

CONSIDERABLE  
INFLUENCE

# How to Use Your Influence

A Guide for Influencers

This book was compiled from blog posts  
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# It's no secret that...

**influencer marketing is fast becoming the most important marketing development of the last decade.**

**Whereas once we looked to the lofty plinth of celebrity for consumer guidance, a whole new team of online stars have been born from blogs, vlogs and social media, and it's these individuals to whom the public is now listening. The rulebook of traditional marketing has been well and truly torn up.**

**So where does this leave the bloggers, vloggers and social personalities that have worked hard to garner a honed, engaged audience, looking to turn their digital passion into a lucrative income?**

**To help guide you through this brave, new world, we at Considerable Influence have put together a handy booklet covering every aspect of beginning to negotiate and work with brands and agencies. From how to value your influence to optimising it, to knowing your rights to carving yourself a niche in this more and more crowded marketplace, here's your comprehensive guide to using your influence.**

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## Could You Monetise Your Influence?

The meteoric rise of blogging and influencer marketing has had far reaching consequences in many areas of advertising, not the least being the shift in influence from the unattainable celebrity, to the everyday Joe Blogg-er. Because of this, you'd be forgiven for looking at the inconceivable success that influencers of today enjoy, and wanting a piece of the action.

Can anyone become an influencer? Is it really as simple as owning a theme, domain and taking a crash course in social media, and raking in the cash before the month is out? Well, no, but influence is always there for anyone to take. Anyone with a blog or social channel can (provided they are willing to put in a mammoth amount of work), make it pay dividends.

Keen to try? Here's a few points you should bear in mind...

### 1. Be prepared for an unending whirlwind of work

Although blogging and social media influence appears tremendously simple on the surface, it is imperative to remember that IT IS NOT. To be influential, you need to know how to play the game, and to play it better than most other people. Otherwise we'd all be influencers!

If you want to monetise a blog, you need to learn how to create relevant, engaging, well-written and search optimised content, day after day after day. It is not enough to write a bi-monthly post about your idiosyncratic pet dog. You need to learn how to brand yourself and your blog so that people will want to read your content. It is not enough to set up mycrazylife.wordpress.com using the 'Twenty Fifteen' theme and rest on your laurels – successful blogs need logos, typefaces and photography that can rival most online magazines. You need to be au fait with social channels and have a decent following on each, with whom you are constantly interacting.

It is not enough to just automatically share your own, hashtag-less content through each platform as and when it happens.

Social media influencers don't get off any easier either. Social media, despite its innocuous, friendly appearance, is a game of numbers that takes a long time to master. You need to know how hashtags work, what kind of content attracts followers, how to talk to the followers you do have to get them to maintain interest in what you're sharing, as well as the best times to share it.

Simply put, influencers work damn hard, and this workload is most insurmountable right at the very beginning.

## 2. Make sure you have an audience

As good as your content, as regularly as you update it and as diligently as you use social media, you won't get anywhere as an influencer unless you have an audience. This is for the simple reason that access to an audience is what brands are really paying for when they work with influencers – no audience, no brand interest.

Of course, audiences don't suddenly appear from nowhere. They take a lot of time and effort to build up, but just because the building is slow at the start, it doesn't mean you'll never succeed. Before you start the process of monetising your blog or social channel, it is essential that you make sure the audience you want to attract exists. What content are you planning to share, and who would be interested in it? Is it niche enough to set you apart, but not too niche that it will isolate people? What makes you different to other bloggers/social stars in the same vertical? Why would people WANT to follow you and engage with you? If you can answer all these questions unequivocally and with unwavering self-belief, you have given yourself the best chance of success.

Once you have the audience in mind that you want to attract, make sure you do everything with them in mind. If you want to monetise your blog/social channel, you can't only consider yourself and your own preference anymore. That's what hobby blogs are for!

## 3. Always stay passionate

We'll admit, being an influencer sounds like a lot of effort so far. So why does anyone bother? Well, it all comes down to sheer and unadulterated passion. Influencers work way past the 9-5, but are always working on something they love. The reason audiences trust and value the opinions of influencers and the content they produce, is that they always come from the heart.

Becoming a successful influencer should mean that you are able to make decisions about which brands to work with, so that you still only produce content in which you fully believe. On days when the

work piles up, the follow-counts have suddenly dropped and your site is experiencing technical difficulties, it is the love of what you do that will get you through.

## 4. Don't expect too much too soon

Unsurprisingly, all of the above takes time. However you intend to make money from your blog/social channel, remember that it is not valuable until it is influential. Sounds simple, but unfortunately it's easy to forget. Once your influencer identity, be it blog or social based, has value and has built up a wide, dedicated and focused audience, it will be invaluable. Until then however, it simply won't be of interest to brands.

Stay focused and motivated. Instead of concentrating on making yourself attractive to brands themselves, shift your attention to the people you want to read and enjoy your content. Focus on transferring your own passion to them, and make it your goal to build up a following of people hungry for your next post. If you achieve this, finding brands to work with may well take care of itself – if you build it, they will come.

## 5. Be diverse – think about different ways you can use your influence

Here at CI, we concentrate primarily on brands and influencers working together to produce content, but it is important to remember that there are endless other ways the two can partner:

- **Content Sharing:** Sometimes, working with a brand need involve nothing more than you simply sharing their content via your blog and/or social channels. This is a relatively labour-unintensive way of making money from your influence, but be warned, share the content in a natural and authentic way. Audiences can smell fake posts a mile off.
- **Sponsored Posts:** Creating content in your own style, but commissioned by a brand can sometimes be the best of both worlds – you get relative creative free-reign, and you can work with a brand on paid campaigns.
- **Guest Blogs and Social Takeovers:** Writing a piece on a brand's blog, or sharing content through a brand's social channel as yourself is a great way to build a relationship with said brand, and can be a lot of fun. However, these methods usually require a very high level of influence, to have enough gravitas for the brand's audience to take notice. It's definitely a method to consider in the long term.

- **Product Reviews:** This can be a great way to start building up your name, although isn't hugely lucrative for micro-influencers. Whilst the big guys can charge a lot to review a brand's product, those with smaller audiences are often asked to review with the product as the only form of payment. However, working with brands this way can increase your own exposure and lead to bigger things – just remember to only review products your audience will actually be interested in!
- **Competitions and Giveaways:** This is a great exercise, as not only does it increase exposure, it's also a lot of fun. Brands are always keen to involve even small influencers in competition promotions, and doing so is one of the easiest ways to collaborate.

## Final thoughts...

To answer the titular question of this post, yes, you can monetise your blog or social channel. It definitely won't be easy, and will take time, but as long as you never lose your passion, drive and work-ethic, the rewards of building an engaging blog/social channel with a dedicated following really are limitless. The most important thing to remember throughout all of this however, is audience. If you have an audience that transcends your family and friends, if the audience is loyal and comes back time and time again for the content you produce, and if the audience is engaged, you could well be onto a winner.

# How Much is Your Influence Worth?

Once you've established yourself as an influencer, you'll have to make the decision as to whether or not to continue using your platform solely for building up relationships and interacting with your followers, or to make it into an income source as well. If you do decide to make the leap into making money from your influence, the very first step (which also happens to be one of the hardest), is to decide how much to charge for it.

So what must a new influencer consider when taking this step? Here's a few key considerations to make the process a little less scary!

## 1. The influence you currently have

So you're rocking a few thousand followers and are gaining more and more each day. Your readership stats on your blog have never been so buoyant. But before you begin trying to place a monetary value on your own influence, you have to understand EXACTLY what it is. Annoyingly, there are many different factors to consider here:

### Your DA (domain authority)

Obviously this is only applicable to influencers with a blog or site, but DA is a metric created by online SEO tool Moz, and is still considered a pretty big deal. It is a single value out of 100, and is calculated based on how well your site ranks on search engines. Most micro influencers will have a DA of between 30 and 45, whilst macro rankings are more around the 50-65 mark. Just to contextualise, Twitter has a DA of 100. This is a handy way to compare yourself to other bloggers, but it is not the be all and end all, and can easily be improved. The best way to boost your DA is to ensure that your blog posts are all search engine optimised, but more on that later.

As much as DA isn't everything, it is important to remember that many brands will not be aware of the nuances that affect DA scores, and will take them at face value as an easy way to compare

influencers. Although this is a very reductive way of doing so, it undeniably happens.

## Your unique users and/or follower counts

Crude as is it, these figures matter. They matter because when brands work with influencers, they are looking to reach an audience. As much as we know that the type and quality of audience they reach is more important than the size, that message has not always reached the brand in question, especially if they are new to influencer marketing.

If you're lucky, you'll be approached by brands that value the calibre and interests of the audience you have attracted, but they will also invariably be interested in the quantities of readers and followers that your blog and/or social channels are seeing. Have a think about who your main peers are, i.e. which influencers are working in the same niche as you are, and assess their own follow counts and, if you can get them, their readership stats. This will give you a rough idea of your position in relation to them, and may give you goals to work towards (or make you feel secretly smug).

## Your engagement rates

Slowly, brands are beginning to place more and more value into influencers with followings that are not necessarily large, but are engaged. This means that not only are your audience listening to what you're saying, they're responding to it, which manifests itself in comments, likes, retweets, regrams, shares etc etc etc.

Essentially, the more engaged your audience are, the more likely they are to be receptive when you partner with the right brand. And this is, of course, of immense value to said brand.

## 2. The influence you will have

The funny thing about influence is that it grows, and grows quickly. Especially in today's online communities, whereby content 'going viral' is a daily occurrence. Yes, your blog, vlog and/or social channel may be fairly average in terms of its following right now, but if you're garnering more and more attention and your audience appears to be growing exponentially, chances are you're on your way up.

Keep an eye on the growth rates of your unique users per month, how many new followers you are gaining, and how your engagement rates are increasing. Make sure you convert these increases into cold, hard percentages, and then present them to brands wanting to work with you as reasons why they should value the identity you are building up. Influence never stands still, and

some of the best influencer-brand partnerships work because the two grow together, or because audiences value brands placing faith and stock into influencers that are up-and-coming.

### 3. The work you put in

Making money from your influence is a form of freelance working. You work as your own agent, quite often around the clock, and you are hired for different projects in much the same way a freelancer would be.

The ISPE (Associate of Independent Professionals and the Self-Employed), states that freelancers should charge 30% more for their work than an in-house employee would be paid – bear this in mind. Also, always consider not only how long the work you are offered from a brand will take you to complete, but how much time you have spent creating the kind of influence that they are willing to pay for. Of course, you can't bill a brand for every hour you've spent building up your blog/vlog/social channel from day one, but it is worth being mindful of the fact that what the brand is actually paying for is not so much the work itself, but the people it will reach.

It goes without saying that brands, like everyone in business, will be looking to get what they need for as little money as possible, but it is up to you to clearly set out what it is they are paying for. Depending on how you are working with a brand, the actual output from you will vary, for example, a simple content share will require much less effort than collaborative, commissioned content or sponsored posts, and your rates should reflect this. But never forget that a brand would not have approached you to share their content or create your own on behalf of them, if you hadn't have worked so hard in the first place to cultivate a valuable audience.

### So, how much should I charge??

The above is all well and good, but we haven't really mentioned actual, tangible figures. This is because influencer rates are so subjective and vary so much, and what brands are willing to pay for varies wildly too.

A good rule is to start by working out exactly how much time it will take you to complete the work you have agreed with a brand, and then an hourly rate depending on how much you would need to earn to make to profit. This can be anything from £15 an hour to £150 an hour, but it should always be realistic and honest. Once you have an hourly rate, look at your DA score, follower numbers, readership stats and engagement rates. Compare them to influencers you feel are on your level and in your niche. Influencers are always keen to share knowledge and support each other, therefore you will rarely encounter reluctance and hostility if you ask

for these figures. Use this information to guide how you value your own influence. Often, influencers will use a 'media pack' to lay out their key stats, current and predicted future influence in an easily accessible way, so that brands can quickly access and digest it.

Frustratingly, there is no magic formula for calculating your worth as an influencer, and this is simply because it will change from project to project, brand to brand. It is common practice to negotiate over prices, in order to agree a figure that works for both influencer and brand, and so your set rates will not always be what is paid in the end. As long as you have an unwaveringly clear idea of what you can offer and why that is valuable to a brand, and you communicate this from the start, you'll find the process of placing value on your influence a lot more straightforward.

## THREE

# How to Carve a Niche for Your Influence

One of the biggest recent trends in influencer marketing is the swing towards brands sidelining larger, well-known, established influencers in favour of 'micro' ones. In simple terms, this consists of brands working with newer, smaller influencers, focused on engaging with a more niche audience base, with the aim of achieving a higher customer conversion rate.

Why? Well, micro influencers are proven to achieve much higher rates of engagement. Of course, an influencer still has to have an audience of a certain size to even have influence in the first place, but the more focused and specific the interests of that audience, the more they will engage with an influencer who espouses them.

Is this good news for newly emerging influencers? You bet it is. By their very definition, new influencers are considered micro, and as we now know, micro influencers have never been more in demand. However, being a successful micro influencer is a little more complicated and involves a lot more work than simply having a smaller amount of followers than your macro counterpart. There's a secret ingredient, and it's called niche.

Niche in this instance simply means having a USP, something that sets your content apart from others and makes you a go-to for certain types of inspiration. For example, a generic fashion influencer is all well and good, but if this influencer has carved a niche based around the types of clothes they feature and talk about, or the specific style they emulate, the audience they attract will be more focused and therefore receptive. If your influencer 'brand' has a clear, defined niche, you're much more likely to attract an audience genuinely interested in you and your content, more likely to engage with it, and, consequently, more attractive to brands when they come a-knockin'.

Carving out a niche in an already fairly saturated influencer marketplace however... that's the tricky bit. Here's a few pointers:

## 1. Know Yourself

No one knows what gets you going and sets your fire alight like you do. A tangible passion for what you do is essential for your audience to believe in and trust you, and if you want your influence to provide a long-standing stream of income, you're going to have to sustain that passion through thick and thin.

What are you most engaged when talking about? What do you always want to steer a conversation towards? What makes you who you are? As cheesy as these questions may seem, answering them will give you a pretty candid idea of what you can talk about in the most interesting and authentic way. Sometimes this may be a blend of things that don't obviously seem to marry together, but this only serves to make a more focused niche. Just remember, it is insanely unlikely that you'll be the only one in the world interested in a certain subject matter, no matter how specific it may seem. There's an audience for it. Trust us.

## 2. Know Your Audience

As an emerging influencer, you'll already have an engaged audience. But in order to grow it organically and develop the relationships you already have, you need to know exactly who is listening to you.

There are numerous audience analysis tools that can help you take stock of who your audience are, where they are coming from, what they love to see from you and indeed what they don't, Google Analytics being the most obvious. However, there isn't really a better way to get to grips with what your audience appreciate about you as an influencer than asking them. Don't be afraid to start a conversation – you don't have to outright ask your followers why they follow you but think about starting discussions about their lives and their interests. You'll soon see trends that you can tap into and the ways in which to strengthen your connections.

## 3. Identify Gaps

It's highly unlikely that however focused your niche, it'll be a truly unique USP. That doesn't mean that you can't be savvy about identifying gaps in the influencer market though. By now, you should know your competitive landscape pretty well, and so you should have a rough idea of where there is unmet demand, or people looking for a voice to listen to – could it be yours?

## 4. Pick Your Channels

Although being active on social media is undeniably essential

in the game of influence, it doesn't have to mean that you have an account on every channel and spread yourself too thin. By now, you'll have a pretty good idea about where your audiences are more engaged, be that through Instagram, Snapchat, or reading your blog. What is more often the case however, is that different audiences are engaged on different channels, and treating each one as an individual line of communication is a good idea, as is sacking off the ones that don't provide quality interaction. Social media is not a content pumping machine – it's a conversation opportunity. It ain't called 'social' media for nothing.

## Final thoughts...

There's really never been a more exciting time to be an influencer than right now. It's no longer a game for just the 'big players', and more and more brands are placing stock in the power of those with an honest, authentic, genuine voice. If you stay true to your own values and what you love to talk about, and align this with your loyal audience, your micro influence will only become more and more in demand.

# Search Optimising Your Influence

SEO is hardly the most exciting of digital marketing's many acronyms, let's be honest. Commonly misquoted, and dogged by 'scare stories' of bad practices and Google penalties, SEO often gets a bit of a rough deal. However, SEO's bad-rap is not really deserved. At its rudiments, SEO is a simple and logical concept - increasing the searchability of your content by optimising it, and despite what you might think, this usually comes down to nothing more than a bit of know-how and old fashioned, hard work.

As an influencer, you might struggle to see how SEO is relevant to you. After all, the very fact that you have influence is a solid indication that you're pretty darn searchable right? Well, yes, but the first rule of SEO is that if you aren't moving forward, others will be overtaking you - searchability can ALWAYS improve. Why do you need it to? Optimised content not only increases your chance of attracting more organic traffic, it ensures that your output is primed for your existing audience, increasing their engagement. And what does that lead to folks? More impressive stats to attract the brands you want to work with, that's what.

In this section, we're going to be looking at assessing and implementing your own SEO strategy, as well as the benefits of doing so. It's honestly easier than you'd think!

## Audiences and Intent

Guess what? Like everything to do with influencer marketing, audience can also be found at the very centre of all SEO endeavours too. When you think about it, the reason for this is pretty obvious - 'audience' refers to the people that do and that you want to engage with your content, and so optimising it for them is nothing but a good plan. To do this, you should be considering:

- The language your audience uses and how they are likely to search for topics

- Where your audience are and how this affects their 'digital day'
- What content they want
- How they will view the content you produce

Bloggers using Wordpress can find a lot of this information easy to curate through various keyword plugins, as well as Google XML sitemaps. Checking that your archives and tags are 'no-indexed' is also a good move, as it avoids accidental duplication which will eat up precious crawl budget (trust us, this is important - just nod and smile). If you're not the Wordpress type, Google Adwords is always a good way to turn - the Keyword Planner in particular will help with some of the meatier optimisation. This can also help with optimising social content, particularly when used in conjunction with sites like Keyhole and Hashtagify that suggest optimum hashtags for your audience based on subject areas.

Armed with this information, you should find it much easier to ensure that whatever your output, it's crafted for the audience you want to engage, manifesting in optimised meta titles, descriptions and body text, specific visual assets, the platforms that your content is shared on, when, how many times and with which hashtags.

## Site Technicals

OK social influencers, you can pretty much switch off here. Go make a cup of tea and join us back in the next section. Bloggers, vloggers and any influencer with their own site - listen up. This is about how Google and all its intricacies can affect the way you interact with your readers.

If there's one thing we know about Google, it's that it is always morphing, shifting and moving the goalposts. Here's a quick summary of the changes to Google that will matter to you if your site is key to your influence:

**Security** - More and more sites are switching to https as the web itself becomes more secure. Still being http is not yet 'unsafe', but making the switch has many benefits including protection from hackers and a quality signal to users and Google alike.

**Device** - Search engines are soon going to start prioritising mobile devices, so having a mobile-first site will stand you in good stead.

**AMP** - Accelerated Mobile Pages are a good solution if upgrading to a mobile-first site is not currently an option.

**Fred and Panda** - We can't tell you why Google names its updates in the same way CBeebies devises new shows, but we can

tell you that these updates are concerned with the quality of your webpages, rewarding sites that are less advertorial and penalising those full of display ads with poor user experience.

**Google Penguin** - This update is concerned with having a good 'link profile'. Moz and Majestic are both useful tools for analysing and monitoring your inbound links.

As well as all of the above, you're also gonna have to consider the visual optimisation of your site. For example, if your audience are more likely to be reading your content on a tablet or phone, you should make sure your site is mobile friendly or consider AMP. Also think about the visual content you put out, as this is more likely than text to be affected and skewed when being viewed on different devices.

## Share Optimising

You may think that once you've created and published your content, your work with optimising is done. Well, not so fast. Sharing the content you produce also has myriad opportunities for optimisation. Here's a few of the main ones:

**Size and composition** - It's an easy thing to forget, but when you share content through different platforms, you should optimise it for each. This will consist of pairing down articles into delicious soundbites for Twitter and Facebook, editing images to the right dimensions for each social channel, and selecting those all important hashtags so that what you're sharing ends up in the right places.

**Keyword planning** - Wherever you share your content, you should carefully plan the keywords you use in its title and meta tags to maximise its search potential. Remember, these may well be different for different sharing platforms.

**Digital days** - If you haven't already got a rough idea of your audience's digital day, you should. This will tell you when they are most likely to be engaging with your content, most receptive to it, and where they'll look for it. Share it accordingly.

**Share planning** - Creating an editorial calendar can often be a great way to stay on top of when, how and where you need to share your content. We'll talk about the best tools for this a bit later on.

**Consider bounce** - Of course, the reason for sharing content is to grow your audience, but if people are bouncing as soon as they find it, you might need to reconsider how you're selling it. Google Analytics offers bounce reports, and they're pretty handy things to have.

## Reputation Build

Increasing awareness and reach of your content is another major objective of optimising it. The easier your content is to find, the further its potential reach, which is important to remember with regards the content itself, and sharing it.

When it comes to rep build, SEO is often associated with paid 'link-building'. Link-building exists because having numerous sites linking to yours increases your visibility in Google, and in turn, your searchability. Think of paid link-building as the Del Boy of digital marketing - dodgy, shady, and unlikely to succeed. All too often, people are tempted into paying companies to bulk-buy links that are of poor quality and potentially SEO-dangerous. The best way to link-build? The most virtuous and wholesome way of course - organically.

## So why is optimisation so important?

Hopefully you'll have at least an idea by now as to why optimising your content is so vital, but to draw things to a conclusion, let's recap in a little more detail.

### 1. Your current audience

Because you wouldn't be where you are without them, ensuring that your content is optimised for your current audience keeps them coming back for more, allows them to easily find it, and makes it more engaging for them.

### 2. Your future audience

Optimised content is easier to find, more relevant, more shareable and more searchable, therefore having a massively increased chance of attracting a wider audience that are interested in and engaged with you as an influencer.

### 3. Your longevity

Simply put, the more you stay on top of optimising content, the longer you'll be relevant.

### 4. Your brand collab opportunities

All of the above combine to strengthen your influence, make it more impervious to Google's whimsical fluctuations, and continue its relevance. Guess what? Brands are into that.

# Ways to Work with Brands

Making the transition from popular blogger/vlogger/social personality to professional influencer comes with many challenges and changes, but by far the most marked of these is beginning to produce content not only for yourself and your audience. As an influencer, you'll soon find you have another voice to listen to – that of the brand with whom you work.

Although paid collaborations are almost never successful when led more by the brand than the influencer, only successful collaborations take the desired objectives on both sides into consideration. But, and here's the rub - there are endless ways in which to do it. So which is right for you and your brand?

In this section, we're going to be taking a look at the many different ways in which brands and influencers are working together, and the benefits of each. Although by no means exhaustive, this list will do wonders for setting you in the right direction, and helping you understand where your strengths lie as a newly emerging influencer!

## 1. The Content Share

The most straightforward of all brand collabs, this simply involves you sharing a piece of content and/or promotional incentive from a brand to your audience. Content shares can come in the form of social posts, blog entries or pretty much any medium you fancy, but they must, we repeat, **MUST** be authentic. This is where choosing the right brand to work with is essential. If you mindlessly share content from any brand willing to pay, your audience will know, and your position as a voice they trust will be compromised. Think carefully about how you can promote the brand's objectives honestly, and in your own style before you agree to do so.

### Why use this method?

If you have influence over a certain audience that a brand feels they want to reach, chances are they will be eager to work with you in this capacity. This is for the simple reason that the content share is very non labour intensive on both sides. Chances are though, that

the brand will not consider how you have to speak to your audience for the content share to not seem fake and inauthentic. It's up to you to ensure that the brand understands you know best when it comes to sharing their content with your audience.

## 2. The Sponsored Post

There's a little more work involved with a sponsored post than a content share, but it can often be a more rewarding (not to mention lucrative) option. Consisting of you creating a post/social campaign/video based around a brand's given concept and objective and sending your audience their way through considered CTAs, this method has its roots in native advertising.

### Why use this method?

Many brands using CI opt for sponsored post strategies, as they are often a good way to balance the needs of both brand and influencer – the brand gets promoted and the influencer gets to do so on their own terms, in their own unique style. Although it is required by the ASA that you state when a post has been created in collaboration with a brand, provided the brand is one that you and your audience are naturally interested in, the content will still be genuine.

## 3. The Guest Blog

Despite its name, this method can be employed by influencers on all manner of channels. Simply put, it consists of you creating content in your own style and voice, about a subject agreed with a brand, and publishing it through the brand's own blog/vlog/social channel.

### Why use this method?

This is a great way to bring your own voice and identity as an influencer to a new audience, as well as giving the brand a leg up by associating yourself with it. It also gives you a slightly new audience to speak to, thus increasing your range and OTSs as an influencer.

## 4. The Joint Content Creation

Similar to the sponsored post, this method is different in that it involves both brand and influencer working together to create content, rather than the influencer doing so based on a brand's objectives. For example, a food brand and culinary influencer could work together to create a certain recipe and cookery tutorial that promotes both equally.

## Why use this method?

This can be a really fun way for you to experiment with your own content portfolio, and give your audience something a little bit different into the bargain. It is also perfect for blending both brand field expertise, and influencer talent for talking to a certain audience. It's creative, experimental, and a real collaboration.

## 5. The Product Review

Fairly self-explanatory, the product review is great for niche influencers looking to strengthen their reach and reputation. This process works through brands sending bloggers/vloggers/social personalities new products to test out and review in front of their audiences, and (hopefully) give their honest opinions. As a working example, restaurant booking service Bookatable often post assignments through CI, asking foodie influencers to try and review top eateries and share the experience with their audiences.

## Why use this method?

Although you should still be paid for product reviews, they are a great way to test out products and services that are new and emerging in your specialised industry. This not only gives you lots of content fodder, it builds your identity as an expert in your field, with your finger firmly on the pulse. Granted, this is a difficult method for influencers who deal more in experiential content (e.g. travel bloggers for instance), but for those with a more practical niche (parenting, cookery, fashion etc) it can work a dream.

## 6. The Competition/Giveaway

This can work in two different ways, either with an influencer promoting an existing brand competition, or with influencer and brand partnering to devise and conduct a competition, and then promoting it together. The competition prize is largely provided by the brand, with the creative marketing the specialism of the influencer.

## Why use this method?

Aside from it being gloriously straightforward and also not overly labour intensive, getting involved in a brand-aided competition can allow you to expand your reach as an influencer. Everyone loves a competition, and a high-profile one might just attract you some new followers, as well as giving the brand's cause a boost on account of your own influential status.

## 7. The Event Promotion

Often, brands will seek influential, hot-right-now guests to attend their own events, in order to boost their profile. The expectation here is not only that your presence will add a certain gravitas and excitement to the event itself, but that you will be very vocal about the fact that you're there, and how darn awesome the event is, thus promoting it to your audience.

### Why use this method?

Cards on the table here – being paid to attend swanky events is nice work if you can get it. Just be sure to promote it in an honest and authentic way, that your audience will key into. Attending these events also gives you the opportunity to meet the faces behind the brand in person, thus strengthening your relationship and increasing the possibility of future collaborative projects.

## 8. The Takeover

Taking the reigns of someone else's social channels can be a hugely daunting, but also liberating experience. More and more, brands are working with influencers by handing over control of their outputs for an agreed amount of time, and letting influencers put their own stamp on brand content. This is most popular on channels like Instagram, Snapchat and Twitter, where quick, constant content rules the roost.

### Why use this method?

This can be an excellent opportunity to expand your audience base and strengthen your name as an influencer, by putting your own content in front of followers who are likely to be receptive to it. Aligning yourself with the chosen brand will also improve their standing as a contemporary, risk-taking organisation.

## 9. The Brand Ambassador

This is the most involved of all the ways to work with a brand, and must only be undertaken if you truly believe in the values, objectives and products/services of the brand you choose. Being a brand ambassador involves a long-standing (usually exclusive) relationship with a brand, and a commitment to regularly promoting it through various channels of communication with your audience.

### Why use this method?

If this seems to you to be a huge commitment, you'd be right. It is. This is why mutual respect and value between you and the brand is paramount for this method to work. When it does however, it can provide you with a steady source of income, support and opportunities.

## Final thoughts...

This was a rough, whistle-stop tour through the various different ways that brand and influencer can collaborate. Some pairings focus on just one of these methods, some use all of them over a longer period of time, and some pick and choose the ones which work the best. At the end of the day, the most important thing to consider when you decide how to partner with a brand, is your audience, what they will be interested in, and what they will engage with!

## 7 Common Pitfalls of Working with Brands (and how to avoid them)

Starting out as an influencer and being approached by brands to work on myriad projects can be nothing short of overwhelming. With so many different ways to collaborate, it can be difficult to see the best way forward as a mutually beneficial partnership.

This chapter focuses on anticipating, navigating and avoiding the problems that can often be real barriers to successful brand-influencer partnerships. Here are seven of the most common pitfalls of working with brands, and, of course, how to avoid them.

### Pitfall 1: Working with the wrong brand

As much as it can be tempting to partner with a brand that is hugely well-known and has massive reach, and/or is willing to pay the big bucks, these are not usually the projects that pay off in the long term. This is for the simple reason that working with brands for any other reason than you really believe in what they represent and want to share it with your audience, comes across and ingenuine – inauthentic brand promotion can be sniffed out a mile away by consumers, and more importantly, your audience.

#### How to avoid it

Of course, it is often tricky to tell a good brand collaboration opportunity from one that might not be quite right. There is one golden rule however, that is hugely instrumental in ensuring a successful partnership – audience alignment. Almost invariably, if your audience as an influencer aligns with who your chosen brand is trying to reach, the campaigns you undertake together will work. It makes sense really – if the content you produce in collaboration with a brand is the kind of thing your audience will engage with (i.e. in your unique style) they will be more receptive to it. Put audience alignment at the top of your brand collaboration checklist, and you won't go far wrong.

## Pitfall 2: Not agreeing your terms in advance

Working as an influencer is largely working as a freelancer. And as any freelancer will tell you, contracts and agreeing the terms of the collaboration in advance is essential. Not doing so can result in brands and influencers not knowing what is expected of each other, and disputes at a later date, particularly when it comes to being paid on time.

### How to avoid it

Put simply – insist that you have written agreement of terms that work for both you and the brand before any work begins. This can consist of simply email communication, as long as there is written proof of agreement on both sides. Trust us – doing so will save a lot of time, effort and stress at a later date!

## Pitfall 3: Advertising the brand instead of talking about it

Although it sounds obvious, it is always pertinent to remember why brands are approaching you as an influencer in the first place – you can engage the audience they want to market to, because this audience trusts you as an individual. You are able to introduce a brand to your audience in an authentic, genuinely interesting manner, which is something the brand can't do for themselves. A survey by AdWeek found that a staggering 92% of consumers trust recommendations from influencers they trust over those of brands. Note the word 'trust'. Authenticity is key – if you put a brand or a brand's products in front of your audience in a way that screams 'I've been paid to say this', the audience will switch off. And that's bad news for you and the brand.

### How to avoid it

Remember why your audience follow, engage with and trust you. Make sure you bring this to any brand collaboration you enter into. If you've been selective about the brand you're working with, and made sure it's one your audience will be interested in, this will be all the easier. Be honest and open when you talk about a brand, in the style that your audience expect from you, and always conduct an assessment of the content you've produced before putting it live. If it seems contrived and inauthentic to you, your audience will definitely think so too.

## Pitfall 4: Letting the brand dictate the terms too much

When partnering with large brands, particularly for the first time, influencers can understandably feel intimidated. After all, you want to do as good a job as possible for the brand to secure future collaborative work. But, and this is a very significant but, brands are working with you because you know how to talk to the audience they want to reach, and have spent a lot of time doing so. All too often, influencers become too caught up in the brand objectives, and forget their own. This can lead to, at best, an inauthentic partnership and at worst, a failed campaign.

### How to avoid it

If at any point you feel as though a brand is trying to take a partnership in the wrong direction, or include elements that your audience will respond negatively to, it is essential that you raise it. Remember that no one knows how to engage with your audience like you do.

## Pitfall 5: Not setting clear and achievable ROIs

Influencer marketing projects are notoriously hard to measure the results of, but there are ways to do so, and agreeing them prior to starting work on a collab is vital. Not knowing what you and/or your brand are hoping to achieve through your partnership will mean it is not optimised, efficient and targeted.

### How to avoid it

If the brand hasn't already clearly defined their objectives and communicated them to you, instigate the conversation yourself, then agree the ways in which you'll measure them. Make this an essential step of the planning process, and ensure that both you and your brand are 100% clear on what working together should achieve, by when, and how it will be measured. This not only means that the whole process will run a lot smoother and be easier to carry out, but you will have a clear agreement to refer back to if there are any discrepancies regarding its success.

## Pitfall 6: Forgetting your audience

It's easy to get caught up in ideas and enthusiasm for a brand collaboration, but many partnerships ultimately fail because the people who really matter get sidelined – the audience. Whatever brand you are working with and whatever product or service you are promoting, never do so unless you are sure that your audience

will be interested to hear about it. The reasons for this are obvious – a disengaged audience is pretty much the worst outcome of any influencer marketing endeavour.

### How to avoid it

As well as carefully considering what it is about your style as an influencer that your audience respond to and channelling this into your work with a brand, pay attention to your audience's online presence too. This especially involves being aware of the platforms through which you are going to conduct your brand collaboration, if your audience is more active and engaged on Instagram than Twitter for example, use it. Another thing to consider is your audience's 'digital day' (what times they are most active and receptive online) – factor this into the brand collaboration too.

## Pitfall 7: Being in it for the wrong reasons

Undeniably, making a living from being an influencer relies on a steady income from partnering with brands. But, working with brands purely for monetary reasons is a very dangerous game to play. For brand-influencer partnerships to be mutually beneficial, you should believe in the brand as much as they do in you. If you're not enthusiastic and engaged with a brand, how can you expect your audience to be?

### How to avoid it

Although it seems counter intuitive to turn down paid work, it's important to remember just what the paid work is trying to achieve, and just how hard that will be if you don't believe in what you're doing. With a bit of luck, you will be approached by brands that you would naturally gravitate towards anyway. If not, carefully think about whether there is any way you can make a collaboration that you would not naturally conceive of work for you and your audience. Sometimes devising an out-of-the-box plan might just be the solution, and sometimes it still won't work. Whatever way you look at it, if you partner with a brand you're not passionate about, this will come across to your audience, and just isn't worth the risk.

## Final thoughts...

Getting to grips with your newfound position as an influencer is always going to come with its challenges. At the end of the day, there's no better way to ensure as high a level of success as possible than keeping your audience at the heart of everything you do, and staying true to what made you and influencer in the first place!

## Making a Media Pack

As a newly emerging influencer, chances are you will have gathered yourself some pretty impressive readership stats, and social followings to boot. You will also have a clear idea about what you can offer a brand looking to partner with you, as well as which brands and core values you feel resonate with your audience.

However organised you've been though, you'll soon discover that brands and agencies keen to collaborate with you will be demanding this information at a rate that can be hard to keep up with. As an in-demand influencer, nothing is more helpful when presenting yourself for potential work than having all of your vital statistics in one place, easily accessible and unquestionably clear.

So what is the best way to do so? Well, many influencers are circumventing this issue by using a 'media pack' (also sometimes called a 'media kit'). Loosely speaking, a media pack is a short presentation that can live on your site and easily be attached to emails, that outlines all of the information a brand will need to know before working with you. Having a media pack not only makes collaborative projects infinitely easier, it shows brands that you know your worth, and that you really mean business. Luckily, this section will tell you exactly how to make one.

### What goes in a media pack?

This is a matter of personal taste and opinion, but the following elements are fairly crucial to a good, comprehensive media pack:

#### **Your vital statistics:**

- Your name and contact details
- Your influencer name – either the name of your blog or social identity
- Your blog URL and/or social account handles
- Your blog and/or social logo

- Your site's unique users (usually monthly)
- Your audience composition – this can include their geographical location, gender, age, occupation, household income etc. As in-depth as this information seems, brands will be interested in it to ensure your audience aligns with theirs
- Your page views per month
- Your social stats – Obviously this should be more prominent if you are primarily a social based influencer. Pay attention to which channels are your strongest and most engaged, and promote these as such

#### **Your personal statement:**

- This should be a concise and authentic paragraph about you as an influencer, as well as your site and/or social channels
- This section should make brands instantly aware of your core values as an influencer, so that they can quickly assess whether you and your audience are likely to value what they offer

#### **Media coverage of your blog and/or social channels:**

- If you have examples of this, it can really add gravitas and value to your status as an influencer
- Don't go overboard – include the pieces you feel really showcase your work and its reach, don't cram every media mention you've ever had into one section

#### **Your previous brand partnerships:**

- If you have already partnered with brands, others looking to work with you will be interested to see how you have handled them and the results you saw
- Include a few of these with measurable results if possible, but keep them brief, text-light and easy to digest

#### **The types of brand partnerships that you offer:**

- Some influencers offer only social media content sharing, some favour sponsored posts, and some do it all
- Think carefully about what you can and want to offer brands. It is not necessarily an advantage to have every possible collaboration on your portfolio. Think about what kinds of brands you are looking to work with, and what types of partnerships are likely to work for them

### **Your rates:**

- This is not essential, and there is something to be said for keeping your rates under wraps until it comes to negotiating
- However, if you want to give brands a rough idea of what to expect in terms of the financial compensation you require, including pricing for different types of collaborative projects is a good start

## **How should a media pack be laid out?**

Again, there are endless ways to lay out your media pack and all are based on personal requirements and taste. Here's some things to bear in mind to keep you on the right track:

### **Branding:**

- Your blog and/or social identity should have a strong aesthetic that reflects everything you're about
- Make sure you bring this to your media pack, through things like colour scheme, typefaces, featuring your logo etc etc

### **Length:**

- The ideal length for a media pack is about 2-3 pages. More important than this however is that it is concise and as easy to read as possible
- Don't include any information that isn't necessary and useful, but make sure you still showcase your personality

## **What tools make a good media pack?**

- Canva -This is a great tool for those short on time (and graphic design skills), with loads of slick templates and layouts to customise and make your own
- Brand Magnet – A relatively new product, Brand Magnet allows you to create a clean, contemporary media pack for a small fee
- Pic Monkey – Mainly a photo editing tool, this is a super easy way to arrange information in a professional looking, collage format

## Final thoughts...

At the end of the day, a media pack should sell your influencer identity to a brand or agency. Imagine if you were to have a face-to-face business meeting with a potential brand collaborator. What would you want them to know in order to make the partnership work for you? Whatever the answer – put it in your media pack!

# Pitching Yourself to Brands

The current rhetoric around influencer marketing can often paint the influencer in a somewhat heroic light, and place influence itself on a pedestal. Yes, brands are waking up everyday to the overwhelming power of online influence, and are more and more clambering over themselves to grab a piece of the action. For this reason, certain digital personalities who have been in the game for a while now, are more than accustomed to having endless offers of brand collaboration thrust their way, some relevant and of interest, but most, unfortunately, not so much.

But when you're a newly emerging influencer, chances are this won't be the case. Even the most savvy brands can be a little slow to recognise the hot new influencers on an upwards trajectory. At CI, we are forever extolling the importance of partnering with brands that you believe in as an influencer, and that your audience will too, but what do you do if those brands just aren't ringing your doorbell? Well, here's a little secret - influencer-brand collaborations are a two-way street. You don't have to wait patiently for the right email from the right brand to arrive in your inbox. You can make things happen by approaching the organisations you want to work with.

Of course, we'd be lying massively if we said that doing so is always successful, and all it takes is one well-worded email for the brand of your dreams to be begging to have you as the face of their latest campaign. However, knowing how to approach and pitch yourself to brands is an incredibly useful skill if you want to increase your chances of landing the perfect project. Here's some tips to help you do so.

### 1. Never 'go in cold'

You're more likely to respond to a brand that has shown an active, genuine, non-contrived interest in you as an influencer, right? Guess what? It works both ways. Get onto your chosen brand's radar - check out their social profiles, see how they respond to their followers and get involved! Comment on a post, retweet something of theirs that captures your imagination, mention them on your

own channels etc. It won't be missed. If you've taken the time to engage and interact with the brand before approaching them for collaboration, your proposal will not only be met with more positivity, it will seem all the more authentic.

## 2. Consider your platform

It doesn't take a genius to see that approaching a brand on a platform or through a channel that is either not active or completely inundated with correspondence, is not going to go well. Although it seems as though emailing is the most professional way to broach the subject, it is not necessarily the most effective. Consider using business networks like LinkedIn, whereby correspondence is less likely to get lost in the shuffle.

Another technique is to send a sort of 'pre-approach' through a more informal channel first, and then email the bulk of your proposition afterwards. Any social channel with an instant message function works for this, perhaps pick the one upon which you have the most engagement. Just send a quick, but nicely worded message, explaining that you're keen to work together and want to hear their thoughts. This will plant the seed early on, and hopefully direct the brand to your influencer profiles so they can see your fantastic content for themselves!

## 3. Be complementary

It's long been said that flattery will get you anywhere - use it to your advantage. You are approaching this brand purely because of your interest and enthusiasm regarding what they embody, promote and sell, so make sure that comes across. If a brand can see that you are genuinely excited about what they do and the products/ services they offer, you've more than proven yourself to be a brilliant ambassador. Half the work is done!

## 4. State what you can do

Yes, influencer marketing is all about positive customer affinity and putting the audience first, but at the end of the day, it's still business. Put bluntly, brands will want to know what you think you can do for them.

Luckily, you have an answer. Focus on describing the audience you have - this is what the brand wants to gain access to. If you can show how your audience will naturally be receptive to and enthusiastic about the brand, they'll immediately see why you'd be an asset to their marketing incentives. Don't be afraid to hit them with engagement stats too - if you can display how your audience respond to you and how they trust your endorsement, the brand will hopefully see the value you hold.

## 5. Pay attention not only to what you say, but how you say it

Assertiveness is essential in business, not least when trying to persuade someone to do business with you. Just be careful not to come across like you think you have a God-given right to work with a brand just because of your status as influencer. You want to prove to your chosen brand that working with you is a savvy move on their part, because you can talk about them in an authentic, engaging way, to an audience already primed to listen, not blow your own trumpet by trotting out undeniably impressive, but essentially irrelevant facts and stats. One brilliant tool that will help you put your message across in a non-confrontational way is a media pack (which, by now, you know how to make!) Media packs function a bit like CVs. People expect them to be impressive, unapologetic and self-congratulatory, and so they are perfect for bragging without actually having to.

As great as media packs are though, DO NOT rely solely on yours to convince brands to work with you. You need to show the brand why they specifically should partner with you specifically - why does your unique voice as an influencer suit their objectives? Why does your unique audience consist of the people the brand wants to reach? Do your research, know what the brand promotes and who they want to market to, then put yourself forward as a way for them to do so.

## 6. Consider a platform

This is where we smoothly segue into how CI can help with approaching brands... Platforms exist because we know how hard it can be to avoid being lost in the crowd, and to know the best way to connect with that company you'd just love to work with. The brands that use CI check it daily for new influencers and opportunities to collaborate, and the platform has a built-in opportunity for you to showcase your influence to the right one. Simply put, it cuts out many, many middlemen.

## Knowing Your Rights as an Influencer

Being an influencer and working for yourself has a string of incredible benefits (not the least of which being the option of working from the sofa). As 'cushty' as influencer working can be however, there are undeniably some downsides that come from working, essentially, freelance.

Not protected by company policy and HR requirements, influencers need to be savvy and smart when it comes to knowing their rights and not coming a cropper at the hands of an organisation looking to take advantage. To help you get to grips with influencer rights, this section acts as a rough guide to knowing where you stand.

### 1. Employment law

As a rule, working for yourself means that you largely won't have employment law rights. Even if you are working with a brand on a long-term project or as a brand ambassador, chances are you won't be entitled to what employees are, e.g. sick pay and holidays. The flip-side of this however, is that being employed in a freelance capacity means that you are not legally obliged to work from the premises of the company you are collaborating with, however long the contract is for. That's right, you can work wherever you like. Including the sofa.

### 2. Being paid

Of course, influencers have the right to be paid on time, as much as this is sometimes a struggle. You can find full details on what to do if you are struggling with brands paying late and what steps in section 11. As a rule, if you are having trouble chasing a late payment and not getting anything back from your attempts, the best place to go for help as a first-step is the Citizen's Advice Bureau. As long as you have a written agreement (which includes emails) of the payment and terms, you are perfectly within your rights to go

to a small claims court if your requests for payment are continually ignored.

### 3. Links, endorsements and best practices

Although promoting and endorsing brands through collaborative content is common practice amongst influencers, there are still a few guidelines to be aware of. We'll discuss the ASA's requirements for being transparent about endorsing a brand in more detail in the next section, but in the interests of completeness, here is a brief summary:

If you are being paid or rewarded in any way for promoting a brand, you must indicate this to your audience. If not, you are at risk of penalisation from the ASA. Even if nothing is mentioned in your contract about disclosing an endorsement, you still must do it.

Google also has its own stipulations when it comes to collaborating, particularly with regards linking. It is a common misconception that it is against the law to include a follow link in a sponsored or any kind of post commissioned by a brand. This is not the case. It is however, against Google's best practices, and at risk of penalisation. To be on the safe side when backlinking to a brand in a piece of sponsored content, it is best to make the link nofollow. This is not necessary for social content however.

### 4. Owning rights and intellectual property

The matter of whether or not you own the rights to the content you produce on behalf of a brand is unfortunately never a black-and-white deal. It largely depends on the terms of the contract and agreement you made with the brand – if intellectual property isn't mentioned at all, then you own the rights to the content you make, but it is advised to be specific in the contract about who owns what to avoid later confusion.

### 5. Exclusivity

In a similar way to the above point, if a brand wants exclusive rights to your promotion as an influencer and for you not to work with any competitor brands, guess what? It has to say so in the contract. Otherwise you are under no obligations to be loyal and exclusive in partnering with brands, regardless of how similar they are.

## 6. Working with an agency or platform

This can be a good way to circumvent the often tiresome back-and-forth that comes with contracts and stipulations, but if you do decide that working with an agency or using a self-serve platform (where could you find one of those huh?) is the way to go, check their Ts&Cs with a fine-toothed comb. These will not always trump those of the brand you are working with through the agency or platform, but more often than not they will apply.

### Final thoughts...

Striking out on your own as an influencer can be daunting, but there are a number of resources, unions and forums available to help you through. Err on the side of caution, be sure to clarify things you are not sure about, and always check the Ts&Cs!

# The ASA and What You Need to Know

As exciting as it is, beginning to work as an influencer that partners with brands in a paid capacity also comes with its complexities. This is, largely, because even once you have agreed to produce or share content commissioned by a brand, there's a bulging bag of regulations to navigate courtesy of the ASA\*.

Because knowing how ASA guidelines work and affect you is a hugely important part of being an influencer, this section functions as a sort of crash course in staying on the right side of them!

## What is the ASA concerned with in this context?

Essentially, when it comes to sponsored or commissioned content, the ASA requires that it must be clearly disclosed as such. To put it another way, if you've been commissioned to create content, you need to let your audience know. This is how the ASA describes the type of content that must be identified:

**“An advertisement feature, announcement or promotion, the content of which is controlled by the marketer, not the publisher, that is disseminated in exchange for a payment or other reciprocal arrangement.”**

So if you are working with a brand to produce content of any kind, you have to say so. This requirement extends even to something as small as a single photo on social media, if a brand has commissioned you to post it. If you're interested in reading the long version of the ASA guidelines, give their website a visit.

## How can you mark content as sponsored?

Influencers use many different phrases and formats to identify when they have been asked to produce sponsored content. Ways in

which to do it also vary from blog and vlog content to social media posts. Here are a few example soundbites that may be useful:

## For blogs and vlogs:

- “Produced in collaboration with [brand]”
- “This content is sponsored by [brand]”
- “This piece was inspired by [particular aspect or article on brand]”
- “Thank you to [brand] for the inspiration for this post”
- “This piece was produced in conjunction with [brand]”

## For social content:

- #ad
- #advert
- #advertisement
- #paidfor
- #supportedby[brand]

DO NOT USE #sp, #spon as these have been ruled as not clear enough.

## Make sure that your disclosures are ‘timely’

This refers to when you call out your content as sponsored. For example, if you wait until the very end of your piece to mention that it was actually sponsored by a brand, this is considered to be a little too late, as the reader/viewer will have already digested the contents before being made aware of their source. This won’t be too much of a problem if you employ common sense and are proud to display your brand affiliations. After all, if you believe in the brand and its core values, and have talked about it in an authentic and genuine way, why wouldn’t you want to be associated with it?

## Are there any exceptions to the disclosure rule?

In a word, yes, but they are few. Basically, the only time you are exempt from having to mention a brand when you are creating content that involves them, is when the content is deemed to be your own opinions, editorial and/or news. This largely manifests itself in things like reviews – if you happen to be trying out a restaurant/hotel/product of your own volition and are not attempting to sell it, you don't have to mark the content as sponsored. If a brand has asked you to review a product and you include an affiliate or 'salesy' link or call-to-action however, it's gotta be disclosed.

## Final thoughts...

Of course, this is quite the whirlwind tour around the often tricky-to-navigate guidelines and rules of the ASA, and should not be taken as gospel. Use our post as a starting point, and then swing by the ASA's website to register and read for yourself. Be sure you are checking the regulations for your own country though (easy mistake to make we hear!)

*\*the ASA applies only in the UK - other regulators are available worldwide!*

# How to Chase Late Payments

Working as an influencer can often come with its challenges. By now, brands and agencies should have cottoned onto the fact that influencers are extremely valuable, and will require financial compensation for their efforts. Once you've found a brand to work with, agreed your terms and completed the work however, if you're unlucky, actually getting your hands on the agreed payment can be harder than you imagined...

Before you grab the pitchforks, it is important to remember that slight payment delays are part and parcel of life in business, and can occur for a number of different reasons. Cashflow can be a real bugger. However, if the delay becomes significant and is impacting your own finances in more than just a trivial capacity, should you give up? Or should you just keep chasing payments?

Here's some steps you can take:

### 1. Check over your original agreement

Before you began working on the brand collaboration project, you should have made some sort of agreement regarding fees and expected ROIs on both sides of the deal. Even if this consists only of an email, it is still valid as long as there is written proof that both parties agree. Check this over THOROUGHLY, particularly the terms of payment. It is not uncommon for large organisations to outsource financial processes to other companies – make sure you have sent your invoice to exactly the location specified.

If you can say with 100% honesty and accuracy that you have delivered everything you agreed to in the specified time-frame, resend your original invoice. If it makes you feel a little less awkward, send a light and breezy note along with it, 'checking that the original invoice found them ok, and just wondering when to expect payment' or words to that effect.

If you are using a platform like CI, it is often not the brand or agency that are responsible for actually making the payment, although they have provided the funds. In this instance, get in touch

with the help-desk of the platform in question, and they will be able to direct your enquiry to the right place.

## 2. Take your correspondence higher

The person you are emailing or are in contact with from the agency or brand is highly unlikely to be the one who handles the company's finances. If you still haven't heard back after re-sending your invoice and waiting a few more days, it might be time to move further up the managerial chain (if possible). Use LinkedIn to find useful email addresses if you have to, and send a copy of your agreement and invoice to someone a little higher up in the company, preferably in the finance department if applicable. Make sure you are polite and non-confrontational, but be clear that you are still awaiting payment that is now quite late. Chances are, this will elicit at least a response, if not a swift injection into your bank account.

If your MO is to add late charges to outstanding invoices, it might be an idea to offer to drop them if the total amount is paid straight away.

## 3. Pick up the phone

As obsolete as telecommunication seems in this day and age, sometimes it really is the quickest route to getting things done. Try calling the company you are owed money from directly, rather than a number unique to the person you are dealing with. If you speak to someone unaware of the situation, they may be more dynamic in sorting it. Calling also creates a space to discuss the situation, as opposed to relying on email communication solely.

## And if you're still not getting paid...

Unfortunately, sometimes receiving the funds you're owed is a much harder process than it should be. If it's been a significant amount of time without payment and you have tried all of the steps above to no avail, the next thing to do is send a certified letter. This consists of a letter describing what you intend to do in a legal capacity if you do not receive payment within a specified time frame. It should also include a copy of the original agreement. These letters are usually ignored, but they are a necessary step if you plan to take the situation further. Once you've sent your certified letter, check your paperwork to see which geographical jurisdiction your collaboration is covered under (on CI for instance, this information is listed in the Ts&Cs section). If covered under UK jurisdiction, seek legal advice from Citizens Advice and sites like [freelancersintheuk.co.uk](http://freelancersintheuk.co.uk).

# 21 Helpful Online Tools for Every Influencer

As a successful influencer, you'll have a huge amount on your plate. From the constant production of content that'll keep your audience hooked, to the unrelenting maintenance of numerous social channels, production of inspirational photos and daily engagement with followers... an awful lot goes into creating and maintaining influence.

Luckily the internet, as it so often does, has come to the rescue. For every plate you have spinning in the air, there's an online tool to take away the bulk of its necessary 'grunt work'. We've collected together a list of the best we've found for all manner of influencer needs, from content planning to social scheduling, photo editing to search optimisation – it's time to upgrade your influencer toolkit!

## Content Planning

Every influencer needs to generate content, regardless of the platform and channels they use. Content is an influencer's currency, and letting it slip with regard quality or quantity is a definite no. But how do you continually come up with engaging, new content ideas? And ensure that when inspiration strikes, it doesn't get lost in the shuffle?

**Wordpress Editorial Calendar Plugin** - This is obviously only relevant for influencers using Wordpress blogs, but is a brilliant and simple way to plan out when posts should be written and published.

**HubSpot Editorial Calendar Templates** - If you want to keep your editorial planning simple and scaled down, HubSpot's templates are endlessly useful. No more complex than G-Sheets or Excel, these templates are designed specifically for editorial planning and are a great way to get organised.

**Trello** - Agile and clever, Trello is perfect for personalisation, as well as organising posts into categories and daily schedules. It's also easily integrated into Google Drive.

CoSchedule - This is one for those who really mean business, and don't mind dropping some cash... CoSchedule covers every aspect of editorial, from the planning to the sharing and promotion, and even the strategy and optimisation.

## Social Management

If you're a social influencer, this section is particularly pertinent, but every serious influencer knows the importance of social media with regard generating and maintaining engagement. These helpful tools make the whole process a lot easier.

**Hootsuite** - An oldie but a goodie, you'll almost definitely have heard of Hootsuite, but it's worth mentioning anyway. Hootsuite's best feature is that it allows you to monitor all your social channels in one place, and schedule content across them all in one go, as well as keeping up with conversations, comments and mentions.

**Later** - With a beautifully simple and clear layout, Later solves the most frustrating of social problems - scheduling Instagram posts. And it offers analytics to boot.

**Dashburst** - Regular sharers of imagery and photo content through social platforms may find Dashburst infinitely helpful. It is a great place to curate, discover and share visual content across your social portfolio in, get this, short bursts.

**Hashtagify** - A quick and easy way to explore hashtags related to all manner of topics, Hashtagify enables you to use the ones that will propel your content further.

**ReachPod** - Most social channels have inbuilt analytics tools that display the reach, engagement and disbursement of posts, but if you want to kick things up a notch, try ReachPod. It does all of the above, with bells on.

## Audience Analytics

As we may have mentioned just a few times before, your audience should be at the centre of pretty much everything you do as an influencer. Unless you're literally a superhuman, getting to know each and every one of your audience members is impossible, but it is crucial to monitor how your audience works, what they react to and where their engagement peaks, in order to maintain your influence.

**Buzzsumo** - This is a great tool for monitoring your social content and how it is being received. You can check which of your posts are the most popular, which create more engagement, and

which channels see the most interaction from your audience.

**Google Analytics** - Sometimes, the simplest solution is one of the best. If you're looking for a snapshot of who reads your blog, where they're coming from, how they're finding it and how long they're sticking around for, GA is ideal. You can also use this tool to create specific reports based on certain objectives, which is endlessly handy.

**Clicky** - Although potentially named by a child, Clicky is a very detailed way to monitor your site traffic, and can be easily integrated into Wordpress. What makes it different? You can watch people visiting and navigating your site IN REAL TIME.

**Kya** - Specifically a Wordpress plugin, Kya focuses on analysing audience engagement, rather than simply offering numbers and stats.

**Followerwonk** - From the agile minds at Moz, Followerwonk allows you to explore, analyse and get to know your social followers, check out their profiles and see what bits of your content they interact with.

**Klear** - Once you've connected all of your social profiles, Klear will provide you with detailed insights as to your approachability as a social personality, as well as your audience's interests and social habits.

## Photo Editing

Visuals are essential for influencers in 2017. Regardless of where your influence lies, the fact is that your content won't fly unless it is visually appealing. In case creating drool-worthy, nicely composed pictures that'll rack up the Instagram likes isn't your bag, here's some tools that'll help.

**Whitagram** - Fans of adding white borders and dreamy filters to your Instagram photos, this is your stop.

**Hyperlapse** - Hyperlapse is IOS only, but is one of the best time-lapse apps (try saying that after a few beers) on the market.

**Snapseed** - This is a great, free photo-editing app, with enough features and filters to make even the most ham-fisted photographer rake in the re-grams.

**Over** - Over allows you to add stylish text to your photos for Pinterest assets and blog headers.

## Search Optimisation

We'll be delving into search optimisation in more detail in the next blog post, but for now, here are a few handy tools to maximise the searchability of your site.

**Majestic SEO** - One of the most comprehensive SEO tools on the market, the free version of Majestic SEO is perfect for bloggers.

**Google Keyword Planner** - A brilliant way to assess which keywords will get your content ranking higher, and shepherd in more organic traffic.

**So there you have it** - the complete influencer toolbox. Some of the above will require payments and signing up to plans, but most are free, straightforward and infinitely useful!

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