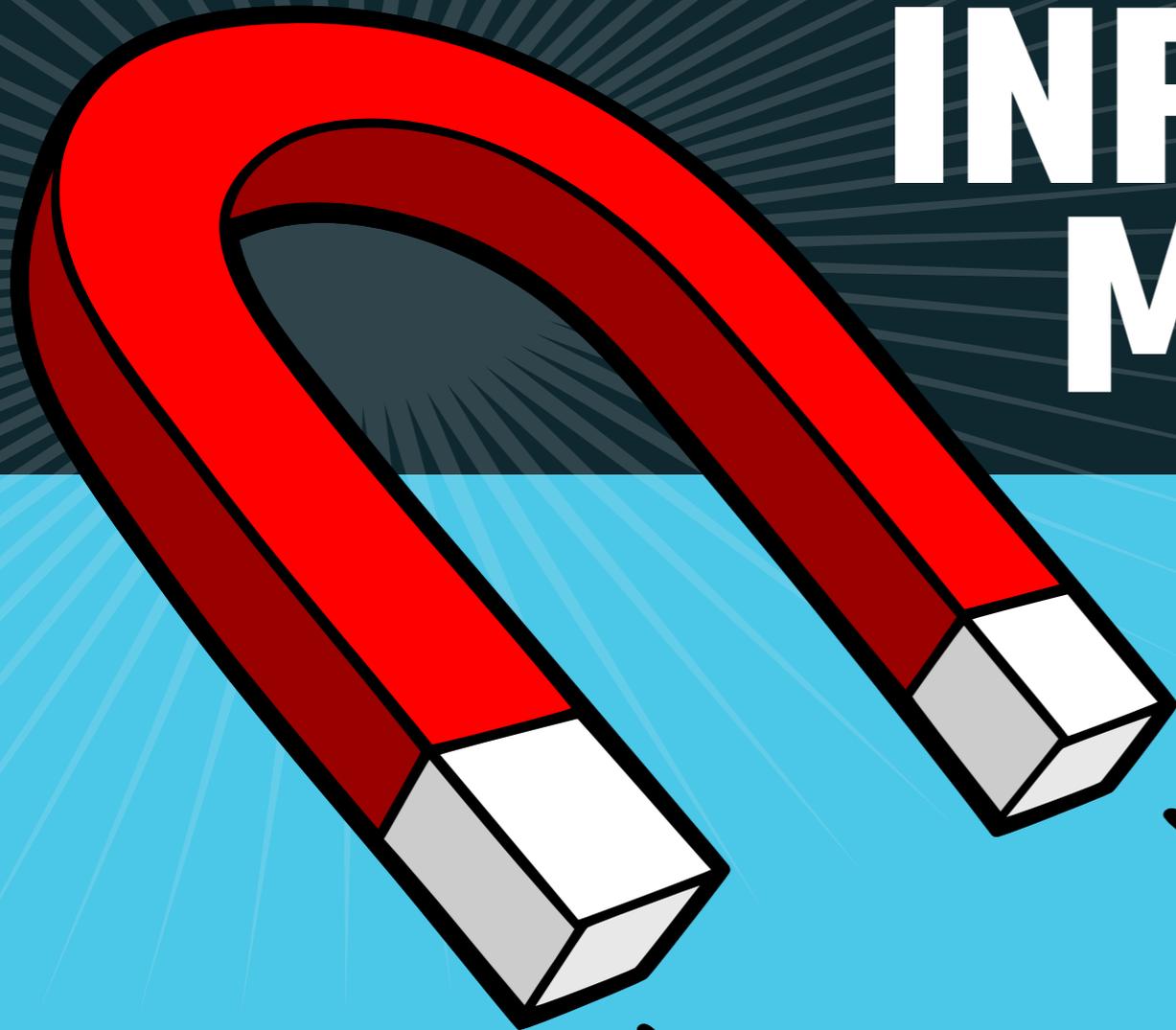


# INFLUENCER MARKETING:

**The Latest Strategies,  
Templates, and Tools**



CONTENT  
MARKETING  
INSTITUTE®



**Looking to build,  
or expand, an  
influencer program  
as part of your content  
marketing strategy?**

**You've come to the right place.**

We've gathered some of the smartest practices in the industry to help increase your understanding of the technique, and enable you to use it to amplify the impact of your content.

We've also supplied some handy advice, process guides, and templates that will make it easier to plan and execute your program while keeping your efforts on track with your goals.

Read on for everything you'll need to make influencer marketing a successful component of content marketing in your organization.

# 1 JUSTIFY INFLUENCER MARKETING

Influencer marketing programs rely on the strong voices in your industry – in other words, people who already have the ear of your target audience and are willing to help bring your business to their attention. Their level of participation can be something simple, like regularly re-tweeting your content to their communities, or as proactively involved as co-producing content for collaborative publication.

Why do you want to go to the trouble of working with influencers? They have a pre-established audience that is already receptive to their ideas and recommendations. This means they are well positioned to amplify reach and awareness, which, in turn, helps your content get found and consumed by the right audience.

They can also lend credibility to a particular piece of content, as their endorsement trades on the trust they have earned, over time, from their followers. In addition, companies can piggyback on an influencer's favorable brand reputation to develop the rapport necessary to reach and build trust among the right audiences.

## Make the case in your organization

Companies often find it challenging just to get the necessary buy-in and budget for content marketing, let alone for a promotional add-on. So how can you convince your stakeholders that it's important to add influencers into your content mix? Here are just a few facts you can cite as compelling evidence of its value:

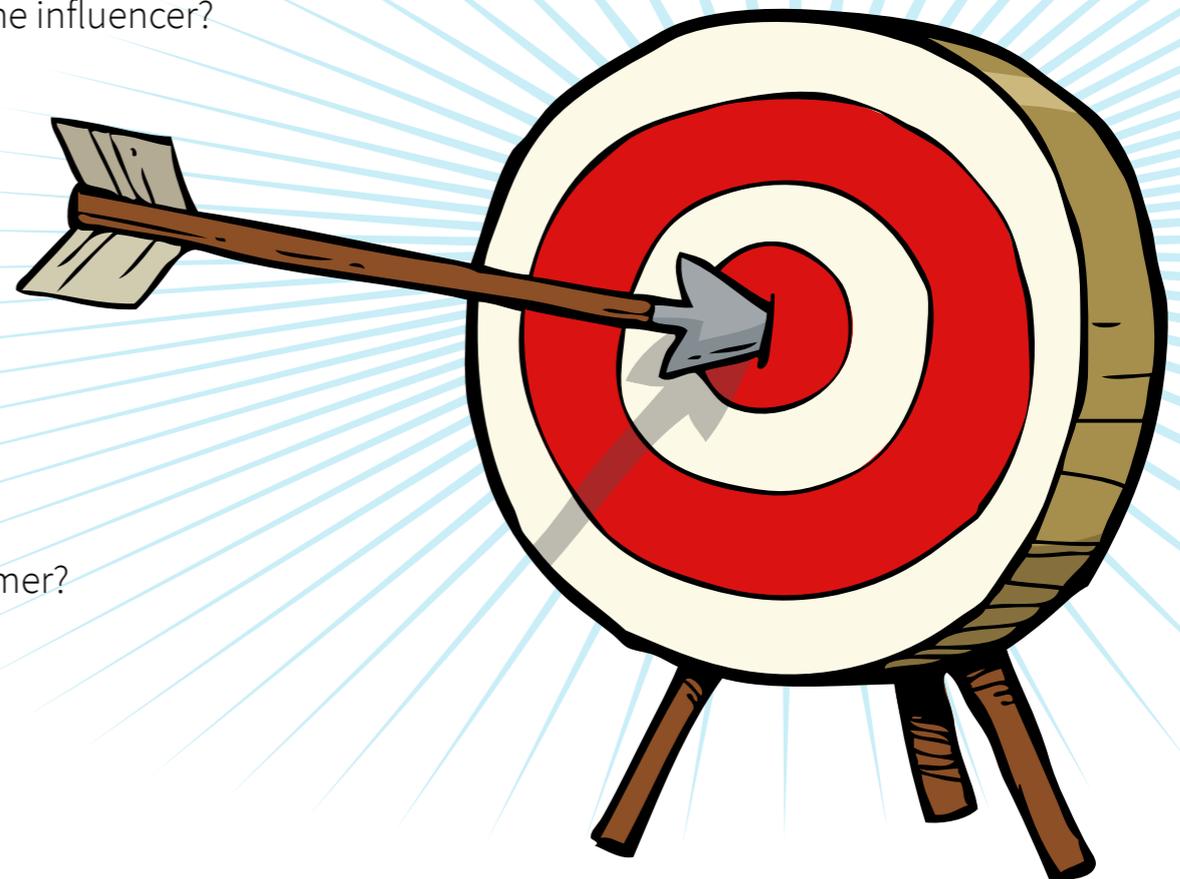
- **It builds trust:** 92% of people trust recommendations from individuals (even if they don't know them) over brands.
- **It attracts qualified leads:** According to a **Tomoson poll**, 51% of marketers believe they get better customers from influencer marketing.
- **Your competitors are getting good results with it:** A **May 2015 study** found that 84% of global marketers expected to launch at least one influencer marketing campaign in the coming years, and 81% of those who had already done so reported they were happy with the results.
- **It increases ROI:** According to a Burst Media study analyzed by **eMarketer**, brands saw an average ROI of \$6.85 for every dollar invested in influencer marketing.

## 2 IDENTIFY YOUR GOALS

Determining the best ways to work with influencers starts by identifying – and documenting – the specific business goals you want your efforts to accomplish.

Here are a few potential objectives you can use to help build your own list of goals, along with the signs of influencer success you'll need to be aware of for each one:

- **Brand awareness:** How many people viewed, downloaded, or listened to this piece of content because of the influencer?
- **Engagement:** How often is your content shared with others because of the influencer?
- **Audience building:** How is the influencer helping to convert people into subscribers and valuable leads?
- **Lead nurturing:** Does interaction with the influencer help move a lead closer to a sale?
- **Sales:** Did you make money because of this content shared by the influencer? What revenue or ROI can you apply to this program?
- **Customer retention/loyalty:** How can an influencer help retain a customer?
- **Upsell / cross-sell:** Is there a way to use an influencer to help someone become more invested in your business?



## **3 FIND YOUR IDEAL INFLUENCERS**

Influencers can be instrumental to optimizing the impact of your content marketing, and knowing what you want that success to look like is an important first step toward achieving it. But you will also need to find reliable partners to power your influencer engine, and that's not always easy. In fact, as **Andrea Lehr** recently pointed out, a whopping **75% of marketers** consider finding the right influencers to be the most challenging aspect of this outreach strategy.

Depending on your goals, you may not necessarily have to impress a big-name industry “guru” or entice an internet celebrity to take up your cause (though both are viable options). But how do you find the most trustworthy partners among the sea of influential industry players out there?

Like most other facets of influencer marketing, your specific content objectives will help determine which relationships will be worthy of pursuing. For example:

- If your aim is greater awareness and/or reach, you may choose to work with popular bloggers or social media influencers who can help increase your share of voice across the platforms where each is most active.
- If you are looking to retain customers or upsell, current customers often make more of an impact on decision-making than a neutral third party.

### **KNOW YOUR PREFERRED “TYPE”**

It helps to start by determining the types of influencers that you should be looking to work with. For example, here are a few common categories:

- Bloggers
- Customers
- Members of a purchasing group
- Industry experts, analysts, and thought leaders
- Business partners
- Internal subject-matter experts
- Celebrity tastemakers and trendsetters

## Where to look

Once you've decided on the types of influencers you want to leverage, you will need to find viable candidates.

Through your regular networking and social media activities, you are likely already aware of some high-profile professionals you might want to partner with. But it's always a good idea to add a range of expertise to your influencer pool – especially when you are just starting out – since you never know when a preferred influencer might be unavailable, unreachable, or have conflicting interests or obligations that would make them a poor fit for your needs.

One way to find worthy partners is to ask around. Attend events in different areas of your business and survey attendees, talk to your customers and your sales team members to see who they follow, ask other colleagues for recommendations, or get involved in relevant social media forums and discussion groups and ask (or just observe) who the main players are.

Another way to approach influencer discovery is to use keyword-based searches to uncover notable names that pop up in relation to your chosen topic.

In his recent post, [Aaron Agius](#) shares the search-based process he uses to find great placements for his content, which can be easily adapted to uncover influential voices to connect with:

**STEP 1: Use Google to find relevant sites:** Search for [your industry] + “blog” (or “site”). Then, use **advanced search operators** to expand or narrow your results, as needed. Consider adding the top resources to your list; but bear in mind that it may be tough to get the attention of the experts running those sites, as they are likely to get a lot more inquiries than sites that are a bit further down the list.



## REMEMBER:

As you discover potential promotional partners, you will want to listen in on their insights and content activities on a regular basis. Once you are ready to ask them for their participation, you'll have a much easier time getting their attention if you are familiar with the topics they frequently cover (and the positions they typically take on those topics), or have already engaged in conversations with them in their chosen forums. This means subscribing to their newsletters; reading their blogs; following them on Twitter, Google+, or LinkedIn; and seeking out the other content channels where they frequently share their thoughts and ideas.

**STEP 2: Qualify sites:** To decide if a potential influencer is worth adding to your outreach list, look for evidence of qualifying criteria on the sites that popped up on your SERP, such as:

- **Domain authority:** How well does the influencer’s site rank on search engines?
- **Social reach:** How large is their following on social platforms?
- **Sharing habits:** How often does the influencer share others’ content, as opposed to their own original material?

Don’t forget to follow your instincts: If you visit the influencer’s site and it just doesn’t look or feel like it would be a good fit for your brand’s content, it’s best to leave them off the list – you can always add them back if you discover mitigating circumstances.

**STEP 3: Find the correct contact details:** Ideally, you will want your request for participation to go through the proper channels, but sending an email to an anonymous “Info@” address or blindly submitting a contact form may not be enough to get your message in front of the influencer him or herself. Instead, try reaching out to your network to see if you have mutual acquaintances, or search the influencer’s social profiles to see if you can turn up a direct email address.



**HANDY TIP:**

As **Devesh Khanal** reminds us, search

for influencers with high engagement levels – not just high follower counts – as these can be artificially inflated and may not represent true thought leadership. Look for signs – like their participation in discussion groups, the number of comments they receive on their content, and how often they respond to those comments – to gauge how active and engaged in their communities they truly are.



## PREPARE YOUR OUTREACH

Influencer agreements can take many forms, depending on variables like:

- Who the influencer is
- The specific content types and platforms you want their help with
- The level of involvement you are expecting
- What you are offering them in return for their efforts

But regardless of how you end up structuring your arrangement, the initial outreach is fairly universal: You need to contact potential partners, and deliver a prepared pitch that will compel them to say yes to your requests.

Any efforts you've already undertaken to track down influencer contact information and preferred media channels will come in handy at this stage, as your next step is to initiate contact.

### **Making the first “connection”**

There are multiple ways you can establish contact with your target influencers, including:

- Giving them some positive attention through a reply, re-tweet, or mention on the social channels they frequent
- Providing thoughtful comments on their blog posts
- Connecting with them on LinkedIn, introducing yourself, and explaining why you'd like to connect
- Making an old-school phone call

While these are all acceptable approaches, perhaps the most direct and successful way to reach out to an influencer is via email.



### **HANDY TIP:**

The key to successful outreach is not to seem like you're asking for a favor; rather, try suggesting a collaboration that takes into account their skills and interests first, putting your needs secondary.

## Ideal outreach: Email

Of course, you can't just send a link to your content in an email and expect the influencer to beg you to get involved. You need to do everything you can to ensure that your target opens your email and becomes interested in working with you.

What key characteristics make for a great outreach email? Here are a few guidelines Aaron Agius shared in his aforementioned post:

- **It should have an honest, yet enticing headline:** Influencer relationships are most successful when they are founded on mutual trust and respect. That will be hard to establish if your email has a misleading headline or other deception that tricks the influencer into reading it.
- **It should be brief:** You'll generally be contacting busy people who don't always have time to read all the emails they receive. Be sensitive to their time constraints by getting to the point quickly and concisely.
- **It should be personalized:** Be upfront and direct about why you think they, personally, should care about your content and want to get involved. But make sure you are genuine in your praise – false flattery tends to stand out like a sore thumb.
- **It should explain what you want them to do:** Plainly and politely outline what you would like their involvement to entail, and how flexible you are on the terms you are proposing.



If you decide to go the email route, **Amanda Maksymiw** has shared some fantastic templates you can customize to make your outreach efforts more efficient. Here's one example below:

*Hello [Name],*

*We haven't connected before but I work for [Company X] and I have enjoyed your blogs about [Topic Y]. We'd love to collaborate with you about [Content Idea Z]. We think our audience would love to hear from you...*

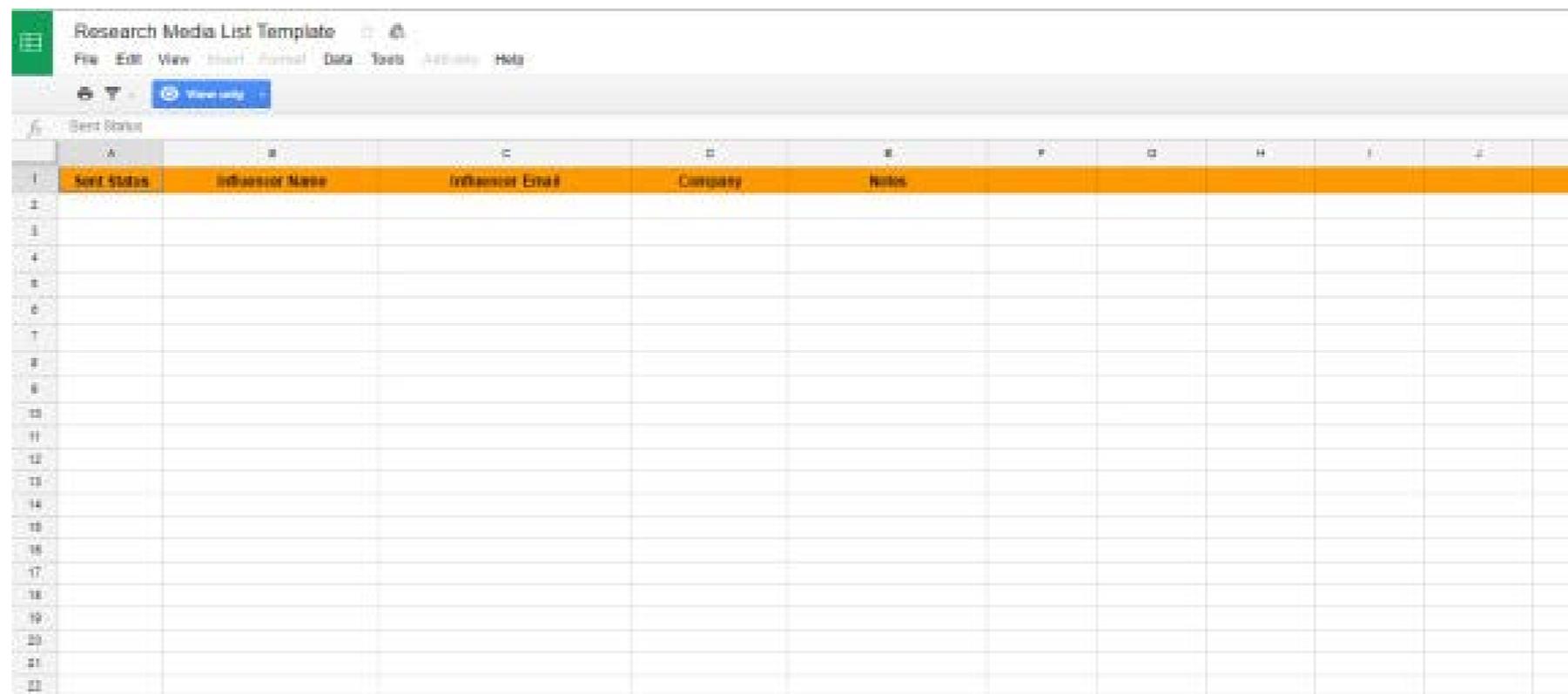
## Outreach suggestions

Not sure what, specifically, to ask influencers to do on your content's behalf? Here are some suggestions, which range from one-time contributions to ongoing partnerships:

- Ask for a quote for an upcoming article, blog post, e-book, or other effort.
- Ask them to participate in an interview.
- Request that they speak at a conference you are involved in organizing.
- Request their participation in a crowdsourced article.
- Seek their permission to share, link to, or republish their content on your blog.
- Request information or data for a case study.
- Ask them to write a guest blog post, or feature in one.
- Include them in an expert panel at an industry event.
- Invite them to be a guest on a podcast, Twitter chat, or webinar you are hosting.

## Tracking your outreach

As you conduct your outreach, you will want to track your efforts, so you know who you've contacted, who has agreed to participate, and what terms they've agreed to. Here is a sample template you can **download** and customize to help get you started (Go to "File > Download As >" and select the format you would like).



The image shows a screenshot of a spreadsheet application window titled "Research Media List Template". The spreadsheet has a header row with the following columns: "Sent Status", "Influencer Name", "Influencer Email", "Company", and "Notes". The rows are numbered 1 through 22. The spreadsheet is currently empty, with only the header row containing text.

	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	I	J	K	L	M	N	O	P	Q	R	S	T	U	V	W	X	Y	Z
1	Sent Status	Influencer Name	Influencer Email	Company	Notes																					
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## SEED YOUR INFLUENCERS' EFFORTS

In many instances, after you've made connections with your targeted influencers, you'll have an opportunity for influencers to share your content. This means you need to create something that they will be proud to put their personal brand behind.

Not every piece of content you create will be right for every influencer. To determine whether or not it's a fit, consider your answers to questions like these:

- Is it relevant to your influencer's areas of expertise and passion?
- Will it be of interest to their audiences?
- Could it involve them in a controversy, shady practices, or conflicts of interest?
- Does it avoid blatant promotion for your business?
- Is it easily shareable?
- Has it already been performing well on your own content channels?
- Is it well positioned to help further your conversion goals?



### HANDY TIP:

Not sure how to tell whether a piece of content is performing well enough to merit an influencer's involvement? Andy Crestodina walks you through the essentials of **how to apply analytics to make better content marketing decisions.**



## NURTURE AND SCALE YOUR INFLUENCERS' EFFORTS

Once you've made your connections and your influencer efforts have begun to bear fruit, you will want to do everything you can to keep them happy – and keep them interested in contributing to the success of your content.

Here are a few ways you can incentivize influencers' efforts on an ongoing basis:

- **Reciprocate:** Establishing a pattern of give-and-take by sharing their original content on your channels can increase their sense of obligation to respond in kind.
- **Co-create:** Rather than solely focusing on enlisting their help with distribution, consider proposing a creative collaboration that will benefit both parties equally.
- **Appreciate:** Recognize your influencers' expertise by mentioning them by name in your content – who doesn't like to do a little self-promotion, especially when it comes in the form of a third-party testimonial?
- **Compensate:** Consider providing influencers with product samples, offering them affiliate discounts, or paying them outright in exchange for their participation in your program.

### A NOTE ON COMPENSATION

Today, it's common for celebrities, social media-famous power users, and other notable media players to require payment for participating in brand content promotion. Should you decide that working with high-profile players is a good fit for your strategic goals, a little preparation will help ensure that you receive the value you are paying for:

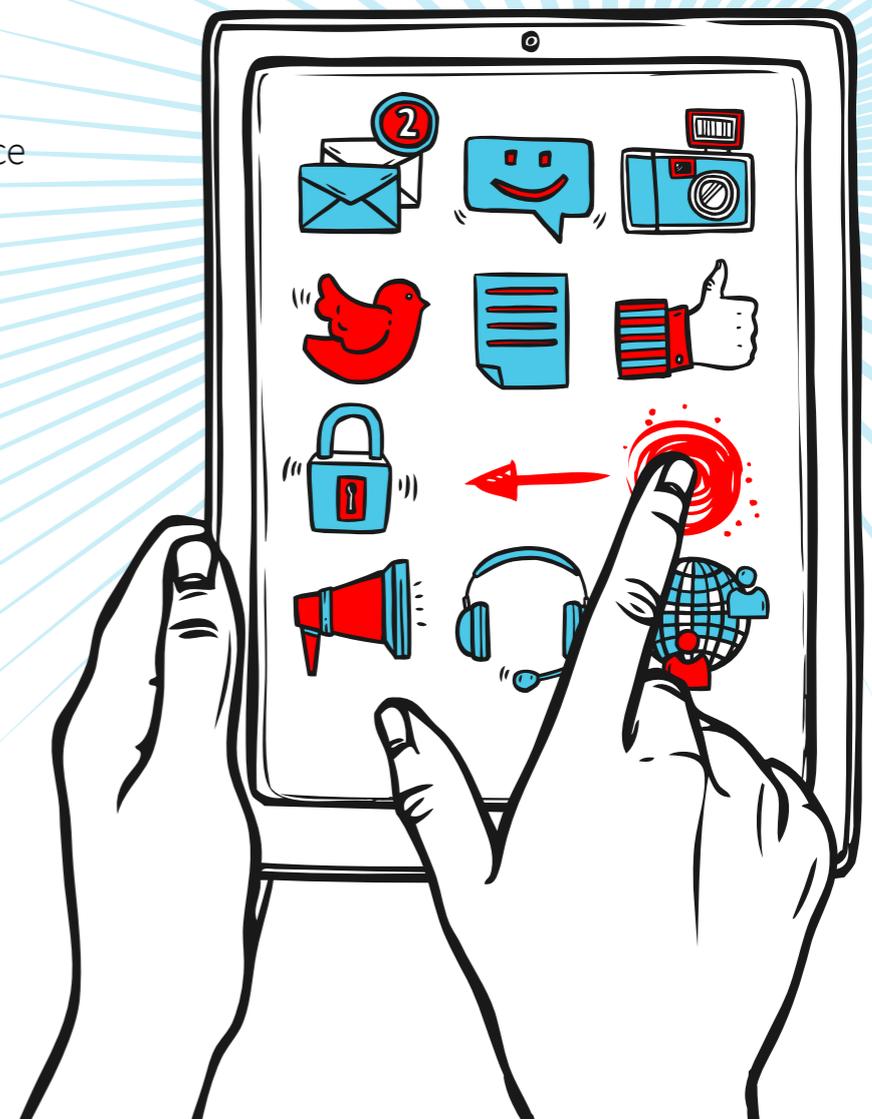
- **Establish your budget:** If your funds are limited, you may be able to negotiate on terms, such as lowering the number of actions they are required to take in a given period of time. But...
- **Don't compromise on the value of their engagements:** Make sure they have the clout and the dedication necessary to meet your quality expectations in terms of the number of hits, qualified leads, or other goals you are looking to drive.
- **Know who you will be working with:** Be familiar with factors like the size of their network, their personality, their communication style, and how personally active they are on your preferred channels.
- **Spend smartly:** Just because you don't have a lot to spend doesn't mean you can't play in the big leagues – you may just need to find a celebrity who shares your brand passions and may be eager to work with you in some capacity.

## Scale your collaborations

Just as you test and iterate your content marketing initiatives, your influencer program should be able to grow and improve as you start to realize its potential. This includes exploring additional ways to leverage the rapport you've built with your influencers, and squeezing greater value from your existing collaborations.

For example:

- Consider rounding up monthly guest blog posts and turning them into a quarterly e-book series.
- If you've produced a series of webinars or podcasts hosted by your influencers, gather those into robust resource guides.
- A collection of quotes or insights from your influencers can be consolidated into best-practice articles or roundtable posts.
- Fuel your website, social platforms, and other content channels by repurposing the content your influencers have shared on your behalf.
- Deepen your engagement by asking the influencers to create their own content for exclusive distribution on your content channels.



# 7

## USE TOOLS TO STREAMLINE THE PROCESS

For many marketers, a fully grassroots, home-grown influencer marketing program isn't always feasible given the considerable number of day-to-day responsibilities they are already tasked with. That's why many marketers choose to work with third-party technologies to help them manage their program and keep up with their activities, even when other priorities take precedence.

There are three categories of tools that apply to influencer marketing. It's likely you will want to explore solutions from each throughout your influencer-marketing journey, especially since the objectives of your programs can shift from awareness, to lead generation, and back to sentiment at the drop of a hat.

- 1. Content campaign tools:** These companies help manage the entire process of your influencer marketing, from identifying the right people, to helping deploy content programs, to distributing and measuring the content for ongoing optimization.
- 2. Discovery and connection tools:** These tools help you scour the internet to home in on viable influencer candidates. They can handle tasks that range from basic listening, to influencer scoring (like Klout), to finding people who write about certain topics on forums or by keywords.
- 3. Distribution tools:** These tools work best if you already have a functioning influencer program, but are looking to amplify your efforts, or kick your results up a notch.





## MEASURE INFLUENCER IMPACT

Your influencer marketing program – no matter how vetted, robust, and thriving it is at the start – may start to stall if you aren’t continuously measuring and assessing its impact. Now is the time to think back to the objectives you outlined in earlier in the process: How will you report out on these?

### **First, show some quick wins right away**

Informally circulating some quick wins – such as positive quotes from your community or influencers themselves, attendee/registration numbers, or blog post views – will help you raise awareness and build momentum around your program internally.

Here’s an idea of some additional KPIs you can track, based on the objectives you established at the onset of your program:

OBJECTIVE	POSSIBLE METRICS
Brand awareness	Website traffic • Page views • Video views • Document views • Downloads • Social chatter • Referral links
Engagement	Blog comments • Likes, shares, tweets, +1s, pins • Forwards • Inbound links
Lead generation	Form completions and downloads • Email subscriptions • Blog subscriptions • Conversion rate
Sales	Online sales • Offline sales • Manual reporting and anecdotes
Customer retention/loyalty	Percentage of content consumed by existing customers • Retention/renewal rates
Upsell / cross-sell	Sales for new products / services



### **HANDY TIP:**

Always be on the lookout for improvement opportunities.

**Few collaborations function perfectly at the outset, and even the most successful approaches may grow stale and ineffective over time. So it’s important to periodically review your influencer engagements, analyze how well each one is currently performing, and then refine or revise the terms, as necessary.**

As you become ready to develop a more formalized output that you can share with stakeholders, consider building a performance dashboard. As you can see from the sample template below (which you can **download and customize** by going to “File > Download As >” and selecting the format you would like), even a simple Excel or Google Spreadsheet document can be helpful for tracking the positive impact your influencers’ efforts have had on your content, over time.

2016 Influencer Tracking			Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec	Averages
<b>Influencer Tracking</b>															
<b>Blog Name</b>	<b>URL</b>	<b>Blogger Name</b>	<b># Visitors to website from source; Total # of posts created, social links and other stats</b>												
<i>Name of blog</i>	<i>Link to blog</i>	<i>Name of influencer</i>	<i># of posts and # of links/ impressions for the month</i>												<i>Averages for comparative purposes</i>
<b>Company Website Tracking</b>															
<i>Month-over-month tracking of key metrics below:</i>															
<b>Share of Voice</b>															
<b>Volume of Mentions (% or total)</b>															
<b>Sentiment</b>															
<b>Total Inbound Links</b>															
<b>Other</b>															

## EXAMPLES: INFLUENCER MARKETING AT WORK

### Marriott

In an effort to attract younger travelers, Marriott has partnered with influencers like Shaun McBride and Casey Neistat, who appeal to Millennials on Snapchat. As David Beebe, vice president of global creative and content marketing for Marriott International, **explains**, the program works like this: Hand-picked influencers travel to places with Marriott properties that were chosen by Snapchat users. They then document their journeys and share their experiences on both Snapchat and their personal platforms.



## Tyson Foods

To spice up holiday sales of its chicken nuggets, Tyson invited mom bloggers to give its bite-sized snacks a heaping helping of seasonal spirit and share their creations. Soon, chicken-nugget reindeer and Santa Claus figures were popping up all over the web, and family shoppers were making their lists (and checking them twice) with Tyson in mind.

As **Daniel Sayer** points out in his recent post, Tyson's mom blogger militia was the perfect pairing for the family-friendly brand: The campaign netted Tyson 8.8 million social impressions in just four weeks, streaming past its goal of 2.6 million impressions over eight weeks. But perhaps Tyson's greatest – and possibly least visible – contribution to the campaign's success lies in how it treated mom bloggers who participated. It didn't dictate which nugget creations the influencers should prepare, and it encouraged them to write about their experience in their own authentic voices.



## Blendtec

Partnering with Blendtec is about much more than writing a blog post in exchange for a blender or putting the company logo on a team jersey in exchange for sponsorship, according to the company's senior content marketing manager, **Mike Jensen**. Blendtec vets prospective brand ambassadors by focusing on people with whom it can have lasting relationships. "We follow and engage with people who care about what we care about," says Jensen.

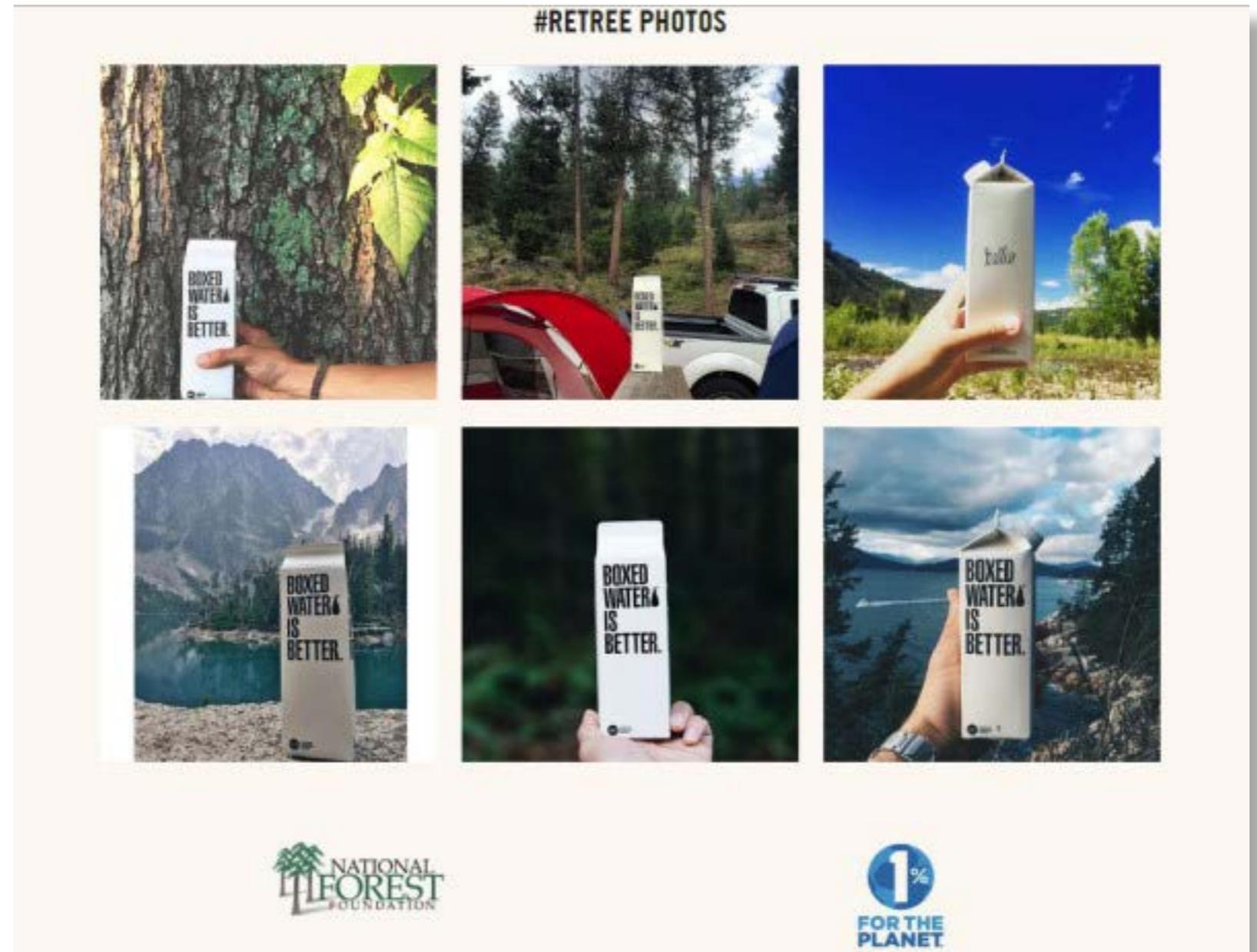
One of Blendtec's less obvious brand ambassadors is tattoo artist Billy DeCola. The two partnered for a designer blender that features an original cherry blossom watercolor design by DeCola. The tattoo design has inspired other influencer collaborations, including a berry design for a California Giant Berry Farms blender giveaway and a graffiti blender created for the Dew Tour sports event.



## Boxed Water

As we mentioned earlier, influencer marketing programs don't always need to leverage media celebrities, hired spokespersons, or even professional writers to help your content take root and grow in popularity. Sometimes all it takes is a cause that's worthy of a grassroots audience's passion and a clever hashtag.

As described in Daniel Sayer's aforementioned post, packaged water brand Boxed Water enlisted Instagram influencers Jaime King, Aidan Alexander, and Meg DeAngelis to drum up support for its National Forest Foundation philanthropy initiative. The company vowed to plant two trees for every Instagram photo tagged with #retree. Within four weeks, 2,600 hashtag uses led to the planting of 5,200 trees – a veritable forest worth of social media engagements.



## Priceline

Karianne Stinson, Priceline's head of social media, spoke with **Chief Content Officer Magazine** about her company's increasing reliance on influencer marketing:

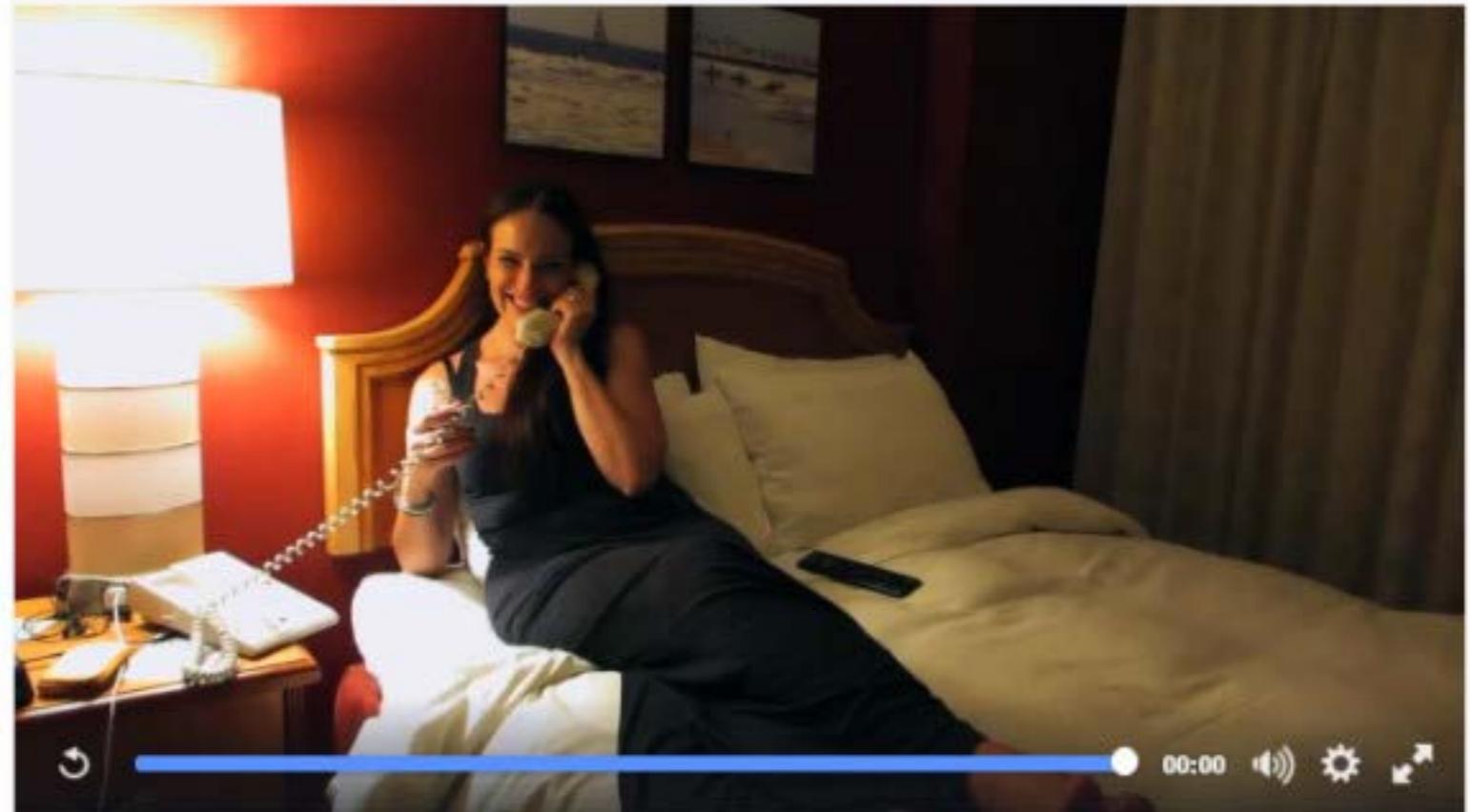
*"One of my goals is to get other people talking about us. During the promotion for Tonight Only, we worked with the Eh Bee family (famous on YouTube) to create content that was less about Priceline and more about connecting through a moment with the family. It was about why you would book at the last minute, and we wanted it to resonate with the Eh Bees' audience. It performed really well. Last I looked, it had five million organic views – all on Facebook."*

### How To Get Some "Peace & Quiet" Time

More Videos by Eh Bee

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Eh Bee

How to get some "peace and quiet" time with a Tonight Only deal. Thanks to Priceline.com #WhyNotTonight #sp

Shared with: Public

2,552,299 Views

Like · Comment · Share Buffer · August 1, 2015 · Edited

86,114 people like this.

Top Comments -

4,970 shares

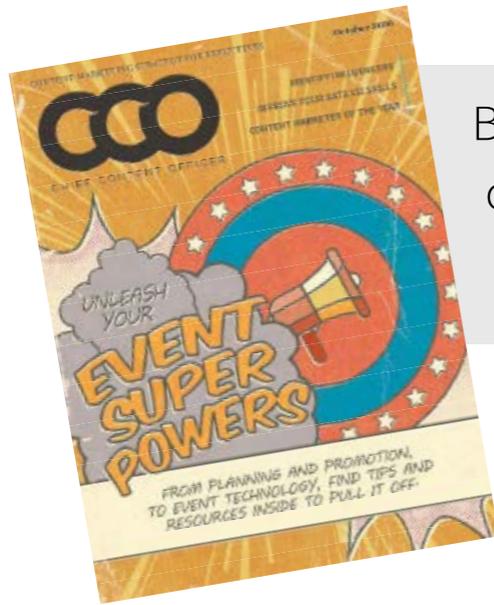
940 comments

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**Content Marketing Institute** is the leading global content marketing education and training organization, teaching enterprise brands how to attract and retain customers through compelling, multichannel storytelling. CMI's **Content Marketing World** event, the largest content marketing-focused event, is held every September in Cleveland, Ohio, USA, and the **Intelligent Content Conference** event is held every spring. CMI publishes the bimonthly magazine, **Chief Content Officer**, and provides strategic consulting and content marketing research for some of the best-known brands in the world. CMI, a UBM company, has made the Inc. 500/5000 list from 2012-2015.

Watch this [video](#) to learn more about CMI.