



Essential Guide to B2B Influencer Marketing

How to choose the right influencer program
and execute a winning strategy

B2B Influencer Marketing Builds Momentum



The power of influence has always shaped B2B purchase decisions, from word-of-mouth recommendations to celebrity endorsements. But in a digital-first world—now saturated with marketing content and advertising messages—authentic influence has become something precious and coveted. B2B buyers crave insights and recommendations from trusted sources. That means real people (not faceless brands) who are reliable subject matter experts and engaging content creators.

This growing emphasis on trust has made influencer marketing—the process of promoting your company through collaboration with influencers and content creators—a primary digital strategy:

#1

marketing trend in 2022: Marketers cited influencer marketing as the most effective strategy with the biggest ROI!¹

\$11.7B

in revenue: B2B influencer marketing will generate nearly \$12 billion in revenue by the end of 2022.²

38%

of brands engaged: More than 38% of B2B companies are now pursuing influencer marketing programs.²

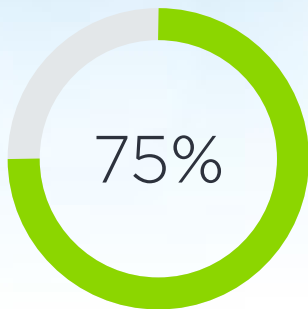
Accelerated adoption raises a question: If thousands of B2B brands are now working with influencers, how can your own influencer marketing program stand out and succeed? This ebook shows you how. Whether you're developing a new program or rebooting an existing one, read on to learn how to:

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| Incorporate the five qualities of a successful influencer program ▶ | Page 4 |
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| Identify the right influencers to work with ▶ | Page 6 |
| Execute three primary types of influencer programs ▶ | Page 7 |
| Develop a winning content strategy ▶ | Page 15 |

1. Hubspot, State of Marketing Trends Report 2022, <https://blog.hubspot.com/marketing/hubspot-blog-marketing-industry-trends-report>

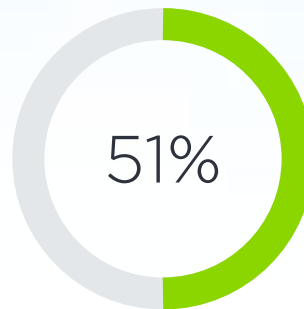
2. Frost & Sullivan, Growth Opportunities for Global B2B Influencer Marketing, March 2022, <https://www.researchandmarkets.com/reports/5561794/growth-opportunities-for-global-b2b-influencer>

Why B2B Influencer Marketing Has Become Indispensable



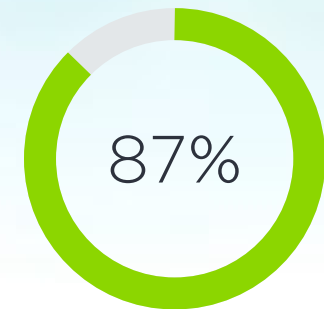
75% of B2B ad creative is ineffective and does not contribute to long-term growth.⁴ Digital advertising has long been seen as ineffective and wasteful, but with the coming [elimination of third-party cookies](#), targeted advertising will become even harder to execute. Influencer marketing presents a more cost-effective alternative.

4. LinkedIn B2B Institute and System1, Cashing in on Creativity Report, 2021, <https://business.linkedin.com/marketing-solutions/b2b-institute/b2b-creative>



51% of B2B marketers say it has become increasingly difficult to grab and keep audiences' attention.⁵ More brands are cranking out good-quality content, which means that your content must stand apart in some way. Influencer marketing can help you cut through the clutter and connect to your customers in an authentic way.

5. Content Marketing Institute, B2B Content Marketing Benchmarks, Budgets, and Trends Report 2022, https://contentmarketinginstitute.com/wp-content/uploads/2021/10/B2B_2022_Research.pdf



87% of executives think customers highly trust their companies when only about 30% do.⁶ This trust perception gap is particularly acute in the B2B space, according to [Forrester](#). For B2B buyers, trust is a critically important brand attribute. By partnering with an influencer that your audience trusts, you can build stronger long-term relationships.

6. PwC, 2022 Consumer Intelligence Series Survey on Trust, <https://www.pwc.com/us/en/services/consulting/library/consumer-intelligence-series/trust-new-business-currency.html>

5 Qualities of a Successful Influencer Program

What makes an influencer program successful? The five fundamental qualities listed below. In your planning and execution phases, be sure that your influencer strategy continually aligns with these qualities.



Relevance: A successful influencer program occupies a clearly defined niche and stays on topic. The more relevant an influencer's content is, the more shares, comments, and clicks it's likely to generate. B2B buyers seek out relevant, high-quality educational content as well as thought leadership.



Consistency: To build up online influence, you must keep at it. Successful influencers maintain a sustained level of effort, regularly publishing content on their channels. Your cadence will depend on your goals and the time and resources available, but your audience needs to be able to reliably find fresh content.



Originality: An effective influencer provides something audiences can't find anywhere else. Topics such as insider tips or industry insights—typically based on a long history of experience—attract an audience because they expand beyond the scope of traditional marketing content to provide a unique point of view.



Authenticity: Having experience with a topic will validate an influencer's thought leadership by showing the audience it's based in truth. Showing some evidence of an influencer's real personality also helps to differentiate and make them more approachable.



Trust: If audiences know that they can depend on an influencer to consistently provide content and opinions that deliver real value, they'll start to trust that influencer. Establishing transparency also helps [build trust](#), such as indicating when a brand is paying an influencer to review its products or disclosing that the influencer works for a specific company whose services they'll be discussing regularly.

Getting Started: Map Your Audience and Goals



The starting point for your influencer program—like any marketing initiative—is to define your audience and goals. Take a step back from any tactical thinking (like what types of influencers you want to work with) and carefully consider the outcomes you want to achieve. What does success look like?

Here are a few examples of specific goals you can pursue via influencer marketing:

- Raising your company's profile on social media
- Generating awareness for a product or service launch
- Promoting a specific conference, event, or webinar
- Communicating a change in brand messaging or direction
- Staking out a presence in a new industry or market
- Generating marketing-qualified leads and accounts
- Supporting customer retention
- Increasing the reach of a content marketing campaign

Next, consider your audience. Whom are you trying to reach? Be as specific as possible and reference existing [buyer personas](#). In addition to the usual information you collect on audience pain points, informational needs, and communication preferences, go deeper on intel specific to influencer marketing: What social channels and media outlets does this audience frequent? What industry influencers do they already follow?

How to Identify the Right Influencers



Your audience research will pave the way for identifying the right influencers to work with. As you search for candidates, keep your end goals in mind—what you want to ultimately accomplish, and which individuals can help you get there. In turn, you should seek out influencers whose own vision and objectives are aligned with yours. It should be a fruitful partnership (not a transaction) that benefits both parties.

Look for B2B influencers with these qualities:

Authority: They have recognized expertise and thought leadership credentials in your industry or niche

Reach: Someone who already engages the right audience for your needs (which may not necessarily be the largest audience)

Relevance: They post and create content relevant to your industry, via social media, a niche blog or podcast, or as a conference speaker

Engagement: Their own followers interact with them frequently and genuinely

An influencer identification tool can help you quickly build a list of possible contenders based on topic criteria that you enter, and then rank that list based on metrics such as audience size, engagement scores, and so on. Investigate the potential fit for tools like [Followerwonk](#), [BuzzSumo](#), [BuzzStream](#), [Onalytica](#), and others.

3 Types of Influencers You Can Work With

Independent influencer

An individual with an area of specialty who has developed an audience based on a personal brand but is not linked to a specific company. Audience size generally starts in the tens of thousands. May work with multiple brands within their specialty area, or none at all.

In-house brand influencer

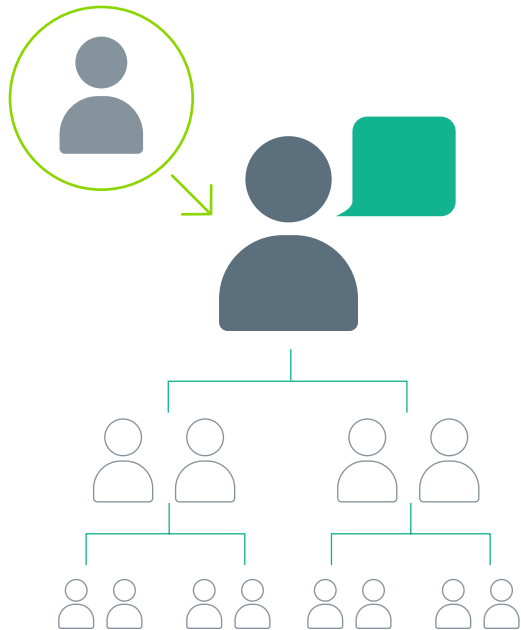
An individual who has developed an audience based on a personal brand and works at your own company. Often an executive or technical subject matter expert. Audience size generally starts in the thousands. Still functions as an independent thought leader, but only works with their company's brand.

Micro-influencer/creator

An individual with a small to moderate following, generally under 10,000. A micro-influencer is typically both a subject matter expert and an expert content creator. They have generated a loyal following—with genuine interactions—thanks to their keen insights, engaging content (videos, blog posts, podcasts, etc.), and consistent publishing cadence.

You certainly aren't limited to working with only one type of influencer. Your influencer program can mix and match to find the blend that meets your needs. Let's explore each of these types of influencer programs in more detail.

Program 1: Independent Influencer Outreach



Ideal for:

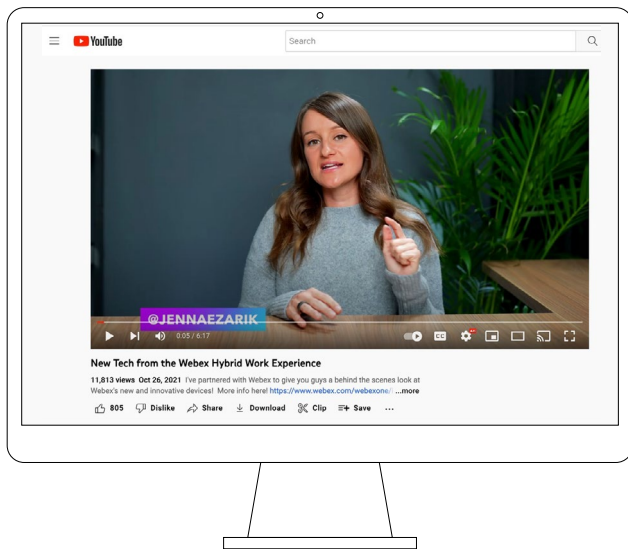
- Short-term campaigns, such as supporting an event or launch
- Accessing niche audiences
- Increasing overall reach

Program summary:

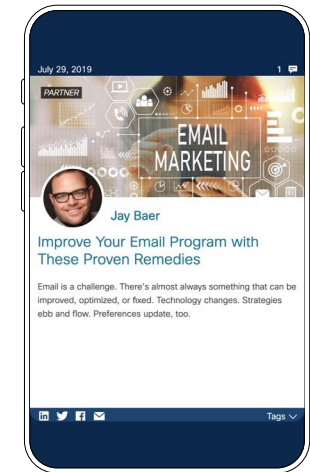
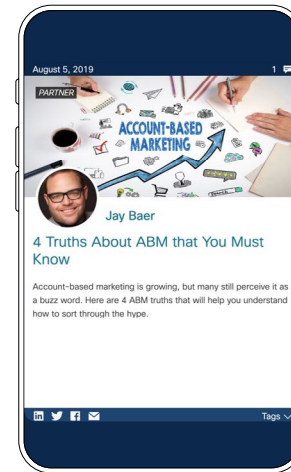
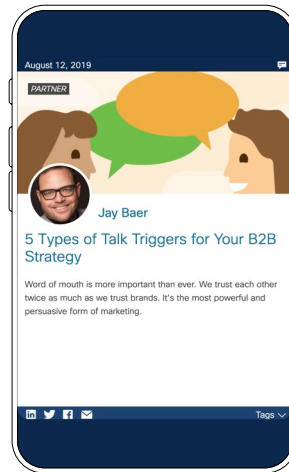
This type of influencer marketing, co-opted from the B2C arena, focuses on using category leaders with relevant expertise to drive your brand's message to a larger market, i.e., the influencer's audience. It is most effective for marketing initiatives with specific timelines, such as events or product launches, because an independent influencer is less likely to maintain a continued narrative around your brand.

For example, an influencer may impartially review your product or service, which you may have provided for free, or appear as a guest on your blog or webinar. To maintain audience trust, independent influencers should be transparent about payment to work with a brand (which most expect). If an influencer makes an endorsement or recommendation, it should be based on real opinion, not because of a payment.

Spotlight: Independent Influencers at Cisco



Cisco Webex collaborated with lifestyle and tech influencer Jenna Ezarik, who has nearly 1 million YouTube followers and more than 133,000 TikTok followers. In this [YouTube video](#), Ezarik toured Webex's Hybrid Work Experience Center to give her followers an inside look at the latest devices to enable remote work and collaboration.



Cisco's Partner Marketing team works with author and marketing influencer [Jay Baer](#) to create ongoing educational content. As an expert in B2B and B2C marketing, Baer helps Cisco channel partners to adopt strategies and best practices to become more effective marketers. He develops content tailored to the needs of Cisco Partner companies, including training videos, blog posts, and more. Baer boast more than 33,000 LinkedIn followers and 275,000 Twitter followers.

Program 2: Developing In-House Brand Influencers



Ideal for:

- Nurturing long-term brand affinity and audience relationships
- Awareness building
- Customer retention

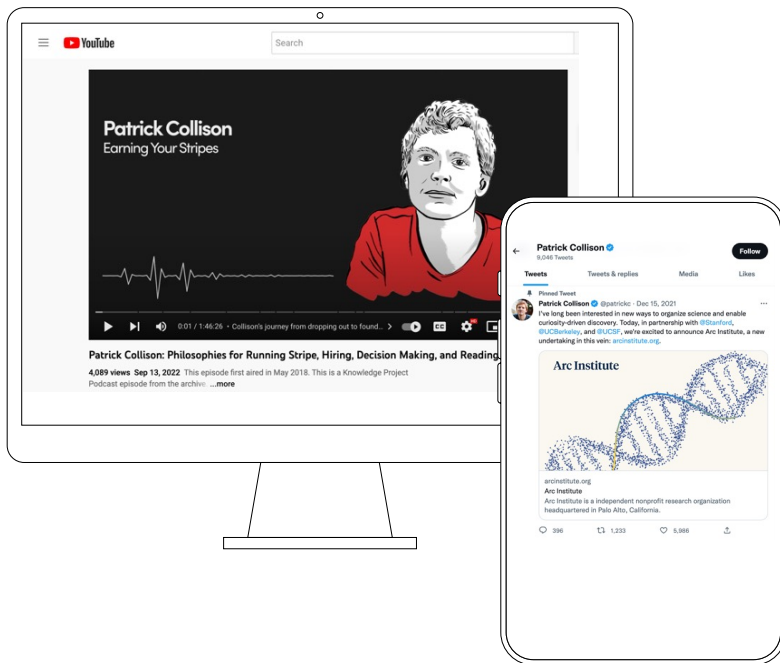
Program summary:

Developing an in-house or brand influencer is a good way to support a sustained brand narrative. By identifying thought leaders within your own organization and helping them develop an online presence, you can expand both their influence and that of your company. This approach is particularly effective for B2B companies that may have a smaller pool of independent industry influencers to draw upon or for those with a high level of in-house expertise, such as service providers.

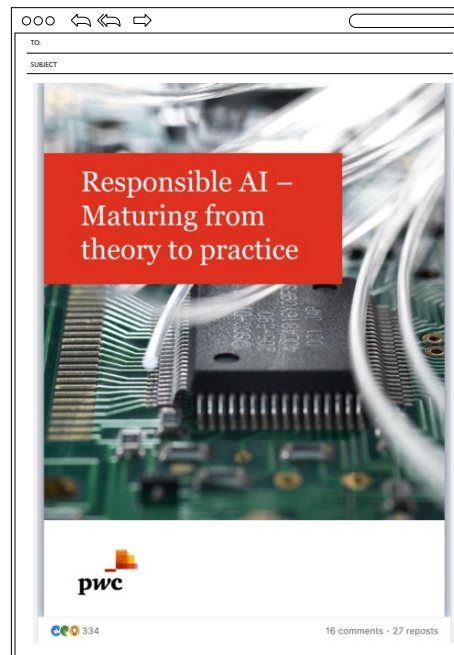
Though transparent about being employed by their company, in-house influencers maintain an independent voice and provide objective thought leadership. For example, in-house influencers for an IT security firm might cover topics such as changes to the profession or top trends for the coming year. Mixed in with that might be a discussion of what their firm will be demoing at an upcoming industry event or how to troubleshoot updates to a solution released by their firm.

Many in-house influencers will need a support structure to aid their development, either due to time constraints or lack of familiarity with various content platforms. Support can range from simple tools to help plan and schedule content to a full-blown team that manages the influencer's social account and creates content on their behalf. An effective support structure should transition an influencer toward greater self-sufficiency and engagement with the process, ideally reaching a point where the influencer creates at least some of their own content.

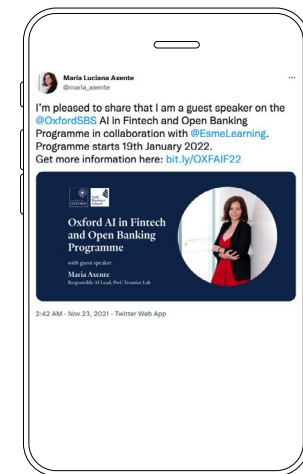
Spotlight: In-House Influencers at PwC and Stripe



Patrick Collison, co-founder and CEO of the online payments company Stripe, demonstrates the qualities of a successful CEO influencer. As a frequent speaker and prolific social media sharer (with nearly 400,000 Twitter followers), he shares thoughtful opinions and tech insights which, in turn, elevate his own company's brand.



PwC executive Maria Luciana Axente is an internationally recognized expert in AI ethics and responsible AI, and one of the top influencers in AI circles. She is a frequent speaker and guest blogger, and consistently posts her latest research and reporting on Twitter and LinkedIn. Her digital presence and thought leadership helps to affirm PwC's status as one of the world's top AI consultancies.



Program 3: Developing Micro-Influencers Through Employee Advocacy



Ideal for:

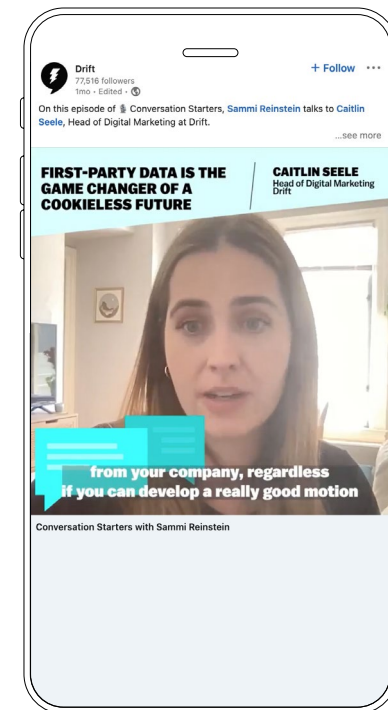
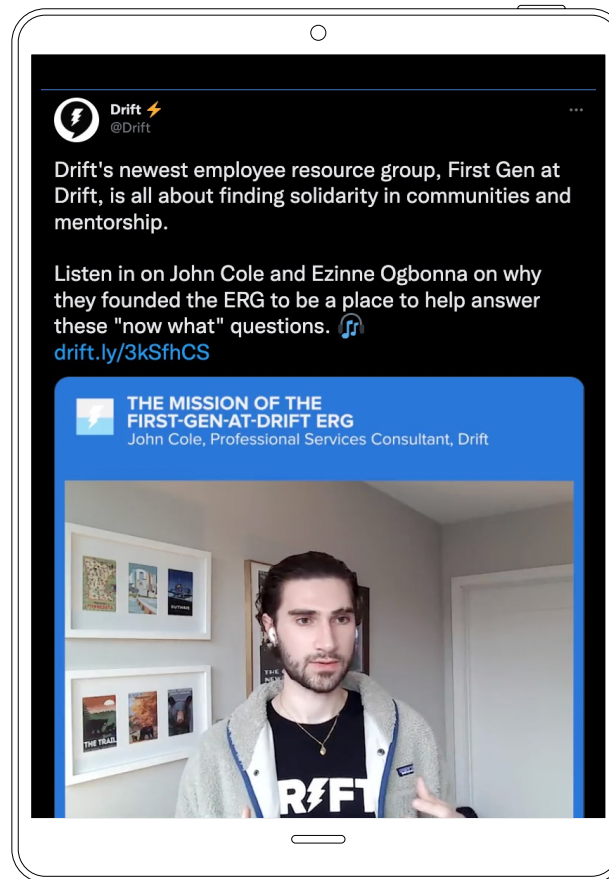
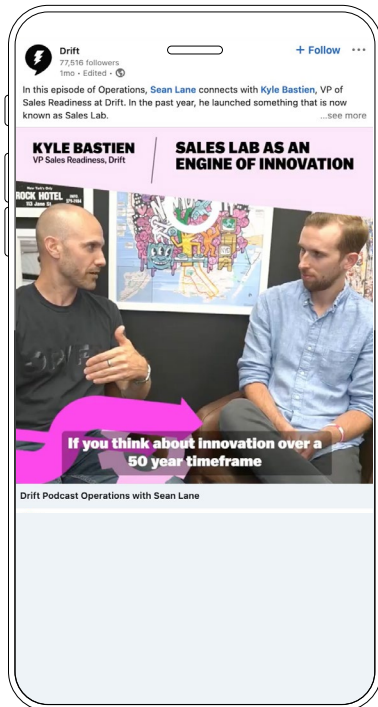
- Building awareness and increasing your brand's digital footprint
- Expanding reach and share of voice
- Increasing authenticity in your outreach

Program summary:

Employee advocacy is a specific flavor of micro-influence and content creation. Encouraging employees to hold real, organic conversations on social media can help build awareness of your brand and increase your brand's online footprint in a way that slickly-designed campaign posts just can't match. If you're lucky, these micro-influencers are already talking about your brand online, either within the context of personal social media accounts or via separate professional personas that they're nurturing as part of a career-building effort.

A successful program calls for structure and processes so that employees are trained on how to interpret and apply campaign-related messaging, rather than just parroting the contents of a distributed social media package.

Spotlight: Micro-Influencer Content at Drift



Drift, a SaaS platform and chatbot application, excels at authentic thought leadership and micro-influence through employee advocacy. It's Conversation Starters video podcast, posted to its [LinkedIn page](#), features short takes from Drift employees on topics they're passionate about. Drift encourages its employees to become active content creators that communicate regularly with their own networks.

Tracking Progress and Measuring Success

Measurement approach

What and how you measure will vary depending on your specific goals and the type of influencer program you're running. For any type of program, differentiate and separately measure short-term vs. long-term goals. Generally, you'll measure short-term goals at a campaign level and long-term goals at a program level. Overall, you'll want to contextualize metrics based on outputs (what you're doing), outcomes (the results of what you're doing), and business impacts (ROI).

When working with an independent influencer, your primary objective is to get them to engage with your content, campaign, or brand in some way, such as covering it in a blog post or sharing or liking your content. You'll then achieve reach and engage the influencers' audience.

Example Influencer activity to track:

Number of times an influencer mentions your brand or campaign in their own content

Number of times an influencer engages with your content (likes, shares, comments)

Frequency of influencer posts (for in-house influencers and employee advocates)

Number of fans and followers



Example Influencer audience activity to track:

Overall mentions of your brand or campaign

Overall reach of your brand, campaign, or content

Overall engagement with your content (likes, shares, comments)

Overall traffic to your website or campaign assets

Start slowly by focusing first on measuring and reporting influencer activity, followed by tracking the influencer audience reactions based on how you're optimizing your content. Once you've developed some traction there, focus on business outcomes such as leads, conversions, and revenue generated by your program.

Embed Influencer Marketing into Your Content Strategy



Influencer marketing is a perfect complement to your existing content marketing program. The secret to both practices? Relevant, engaging content delivered consistently to your audience.

Influencer content can take many forms:

- Your company's content shared by an influencer on Twitter or LinkedIn, with their own spin or opinion layered on top
- Your company content, featuring a quote from an influencer
- Influencer-created content about your company's solution or product (announcing a new launch, describing a demo experience, etc.)
- An expert or executive from your company appearing as a guest on an influencer's podcast
- Your company's latest thought leadership or educational webinar, hosted by an influencer
- Op-ed or sponsored content article written by an influencer, published in a mainstream media outlet (and paid for by the company)

B2B influencer marketing comes alive when content is co-created between the influencer and the brand. The most effective and authentic content is written in the influencer's own voice, with their own perspective—rather than something created in advance by your marketing team. Let your influencers pitch your ideas and flex their creativity.

Bringing It All Together



An influencer program can provide measurable results, but assembling and launching one takes serious focus and sustained effort. Before you begin, be sure to make the up-front effort to identify and document the goals, strategies, and plans of your program. Assemble and develop your tools, processes, roles, and responsibilities at the outset to provide a clear picture of where you are and where you are going.

Make sure you have the resources you'll need to achieve success, both in the short and long term. Scale and communicate your expectations accordingly. Once you've launched your program, be sure to measure progress along the way and adjust if necessary, like any content marketing effort.

Work with Tendo

Ready to create superlative content that can break through the noise and reach your audiences? Partner with Tendo Communications, the B2B content agency preferred by world-class B2B brands.

We'll help you devise and execute a strategy that integrates content marketing and influencer marketing to help you maximize your budget and deliver better results. Learn more at www.tendocom.com or contact us at inquiries@tendocom.com.



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About the Authors

This ebook was written by Tendo Communications staff. Tendo is an end-to-end content agency that supports some of the world's best-known B2B brands. Content is all we do: Our team of content marketing and content strategy experts combine their skills to help our clients achieve their toughest marketing goals. Get in touch to explore how we can help you plan, create, and optimize content experiences for your customers and prospects: inquiries@tendocom.com.