



BUILDING AN INFLUENCER GRAPH: AN EARNED MEDIA MANAGEMENT STRATEGY

**How to rethink your influencer identification as
part of an Earned Media Management strategy**

By Kaila Garrison,
VP GTM Strategy, Co-Founder Cision Innovations Lab



Introduction

Earned Media Management is a four-part strategy that modern communicators are adopting to be able to take a data-driven, systematic approach to their PR and comms functions. By reworking their approach, communicators will be able to better identify influencers based on how they will influence the end-consumer, more accurately craft and pitch a multimedia-rich story, and measure their efforts using the same performance benchmarks that their owned and paid media channel owners are using. This new

approach will modernise the comms function and elevate the role of PR so that it once again becomes an essential and integral part of c-suite decision-making.

The first thing PR pros need to do is shift their influencer identification approach from using established media lists or old-school cold-calling methods to the consumer-first model. This requires PR pros to develop a deep understanding of who a brand's desired audience is and to find influencers who can effectively reach that audience.

THE CHALLENGE:

Understanding customer-first influencer identification

When a PR is looking for journalists and influencers to pitch to, some will reach for a list of people they already know. Sometimes they will also connect with specific media outlets that they think will help them reach their target audience. Often outlets are chosen for brand name recognition, like *The Telegraph*. In extreme cases, PR pros will email every single media outlet and influencer they can find.

If the primary goal of a comms professional is to get their message in front of the brand's target audience, then the logic of the traditional model where PR pros either partner with journalists and influencers based on relationships or notoriety or pitch their story to as many people as possible is fundamentally flawed, for one simple reason: *This old model does not clearly correlate with meaningful content getting to a targeted audience.* In each case outlined above, the PR pro is searching for journalists and influencers first, rather than carefully considering their end-customers and who has the most influence over them.

The problem is systemic, as revealed in Forrester's Oct. 2018 Opportunity Snapshot Survey. 70% of PR pros depend on their existing influencer and journalist relationships to perform outreach compared with 52% who



EMERGENCY ALERTS

T

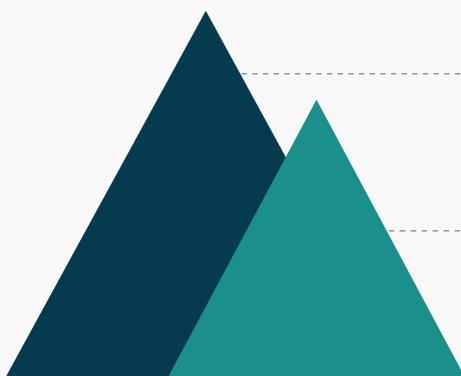
Presidential Alert

This is a random pitch. No action is needed as no thought went into what influencers we want to target with this message.

are using data from their end-customers to inform how to strategically communicate to influencers and journalists.

In fact, **half** of communications teams still feel it's the job of influencers and journalists to reach out to them. These survey findings show that not only that some PR pros have no idea how to perform insights-driven influencer outreach, but also that some PR pros actually expect journalists and influencers to reach out to them, which is unrealistic and problematic.

Now, more so than ever, influencer identification requires a systematic approach to determine the right mix of journalists and influencers that will best influence a brand's audience. This is the first step in implementing an Earned Media Management strategy.



70%

of PR pros depend on their existing influencer and journalist relationships to perform outreach.

52%

are using data from their end-customers to inform how to strategically communicate to influencers and journalists.

(Source: Forrester Opportunity Snapshot, Oct. 2018)

What is an Influencer Graph?

influencer graph

[in·flu·ence·ər graf]

noun

1. An influencer graph is a complete mapping between an influencer, their content, and the actual audience that consumes it.

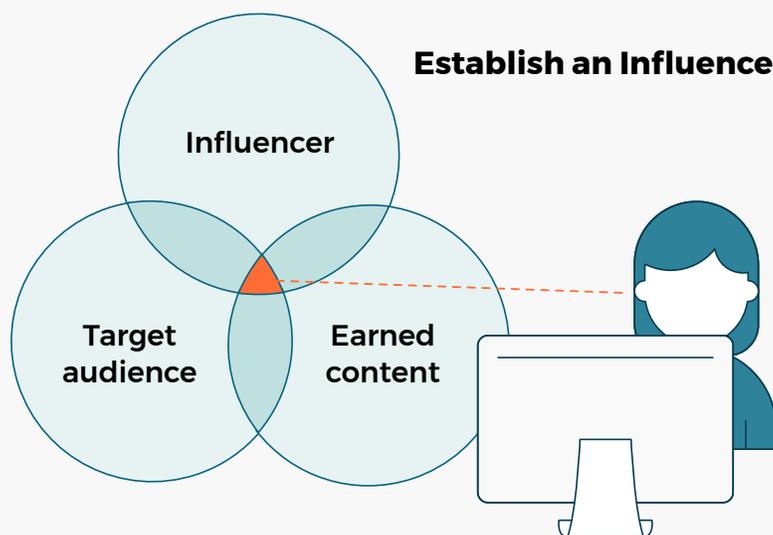
*Example: By establishing an **influencer graph**, Jessica was able to pinpoint the right journalists to reach out to in order to best influence her brand's target audience.*

A shift must occur, where influencers and journalists are identified based on the amount of actual overlap that person has with the brand's target consumer. PR pros can easily do this by establishing an influencer graph.

An influencer graph is simple. By mapping out potential influencers, the content those influencers create and the consumers that read/watch/listen to that content, you can graph the overlap and identify the ideal.

By turning the primary focus on identifying the audience first, instead of identifying journalists and influencers first, the whole traditional pitch model has been turned upside down.

By turning the focus on the end consumer that the brand wants to reach, communicators can then start using new tracking technology like Cision ID to measure efforts to break through to this audience.



Establish an Influencer Graph

Optimise influencer identification with these questions:

Who is your target audience?

What influencers reach your target audience?

What content performs best?



Understand your audience

Never before have PR or comms professionals been able to access such granular data about the audience they are reaching. By better understanding the brand's desired audience, comms professionals can then use technology to identify the journalists and influencers who are providing the content that your audience wants to consume.

Using the audience data gained as part of an Earned Media Management approach will help PR pros overcome executive objections as to why the brand might not prioritise pitching to the “tier 1” publications and media outlets that used to be part of the “pitch and pray” strategy.

Executives will quickly see that the old methods of pitching to journalists and influencers have no consideration for the end consumer and won't do anything to impact their top or bottom line results.



By better understanding the brand's desired audience, comms professionals can then use technology to identify the journalists and influencers who are providing the content that your audience wants to consume.

Example: A big consumer packaged goods company wants to reach new parents who are shopping for baby products. While a tempting route might be to pitch tier one publications, audience data may indicate that new individual influencers might have a more significant impact.

For example, while it might be tempting to get pick-up on, say, *The New York Times*, this demographic which indexes high for males between the ages of 35-44 and females between the ages of 55-64, has minimal overlap with the brand's target audience.

However, US influencer, Jamie Grayson, known as “The Baby Guy,” is a reviewer of new baby products. He has over 90,000 followers on Instagram and another 263,000 on Facebook. His followers index at a significantly higher rate with 82% females and 60% between the ages of 25 and 44.

The overall conclusion: The overall conclusion: While an individual influencer like The Baby Guy doesn't have brand power like *The New York Times*, his following has a higher saturation of audiences in-market for those types of products. This means that the big consumer brand might be able to better influence its target audience by pitching to Jamie Grayson instead of *The New York Times*.



PR pros can use an influencer graph model to make real-time adjustments to pitching strategies for better outcomes.

—Kaila Garrison,
VP of Marketing Strategy & Innovation,
Cision

The opportunity is for PR pros today to be able to use an influencer graph model to make real-time adjustments to their pitching strategy to account for the audience data they are seeing and to use and understand that data for better outcomes. As **77% of PR pros believe they still can do a better job at measuring** and proving its impact on business objectives, this opportunity has big implications for elevating the profession and the industry.

Audience data

Some of the available audience insights that can now be uncovered includes:

- Revenue
- Reach
- Engagement
- Web events
- Gender and age demographics
- Life stage demographics
- Marital status and education demographics
- Wealth decile and employment status
- Estimated net worth
- Household size and property type
- Income
- Median home value
- Gender of children and age of children
- Number of children and family position
- Role and decision maker firmographics
- Company age and size
- Sale firmographics
- Industry and occupation firmographics
- Past technology purchases firmographics



Let's get technical:

Assets needed to build an Influencer Graph

In an Earned Media Management programme, the creation of an influencer graph requires that you gather as much data about your audience as you can. You should also have access to a communications platform that includes a media database, as well as measurement functionalities.

01. Start with ideal customer data. Request customer profile data from the places in your org that already have it, such as a product marketer (B2B) or a CRM manager (B2C). This data may come in a variety of forms, and it's recommended that your comms team distill it into a persona document.

02. Use an AI-powered media database. Ideal platforms will have artificial intelligence and machine-learning capabilities to help you analyse the influencers that generated content – such as news articles or reviews on third-party sites – viewed by end-consumers with the attributes of your ideal customer. The platform should offer both traditional media identification options as well as a [social influencer discovery tool](#).

03. Score and recommend the right influencers. A “smart” platform will score the most relevant influencers across both traditional and social media who overlap most with that target audience. The scoring mechanism is important as you'll want to be able to prioritise your relationship-building capital, both in terms of time and money.

04. Validate with human intelligence. As with most AI applications, human reasoning, when paired with artificial intelligence tools, is still vital for optimal outcomes. Even if you choose the smartest communications plat-

form in the world, you'll still need a tech savvy comms team to help sift through influencer recommendations for each individual campaign. This also will help your team become more authoritative with the c-suite, now that campaign decision-making is backed by real data.

05. Track and analyse success. When new earned media coverage is secured with influencers, the brand can identify the audiences that consumed their content on third-party outlets. They can then match that with desired behaviors. For example, you may want to partner with your e-commerce or web team to discover what audiences that consumed an online article also became a lead or purchased a product online.

Finding the best partners for your brand

By taking a customer-first approach and building an influencer graph, modern communicators have successfully implemented the first part of a systematic Earned Media Management strategy.

Once an influencer graph has been built, and PR pros more clearly understand the people they want to reach out to in order to influence consumers, their next step should be to engage journalists and influencers in a strategic way. The term is **Smart Engagement**, and it's another core part of Earned Media Management.

TO LEARN MORE about how modern communicators are turning scattered and largely unmeasurable PR and communications processes into organised, strategic functions at their organisations, read **Earned Media Management: The Evolution of PR and Comms**.

COMMUNICATE LIKE NEVER BEFORE WITH THE CISION COMMUNICATIONS CLOUD®

Transform your PR approach with Earned Media Management using the Cision Communications Cloud. Request a demo now and learn how to demonstrate real business impact and elevate the comms function once more.

[REQUEST A DEMO](#)

CISION®