



2020

State of B2B Influencer Marketing

Research Report

TopRank[®]
Marketing

The Business of Influence

The future is here

Whether in times of crisis or in competitive markets, B2B marketers are challenged to reach distracted buyers and create meaningful experiences that inspire trust, confidence and action.

Over the past 5 years many marketers have realized that partnering with trusted industry experts to co-create content provides the kind of marketing experience that drives engagement, brand credibility and marketing performance.

While optimism about the potential of B2B influencer marketing is increasing, commonly known B2C best practices do not directly translate to B2B and many marketers are not confident about their ability to implement using internal resources alone.

To help close the gap of knowledge and skills around working with influencers to impact marketing and business goals, the 2020 State of B2B Influencer Marketing

report focuses exclusively on how businesses are engaging influencers for marketing to other businesses.

Hundreds of B2B marketers have shared their insights including many of the top B2B brands in the world on all things B2B influencer marketing including strategy, tactics, operations, software, integration, measurement, budgeting and the future.

We've combined the findings from our research with insights from top B2B marketers from brands, case studies and some of the most respected B2B influencers in the industry to give you direction, confidence and inspiration for the best that influencer marketing has to offer in the business world.



CEO & Co-Founder,
TopRank Marketing

In a time of darkness, chaos, or confusion, B2B brands have an opportunity to be the light for their customers and customer's customers.

Meaningful customer engagement starts with discovery. When someone begins their discovery process, what do they find? How do they react? Does your content resonate in a relevant and empathetic way or does it push customers elsewhere?

B2B marketers now have an opportunity to reimagine engagement to ignite a new type of connection with customers. Beyond designing for and measuring the potent for engagement, design for humans and their intentions, needs, and desired outcomes. Engagement becomes a function of intent and purpose.

This is where influence and thought leadership transcend marketing to become partners to drive business growth.

Continued >

Brian Solis

*Digital Anthropologist, Futurist
Salesforce
@briansolis*



“ **Influence is a means of partnering with experts and trusted authorities to guide customers forward.**”



Always-On thought leadership and influence are more important now than ever because the customer never turns off. They don't seek to find your journey just to do business with you. They create their own journey and invite you, if you're worthy, to be part of it. The need for influence as such is also Always-On. If you are not discoverable, or the mentally available solution in any moment of truth, you can never be part of the consideration set. Without that, what do you have, really?

Influencer Marketing plays a critical role now, beyond marketing experimentation or a checkbox in the marketer's to do list. Influence is a means of partnering with experts and trusted authorities to guide customers forward. It should be seen, not as trendy or a nice-to-have program, but instead a value added service to every

facet of the organization, especially to customers and prospects seeking information and engagement at every stage of their journey and lifecycle.

If we've learned anything about influence, is that it works. That is what influence is all about. It's not about marketing. It's about being the light in someone's darkness or chaos. It's about guiding them in ways that shape behavior and inspire mutually beneficial outcomes. In this light, B2B influence faces a tremendous opportunity to grow.

This report will help you understand that opportunity, to learn when, where and how to deliver value, and provide insights and direction, to be the light, for true engagement, true influence and true success now and in the future.

Key Findings

While there is optimism about the role influencer marketing plays with prospects, customer experience and marketing results, many B2B marketers feel they do not have the skills to implement programs on their own. The most successful at influencer marketing follow a pattern including implementing Always-On influencer engagement.

74%

Influencer Marketing impacts customer experience. 74% of marketers agree that influencer marketing improves customer and prospect experience with the brand.

63%

Influencer Marketing drives results. 63% of marketers agree that marketing would have better results if it included a B2B influencer marketing program.

5%

Only 5% of marketers who do periodic campaigns are very successful vs. 60% of marketers who implement always on influencer marketing programs.

60%

60% of marketers who do not implement ongoing influencer marketing programs report not having the right skills in house or knowledge to execute.

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01 The Influence Advantage

Business marketing can be a challenge in the best of times. During periods of uncertainty, it is even more important to understand the optimal means for reaching and engaging customers.

When it comes to building value for the brand through thought leadership and driving business goals through revenue growth, Influencer Marketing offers B2B brands an advantage: 83% of marketers engaging in influencer marketing do so to be seen as thought leaders. 69% believe influencers are effective for attracting prospective customers. For B2B brands, creating value across the customer lifecycle with influencer marketing is an effective solution.

In this chapter of the report, we'll explore findings around why B2B marketers choose influencer marketing, expectations, results, maturity, and impact on customer experience.



96%

of B2B marketers that engage influencers consider their program to be successful

B2B Brands Are Confident About Influencer Marketing

90% of B2B brands expect their budget for influencer marketing to increase or stay the same. One of the reasons for confidence is the importance of trust: 77% of marketers say their prospective customers rely on advice from industry experts. From the 84% that trust influencers to create brand awareness to the 69% that count on influencers to help generate new leads, B2B brands have many reasons to make influencer marketing part of their marketing mix.



Rani Mani

Head of Employee Advocacy,
Adobe
@ranimani0707

Engaging with influencers provides a myriad of competitive advantages. The main ones being:

- Their expertise lends credibility that results in convincing and converting your target audience.
- They provide an outside-in POV and new ideas on how your brand can be part of the solution.
- They bring a heavy dose of freshness and creativity to brand content.
- Their affiliation with your brand attracts other luminaries to be a part of your community.
- They become an extension of your PR team and oftentimes are more compelling to have in your corner especially in times of crisis.

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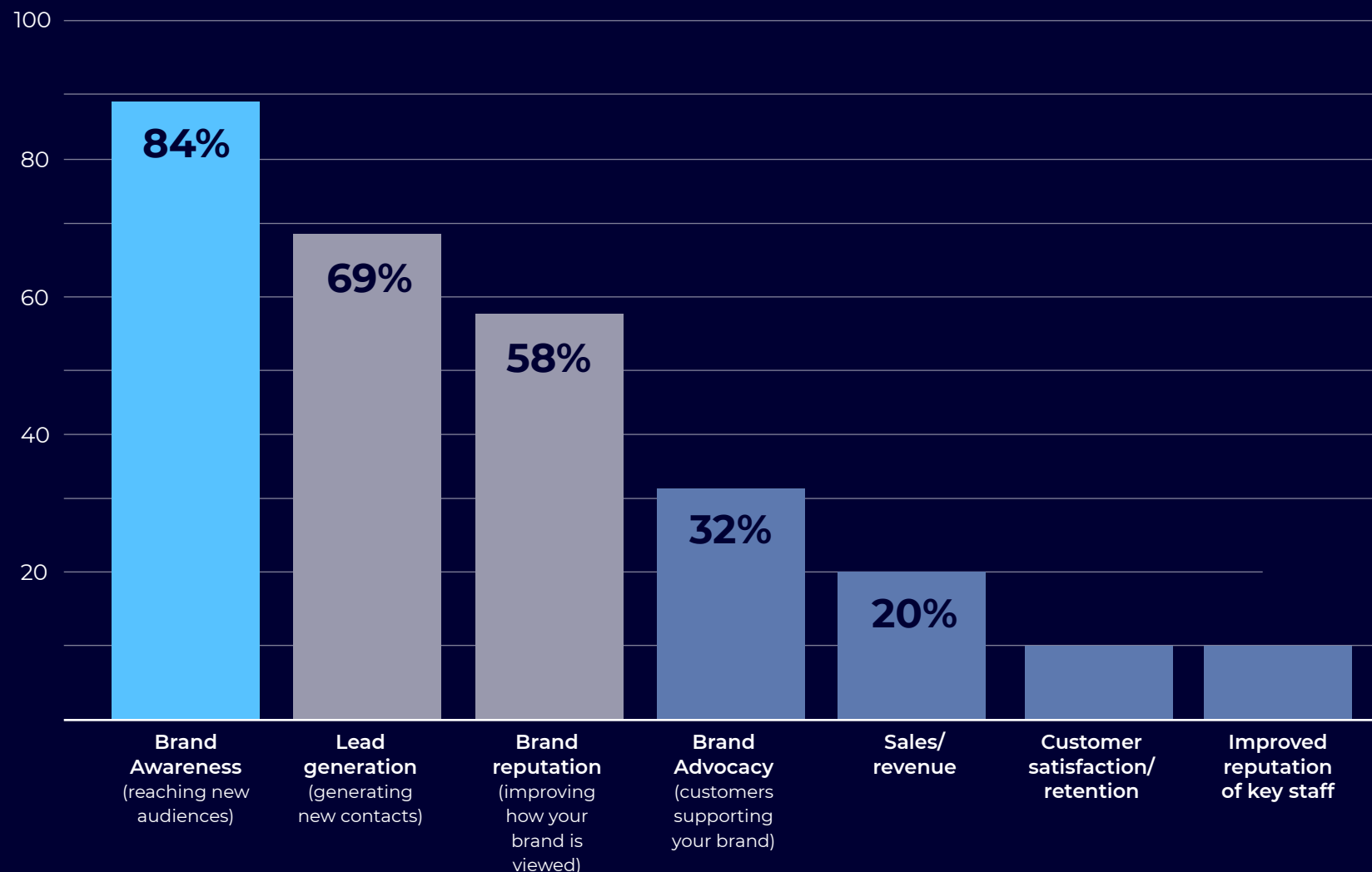
Influencer Partnerships Extend Brand Impact

For many B2B marketing departments, performance expectations have increased while resources have not. Partnering with industry experts that have the trust and attention of your audience means adding brand credibility where it's needed most: on the front lines of prospective customer communications.

During the customer journey, influence happens in every exchange of information as prospective customers pull themselves through the sales cycle towards a solution. When industry experts can provide B2B brands with insights, content and advocacy, it helps create value for everyone: customers get useful content experiences, the brand gains reach and engagement, and the influencers improve their credibility by association with the brand.

What B2B Marketers Can Achieve with Influence

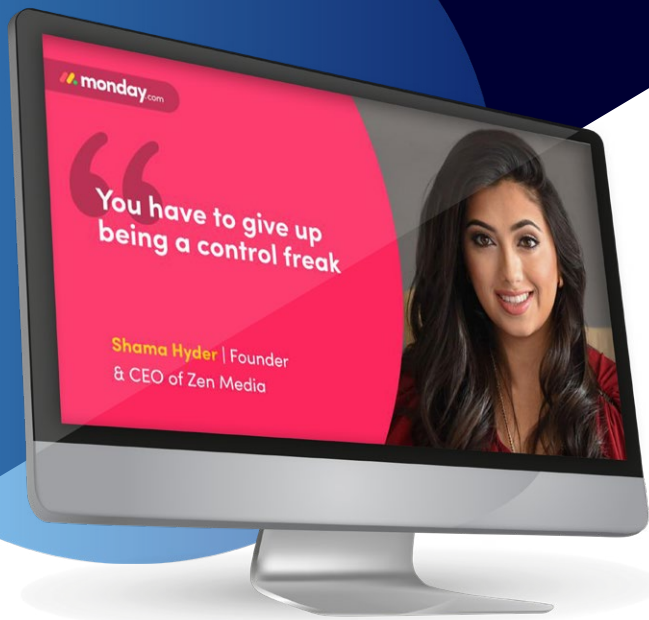
Measurable benefits from working with influencers



Within B2B marketing few differentiators are more powerful than the brand. Within some B2B industries like MarTech, the proliferation of competitors has made it nearly impossible for brands to stand out. For many B2B companies, the solution includes working with influencers.

Many of the top goals B2B marketers have for influencer marketing align with measurable benefits in the graph to the left including: growing brand awareness (84%), reputation and advocacy as well as lead generation (69%) and increase sales/revenue. Influence offers marketers the unique opportunity to affect positive outcomes across the customer lifecycle from awareness to advocacy.

The pressure for many B2B marketers to achieve both brand and lead generation/revenue goals is high. While it is possible for an influencer marketing program to be architected in phases to achieve both, it is more effective to align the most relevant influencers and content with specific brand or lead generation objectives for the best results.



B2B Influence in Action

How monday.com Created an Influencer Marketing Advantage

1,790%

above goal social reach from
influencer shares of brand content

When the pandemic swept through the world in early 2020, monday.com identified an opportunity to help support teams that had gone from working in-office to working remotely.

As a provider of remote project management software this transition created an opportunity for monday.com to position itself as a valuable resource for remote teams. Monday.com partnered with TopRank Marketing to develop an influencer marketing campaign featuring industry experts that

could reach and engage remote work teams more effectively than the brand on its own.

Seasoned experts and influencers in the remote work space were engaged to collaborate on and promote content published on the brand site, on the influencers own sites, brand social channels and via livestream.

By engaging influencers with audiences hungry for information about remote work best practices, this campaign

added value to the target audience and increased awareness of monday.com's offering with impressive results:

- **17.9M in potential reach from brand mentions by influencers (goal was 1M)**
- **Over 300K organic impressions on social media**
- **Nearly 3k video views of a live stream featuring two industry experts within the first week**

[Read the Full Case Study](#)

How Influencers Create Value for B2B Brands

B2B companies need trusted voices on their side that also have an empathetic ear to what customers really care about. Relationships with the right influencers matched with relevant brand content and activation opportunities can deliver important competitive advantages including high quality content, rich customer engagement and inspiring brand advocacy.

As B2B marketers look to what's possible with influencer marketing, they will also look at what makes some B2B brands more successful than others. Our research found that the most successful B2B influencer marketing programs have certain characteristics including:

- Engage in ongoing influencer marketing vs. periodic campaigns
- Rely on industry experts and analysts
- Use blogs as content publishing platforms
- Use software to identify and qualify influencers
- Create interactive content with influencers
- Have a centralized Influencer Marketing program
- Have a documented B2B influencer marketing strategy

Successful B2B influencer marketers are mature in their use of best practices, process and technology. Benefits achieved from influencer marketing include:

- 78%** Increased social reach
- 64%** Increased credibility of brand content
- 62%** Increased share of voice
- 55%** Increased media mentions of brand
- 53%** Increase in new leads
- 44%** Increase in brand advocacy
- 34%** Increased sales

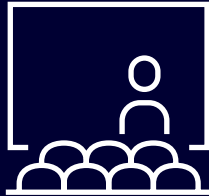
Working with the right influencers, you build credibility with the audience you are trying to reach. Influencers can help you deliver content that solves problems, educates and inspires your intended audience. The biggest benefit is the engagement, how you can work with your influencers to create meaningful engagement that lead to the right outcomes for your brand.

Amisha Gandhi

VP Influencer Marketing and Communications, SAP Ariba
@AmishaGandhi

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Most Essential Qualities in Choosing an Influencer:



Relevance of audience

91%



Subject matter expertise

79%



Influencer publishes on at least one platform (*speaker, author, blogger, analyst*)

72%



Values align with the brand

64%



Ability to create content (*text, image, audio, video*)

51%



Advocate for our brand

39%



Size of audience

32%



Charisma and personality

31%



Professional credentials (*education, job title, company*)

30%

01 CHAPTER SUMMARY

The Influence Advantage



B2B marketers are confident about influencer marketing. 83% engage influencers to build thought leadership and 69% collaborate with influencers to generate leads. 96% consider their influencer marketing program to be either moderately or very successful and 90% expect their budget for influencer marketing to increase or stay the same.



Engaging influencers creates a competitive advantage for B2B brands. Rani Mani from Adobe says, “influencers’ industry expertise lend credibility that results in convincing and converting your target audience.” Research supports that insight with 77% of marketers saying their prospective customers rely on advice from industry experts.



Successful B2B Influencer Marketing has a pattern: A documented influencer marketing strategy, software to identify and manage influencers, a focus on industry experts and analysts, always-on influencer engagement, co-creation of interactive content and publishing blog content.

02 The Engine of Influence is Always On

As the need for B2B brands to reach and connect authentically with customers rises, B2B influencer marketers are maturing from intermittent campaigns (25%) to relationship driven, Always-On programs (34%).

With 84% of B2B marketers focused on building brand awareness with their influencer marketing efforts, ongoing influencer engagement is essential for creating vested relationships that inspire more qualitative activations and brand advocacy.

The Engine of Influence needs to run ongoing in order to win relationships with the most trusted voices. Our findings amongst B2B marketers will reveal how Always-On compares to campaigns, what best practices they follow and an example of Always-On influence in action.



60%

of B2B marketers who use Always-On Influencer Marketing programs are very successful vs. 5% who only use periodic campaigns.

Influencer Marketing is a Relationship Business

In the world of business, many decisions are made based on brand strength and the trust of expert voices. And B2B marketers who build relationships with trusted experts understand the value of having brand advocates who engage authentically with hard to reach audiences. An Always-On approach to influencer marketing provides a framework for finding, engaging and elevating relationships with those very experts that customers trust and want to hear from.





Garnor Morantes

Group Marketing Manager,
LinkedIn

“**Being “always-on” has allowed our team to build meaningful relationships with influencers.** This approach means that the relationship ceases to be “transactional” (what can you do for us) when we’re in a state of ongoing activity. Because of this foundation, we are in a situation where, when urgency strikes, we’ve been able to immediately activate influencers, whether it be for private, direct, unfiltered feedback and consult, or for external, public-facing advocacy and amplification. B2B brands would be wise to adopt an always-on influencer engagement approach as they look to build true brand advocates.

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The Always-On Imperative for B2B Brands

In today’s uncertain environment, brand reach and credibility are more important than ever. Some of the top B2B brands in the world have invested in developing communities of industry experts through Always-On influencer marketing that they can count on for social engagement, event activations, and brand advocacy.

B2B marketers using an Always-On influencer marketing strategy are seeing important benefits including:

- 75%** Increased views of brand content
- 70%** Improved credibility of brand content
- 60%** Increased share of voice
- 55%** Increased media mentions of brand
- 50%** Increased brand advocacy

Buyers want to trust the brands they work with, so it’s imperative that B2B companies invest in relationships with credible experts that have customers’ confidence. Always-On Influencer Marketing programs both build and deliver brand trust.



B2B Influence in Action

How LinkedIn Built Trust and Advocacy with Always-On Influence

75 strong influencer community created

Brand trust, advocacy and customer experience are some of the most important goals for B2B brands today. But those goals are not achieved overnight or through brand efforts alone.

LinkedIn realized that in order to continue being the most relevant destination for business professionals online, building confidence and credibility amongst their community was essential. One way to do that was by partnering with industry influencers.

As sophisticated marketers, LinkedIn understood that building brand trust and advocacy meant more than influencer campaigns. It meant building relationships with a community of industry experts through a strategy called Always-On Influencer Marketing.

LinkedIn's goal was to grow brand awareness, reach and engagement through credible voices in the marketing and sales world that were activated in a variety of ways from creating thought leadership content to driving social conversations.

By engaging influencers with whose audiences and expertise align with LinkedIn's POV, an Always-On Influencer Marketing strategy provided impressive results:

- **Nearly 2,000 brand mentions by influencers and their networks**
- **84M in potential reach from brand mentions by influencers**
- **200-450% above benchmark engagement on one social influencer activation**


[Read the Full Case Study](#)

Skills That Pay the Bills with Always-On Influencer Marketing

Ongoing influencer programs are more valuable to B2B companies and allow for deeper engagement with influencers. These connected activities provide a cohesive experience for your audience and more amplification of the program.

Tom Treanor

Global Head of Marketing
Arm Treasure Data
[@RtMixMktg](#)

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Always-On Influencer Marketing is the practice of ongoing relationship building, engagement and activation of a specified group of influencers to build community, content and brand advocacy that is of mutual value to the brand, its customers and the influencers.

B2B marketers that have matured their influencer marketing efforts from pilots to campaigns to ongoing programs see greater sophistication and confidence in the practice.

For example, none of the B2B marketers implementing Always-On influencer programs rated their efforts to find the right influencers as very difficult vs. 25% of marketers who run campaigns only.

From a confidence standpoint, 94% of B2B marketers using an Always-On influencer engagement strategy believe influencer

marketing will grow in importance over the next 12 months.

That confidence is reflected in marketing budgets as well. 89% of B2B marketers implementing Always-On influencer programs expect their budgets to increase or remain the same vs. 73% for marketers running campaign based programs. 28% Always-On influencer programs spend more than \$100,000 per year vs. 8% for marketers running campaigns.

Always On Influencer Marketing is a strategic approach to creating communities of trusted experts that is relationship and content focused. Those relationships are nurtured over time through ongoing engagement and activations that create value for buyers, the brand and the influencers – it is truly an “everybody wins” approach to marketing.

Activities Influencers Participate in with Brands:

Collaborate on content / provide quotes for our brand



Promote our content



Participate in events (emcee, keynote, breakout, workshop)



Serve as a brand ambassadors



Serve as advisors for our brand



Endorse products



Participate in media interviews



02 CHAPTER SUMMARY

The Engine of Influence is Always On



Influencer Marketing is a relationship business and an Always-On strategy helps B2B brands turn those connections with trusted experts into marketing results. 60% of B2B marketers who use Always-On Influencer Marketing programs are very successful vs. 5% who only use periodic campaigns.



Always-On Influencer Marketing elevates influencer engagement from mechanical to meaningful, from transactional to relationship focused. As a result, brands like LinkedIn are able to activate their community on-demand. “When urgency strikes, we’ve been able to immediately activate influencers,” says Garnor Morantes of LinkedIn, “B2B brands would be wise to adopt an always-on influencer engagement approach as they look to build true brand advocates.”



An Always-On Influencer Marketing strategy creates a win for everyone. With a framework that goes beyond influencer content marketing campaigns to partnering with industry experts to drive conversations and advocacy, an Always-On approach builds brand awareness, and inspires customers to trust and engage with the business.

03 Influencer Marketing Integration

Influencer Marketing is a fast growing discipline for B2B marketers and while many brands view it as a stand alone tactic, mature marketers realize that influence can play a role in virtually any business communication, content type or publishing channel.

Customers do not limit their information discovery and consumption to single communication channels or content types and neither should marketers. That's why savvy B2B marketers integrate influencer content across marketing disciplines from ABM to Public Relations to SEO.

In this chapter, we'll cover the ways marketers are integrating influencer content with other marketing, best practices and what a successful influencer content integration effort looks like.



50% of B2B marketers integrate
Influencer Marketing with SEO.

Content Optimized for Findability and Credibility

The vast majority of B2B marketers integrate influencer marketing with social media (90%) and content marketing (83%) activities. As B2B marketing moves entirely online, another influencer integration opportunity exists: SEO. When marketers integrate the findability of SEO with the credibility of content that is influencer activated, it helps your brand become the best answer for topics you want to be known for and that customers care about.





Ann Handley

Chief Content Officer,
MarketingProfs
@marketingprfs

“ You could call yourself a good parent or a world-class marketer or an empathetic friend... but any of those things would carry more weight coming from your child, customer, or BFF.

So it is with integrating influencer content: It's a direct line to building trust and customer confidence.

And doing so at scale across multiple channels, touchpoints, interactions – be it an Instagram story, LinkedIn video series, co-created white paper, research report, live puppet show. (Side note: I've never actually seen the last one. Dear brand manager: Please run with it!)

Partnering with well-matched influencers is also a handy way to infuse your brand with creative energy and inspiration. The best influencers act almost as a creative agency of one: Devising innovative ways to tell a story that ultimately benefits a brand, its prospects/customers, and the influencer. (I'm resisting the use of “authentic” here. But it's basically that.)

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The Value of Influencer Content Integration

When brands have trusted experts to tap for insights, content and advocacy, the contribution to customer experience can be significant. More than ever, buyers are pulling themselves through the sales cycle with digital information in a variety of formats and channels.

To meet customer demand for relevant content where they want it, B2B brands that run influencer marketing programs are integrating influencer content with other marketing activities from social media marketing and content marketing to public relations and SEO.

Whether influencer content is customized or repurposed for the different channels where customers consume content, the result is a better experience for the buyer and for the brand.



B2B Influence in Action

How Cherwell Software's Integrated Influencer Approach Reached Millions

342% better CTR on influencer content

The credibility and continuity of a brand's message can be the difference between marketing success and failure. When a B2B brand needs to pivot its message, building trust and being seen in all the channels where customers are, is essential.

As a tech company transitioning its messaging and focus from ITSM towards digital transformation, Cherwell Software sought to accelerate their credibility within the industry with an influencer marketing campaign focused on helping the target audience overcome obstacles and get buy-in along their digital transformation journey.

To build message credibility and ensure visibility, Cherwell partnered with trusted technology experts to co-create content in formats that would resonate with customers including video, interactive content and blog posts in support of new original research in the form of an industry report.

With the brand and influencer messages coordinated across formats and channels, Cherwell Software was able to drive awareness, engagement and conversions.

By co-creating content with influencers and integrating the message, this program achieved reach and engagement goals while building trust in the new brand message:

- **5.45M in potential reach from influencer shares**
- **90% of all visitors were new users**
- **882 interactions with the interactive content**

[Read the Full Case Study](#)

Top Opportunities for Influencer Content Integration

Customers know authenticity when they see it and naturally trust humans more than brands. Working with credible B2B influencers helps to build brand authority through real, human conversations and interactions.

Sarita Rao

SVP Marketing, AT&T Business
@saritasayso

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B2B marketers top influencer marketing goals focus on building brand awareness (84%) and lead generation (69%). Achieving both goals with any kind of influencer marketing program requires message integration across channels to create a consistent brand experience.

In our research we found 6 key areas where influencer marketing was integrated with other marketing activities:

90% Social media marketing

83% Content marketing

56% Public relations (PR)

50% Search engine optimization (SEO)

43% Branding

32% Account-based marketing (ABM)

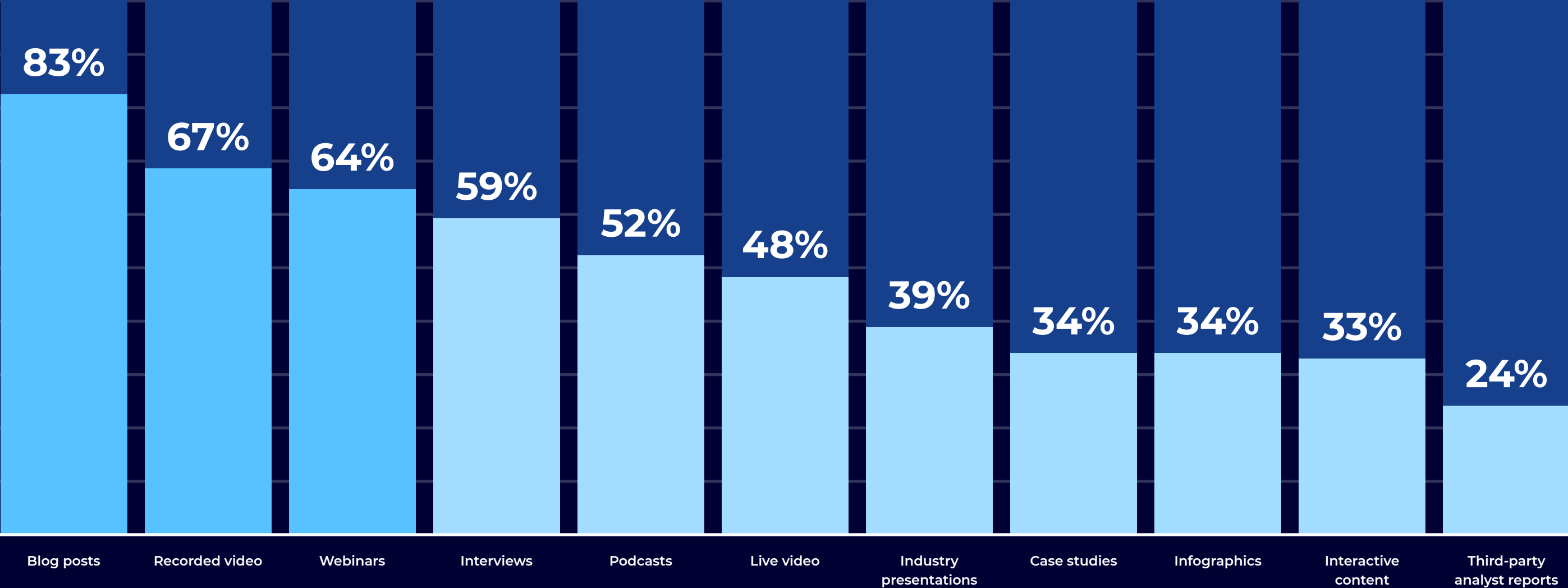
Social Media is where a significant portion of influencer marketing activities happen and content activations are a best practice. Integration of influencers with PR activities, or Influencer Relations, aligns with brand building and thought leadership.

B2B buyers rely on search engines to find information in today's digital world and SEO keywords can be used for influencer selection, content planning and promotion.

Branding integration synchronizes with the top influencer marketing goal of brand awareness as B2B marketers seek to gain brand reach and influence by working with experts that already have it. ABM integration is relatively new and represents a significant opportunity to add credibility to content used for targeted accounts.

Influencer Marketing integration brings the credibility of trusted experts in all the channels where customers are looking whether the goal is branding focused or generating new leads.

Types of Content Brands Create with Influencers:



03 CHAPTER SUMMARY

Influencer Marketing Integration



While the majority of B2B marketers integrate influencer marketing activities with social media (90%) and content marketing (83%), **integration with SEO (50%) presents an opportunity for brands to gain a competitive advantage**



B2B marketers can partner with influencers to co-create and integrate content messaging for brands that need to pivot. Cherwell Software successfully engaged influencers to do just that with 90% of campaign content reaching new users.



Marketers are not handling influencer integration efforts alone. 63% of marketers say they enlist agencies to help integrate influencer marketing programs with other marketing tactics from social media to SEO to PR.



04 Influencer Marketing Operations

When centered around relationships, influencer marketing can be resource intensive and time consuming. To scale the impact of those relationships requires processes and software. Tools and best practices are as essential for influencer identification as they are for managing ongoing communications and performance reporting.

Our research found that B2B marketers who document an influencer strategy and engagement approach, define processes, use software and elevate their internal operational expertise are better suited to scale a high quality and successful influencer marketing program.

This chapter will cover our findings about influencer marketing operations on everything from top challenges to best practices and process to software.



50% of the most successful influencer marketers use software to identify influencers.

Optimize Influencer Identification and Activation with Software

39% of marketers state their top challenge with influencer marketing is that the process is too manual. Only 25% of less successful influencer marketers use software vs. half of the most successful to identify influencers. The vast amounts of data and analysis needed to predict which influencers are a match go beyond personal referrals. Process and technology are essential for finding, qualifying and activating the right influencers.

Operations Drive Influence at Scale

For the most successful B2B influencer marketers, having a documented strategy (68%) is one of the key differentiators over less successful marketers (25%). A strategic plan provides the framework for effective and scalable influencer marketing implementation through process, best practices and technology.

The top ways marketers use technology to help with influencer marketing programs include:

- Identify influencers **76%**
- Monitor influencer social network activity **66%**
- Qualify influencers **64%**
- Measure and report on campaign/program results **63%**
- Manage influencer campaigns/program **43%**
- Manage and nurture influencer relationships **41%**

The most successful marketers use technology and the impact is evident: only 13% rate difficulty achieving results as a top challenge vs. 30% of marketers overall.




Ursula Ringham

*Global Head of
Influencer Marketing,
SAP
@ursularingham*

“ **Influencer marketing is a hot topic these days because in-person conferences, events, and meetings are all in transition.** But as a brand, how do you find the right influencers for your program?

The operations behind Influencer Marketing is the less glamorous yet essential side of relational business. You need to come up with a strategy, plan of action, and a process. All incorporate various tools and techniques and will give you the knowledge and skills to run a successful influencer marketing program.

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B2B Influence in Action

How SAP's Influencer Podcast was Operationalized for Multiple Objectives

Podcast featuring influencers reaches

101% of industry average downloads

Successful influencer marketing is a journey. The most successful brands create a hypothesis for their approach, test and then develop a standardized process in order to create a scalable operation.

Challenged to create a single influential marketing resource to reach multiple business objectives, SAP needed to implement a process that would enable them to create a content destination to satisfy the interests of business leaders within many verticals and topics around technology.

The solution included creating a podcast featuring an influencer host and a combination of industry experts and internal executives. To make the solution scalable, a process was developed and aided by multiple tools to identify, engage and activate influencers, record interviews, produce podcast episodes, publish and promote the podcasts.

The process made it easier for influencers to contribute, resulting in more influencers participating more efficiently, allowing expedited production and delivery of podcast episodes on-time and under budget.

Not only was this program efficiently created and capable of serving multiple audiences, the marketing performance was significant:

- **128M in potential reach from influencer shares**
- **13M+ estimated impressions**
- **66% increase in podcast downloads over previous season**

[Read the Full Case Study](#)

Behind Influence Success is an Effective Operation

Influencer Marketing can impact B2B marketing efforts across the customer lifecycle from creating greater brand awareness to lead generation to inspiring advocacy.

For most B2B companies, influencer marketing is not a turn-key effort. 60% of marketers state they do not have the right skills in-house or the knowledge to execute and influencer marketing program.

However, many operational aspects of influencer marketing are handled by outside resources such as specialist agencies including:

- Identifying influencers **79%**
- Managing influencer relationships **76%**
- Developing the strategy **71%**
- Measuring effectiveness **66%**
- Integrating with other marketing efforts **63%**
- Implementing campaigns **60%**
- Managing influencer marketing technology **44%**

Some B2B brands forgo initial growing pains of figuring out the right strategy, process and technology for influencer marketing by partnering with specialists.

There are also many B2B marketers that have experience with influencer marketing. 32% of marketers in our survey have worked with influencers for 2-3 years and 25% over 5 years. A highlight of their best practices include:

Top influencer activities: Collaborate on content (87%) and promote content (82%)

Content types: Blog posts (83%) and recorded video (67%)

Influencer appreciation: Public recognition as a brand influencer (51%) and special access (50%)

How agencies help: Identify influencers (79%) and manage influencers (76%)

Spending on influencer marketing: 40% spend less than 50k, and 19% spend \$50-100k

Top platforms: BuzzSumo 18%, Onalytica (17%), Traackr (16%)

For me having an end-to-end process is key to not only be effective but also to scale - from clear objectives to identification, engagement tactics, management, budgeting, reporting and not to forget feedback to close the loop.

Janine Wegner

Global Thought Leadership
Program & Activation Manager
Dell Technologies
[@JanineWegner](#)

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How B2B Marketers Use Technology to Help with Influencer Marketing

Identify influencers



Monitor influencer social network activity



Qualify influencers



Measure and report on campaign/program results



Manage influencer campaigns/program



Manage and nurture influencer relationships



Activate influencers



04 CHAPTER SUMMARY

Influencer Marketing Operations



Marketers that document an influencer strategy and engagement approach, define processes, use software and elevate their internal operational expertise are better suited to create successful influencer marketing programs.



Influencer Marketing can deliver substantial results for basic to sophisticated marketing campaigns like the SAP Tech Unknown podcast serving multiple audiences and stakeholders.



Only half of B2B marketers include a plan for influencer activation in their strategy and 41% are not using any technology. Many of the challenges marketers face with influencer marketing can be solved with process, technology and expertise.



05 10 Predictions on the Future of B2B Influence

The B2B world has gone digital and virtual experiences are replacing in-person events and field marketing activities. This new environment requires new thinking about content formats, looking at customers and employees as influencers, building trust through influence and greater emphasis on influencer marketing ROI.

Influencer is already moving B2B marketing forward. 74% of marketers believe their influencer marketing program is improving customer experience. In 2021 and beyond, influencer-driven content experiences—from audio to video to interactive will deliver engaging information to inspire buyers to action.

To learn more about the future of B2B influencer marketing, we tapped 10 practitioners and influencers on what to expect.

79%

of B2B marketers believe influencer marketing will grow in importance over the next 12 months.

Interest in B2B Influencer Marketing is on the Rise

In the last year, nearly 60% of marketers have indicated that multiple stakeholders within their organization have expressed interest in influencer marketing activities. In 2021, brands will increase investments in influencer marketing as a way to build trust and credibility with their audience as well as a means of extending their reach. As brand stakeholders continue to see the value of an influencer-driven program, investments will often be funded by multiple departments, which will enable brands to implement larger scale influencer marketing programs.



B2B Influencer Marketing Predictions

from Top Experts and Influencers



Tamara McCleary

CEO
Thulium
[@TamaraMcCleary](#)

“In 2021, our world will still be largely virtual which means that brands will need to identify, test and deploy a new type of tech stack to make the creation and consumption of virtual content as seamless as possible for influencers and audiences alike.”

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Pierre-Loic Assayag

Founder and Chief Executive Officer
Traackr
[@pierreloic](#)

“As the practice of influencer marketing matures and complexifies, brands come to expect their IM to cover a broader functional scope, deliver demonstrable value, and integrate with the rest of the stack. 2021 will see the end of solutions coming short of these expectations.”

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Jeff Davis

Author & Keynote Speaker
[@meetjeffdavis](#)

“We will see the rise of the customers as influencers given their ability to share stories that help target buyers navigate the increasingly complex B2B buying journey. Buyers are hungry for insight on how to make the best decision for their unique business situation.”

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Rotem Yifat

Head of Influencers &
Online Partnerships
[monday.com](#)

“I believe that as we adapt to the evolving global situation, there will be a need to create interactive touch-points between the audience, the brand and the influencers. Live streams, contests and other digital events featuring influencers will become increasingly important.”

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Ryan Bares

Global Social Programs Lead
IBM
[@RyanBares](#)

“One major shift I see for B2B influencer marketing in 2021 is the idea of using employees as influencers on social media. This shift will allow marketers to have more control of the campaign and build advocacy among internal thought leaders.”

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B2B Influencer Marketing Predictions

from Top Experts and Influencers



Judy Tian

Marketing Manager
LinkedIn
[@judytian07](#)

“In 2021, influencer program ROI will go from being a nice-to-have to a must-have in B2B marketing. Tighter budgets will force marketers to prove direct influence on revenue and measure results relentlessly.”

[Click to Tweet](#)



Kevin Jackson

Chief Executive Officer
CC GlobalNet
[@kevin_jackson](#)

“In 2021 the market will experience an accelerating shift to virtual alongside businesses that have moved to working from home and social distancing in the office, success in B2B influencer marketing is dependent on the compelling delivery of relevant information via video and audio.”

[Click to Tweet](#)



Joel Backaler

Author, Digital Influence
[@joelbackaler](#)

“Live sales meetings and conferences are critical for B2B companies to build trust and establish credibility with new customers, but they’re not happening with covid. As a result, B2B influencers will play an even more important role in bridging the trust gap with prospective customers.”

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Katie Martell

Marketer, Author &
Producer of Pandermonium
[@KatieMartell](#)

“Moving budget from live events, travel, and IRL field marketing will give marketers an opportunity to partner with influencers to help amplify key themes that create demand in-market, while maximizing brand recall and awareness.”

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Mark Schaefer

Author, Return on Influence
[@markwschaefer](#)

“The pandemic is accelerating inevitable change. Traditional marketing channels are drying up and even trade shows are imperiled in 2021. Marketers will have to turn to other ideas meaning influencer marketing will be amplified as businesses seek trusted voices to join conversations.”

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The Future of Influencer Marketing: Experiences

With nearly 80% of B2B marketers saying influencer marketing will be more important in the coming year, the world has changed and so too must strategies and tactics.

Here are 6 trends within influencer marketing for B2B marketers in 2020 and beyond from TopRank Marketing.

Democratized Influence – B2B purchasing is a team sport involving individuals at multiple levels. More brands are going to tap into the niche influence of the many, whether they are employees, customers, or prospects.

Brandividual Media – More professional business influencers will operate their own media networks of multiple influencers with distribution channels and compete with traditional digital media.

More Engaging Content Formats – B2B is evolving from boring to bold through recorded and livestream video, audio, interactive and VR/AR content.

Influencer Tech Integration – Influencer identification, engagement and measurement technology will increasingly become integrated with cloud marketing platforms.

Consumerization of B2B Influencers and Content – Business influencers will publish more consumer-like video content on YouTube as well as livestreaming on social networks and business customers will love it.

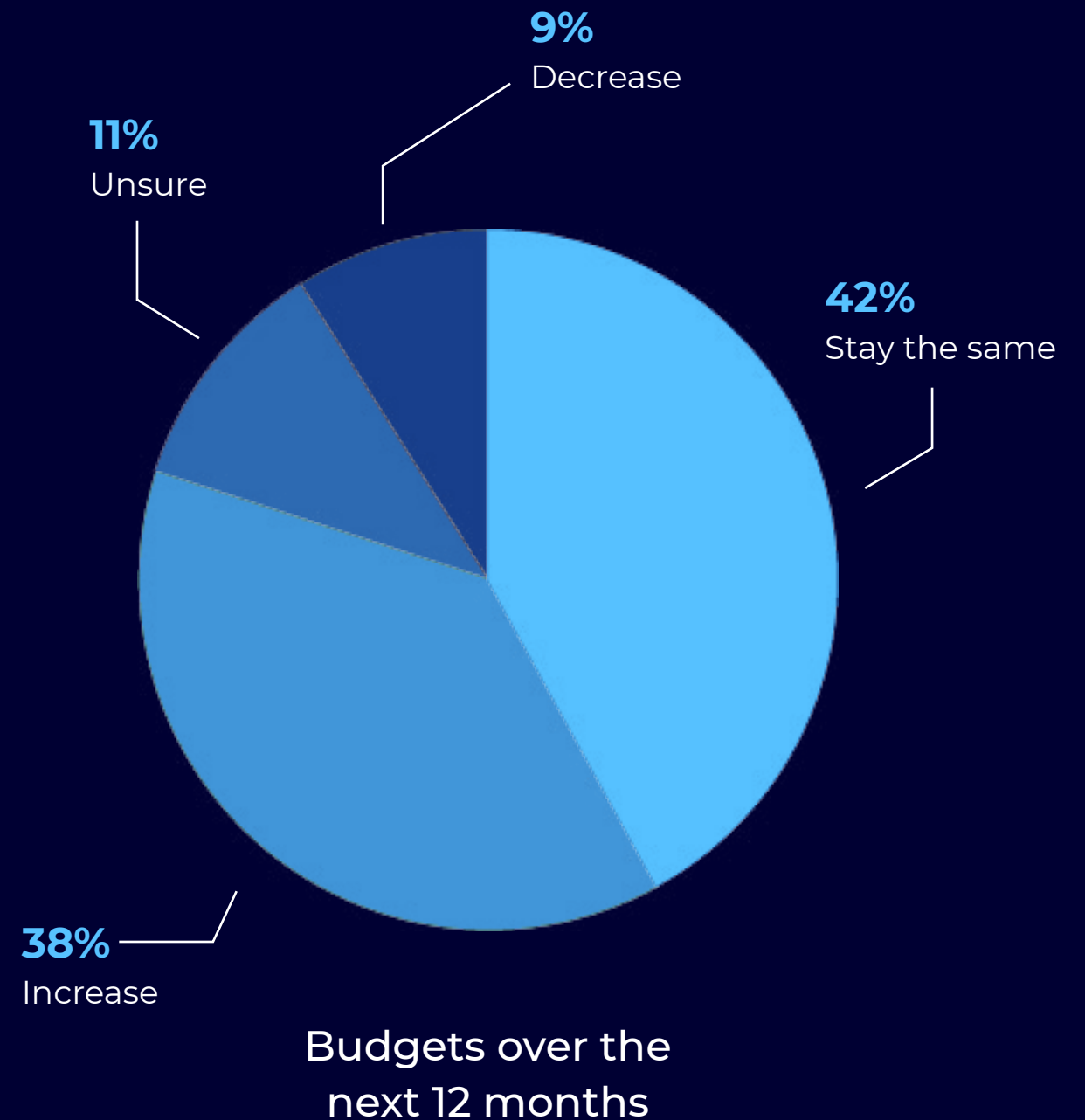
Influencer Experience Management – There will be an increased focus on managing the experience of influencers to inspire more effective brand advocacy and recommendation behaviors.

B2B Influencer Marketing Spending

80% of B2B marketers influencer marketing budgets will increase or stay the same into 2021

While one of the top challenges B2B marketers face with influencer marketing has been lack of budget (37%), overall, marketers who took the survey are optimistic with the majority saying budgets will remain the same (42%) or increase (38%) over the next 12 months.

Much of this spending optimism is warranted with 79% of marketers indicating that B2B influencer marketing will grow in importance for their business over the next 12 months and 63% saying their marketing would have better results if they had a B2B influencer marketing program.



The State of B2B Influencer Marketing

Influence plays an essential role in marketing whether B2B brands run influencer programs or not. The question is, will influence be random or will it be nurtured, amplified and targeted to produce brand awareness and lead generation outcomes B2B marketers are after?

Consider these insights from our research:

Brand trust is in question but buyers trust experts: 78% of B2B marketers say that their prospects rely on advice from industry influencers

Influence optimizes performance of content and other marketing: 63% of marketers stated their marketing would have better results with an influencer marketing program.

Influence differentiates B2B brand experiences: 74% of B2B marketers believe their influencer marketing program is

improving the experience of prospects and customers have with the brand.

The B2B marketing world is at the cusp of change but also opportunity. The influence advantage is available for marketers who can adopt the best practices of the most successful B2B influencer marketers outlined in this report from an Always-On strategy to qualitative influencer engagement to effective operations with process and software.



20 Top Influencer Marketing Experts to Follow



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Head of Global Influencer Marketing,
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Rani Mani

Head of Social Influencer Enablement,
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Jen Holtvluwer

CMO,
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Garnor Morantes

Group Marketing Manager,
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Martin Hanna

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Amisha Gandhi

VP Influencer Marketing and Communications,
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Chris Purcell

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Janine Wegner

Global Thought Leadership Program & Activation Manager,
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20 Top Influencer Marketing Experts to Follow



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Meg Crawford

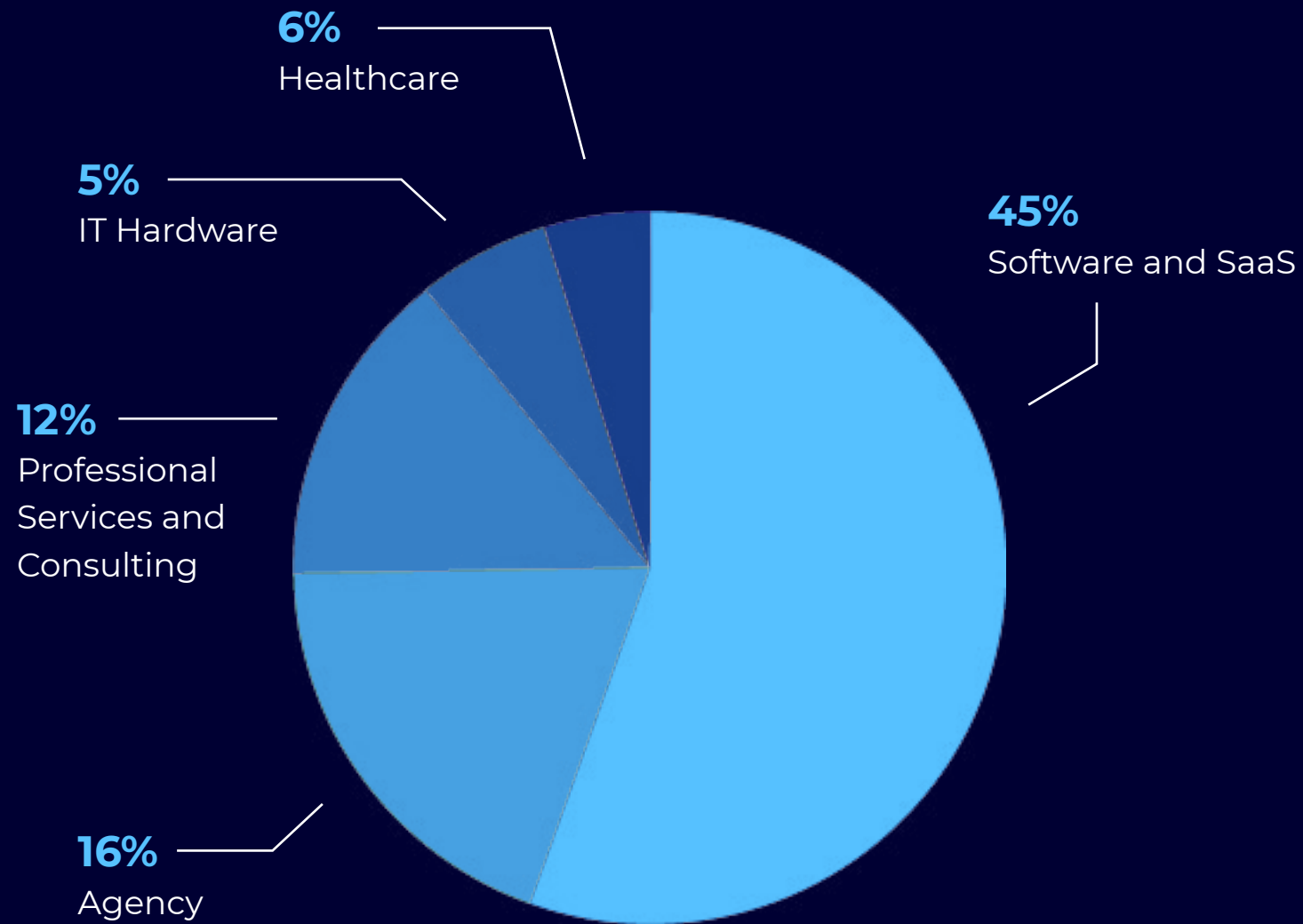
Sr. Influencer/Social Media
Marketing Manager,
Splunk
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Brandi Boatner

Social and Influencer
Communications Lead,
Global Markets at IBM CHQ
Communications
@ThinkBluePR

Top 5 Industries Represented in the Survey



Survey Methodology

For this report TopRank Marketing partnered with Mantis Research to survey over 300 B2B marketing and communication professionals to understand how businesses are using B2B influencer marketing. The results in this report are from an online questionnaire fielded via email and organic outreach from February 26 to April 26, 2020.

Marketers made up 75% of respondents to the survey, 24% of which were Directors and 24% VPs or CMOs. 72% of those who participated are located in the United States and 35% have 1,000 or more employees within their organization.

If you're interested in deeper influencer marketing insights from the team at TopRank Marketing, please visit TopRankMarketing.com or subscribe to TopRankBlog.com.

About TopRank Marketing

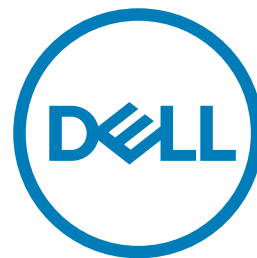
TopRank® Marketing was established in 2001 and has earned a reputation as a first-choice digital marketing agency for enterprise and midsize technology B2B brands. Our mission is to create meaningful content experiences that inspire action. We believe our team of smart, creative and results focused professionals are masters at planning, implementing and optimizing marketing programs that integrate

- **Content Marketing**
- **Influencer Marketing**
- **Search Engine Optimization**

By consistently incorporating industry experts with experiential content for clients in ways few agencies have, TopRank Marketing has helped over 50 brands improve their thought leadership, grow customer engagement and impact the bottom line.

As a trusted marketing industry thought leader for nearly 20 years, we've been cited by the Wall Street Journal, The New York Times, Forbes and The Economist and many other industry publications. Additionally, TopRank Marketing is the only B2B agency offering influencer marketing services to be recognized by Forrester in their B2B marketing agency report.

Brands That Trust TopRank Marketing



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