

# How to Become an Influencer in Your Industry



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## FOREWORD

There's a conversation over a glass of red wine that I won't forget. It was in Italy -- I had been invited to keynote in a country more than half a world away from home. A question was posed. "Why were you asked to speak?"

It hadn't been arranged at the introduction of a speaking agency, a friend or even a LinkedIn post. The answer? "We saw you everywhere".

The pervasive and persistent strategy to growing my reach as an influencer was working!

I had been creating and sharing original content for over two years. My audience was growing. I was on a mission to share the empowering freedom of social media -- my industry -- to the world. This intersection of technology and humanity had me hooked, and I started growing my reach, one blog post and tweet at a time.

I was just a blogger, just a personal brand, just like everyone else...but establishing my expertise in an area -- social media in my case -- and being savvy about sharing this expertise online helped me reach an audience and shape influence. Thanks to the internet, I was no longer constrained by borders and geography -- I could amplify my voice and cut through the noise.

But influence requires more than unique content and compelling insights or ideas with gravitas. It needs to move. Ripple across the web. Dropping into inboxes, LinkedIn and online conversations.

So do you want to be an influencer in your industry?

The creation and distribution of your content to achieve thought-leader-status influence in your industry means a multi-channel strategy that weaves your brand into obscure corners. This ebook will help you understand and build the fundamental pillars of a solid influencer strategy so you can cut through the chatter and be heard.

The old adage "build it and they will come" doesn't cut it in a noisy digital world.

It's time to elbow your way to the front of the queue -- and becoming an influencer in your industry is the way to do it.

**Jeff Bullas**

Founder & Digital Wrangler at [JeffBullas.com](http://JeffBullas.com)



# WHY DO WE PAY ATTENTION TO INFLUENCERS?

## INFLUENCE

in·flu·ence l'inflooans/  
noun

1. The capacity to have an effect on the character, development or behavior of someone or something, or the effect itself

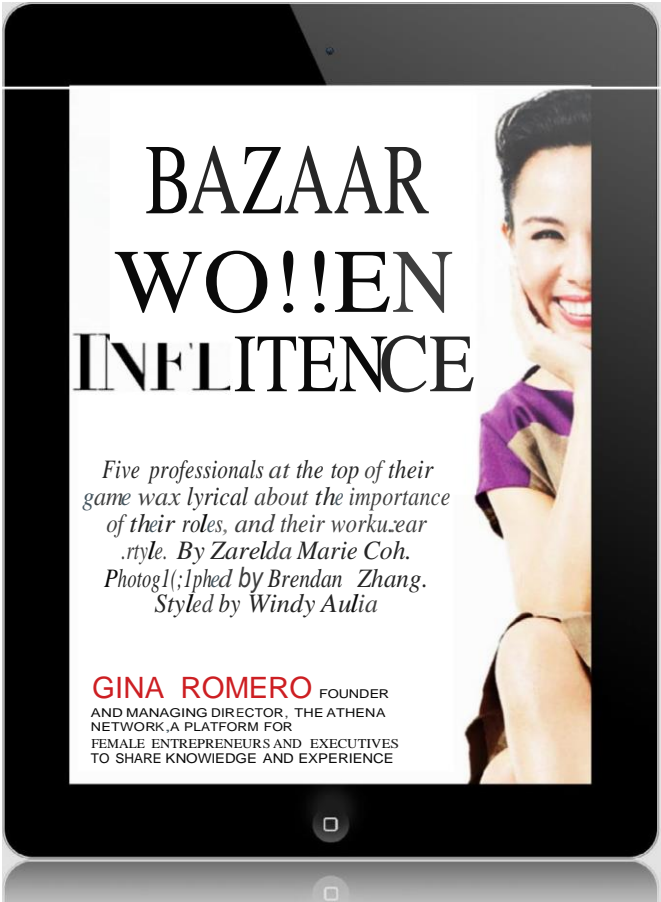
- Oxford Dictionary (source)



As long as there has been society, there have been influencers. Easily recognisable influencers include kings and presidents, religious and community leaders, business leaders, and of course, celebrities. Similarly, you're probably also familiar with companies that are influencers – take Nike, a leader in sports apparel and the larger conversation around sports, or Apple for technology and innovative design.

Their actions are closely watched and frequently discussed, from certain clothing styles that influence fashion to their ideologies on how to run a business or live life. But *why* do we pay attention to them?

- They have some sort of niche – that is to say, they hold some key authority, charisma or knowledge that others do not.
- They regularly share quality content that is inspirational, helpful, original or knowledgeable from a position of experience and/or expertise. This content can be different things for different people- from presentations to articles to videos.
- They have a larger presence than others in their industry. They have some combination of greater name recognition, social reach, media coverage, speaking engagements and content readership.



# INFLUENCE STEMS FROM POWER

Before we get into *how* to become an influencer, it's important to know how influence starts. Influence is created from power – and there are different types of power.

Based on the strength of your organisation and the individuals within, it might make sense to leverage a particular type of power in your positioning strategy. Below, we have summarised widely accepted forms of power bases coined by social psychologists John R. P. French and Bertram Raven.



**Tharman Shanmugaratnam**

Deputy Prime Minister and  
Coordinating Minister for Economic  
and Social Policies, Singapore

## LEGITIMATE POWER

When a judge hands down a sentence, that sentence is enforced. The judge has final say – their power comes from a position of authority. This is legitimate power.

**Legitimate power can influence in two ways:**

**Official capacity:** such as the judge in a courtroom, a legislator in parliament or the board of directors deciding which new CEO to hire for a company.

**Attributed influence:** when Singapore's finance minister gives his thoughts on best business practices for 2016, media outlets are quick to report it. Business people listen and may incorporate them into their strategies because his position lends weight to his opinion on related topics.

The Deputy Prime Minister has power that is inherent to his role within the organisation – that is, the Singaporean government. Similarly, your company's co-founders or CEO have legitimate power due to their role. When you are putting out press releases, you are most likely to reference someone with power because it holds more weight.

Source: commons.wikimedia.com





## REFERENT POWER

When Kate Middleton, the Duchess of Cambridge, is spotted wearing a new pair of shoes, that shoe is sold out within hours. Many people around the world look up to her as an individual with great poise and impeccable fashion sense. Brands associated with the Duchess get a boost in sales because people follow her every move and want to copy her style.

Kate Middleton holds referent power as a style icon. Referent power comes from being liked and respected by those around you. This power is based on the fact that people look to you for inspiration and want to emulate you.



## EXPERT POWER

When Australian-based Search Engine Optimisation (SEO) professional Dan Petrovic is a guest on a webinar about better link building, digital marketing professionals will be tuning in.

Through experimentation in SEO and original content, Dan established expertise in the field. His thought-leadership has built him a following in that niche. He is listed as one of the top influencers in the industry and he has been featured in multiple publications, such as Young Entrepreneurs below. By association, Dejan SEO, the agency he is part of, is regarded as one of the top agencies for SEO in the world.

Dan has expert power, a type of power that comes from other people needing to know what you know and what you can do. At your organisation, look for individuals who are experts in their roles, whether they are software developers, mineral compliance directors, marketers, or dentists- are they pushing the limits? Are they trying new things? Can others find this useful? Can you channel their expertise into speaking engagements, ebooks and other content?

# INFORMATIONAL POWER

With social media spreading content at the speed of light, it's possible to use information such as data analysis as a way to influence others. A great example is Nate Silver, statistician and founder of the popular site FiveThirtyEight.

Through data analysis, from both original research and other data sources, Nate and his team influence opinions on everything from sports to climate change to which candidate is most likely to win the next presidential election. This research is then picked up by other news outlets, bloggers and social media users and circulated widely. This increases reach and establishes FiveThirtyEight as a credible, go-to source that often gets quoted in major media outlets.

If your organisation creates original research, you can position yourself as the top industry resource for trends and analysis in your niche. For example, if you are a medical college looking to recruit students, you could research and release data on medical professions' salaries or perceived job satisfaction for different medical specialties. This data can then be shared and referenced by third-parties, boosting your brand's profile.



## OTHER TYPES OF POWER

There are other types of influential power that we won't go into too much detail about in this guide. This includes coercive power which uses the threat of force to gain compliance from another – think dictatorships and blackmail – as well as reward power which is based on the right to offer or deny others something – for example, industry awards or honors.

While we definitely do not endorse coercive power, reward power is a great way to exercise influence but it is dependent on first establishing yourself as a credible individual or organisation using one of the other power tactics.





# WHO CAN BEAN INFLUENCER?

**If everyone becomes an influencer, does anyone truly have any influence?**

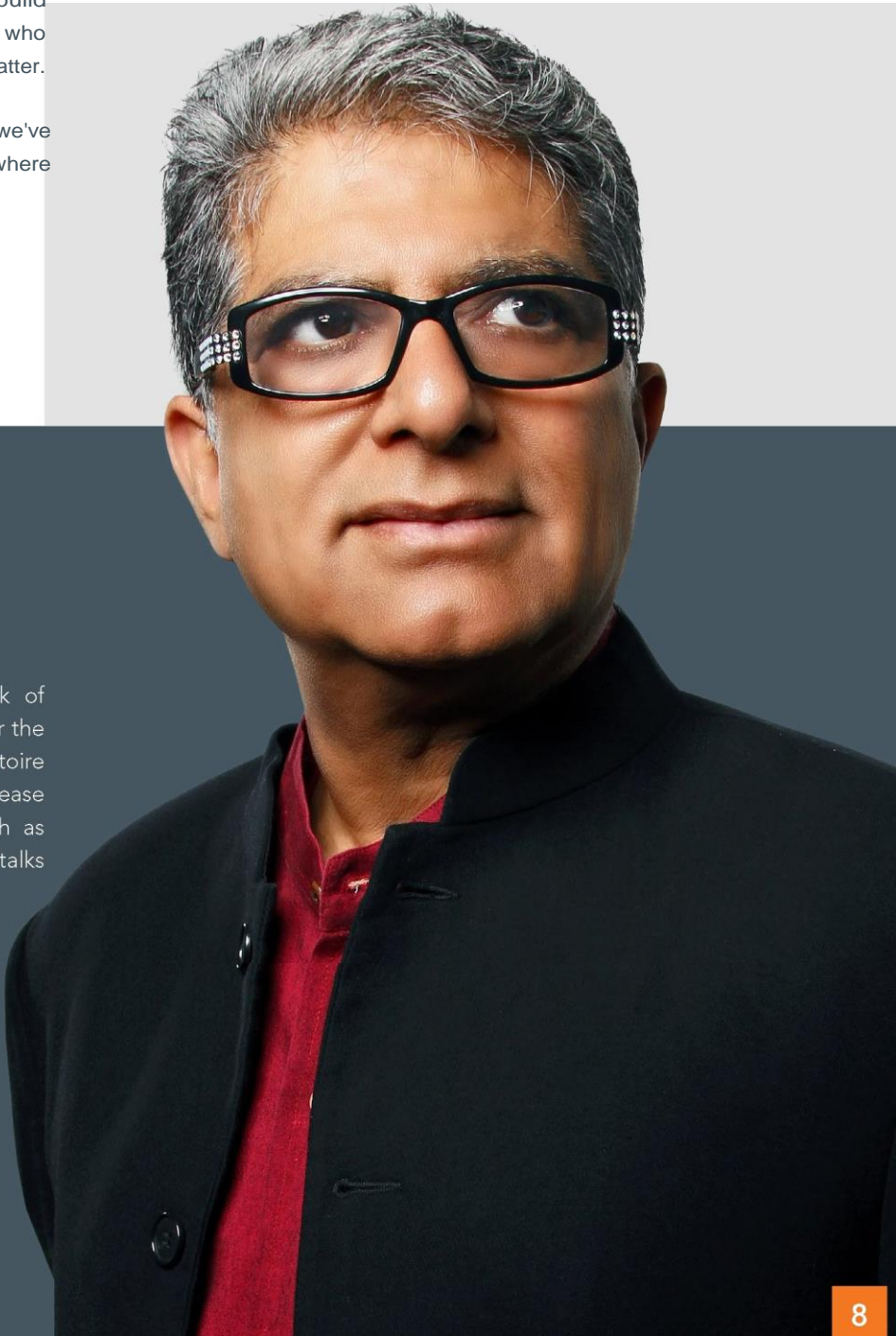
The reason influence works is because there are more people listening than talking. If everyone were to talk, the chatter would drown out individual voices. With digital marketing, it's possible for everyone to build a platform to be heard but it's the select few who establish power whose voices rise above the chatter.

There are several categories of influencers – we've outlined them below to help you understand where your strategy might fit best.

## INDIVIDUALS

### → Individual as a brand

Sometimes, an individual is the brand. Think of celebrities with a platform such as Hollywood or the music industry, who build their image and repertoire of work and then leverage their fame to increase reach. Or, think of motivational speakers such as Deepak Chopra who are wildly popular for their talks and books.



Picture credit: [www.forbes.com/sites/davidhochman/2014/07/11/exclusive-deepak-chopra-aims-to-set-world-record/#1404b163d67](http://www.forbes.com/sites/davidhochman/2014/07/11/exclusive-deepak-chopra-aims-to-set-world-record/#1404b163d67)

## → Individual on behalf of a company

In the business world, the individual and their organisation are often linked in a cycle. An individual leverages their company as the initial platform, builds thought-leadership, works to reach the right people and at a certain point gains enough notice in the industry to be recognised as a leader in their niche.

There are different ways to become an influencer and different types of individuals who can become one. It just depends on the audience.

## Examples of people at your organisation who can become influencers:

### C-Level Executives

These people have legitimate power due to their position within the company

### Data Scientists

Data analysts is content. Those creating original content around research can be seen as foremost experts in their field.

### Staff Writers

Bloggers who write enough quality content to be recognised for their individual work can be leveraged at speaking opportunities as a representative of your brand and write guest posts on other platforms.

### Product Developers

"Makers" have their own community as well and can wield incredible influence in their industries and communities such as **Product Hunt**.

### Interns

Yes, even interns can become influencers. For example, an intern may become a great source of content for a careers blog which other aspiring young professionals look to for guidance.

## → The role of an individual can change between personal and brand influence

Influence is a gradual upwards spiral— the individual becomes an influencer and the company gains attention by association *with the individual* instead of the other way around.

As the company's brand influence is elevated, its content as a whole becomes more influential and multiple content creators can grow their own influence by association.



# ORGANISATIONS

## + The organisation as an influencer

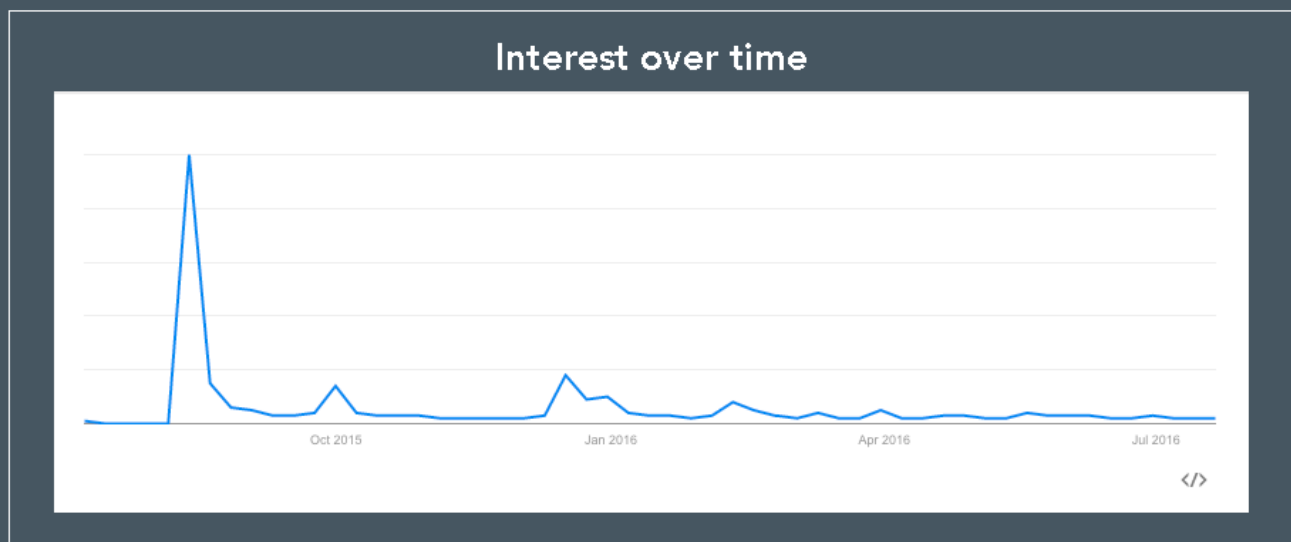
There are scenarios in which no single individual is an influencer but rather it's the organisation as a whole. Certain brands are influential in a particular industry, such as Coca-Cola in advertising or IKEA in design. You don't think of one particular person within these companies- it is the company as a whole that is considered an influencer.

## The organisation as a platform for individuals

Sometimes, a company already has brand recognition – they have a successful product or service that people love. They may have brand favourability built from years of growth or perhaps a viral marketing campaign that received wide attention.

Individuals who join the company are then elevated in status. An example of this is Sundar Pichai, CEO of Google. When Mr. Pichai was announced as the new CEO, he became the centre of attention to much of the tech world. Prior to that, he had been well-known in a small circle but ascending to CEO at a globally recognised company elevated him to the highest echelons of influencer status in the tech world. Every word is now amplified.

You can even measure this online: here's a Google Trends report showing Mr. Pichai's rise to influencer status. You'll notice that there was a huge spike in interest August 2015 when he joined Google as CEO and interest remains even after the initial spike – with major speeches coinciding with more bumps in search volume for his name.



It can benefit both the individual influencer and company to show that the company has socially engaged leaders. Through platforms like LinkedIn, executives have an opportunity to share their expertise and connect to their company's professional and consumer ecosystems. By having company's executives become influencers, it offers an authentic human face to your brand.

Source: <https://www.google.com.sg/trends/explore#q=sundar%20pichai&-date=7%2F2015%2013m&cmpt=q&tz=Etc%2FGMT-8>



# HOW DO YOU MEASURE INFLUENCE?



It's fairly easy for just about anyone to start creating content about a topic and putting it on the internet. So what's the difference between influencer and a regular content creator?

An influencer has considerable reach in the industry that is measured by *how many people are paying attention and how much experience they have.*

## SOCIAL REACH

When you are doing outreach for a new marketing campaign, have you ever looked into reaching out to influencers in the industry? If yes, the first place you probably looked to determine if they have influence was social media. Depending on the individual or brand, you may look at metrics such as:

- O** Number of Twitter or Instagram followers
- O** Engagement on content platforms such as personal blogs or LinkedIn Publishing
- O** Number of Facebook fans
- «§)** Content shares of their articles

### → What's a good number?

There is no magic number of followers. An influencer in a niche such as SEO might have only 13,000 followers while a global brand may have upwards of 50,000 or even 1 million.



### → Find your personal benchmark within your industry

Research known influencers in your industry, both individuals and brands. See what kinds of following they have and across what platforms. Look at what engagement is like on their posts. This will give you a good baseline for what qualifies an influencer and what metrics to aim for with your own strategy. Use your LinkedIn profile as a tool to compare yourself with other people in your company, with your connections and with other people like you.

**Pro tip: influencers do not need to meet every social reach criteria – it depends on the industry.** For example, in some industries, such as B2C lifestyle products, you can measure influence by the number of Instagram followers and the engagement of a brand and its ambassadors. For other industries, such as FinTech, influencers might be more active on a professional network such as LinkedIn.

# EXPERIENCE

A savvy individual can work on growing their social and content reach but what sets individuals apart is that they have experience in an area that others lack. We see them as trailblazers because they are doing something new and are seasoned

They might be a startup founder, a CEO, a journalist, a fashion model, an artist, a YouTube star – whatever their niche, they've gained experience in that space and can command clout.

## + Surfacing Experience

You can learn quite a lot about an individual on LinkedIn. How long has the individual been in the workforce? What is their role? Have they published any recent articles in media publications with sizeable reach? Have they been featured in interviews? Do they speak at industry events? An influencer will make sure his or her outward-facing profile is thorough and up-to-date on all social platforms so that others can find them. Here is an example of what a complete profile on LinkedIn would include.

### You at a glance

#### Profile Picture

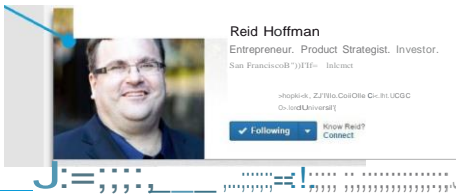
Your picture is your virtual handshake. Pick a picture that is friendly and aligned with your role as a leader.

#### Custom URL

LinkedIn will assign you a random URL. A custom URL is easier to communicate and more professional.

#### Headline

By default the headline is your current position. However, you can customize it to demonstrate your expertise and vision for your role

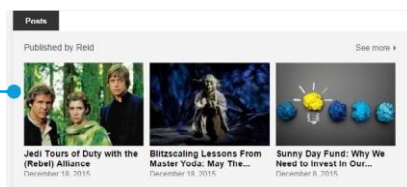


### Tell your story

- **Experience** - List the key positions you had in the past and briefly explain your role. You can also detail your education background.
- **Summary** - The summary is a personal note where you can share a bit more about the vision you have for your role or company.

### Bring your profile to life

Add multimedia content to your profile.



For companies, consider looking on their website and corporate blog. Were they featured in recent press coverage? How long have they been in business?

Look at their LinkedIn Company Page to easily find employees. Is the organisation comprised of individuals who have unique expertise in the industry?

## INBOUND INTEREST

You can also take a look at inbound interest which is the measurement of how many people are *finding the influencer* using search.

- Search Google Trends for the intended influencer. How much search interest is this individual and/or company getting compared to other known players in the industry? An example of this in action is the Sundar Pichai Google trend search in Section 2.
- Leverage tools such as BuzzSumo which measure social shares and inbound links to content. You can see what sort of reach an individual or their company has and compare it to others.
- Media and event interest is something to keep track of as well – is an individual being solicited for a quote on a specific topic often? Do publications reach out to your company to profile it? Do you often get requests to speak at events in the area or around the world? You can quantify interest by month to see the scope of influence over time.

# WHAT ARE THE COMPONENTS OF INFLUENCER STRATEGY?

Now that we've learned about who can be an influencer, let's delve into how to build a strategy to help turn yourself and/or your organisation into a powerhouse thought-leader in your industry.

## COMPONENT 1: KNOW WHO YOUR AUDIENCE IS

### Reach vs. Accuracy

When you choose a specific audience, you can go broad or narrow. The problem is, there's only so much attention out there and everyone's fighting for a piece of it. When you narrow your focus, you diminish your overall reach but increase the chances of being heard by your **target persona**.

Think of it as a bullseye target where the middle is the audience with the most engagement. When you target a broader audience, your marks are more scattered to reach a wider range of rings. That means you may reach more people but they're not necessarily the ones who will be most engaged because your content doesn't apply to them as much. When you target a specific persona, your marks are concentrated in the centre. Although you reach fewer people, each of those people is more likely to be interested in what you have to say which leads to greater engagement.

It doesn't have to be one or the other – you can decide where in the spectrum, between reach and accuracy, is the best position to achieve your goals.

We'll go over how to build your target persona in chapter 5.



Reach



Accuracy



## COMPONENT 2: CONTENT IS KEY

To be a successful influencer, you need a comprehensive content marketing strategy. That's because at the end of the day, every influencer is a content creator, whether through blog articles, speaking engagements, innovative practices or even fashion style. Influencers are telling a story and giving out information that *is* valuable to *others*.

### Content Marketing



**Create quality, original content in order to do one or more of the following:**

- Establish your credibility through original research, analysis and opinions
- Establish your legitimacy amongst others in your role in the industry, such as CMOs in technology
- Incentivise inbound links to expand reach
- Increase social media reach
- Reach intended audience and establish yourself as an expert

Ann Handley, Chief Content Marketer of Marketing Profs and author of *Everybody Writes*, defines **content marketing** as, "Anything an individual or an organisation creates and/or shares to tell their story. What it isn't: A warmed-over press release served as a blog post." In influencer terms, all of your content needs to map back into the same big story. Your followers are interested in hearing your story.

*In section 6, we'll go over how to decide the topics to focus your content editorial strategy around for maximum effect. In section 7, we'll go into specific types of content you can create to grow your individual or company brand.*



## COMPONENT 3: EARN INFLUENCE THROUGH NETWORKING

Perhaps the most crucial component of influencer strategy is growing your network. It is not enough to just post great content and hope someone picks it up. It is not enough to just identify a target audience and assume they'll listen when you say something. In most cases, especially in the business world, **you have to earn your influence.**



You do this by taking time outside of your normal office hours to go to events and meet others in the industry, build relationships face-to-face or interact with people via platforms such as Facebook or LinkedIn. You can collaborate on content with others to grow reach collectively, you can constantly put yourself forward for those smaller speaking engagements, contributed articles or even for podcasts that don't necessarily give you an audience of several thousand right out of the box.

### → Individuals *and* Companies Have to Earn Influence

C-Suites and experts across the world are trying to position themselves as influencers in their company's industries as much as anyone else- you can be a great CEO to your company but unless you are putting in the time to network and build relationships, no one will know who you are.

And as a company, your team of 1 or 10 or 50 needs to dedicate time and resources reaching out to industry publications to contribute guest articles, put budget into promoting that content on platforms such as LinkedIn, have a strong presence at industry events, build and grow a social media strategy that defines who you are as a brand and constantly create original, useful, inspirational content that speaks to your core audience.

*Growing and maintaining reach can be the most overwhelming part of an influencer strategy- but in section 7, we'll break it down into action items you can actually execute!*



## → Influencer strategy is like growing a plant

Think of influence as a plant. Plants need water and soil for nutrients and sunlight to turn those nutrients into agents for growth.

In influencer strategy, the soil and water are your content topic and type- original angles packaged effectively that you know others can benefit from consuming.

Networking, both one-on-one and through platforms like social media, is the sunlight that helps make the content *usable* to others.

Influence starts out as a seed in the ground that no one can see. You constantly need to water it and provide sunlight in order for it to grow – first into a sapling and then into a full-fledged plant. If you stop one or both, the plant wilts.

Similarly, you need to constantly create quality content and share it with your target audience in order for your influence to grow and thrive. **Influence cannot just be built- it has to be maintained.**



# HOW DO YOU IDENTIFY YOUR TARGET PERSONA?

Target personas (sometimes referred to as marketing personas) are fictional, generalised representations of your ideal customers. Personas inform every part of your business and brand, from marketing strategies and sales playbooks to new product development.

By putting a "face to the name" and creating this ideal person we're trying to attract, we can relate to our intended audience as real humans. Having a deep understanding of your target persona(s) is critical to driving content creation, engagement and growing your brand.

Through research, surveys and interviewing your target audience, you can create your target personas. This includes a mix of customers, prospects and those outside your database who might align with your target audience.



Here are some practical methods for gathering the information you need to develop personas:

Look through your contacts database to uncover trends about how certain followers or customers find and consume your content

When creating forms to use on your website, use form fields that capture important persona information. For example, if all of your personas vary based on company size, ask each lead for information about company size on your forms

Take into consideration your sales team's feedback on the leads they are interacting with most. What generalisations can they make about the different types of customers you serve best?

Interview customers and prospects, either in person or over the phone, to discover what they like about your product or service

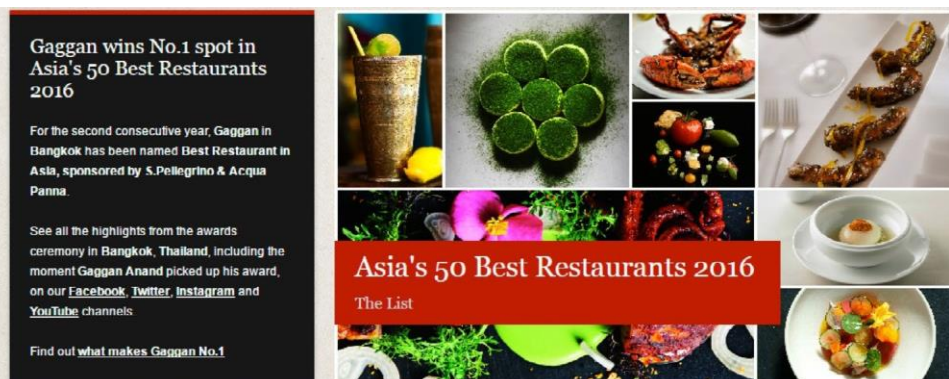
# FINDING YOUR NICHE

There are content creators who create helpful influencer rankings for niches so that others can find and follow these people and brands, such as the **top 100 Conflict Mineral Influence Leaders**, the **top 100 Influencers and Brands in Financial Technology** and of course, the annual William Reed Business Media list of **Asia's 50 Best Restaurants**.

## + Geographical Niche

If you're a fine dining foodie then restaurant evaluation websites such as Asia's 50 Best Restaurants are probably your "go-to" sources for that special occasion restaurant choice. Asia's 50 is a list created by the Diners Club® Asia's 50 Best Restaurants Academy, an influential group of over 300 leaders in the restaurant industry across Asia, each selected for their expert opinion of Asia's restaurant scene. Launched in 2013, it quickly became recognised around the world as the most credible indicator of the best places to eat.

ACQUA PANNA S.P.A. PELLEGRINO  
THE FINE DINING WATERS



## + Sub-industry Niche

Have you watched the movie Inception where the protagonists embark on an adventure entering dreams within dreams (within dreams)?

Think of sub-industry niches as industryception- smaller groups within the larger industry. For example, SEO is a niche within inbound marketing which is a niche within internet marketing which is a niche within marketing.

Similarly, a head hunting firm for executives in IT is a niche within the head hunting industry which is a niche within the hiring and talent industry as a whole.

If you're in a specific niche, own it. There are less players and you likely have more power in the form of expertise and original ideas that appeal to others in that niche. **It is easier to become an influencer in a sub-industry than in an umbrella industry. Here's an example: pharma is a niche within the umbrella of medical and healthcare industry.**

## + Opinion Niche

Individuals can make a name for themselves in the opinion niche by having a unique take on a topic. These folks are often referred to as "pundits" in the space- for example, Xiaxue, a lifestyle blogger based in Singapore, has garnered millions of followers because of her popular ideas on makeup.

In order to claim this niche, individuals must hold **expert power** – through previous roles in that industry, published content, original ideas that are well-known and frequent speaking engagements on the topic. Because you are perceived as an expert in the area, your opinions hold more weight than the average person.

If you choose this niche, it is very important to outline *what your opinions are and to be* consistent. Create content to illustrate these points often and in different mediums such as Op-ed pieces, social media posts and presentations. Your opinion **becomes your brand**.



## + Create Your Own Niche

This is for the disruptors and innovators in an industry. Often, when asked to recall a list of influencers, people such as Steve Jobs and companies such as Google come to mind. That is because they influenced **industries** by turning them on their head with new ideas that then shape the future of the industry.

### Two examples from this guide's authors:

Inbound marketing didn't even exist 10 years ago. The term, which refers to leveraging digital marketing and content to draw people to you instead of through traditional advertising, was coined by HubSpot co-founders Brian Halligan and Dharmesh Shah in 2008 and has since become a predominant industry with hundreds of thousands of professionals, companies and agencies focused on providing inbound marketing solutions.

**Social selling**, the process of developing relationships as part of the sales process, became a buzzword in the early 2000s. As more users took their sales business online, LinkedIn saw an opportunity to leverage its professional social platform to own and evangelise the principles around social selling. In 2015, LinkedIn tried to help quantify the value of social selling and produced the first-of-its kind social selling measurement – The Social Selling Index (SSI). This step helped to further shape the online sales industry and placed LinkedIn on the map.



# HOW DO YOU DECIDE WHAT TOPICS TO FOCUS ON?

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Good topics should be found at the intersection of your expertise and your target persona's core needs and interests. You know what interests *you*; now open up channels to find out what matters to *your audience*. Here are some avenues you can use.

## FIND TOPICS THAT MATTER TO YOUR AUDIENCE



### Keyword Research

Sometimes it may seem like there's nothing left in the world to write about but millions of searches happen on a daily basis. Millions of people with questions take to Google (or another search engine of choice) to find their answers.

You can use free tools such as Factbrowser, Google Trends or Google Adwords to start reviewing keywords that readers have entered to find you- and keywords they've entered for which you're not getting found – and seeing if there's a topic you could write around it. You can use LinkedIn Pulse to join relevant groups to discover and keep track of popular topics in your industry.

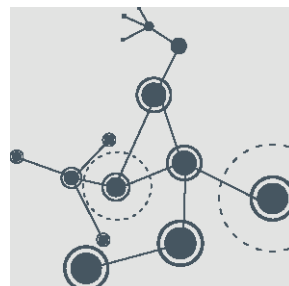


### Talk to Your Sales and Customer-facing Teams

Your customer service and sales staff– or anyone interacting with leads and customers on a daily basis – often have the closest view into the challenges your customers face and the questions asked by prospects.

Create a forum for them to send content ideas to you based on feedback from their customer interactions. At HubSpot, there is an internal web page where staff can suggest topics for the blog. For instance, a member of your sales team might mention that he had been receiving a number of questions from leads about a specific topic– turn that into content

If you're having trouble creating content around these topics, remember that your sales and services staff not only hear these questions every day ... they answer them too. If you've created a strong content culture at your organisation, you could empower them to write blog posts or create other content assets that put down on "paper" the answers to the questions they field each day.







## Internet Forums

If your staff and keyword research doesn't give you enough to work with, take a look at external forums and sites for some relevant topic ideas. Quora is one of the best sites to check out, particularly for B2B marketers, because it positions itself as a place where anyone can ask anything (although some fields are represented more than others).

Try exploring external forums that might help you surface questions in need of answers. The great part is that once you create content to answer the question, you can also go back to that forum to show your content to the person seeking advice!



## Historical Data

You can also rely on your historical data to determine which content topics perform best for you. For instance, if you're using HubSpot, you could export your Page Performance report to get a spreadsheet containing all of your blog posts alongside performance data, like inbound links, comments and page views generated. You can then export page performance and sort by inbound links and views to see what's performing best. Then, sort by topic to see if there are any correlations between great performance and topic choice.

You should actually perform these analyses all the time – perhaps not weekly but a quarterly check-up is a good idea. For instance, we learned that content about social media performed extremely well.

So we thought, "Great! Let's write more about social media for marketing!"

We continued to check in to see which content performed best and we noticed that posts about general social media weren't doing as well as they used to. They're still *pretty* good but not a top performer like they were a couple years ago. In fact, these days, more specific topics within social media, like how to use Instagram, are performing much better as a blog topic! It makes sense since it's a newer platform that marketers are just starting to harness.

Performing these analyses frequently is a pretty easy task. It helps you determine what has worked historically as well as to identify trends over time to see if performance improves, or falters, around certain topics.

## Expertise



Finally, the best content provides an opportunity for you to learn something new and teach other people about it. Why is expertise the gold standard of quality content? It's because no one wants to do their own research. It's time-consuming and most people look to others for information.

Influencers are the ones that do it for their audience- and do it diligently – and they often see huge returns from it. And it wasn't just a one-time success, either. Once you establish expert power, you become the trusted resource in that niche for your target audience and can grow your reach even more.

All this being said, you don't always have to just jump on the next big thing to be an expert. Your company most likely has a wealth of industry knowledge which you can draw on to create excellent content around really helpful topics. Think about what your audience needs to learn and that you can teach them.



# POSITION YOURSELF TO ADDRESS CONTENT TOPICS

Once you've found a good topic, you'll need to figure out how to actually position it to produce a good piece of content. Considering these steps will help you further ground your topic and create content that's worth reading and sharing:

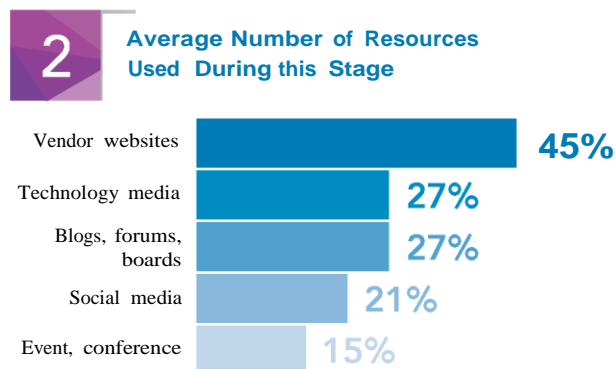
## Find Data

Data is one of the best ways to add instant credibility to your content. It also makes for a higher quality read and provides some much-needed perspective to help the audience understand a topic.

In 2015, LinkedIn Marketing Solutions published its buyer committee research and found that 80% of prospects require education when purchasing technology and 63% are more likely to consider an IT vendor that educates them through each stage of the decision process. Furthermore, they also discovered that the vendor website is still the number one resource buyers look at during their research phase. This can provide very valuable information for vendors deciding on where they need to create and place their product education content.

This data knowledge further establishes LinkedIn Marketing Solutions as an expert in understanding the IT buyer's journey.

### Percentage of Time Members Spent on Each Channel Conducting Research for this Purchase

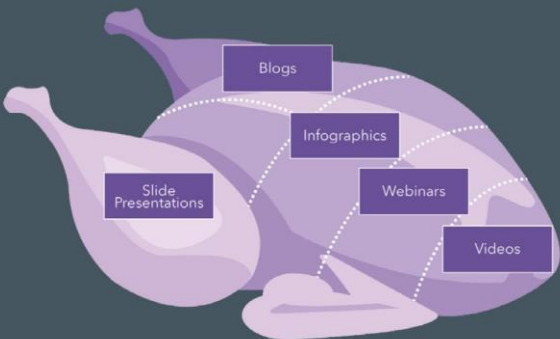


## Inform and the thought-leadership will follow

People often want to become influencers and create editorial strategy based solely on thought-leadership. The problem is, this only works when you've earned your influencer status and can be trusted as a thought-leader. When you're still building that reputation, leaning on informational expert posts for 80% of your content and interspersing it with high-level thought-leadership pieces that are less tactical will help you reach more people quickly.

# WHAT TYPES OF CONTENT SHOULD YOU CREATE?

When approaching content marketing, one of the first questions that comes up is what type of content should be created? At LinkedIn, we recommend creating a cornerstone piece of content such as an eBook or whitepaper that really lays out your point of view on a topic. From there, the writer can slice it up into turkey slices such as blogs, slide presentations, visual infographics, videos or webinars.



## + Blog Posts

Predictably, blog posts are typically ghost-written by the bloggers. However, if your team is large enough to have someone dedicated to creating gated assets and premium content -things like eBooks and tools -they should also write blog posts to help promote those assets. SEO specialists will also work closely with bloggers as blog posts are often a company's best opportunity to improve organic search rankings. As such, bloggers should be writing posts to help improve the site's SEO and drive organic traffic and leads. Editorials should be informed by keyword research and optimised for SEO and reader engagement.

And remember, not every post written by an influencer will be a mind-blowing piece of thought-leadership. The key is balance- different types of helpful posts go a long way in building a solid foundation for your expertise.

### Types of Blog Posts to Write:

**How-to-** Posts that teach readers how to do something; these typically perform very well in organic search if they align with long-tail search terms.

**List Posts-** Curated examples that can be informative and thus also rather search-friendly, or simply entertaining.

**Thought Leadership-** Posts that explain fundamental shifts in industry or ask the reader to rethink convention wisdom.

**Newsjacks-** Timely content that reports on industry news or finds unexpected tie-ins with popular news items.

**Infographics/SlideShares-** Blog posts that primarily use visual content to tell a story.

**Don't be afraid to mix it up.** To keep your readers on their toes, consider using a variety of formats- it lets you balance the formats as well as the topics you write about!

## ➔ Social Media Posts

We often relegate social media to simply being a content distribution tool but social media posts are also valuable as content hosting tools. In fact, some influencers have built up their whole voice and following with tools such as 140-character bytes on Twitter, through engaging Instagram posts or through thought-leadership-style short posts on platforms such as LinkedIn. Here is a great example of how Jeff Bullas leverages LinkedIn.

**Jeff Bullas**  
CEO at JeffBullas.com Pty Ltd  
Sydney, Australia • 500+ connections

JeffBullas.com Pty Ltd, jeffbullas.com, mrmrty, TheCivildigital, Opus, Amicron

1 people you know will find Jeff Bullas on LinkedIn. Click here to see who.

SOCIAL MEDIA & CONTENT MARKETING KEYNOTE SPEAKER

Full profile. It's free!

and 400 million other professionals are on LinkedIn

What is LinkedIn? Join Today Sign In

Search by name

2- or 400 million professionals are all on LinkedIn. Find who you know.

Example: Jeff Weiner

Public profile badge

Include this LinkedIn profile on other websites

People Also Viewed

Chris Ouellet (W...)  
Vice President Asia-Pacific at Brandwatch

Dor... Clatt  
Keynote Speaker, HBA Contributor, Author, Marketing Consultant, Bullas & Co. Chief Professor

DIW Kwen  
Founder & CEO at Health Local, NY Times Best Author, "The Whan Business Meets"

S... G...rd...  
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Summary

Jeff is a digital marketing blogger, keynote speaker, digital strategist, CEO of Bullas & Co. and best-selling author. He works with companies and executives to optimize their online presence and company brand through social media channels and other web-based marketing. He has spent most of his business career involved with information technology, and he has 100+ publications and the web.

Blogging rights include:

- 11 Global "Digital Marketing Influencer" 2016
- 1 Content Marketing Influencer from 6M web updates in 2015 by Appr Wins
- Listed in the Content Marketing Institute's "2015 Content Marketing Talent"
- World's 100 Most Influential People in 2015
- Ranked 18 on Forbes' "The World's Top 40 Social Marketing Talent" 2014
- Ranked 11 on Content Marketing Institute's "2014 Content Marketing Talent"
- Listed by Forbes as one of the "Top 50 Social Media Power Influencers" in 2013 - 111
- 11 Million Followers on Twitter
- 25,000+ Twitter followers

Specialties: Social media marketing, content marketing, digital marketing strategy, keynote speaking

Skills

Social Media Marketing, Marketing Strategy, Digital Strategy, Content Marketing, Digital Marketing, Online Marketing, Internet Strategy, Public Speaking, Content Strategy, Twitter, Social Media, Content Marketing

Online Reputation Management, Web Marketing, See 12+

Experience

### Find career opportunities

Add a position to get relevant job recommendations.

Update your profile

In the previous section, you learned how to build a target persona which included identifying where your intended audience spends time in the social media ecosystem. Don't waste resources trying to utilise every platform. Considering that his content is centered around beautiful photography, Russian photographer Murad Osmann chose Instagram as the best channel to amplify his work. His Instagram series "Follow Me To" went viral in 2012 and now has over 4.3 million followers, with many copying his style in their own photography.



QSee on

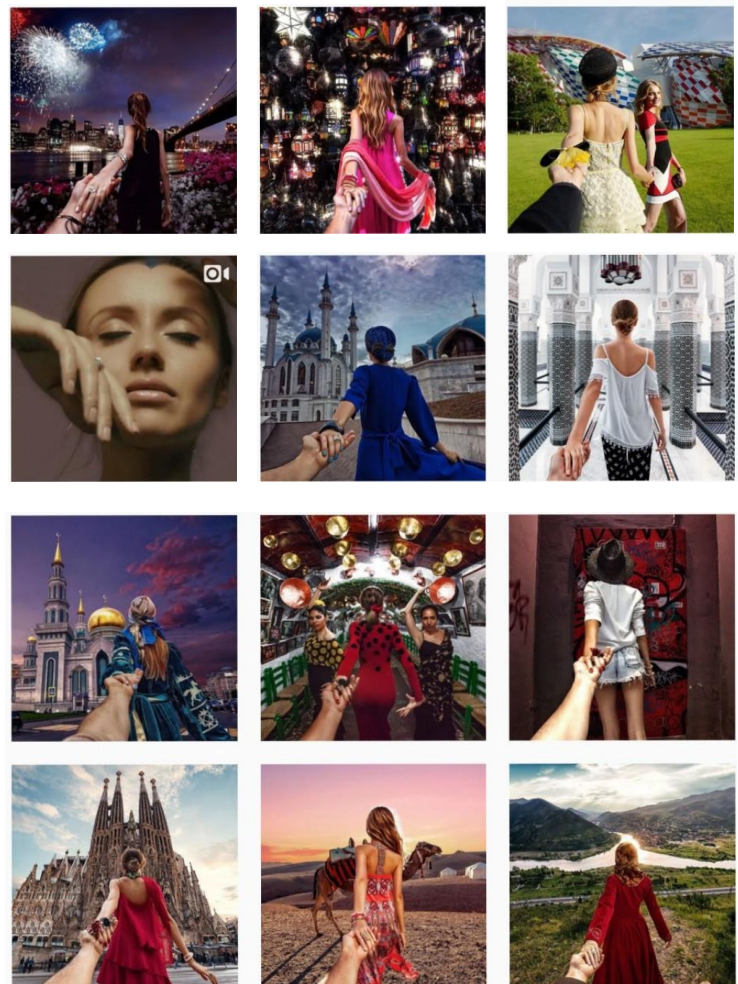
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Business: oneCmuradosmann.com Follow us on snapchat Followmeto O  
O followmeto www.instagram.com/followyourlovetoveto

321 posts 4.3m followers 618 following



## Here are some ways to leverage content for social media:

Repurpose presentation decks by turning them into highly shareable **SlideShares**

Create a personality for yourself or your brand by posting high-quality images to Instagram

Create a "series" of short posts on LinkedIn that revolve around a specific topic that is of interest to your audience

Post original videos *directly* to Facebook so that they are embedded- whether they are short inspirational clips about leadership, how-to tips that people in your industry niche will find useful or perhaps to mark a special occasion such as a national holiday

## + Premium Content

Premium content refers to longer form and more time-intensive pieces that don't exist on a blog.

Premium content is often gated – that is, it's behind a form. It might be used to generate leads or contacts, or for brand-building purposes. This content is typically created by the dedicated long-form content creator if your team is large enough to have one. Sometimes bloggers get involved too as blog posts are good testing grounds for what performs well.

### Premium content includes:

**Longform content-** An incredibly popular format, typically presented as an eBook PDF or as a printed book. An organisation might release a new eBook on an industry-related topic such as thought leadership, while an individual may publish a book- think of Sheryl Sandberg's *Lean In*.

**Research Reports-** Often presented as a gated PDF or an ungated microsite.

**Webinars / Live Presentations-** Though time-intensive, webinars and live presentations are personable and they let you speak to your audience and their networks which can help broaden reach and spread ideas. Recorded versions of webinars or live talks can then be published on your blog or on a landing page.

**Tools & Templates-** Because they're extremely utilitarian in nature, tools and templates often prove to be incredible for long-term lead generation despite the upfront resource-investment required. This is often a great way for organisations to grow influence – for example, HubSpot released a tool called Website Grader that helps people understand how strong their sites are and it establishes the company as a leader in website design.



## + Visual Content

Regardless of team size, it's common for visual content to be created by nearly everyone except perhaps, the SEO specialist. While designers do the bulk of the advanced creative work, bloggers, content creators and social media managers will all get involved in lighter-weight design. Often, designers will also create templates for the writers on the team so they can be more independent - like creating eBook templates so premium content can be laid out by just about anyone with an InDesign license.

### Types of Visual Content to Create:

**Infographics**- These can be embedded in blog posts and shared on social media.

**SlideShares**- Some social media managers focus a lot of energy on SlideShare as a channel and create exclusive content.

**Video** - Whether for YouTube or a blog post embed, short videos for the sake of entertainment or education can help you diversify your content portfolio and improve your SEO.

**Lookbooks** - Spice up your company's next eBook by turning it into a visually appealing "lookbook" of examples. This format is great for inspiration-whether you are a real estate firm targeting new buyers with a lookbook of beautiful home interiors, a design firm putting together examples of great logo design, or even a Financial Services company putting together a spread featuring quotes from well-known gurus.

### Podcasts

Podcasts are officially en vogue again and they are a fantastic way to record your thoughts on a topic and reach a busy audience that doesn't always have the time to read your content.

Podcasts are especially effective if you are targeting executives-they are always on the go but looking to constantly learn more to stay at the top of their game. A podcast with the right content is a perfect fit. According to Google Trend 2015 reports, podcast usage increased 112% in Australia and 150% in Singapore 2015 signifying its increasing importance as a platform.

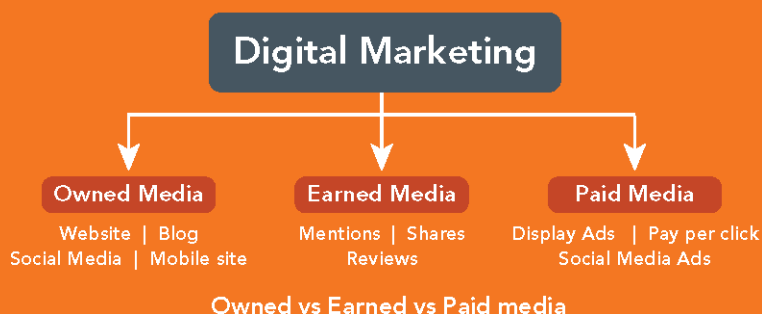
There are more and more ways to package your content every week-always keep up to date on what's new and don't be afraid to try newer content forms. LinkedIn Marketing Solution Content team took a risk in early 2014 when they decided to launch a podcast series titled The Sophisticated Marketer's podcast series. The series is still running and is on its 18th episode due to its continued popularity globally.



# HOW DO YOU DISTRIBUTE CONTENT?

Have you ever heard the phrase “if a tree falls in a forest and no one is around to hear it, does it make a sound?” It’s the same thing with content. If you create quality content and no one sees it, does it even matter?

There are three ways you can distribute your content: through owned channels, earned media and paid channels.



## OWNED MEDIA

Owned media includes any channels you or as an individual or as a company own – such as your company blog, email distribution list, LinkedIn profile, Twitter handle, SlideShare channel, podcast.. the list goes on and on. The big indicator of ownership is whether or not your brand has complete control as to what is posted on these channels.

As we mentioned in section 3, the key to success is not to try to dominate every channel – a smart strategist will research which channels work best for their target persona and then focus heavily on building those.

**Here are ways to leverage your owned media:**

- Collect subscribers to your content and use email to nurture your existing database
- Regularly publish helpful decks on SlideShare
- Post bite-sized pieces of wisdom on Twitter (and make sure to include a visual!)
- Include infographics that illustrate your original research
- Post content using LinkedIn Publishing to reach your network and have your content exposed to a wider business audience

- Feature videos on a topic that resonates with your audience on your own YouTube channel or Facebook

## EARNED MEDIA

Earned media refers to publicity gained through promotional efforts other than advertising. Essentially, it is when third parties distribute your content or mention you, such as in their articles, linking back to your content or by featuring your contributed posts on their site. Earned media helps you build organic and referral traffic back to your site and increases your brand's visibility.

According to influence expert Kelsey Meyer of Influence & Co, you can earn media by getting press mentions, positive reviews, reposts, recommendations and more. You can also facilitate earned media by helping journalists and content writers author their articles or by contributing your own thought leadership content to industry publications.

Thanks to the rise in popularity of social media platforms like Twitter and Quora, it has become easier for content writers and journalists to reach out to your business for quotes and insights to mention in their articles. This type of accreditation helps build trust around your expertise.

## There are a few ways to get earned media:

- Leverage PR to build relationships with media outlets and bloggers in your industry, and contribute content
- Create unique content that you know is a good fit for a particular media outlet and share it with your followers to increase its chance of being shared and cited
- Create original research that journalists can use when writing their articles. Don't have a PR firm? Research journalists and bloggers who are writing about the topic you are covering then reach out to them with your content.
- Encourage reviews of your product or service on third party sites

## PAID MEDIA

Often, when you're just starting to get into the scene, it can be hard to get traction just through unpaid channels. Paid media is a great way to drive exposure and **amplify your owned media**.

With so many options to choose from, where do you start? Once again, remember your **target persona** – choose paid networks that service that audience. Here are some examples:



### Google Adwords

Google Adwords is used to surface content based on certain keywords. As an influencer, there will be some top phrases you'll want to own—insert these keywords in your content as part of your organic strategy then amplify their reach by bidding on those keywords in search.



### LinkedIn

LinkedIn is the world's largest professional network with over 433 million members globally. Individuals visit LinkedIn to network with colleagues, bolster their reputation, stay up-to-date on industry news and find business opportunities. Marketers can use tools and solutions for advertisers to target audiences by demographic and interest, or to target specific companies through account based marketing.



### Facebook

Facebook has the largest audience of any social network, with nearly 1.2 billion registered users. Especially in Southeast Asia and Australia/New Zealand, it is the network of choice for all sorts of personas when it comes to personal use. You can use Facebook to run targeted campaigns due to its rich demographic data, as well as to boost organic posts.



### Twitter

Twitter is a fast-moving platform that lets you target people based on their interests—similar to the concept of Google Adwords. However, keep in mind that it's a platform intended to cycle content quickly—so make sure you use bite-sized information to try to engage your audience as your ad will disappear within a few seconds.



# THE STEPS TO BECOMING AN INFLUENCER



## ● BE SHOCKINGLY HELPFUL.



HubSpot's co-founder and CTO, Dharmesh Shah, has a great expression about networking: the notion of **being shockingly helpful**.

Starting here will fundamentally help you rethink how you network. If you start with the intention of meaningfully helping 10 people in a month, your bar for who you reach out to and the value you offer goes up, as does the quality of the potential interaction.

Start with a list of who you can help in your immediate network and once you've warmed up your shockingly helpful muscles, expand your network each week. Doing so will pay significant dividends over time.

## ● PLAY EVENT ROULETTE.

### STEP

One of the challenges with the very nature of networks is that we are all inclined to self-select based on our interests and existing habits. But doing the same things to network will give you the exact same results.

To combat this, try playing Event Roulette. Search for events happening in your area in the upcoming week and attend the third event that shows up on the page (or pick your lucky number as you see fit). If you're the more traditional sort, look at the events board at your local coffee shop or library and attend the event that represents the furthest possible departure from your current comfort zone.

Whatever you do, resolve to go, enjoy the new experience and say hello to five new people. Try simply going to an event you wouldn't typically attend. You will be surprised how this can open your eyes to new connections and creativity you might otherwise miss.



## SHAKE UP YOUR SOCIAL NETWORKS.

If you look at a scatter plot of your connections on Twitter, Instagram, Facebook and LinkedIn, the chances are that your network lines up roughly to past jobs you have had, schools you have attended and places you have lived.

It's safe to say that our social networks have a significant impact on the content we consume and share on a regular basis. That said, the constraints of your existing network often create a virtuous closed loop.

Resolve to follow ten new people on Twitter and LinkedIn this week but instead of taking the algorithm-suggested options, identify a few people who are experts in things you know nothing about. Just the act of following them will help open your perspective and likely lead you to some adjacent people worth learning from as well.



## STRENGTHEN YOUR WEAKEST CONNECTIONS.



Mark Granovetter's research on the power of weak ties revealed that a vast majority of people got their jobs through people they occasionally or rarely see – dating back to as early as 1973. While job hunting has changed significantly since 1973, the importance of passive connections has not: it's rare that your best friend will refer you to your next job but much more likely that you'll be referred by an old classmate, neighbour or friend of a friend.

So, set a reminder in your calendar weekly to reach out to someone you haven't spoken to in six months. Your outreach could be a simple hello or an invitation to coffee but we typically find that leads to transactional emails and delayed or often canceled plans. Another – perhaps more effective – strategy?

Don't know anyone at an event that you found out is happening in your area? Don't be afraid to go but make sure you're armed with a plan.

To get started, search the event agenda and hashtag to identify people you'd like to meet who are attending or speaking and challenge yourself to connect with each of them. Instead of joining the packed crowds of people talking to speakers after they conclude, set up time to talk to speakers a few hours before they go on stage. Can't snag time with them? Go the "shockingly helpful" route and create compelling blogs about their talks to help spread their message and insights more broadly.



STEP

## GATHER AN UNCONVENTIONAL GROUP.

As humans, we collectively resist uncertainty and change. If you vaguely suggest a group outing with a bunch of people who don't know each other well to hang out, chances are you'll end up making plans for sometime next year.

Instead, choose an activity that is reasonably inexpensive and fun then pick a date and time to do it. Send a personalised invite to five people to join you, none of whom have met prior to the outing and make it clear that the purpose of the evening is to have fun and meet new people.

Chances are, you'll find a group who never would have thought to go oyster shucking, photo walking or art gallery gazing on their own but who are super grateful that you put it together. In addition to planning a fun night, send an email thanking everyone after so that your loose connections get the benefit of each other's networks as well.



## BE FEARLESS.

In her book, *Why Not Me?*, Mindy Kaling suggests that you "make a list of the people you think would make the greatest mentors and try to get close enough to steal their Wi-Fi."

While her approach is tongue-in-cheek, most of us have people we admire from afar for their smarts, insight or ambition... but we never approach them.

If you're in this boat, we recommend checking out Jia Jiang, a corporate strategy coach and influential speaker, for inspiration. Based on his experience facing rejection first hand, Jiang warns that fear or rejection leads people to ultimately say no to themselves. Don't let the obstacle to building a large open network be your own fear or rejection. Instead, create an ambitious list of people you want to learn from and identify creative ways to make it happen.



## CALENDAR YOUR NETWORKING TIME.

### STEP

If you're like most busy people, your calendar is packed with obligations and transactions. If you have time blocked for networking, chances are it's for a specific purpose such as an active job hunt.

Instead of waiting for serendipity to bring new people to you, put an hour on your calendar each week specifically focused on expanding your network. Ask a friend who they think is the most interesting person they know and go meet them. Email a blog author whose content you love with a specific comment or question about his or her work. Reconnect with an old colleague whose work you always admired. Sometimes these conversations will lead nowhere but many will generate new ideas, connections and creativity, so it's worth the break in the action from your usual busy day.







## THINK LIKE A JOURNALIST.

Using people's passions as an entry point to learn from them is far more likely to stick than a standard request for more information about their company or career. With this in mind, channel your inner journalist and generate questions that unleash what people know or love about a subject you know very little about.

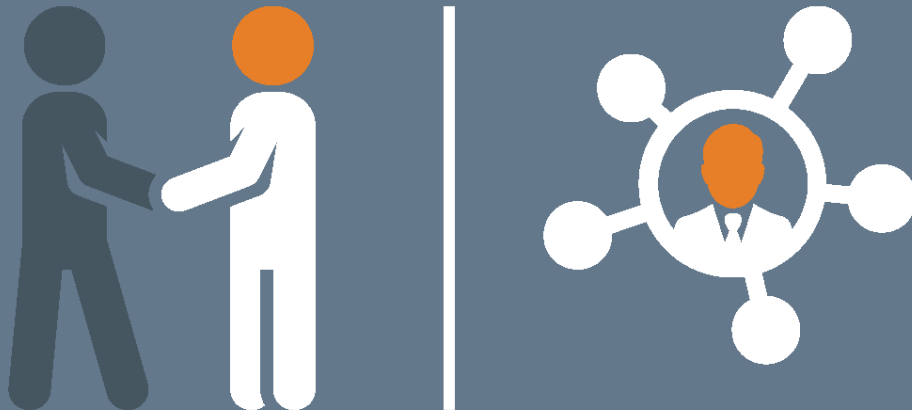
The lesson? These jumping off points go beyond standard small talk about weather and politics and help you uncover more interesting stories and takeaways from people.

No influencer can be successful without strong networking skills. It's important to build these up by putting yourself out there, finding events that match your angle and meeting as many people as possible. If you don't network, you won't make those important connections to integrate yourself in the niche you're looking to own. Find others with influence to amplify your own and then get in front of them.

## IT'S ALL ABOUT CONNECTIONS.

Influencers exist because there are people who they influence. You can't sit in one corner and never interact with others (face-to-face or online!) and expect to grow your influence.

Networking helps get you in front of people, make connections, build partnerships and open opportunities up for things such as speaking engagements. It also helps expand your own knowledge and learn from others so you can evolve your influencer profile over time.



# CONCLUSION

No one becomes an influencer overnight. Unless you're born into fame and power, you'll need to put in the work to get noticed.

The first step to becoming an influencer is understanding who your target audience is. As with any marketing endeavour, you'll need to do some research to figure out the right niche you should be focusing on as well as where that audience is – physically and online.

Next, you need some self-awareness. What can you already bring to the table? If you're aiming to elevate your company to influencer status, you can leverage a strong product or a recognisable company brand (you can be recognisable without being an influencer in your industry). If you're trying to elevate an individual (yourself or another member of your team), firstly consider their position within the company. Are they a co-founder who can speak to a specific vision? Are they an expert in a specific area such as SEO or product design?

Once you've identified your audience and your starting point, create targeted content and distribute the right content to the right audience. In this guide, we've gone through examples of content you can create and how you can distribute it – but of course, this is just the beginning – we could write volumes and volumes of eBooks on those particular topics (and we have)!

When all this is rolling, amplify your reach by networking like crazy: meet as many people as you can and build connections. These connections will allow you to gain access to inner circles in your industry, give you speaking opportunities and open doors to great peers to collaborate with. There's always a tendency to want to build up an individual brand for yourself or your company but don't underestimate the power of good connections.

Like any strategy, it's important to have a plan of action and to know your edge and how you'll stand out from the crowd. We hope this guide gives you the tools to create an actionable plan to build up influence for an individual or company in your industry and that it shows you how to build a platform to leverage your unique brand.



## ABOUT US



HubSpot is an inbound marketing software platform that helps companies attract visitors, convert leads, and close customers. HubSpot's all-in-one platform brings your entire marketing funnel together with different tools.

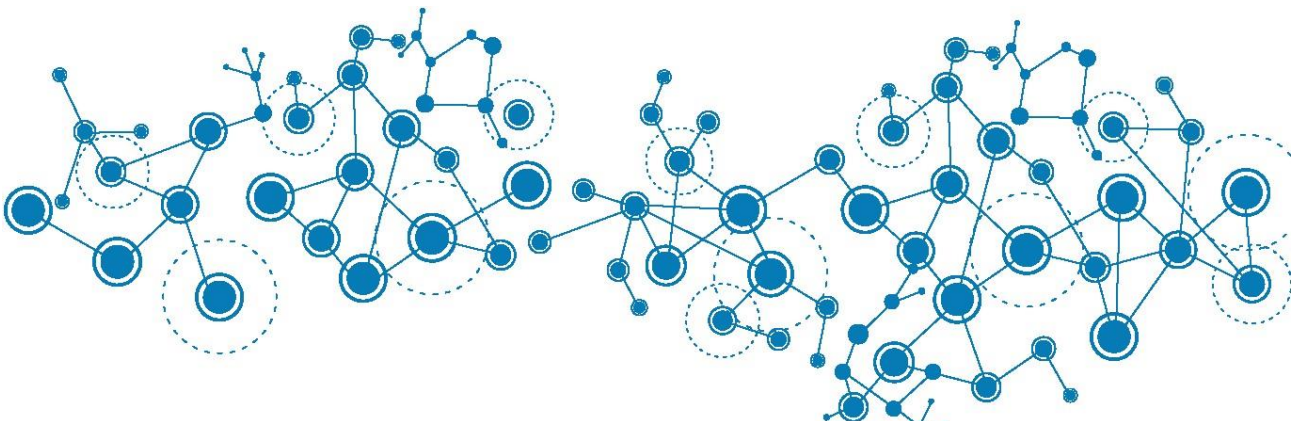
Get a [free content marketing assessment](#) to see how you are performing in your road to becoming an influencer in your industry.



### **Market to who matters**

For the first time in the history of media, you can reach the world's professionals – all in one place. More than 433M people worldwide gather on LinkedIn to stay connected and informed, advance their careers, and work smarter. Together they comprise the largest global community of business professionals. These are the decision-makers, influencers, and the leaders of today and tomorrow – precisely the people you want to target.

**For more information, visit [marketing.linkedin.com](http://marketing.linkedin.com).**





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