

SOCIAL & INFLUENCER GUIDE FOR PR

Best practices for social media are constantly in flux and influencer marketing is just solidifying itself as the strategy evolves into its own industry. We're taking the guesswork out of both for PR and comms pros by putting together this guide, which will walk you through everything you need to know.



01 Social Media for PR and Comms Pros

There's no shortage of resources available on social media strategy and influencer marketing, but as a PR professional you need something tailored to your specific needs. That's exactly why we put this guide together.

This guide contains relevant, actionable tips you can use to incorporate social media and influencer marketing into your company or client's communications strategy.

For daily curated content- both our own and from other reputable sources- find us on Twitter @Cision. We share everything we find relevant, helpful, and occasionally even entertaining.

How PR pros can tap into social for research

Social media contains a wealth of information that can help you prepare and target pitches, especially if you have the tools to filter what you need out of the ever-increasing noise. There are a few social media use cases specific to PR and comms professionals:

- Build relationships with journalists
- Research and prepare a pitch
- Deliver a pitch when appropriate

And a few other use cases that are more general but also applicable to PR:

- Monitor the competition
- Keep up with the industry as a whole
- Keep an eye on trends

Using social to build relationships

Social media is a fantastic place for PR and comms pros to not only keep up with the relationships they already have in the industry, but also discover new journalists- and other influencers- to connect with. If social is unfamiliar territory, treat it as you would any other professional networking tool: Don't be overly pushy or sales-y, just connect on a human level.

You don't have to be glued to your Twitter stream 24/7 to keep up with what journalists are working on and you have a built-in opportunity to boost and share their other work when appropriate, deepening your relationship. (This applies to any other social platform as well, not just Twitter.)

Social is also a great place to do some research around a pitch you're putting together. As we learned in our recent [State of the Media Report](#), 75% of journalists surveyed feel like fewer than 25% of the pitches they receive are relevant. That means if your pitch is researched, it's way more likely to be picked up.

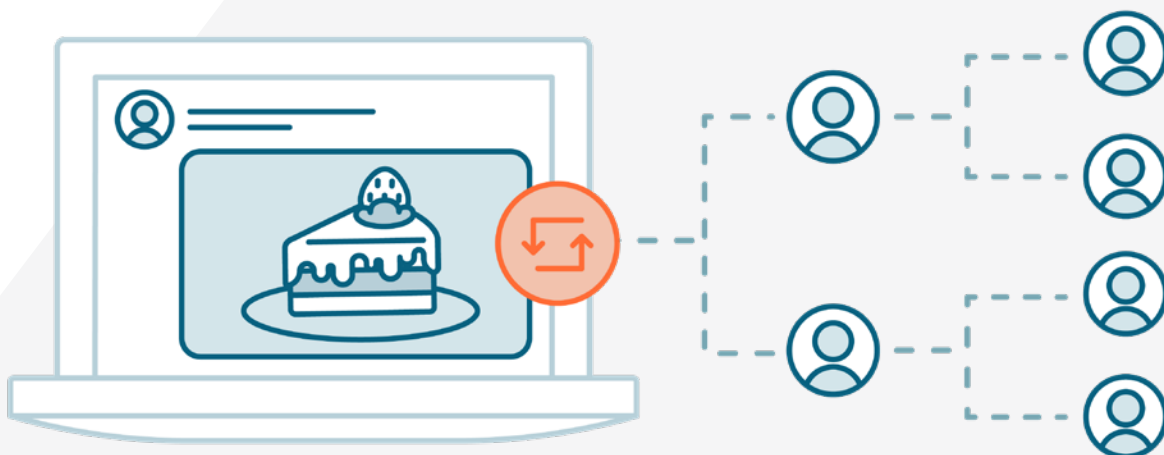
We have more actionable advice from that report on how you can create better pitches in our [Media Pitching Manual](#).

Using social to research a pitch

Just glancing at a journalist's profile can often tell you where they're working (and if they've changed jobs recently), what their beat is (and if that's changed lately), and more. Looking over their recent work can help give you a feel for if your current pitch would be a good fit.

And if it's close but not perfect, you can tailor the message to reflect that you know it's not quite there. That gives you a better chance of getting a response that lets you know if this particular journalist might cover a similar pitch in the future.

It can also tell you who's on vacation, which lets you save yourself the time of crafting a personalised pitch around a piece on a tight deadline they wouldn't get to in time.



Using social to deliver a pitch

If you've built a good rapport with a journalist, you'll know their preferred method of receiving pitches. While many journalists still prefer to receive pitches via email (with a link to any and all assets necessary to put together the story), most of all they prefer that a pitch be relevant and concise.

That advice comes from the fact that [42% of respondents to our 2019 State of the Media Report](#) said they work on stories no more than a day in advance.

So if you know a particular journalist is comfortable receiving a pitch via social (direct or private message), that's a perfect place for a direct and concise pitch to go. Just keep in mind that social networks don't have the same tools for flagging and following up on messages the way that most email clients do.

You can also take a chance by reaching out on social if that's the only contact information you can find for a specific journalist or influencer, but know that they may not be receptive, depending on their personal preferences. You may also be able to build a relationship from there, however.



Monitor the competition

Does a rival seem to get all of their pitches placed while yours keep falling flat? Use social to monitor how they're moving in those spaces and pick up some tips and tricks to alter your approach.

You can also learn from some very real examples of what *not* to do when pitching. (We've all seen those viral Twitter threads of embarrassing, completely off-base pitches. Don't be the next example to go around.)

Keep an eye on which topics and trends your rivals are talking about and tracking, too. You can take advantage of any gaps in their coverage, or possibly see that a trend is serious before it really takes off. If that trend makes sense for what you're working on, make sure to capitalise on it.

Keep up with the industry as a whole

An important part of pitching is staying on top of general conversation and trends in your industry: What's a hot topic right now? What isn't, but that you can tie into a hot topic? Social is the perfect place to stay on top of this, and help you know how to better craft your pitches.

It's less something you can do by hopping on for a few minutes of recon while you're writing a particular pitch, and more something you know by having a constant presence. That doesn't mean you need to spend six hours a day on Twitter or Instagram or the hot new platform that has launched since we wrote this guide, either.

After spending some time on different platforms you'll hopefully find the sweet spot for staying connected without getting overwhelmed or burned out. You at least want to check in daily to see who has been responding to your content; those are always the relationships to prioritise.

How PR pros can tap into social for discovery

In the process of using social to keep tabs on competitors and the industry as a whole, you're likely to begin noticing and at least informally tracking influencers.

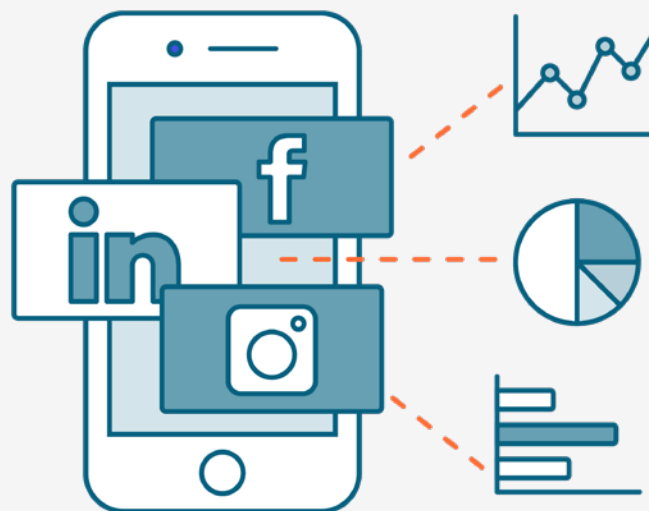
If influencer marketing is something your brand wants to tap into (and there's a 50% chance that's why you've downloaded and are reading this guide), there are also some use cases for the overlap between social and influencers:

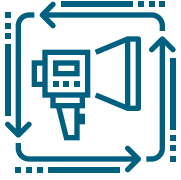
- Discovering influencers
- Building relationships with influencers
- Vetting influencers before contacting them as a source or for a campaign or partnership

Twitter lists are a handy way to keep tabs on influencers and what they're talking about and working on — another helpful way to stay on top of trends. We've already discussed how following contacts across social is a good way to keep in touch, building and improving relationships.

It's also a great way to do some research around influencers before you decide they're a good fit for a story, campaign or other project that you're working on. What kinds of brands are they working with now, or have they worked with in the past? What's their style, and would it be a good fit for what you have in mind?

You also want to be sure you've thoroughly vetted any influencer before working with them, lest you find yourself in a crisis communications situation of your own making. Spend some time going through their posting history, accounts they frequently associate with, and anything else that could be off-brand or potentially detrimental to your brand.





02 Influencer Marketing for PR

We know you also know the basics of influencer marketing, and probably that the old model of “pay-and-pray” is no longer the best approach for any brand’s dollar.

Here’s what PR and comms pros specifically should know about influencer marketing.

Finding the right kind of influencer

Depending on the project that you’re working on, there are different “levels” of influencers available to reach out to. Are you trying to amplify a story within a specific niche, or does a brand you’re working with want to find an influencer to partner with on a longer campaign or other project?

You can consider:

- **Traditional influencer:** Those with large followings who might be a celebrity outside of their social media presence (some are simply influential for being influential on social)
- **Micro-influencer:** These influencers have “smaller” followings still typically around the 10k range
- **Nanoinfluencer:** These influencers have much smaller- but often much more engaged- followings and are perfect for niche projects

You also want to consider which platform an influencer is influential on. Some are only influential in one place while some have a very influential presence across multiple platforms. You want to match that to where your target audience is most active and wants to receive your message.

Once you’ve identified the influencer or influencers you want to work with, you need to approach them about the project you have them in mind for. This is easier if you’ve been building relationships with appropriate influencers and others in your industry, often on social.

As we discussed earlier in this guide, social gives you a place to discover influencers, connect with them, and then organically build relationships with them over time (read: don’t be creepy) so your first outreach isn’t an ask.

A final consideration: Are you working in B2C or B2B for this particular project? Your approach will be slightly different with an influencer in a B2B space than a “traditional” B2C influencer. It’s harder to send them a copy of some cloud software to pose with on Instagram, for one, and Instagram is probably not even the platform you should be targeting either. B2B influencers typically have a dedicated following on LinkedIn or Twitter, though if they are a popular video personality you might find them on YouTube, too.

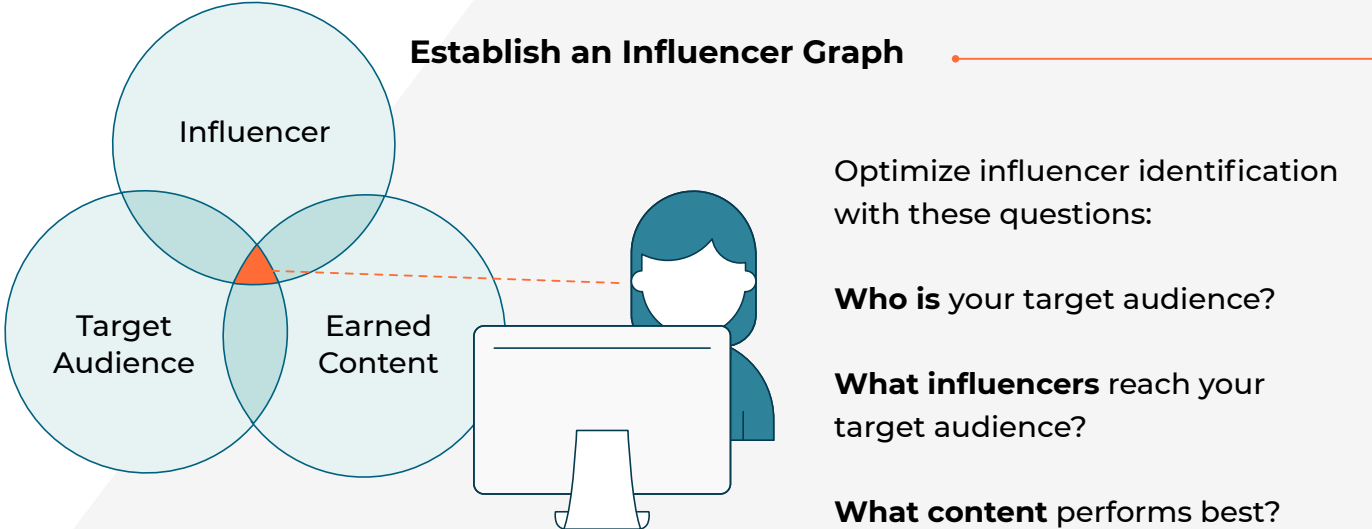
As always, it comes back to knowing your audience— and we have an incredibly helpful technique for mapping that out when it comes to influencer marketing of any variety.

How influencer graphs can help

As influencer marketing has evolved, Cision has come up with the concept of the Influencer Graph to get the most out of this marketing strategy.

Influencer graphs can not only help you find the right influencer, but be sure you’re speaking to the right audience in the end: The only way your project is going to ultimately be effective, after all.

Influencer graphs allow you to completely map an influencer, their content and the audience who actually consumes it. Here’s how.



Step 1: Profile your ideal audience

Hopefully this is the target audience you've been working to reach, but if that hasn't been refreshed by your team in a while there's no time like the present.

Do you have existing personas? Be sure to go over those and update and/or expand them as necessary; while they might be extremely up-to-date for your target audience in some aspects of your business or sales pipeline, they could be different elsewhere (on social media for example).

Be as detailed as you are able to with the resources your team has available. You also want to be sure this information is accessible to everyone it could be helpful to, from marketing and sales to developers building out products and UX. Truly understanding your audience means keeping them in mind through every step of not only the sales cycle, but also their customer lifecycle.

How does what they need change over time? Who is influential to them will also change over time and might be different in different places. Later in the cycle might be a good time to tap internal brand advocates as influencers, for example.

Step 2: Map out the influencers

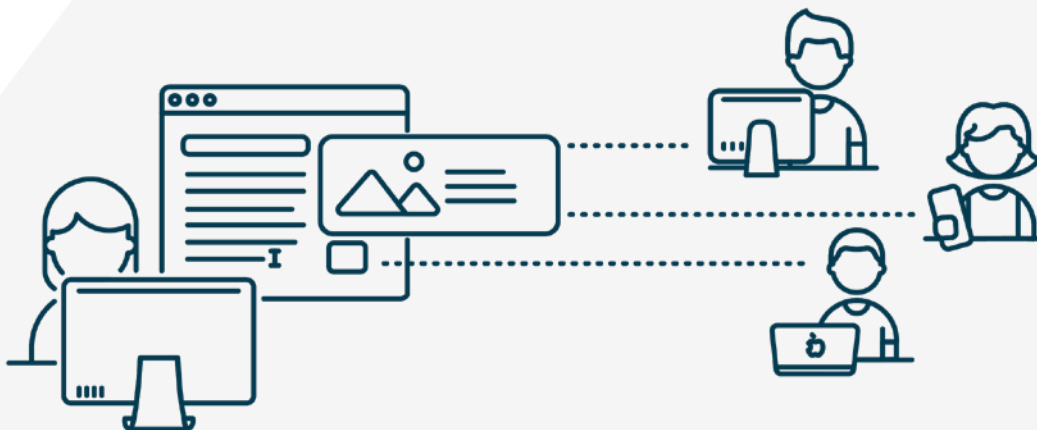
You can do this manually, of course, or you can engage the right technology and/or partners to make this easier. (We are biased, but we suggest ourselves if you're looking for a place to start.)

If you're putting in the work to get to know your audience, chances are you'll have a good idea of who they find to be influential. The key is to map out their influence more than simply create a list of influencers who might be good to tap for your campaign or partnership.

Where are they most influential? Is it just on one platform, or across several? Does their audience differ between platforms? Do they have strong relationships with other influencers, and if so, how do their respective audiences overlap? How much does your target audience overlap with those audiences?

It's important to do this work to understand the true potential of working with an influencer. A lot of overlap between their audience and your target audience means it's a good idea to move forward with a campaign or partnership with a particular influencer.

If not, don't engage them simply because they have a big following. You'll be wasting the potential your campaign or partnership could find in a better matched influencer.



Step 3: Map out the content these influencers create

This will give you your graphical overlap; which content is your target audience consuming from these influencers? Which content is getting the highest level of engagement from your target audience?

This approach gives you a game plan when you approach an influencer about working with them. It lets you know which metrics you should focus on for success during a campaign. It lets the influencer better refine their content for any campaigns or partnerships you're working on.

All of these factors will mean you're set up for maximum possible success in your working relationship with the influencer or influencers you want to tap for your campaign or partnership.

Why is this important?

Why should your team bother to put in this level of work for a marketing trend? Influencer marketing isn't just a trendy tactic to tap into; when you approach it this way, you're strengthening the base of your entire marketing strategy by focusing on the most important base element: the right audience.

When you know your audience, that means you're creating better, more targeted content that will drive better results. It means you're creating and leveraging more targeted pitches to influencers, driving better results across your strategy.



What you should measure with influencer marketing

Before starting any kind of project or partnership with an influencer, you want to be sure you've set the right expectations on both sides of the endeavor. Everyone needs to be clear on what they're expected to deliver, when, and how everything will be measured. What does success mean?

For example, if you want to increase your share of voice in the industry, choose some metrics to concentrate on that reflect this goal. First you'll have to decide which of your competitors you'll compare yourself to- pick two to 10 to get started- and get metrics around the entire conversation in the industry. This means you'll want to have some baseline metrics before you start working with an influencer, to be able to definitively say that they had an impact on your brand's share of voice.

Twitter is the best place to measure this, because of the robust conversation and available data there.

To truly understand share of voice, you'll want to compare across several different metrics. One competitor you're tracking might have a high reach, while another could have a lot of tweets. By comparing several different metrics, you can see where the patterns are and what metrics make most sense in your industry or category.

One of our favorite metrics to start with is simple tweet volume. Tweet counts are useful in understanding the size of the conversation about a brand or competitor. You'll also want to look at tweet volume compared to overall tweet total.

Reach is an excellent metric for share of voice too, because it tells you about the size of the potential audience for a brand. The bigger the reach, the larger the variety of people who are spreading the message. A high reach indicates a diversity in contributors

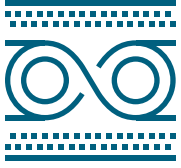
and audience, as well as some potentially influential (hopefully including the influencer or influencers you are considering working with) and high-follower contributors.

We also recommend unique contributors as a share of voice metric. Which brand has more different people talking about it? One caveat about both reach and contributors is that since these are metrics based on counting unique users; you can't compare one brand's metric to an overall sum, since you can't add up reach or contributor numbers to get overall reach or contributors. You can only compare reach to another brand's reach. That's still useful, but may not be a traditional share of voice metric.

A FINAL NOTE ON INFLUENCER MARKETING

Most importantly? Make sure you're complying with all current laws, regulations and even suggestions around influencer marketing. The FTC is starting to crack down on influencer marketing that doesn't explicitly follow its regulations. You don't want your project to be the one pointed out as What Not To Do in examples shared around the world.





03 What about when you combine social and influencer marketing? (Or: How do algorithms affect this?)

You might have noticed there's some significant overlap in influencer and social media marketing because most influencers are influential on a particular social platform. That means when social platforms change their algorithms, this can have a huge effect on influencer marketing and consequently on anyone working with influencers in any capacity.

The Facebook News Feed

The News Feed algorithm has been the enduring mystery of our time for marketers and social media managers, not to mention PR and comms professionals. Changes are made, rolled out, and taken back. Testing is done. New features appear and disappear. We are told little official information, but do our best to work out what is most likely happening.

It's no secret that organic reach has been falling for brands on Facebook for some time now, and Facebook has also publicly announced in response to recent backlash that they're concentrating on making it a place for meaningful engagement with friends and family. Not brands.

However, hope for brands still exists in Facebook's renewed emphasis on Groups. If you have a branded Group, it seems it will still be weighted the same as any other kind of Group (they're opt-in, after all) and will exist in its own prioritised tab in a yet-to-be-realised redesign.

Consider this if you and a Facebook influencer are working together on a project. Do they have a highly engaged group that's a perfect fit as your target audience? Then this is the place to concentrate your efforts and resources.

Instagram's algorithm

Let us not forget that Facebook owns Instagram, but also that Instagram is usually the destination of choice for influencer marketing.

The big change to Instagram's algorithm came a while ago and transformed it from a solely reverse-chronological feed to one operating on an unknown system of weighted factors. Another big change came when Instagram cut off the APIs many influencers relied on to artificially inflate their numbers—and they're only cracking down on this more, taking action against accounts who have bought fake followers or engagement.

This has always been against the platform's ToS (terms of service), but it was largely ignored until it became such a rampant problem. Now in the works are messages that will pop up warning other users if it looks like an account has bought followers or engagement, and that could also lead to repeat offenders being banned and losing their accounts and followers.

It's a better bet for brands and the PR and comms pros behind them to find the right influencer with a highly engaged following than betting on just anyone with big numbers.

One easy way to tell if someone has bought fake followers- or just to see how engaged their following is- is to compare their overall follower number to how many likes and comments their recent posts have gotten. If someone has 9 million followers but only 33 likes on their posts, chances are those followers are mostly bots.

Twitter's timeline

You now have a choice on your Twitter timeline as a user: Toggle a button to see the latest tweets, or "top tweets" instead.

Twitter has had its own issues with bots and fake followers and engagement and they're starting to take a lot more heat for not dealing with the problems on their platform sooner.

This is the place you definitely need to vet any influencer you're working with: Search deep through the tweet archives to be sure they haven't posted anything in the past that will get them and consequently, you in trouble now. If you don't do it, a competitor- or competitor of the influencer- will do it for you.



Conclusion

We hope this helps you streamline your approach on social media and/or with influencer marketing as a PR pro.

Social media is a fantastic resource not only for building and maintaining networks, but staying on top of trends and even discovering influencers. While influencer marketing isn't a magic solution to every branding problem, it is a way for brands to reach their target audience through an admired, trusted voice. PR and comms pros can guide brands in the right way to really maximise their efforts with these strategies.

We hope this helps you strategise for the best possible returns on your projects. Thanks for taking the time to read, and please share if you found this guide helpful.

WANT HELP? Talk to one of our experts today to see how Cision can help with all your pitching and PR needs.