

Four Steps to Initiating International Influencer Relations

Influencer Relations is the long-term, strategic engagement of high-profile social media commentators with expertise relevant to your business.

It is a new name for an old skill – engaging with high profile opinion leaders. Whereas that might have entailed local chambers of commerce, professors, and business associations beforehand, today influencer relations steps deeply into the world of social media.

The following are four steps you can take to begin engaging with international influencers:

1. Identify your industry's real influencers

Today there are a myriad of free and paid tools that allow influencer analysis, tracking, evaluation.

The three critical areas to examine are:

A) Reach – Primary and secondary audiences reached, including validation of actual subscribers, geographic reach and/or focus, language(s), occupation(s) of audience

B) Relevance – Link to company's businesses and primary audiences, and which segments you're looking to/able to reach online, secondary relevance via geography, diversity, on-line promotion, adjacent expertise

C) Resonance – Levels of engagement when posting – shares, comments, conversation with author. A Tweet in the dark means nothing. A post with lively interchange is rewarding for all parties

Also look through your existing organisation for online advocates. Analyst relations, media affairs, trade associations, chambers of commerce, multinational member organisations all have some active online influencers – and you already have a relationship.

Across the employee base there are online advocates (and detractors). Understand the social base of support already existing within your company today.



Influencer Relations Continued

2. Listen to Understand

Having identified key influencers, start listening to them. Follow their posts on LinkedIn, Facebook, Twitter, Instagram – or whichever platform they favour. To succeed with Influencer Relations you need to get a sense of the influencers style. Which areas of your business seem of interest to them? How frequently do they post? What’s the engagement of their audience? If influencers post and no one responds, then they might not be as aligned with their readers.

Your goal in this stage is to understand the top influencers' style of engagement and preferred content. This will matter when you begin to find content opportunities to share with them.

At Huawei Technologies where I led global Influencer Relations, we developed relationships with product review specialists for new handset devices, as well as edge computing experts to discuss enterprise solutions.

Listening is a step you’ll continue to do whether evaluating long-term influencers or looking at new relationships as part of your Influencer Relations program.

3. Start a Conversation

By far the simplest concept, but for many the hardest to commence. Conversations are two-way exchanges between humans – not blast email marketing campaigns, Facebook likes, one-off campaigns, or random Tweets. This is a person within your organisation or senior agents able to build a relationship.

In B2C campaigns, contracts get into the specifics of the engagement – number of posts, platforms, cross-promotions etc. When executing on Influencer Relations for long-term corporate reputation and B2B awareness, the time-frame is longer and that demands a relationship.

Start small and follow the people you want to know – and read their content. Post your appreciation and interests. Looking up at the third step in the Identification process, consider "Resonance". Is there an interchange. An engaged and audience-centric Influencer should respond. Step two of the conversation model is getting a response.



This is what happens in an internet minute - 2018



Words of Advice for Influencer Relations - Relationships Take Time

Start slow, build and continue. Relationships can be ruined if programs begin without the support required to continue and build longer-term engagements.

Like your suppliers, customers, associations, regulators and more, the key to successful communications is consistency and effort. Treat Influencers with the same respect shown other business-critical audiences.

4. Start Meaningful Engagements

If you have targeted and talked with the right-level of international influencers, the next step is to find mutually-rewarding ways to engage. Are there thought-leadership papers in your organisation that align with their interests? Could one be a speaker at future client or industry conferences? Can you invite them to headquarters to meet with your relevant experts?

This is not an extra channel to funnel every news release to, however if you're able to curate your content to meet their interests, you'll find they'll be willing to re-share and write-up. Most Influencers align their content strategies with the interests of their audiences. Each will have a forward-looking editorial calendar of news and views that keep them engaged and engaging.

Be respectful. Each online influencer is a person and a professional. You can begin select paid engagements if you're wanting a specific person for a specific speech or article. It isn't their role to promote your business, but if you are of interest they will share your material.



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About Tantalus' Influencer Relations Specialist Walter Jennings

Walter Jennings is a Senior Consultant with The Tantalus Group, and the firm's leading expert on International Key Opinion Leaders and Influencer Relations for corporate reputation.

He developed and led the program globally as Vice President, Global Corporate Communications at Huawei Technologies in Shenzhen, China.

Based in Hong Kong he is an American-Australian with 25+ years' experience advising companies in China, Australia, and the United States.

Put the talented team of Tantalus management and communications consultants to work for you.

Our unique networked structure provides our clients access to the latest strategies from around the world and the ability to leverage experience in wide-ranging industries and markets.

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