

# An introduction to influencer marketing – The opportunities for public relations Skills Guide

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### Learning outcomes:

By the end of this skills guide you will:

- Learn how to articulate a working definition of influencer marketing
- Gain an understanding of some misconceptions surrounding influence
- Gather an appreciation of the opportunity influencer marketing presents to public relations
- Learn how to identify the varying outcomes associated with influencer marketing

### Influencer marketing – a definition:

The Chartered Institute of Public Relations (CIPR) Influencer Marketing Panel defines influencer marketing as follows:

The art and science of forming, or changing, a public's opinions and behaviours via a third party online. The practice can be via earned, paid or a hybrid initiative. Influencer marketing at its core is partnering with individuals who have a significant audience and influence within a particular segment. Influencers can drive a message – often in the form of original or co-created content – to the masses or to a micro-targeted audience.

### Influencer marketing market size:

Brands are set to spend [up to £11.5 billion globally on influencer marketing by 2022](#). This represents a 92% revenue hike from 2019 figures of £6 billion.

Influencer marketing is no fad. Organisations are seizing the opportunities of influencer marketing at speed and at scale. During a 2019 earnings call, the Estée Lauder CEO told analysts: [“75% of our investment now is in digital social media influencers and they're revealing to be highly productive.”](#)

Also in 2019, [Sir Martin Sorrell's S4Capital acquired IMA – a Dutch headquartered influencer marketing agency for £9.3m](#). In addition, [Unilever announced it had assisted in successfully raising £9m funding for CreatorIQ](#), an influencer marketing software platform.

## Influence misconceptions:

Influence is not measured by how far a person can PUSH their content out. Rather it is the power they have to PULL their community in towards an action. Influence is the ability to shape or change a person's opinion or behaviour.

The term 'influencer' is often used interchangeably with the term 'brand advocate'. But influence is neutral. Influencers are change agents who may hurt just as much as they may help a communicator's cause. Advocates are supporters – people who talk favourably about an organisation. They do not necessarily possess the power to influence.

## Opportunity for PR profession to lead influencer marketing:

PR practitioners have always worked with influencers. Previously these influencers were confined to groups such as journalists, analysts and government officials. Today, the social web has enabled influencers to emerge on every media and in every vertical and sector.

PR is the management discipline centred on reputation. It looks to form and maintain goodwill and mutual understanding between an organisation and its stakeholders. This is distinct from other creative industries which focus solely on customers and potential buyers.

The opportunity for PR professionals is to transfer long-established, relationship-building skills and to embrace new groups of influencers for the benefit of the organisations we represent and their important stakeholders.

## Outcomes of influencer marketing:

Selling products is only one outcome of working with influencers. Other outcomes include brand awareness, nation building, crisis communications, employee advocacy, and positive social change.

## Influencer marketing and the PESO model:

PR practitioners have widely adopted the [PESO model created by Gini Dietrich](#). We start with owned channels and use paid, earned and shared media to help amplify our messages, increase reach and encourage engagement. How can we apply PESO to influencer marketing?

The value exchange between an organisation and influencer is the driver of the relationship. It can be exclusive access to content, products and services, or financial remuneration.

Influencers are often **paid** by organisations, in cash or in kind, to create favourable brand-sponsored content.

PR practitioners can work with influencers as an extension of traditional media relations outreach, generating **earned** content through press release targeting and relationship building.

Organisations and influencers often work together to co-create content which is then **shared** to the influencer's audience on social media platforms.

Increasingly, influencer-generated content is repurposed and published to brand-**owned** media such as websites, social media profiles or point of sale advertising.

## Compliance and disclosure:

Everyone involved in the publication of influencer marketing content is responsible for its governance and compliance with relevant laws. This includes the sponsoring organisations, agencies, advisors and the influencers themselves, as well as any and all media (such as publications and online platforms) on which such content appears.

Anyone endorsing a product or service on social media must disclose clearly and prominently when they have received any payment, benefit (such as a free gift, hospitality, free travel or stays, loans of product) or any other incentive. Lack of effective disclosure erodes trust with an audience and contravenes government-set rules and regulations.

In the UK, influencer marketing is regulated by three enforcement bodies: the [Advertising Standards Authority](#) (ASA), Local Authority Trading Standards and the [Competition and Markets Authority](#) (CMA), whose remits overlap.

CIPR members are also bound by the Institute's [Code of Conduct](#).

## Related guides in this series:

[PR and influencer marketing – the rules and regulators](#)

[PRs as influencers – how to ethically disclose your relationships with clients and causes without misleading your online audience](#)

## Further reading

[ASA and CAP Influencer Marketing – Key Advice Resources](#)

[ASA and CMA Influencer Guidance Update](#)

[CIPR Code of Conduct](#)

[CMA Guidance – Social Media & Endorsement](#)

[The Labelling of Influencer Advertising](#)

[Research on the Labelling of Influencer Advertising Report for the Advertising Standards Authority](#)