



 WHITEPAPER

How To Successfully Integrate with Influential Content Creators



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Introduction

It's well-understood that partnering with influencers is a powerful technique for reaching a broader audience in a more genuine way. According to [SocialTimes](#), close to 60 percent of marketers plan to boost their influencer marketing budgets over the next year.

When it comes to creating content on behalf of your brand, it's also essential to work with a range of contributors both internally and externally to vary the voices and perspectives you're offering to your customer base.

Integrating content creators with influence into your content marketing strategy not only helps your organization feature a unique point of view in your vertical, but it also gives you the opportunity to distribute your content with a larger audience. Learn how to thoughtfully integrate influential content creators in your content marketing workflow by following the steps found in this resource.

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The Benefits of Partnering on Content Creation

When it comes to developing content for your business, whether it is a blog post, case study, landing page, video, infographic or other type, many businesses create these resources in-house, since they know their brand and it's a cost-effective approach to content creation.

However, by solely relying on in-house content creators to execute your content strategy, you're missing out on some of the key benefits of working with influential writers, designers and other freelance talent who can create quality content and help with distribution, which ensures your investments in content are seen by the right people.

By influential content creators, we mean individuals who produce high-quality content in one or a variety of formats, who also have an engaged online audience that regularly interacts with the content they are sharing. For example, freelance writer [Kristi Hines](#) and freelance designer [Paul Jarvis](#) both regularly contribute to major publications within their industry from Forbes to Social Media Examiner, are highly active on social media and produce expert content for a variety of clients across verticals.

According to [eMarketer](#), advertisers who implemented an influencer marketing program in 2014 earned an average of \$6.85 in media value for every \$1 they spent on paid media, highlighting how choosing content creators like these can help generate ongoing results as they develop content on your behalf. Compare this to creators who merely create content for your business, and that's the extent of your relationship — the distribution of the content is entirely up to you.

The benefits of working with an influential content creator include:

- Premium creators with influence create world-class content on your behalf
- Added distribution to a relevant audience of any content co-created together
- Their knowledge of both content creation and distribution is an asset for your strategy
- Your business and content is connected with their brand, building a strong association
- The added distribution of partnering is a cost-effective solution to generating more reach

Start partnering with influential content creators to start seeing more results from your content strategy. This resource has an emphasis on written content, but the process applies to most forms of content creation.



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Matching With Consistent Content Creators

The first step of bringing influential content creators into the fold is finding the right ones. They should be good matches for your campaign, with industry expertise and a following within your vertical. Think of it like dating — you don’t want to date just anyone, right? You want someone who matches your interests and expectations of the ideal partner who’s interested in you as well.

Same goes for working with a content creator; there has to be a mutual interest to ensure the relationship focused around creating and distributing content will be a success for both parties. Otherwise, the partnership can feel forced and the content can come off as disingenuous.

“There’s real value in finding a great writer who fits with your culture and who you want to work with — even if they lack industry expertise. You can likely teach someone the specifics of your business (by pairing them with a subject matter expert, for example),” said Ann Handley, the author of [Everybody Writes](#) and head of content at [MarketingProfs](#).

The best arrangement is one that sets up a relationship between a business and a content creator for the long term, as opposed to a one-off engagement. This content creator should already be creating the format of content you’re interested in, as well as have experience creating content centered around topics of interest to your target audience.

There are a few ways to find these influential content creators. First, search social networks like Twitter, LinkedIn and Facebook, and Google industry-related keywords to find content of interest.

For example, Handley advises using Twitter as a “social prospecting” tool to find strong voices and points of view in any industry. After finding these creators on social media or elsewhere, she recommends reading what they wrote to better understand who they actually are. “Look for attention to detail, a cultural fit, and how interested you are in what they have to say. Can they tell true stories well?” she asks.

The downside is that this process can be time-consuming, since you’ll have to review who authored each piece of content, until you’ve identified a handful of creators to review and potentially contact.

The other ways to find influential content creators include working with an agency dedicated to managing influencer relationships, using a content platform dedicated to freelance talent and managing the content workflow, asking colleagues in your industry for recommendations, and researching articles that highlight influencers in your niche.

After identifying potential content creators to work with, it's time to vet them based on their experience, audience and pricing, all of which depend on a variety of factors.

When first reaching out to influential creators, ask for case studies, examples of their past content and how they typically structure their content partnership projects. They should have multiple past projects for you to refer to to better understand their approach to content, quality of work and experience within your industry.

Next, to analyze if they are reaching your ideal audience on a regular basis already, look at what industry their content is usually tailored to. This would also require reviewing their social media profiles, website analytics, email newsletter and other channels to understand what content they choose to share, alongside how often the content they are sharing is engaged with per channel. By understanding their audience and how engaged they are, it'll become clear which content creators you'll be interested in working with based on their potential to reach your customer.

Lastly, understand your budget since influential content creators are often more costly to work with initially than your average freelancer. As mentioned before, partnering with this level of content creator provides cost savings in the long term, since they assist not only with the creation of content but distribution as well.

Pricing for this caliber of content creator will vary due to their experience, audience size, the type of content and other factors. These types of partnerships are best-suited to mid-sized businesses and large enterprise brands that are able to pay a minimum of \$300 per piece of content created.

How to Pair Creators With Targeted Topics & Formats

Once you've identified the partners, it's time choose the right topics and formats for your organization. This comes by first having a deep understanding of the range of topics related to your company's offerings that truly interest and engage your audience.

This should be a [collaborative effort with the content creator](#) based on a list of challenges your audience faces, as well as the creator's opinion on the industry, their comfort level with a particular subject area and what they believe will resonate best with their community.

Ask these questions when deciding upon what topics your content creator should focus on:

- *What challenges do my customer base regularly come across? By using content to answer these problems, you'll help deliver value to your audience and associate your business as a subject matter expert over time.*

- *Where are there gaps in information across my industry when it comes to content?* Don't produce content that's already been done across your industry once or a few times; look for areas that competitors haven't talked about to give your content a chance of standing out.
- *What content will have the most impact from this partnership?* You're allocating budget and additional time to working with an influential content creator, so ensure that the topics you choose are the most impactful to get the most from collaborating.
- *Are both parties passionate about this particular topic or set of topics?* Work with the influencer to understand what subjects they are passionate about, as well as what your team is excited about exploring. Both parties need to be delighted about the topic to interest your audience with the final piece of content.
- *Does this content incite action from your audience?* Understand how the topics relate back to your company's offerings and further move a customer down the sales funnel to a conversion. Whether the goal is to gain more visibility with a demographic or generate email sign-ups, the topic should help guide a reader to take action.

When the topic choices are narrowed down, the format options are limited by what types of content the creator typically produces — because you can't expect a freelance writer to produce infographics or a graphic designer to write a winning blog post. However, it's important to consider multiple formats at this step in the process, because your collaboration with an influential creator should also enable you to repurpose the content they create into other types to make the most of your investment.

For example, working on a white paper with an influential content creator can provide your business with an outline for developing an infographic based off the same information found in the written resource. Another example could be repurposing blog posts into podcast episodes or a script for creating a video.

The possibilities with repurposing content are endless; it just comes down to [thinking creatively](#) about how your company will repackage the original resource into different formats. It's important to also include provisions in your contracts with content creators that allow for the reuse of content created by them into other formats.

Sync Distribution Efforts From the Start

In the beginning stages of content planning, work with your content creator to understand how it'll be distributed after publishing, especially among their audience. Discuss how the resource will be marketed, because the way in which it is distributed could impact formatting considerations, the topics chosen and the elements included.



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Will this content live on a landing page? Will you promote this resource on Facebook? Understanding how this influential content creator will make use of their audience in the distribution process is a necessary step in ensuring the most results from the partnership.

“A brand should understand and align with the domain expertise of the influential content creator, details of what they have published in the past (which might differ slightly from their domain expertise), as well as the professional objectives of the content creator to best determine how the brand should collaborate with this individual,” said Neal Schaffer, speaker, author of [Maximize Your Social](#), teacher at Rutgers University and the founder of the [Social Tools Summit](#) and the Social Media Center of Excellence.

“Only in this way can the brand be assured of collaborating and receiving content that is of the highest level because the goals of the brand as well as the creator are the same — and this ensures that the influencer would naturally promote it to his or her own network as if it was his or her own work,” he added.

According to [Viveka Von Rosen](#), [LinkedIn marketing expert](#), speaker and author, here’s what you should be thinking about to sync your distribution efforts from the beginning:

- **Your Audience.** Who is your audience for each platform (I guarantee they will differ somewhat, if not greatly)? What are they interested in? Who are they interested in? Would the person you interview on your Google Plus hangout also be fascinating to your Facebook group?
- **The Medium.** Be clear on which medium to use. Can you save a Periscope “scope” to YouTube? Transcribe a Blab and make it an interview for LinkedIn Publisher?
- **Timing.** What topics are trending? What events or holidays are happening? Is there someone you should interview who is an authority in a trending topic? How soon should you book the interviews? Will the influencer need to approve it?
- **Content.** Above all things, plan what your content will focus on, and if you are using influencers, how to work with them to best form that content. Should you try interviews? A “best of” list? A book review? A top tips roundup? Do you need their buy in, or are you just reporting?

Accounting for these elements can help your business find worthwhile content to create as well as help with generating content with greater visibility and opportunities for amplification. Using influential content creators as a part of your overarching content strategy is an effective way to strike a strong balance between content production and content distribution. A little planning can make a big difference in both the quality and quantity of your ongoing content efforts.



“As I like to say, great content isn’t great until people find, consume and act on it.”

Facilitating the Co-Creation of Content

It’s time to start creating the content you’ve been planning. To help manage the workflow, give your content creator specific, black-and-white guidance that outlines all tasks and deliverables with detailed timeframes. To ensure the workflow for [your content production](#) runs smoothly:

1. Create a project brief to summarize the focus, goal and strategy behind this particular piece of content
2. Provide the content creator with all the necessary information they need to create the resource, including any existing collateral they can use as reference material
3. Grant the content creator access to any tools or project management systems your business uses to facilitate projects
4. Set up a timeline for when the content creator is expected to complete each part of the project, including everything from turning over the final draft to coordinating visuals
5. Notify them of the editing process and how many rounds of revisions they are expected to compete with each piece of content
6. Allow them to review the final, edited piece of content to ensure they are satisfied with any changes, since it’ll have their byline on it and they’ll be sharing it with their audience

Aligning the Proper Post-Publishing Execution

The resource has been produced, and now it’s time to execute your distribution strategy for this piece of content.

“As I like to say, great content isn’t great until people find, consume and act on it,” said, [Lee Odden](#), author, blogger, speaker and marketing agency CEO at [TopRank Online Marketing](#). Create a checklist based on the marketing tactics you planned for originally.

According to [Forbes](#), word-of-mouth buzz inspired by influencers generates more than twice the sales of paid advertising and a 37 percent higher retention rate. This highlights how helpful it is to have the content creator share the content with their audience via social media, email, their blog and wherever else it makes sense to do so.

“An unknown freelancer’s masterpiece isn’t nearly as valuable as content created by an authoritative source with a native understanding of the topic and a built-in audience anticipating what the influencer will publish next,” added Odden. It is the combination of meaningful content creation and influencer activation that makes co-created content — aka “participation marketing” — a focus for many brand content marketing programs.

Measuring the Impact of Each Partnership

After each piece of content has been distributed to your audience, it's time to evaluate whether you've reached your goals or not.

Pair metrics to each of your goals and [measure them across each channel](#). For example, if your goal is to achieve more engagement from your content across channels, look to analyze metrics like comments, shares, time on site, click-through rates, etc. If you're looking to drive conversions from this content, analyze metrics like email sign-ups, downloads, requests for information, sales, etc.

When monitoring these goals, keep two things in mind: Is the ROI greater than the cost, time and resource investment you spent to produce this content? And did collaborating with this caliber of content creator improve the overall distribution of the content they produced for your company? These are key considerations when analyzing the success of your partnership.

Once you've created multiple pieces of content across a variety of channels with an influential content creator, use the data collected from these content efforts to better understand what works and what doesn't work to drive results. This data will help you determine what types of formats to focus on and which topics drive the strongest results.

Now it's your turn. Use this report as a guide for your future influencer campaigns focused around creating and distributing content with the goal of generating worthwhile results.



Start partnering with influential content creators now.

ClearVoice can help.

Run a casting call in the ClearVoice Marketplace to find the right voice for your content or ask us about our custom influencer identification and management programs.

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