



LexisNexis®

Media Intelligence

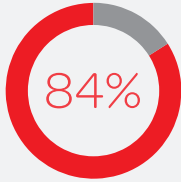
5 Keys to Measuring Social Media Influencers



Public relations and communications professionals have always played an important role in shaping public perceptions of corporate brands, driving greater awareness of those brands within key target audiences and ultimately supporting corporate objectives for business development. But in recent years, the lines between traditional “public relations” and “marketing” have become blurred by the rise of digital media.

Perhaps nowhere is this more dramatically illustrated than with the emergence of influencer marketing, a strategy made more accessible to every company thanks to the ubiquitous social media platforms now consulted daily by billions of people around the world. [Influencer marketing](#) is based on the premise that certain individuals have significant influence over the purchase behavior of potential customers, so it orients a series of marketing activities around those influential individuals—as opposed to the broader target market as a whole.

Corporate marketing executives have quickly embraced the importance of social influencer marketing as a powerful way to drive customer acquisition. Consider this empirical data:



Forbes [reported](#)
“84 percent of marketers
plan on executing at least one
influencer marketing campaign
during the next 12 months.”



Seven in 10 professional
marketers said that
influencer marketing is
“a great way for us to grow
awareness on various social
media platforms,” according
to a [Bloglovin’ survey](#).



Businesses are making \$6.50
for every \$1 spent on influencer
marketing, according to a poll
of marketing professionals
[conducted by Tomoson](#), making
it the “fastest-growing online
customer-acquisition channel,
outpacing organic search and
email marketing.”

One recent [blog post](#) identified 10 brands that have effectively integrated social influencer marketing into their marketing communications strategies. They range from clothing brands such as Old Navy and Gap, to beverage companies such as Naked Juice and Diageo Spirits, to tech companies such as Skype.

The rise and importance of social media influencers as a key component of corporate marketing and PR strategies is clear. But strangely, the industry has [failed to advance](#) when it comes to measuring the impact of influence and evaluating which specific influencers will move the needle for which specific brands.

Unfortunately, many professionals tend to default to the kinds of measurement tools that are rooted in traditional PR schools of thought: audience; reach; and total impressions. The result of this analysis is often the identification of a person with vast numbers of online followers but an ambiguous impact on the target customer the company is seeking to engage.

The purpose of this eBook is to shine some light on this challenge by going beyond basic metrics such as “Reach” and “Impressions” and explore the use of more sophisticated data analytics that can evaluate potential social influencers more holistically. We will open up our methodology to you here and suggest five keys to measuring influencers, which is a crucial starting point in determining the best way to craft communications that are targeted at those influencers.

The very notion of social media influencers is something that could not have been envisioned by previous generations of PR practitioners and marketing professionals. It only stands to reason that we need new measurement criteria for a new marketing channel.

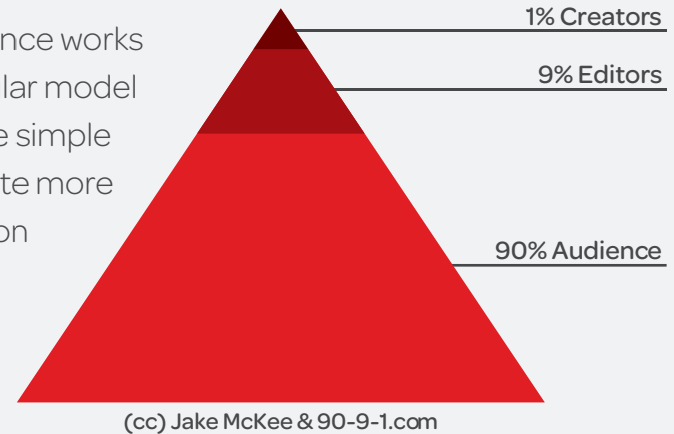
Understanding Online Influence

Before we can dive into the elements of a new methodology for evaluating social media influencers, it's important to understand the dynamics of online influence. Unlike previous channels for mass communications, online influence is fueled by a unique phenomenon made possible by the internet: the ability to tap into the consciousness of people with similar cultural ideas who are otherwise separated by space and media channels.

"Social media binds together communities that once were geographically isolated, greatly increasing the pace and intensity of collaboration," [writes Douglas Holt](#), professor at Harvard Business School and the University of Oxford, in the *Harvard Business Review*. "Now that these once-remote communities are densely networked, their cultural influence has become direct and substantial."



An important framework for understanding how online influence works is the “90-9-1 Principle” [developed by Jake McKee](#). This popular model for how users participate in social communities is built on the simple premise that in social groups, some people actively participate more than others, or what some academics refer to as “participation inequality.” The 90-9-1 Principle asserts the following: 90 percent of users are the “audience” (lurkers who passively observe and don’t actively contribute); 9 percent of users are the “editors” (sometimes add to an existing thread but rarely generate content from scratch); and 1 percent of users are “creators” (active posters that drive a vast percentage of the social group’s activity).



For example, [McKee notes](#) that:

- Most of Amazon’s book reviews are contributed by “just a few top-100” reviewers.
- Over 50% of all the Wikipedia edits are done by just .7% of the users.
- Just 0.16% of all visitors to YouTube upload videos to it, and 0.2% of visitors to Flickr upload photos.

So if we are to understand online influence accurately, it's important to start with the concept that just 1 percent of the overall audience of internet users is really driving the online conversation. The challenge for PR and marketing professionals is to identify social media influencers who reach that 1 percent.

This is an important building block because it illustrates vividly that traditional measures such as “impressions” and total reach are less important when it comes to determining the people you want to target in social media channels. It's irrelevant if a celebrity has millions of followers, for instance, if they're not engaging with people in your target market who are among the 1 percent of online content creators. Those are the individuals who drive the conversation and who will help your brand to “go viral” in a way that traditional media channels cannot.

So how do we find those valuable influencers? There are several types of social media influencers. The most prominent are celebrities, some of whom have huge numbers of followers across various demographics groups. Then there are bloggers and other online media personalities, who typically attract an audience of more narrow interest. We might also think of colleagues and customers as potential influencers within professional networks. And of course, there are friends and family members who represent voices of influence within our personal and most intimate communities.

In addition to finding the right influencers for your brand, it's also important to engage the influencers who will minimize risk of damage to the reputation of the brand. For example, if not properly chosen and engaged, some influencers can actually alienate your target customers if they are prone to sharing content that is not in line with your overall brand positioning and social image. This makes it all the more important to use the right metrics and framework.

The [LexisNexis Media Intelligence](#) team has identified five nuances for measuring social media influence and determining the best targets for an influencer marketing program.





1

Relevance

The first question to ask: Is the influencer focusing on the narrow topic of interest to our prospective customers?

“When strategizing an influencer marketing campaign for a brand, it’s crucial to analyze the influencer’s audience demographics so their content resonates within an accurate target audience on their most relevant platforms,” according to the [Influence](#) digital media blog. “Every brand has a different goal and aesthetic.”

It’s important to start with a thorough evaluation of whether the influencer is sharing content and developing an online following that is relevant to the specific market segment you want to target. We do this by studying the influencer’s social media posts and searching for frequently used keywords.

More than one-half of consumers believe that the smaller the community, the bigger the influence, according to the [Technorati Digital Influence Report](#). To that extent, it’s more important to find those “people like me” influencers who speak to your target audience than it is to get caught up in huge vanity metrics powered by total impressions.

The next question to ask: Does the influencer have a wide enough echo in their follower base to produce value to your business?

This criterion goes beyond “reach”—although reach is certainly a component—because it analyzes not only the size of an audience but also the legitimacy and level of expertise on the subject matter of interest.

“As a blogger, it takes time, nonstop effort and perseverance to establish credibility in an online world,” [writes](#) Slice Communications consultant Rachel Gordon. “When looking for potential influencers, agencies delve into their social media to make sure it is a brand that will positively benefit their own audience as well. For agencies, they use the number of interactions with followers, as well as the traffic to their social media, to see how much of an asset they can be as a brand ambassador.”

There are a variety of analytics we can use to evaluate credibility, including various social media prominence assessments and analysis of the influencer’s social media history to gauge credibility over a prolonged period.



Next we ask: Is the influencer talking about our topic of interest on a regular basis?

It's one thing to flag an influencer who has relevance and credibility, but those characteristics are of minimal value from a PR and marketing perspective if the person suddenly discussed the subject and then went silent for a long period of time. It's important to understand whether the social influencer has regular and confirmed activity, engaging on the topic that is relevant for your business.

"Some people contend that 'relevance' is all that matters, but mixing relevance and consistency enables marketers to give greater attention to influencers who have regular things to say on a topic across a wider span of time," said Jean-Christophe Lahary, Head of Media Intelligence Research & Analytics at LexisNexis. "This also creates an additional field of study because we can measure consistency on an ongoing basis by reviewing archives of social media conversations and calculating the number of relevant messages during a certain period of time."

For example, there are various tools to measure the number of tweets an influencer has sent related to a specific topic and to evaluate the frequency of those tweets within a specified time window.

The next question to pose: Who is interested in the influencer's content and to what extent does it resonate with that audience?

This criterion seeks to understand how much of an impact the influencer has on their social network by trying to determine how interested those individuals truly are in the published content. Marketers need to understand the potential level of engagement the influencer can create with an audience in order to assess how valuable that influencer might be to the corporate brand.

Nearly four in five marketers use "brand engagement" as a metric for measuring Return on Investment in social media marketing, [according to a survey](#) by *Marketing Week*, but they also admitted that they struggle with defining engagement and determining how that translates into value. Likewise, 25 percent of marketers already find cost per engagement to be the most effective influencer marketing pricing model, and 81 percent see engagement metrics as their top success indicators, according to Linqia's [The State of Influencer Marketing 2017 survey](#).

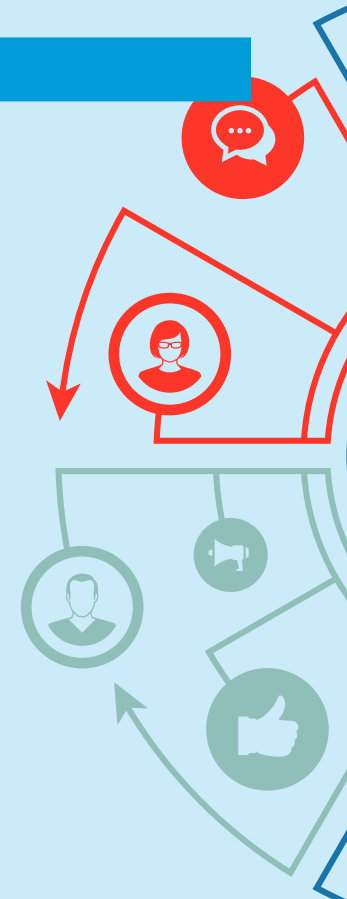


With social influencer marketing, we can measure engagement by identifying the number of followers for an influencer and then calculating the number of retweets/shares the influencer generates in proportion to that follower base. If a high percentage of them are engaging with the influencer's content in some way, it indicates that influencer's network is mobilized by the posted content and not just passively scrolling.

The fifth and final question to ask: What is the influencer's degree of connection with other online influencers?

This is another criterion that is often misunderstood and therefore not accurately measured by marketers. It's not enough to just ascertain how many people are in the influencer's sphere of influence, it's more important to apply advanced data analytics and evaluate whether their network includes other influential people who can create an outsized market impact.

The key metric to evaluating an influencer's network include how frequently we see mentions of the influencer's social media profile on other social media accounts. For example, aside from the influencer's own Twitter account, how many times do we see the Twitter accounts belonging to their followers mentioned by others on social media? Do the influencer's followers include other social media influencers? If so, those are the influencers that PR and marketing professionals ought to be more interested in targeting with their communications.



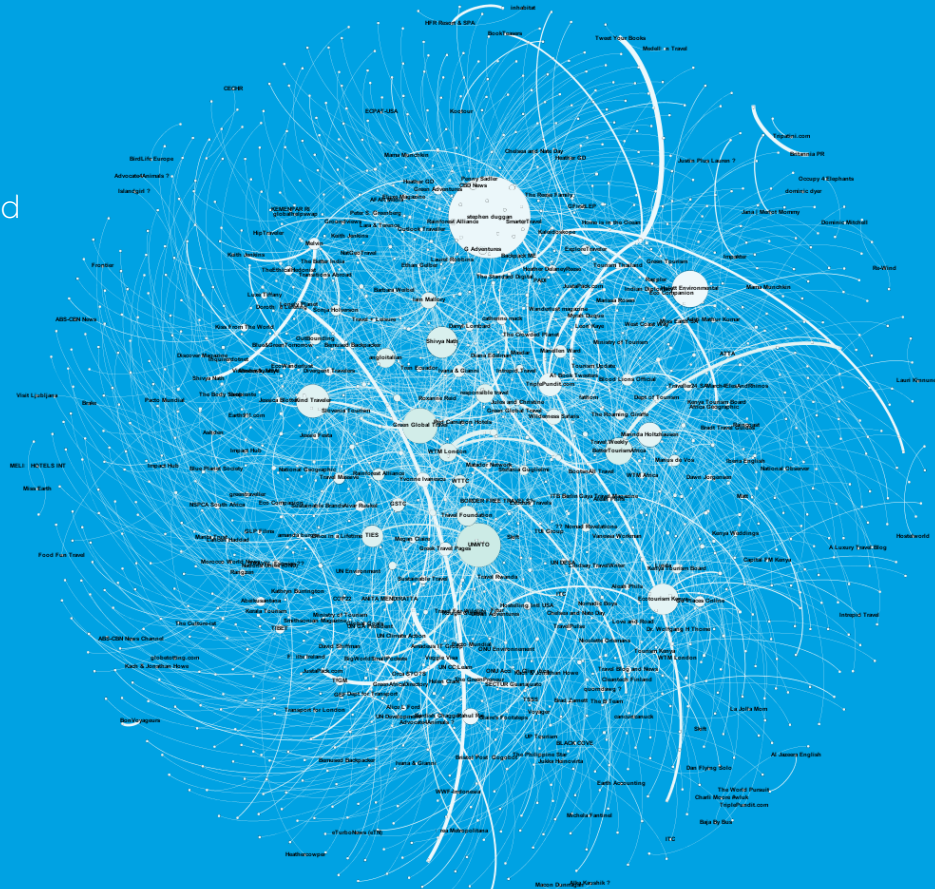


“Here we consider the capacity of potential influencers to create strong ‘nodes’ or connections with other potential influencers,” said Mr. Lahary of LexisNexis. “This network can be measured by the ability for a potential influencer to quote and then link with other influencers, who are themselves connected with others. This capacity to be a strong ‘connector’—the ability to determine which one is the shortest path to connect the maximum of people between themselves—can be visualized with analytics that tell a story for marketers.”

Mr. Lahary shared an example from a recent [“Social Media Influencer Landscape Report”](#) prepared by his team:

→ Overall Network

Analyzing influencers starts with a broad view of the overall network. Profiles (represented by dots) are linked and sized based on degrees of connectivity.

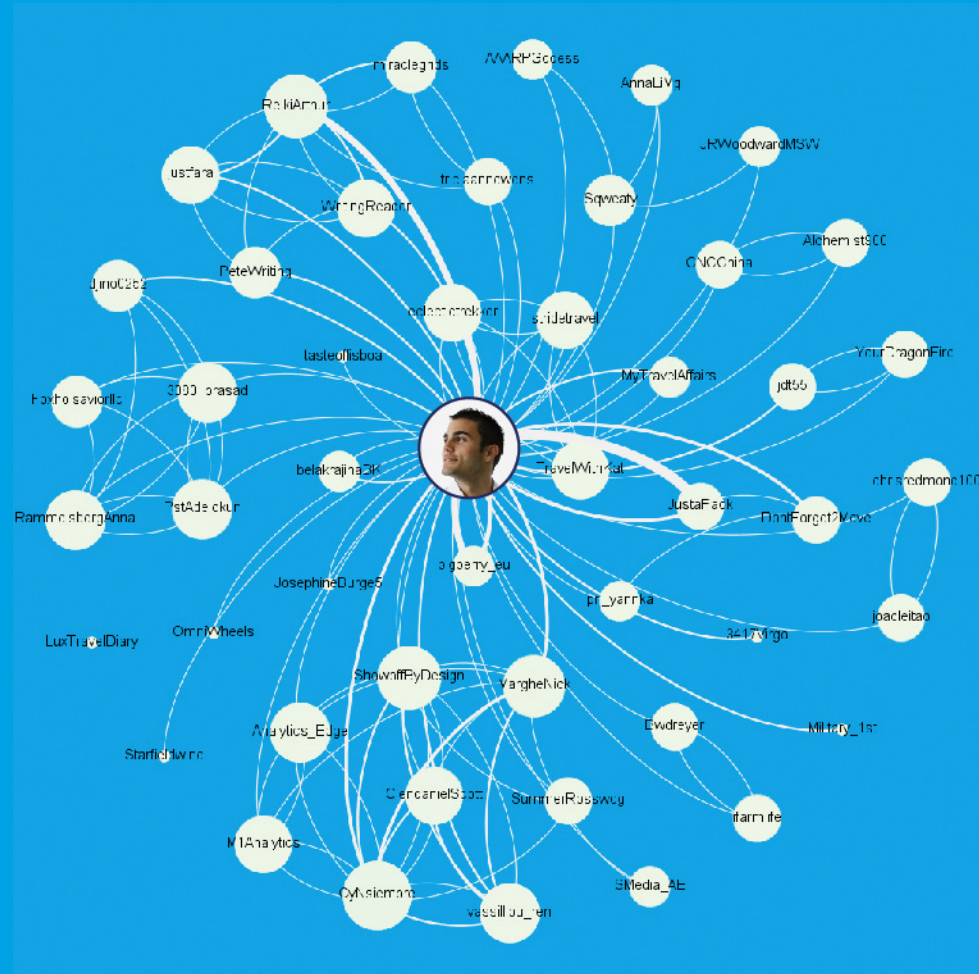


By strategically setting criteria across the 5 core parameters, the LexisNexis Media Intelligence Research & Analytics team filters the pool of influencers by their relevance, credibility, consistency, networks, and engagement . (For example, accounts with >5 tweets per month about sustainable tourism, accounts with 5,000+ followers, accounts with a minimum average of retweets, etc.)



→ Influencer's Network Visualization

By delving deeper into the pool of remaining influencers, it's easier to make a selective suggestion of best potential fit according to the five influencer criteria and your business objectives. Human assessment is important to identify which of the best-fit influencers will work for your brand. The combination of automated and human analysis ensures a strong match across metrics and personality.



Conclusion

With this framework in place for measuring social media influencers, marketers and PR professionals can move from the first phase of “descriptive” measurement to “prescriptive” analytics. This allows teams to advance beyond the What and Why, venturing into What’s Next for the brands we represent.

Media intelligence and analytics are best understood as a true end-to-end exercise. To that extent, social influencer analytics are really just one element of a comprehensive measurement program that brings together other components—such as ongoing media monitoring and regular brand visibility reports. This integrated measurement effort provides the best support for the modern marketing communication function.

LexisNexis Media Intelligence drives improved corporate communications and business strategies through deep media insights. The company offers a portfolio of solutions that cut through the noise to uncover the information that really matters. These information tools help PR professionals and marketers to learn what’s being said about their brand, benchmark against others and gain powerful insights about where to shape the direction of the company.



Specifically, the [LexisNexis Media Intelligence Research & Analytics](#) team is a professional services consulting solution that combines media metrics and human expertise. This team provides PR and marketing professionals with social media analysis that helps them to identify the social media influencers who represent the best strategic fit for their brands. The team also provides data and consultative insights that allow marketers to gain deeper competitive intelligence, discover new media opportunities, develop greater awareness of how their brands are portrayed.

In addition, [LexisNexis Social Analytics](#)—powered by Talkwalker—is a new social data intelligence platform empowering PR and marketing professionals to make business

decisions based on social insights. This social media monitoring tool helps users get the most from the billions of social posts and conversations that are growing across the globe every second. It combines the breadth of a powerful social listening service that monitors worldwide social media discussions that take place in 187 languages with the insights of a social analytics reporting service that generates monitoring results with just a few clicks.

The rise of social media influencers as a key channel for corporate marketing and PR strategies is clear, but it's essential to be looking at the right information in order to determine which specific influencers will make a measurable impact for your specific brand. A good starting point is to go beyond the traditional PR metrics such as "Reach" and "Impressions" and explore the use of more sophisticated data analytics that can evaluate potential social influencers in a way that is more suited for the era of digital media. Once the most appropriate influencers have been identified and targeted, PR and marketing professionals can focus on what they do best—crafting communications plans that result in success for their brands.

