

salesforce

radian6™

social media  
monitoring +  
engagement

COMMUNITY EBOOK / FEB 2012 / [www.radian6.com](http://www.radian6.com) / 1 888 6radian

# Win Over Your Industry's Social Media Influencers



Radian6 February 2012 Ebook

# Win Over Your Industry's Social Media Influencers

## **Introduction**

### **Chapter 1:**

Who's an Influencer? Who's Not?

### **Chapter 2:**

Find Influencers Who Align with Your Business Goals

### **Chapter 3:**

Connect and Win Over Your Influencers

### **Chapter 4:**

Become Influential in Your Industry

### **Chapter 5:**

Engage Influencers Beyond a Campaign

### **Conclusion:**

Wrapping it All Up





## Introduction

### CONTENT, SHARING AND COMMUNITY

Take a quick look through your Twitter or Facebook streams. Chances are your friends are talking a lot about brands and products they're using.

Have you ever asked your social media peers to advise you on a new restaurant to try? Have you ever steered someone toward one product and away from another? Have you ever seen similar exchanges in your news feeds? Most likely.

As a brand, how do you capitalize on this phenomenon - the word of mouth rippling through social media channels?

In a previous ebook, we explained [how to define and measure influence](#). In this ebook, we'll provide you with some practical pointers on how to create a network of influencers to support your brand's communication efforts.

In the following chapters, you'll learn:

- What makes a person influential
- The differences between influencers, advocates and detractors
- How to find the right industry influencers
- How to create an influencer strategy that supports your business objectives
- 11 tips for successfully pitching your influencers
- How to extend an influencer relationship beyond a single campaign
- How you yourself can become influential in your own industry

## Chapter 1

### WHO'S AN INFLUENCER? WHO'S NOT?

Let's revisit what we mean when we say "influence" or "influencer."

Influence is simply the ability to change how others think and act. Although the size of an individual's social graph often indicates credibility, the definitive characteristic of an online influencer is not how many Twitter followers or LinkedIn connections a person has nor how often they blog about a particular subject; it's their ability to drive others to take action, alter behavior or change opinion.

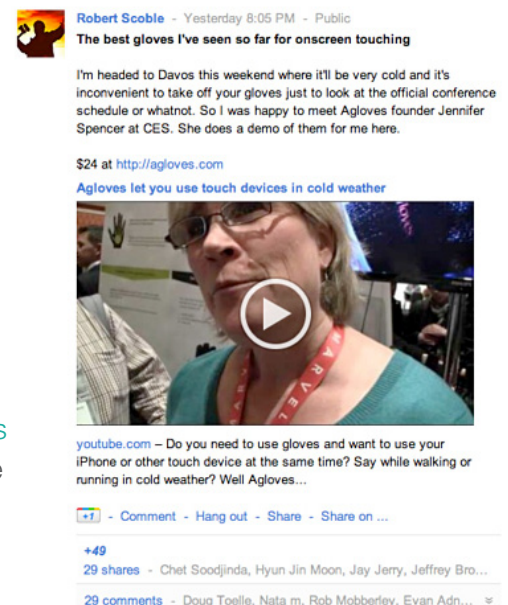
*Guess what? Anyone can be an influencer.*

Influencers aren't necessarily [AdAge Power 150](#) bloggers. They're not always the person with the most arbitrarily [awarded +K on the topic](#) of bacon on [Klout](#). Anyone has the potential to influence another to do, feel or say something so long as they're trusted by the person receiving the recommendation.

So if anyone can be an influencer using social media communications, how do you find the right ones to engage? You listen! We'll discuss finding the right influencers using social listening more in depth in Chapter 2.

Granted, there are people who have enough sway to drive a spike in web traffic and sales with a single status update. [Peter Shankman](#) is a social media entrepreneur with over 200,000 followers. When he randomly tweeted his desire for a Morton's Steak, [the restaurant jumped at the chance](#) to appease this influencer. They delivered the steak to Peter at the airport during his travels. Not only does Shankman continue to be a dedicated customer, but he raved about the experience, reaching hundreds of thousands.

Robert Scoble is another influencer, as [evidenced by his Google+ post about Agloves](#) shown to the right. Scoble could tell his followers to go buy the Pinkie Pie My Little Pony, and because he has established authority and trust with his followers, some would. Then there



The image is a screenshot of a tweet from Robert Scoble. The tweet text reads: "The best gloves I've seen so far for onscreen touching". Below the text, there is a video player showing a woman wearing glasses and a red lanyard, demonstrating the use of Agloves. The video player has a play button icon. Below the video, there is a link to the Agloves website and a description of the product. At the bottom of the tweet, there are engagement metrics: 49 shares and 29 comments.

**Robert Scoble** · Yesterday 8:05 PM · Public  
The best gloves I've seen so far for onscreen touching

I'm headed to Davos this weekend where it'll be very cold and it's inconvenient to take off your gloves just to look at the official conference schedule or whatnot. So I was happy to meet Agloves founder Jennifer Spencer at CES. She does a demo of them for me here.

\$24 at <http://agloves.com>  
Agloves let you use touch devices in cold weather

[youtube.com](#) - Do you need to use gloves and want to use your iPhone or other touch device at the same time? Say while walking or running in cold weather? Well Agloves...

[+1](#) · [Comment](#) · [Hang out](#) · [Share](#) · [Share on ...](#)

**+49**  
29 shares · Chet Soodjinda, Hyun Jin Moon, Jay Jerry, Jeffrey Bro...

29 comments · Doug Toelle, Nata m, Rob Mobberley, Evan Adn...

are others, who don't necessarily catalyze the latest craze when they make a suggestion, but make a difference nonetheless - one changed perception at a time.

As a brand representative or marketer, it's important to understand that influence comes in all shapes and sizes. Influence varies person to person and according to time and context. The same individual may be able to get one friend to buy a new couch, and only able to convince another to "Like" his band's Facebook page without her ever feeling compelled to purchase an album.

Sometimes influence is predictable given a person's established reputation. Although not a surefire method, occasionally an algorithmic tool like [Klout](#) or [PeerIndex](#) can lead you to someone who has the potential to influence others on a specific topic. You can also frequently predict influence by knowing the sources or individuals who produce the most keyword-matched content and the resulting social engagement, as does the [Radian6 Influencer Widget](#). The important takeaway here is that long-time and new-found brand advocates influence customers and prospects to take action at varying degrees all along the conversion funnel. Some advocates drive past customers to buy another pair of shoes from your website whereas others may simply make their connections aware of you.

In order to find those doing the influencing, you have to listen to the distinct social media conversations that take place at the funnel's different stages. These conversations are what will lead you to your demonstrable brand advocates and detractors.



For example, consider monitoring keyword phrases that imply someone is searching for a recommendation, and pay close attention to who answers these inquiries.

"best [product or service]"  
"[your product] vs. [competitor product]"  
"[product or service category] recommendation"  
"looking for [product or service]"

## Influencers vs. Advocates: Pay Special Attention to Those Who Endorse Your Brand

As we've demonstrated, an influencer can have significant social capital, hence all the attention from big brands. An advocate is different. They may not have a lot of followers. They may not blog. The value lies in their loyalty to your brand. Regardless if companies pay attention or not, they will loudly proclaim their passion for certain brands.

Many advocates can outweigh one influencer. Pay attention to your advocates and approach them. As fans of your brand, it won't be hard to get a conversation going.

## Advocates vs. Detractors: Don't Dismiss Your Critics

Influence isn't always positive. It can work against you when influential customers publish negative reviews of your oven-baked pizza on Yelp, or discuss the technical difficulties they had with your recently-launched gadget on their blog. On the flip side, negative feedback can lead to positive outcomes. By listening, brands can better understand their faults and revise their business strategies accordingly to better meet the needs of unsatisfied customers.

You can't control everything people say about your brand online, but by cultivating strong relationships with your brand advocates, you can help steer the conversation in a favorable direction. When seeking out influencers, don't overlook those who are influential and are brand detractors; they need to be incorporated into your influencer strategy. For tips on how to work with them be sure to stay tuned to Chapter 3.

## Chapter 2:

# FIND INFLUENCERS WHO ALIGN WITH YOUR BUSINESS GOALS

Even a simple mention or endorsement from an influencer can make a profound difference, and it's up to you and your team to focus your efforts on relationships that actually help lead to a desired business outcome. An influencer's connections who find this content compelling may pass it along to their community, creating a far wider ripple than the content would have otherwise generated.

When researching your influencers, keep in mind that any influencer outreach should support your existing marketing or business goals. Don't get started without knowing exactly what you want to accomplish, and what word you want to spread. Some of your objectives may include one or more of the following, for instance:

- Establish authority
- Increase exposure/awareness/word of mouth
- Build trust
- Drive business

Here are some ways you can leverage influencers to help realize each of these goals:

### **Establish Authority**

- Demonstrate credibility and thought leadership
- Serve as an expert on your products and services
- Author posts on your company blog

### **Increase Exposure/Awareness/Word of Mouth**

- Stimulate buzz
- Generate inbound traffic
- Enhance SEO visibility through content creation

### **Build Trust**

- Have conversations with your community
- Build customer relationships
- Address the concerns of detractors
- Provide favorable and honest perceptions publicly

## Drive Business

- Move community members through the purchase funnel
- Test new products and provide honest feedback
- Reach out to your community (when your business may not be available) and solve problems and generate leads

Once you know how you want influencers to leverage their social equity on your brand's behalf, you can start the research process to find them. First up: listening.

### Step 1: Social Listening

Listen to the conversations happening in your industry's community. Start by casting a wide net, using a tool or set of tools that will help you sweep the entirety of the social web to discover conversations that matter to you.

As you sort through the posts and discussions, you'll uncover the relevant discussions around your industry. Then you can focus your efforts, uncover the concentration of discussions and dialogue, and determine where you should spend your time and effort engaging with the communities. There, you'll find influencers.

### Step 2: Uncover Influencers

Now that you've found these communities, check out who is sharing content and who's active there. Dig deeper into these influencers by:

- Searching for them on LinkedIn
- Searching industry events and see if they will be speaking
- Checking out Twitter lists to uncover other influencers

### Step 3: Rank your Influencer List

With all this research under your belt, you probably have a good list of influencers. But you have other social media efforts to take on so find a manageable number to handle. This could be 10, 20 or even 50. To do this:

- Find detailed information about your influencers, including their social media identities and ensure they're influencing your target audience
- Look at [Klout](#) for their influential topics and ensure they are relevant
- If they are customers, look them up in your CRM system and talk to your account team

Now that you have your list, how will you get them to pay attention to you and your brand? The next chapter answers that question.



## Chapter 3:

### CONNECT AND WIN OVER YOUR INFLUENCERS

Now it's time to get influencers to join your cause. Keep in mind you are not the only one trying to get their attention. You'll have a better chance if you incorporate some social psychology fundamentals into your communications. Let's take some pointers from the [six weapons of influence](#) discussed in *Influence: The Psychology of Persuasion*, authored by renowned professor, [Dr. Robert B. Cialdini](#).

1. **Reciprocation** - If you give first, it's easier to take. Giving can come in many forms. Offer freebies, insider information or exposure in exchange for a mention, feedback, participation, etc. Blog, link to or tweet about an influencer before you solicit their involvement in your endeavor.
2. **Commitment and Consistency** - Try to find a quote the influencer has already published indicating their love for your brand or support for your cause. Since they've publicly stated their opinion, their conscience will encourage them to remain consistent with their words, increasing the likelihood of following through with your request.
3. **Social Proof** - We learn the norm from the actions of others around us. If any of your influencers' connections or other industry players have participated in your effort, call it out. Another way to provide social proof is with numbers; for example: "18 others are participating. We need 7 more and were hoping you'd be one."
4. **Liking** - People do business with those they know, like and trust. Make communications personal. Be enthusiastic. The closer you can draw a personal connection to your target, the more willing they might be to take part.
5. **Authority** - In order to recruit authoritative supporters, you have to be authoritative yourself (see more in Chapter 4 on becoming an influencer). Establish credibility as an organization or individual by using proper spelling and grammar, using professional language, linking to success stories, etc.
6. **Scarcity** - The thought of missing out incites action. Offer a limited-time sneak preview, limited-edition product or service, or limited quantity.

With these influential points in mind, it's time to craft an introduction message. Keep these eleven tips in mind:

### Tips for Pitching an Influencer

1. Introduce yourself and establish credibility.
2. Play by the rules. Some bloggers have published guidelines they want you to follow if you pitch them (ex: [Jason Falls](#), [Arik Hanson](#)).
3. Do your research. Read up on the candidate and find a way to make your introduction and request personal.
4. Compliment, and make it authentic.
5. Keep messages short and get right to the point.
6. Let them be themselves. Don't tell the person exactly what to do, but provide clear expectations and, if possible, examples demonstrating the output you're looking for.
7. Include a *why* statement. Make it very clear *why* this person should care about your endeavor.
8. Offer an incentive/reward/exclusive sneak peek, etc.
9. Provide all contact and supplemental information needed to make a decision. The candidate shouldn't have to do any research to comply with your request.
10. Always follow up if you don't hear back the first time.
11. Once participation is confirmed, send a thank you message and summarize next steps.

A great example of a successful campaign pitch involved [Shonali Burke](#) convincing Arik Hanson, principal of PR agency ACH Communications, to support the [Blue Key Campaign](#). According to Hanson, the pitch was exemplary because Burke:

1. Got right to the point
2. Made the influencer feel special
3. Set expectations
4. Made the invite exclusive
5. Made the pitch personal

### Tips for Building Mutually Beneficial Relationships with Influencers

As we said, a great way to draw in influencers is by providing them special access to products/tools. This does not always guarantee a review or publicity, so at the very least it's great to ask for feedback from the influencer. This demonstrates that you value their opinion and recognize them as a thought leader. It also allows you to gain insight for the product/tool provided.

This is something that Sephora recognized and therefore invited their influencers to participate in a YouTube series where beauty tips and insights are shared. You can see a sample video [here](#).

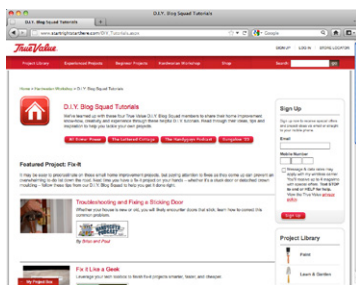


This highlighted industry influencers, connected their community with some fantastic experts and promoted the Sephora brand.

Winning over your influencers often involves gifting, discounts, insider scoop, etc. This means that brands need to abide by the FTC Guides Governing Endorsements or Testimonials. In the United States, advocates are obligated to disclose any material ties to a company they're endorsing. [The FTC recommends](#) that brands:

- Mandate a disclosure policy that complies with the law
- Make sure people who work for you, or with you, know the rules
- Monitor what they're doing on your behalf

[As stated](#) by the FTC, "The post of a blogger who receives cash or in-kind payment to review a product is considered an endorsement. Thus, bloggers who make an endorsement must disclose the material connections they share with the seller of the product or service." Although the FTC Endorsement Guides are U.S.-only, disclosing material associations is considered a best practice.



Each year, True Value teams up with home improvement bloggers to run the [D.I.Y. Blog Squad](#). Not only does the blog help True Value's customers with their own home improvement projects, but it endorses the influencers that serve as experts on the blog. The store gives the bloggers funds to shop for supplies at their local True Value so they can create fabulous projects using the store's supplies.

On top of providing access to your products, it's great to ask for advice from influencers when the opportunity presents itself. This is a way to demonstrate that you value their opinion. Some sample questions might be:

1. What are your top three pieces of advice about....?
2. What's a good way to approach...?
3. How can we better serve our audience?

You can use responses to create content, apply it to your business practice or to forward to your community. Make sure that you always take their advice when you can and then share with them how it was of benefit to you. This could help your influencers develop their own content. You might even be lucky enough to be mentioned in it and this can be a great way to gain exposure.

Sharing influencers' content is also a great way to connect with them. It's important to not only look at how your brand can benefit from influencers, but how you can promote them through your brand. Highlight relevant posts written by influencers to stand out and connect with them and their audiences.

## Detractors and Influence

Earlier on we talked about detractors. These are people who do not like your brand or actively drive people to your competitors. Consider these people differently than you would the random person who has something mean to say. Generally, if they are influential, they are not being defamatory. They might have legitimate concerns about your product.

This negative feedback can be very beneficial. They can help point out things that others may miss. If the opportunity is there, ask detractors if they would be willing to share their negative feedback offline. Sit down on a phone call with them, or in person and include an executive if possible. This shows that you value their opinion and want to take the time to learn from their feedback.

When you make the improvements or changes they have suggested, let detractors know and ask them if they would like to have another look at your product. Thank detractors for their time and the improvements they helped make with a card or small gift. The best part? It could turn the detractor into a major ambassador.



## Chapter 4:

# BECOME INFLUENTIAL IN YOUR INDUSTRY

With a little patience, you too can become an influencer. Here's how to get started.

### Create Relevant and Unique Content

After spending time listening and engaging with your community, you should get a feel for their interests. Sync up these interests with your area of expertise to create content that answers common questions, solves a problem, entertains or enlightens.

Be unique. Your ideas and brand need to stand out. Think about an interesting and different angle you could take on a topic of interest in your community. Maintain a content publishing schedule to ensure you're consistently disseminating thought-provoking content to spark your community's interest to evoke buzz around you and your brand.

### Be Ubiquitous

Have a presence on many relevant online communities and ensure each profile is customized with easily recognizable personal branding and consistent tone across all profiles. Syndicate content to multiple social properties, and optimize the content within them to include popular industry search terms for enhanced exposure in search engines.

[New York Life](#) has emerged as a leader and influencer in the financial space amongst its peers from driving interaction, engagement, and relevance through the use of social media unlike other insurance brands have done in the past. They leverage their brand heritage, employees, and agents to achieve short-term wins with long-term benefits with social media all the while establishing a leadership presence in the space.

### Build an All-Star Team

People won't subscribe to your content or listen to what you have to say if they believe the information or conversation is being generated from the faceless avatar of Artificial Intelligence. There's an expectation for real-time engagement in social media that just can't be ignored, so meet that expectation head-on and get actual people within your company talking with your community.

Hire or train a strong, experienced social media team to actively engage with your community. To ensure consistency, organization and security, create a clear social media

policy including guidelines for employees to follow. For instance, each member of the Radian6 Community Team holds a [playbook](#) for brand engagement, and follows these guidelines in their day-to-day engagement in order to work as a unified and organized voice.

## Get Offline

Growing your network in order to become an influencer in social media doesn't need to be exclusive to the online world. Attending industry events and conferences is an excellent way to network with others in your field of expertise and meet other like-minded people in your community.

Hosting a get-together or tweetup is a sure-fire way to get involved in your community and acquire "leader" status.

## Be Helpful to Others

According to social media thought leader, [Chris Brogan](#), "One thing that helps one become influential is to work on helping others rise up."

By answering questions or directing your connections to useful information, you will not only help others grow their network by sharing the spotlight with them, but you will also grow your network, learn how to improve your own efforts, and build long-lasting relationships.

## Update Social Networks Frequently

The news feeds and streams of Facebook, Twitter, Google+ and other social networks are continually updating. To stay top of mind amidst ephemeral conversations, you need to be present there. Engage and publish content at least several times a day to the platforms where your industry peers are active.

## Make Time to Find New Connections

While social listening helps you find who is most influential within a specific industry, the recommendation engines within popular social networks like Twitter and Facebook can be extremely helpful in finding additional connections. Twitter's "Who to Follow" and "Similar To" suggestions are incredibly helpful in finding people akin to those you already follow and trust. Directories are another great place to look; go ahead and give "[Find People on Plus](#)" a try and/or discover Google+ users interested in topics related to your industry. Find and connect with other influencers via other social channels through some of the tactics discussed in chapter two.

## Chapter 5:

### ENGAGE INFLUENCERS BEYOND A CAMPAIGN

Perhaps you only wanted to reach out to influential bloggers for a one-time outreach campaign to boost buzz about a product launch. That's fine, but the relationship doesn't have to stop there. In fact, brands should be thinking about building community for the long term instead of cutting ties after the buzz fizzles. Continue the relationship beyond the campaign by incorporating one or more of the following strategies into your communications with influencers and advocates:

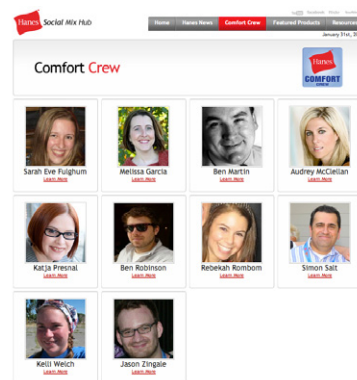
#### Use the Power of Reciprocation

As mentioned earlier: give, take, repeat. Relationships are fifty-fifty. There's got to be something in it for each person involved. In order to foster a long-term relationship with your brand advocates, you've got to provide a benefit. Regular gifts, discounts, or publicity will keep your influencers happy and willing to give back.

#### Surprise and Delight

Listen at the point of need and surprise advocates for recommending your products even though they had no idea a reward was in store. This could be as simple as featuring the user in a blog post, or giving them a discount on another product. The element of surprise may just garner your brand additional buzz as your advocates share their pleasant experience with their followers, garnering your brand even more exposure.

Hanes calls their influencers "Comfort Crew Members" and [features them on their site](#). This is a feel-good approach and gives additional exposure to the influencers.



#### Keep Them in the Loop

Let your influencers be the first to know anytime a company policy changes, a new product is about to launch, there's a new event to attend, and so on. As brand advocates, they deserve to know the scoop before the unattached and indifferent.

## Check In Periodically

The conversation is the relationship. Don't just contact them when you need a favor. Periodically send an email, leave a comment on their blog or send a tweet just because. Ask about the weather. Ask about what they're seeing and hearing and reading - anything to get a conversation started to strengthen rapport and keep the feedback flowing.

## Plan Blogger/Influencer Appreciation Events

Your advocates deserve recognition for all they do to help spread the word about your brand to their social connections. One way to keep them happy is celebrating them with events planned specifically for them and nobody else, complete with your best version of red carpet treatment.



## Conclusion:

### WRAPPING IT ALL UP

Now with this ebook in hand, you can begin your influencer strategy or further develop your existing strategy. We have taken you through:

1. **Defining an influencer.** Now it's clear that influence involves the ability to drive action, and it's a vast landscape full of both advocates and detractors.
2. **Why engaging with influencers is beneficial.** Influencer can help you achieve business goals, whether it's to establish authority, increase awareness, engender trust, drive business or something else.
3. **How to find your industry influencers.** The steps are there to start listening, then discovering, and finally categorizing and prioritizing your influencers to make those connections.
4. **How to win over your influencers.** Now you can approach influencers with methods that will grab their attention and establish relationships, such as reciprocation, surprise and incentivization.
5. **How to become an influencer.** Apart from just developing a strategy to connecting with external influencers, it's now valuable to become influential yourself.
6. **How to develop influencer engagement strategies.** Take it beyond one-off campaigns and develop a strategy that works for your brand now and going forward.

The same way that media lists are developed and target audiences are identified, so too should influencers be determined. Everything should tie back to your current goals and seek to benefit your overall brand strategy.

***Start your influencer strategy today.***

Find us on the web: [www.radian6.com](http://www.radian6.com)

Follow us on Twitter: [www.twitter.com/radian6](http://www.twitter.com/radian6)

Read the Blog: [www.radian6.com/blog](http://www.radian6.com/blog)

*Authors: Melanie Thompson, Julie Meredith, Shannon Johnson*

*Editor: Amanda Nelson*

*Designer: Lise Hansen*