that you are likely to be interested in what they say, might have credible views on key issues and a potential following of like-minded folk and why you are worth engaging with.

What does this mean? Clear messaging, ideally supported by evidence of your company's success and status. A profile in appropriate media, such as trade press or industry analyst reports, is useful third-party endorsement. This, alongside some unique and insightful content and/or commentary on related issues of your own, will mark you out as someone an influencer is pleased to have as a follower, and would be open to engaging with.

David Spark, one of the leading thinkers in influencer marketing, believes one of the best ways of engaging with online influencers is to be one. Influencers attract influencers, so do your best to look like you have the potential to be one.

3.4.1 Being useful

At this point, you haven't said anything to the influencer yet. That's OK. The preparation work above is vitally important and without it, any attempt at dialogue will fall on deaf ears.

Influencers, by their very nature, will be distributing or sharing content in whatever form that may be. Take the time to read, digest and understand this content, and the argument or agenda it is putting forward. Then share some of it to your own relevant networks and audiences. Almost irrespective of the influencer's own ambitions and motivations, this will be of value to them. You are providing access and profile among your carefully built networks, which will either be of immediate value, or will simply offer them an opportunity to engage with more like-minded individuals.

But this must be more than simply liking, re-tweeting, sharing or copying and pasting. Dumb amplification gives limited value to the influencer and your own audience. Instead, re-circulate their content along with your own thoughts on the material, and your additional comments.

For example, simply saying: "Great article from John Smith on influencer marketing <<link>>" is of severely limited value. Instead, commenting that "John Smith's influencer marketing blog outlines how to approach influencers – great points, some of my own thoughts here <<link>>," immediately adds a valuable contribution. Such an approach also encourages a dialogue with the influencer, who may then wish to respond.

Where you are distributing influencers' content via offline channels, make sure you have their permission and the influencer understands the reason and context behind re-using their material. This may offer an opportunity to immediately engage with the influencer, while also ensuring you gain credit for any positive effects from the redistribution.

Crucially, it must be understood a single distribution of an influencer's blog or other content does not entitle you to any reciprocation. In fact, almost no matter how much you may do or give, there will rarely be a situation where an influencer ever 'owes' you anything. An influencer's likelihood to later engage with

"The likelihood of an influencer engaging with you will depend on how insightful and engaged you are in their specific area"

you will depend on some key elements of your value to them:

- What content of theirs you have shared and to whom.
- In what context you have shared it.
- How relevant/insightful/valuable your own activities are to their specific area.
- How long you have been a valuable member of their audience.

This last point echoes the statement at the outset: influencer marketing takes time and effort. There's no rule of thumb for how long. Some relationships kick off quickly. Some take months to progress. Some may never really be relationships.

3.4.2 Introduce yourself

Once you've built up some familiarity you should introduce yourself. But, whatever you do, don't ask for anything on the first date.

This is a serious point. The stages listed above may sound a bit creepy. I'm pretty sure that if I explained the process of making friends with my five year old, it would sound pretty creepy. And if not creepy, then manipulative and unnatural. That's because I've documented a process that many people would ordinarily go through by gut – if it wasn't a 'new' marketing buzz term.

Apply common sense here. Be normal. Don't charge in like a bull in a china shop. Instead, just introduce yourself. If you've been doing things right, it's just going to be a case of: "Hey, we've been trading thoughts for a while, but I thought I'd just drop you a line to introduce myself."

Maybe suggest meeting up for a coffee at a conference or event. Relationships form faster when you physically meet someone. It's not critical, but it helps.

3.4.3 Pop the question

The exact timing of this is more 'gut feel' than specifically defined – just consider the points above regarding whether you are of value to them before doing so.

The core principal is that you need to earn the right to introduce your agenda. You have to wait for them to trust you. Before you begin the conversation however, make sure you know exactly what you want, for example:

- Co-creating content.
- Speaking at your event.
- Offering advice or opinion.
- Curating your content.

Naturally, the examples above are all specific requests that offer some value to the influencer. Speaking at events adds to their profile, co-creating content eases the production burden and widens their available audience, etc. That said, you also need to make it clear exactly what you are offering in return:

- Exclusive or early access to industry insight or information.
- Direct payment for time spent.
- Access to a new or otherwise closed audience.
- Expenses-paid travel and accommodation for an event.

By this time, of course, you will know exactly what to ask for. Your pitch will be perfectly tailored, based on the research and listening you've been doing. Your offer will be enticing, because you know what kind of content or discussion they enjoy engaging in. And all this will be coming from a 'friend' or a 'trusted contact' rather than a faceless marketing department.

"Add value to your priority influencers, that's the key to a long-term influencer marketing programme that delivers value to your organisation"

Even once you have managed to balance what you are asking for with what you are offering in return, it is still important to remember that you don't own them. Just because they have agreed to collaborate, even in return for payment of some kind, your relationship remains more casual than a classic agency/client scenario.

This casual nature is an important factor in the 'ethical' nature of influencer marketing. A cynic will look at influencer marketing as an attempt to game or co-opt the idea of authentic reference. But there is the ultimate check and balance in influencer marketing: no one with real influence will allow themselves to be controlled. If they do, they risk their objectivity and the trust their audience has put in them and they will cease to become an influencer.

An influencer risks his or her industry status if they agree to blindly regurgitate your own messages and content without adding their own view, so be reasonable in what you expect to receive.

3.5 Summary

The goal of influencer marketing is to have credible, trustworthy individuals communicate your messages to your target audiences in an authentic way. It is not a switch on/switch off mechanism – the amount of upfront research, ongoing listening and engagement means it is a long-term undertaking. And, to that point, potentially infinitely repeatable.

There is one thing to remember at all times: influencer marketing is about relationships, and relationships are about mutual respect and value. Your first responsibility is to make sure that in everything you do; you continue to add value to your priority influencers. That's the key to a long-term influencer marketing programme that delivers value to your organisation.

Measuring success

4



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Influencer marketing is now an accepted component of the core marketing function and, as a result, marketers need to understand and implement measurement strategies that both inform the ongoing campaign and provide ROI data on the effort and spend. When brand marketers first started influencer marketing efforts, their approach was often informal and subtle, for example, issuing complementary products, hospitality, private demonstrations, product trials or other perks.

Fast forward to 2014 and we have millions of users participating in online communities, through which they develop their own following via their personal interests and unique insight. For instance, an influential individual can easily have thousands of Twitter followers or receive thousands of views a month on their own blog, geared towards a specific audience. But it's not just those that have a strong online following that attract the attention of the marketing and PR department, it's the individuals that have true influence in a sector or category and whose voice has the potential to sway opinion. These individuals are often online but may not necessarily have the largest following and hence could be overlooked in comms and marketing campaigns.

Considering these developments, the use of the conventional brand ambassador is now up for debate, as marketers understand the power of true influence and look to reach and engage with those who hold the 'power'. This shift in tactic has been driven in part by the influence of social media and the rapid impact a negative or positive comment can have on reputation. As a consequence, planning cycles have been dramatically compressed so the need for monitoring and fast insight to drive communication strategy and decision making has never been greater.

However, talk to any marketer or PR practitioner in virtually any sector and they will tell you that the lack of a universally accepted measurement methodology is a factor that holds back the credibility of communication practices and its overall support for a brand. If this is true of the core communications function, then the emergence of influencer marketing will invariably fall into a similar thought bracket. Luckily, the reason influencer marketing is growing in popularity is down to the new measurement tools available to analyse influencer engagement. Free tools such as PeerIndex and Klout are cataloguing millions of social actions, scoring individuals on how influential they are online.

On the premise that new tools can support how success is measured, the wider influencer campaign needs measuring through a medium that integrates the different elements of the marketing programme, including influencer measurement. The shift toward content-oriented campaigns aimed at influencer groups across owned and earned media, together with the growth of paid elements to campaigns, means marketers need to adapt their measurement thought process. Therefore, the trade body tasked with developing and promoting best practice measurement in communications, AMEC (the International Association of Measurement & Evaluation in Communications) has been working for the past three to four years with agencies, research organisations and in-house practitioners to develop a worldwide approach to communications measurement, called the Valid Metrics Framework.

"The reason influencer marketing is growing in popularity is down to the new measurement tools available to analyse influencer engagement"

4.1 Valid Metrics Framework

Marketers and PR practitioners need to develop their thinking in terms of the importance of measurement. As a PR practitioner working directly with client marketing teams, I have realised the art of setting meaningful metrics needs to be elevated to being a key driver in developing strategy.

In the past, metrics have been talked about as a consequence of the tactics employed in a campaign – a backwards approach.

The subtle shift now is to embrace the communications measurement approach before strategy is finalised. The marketing team needs to extend its measurement and analysis to take an almost forensic approach to setting comms measurement based on a complete examination of the company's requirements, target audiences and core positioning.

The key principle behind the framework is to map desired outcomes against the widely accepted stages of the sales cycle from awareness, knowledge, consideration, support, preference and action.

The AMEC Valid Metrics Framework measures the following processes:

1. **Marketing activity**
   These metrics reflect the process of actually doing the work, and should link directly on a monthly basis to the work done.

2. **Influencer effect**
   Activity should have a direct effect on the chosen influencers for a company. These are selected so they have an effect on the end audiences. Metrics at this stage should measure the accurate and effective dissemination of the key messages for the campaign.

3. **Target audience effect**
   The focus on measurement helps demonstrate how influencer activity drives business outcomes. This can include building a stronger brand profile or increasing sales. Hence, the target audience effect is a critical component of the performance reporting and analysis approach.

Metrics relating to target audience must link directly to desired audience behaviour, that in turn will link into the business and communications goals of the company, which will have been defined and agreed at the outset of the campaign.

An example

Care and attention must be applied when developing the measurement criteria so as to be relevant and achievable for each specific campaign. The matrix on page 47 illustrates how to apply the framework to different influencer marketing activities.

"The marketing team needs to extend its measurement and analysis to take an almost forensic approach to setting comms measurement based on a complete examination of the company's requirements"

Reputation and brand awareness activities	AWARENESS	KNOWLEDGE	CONSIDERATION	SUPPORT/ PREFERENCE	ACTION
ACTIVITY	• Content creation • Traditional media engagement • Social media engagement • Influencer engagement				
INFLUENCER EFFECT	• Audience reach • Impressions/ target audience • Number of articles • Video views • Frequency • Prominence • Share of voice	• Key message alignment • Accuracy of facts	• Key message alignment • Frequency of mentions • Expressed opinion of consideration • Social network followers • Retweets/shares/ link backs	• Media or industry analyst endorsement • Industry rankings • Social network likes and followers • Expressed opinions of preference	
TARGET AUDIENCE EFFECT	• Unaided and aided awareness measured by audit or third-party survey	• Knowledge of company/product attributes and features • Brand association and differentiation	• Relevance of company to stakeholder • Visitors to website • Click-throughs to site • Time spent on site • Downloads from site • Calls • Event/meeting attendance	• Attitude change • Uplift in reputation drivers e.g. trust • Admiration • Endorsement • Belief in corporate brand • Links to site • Enhanced relationships with key stakeholders	• Sales • Marketshare • Share price • Talent retention and attraction • Customer loyalty • Legislation or regulation passed or blocked

"To effectively measure the outcome of an influencer event, you need to consider the Valid Metrics Framework and methodology, and determine your strategic goals and objectives"

4.2 Types of influencer activity

4.2.1 Relationships with media, bloggers and analysts

Often the traditional method used to measure the impact of journalist interactions is the Advertising Value Equivalent (AVE). However, AVE is not a reliable way of analysing a successful influencer outcome, as it is fundamentally based on a set of metrics that cannot measure the true business value of a 'relationship' with a journalist, blogger or an analyst.

As the Valid Metrics Framework and methodology dictates, marketers need to revert to their initial strategic objectives and consider how specific activities have led to an outcome with their target audience.

Let's say a brand awareness campaign, specifically geared towards the financial community, achieves great coverage within top city publications, including the *Financial Times*, *The Times* and *City AM*. Instead of looking at this as the total output, marketers need, from the outset, to have identified an agreed set of top campaign messages aligned to the business goal, along with tiered lists of influencers and publications through which these messages need communicating. That way, the 'influencer effect' can truly take shape. Either through key performance indicators (KPIs) formed on the basis of share of voice, the number of key messages communicated in a piece of top tier coverage, the percentage of top influencers engaged with or the percentage of influencer commentary communicated with a positive tone.

Once these statistics are gathered, marketers can use the Valid Metrics Framework to measure the target audience effect more closely. As a result, the true value of influencer relationships can be realised. Again, taking it back to the basic strategy; how has influencer marketing through positive endorsement met the original brand awareness campaign objectives? Has it increased the number of people visiting your website? Or increased downloads of your thought leadership content? Has it elevated the public's perception of your brand? All of which can be measured using web analytics and surveys of your customer base, prospects and stakeholders. Although, it is important to note these activities need to be done before and after the campaign, to ensure defined benchmarks are in place.

4.2.2 Events measurement

The simplest metric to measure when you hold an event is the number of attendees, but if you are holding an influencer event, then there are far more metrics to consider. Influencer events where you might be aiming to attract social media, press or analyst influencers have different objectives to events where the only goal is getting people through the door. Attracting a number of people to an event is necessary in its own right if hosting one, but it does not affect the business value or outcome, and so instead an extra layer of measurement must be applied.

To effectively measure the outcome of an influencer event, you need to consider the Valid Metrics Framework and methodology, and determine your strategic goals and objectives. In particular, you need to consider how the influencer event will help achieve them.

Imagine you're launching your new product to market and want to hold a pre-launch event specifically targeting influencers. You may have a handful of bloggers, Twitter users and traditional press on your core list you want at the event.

The traditional events metric is to simply count the number of influencers who have shown up at your event, but this influencer effect doesn't consider the true business benefit of why you're hosting this event. Instead you need to delve further into the Valid Metrics Framework.

"The first step to achieve measurement success is to have clearly defined objectives and goals in place"

Events are rarely isolated anymore as conversations take place on social media before, during and after the event, while other marketing channels integrate. Therefore, in an integrated marketing world, it is essential to be able to measure the activity effectively. Separating the various channels and pinpointing where a potential audience came from provides value for you.

The influencers who attend your event can have an effect on various aspects of the sales funnel. With awareness, you can measure how many of your attendees spoke about the event through social channels, their blog posts or press coverage afterwards. Encourage your social media influencers to use specific hashtags when mentioning the event. Create bespoke links or offers for the bloggers to use when discussing it, providing an incentive for them to do so.

These bespoke links or ways to measure the influencer's engagement during and after the event means you can also track the effect on target audience. If you suddenly get a spike in sales using the promotional code, you can track those sales back to the influencer event. If you simply want to grow your Twitter followers, you can measure how many new followers you gained through the influencers' tweets on the hashtag you've created.

The first step to achieve measurement success like this, where you can trace the full target audience effect back to the influencer event, is to have clearly defined objectives and goals in place. You shouldn't, therefore, define your goals midway through your event planning but instead at the very start. The business objective needs to be considered before anything.

4.2.3 Social media

Many communications practitioners have previously struggled to implement measurement strategies when social media appeared in the mid-2000s. However, since then, measurement methods have multiplied.

The complaint with social media measurement is there are simply too many tools out there and it becomes daunting. Again, businesses need to appropriately define their objectives from the beginning, isolating which benchmarks need exceeding for an influencer campaign to be successful. For instance, you can set KPIs on increasing your influential followers on Twitter. One example would be 'XX per cent increase in top tier followers on Twitter by end of Q3 2014'. In order to achieve this, you will need to initially quantify your top tier following on Twitter, which you can then measure against to ensure your goals are being met. Secondly, there are many tools that can pinpoint how influential people are with your customers and prospects, including Klout and PeerIndex, meaning you can develop your top tier list and the tactics required to target these individuals.

If we then consider the Valid Metrics Framework, the influencer effect will eventually come into play through the proactive engagement with your brand made by these top tier influencers. The whole process can be long, especially building up a list of premier followers, so patience is a virtue here. Once the influencer effect is in place, you can then start tracking the target audience effect. For example, if you need these followers to increase product sales, you can track sales through Google Analytics by seeing what source your users came from. Alternatively, if you can provide bespoke hyperlinks to your influencers, you can create campaigns in Google Analytics so you can track the exact number of sales each influencer provides for you.

The volume of social media monitoring tools out there can be daunting if you don't know what you're trying to measure. But once your objective and KPIs are defined, finding the right tool is much easier. Often, extracting the true value of a social media influencer campaign can be a long process; however the Valid Metrics Framework helps your business map out the journey from start to finish, with the different measurement tactics in place from the get-go.

"Setting your KPIs as part of your initial strategy, and familiarising yourself with certain influencer touchpoints, will help you understand the targets you wish to measure against"

4.3 Summary

Understanding influencer measurement should no longer be considered a dark art. Nor should it be thought of as a luxury to be afforded by a few. The emergence of free tools that work well alongside established tracking methods means any brand can demonstrate return on its influencer investment. Social media has allowed us to identify those with influence and to build plans to engage with these individuals in an open and monitored environment. It's taken the dark art of influencer marketing into a more enlightened place where metrics can be applied and where campaigns can be modified quickly using insights gained from interactions.

Measurement is not an easy task, but it is getting easier. That's why the core message from AMEC is considering measurement long before an influencer marketing campaign is underway. In fact, setting your KPIs as part of your initial strategy and familiarising yourself with certain influencer touchpoints, will help you understand the targets you wish to measure against and, therefore, exceed.

I am an advocate of evolving how PR practitioners and marketers approach measurement and prioritising its value to a campaign. There is still a long way to go, but adopting AMEC's Valid Metrics Framework is a good start to ensuring influencer marketing campaigns are truly recognised for their real value to a business.

Telefónica Digital 'Connected car' case study

5

About Telefónica Digital
Telefónica Digital, the global digital services and innovation arm of Telefónica, is one of the world's largest telecomms companies, with operations across Europe and Latin America, and over 320 million customers.

The challenge
Machine to machine (M2M) represents one of its fastest-growing opportunities, specifically within the automotive sector. However, awareness of Telefónica Digital in this market was low, particularly in the US – a key automotive market, in which Telefónica Digital does not have a telecommunications network and has a low brand awareness.

Telefónica Digital wanted a communications campaign that would: raise awareness and understanding of Telefónica Digital's 'Connected car' proposition; position Telefónica as a global leader in innovation, a company playing a crucial role in the connected car industry. It also wanted to push Telefónica Digital as a brand original equipment manufacturers (OEMs) want to partner with, and build support among opinion formers and influencers in the automotive industry.

The solution
In-depth research was conducted into the connected car industry – with a focus on understanding how the industry was connected, where it obtained its knowledge and how knowledge was shared.

Research revealed an interesting phenomenon; connected car decision makers was a small global group and there was no single platform for engagement and education. This was in complete contrast to other complex and fledgling markets.

Telefónica Digital and Bite (its retained content, communications and community agency) worked with specialist analyst firm Machina Research to publish thought leadership content based on face-to-face interviews with eight of the world's largest automotive OEMs. These formed the bedrock of a first-of-its-kind report that explored the action needed to make the connected car a reality.

Through in-depth interviews with senior decision makers at BMW, Cadillac, Land Rover, Volvo, Renault, Audi, Nissan and Kia, the report produced a 10-point action plan for the industry.

A dedicated section of the Telefónica Digital online hub was created to house all connected car content, including translated versions of the report, contributed blog posts, video interviews with heads of connected car, and announcements. It subsequently served as a destination for community outreach across all owned, earned and paid media.

With a suite of content assets created, a strategy was developed that mapped against the profiles of key influencers to shape their opinion through leveraging paid, earned and owned channels.

All recipients of the report were invited to join the Telefónica Digital 'Connected car leadership network', an exclusive group to enable physical and virtual networking, knowledge sharing and debate. The first physical meeting took place at the Connected Car Show in Amsterdam to discuss the findings, with senior representatives from connected car OEMs in attendance, the first time many of these participants had ever met or heard each other's viewpoints. The discussions were continued through a private LinkedIn community, where topical content was regularly uploaded, discussed and flagged by its OEM membership.

Global and local influencer strategies were coordinated with Telefónica Digital offices around the globe to maximise conversations around the report. Twitter and LinkedIn content calendars were created for organic and paid activity. The *Connected Car 2013 Report* content was also used to create a range of sales materials, from presentation decks to battle cards for Telefónica Digital's sales teams.

Results

A premium print version of Telefónica Digital's *Connected Car 2013 Report* was mailed to key sales leads in every major automotive manufacturer, with the edited and translated versions downloaded over 13,000 times to date.

Over 450 pieces of coverage, including *Forbes*, *LA Times* and the *Wall Street Journal Europe*, were achieved through targeted global media relations.

A Twitter campaign resulted in over 200,000 engagements, and over 50 senior executives from the world's largest automotive OEMs joined the LinkedIn group.

As a direct result of the 'Connected car 2013 campaign', Telefónica Digital had live sales conversations with three potential customers, all of whom mentioned the report during the selection process. In one instance, the report was directly credited for Telefónica being invited into a multi-million dollar request for proposal process it had not previously been part of due to lack of awareness.

"*The Connected Car 2013 Report* has opened the door for me. It's helped put Telefónica Digital at the heart of the industry," Pavan Matthew, global head of connected car, Telefónica.

The Connected Car 2014 Report is currently in planning stage. Members of the Connected Car Leadership Network are involved in consultation with Telefónica on the development of the next report.

Report content is now being used to support Telefónica events globally.

STAY ON TOP OF THE MARKETING EVOLUTION

Corporate membership

B2B marketers have never had to be so multi-skilled and accountable to business objectives. Marketers need up-to-the-minute research, knowledge and insight to ensure they're not left behind.



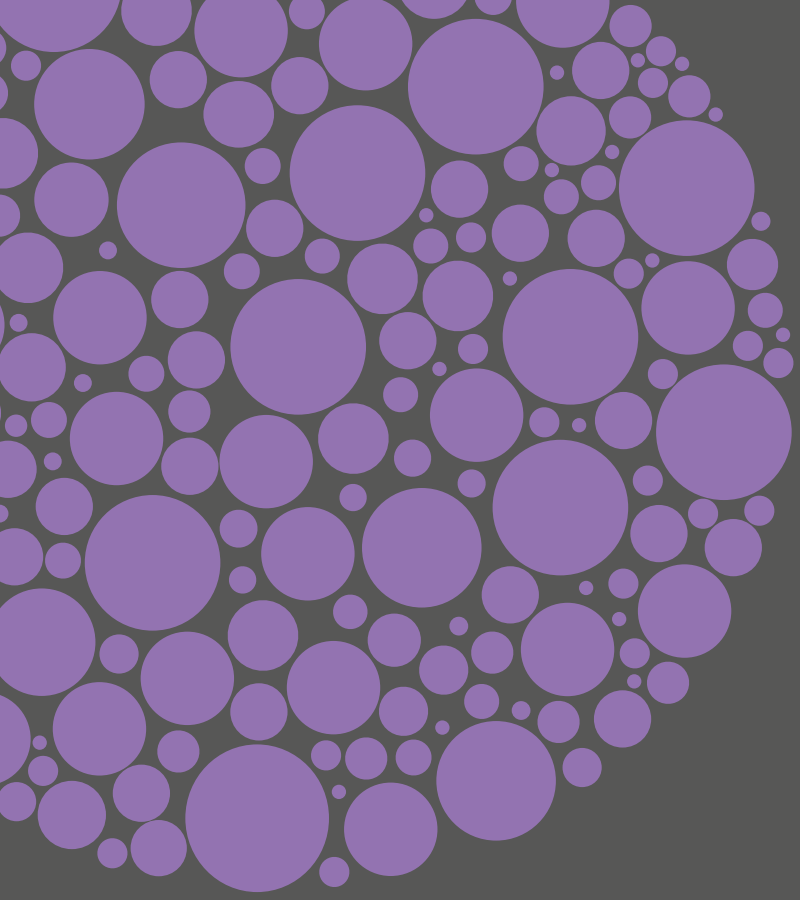
Join us today

To find out more, contact our membership team:

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