

The Influencer Marketing Manifesto:

Why The Future of Influencer Marketing Starts With People And Relationships Not Popularity.



By Brian Solis

Introduction

We're all pretty familiar with celebrity endorsements. Famous people (and things) can have a positive and even influential impact on the consumer perception and impression of a brand or product. In fact, 15% of all advertisements feature celebrities.¹ 45% of US adults believe that celebrities can make either a large (11%) or some (33%) positive difference to whatever it is they're promoting. You currently see it with Nespresso and George Clooney, Samsung and Lil Wayne, Lincoln and Matthew McConaughey and the list goes on.

While the cool factor is there for (some) consumers and brand marketers, that doesn't mean that celebrity endorsements are driving brand relevance, resonance, or revenue. In fact, in many cases, they're exactly the thing that consumers don't want to see. Nielsen found that people buy not because a celebrity tells them to, but because their family and friends recommend it. In its research, Nielsen learned that 92% of people trust recommendations from people they know and 70% of people trust peer experiences posted online.

So how can marketers tap into this consumer to consumer network?

1. <http://wallblog.co.uk/2015/05/12/infographic-can-celebrity-endorsements-influence-sales/>

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The Rise of Digital Influence

Enter the digerati, the Internet's version of celebrity aka weblebrity aka creator aka influencer. These individuals might not be in your favorite movie or TV show, but they're creating content that your consumers are viewing and sharing in droves. Their version of the small and silver screens are the most prominent networks on social and mobile such as YouTube, Instagram, Vine, Twitter, Snapchat, blogs, et al.

Some argue that the Internet famous aren't real celebrities. Millions of rabid audiences and fans argue, however, that it's a matter of perspective.

For example, U.S. teenagers are more enamored with YouTube stars than they are the biggest celebrities in film, TV and music according to a Variety survey.² In fact, the five most influential personalities among Americans ages 13 to 18 are all YouTubers, surpassing the likes of Jennifer Lawrence and Seth Rogen. While a small portion of the overall influencer universe, this group is the most highly visible when people think of influencers.

And then there is the overwhelming majority of influencers, everyday consumers who began blogging or sharing their thoughts and ideas on social media, and over time built a loyal and engaged following. This group of influencers might not be household names but they are the fuel of the new influence economy. They focus on their passion areas, from fashion to cooking to home improvement to life hacks, their numbers continue to grow as consumers seek out more and more specific information.

To digital marketers, this new army of online experts, extroverts, and personalities reach fragmented and elusive audiences where other traditional marketing programs can't. More so, they're arguably more relatable and seemingly approachable because they share their real life on social media and thus introduce a more authentic, collaborative form of engagement.

The difference is – and this is important – influencers can carry the same weight as peers or “people like me,” which is among the highest forms of influence cited among consumers in study after study.

To digital marketers, this is where influencers have the potential to live up to their moniker. To consumers, they are bona fide influencers. They reinforce social proof in all they do, even when not paid to do so. What they wear, ride, listen to, where they go, intrigues and inspires communities. This sparks trends and drives transactions—not unlike traditional celebrities in the right circumstances.

Digital influence, and influence in general, can convey social proof, also known as informational social influence: a psychological phenomenon where people assume the actions of others in an attempt to reflect correct behavior for a given situation.

2. <http://variety.com/2014/digital/news/survey-youtube-stars-more-popular-than-mainstream-celebs-among-u-s-teens-1201275245/>



Hoverboards Start a Fire Among Consumers....Literally

In late summer 2015, one of the hottest trends was those now pesky (and extremely flammable) hoverboards aka gliders. But how did that whole phenomenon start? It's one of the most interesting examples of the power of digital influence. It teaches us that traditional celebrity and even online personalities/creators can truly influence consumers if a more peer-to-peer approach, on a peer-to-peer platform à la social media, can communicate a compelling sense of want, FOMO, aspiration, et al.

It demonstrates the potential of a different form of marketing.

In early 2015, PhunkeeDuck, an early distributor of these devices, gave a board to Kendall Jenner. That's really all it took to set things ablaze. Her short video became a viral sensation with over 1.1 million likes and who knows how many views across all of her platforms.³

As a result, celebrities began lining up for their ride and each took to their favorite social media platforms to share the experience. The likes of Justin Bieber, Chris Brown, Nick Jonas, Soulja Boy, Nicki Minaj, Wiz Khalifa, et al., amplified the reach, adding millions more all in a short span of time.⁴ At the same time, Viners and YouTubers also began shooting their shows while on these two wheel stages.⁵ Rumor has it that one or two of the earlier players also had a hand in placing their products with the most connected creators to show off their wares.

In the end, it was the must have product of 2015. Every post shared from celebrities, creators and everyday consumers on social media triggered social proof at every level to further drive the proliferation of this much loved (and equally or more so hated) phenomenon.

3. <https://www.instagram.com/p/2HXaFiDo3X/>

4. <http://www.wired.com/2015/06/the-weird-story-of-the-viral-chinese-scooter-phunkeeduck-io-hawk/>

5. <http://superfame.com/post/hoverboard-youtuber-viner/>

Influencer Marketing Becomes a Thing

Social. Media.

The above referenced example is one of a practically infinite set that shows how the world of endorsements and influence is shifting. Social media represents a collective of consumer-to-consumer networks that democratize relationships, connections, information and also the ability to influence and be influenced. It's an incredible phenomenon, really. Social is a great equalizer and it shifts the balance of power on almost every front away from any one entity to anyone with the ability to share.

For better or for worse, social also introduces new opportunities for brands to connect with people and, in turn, have people connect with others. Even though brands have been all over social media since the beginning, still, some get it and some don't.

Social media is where consumers are having conversations today, and one of the most impactful byproducts to emerge is that of influencer marketing. Now, influencer marketing is part of the everyday marketing mix. At a high level, it is a form of branded engagement where marketers connect with those who boast prominent social footprints. The goal is to plug into new communities and connect the brand/product to new audiences through the voice and trusted relationships of said influencer.

Take Maybelline for example – the company's own YouTube channel drives around 20,000 – 30,000

views per video. Not bad. But the videos created by influencers generate an average of 1.4 million views per video – a clear indication that influencers generate more interest in Maybelline products than its own branded channel. Influencers expose the Maybelline brand to new consumers, far better than the brand could do on its own.

If you think about it...that's really a big ask of anyone. This means that brands have to look at this new generation of would be influencers much differently than they would traditional celebrities and paid endorsements. Marketers must understand the dynamics of relationships, community intentions, aspirations and, more so, the constructs of social proof and actual influence. The key to making engagement work in these new frontiers is to appreciate, empathetically, the currency between a creator and their fans.

It's not "reach" or popularity. It's social capital, the networks of relationships between creator and community and how they function correctly. Social capital is about the value of social networks, bonding similar people – and bridging between diverse people – with norms of reciprocity.⁶

Essentially, everyone, in their own way and to certain extent, now possesses the power to influence.

6. Dekker, Paul, and Eric M. Uslaner. 2001. 'Introduction.' Pp. 1 – 8 in Social Capital and Participation in Everyday Life, edited by Eric M. Uslaner. London: Routledge

Influencer Marketing Takes Shape This Way, That Way, Any Way

Even though the words “influence” and “influencer” have been seized by marketers, their literal definitions cannot be misconstrued. Yet, many influencer marketers get either star struck or simply blinded by numbers when setting out to identify influencers. But influence is not popularity. Popularity can be a byproduct of influence or authority.

What is influence, then, if it is not measured by the size of one’s community or reach?

Influence is the ability to cause effect or change behavior.

Influence is not the act of trying to influence. Nor is an influencer someone who simply has a lot of followers.

It should be very clear. Someone who influences does so because they have the capacity to have effect on something, regardless of followers or popularity.

This common misinterpretation between popularity and influence has led influencer marketing to confuse the principles of traditional celebrity endorsements with the promise of social capital in digital networks. And social celebrities and those who represent them are capitalizing on these misperceptions. Entire ecosystems have sprung up, helping them expand their reach, build audiences, procure partnerships and strategic alliances – and also broker endorsement deals not unlike their celebrity counterparts.

When you base everything on numbers, i.e. number of followers to qualify influencers, ROI becomes impossible to justify.

Influence should be measured by assessing the state of something in any given place at any time and then assessing the effect of your work against that benchmark. It’s cause and effect. So you have to consider what is it you want to do, cause, change, etc. Then identify the right people you want to reach, who they follow, and what’s going to be of value to them. Once you consider creators, you also have to evaluate the relationship they have with their community, their interests, and what it is about this engagement that will help them improve their stature, community engagement, and relationships.

When marketers don’t consider influence as cause and effect, the marketing campaigns they craft can never explore new possibilities or reach their potential. They struggle to break free from the vanity metrics that hold them back. Influencer marketing just becomes a new tool used in old ways.

For example, in an effort to measure influence beyond reach metrics, TapInfluence conducted a blind study with Pinterest users. They found that on average 43% of respondents actually purchased an item they found on Pinterest either in-store or online.

You Can't Buy Me Influence

In May 2016, an article appeared in Digiday that seemed to capture the essence of what influencer marketing often gets wrong.⁷ As part of its anonymous confession series aimed at outing the worst practices amongst marketers, Digiday published “Confessions of a social media exec on influencer marketing.” This exposé of sorts highlights the need for this discussion. We need more conversations about what influencer marketing is and is not so that we can come together and build what it should be.

The article starts with what its author claims to be the root of the influencer marketing problem: “We threw too much money at them.”

This article of course sparked a web-wide debate in the marketing community. Much of the discourse revealed just how much marketers still need to learn. Brand expert, and author of Social Media ROI, Olivier Blanchard responded publicly to the anonymous social media exec, challenging all the claims made in the article as to why influencer marketing didn't work...⁸

1) You just never gave the meaning of the term “influencer” enough thought, and 2) you “threw money” at random strangers instead of investing it in well thought-out programs and valuable relationships.

My experience as an “influencer” has been interesting these last few years. I've identified a few key influencer campaign manager archetypes:

The PR pro turned Digital Influencer Outreach Program Manager: “We can't pay you, but we'll fly you to our event and pay for your hotel room and give you access to our event so you can live-tweet it and write a minimum of three blog posts while there. Does that sound good?”

The legit digital influencer outreach program manager: “We'll fly you and cover your hotel. Can you tell us what your fee is for live Twitter coverage and 3 blog posts? We don't want to pay for your opinion but we will pay for your time.”

The digital agency slapping an influencer program onto a PR pitch: “Hey, I'm looking for a chatbot influencer to cover an event for one of our clients. Would you describe yourself as a chatbot influencer?”

The digital agency slapping an influencer program onto an in-house digital pitch: “How many Twitter followers do you have?”

Personally, as an influencer myself, I couldn't agree more with Olivier's sentiment. Don't measure me by my numbers; measure my work by its impact and see where we can do things together that make both of our communities stronger, more engaging, and productive. I might not be Kendall Jenner or PewDiePie, but I have earned the attention of likeminded peers and we have formed a powerful community even if it isn't the largest online. Together though, we make an impact.

Again, influence is grounded in social capital and the relationships that flourish as a result of thoughtful cultivation. Unfortunately, the social media executive in the story didn't take this into account. When a new channel emerges, marketers want to capitalize on it, and all too often jump in before they know what they're doing. Unfortunately, this article illustrates that behavior perfectly. Influencer marketing should be part of an integrated strategy with defined expectations, cost considerations, and success metrics. It is important to take the time to determine who you want to work with and understand how they engage with their audience.

7. <http://digiday.com/agencies/confessions-social-media-exec-no-idea-pay-influencers/>

8. <https://www.facebook.com/olivier.a.blanchard/posts/10154272237528530>

The Separation of Influence: A View of Influence from Influencers and Influence Marketers

“Influencer” is not only one of the biggest buzzwords and efforts in digital marketing, it is also one marketing’s biggest opportunities.

Facebook, Instagram, Vine, Twitter, Snapchat, Blogs, YouNow, YouTube, Periscope: each of these social platforms only accelerates and expands the potential for digital influence. At the same time, these platforms scatter the attention and activity of consumers across networks and apps, making them increasingly elusive, and immune, to traditional marketing approaches. As a result, marketers face increased pressure to reach consumers. Influencers have built bridges between brand and audience and marketers are starting to increase efforts to reach new territories.

In order to learn new expertise and discover how to succeed in new paradigms, we have to study where we are, what we don’t know, and also, most importantly, we have to understand the world of influencer engagement through the perspective of influencers themselves. To do that, I partnered with TapInfluence, the leading influencer marketing automation software solution for brands and agencies.

Together, we studied the state of influencer marketing by surveying marketers and then separately polling influencers to get a balanced view. The insights were compelling. When compared, they were also revealing.

Where does influencer marketing sit in the marketing organization?

Among the influencer marketers we surveyed, we aimed to see exactly where the responsibility for the program is placed. Most notably, social marketing accounts for the overwhelming majority of ownership with 28.4%. Marketing communications was the second most likely home with 15.7%. Interestingly, 13.7% of respondents reside in a dedicated function for influencer marketing. However, influencer marketing appears to be spread throughout the organization to complement key marketing disciplines and initiatives. What’s unclear however is to what extent, if any, these efforts are coordinated.

“Most notably, **social marketing** accounts for the overwhelming majority of ownership with **28.4%**.”

Department	Response Percent
PR	4.90%
Spans numerous departments	4.90%
Other	6.90%
Content Marketing	12.70%
Digital Marketing	12.70%
Influencer Marketing	13.70%
Marketing Communications	15.70%
Social Marketing	28.40%

Why Influencer Marketing?

Marketers

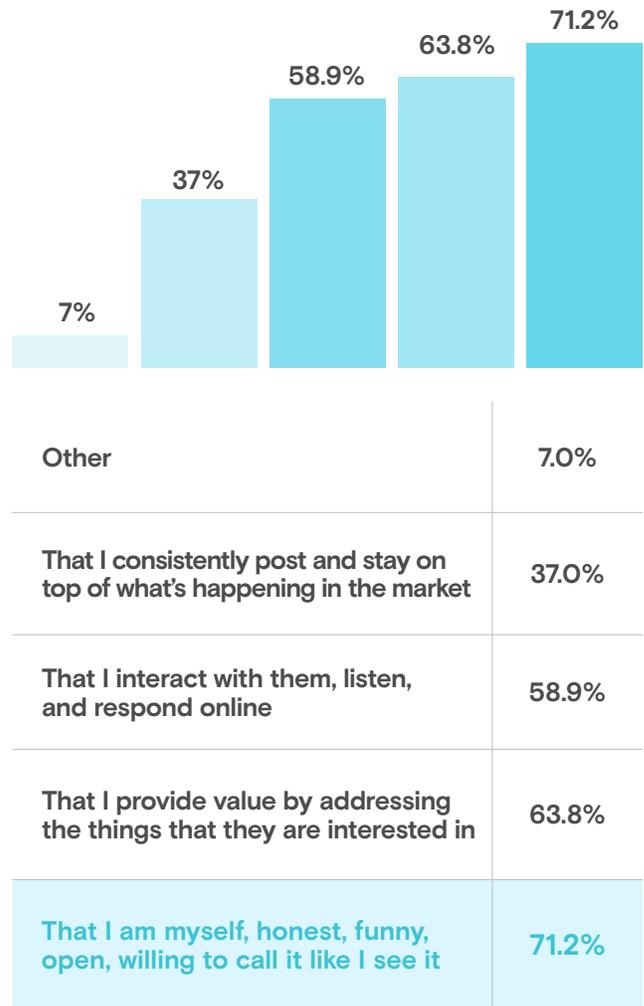
Why do you feel influencer marketing is important?
(Rank in order of importance, 1 = most important)

More authentic storytelling for our brand	2.22
Better reach to consumers	3.08
Offers a better return on investment than my other marketing channels	3.71
Makes our brand feel more plugged into digital communities	3.82
A good alternative to traditional advertising efforts	4.04
Helps us reach Millennials and Centennials	4.14

The data shows good alignment between what's important to marketers and influencers – **authenticity**.

Influencers

What is it that your audience loves about your work?
What keeps them engaged?



The data shows good alignment between what's important to marketers and influencers – **authenticity**. Authenticity is at the heart of engagement in the social web. Authentic engagement over time is how we earn trust online (and in the real world). Marketers view authentic storytelling as the most important aspect of influencer marketing. Influencers believe that it's an honest and authentic voice that keeps their audience engaged (71%). But more so, authenticity has to be the foundation for consistently delivering value to and engaging with communities.

The Types of Engagement

Marketers

What are the most effective forms of influencer marketing?

Affiliate links	10.8%
Other	14.7%
Sponsored content	50%
Event coverage	52.9%
Brand mentions	53.9%
Product reviews	66.7%
Ongoing ambassadorships	70.6%

“Brands cite **ambassadorships** as the most effective use of influencers.”

Influencers

In what ways do brands typically want to reach your audience?

Other	6.3%
Affiliate links	41.9%
Ambassadorships	52.5%
Product reviews	70.9%
Sponsored content	81.7%

As you can see, there is some disconnect here between what marketers perceive as the most effective form of engagement and how they actually engage influencers. Only 50% of brands see sponsored content as an especially effective means of influencer marketing, yet it is the most commonly reported type of engagement among influencers (82%).

While product reviews are an area where there is alignment, brands cite ambassadorships as the most effective use of influencers (71%), yet they are among the lesser-used engagements (53%).

Marketers

What types of influencers do you find to be most successful? (Rank in order of importance, 1 = most important)

	Rating Average
A popular person with a significant and desirable audience	2.82
Those who are subject matter experts regardless of follower count	3.25
Those who act as ongoing ambassadors	3.35
Those who have a large following	4.43
Those who are highly active online	4.83
Anyone who actively talks about our market or brand	5.15
Those who are focused on a single platform	6.64
A real world celebrity	6.70
Someone who always talks about competitors	7.83

Influence isn't necessarily tied to popularity. According to influencer marketers, a large following is not necessarily a predictor of success in influencer marketing. It's also important to consider how well your brand, market, or product will resonate with a given influencer's audience. Marketers reported that they were more successful when working with influencers who are prolific on a variety of channels, as opposed to those who limit themselves to predominantly one platform or medium.

“It’s also important to consider how well your brand, market, or product will resonate with a given influencer’s audience.”

Challenges of Influencer Marketing

Marketers

What are some of your challenges in working with influencers?

Other	13.7%
Communication during assignment	20.6%
Overall management of 3rd party content creators	29.4%
Negotiating terms	30.4%
Finding ways that help them engage their communities while satisfying executive expectations	59.8%
Finding relevant influencers	67.6%

The biggest barriers to working with influencers revolve around choosing who and how to engage. 68% of respondents indicated that they struggle to source influencers who are relevant to their organization or specific objectives. Additionally, 60% of marketers find it difficult to balance the needs of the influencer and his or her community against leadership's expectations for ROI and performance. It's also interesting that almost a third (29.4%) of marketers cite everyday management of influencers and content as a challenge. This suggests that marketers have to consider program management and metrics ahead of any program and get buy-in from executives and influencers alike.

“The biggest barriers to working with influencers revolve around **choosing who and how to engage.**”

What challenges does influencer marketing face within the organization?

Other	13.7%
Lack of control over messaging	41.2%
Unaware of what it is	42.2%
No budget assigned	53.9%
Concern since it is new/unproven channel	55.9%

Influencer marketing faces challenges that are not unlike other emerging forms of digital, social and mobile marketing. There's a lot of work that needs to be done in helping executives understand how influencer marketing actually influences markets, conversations and decisions. Considering that all of the challenges represent that it's new; executives don't know what it is, how to value or believe in it and thus budgets are not established accordingly. However, for those that are already familiar with it, 41.2% of marketers cite lack of control over messaging as a challenge.

“41.2% of marketers cite **lack of control over messaging** as a challenge.”



“Clearly, **controlling the message** is counterproductive.”

Influencers

What are some of the biggest mistakes brands/agencies make in working with you?

Other	16.7%
Requiring drafts for every post	24.5%
Requiring too many social shares or sharing to every social channel	28%
Not providing adequate time	32%
Overly restrictive content guidelines	39.4%
Not offering adequate compensation	72.2%

Influencer marketing is new and faces many challenges. On the marketing front, it's unproven, which requires pilot programs to demonstrate capabilities and shape future budgets and expectations. At the same time however, without pushing influencer marketing strategies into new frontiers where influence (cause and effect) becomes paramount, the ROI potential can't be achieved.

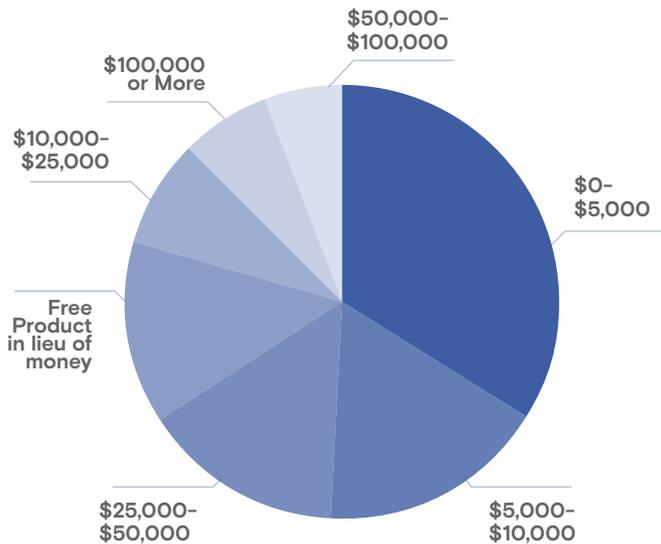
It's also a bit ironic that influencers overwhelmingly cite the number one mistake brands make is not “paying them enough” whereas in the earlier “confessions” story, we heard that they paid “too much” to influencers. This highlights the difference in working with a social celebrity versus an everyday influencer. This is about impact. And impact isn't just about potential impressions. It's about causing effect or shaping behavioral trends.

But as you can see, money is just the beginning of this story. Brands want to control messaging and content, and influencers feel that marketers are too controlling. This is a key point to highlight, influencers are followed because of their authenticity, and brands stated this is their number one priority. Clearly, controlling the message is counter productive.

The Value of Influencer Marketing

Marketers

How much budget do you assign to your influencers per campaign?

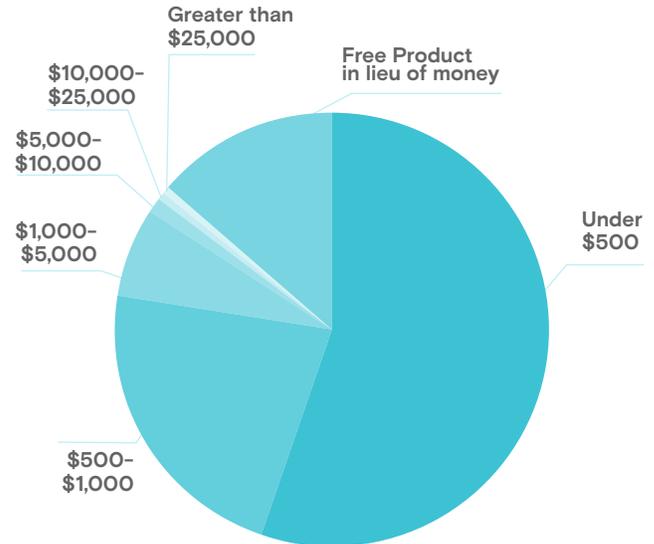


\$50,000 - \$100,000	5.7%
\$100,000 or more	6.8%
\$10,000 - \$25,000	8%
Free product in lieu of money	13.6%
\$25,000 - \$50,000	14.8%
\$5,000 - \$10,000	17%
\$0 - \$5,000	34.1%

Influencer budgets are still small but trending up and to the right. While excited to help brands connect with their followers, influencers are motivated foremost by compensation (69%), yet cite a lack of adequate compensation as the biggest issue in their engagements with brands (72%). This makes sense, given that a lack of budget is one of the biggest challenges for marketers (54%). Obtaining that budget is made harder because even though everyone is talking about influencer marketing, when it comes to allocating budget, it is still seen as largely unproven (56%).

Influencers

What is the value of a typical engagement with a brand?



Greater than \$25,000	0.5%
\$10,000 - \$25,000	0.7%
\$5,000 - \$10,000	1%
\$1,000 - \$5,000	6.6%
Free product in lieu of money	13.5%
\$500 - \$1,000	22.3%
Under \$500	55.3%

Anyone who's ever run a celebrity endorsement program will tell you that deals start in the six figures. But as you can see here, the value of an influencer is modest. This is an opportunity to build relationships early as many influencers are willing to work harder when they have an established ongoing relationship with a brand. Again though, more work must be done on all sides to prove the true value of influence marketing.

Influencer Management

Marketers

How do you manage influencers?

We use an influencer directory or management team to source and then handle internally	8%
Other	8%
We use an influencer marketing solution to handle all the details	14.8%
We use an agency to handle it for us	20.5%
We work directly with our influencers or their management	73.9%

Marketers succeed in interacting directly with influencers – their preferred means of managing an engagement (73%). However, influencers are also very receptive to working through PR agencies (70%) and influencer marketing platforms (70%). With automated solutions only a year old, brands haven't fully caught on to the myriad ways of successfully sourcing and managing influencers. By taking the influencer perspective, this will improve efficiencies and expand management scenarios.

Influencers

What are some of the most effective ways in which brands work with you?

Other	4.70%
Through an ad agency	16.80%
Through an agent	17.00%
Through an influencer marketing platform	69.60%
Through a PR agency or influencer marketing agency	69.70%
Brand direct	73.10%

“Influencers are also very receptive to working through **PR agencies and influencer marketing platforms.**”

Measuring Influencer Marketing

Marketers

How do you measure success/ROI of your influencer efforts? What data is important to measure? (Rank in order of importance, 1 = most important)

Engagement (comments on a blog post, likes, shares, etc on social)	2.89
Brand awareness	3.87
Sales lift	4.11
Traffic	4.67
Reach	4.74
Share of voice	5.07
Sentiment	5.28
Impression	5.37

As a third party, influencers lack access to the analytics at a campaign's completion. Because of this, they see an increase in traffic as the best measure of success in their work with brands, while brands are rightly looking at engagement on social as well as other 'brand awareness' aka vanity metrics. Given that influencer marketing most often resides within the social marketing team (28%) it makes sense. But the ROI of influencer marketing can be vastly improved by first defining the "R" (return) as related to cause and effect against a current measured state.

Influencers

How do you measure your influence/success in your work with brands? (Rank in order of relevance, 1 = most relevant)

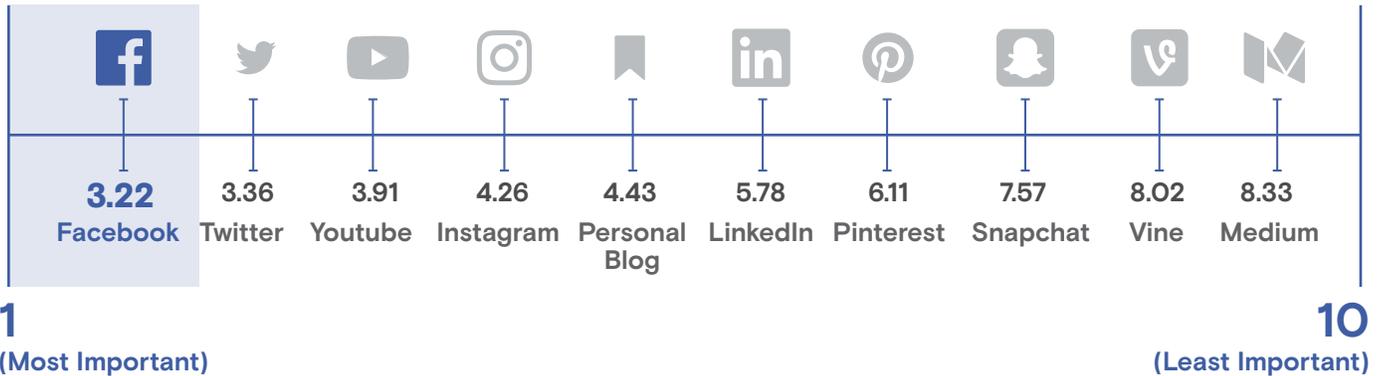
Traffic	3.21
Shares of your post to social channels	3.62
Re-engagement from brand for additional assignments	3.83
Impressions	3.84
Likes (or the equivalent)	3.86
Comments	4.74
Brand mentions	4.89

“The ROI of influencer marketing can be vastly improved by first defining the **“R” (return)** as related to cause and effect against a current measured state.”

Popular Platforms for Influencer Marketing

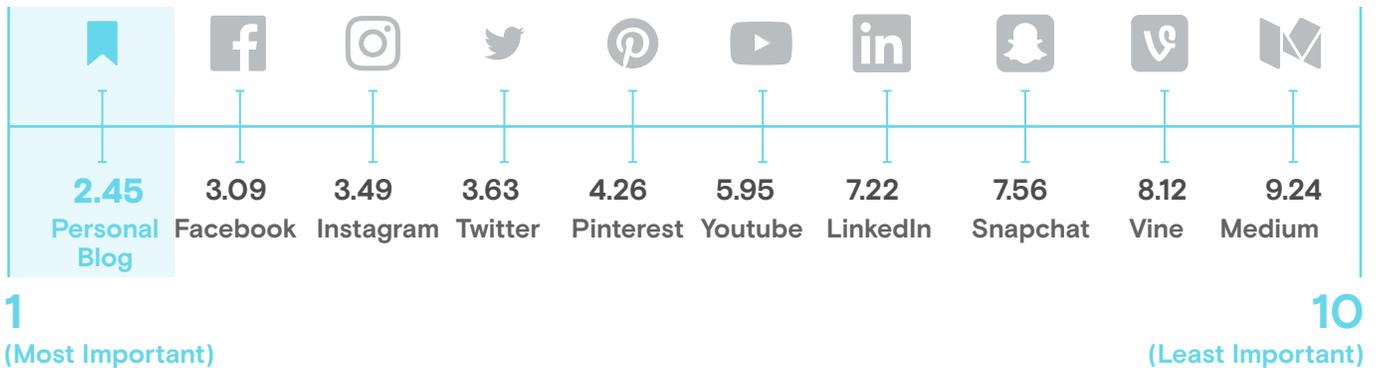
Marketers

What is your most important platform for you
(Rank in order of importance)?



Influencers

What is your most important platform for you
(Rank in order of importance)?



Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, and YouTube are all in the top ranks for the most popular influencer platforms. While brands and influencers are generally in alignment on which platforms are important on social, they should be aware that influencers see their personal blogs as #1 above all other channels. Yes, blogs still matter!

“... influencers see their **personal blogs** as #1 above all other channels.”

Inspiration for Becoming an Influencer

Influencers

What inspired you to become an influencer?

Other	10.40%
To be recognized as a thought leader in your field	36.50%
To build an online audience or grow popularity	48.20%
To make an impact or affect change	57.50%
To earn revenue (part time or full time)	69.40%

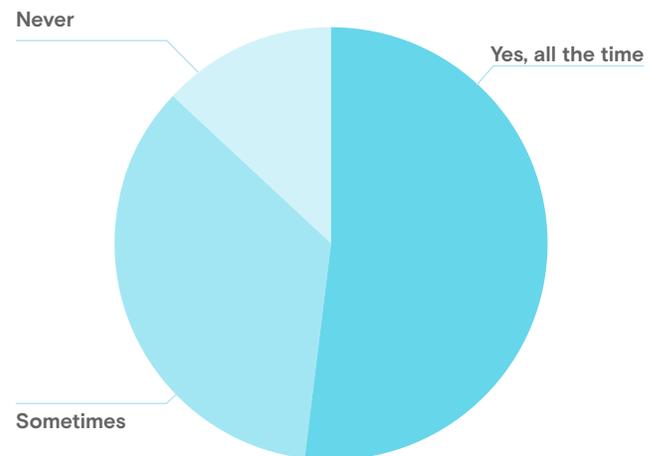
Like their celebrity counterparts, influencers seek revenue (69.4%). But that's not their only driver. For many of them, being an influencer is a part-time or full-time job or a way of earning recognition or having an impact. At the same time, many influencers wish to do just that – influence. Your strategies should start with a more thoughtful approach and an understanding of what it is you wish to impact or change, and how they can help you achieve it.

Do you work with brands who pay you to reach your audience?

No, I am not interested	0.8%
I have but not in the past year	3.2%
No, but I would be open to it	18.5%
Yes, on a consistent basis	37.9%
Yes, sometimes	39.6%

Many online personalities and authorities are indeed recognized and compensated for their online presence when it comes to brand engagement. Just under 80% of online influencers are either earning marketing revenue consistently (37.9%) or on a casual basis (39.6%).

Do brands ask you to publish a disclaimer per FTC guidelines?



Never	12.8%
Sometimes	35.1%
Yes, all the time	52.1%

Currently just over half of brands require disclaimers for sponsored content, with another third asking for them to be included, but not consistently. As influencer marketing becomes more adopted by brands and agencies, and the established rules and best practices become more widely known, this number should increase. It is mistakes like Lord & Taylor's that will bring broad industry awareness to legal requirements surrounding influencer marketing.

Influencer Marketing and the Road Ahead

Influencer marketing is the next big thing because it works in ways that typical celebrity endorsements or traditional content strategies missed – the ability to elicit peer-to-peer action. In social media, celebrities and creators can indeed influence. The hoverboard and cosmetics case studies are two of the purest examples of true social proof. And with each day that passes, social media, and its influential voices, will only continue to grow in authority and popularity.

In its own research, Twitter and analytics firm Annalect found that consumers now trust digital influencers nearly as much as their real world friends. Forty percent of respondents said they've purchased an item online after seeing it used by an influencer on Instagram, Twitter, Vine or YouTube. On Niche, a company Twitter acquired last year that develops content on Vine, Instagram and other social platforms, the number of influencers in the pool to choose from has grown from 6,000 to more than 24,000 in a year. Average deal size has also gone up, increasing 250% with the number of monthly campaigns skyrocketing 300%.

It's time to be more thoughtful and selective about influencer marketing. And to quote Steve Covey, that takes starting with "the end in mind" and working backward to strategy, players and metrics.

In the realm of digital, influencer marketing is still young. It's only natural that there's a learning curve, for mistakes to be made and for new best practices to take shape. If you think about it, it was only recently that brand executives finally accepted that social media itself wasn't going to just go away. There was some strange possibility in the minds of many business leaders that the largest social networks were just a temporary phase and that, I guess, we'd go back to traditional forms of broadcast media.

Now that influencer marketing is part of the everyday mix, it's time to push it forward, try bolder experiments and push engagement in ways that help brands and influencers communicate authentically and effectively for the benefit of all involved.

With the rate at which we're seeing influencer impact and budgets grow, this is bound to be a compelling space that will, in a world of banner blindness and ad blocking, become a real contender for marketing dollars. To succeed, marketers must respect influencers as well as the power of influence and the value of social capital. The goal of any good marketer should be to not only connect brand promise and value to consumer want/need and aspiration, but also to help influencers increase social capital among their communities.

Methodology

This study was commissioned by TapInfluence to understand the current state of influencer marketing. Research was conducted by Altimeter, a Prophet Company, using an anonymous online questionnaire between February 26, 2016 and April 29, 2016. In total, 1,753 influencers responded and 102 marketers responded. We would like to acknowledge Convince and Convert and Bryan Kramer for distribution support.

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About TapInfluence

TapInfluence facilitates real conversations between people and brands by tapping into the power of digital influencers and their authentic content – allowing consumers, influencers, and brands to Get Heard.

Over the last six years, TapInfluence has amassed more influencer marketing and social conversation data than anyone else in the industry, giving our customers access to the best influencers and insights around, such as:

Largest marketplace of vetted, qualified influencers, across the most social networks.

Deep audience insights to identify with laser focus which influencers effectively reach target consumers.

Robust influencer profiles that help you find influencers who will convincingly carry your brand message in their authentic voice.

Performance data on hundred of thousands of influencers and programs.

Visit www.tapinfluence.com for more information or to get a demo.

