

Influencing with Influencers

The ultimate guide to influencer marketing



Source: unsplash.com

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Source: justcreative.com

Who is influencer?

What makes a social media user, an influencer

An influencer is a content creator with a substantial social media following.

Social media influencers develop a following by sharing quality content that inspires, entertains, informs, and connects them with their followers.

Influencers start social conversations, drive engagement, and set trends amongst a receptive audience, which positions them in a right way to work with brands that agree with their content.

The term “influencer” may seem like a fairly new addition to our lexicon, but first uses date back to the 1660s.

History or Evolution of influencer marketing (How it started & how it is going also)

While the “very first” commercial influencer may be lost somewhere in the annals of history, product packaging and magazine adverts of yesteryear provide a breadcrumb trail that tracks the early evolution of influencer marketing. From Aunt Jemima, to the Marlboro Man, to Santa Claus, fictitious characters have offered tried and true ways to establish a personalized connection between products and consumers.

These were historical figures or personalities with enough influence to sway the existing market to the needs and requirements of a particular brand.

The Road to Modern Influencer Marketing

Phase 1: The Pioneers

Starting as early as the 18th century, marketers have leveraged the power of influential people. Josiah Wedgwood was a British potter whose cream-colored artwork got the approval of Queen Charlotte in the 1765 — even earning him the official title of “Her Majesty’s Potter.” Knowing that the Queen was the ultimate influencer at the time, Wedgwood leveraged his new status and promoted his pottery as “Queensware,” the world’s first luxury brand. The royal endorsement catalyzed his brand, as people started flocking to his business and clamoring for his work soon after..

Phase 2 : Fictional Characters

The next era brought in a wave of fictional characters as influencers. The most famous example is Coca Cola’s popularization of Santa Claus in 1932. To drive beverage sales at the height of the Great Depression, Coca Cola used the jolly image of Santa Claus to convey cheer during an otherwise miserable time, refocusing their target audience and helping consumers remember the joyful qualities of the company.



Even decades later in the 1970’s, brands conjured up fictitious characters like Quaker Oats’ “Little Mikey” in order to sway consumers’ decisions. In the brand’s famous commercial titled “Mikey Likes It,” a hard-to-please boy named Mikey is shown enjoying Quaker Oats’ Life cereal. The brand wanted their target audience to relate to the boy and think: if Mikey likes it, I’ll like it. The ad was so successful that it won a Clio Award in 1974 and continued to run on air for 13 years.

Phase 3: Celebrity Endorsements

Then came the celebrity endorsements. Compared to fictional characters like Santa and Mikey, celebrities are real people who have real preferences, plus mass followings due to their fame. Because of this, they have the ability to convince consumers to buy the products that they endorse. That’s why brands like Nike and Pepsi started forming partnerships with celebrities to advocate for their products, in exchange for the publicity.

Phase 4: Reality TV

What truly merged real life and screen life was reality TV shows like The Bachelor and Keeping Up with The Kardashians. Whether we like to admit it or not, most of us are drawn to the larger-than-life personalities on reality television. Because these shows have the basis of portraying “reality,” the stars are perceived as more relatable and authentic than traditional celebrities to a certain extent. Paired with their overnight fame and heightened engagement from viewers, reality TV personalities led the way for what was to come with social media.



Source: theprint.in

Phase 5: Influencer Marketing

As social media platforms like Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, and YouTube arose, everyone jumped at the chance to share their everyday life online. Of course, famous people – like

celebrities, reality TV stars, and even bloggers – garnered many followers on social media due to their existing popularity. But a new phenomenon quickly set in as a handful of “regular” people started accumulating large followings as well, due to their highly engaging content and close interactions with their followers.

Because of their ability to influence the decisions of their audience, these “regular” people became known as influencers.

Compared to celebrities and even reality TV stars, influencers are more similar to us. Most of them don’t own giant mansions or fly around on private jets. Instead, they post relatable content about the good, the bad, and the ugly in their lives. Their consistent

authenticity has earned them the high level of trust and authority given to them by their followers.

KEEPING UP WITH THE KARDASHIANS



Source: filmow.com

Types of Influencers



Mega-influencers with more than a million followers

With more than a million followers, mega-influencers are highly visible on social media due to their celebrity status. They're very active on social platforms where their audience spends time, and they generate a ton of engagement.

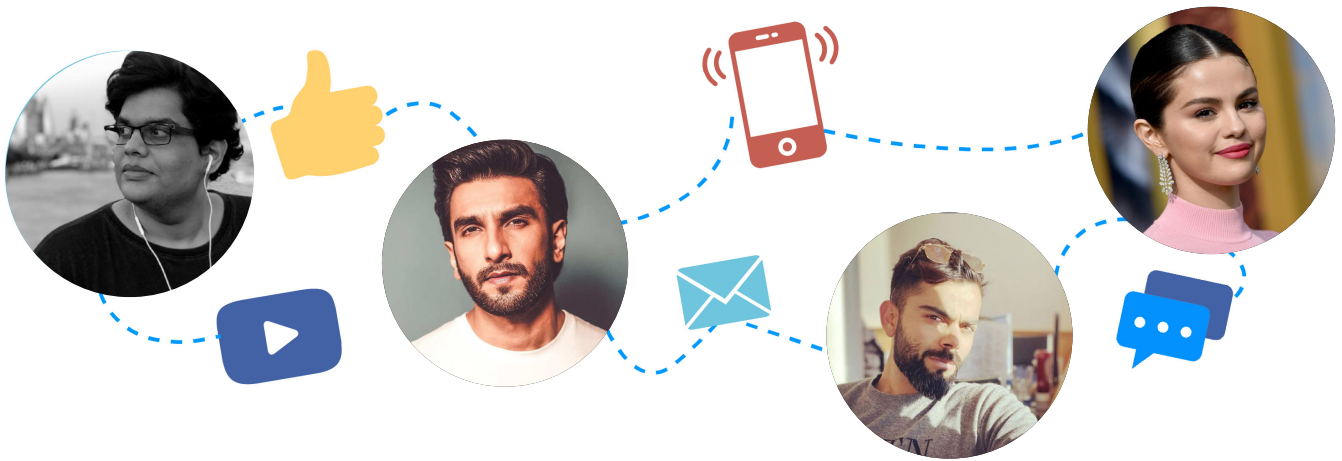
Macro-influencers with 500K to 1 million followers

With a slightly smaller audience size between 500,000 and 1 million followers, macro-influencers may be celebrities, TV personalities, athletes, or thought leaders. Since they can leverage their reputation to gain followers on social media, brands can expect a high price tag—though not as hefty as mega-influencers. Brands still get a large reach with this type of influencer but may not get the engagement rate they want. This is due to the follower to engagement ratio mentioned earlier.



Mid-tier influencers with 50K to 500K followers

Mid-tier influencers may not be celebrity status, yet they remain a powerful group of content creators trusted by their followers. With audiences between 50K and 500K, this type of influencer offers brands a wide reach and slightly more engagement than macro- or mega-influencers. Content is polished but not out-of-touch, lending authenticity and familiarity to each post.



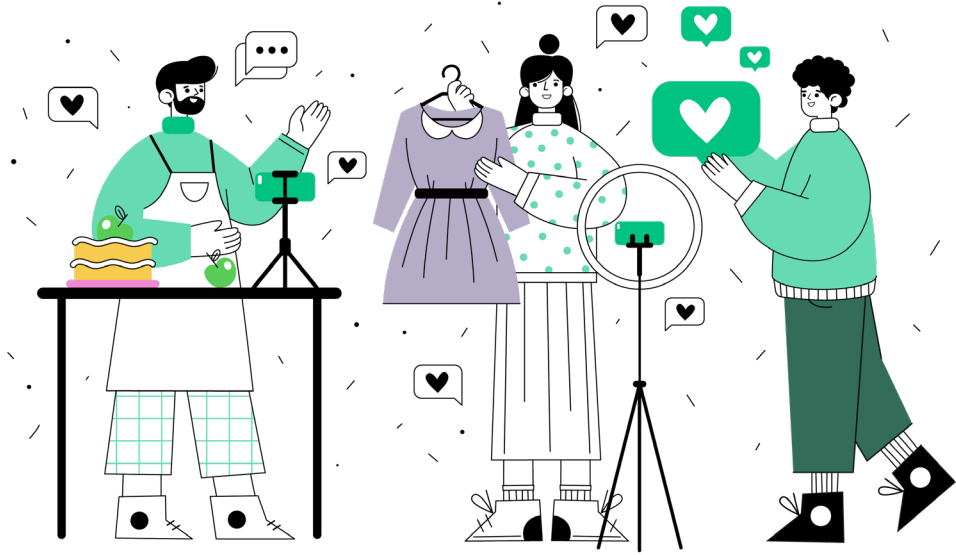
Micro-influencers with 10K to 50K followers

While micro-influencers have a much smaller following in comparison with mega-influencers, brands generally consider this group to be much more effective in terms of engagement and trust. That's because micro-influencers have an intimate connection with their followers and tend to be more niche-focused.

Nano-influencers with 1K to 10K followers

With the smallest follower count, nano-influencers offer brands a modest reach and probably a narrower one, too. However, what brands lose in reach they gain in engagement rates. Nano-influencers have the highest engagement rate of any influencer type, at 8.8 percent.

Choosing the Right Influencer for a brand ?



Researching and finding the right influencers may seem like a scary process. There are many factors you'll need to keep in mind during your search. You'll also have to look out for signs that indicate whether an influencer is fake or not!

To give you a hand, here are 9 criteria you should keep in mind when searching for influencers. We've also included several tips you can use to spot influencers who may have fake followers!

Set your campaign goals

Depending on what you're trying to accomplish, you can choose how you want to collaborate with influencers. They'll be able to contribute in different ways. For instance, if your goal is to create content, you'll want to collaborate with influencers who have photography skills, rather than influencers who may have reach, but average content.

9 criteria to keep in mind to choose the right influencers:

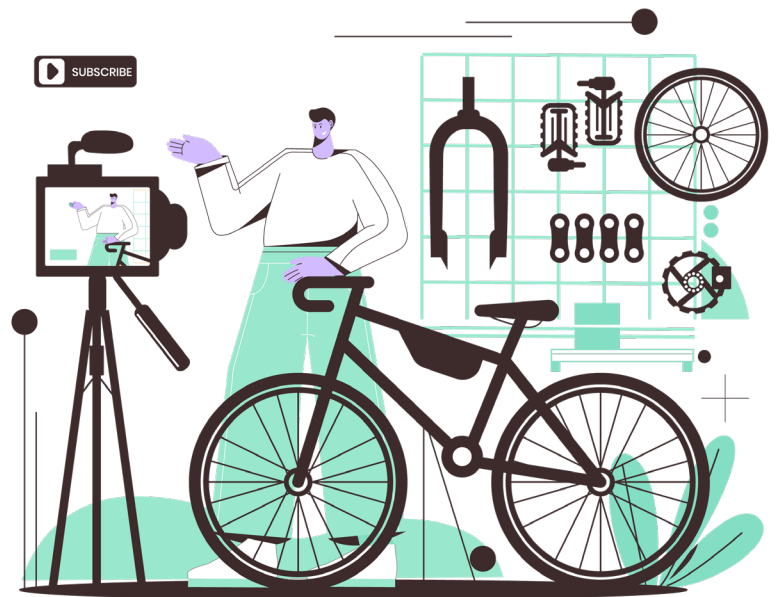
- **Audience** : Audience - To reach potential consumers, it's crucial that you work with influencers who have a relevant audience for your brand.
- **Engagement rate** : Engagement rates indicate how well an audience resonates with and responds to the influencers' content. Good engagement shows that the audience actually cares about what the influencers publish. To work out the engagement rate of a post, add the total number of likes and comments the influencers get on a post. You should divide the total with the influencers' number of followers, then multiply the result by 100.
- **Relevance** : It's important that you collaborate with influencers who are a good fit for your brand. When you're looking through the influencers' Instagram profiles, you should be able to imagine your products or services being advertised there.

- **Authenticity** : Authentic influencers are more likely to have a dedicated following. They're able to build up audience loyalty and trust by becoming experts in their niche, such as food & drink or fashion. They show their expertise by sharing genuine, personal stories, tips, and advice along with their posts.
- **Values** : Before partnering up with influencers, you should check to see if you and the influencers have matching values. After all, it would be out-of-place for influencers to endorse meat products as a vegan.
- **Content quality** : When you work with influencers, you're giving them creative freedom to create sponsored content for your brand. Because their content will be representing you, it's important to check whether their content quality is a fit for your brand image.
- **Frequency** : When you explore influencers' Instagram profiles, be sure to look at how often the influencers publish content. In order for influencers to build a loyal audience, they need to engage their followers by posting high-quality content on their Instagram regularly. Active Instagram profiles should ideally publish content once every 1-3 days.



- **Reliability** : To ensure your collaborations run smoothly and effectively, the influencers you choose to work with must be reliable. If an influencer is, for instance, a slow communicator, it can prevent you from completing collaborations in a timely manner.
- **Audience quality** : The audience of the influencers are as an extension your audience as well in terms of marketing value. So, picking out the right influencer also means picking out the right audience from the influencers with respect to the ones that are interacting with them regularly.
- **Where can you find influencers?** : Instagram, databases, influencer marketing platforms, google searches.

Partnering with Influencers?



The power of social media has always been self-evident. Platforms like Instagram, Facebook, TikTok and Twitter have seen increasing numbers of users over the years, and usage has increased even more since the beginning of the pandemic.

Most influencer marketing campaigns are done through paid placements or partnerships. For example, many musicians have turned to TikTok as a marketing space. The paid content created by influencers on the platform often features an artist's song playing during the video.



Source: clutch.co

So how does a brand find an influencer?

A common way for a brand to reach an influencer is through an agency. Often, agencies will manage a large number of influencers at once, giving a brand or promotion customer the option to work with any of the people they represent. Influencers are placed on large lists and contacted when a campaign fits their style or when a brand requests them.

Without being on these lists, or working with these agencies, it can be hard for an influencer to close deals. While some influencers are making money promoting brands, others are sitting with millions of followers but next to no cash in their bank account.

Leveraging influencer marketing to achieve

The Business Goals



Giveaways and Contests

In such contests and giveaways, people need to follow a certain set of rules like following a specific page, tagging a few more people and like the post or comment. The more people get engaged with the post the more it increases brand awareness and attracts the attention of the target audience.

The reason behind the increase in popularity of such giveaways is that people love free stuff and when they get it by winning a contest, it adds a feeling of pride in them.

Acquire Reviews from Trusted Experts Aka Influencers

Another way to leverage influencers for your marketing strategy is by asking them for getting real reviews. These influencers are the trusted source of information for their audience and if you manage to win their trust, you allow their audience to trust you too.

Instagram Stories

Nearly 500 million users now use Instagram Stories every day. Moreover, 1 in 4 millennials and gen Z-ers look for Instagram stories.



Source: freepik.com

And 36% of businesses use Instagram Stories for product promotion.

While Instagram is the most preferred medium for influencer marketing followed by YouTube and Facebook, Instagram Stories are the second most used format for Instagram influencer marketing after Instagram posts, followed by YouTube videos and Instagram videos.

Add-On Sales

It would, especially if you're an eCommerce business. To do this, add a section of related products on the landing page that you're using in the post that has been promoted by the influencer.

Testimonial Videos

One of the best ways to leverage social media and influencer marketing is to ask influencers to create testimonial videos of your product and share it on social media.

Influencers are influencers for a reason and that reason allows their audience to trust their reviews and recommendations. When influencers create a video with your product and share it with their audience, the audience starts to believe more in your brand because they get to see its real application and by a trusted source.

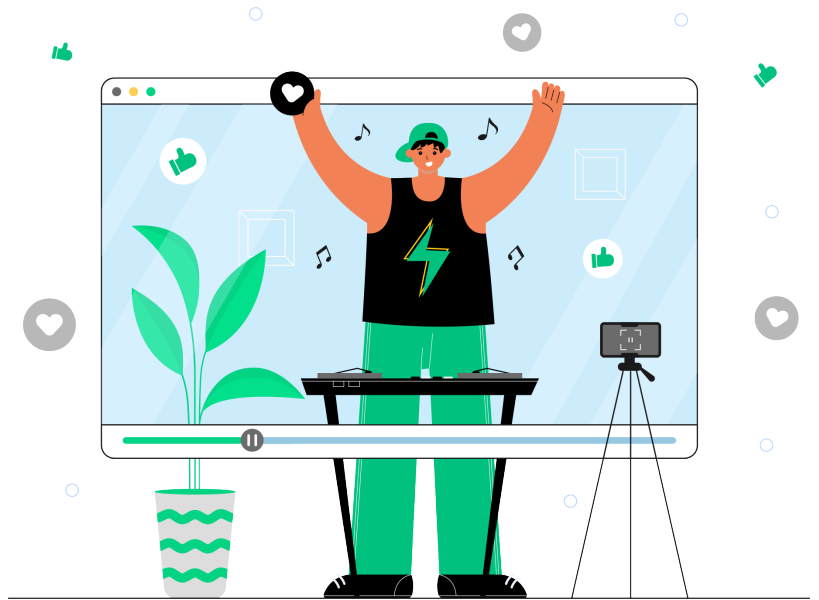
Influencers To Operate Your Account

Ask an influencer related to your niche to take over your social media handles for a few days and operate it however they like.

Influencers have their own set of followers which they can drive to your account. In this way, you'll get a surge in your follower base which can then help in boosting leads and conversions. To use this method, you can either give access to your account to an influencer or ask them to create posts for you which you can share.



What **Ethical** and **Legal** guidelines we should consider?



Ethical Guidelines

- Ethical marketing deals with the fine lines of boundaries between being creative and creating misleading content.
- A lot of emphasis is given to being transparent as a marketer and creating content that is not hurting the sentiments of any community.
- A lot of the digital marketing platform guidelines are channeled towards eliminating spammy content, spammy link building and dishonest marketing .
- Disclosures are historically very complex subtext that easily escapes the eye of the average discerning consumer - sometimes these disclosures that associates a content creator with a brand is just one word, 'sponsored' and the subtext that the content is not just the voice of the influencer but rather the voice of a brand through the influencer platform too. Making these lucid and easy to understand for the consumer is also an exercise in ethics.

5 steps to avoid hassles

- Create your own media/influencer kit that will function as an easy onboarding for the content creator.
- A network of sincere and authentic content creators can be nurtured overtime to reduce the hassle of verifying all content that the influencer is putting out on a regular basis.
- Quarterly auditing of outgoing comms. with respect to content creators and third-party communication networks.
- All influencer content should be branded with the word 'sponsored'.
- Make sure you are available for questions, reviews and feedback - open channels of communications on a regular basis.

Legal Guidelines

- All influencer accounts must have a disclosure that identifies them as advertisements.
- All disclosures must be made in a prominent space identifiable by the average consumer.
- All disclosures must be made in language and composition that will be understood by all consumers.
- In case of virtual influencers (Fictitious characters) the disclosure that consumers are not interacting with a real human being must be made.
- All advertising material should conform to the ASCI standards and guidelines, the influencer is responsible for making the disclosures required under the guidelines.
- The influencers are advised to review and satisfy themselves of the validity and substantiation of the claims made in any particular advertisement.

In the case of disputes between advertisers and influencers on the content with reference to the advertised product/service.

- A declaration from the advertiser that there is no material connection between the advertiser and the influencer content has to be produced attested by the stakeholder from the advertiser's organisation.
- In the case of difficulty in tracing the brand connection to a particular sponsored influencer content, or if there are multiple brands being featured - then proof of purchase has to be produced to refute the material connection.



Source: freepik.com

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