

February 2025

INFLUENCER TREND REPORT



A **DEMOCRACY** Insights Report

INTRODUCTION

With influencer marketing expected to be worth £21.1 billion by the end of 2025 (House of Marketers Report 2024), it plays a pivotal role in modern-day marketing for almost all brands. However, if you've never trialled this form of marketing before - or had a less than stellar experience - then knowing how to make it work can look like a daunting task.

From lifestyle brands through to professional trades, there is now an influencer for every audience type and this authenticity is what makes working with influencers lucrative for brands.

A report by the American Influencer Marketing Hub revealed that the return for every dollar spent with an influencer was \$5.78.

So if you think it's time to get the definitive lowdown on how to work with influencers, from finding them to creating engaging content that lands - this report is the guide you need.

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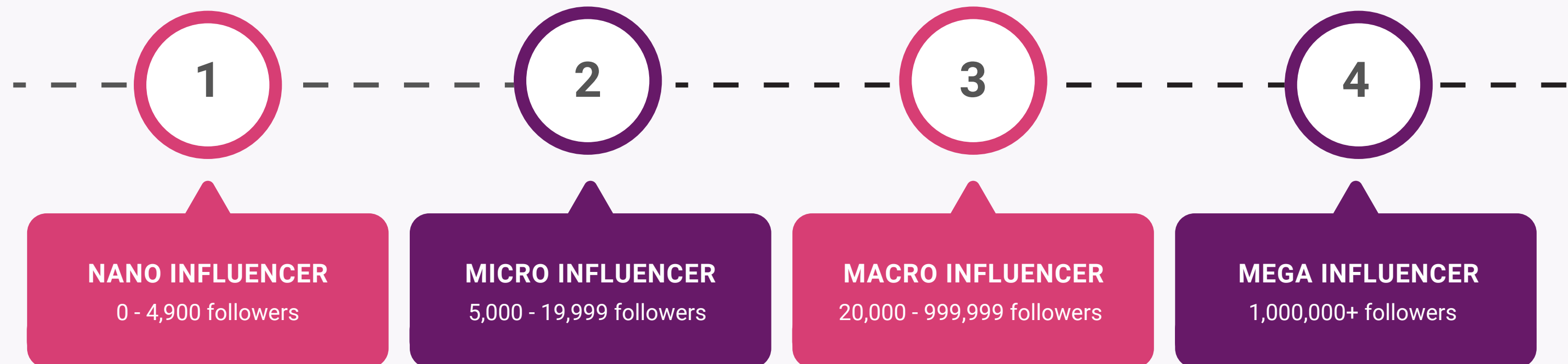


INFLUENCER 101: THE BASICS

What do we mean when a person is described as being an influencer? Simply, it's having credibility on one or more social media platforms through specialising in creating content that appeals to a specific industry, sector or audience. This credibility means that others with the same interests will engage and be influenced by this person's content which in turn can drive brand fame, affinity and sales.

Influencers come in all shapes and sizes. It's not all about personalities who are known from TV, it's about content that offers value and encourages audiences to engage.

Influencers are commonly categorised into four terms dependent on their following



WHY SHOULD YOU USE INFLUENCERS?

When you engage with one or more influencers for a campaign, the top three benefits to your brand's marketing output are:

ENHANCED CREDIBILITY AND TRUST

Influencers have established trust with their followers, so their endorsement lends credibility to your brand. Seeing a trusted influencer use and promote your products/services quickly provides social proof, encouraging others to enter your purchase funnel

TARGETED REACH AND INCREASED BRAND AWARENESS

Influencers often have niches, allowing you to reach a highly targeted audience. These collaborations can significantly boost your brand's visibility and introduce your products or services to new potential customers.

CONTENT CREATION

In a social savvy world, content is king. Using influencers can be a great way to produce high-quality, engaging content that can then be repurposed across your various marketing channels.

Two-thirds of brands who use traditional digital advertising alongside influencer work, report that it is the influencer content that drives greater return on investment.

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WHAT MAKES A GOOD INFLUENCER?

AUTHENTICITY is crucial. Audiences can quickly detect inauthentic endorsements which can damage both the influencer's and the brand's reputation. Genuine personalities who share their true selves rather than a curated facade fosters trust, making followers more likely to value their opinions and recommendations.

RELATABILITY is also essential. Successful influencers share relatable experiences, challenges and successes, which help followers see them as peers rather than celebrities. By creating this relationship, any brand mentions feel more like a recommendation from a friend than a paid ad.



ENGAGEMENT is key. Influencers who interact with their audience, responding to comments, questions, and messages are more likely to create a sense of community. This two-way communication not only boosts follower loyalty but also enhances the influencer's visibility through social media algorithms.

CONSISTENCY in posting content that is informative, entertaining, inspirational and tailored to their niche will ensure followers keep coming back for more. This will help build trust, and ultimately means their community are more likely to buy into their recommendations.

**WHEN SPEAKING WITH MICRO-INFLUENCERS, THEY
AGREED THAT AUTHENTICITY COMES FIRST.**

“I would never promote diet pills and skinny tea brands because I don’t agree with it. They appear to be very unhealthy, and I think people would unfollow me! Even if it was paid, I wouldn’t take it”

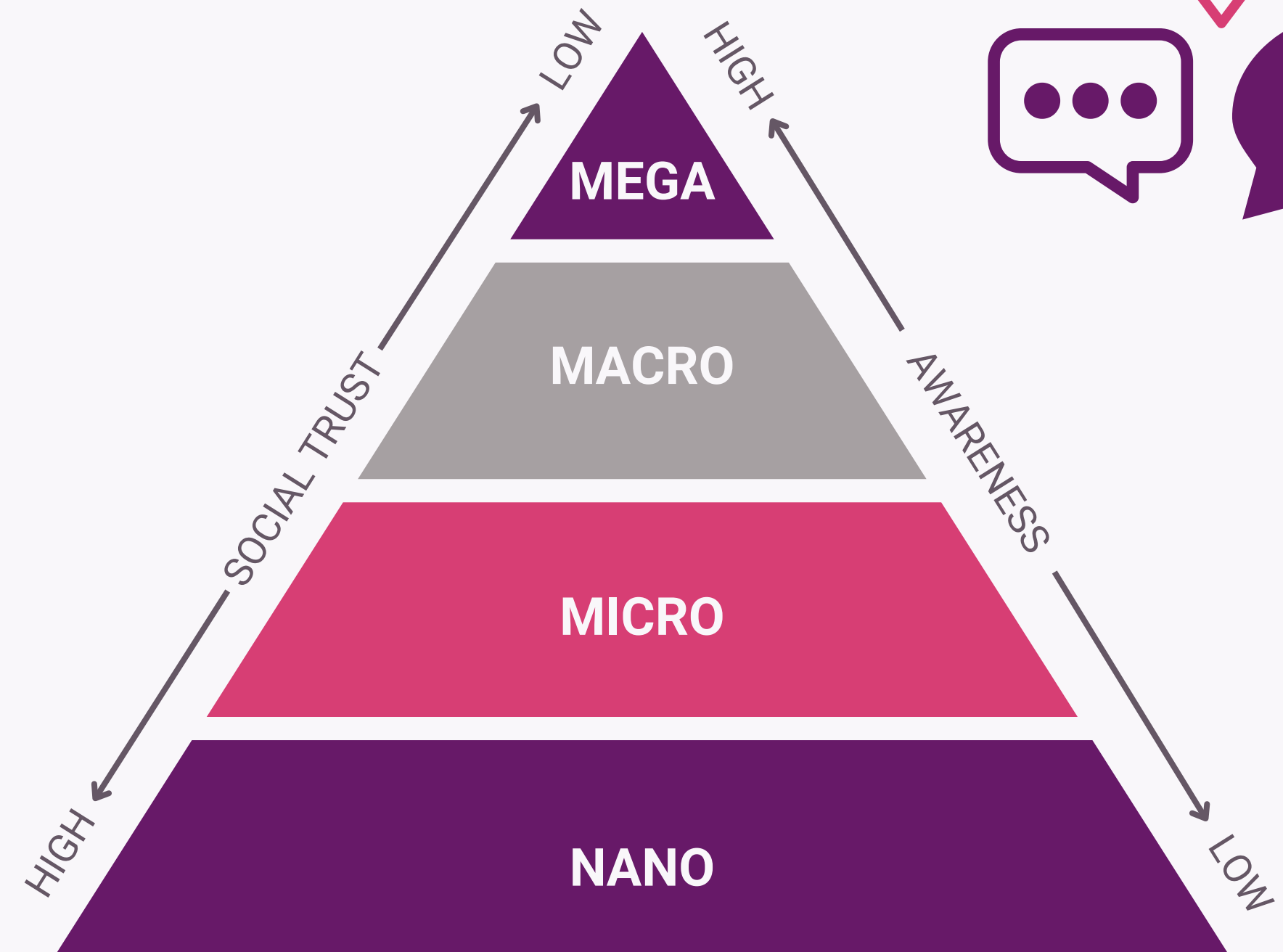
ALIGNING INFLUENCERS TO YOUR BRAND GOALS

For an effective influencer campaign, aligning influencer tiers with your goals—awareness, sales, engagement, or content—is key.

Trust in macro-influencers and celebrities can be low due to perceptions of inauthenticity, over-commercialisation, and misleading endorsements. Followers often suspect financial motives, and the volume of sponsored content adds to scepticism, however they can have the biggest impact on increasing awareness.

Micro-influencers typically have a highly engaged following and are often best placed for building brand trust whilst nano-influencers have a smaller (but loyal) following, and are great for cost-effective content creation.

Utilising a mix of different tiered influencers balances reach with authenticity, ultimately maximising impact.



THE RISE OF B2B INFLUENCERS

No longer just for consumer marketing, influencers play a key role in B2B marketing too.

Experts and key opinion leaders act as credible spokespeople helping endorse products and build brand credibility.

For example, a B2B influencer might advocate for a software solution, guiding industry professionals. Whether targeting decorators, interior designers, or builders, leveraging influencer expertise provides a shortcut to endorsement, making them valuable in shaping opinions and influencing decision makers.

In 2025, we expect to see a rise of B2B influencers, particularly on platforms such as LinkedIn, which have previously been ignored.



THE PAIN POINTS OF WORKING WITH INFLUENCERS

Working with influencers can be highly beneficial, but can also come with several pain points that brands and marketers may need to navigate. Make sure to thoroughly vet influencers to ensure they are trustworthy, compliant with regulations, and aligned with the brand's values.

MEASUREMENT

Measuring the ROI for influencer campaigns can be difficult. Unlike traditional advertising, the impact of influencer marketing is harder to quantify and track, making it challenging to assess the direct impact of campaigns.

CREDIBILITY

Not all influencers have the same level of engagement with their audience. Some influencers inflate their follower and engagement metrics using bots or fake accounts. This can lead to wasted marketing spend and ineffective campaigns.

REPUTATION

Influencers are like public figures and they can sometimes get caught up in controversies or scandals. Brands should be ready to handle any fallout from an influencer's actions that might hurt their reputation.



CASE STUDY: OH POLLY

After winning Love Island 2022, Ekin-Su Cülcüloğlu secured a £1million contract with Oh Polly, called the “largest in Love Island history.” However, the deal fell through due to poor alignment, performance and brand ignorance.

Despite Ekin-Su being a genuine fan of the brand, her audience—primarily male and based in India and Turkey—didn’t align with Oh Polly’s target market. This led to poor engagement, the contract’s termination, and headlines that caused other brands to withdraw from working with her.



INFLUENCERS EXPLOITING AUDIENCES

In 2024, the FCA took legal action against eight influencers with a combined following of 4.5 million people for promoting unauthorised investments. This marks the first time the FCA has prosecuted influencers for breaching financial promotion rules.

Two individuals were accused of unlawfully running an Instagram account and paying influencers to promote high-risk investments known as contracts for difference (CFDs) without proper authorisation. These CFDs typically leave 80% of customers experiencing financial losses.

There are two noteworthy considerations arising from the ongoing legal case, both from the standpoint of an influencer and that of a consumer.

KEY TAKE AWAY FOR INFLUENCERS

It is imperative to have an understanding of your legal and moral duties surrounding the endorsement of potentially illegal or hazardous products.

KEY TAKE AWAY FOR CONSUMERS

If something seems too good to be true, it probably is.

Love Island star Eva Zapico, 25, appears in court accused of 'finfluencer plot to plug risky investment scheme' to her social media followers

By Katherine Lawton

13:20 26 Sep 2024, updated 14:34 26 Sep 2024



WHAT MAKES A GOOD INFLUENCER PARTNERSHIP?

There are hundreds of great influencers out there, so how do you make sure you're creating a good influencer partnership that's going to drive real results for your brand?

ENSURE THERE IS OBVIOUS BRAND ALIGNMENT

Just because an influencer worked well for one brand, doesn't mean they will for you. Take time to look into the influencer, their content and their beliefs - do they ladder up to your brand? Make sure you look into their audience insights to ensure they reflect your customers, too.

SET CLEAR DELIVERABLES

Outline your expectations from the start to establish clear responsibilities and set out the scope of work. Ensure the influencer understands the deadlines and deliverables to prevent misunderstandings and conflicts.

LEGAL PROTECTION

Finally, ensure both the brand and the influencer sign a contract. A good contract will legally protect the client, the agent and the influencer. This protection is vital in case either party fails to uphold their end of the agreement.



HOW CAN YOU WORK WITH INFLUENCERS?

The Influencer Marketing Hub 2024 report showed a shift from free samples to cash payments. 41% of influencer partnerships are now paid collaborations vs. 31% gifting - this trend is expected to grow as brands seek greater control and more nano and micro-influencers recognise their value.

However you choose to work with influencers, make sure to follow ASA guidelines to avoid any trouble. Recent changes to regulations mean that any type of influencer partnership - including gifting - must clearly be marked as an AD.



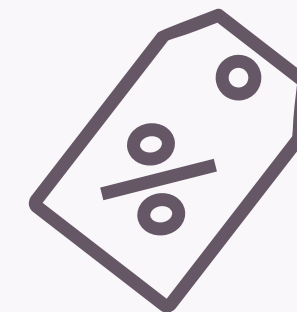
PAID COLLABORATIONS

A paid collaboration is when an influencer is paid to create and share content that promotes the brand's products or services. This approach provides the brand with creative control over the style and messaging.



GIFTING

Gifting involves brands sending free products or services to influencers, hoping for organic promotion across their social channels. Whilst this can be extremely cost-effective, there is no guarantee of coverage and the brand has little control.



PROVIDING DISCOUNT

Affiliate codes are unique promotional codes that influencers share with their followers in order to earn a commission. This method is easily trackable for brands; however there is limited control over how these codes are shared and so isn't always accurate.

CASE STUDY: TALA

Grace Beverly has done an exceptional job in building her global empire with TALA, the activewear brand that transcended its origins as an influencer label.

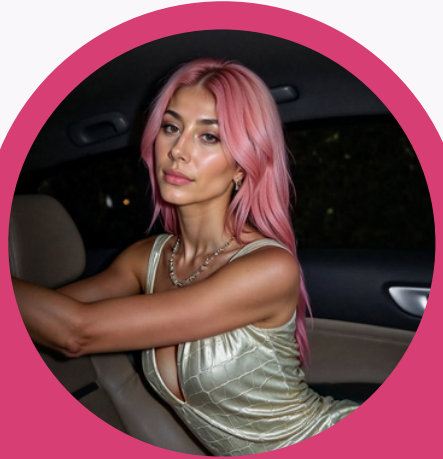
Founded in 2019 when Grace was just 22 years old, TALA emerged from her success as a fitness influencer on @GracefitUK.

TALA's success isn't just about Grace's smarts in business, it's also about her commitment to the important stuff like sustainability, innovation, and inclusivity. By using her platform to promote these values, she's making a positive impact on people and the environment, which is key in today's more 'conscious' world.

However, despite TALA's well-known success, Grace recently came under fire when a ruling found that she had not clearly indicated on her personal TikTok account that she was promoting TALA as her brand. The ASA (Advertising Standards Authority) instructed TALA and Grace Beverley to ensure that their future ads were clearly identifiable as marketing communications, making the commercial intent obvious and that identifiers such as "#ad" were clearly and prominently displayed.



HOW IS INFLUENCER MARKETING EVOLVING?



ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE

Brands such as Calvin Klein and Levi's have used AI influencers such as Aitana, who was designed entirely on a laptop, for their marketing campaigns. If this progresses, users will see bots who look and act like humans responding to comments and messages in real-time, even offering recommendations.



CANCEL CULTURE

There's a notable emphasis on diversity and inclusion, prompting brands to collaborate with influencers from diverse backgrounds to accurately represent their customers and promote inclusivity. Sustainability and social responsibility have also taken centre stage and can no longer be ignored by brands.



SOCIAL COMMERCE

Influencers are helping to drive the rise of social commerce, using platforms with integrated shopping features to generate sales and interact with audiences in real time. This shift is driven by consumers' desire for authentic, direct interactions but can be a great tool for brands who want to directly drive sales.



UGC & EGC

User-generated content (UGC) and employee-generated content (EGC) are gaining traction as consumers seek authenticity. Brands are leveraging real customer and employee experiences to build trust, enhance engagement, and create relatable, organic content at a relatively low cost.



TIGHTER LEGISLATIONS

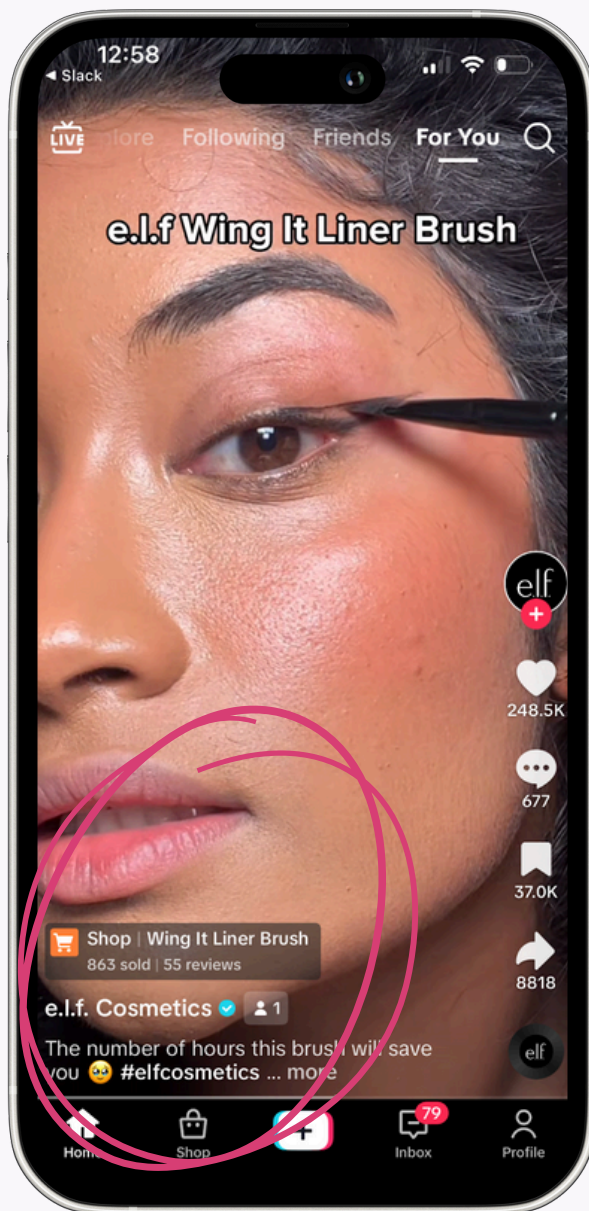
Legislation around influencers is constantly evolving and regulations around influencer marketing are becoming stricter. Brands must ensure clear disclosures, honest endorsements, and adherence to advertising standards to maintain trust and credibility with their audience.

THE RISE OF AFFILIATE MARKETING

Influencers often use affiliate marketing as a way to make money. Affiliate marketing can either come from unique codes, referral schemes or providing influencers with UTM links. This is mutually beneficial to brands because they only pay influencers based on sales that result from their promotional efforts.

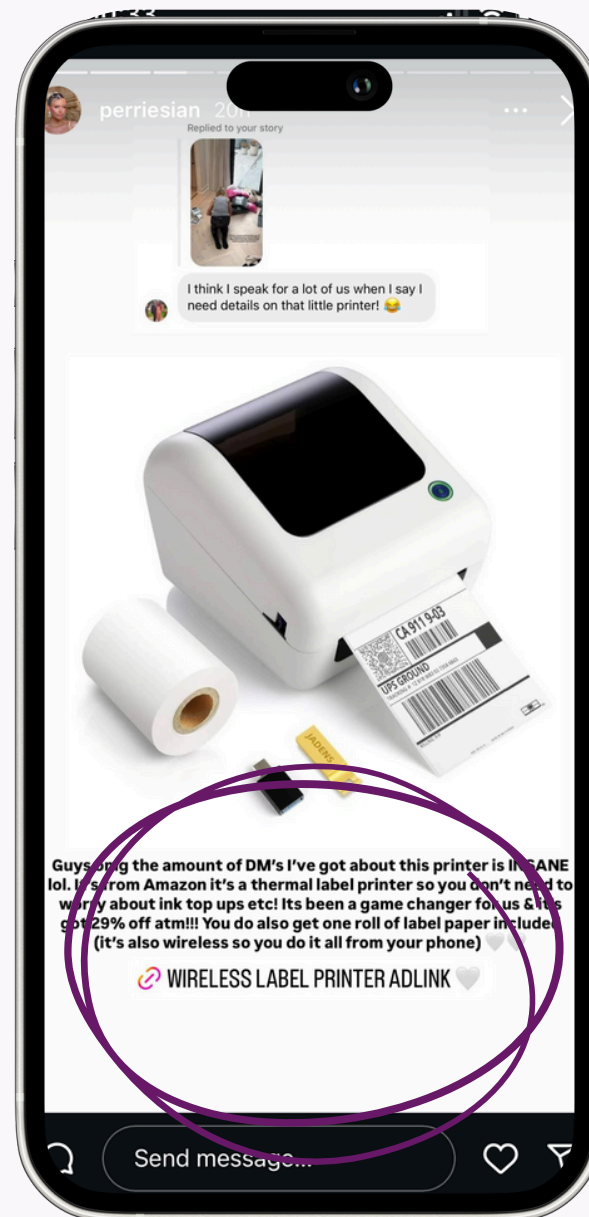
TIKTOK SHOP

With features like shoppable ads, product showcases, and creator partnerships, TikTok is amplifying the way businesses and influencers connect with their audience and leveraging its popularity, especially among younger generations.



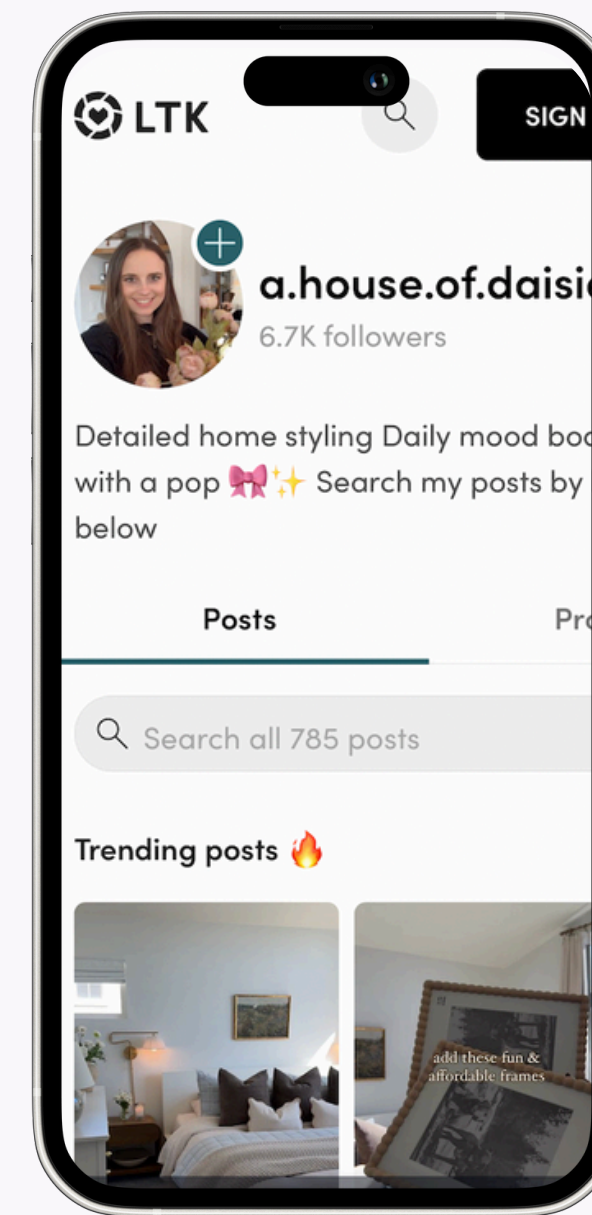
INSTAGRAM

Instagram is enhancing its shopping experience with features like in-app checkout, product tagging in Reels, and creator storefronts. These updates make it easier for influencers to drive sales directly through content, strengthening brand partnerships.



LTK

LTK is streamlining affiliate marketing by allowing influencers to curate shoppable content from various social platforms all in one place. With direct links to brands, it simplifies the buying process and boosts conversions through ease of purchase.



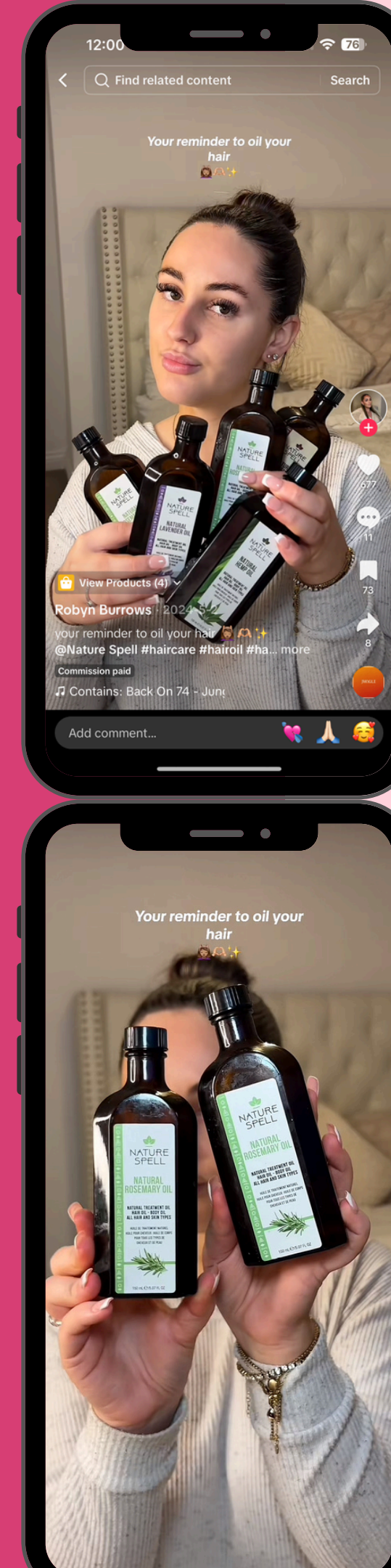
CASE STUDY: NATURE SPELL

TikTok Shop's success stories are nothing short of remarkable. Some sellers have experienced exponential growth using the platform.

One strong example is the case of Nature Spell, a hair and skincare company, which started with just a few orders a day and eventually peaked at around 9,000 product orders daily.

Creators were encouraged to post videos to earn commission on sales generated through their content, providing a direct financial incentive to promote products.

Users on TikTok can start earning through commission-based sales as soon as they promote products as long as they have a minimum of 1,000 followers, making the path to becoming an influencer more straightforward feeding into the rise of UGC.



OUR TEN STEP GUIDE TO WORKING WITH INFLUENCERS



DEFINE YOUR GOALS AND BUDGET

Do you want an influencer collaboration to increase brand awareness, generate sales, or lead to greater audience engagement? Pair this goal with a clear budget and the method and tier of influencer will become clearer at this stage.



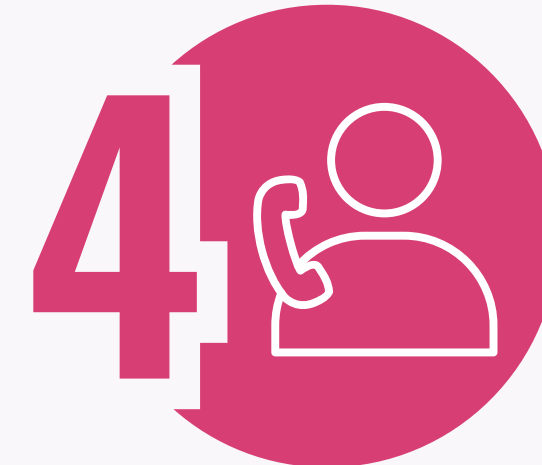
IDENTIFY THE RIGHT INFLUENCERS

Conduct thorough research to select influencers whose audience and content align with your brand's. Look beyond 'vanity metrics' of follower numbers and ensure an influencer has a genuine engagement with their followers.



BACKGROUND CHECKS

What does press coverage, a google search and a look through their historic feed tell you about this influencer? Who have they worked with previously? Are they a suitable ambassador for your brand?



OUTREACH

Contact your selected influencers or their agents, explaining who you are and any top line ideas for the campaign. This will help you gauge interest so you can narrow down the people you want to move forward with and rule out those who don't seem as genuine.



IDEATION

Discuss your ideas around creative deliverables, timelines and any monetary/gifted compensation, and encourage the influencer to share their own ideas too. The partnership should feel like an authentic fit for both you and the influencer.

OUR TEN STEP GUIDE TO WORKING WITH INFLUENCERS



NEGOTIATING BRIEFS AND CONTRACTS

Provide the influencer/agent with a detailed brief and contract which helps to outline the agreed campaign objectives, key messages, brand guidelines, and content expectations along with any legal T&Cs.



CONTENT CREATION AND MANAGEMENT

Support the influencer to create authentic and engaging content that aligns with the campaign objectives. Stipulate one or two rounds of review and amends to get the best results.



CAMPAIGN MONITORING

Once the content is live, track the performance of the posts, monitoring engagement, reach and other key metrics. Engage with the influencer's audience by responding to comments.



EVALUATE THE RESULTS

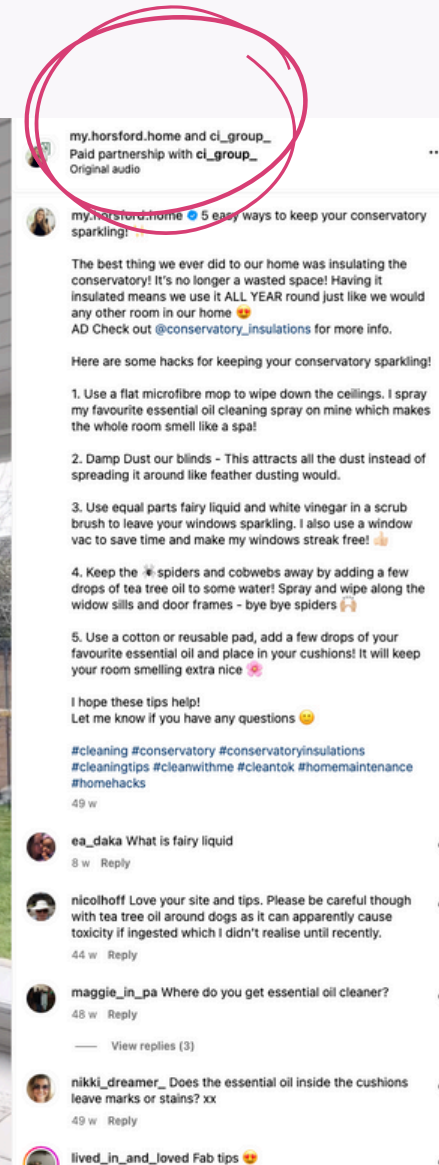
Wait seven days for your final evaluation. Look at the reach, engagement and any conversion - is it in line with what you were expecting? If not, what can you try that's different in order to capture your audience next time.



MAINTAIN THE RELATIONSHIP

Don't let a brand collaboration be a one-off. Keep in touch with the influencer/their agent for potential future collaborations and to build long-term partnerships. Regular gifting is a great way to keep the door open.

HELP YOUR INFLUENCER PARTNERSHIPS TO THRIVE



An influencer campaign often needs additional support to reach a wider audience, which is where paid social media comes in. Paid amplification turns organic content into paid ads, targeting specific demographics or interests to minimise wastage.

Instagram's Collaboration Tool allows brands to co-create content with influencers. Key things to consider are how closely you want to align with the influencer, your broader content plans, target audience and budget.

To determine a cost-effective budget, analyse the influencer's followers and engagement rate to estimate organic results and the impact of paid amplification.

TO TALK TO DEMOCRACY ABOUT OUR AWARD-WINNING INFLUENCER TEAM AND HOW WE CAN
SUPERCHARGE YOUR BRAND, PLEASE GET IN TOUCH.



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