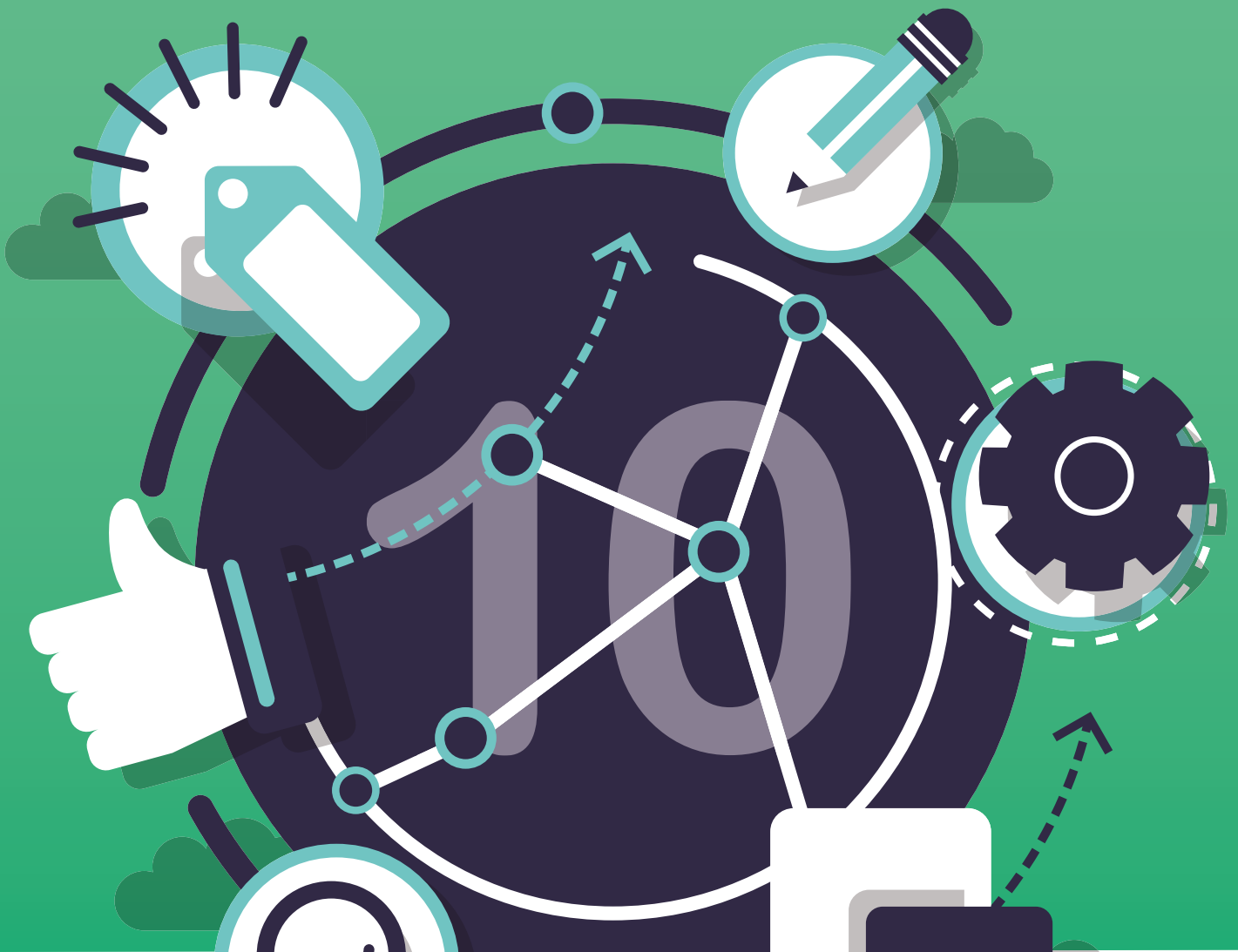


Influencer

MARKETING for B2B -

10 Best Practices

Every Marketer Should
Know and Use



Do you know how exactly your B2B clients are making decisions about your products or services?

Of course, their choices are largely influenced by your product's quality, product reviews, your marketing efforts, and the persuasive power of your sales team—all backed up by your unique selling points and the emotional appeal of your brand.

Yet there's one solid technique above all others that makes an impact on decision-makers at your target B2B companies. The opinions and recommendations of peers, experts, and professional networks are what [nearly every B2B professional trusts most](#). In 2015, [84 percent of marketers](#) were planning to launch an influencer marketing campaign within the next 12 months.

The main reason why [influencer marketing works so well](#) for B2B companies is that it reflects the way people make decisions on a day-to-day basis. Our family and friends, along with the people we view as experts in certain fields, influence us not only because we trust and value their opinions, but also because we [subconsciously want to fit into certain social groups](#). A Nielsen study showed that [92 percent of consumers trust earned media such](#) as personal recommendations and word-of-mouth over other types of advertising.

When it comes to boosting your B2B company's marketing efforts, giving influencer marketing a shot will make way for plenty of great opportunities. The first step is to identify those who are most likely to affect the decisions of your target audience. Who do they know, respect, and want to learn from? These are your target influencers.

With this background knowledge at hand, there are 10 crucial steps you can follow for successful influencer marketing. Whether it's building relationships with popular bloggers, benefiting from guest blogging, or crafting your influencer strategy, these marketing techniques are sure to firmly position your B2B company as an industry leader.



#1 Do Your Homework

Your first move in coming up with an effective influencer marketing strategy should be to thoroughly research who are the important people in your field. These are the individuals your customers look up to: industry leaders, journalists, bloggers, market analysts, and knowledgeable experts.

In order to [identify the influencers who matter in your business](#), start by talking to your sales department and your current customers, who can provide you with insights into what makes your audience tick. Attending industry events is another hands-on approach to take advantage of, as the thought leaders in your field are bound to be prominent speakers at various conferences.

Next, do some investigative work online. Select a number of keywords related to your business and run them through search engines to give you a better idea of potential influencers in your field. Then, move on to Twitter and LinkedIn to find out more about the people you've identified, as well as to possibly connect with them.

The screenshot displays the Buzzsumo Pro website. At the top, there's a dark blue header with the Buzzsumo logo and 'We're Hiring!' on the left, and navigation links for 'Product', 'Customers', 'Pricing', 'Blog', 'Signup', 'Login', and 'Resources' on the right. Below the header, a light blue section features the main heading 'Analyze what content performs best for any topic or competitor' and the subtext 'Find the key influencers to promote your content'. A search input field is present with the placeholder text 'Enter a topic or domain to try out BuzzSumo (e.g. content marketing or cnn.com)' and a 'Go!' button. Below this, a dark blue navigation bar contains 'Content Research', 'Influencers', and 'Content Alerts'. A search bar at the bottom has 'big data' entered, with 'Search!', 'Export', and '+ Create Alert' buttons.

Source: buzzsumo.com

Innovative influencer marketing solutions have been thriving in recent years, including tools such as [BuzzSumo](#), [LittleBird](#), [Traackr](#), and [Augure](#). These platforms use social media stats to pinpoint who the people your customers trust are. Also, they can provide you not only with the right names, but also with additional details about each influencer, including reach, relevance, and authority.

#2 Boost Your Social Credibility

It's difficult to win people's votes when they haven't even heard of you. The same goes for persuading influencers to talk about your brand when they're not familiar with it. So before you start engaging with influential figures in your field, there's one more thing to take care of.

[Your social credibility needs a boost](#) so that you're able to establish relationships with the top people who impact your customers' decisions. How can you achieve that? Well, it certainly won't happen overnight, but with consistency and commitment, steps can be taken to build up awareness of your brand.

Make sure your social media strategy is being executed thoroughly and that your profiles are up-to-date with the proper information. And don't forget the power of curated content, which gives you the opportunity to share and comment on your influencers' work, setting the stage for future collaboration and enlarging your social reach.

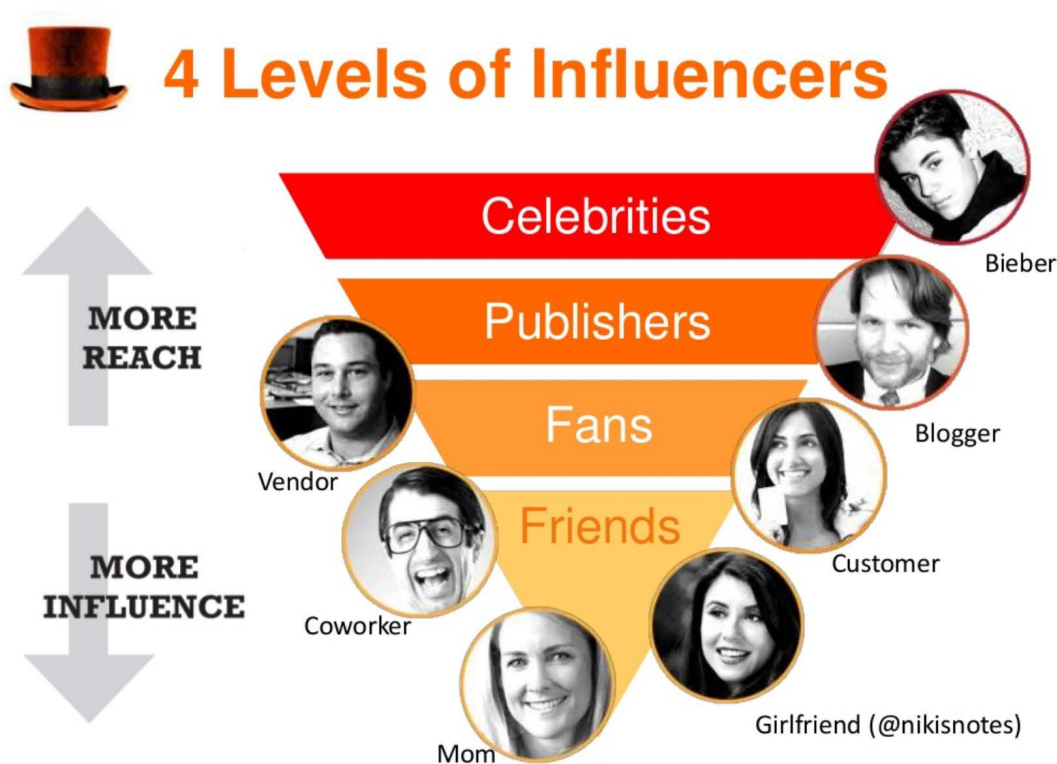
Along with using social media, you can strive for thought leadership in a number of ways. Preparing and sharing useful case studies and white papers that inspire people in your field, speaking at industry events, and engaging with your community both on and offline are all proven methods for building trust in your brand.



#3 Start Building Relationships That Matter

Once you've increased your brand's reach, it's time to launch the lengthy, but rewarding process of building relationships. But simply having the right names on your radar isn't going to get you those important connections—you need to get out there and develop rapport with your target influencers.

Initially, it might be best to select people who are already interested in your brand in some way. [Start with a few influencers and thoroughly research](#) who they are, what they do, and their passions and interests. Look for the commonalities between your brand and their expertise in order to establish mutual interests.



Source: [Social Media Today](#)

After you've become acquainted with them, make the first contact by posting insightful comments on their blog posts or other articles, or by taking part in online forums they're engaged in. Follow them on social media, keeping an eye on what they're sharing and who they interact with.

Once a mutual affinity has evolved, you'll be ready to launch direct communication. Prepare tailored emails for each person so you can show your sincere interest in what they're doing. Let them know you've been following their work, and introduce yourself and your brand with a short but compelling pitch.

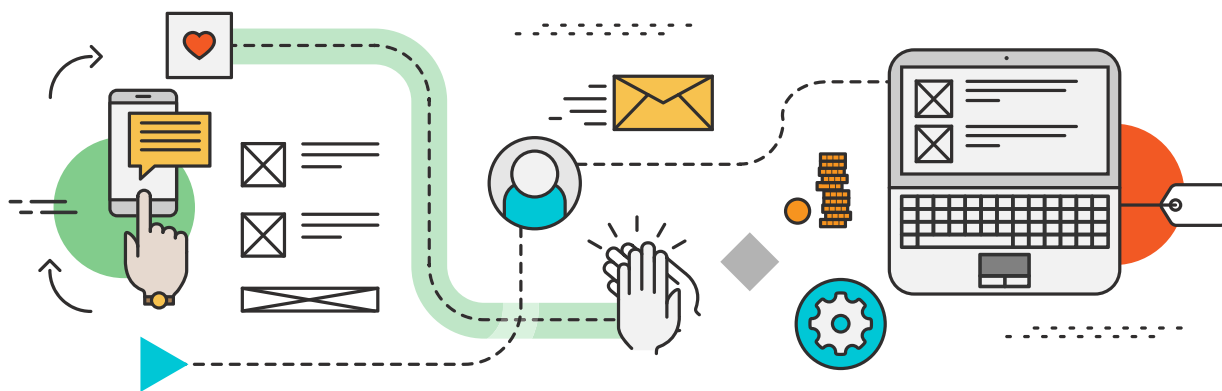
#4 Engage Influencers the Right Way

You've now made your name known to your target influencers—and made the first step in building meaningful relationships with them. Now it's time to find the right approach to engaging those who can make a difference for your B2B brand.

Based on your thorough research of their work, make an offer that suits each individual, identifying and conveying to them a few important details. What exactly do you want them to do? What's in it for them? How do you see your relationship progressing?

When someone agrees to help you, make sure you create the best possible experience for them. Influencers are busy, so they should find working with you to be a seamless, pleasant process.

Naturally, offering your products or services for free can improve the likelihood of maintaining strong relationships with influencers. In some cases, people are open to paid gigs to speak at your event, for example, or contribute to your e-book. Again, the best approach is to maintain personalized communication with each target influencer so you can find what your mutual interests are.



#5 Build Bridges with Relevant Bloggers

Among the different types of influencers in your field, bloggers can be particularly helpful for B2B brands. If you develop solid connections with them, they can write about your brand, share and provide content for your outlets, and spread the word about your work on social media.

But before you approach any bloggers, you might need to delve a bit deeper into their work. First, identify the people who write about topics that are closely related to your own content and interests. Then, follow the appropriate steps to engage with them directly—industry events, social media, online forums and their own blogs.



Source: [Blogging for Living](#)

After making initial contact, nurture the relationship by sharing their articles or offering them free services or other promotions. Suggesting to [place a backlink on your own blog](#) is another option. You can also engage them in more elaborate campaigns that will promote their work, along with your own brand.

#6 Have Your Content Shared by Influencers

One of the best ways to give your own content marketing efforts increased visibility is by having your content shared by important people whose opinions your clients value. That's where your excellent connections with influencers, especially bloggers, come into play.

Depending on the content, select influencers whose own audiences match the profiles of your buyer personas. Research their content and how their readers respond to it to ensure you're collaborating with people whose influence and circle of reach will best suit your brand.

When you've pinpointed those people, it's time for the negotiation process to kick in. Find the individual's motivation to share, republish, or talk about your content and brand. In addition to having them write a guest post for your blog, you can occasionally offer to [write a post for theirs](#). Striking the right deal is up to you and the blogger, but helping to improve engagement with their own audience heightens your chances for a good collaboration.

#7

Get Great Guest Content from Influencers



Source: [Web IC Factory](#)

An alternative way to develop your relationship with influencers, and more specifically with bloggers, is [to invite them to contribute to your own media channels](#). This will allow you to diversify your blog's content for your readers and social media followers, while at the same time establishing thought leadership that will benefit your brand's presence.

Getting an expert to share their insights by writing a guest post can give your brand greater exposure and higher social authority, which can open new doors for collaboration with even more renowned influencers, too. Carefully select top influencers so that their efforts will truly benefit your content flow. You can also minimize their workload by [offering them a draft text](#).

Besides increased traffic to your website, there's a good chance that guest bloggers will also share the content they contributed on their own channels, potentially republish it on their blogs, and talk about it in their communities. After all, the authorship remains with them, which means it's not a sunk cost on their part.

#8 Don't Forget About Structuring Your Strategy

Developing your influencer marketing can be quite a ride. It takes a lot of time and effort, which is why, once you've gotten a firm grip on each process, the best course of action is to wrap them all up into one simple strategy.

With a structured approach, you'll have a strong overview of your actions and the ways in which you can measure success. Since you've already invested time in the initial research, document everything you've found out, including details on your target audience and the circles of target influencers. Don't forget to keep track of the relationships you've started building and the different activities you've engaged influencers in.

[Measuring success is crucial](#) in order to assess whether your influencer marketing strategy is working. Whenever you launch a campaign or get involved in guest blogging, it's pivotal to track how it's performing so that you can evaluate whether your efforts are actually bringing in new visits, introductions, social media attention and mentions, and ultimately, qualifying leads.

#9 Consistent Presence, Not Sporadic Pushes

Cultivating relationships is similar to growing plants. Turning up occasionally to water them doesn't necessarily mean they'll blossom: they need constant care and attention, much like influencers do.

With consistent communication and fair collaboration, you can encourage loyalty and truly inspire influencers to become your brand's ambassadors. Never forget to praise them and express your gratitude. Additionally, it's smart to [engage with influencers in person](#)—suggest meeting them at an industry event or inviting them out for coffee.

Set up reminders for yourself to follow a schedule for touching base with the various influencers you're in contact with in order to avoid sporadic contact that's based only on your marketing needs. In the end, it's important to remember that, just like any person, influencers enjoy attention and care, so when you develop a relationship with them, a personal touch is a must.

#10 Why Not Hire an Influencer?

Finally, here's a more unconventional idea. If an influencer is especially knowledgeable, experienced, and respected in your trade, it could be worthwhile to get them on board with your company once you've established a great relationship with them. After all, [social hires are becoming a prominent recruiting technique today](#), and your company can benefit greatly from the expertise of an established and recognized specialist.

In terms of brand awareness, bringing an influencer on board increases the credibility of your work and the respect for your brand. Your company shouldn't simply be focusing on marketing, but also on bringing together a team of qualified experts. And of course, there's always the possibility of meeting new connections and potential collaborations from the influencer's professional network.

Using the power of influencers is especially relevant for B2B companies, since they can harness it to reach a wider range of people and make a difference to their brand on a larger scale. With a good understanding of how influencer marketing works and how it can benefit a brand, marketers will be equipped to create meaningful relationships with thought leaders that deliver practical results.

Wondering what influencer marketing techniques will work best for your company, or already have some experience with them? If you'd like to take your strategy to the next level, get in touch with our team at inSegment. Our experts can help you structure your efforts and reach out to the most influential people in your industry segment.



Alexander Kesler Bio:

Alexander Kesler is a visionary B2B digital marketer and has been practicing in the fields of technology, software, education and digital security, among others, for over 15 years. As the Founder and President of inSegment, Alexander leads a team of digital marketing experts and specializes in the areas of B2B Lead Generation, Content Marketing & Syndication, SEO & Paid Search, Conversion Oriented Web Development, Programmatic Media Buying and Direct Response Marketing.

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