

INFLUENCERS VS. ADVOCATES: **WHAT'S THE DIFFERENCE?**

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With so much information and so many resources at their disposal, businesses and buyers alike are in a state of content shock. For brands, finding individuals such as influencers or advocates, who can help move the needle and gain buyers' trust, makes a lot of sense. Often these influencers and advocates can engage potential customers in ways that brands can't.

Research shows that consumers trust a referral from their personal network at a rate of 90%, and referrals are found online 81% of the time. 92% of consumers rely on referrals from people they know above all else. These numbers hold true in the business world as well: according to LinkedIn, 84% of B2B buyers start the purchasing process with a referral.

Knowing that influencers and advocates can play a big role in furthering marketing and sales goals, it's no surprise that many brands are integrating these tactics into their content and marketing strategies. You might be wondering, though, how do you get started and which would work better for your brand – influencers or advocates?

This eBook by [TapInfluence](#) and [Influitive](#) explores the finer points of influencer and advocate marketing, including what each can do for you, pros and cons, and how to get started. We'll also review real life examples of companies using successful influencer and advocate marketing campaigns to engage their audiences, build trust and accelerate sales.

“92% of consumers rely on referrals from people they know above all else.”



WHAT EXACTLY IS INFLUENCER AND ADVOCATE MARKETING?



...is partnering with individuals who have significant audience and influence with a particular consumer segment. Influencers can help you drive scalability via consumer reach, engagement, and content. Brands often use influencers to grow awareness, affinity, and loyalty.

Influencers are usually experts, bloggers, speakers, authors, or analysts with an established online presence and a loyal audience in a particular niche. Because they have a broad online presence, they can expose your brand to receptive audiences through the content they create.



...is harnessing the power of customers, partners, employees, and other stakeholders who are willing to publicly support, endorse, or recommend your company, products, or services. Because advocates are already trusted by your target market, they can significantly influence prospects by sharing their positive experiences through blog posts, case studies, product reviews, video testimonials, social media, and at events.

Advocates are individuals who are natural champions for a brand and already have an affinity for a product or brand. They can help drive referrals, provide product feedback, introduce new products to a marketplace, and build long-term relationships with potential customers.

WHICH STRATEGY IS RIGHT FOR YOU?

Depending on your goals, using either influencer or advocate marketing, or both, can be a good strategy. Consider these points as you contemplate which one is the best fit for your brand.



Influencer marketing could be a good fit for your brand if your goals include:

- **Extending your reach and building a large audience.** The right influencers will have massive reach in your niche due to the content they've been creating and the relationships they've built with your target market.
- **Partnering with a topic authority.** Influencers who are recognized by your market as having deep knowledge in a particular area, such as the best running shoes for marathoners, are trusted authorities when it comes to making buying decisions.
- **Being high impact.** Since influencers already have big audiences and they're trusted by their followers, the content they create about your brand can have a high impact on your marketing campaigns.



Advocate marketing could be a good strategy if your goals include:

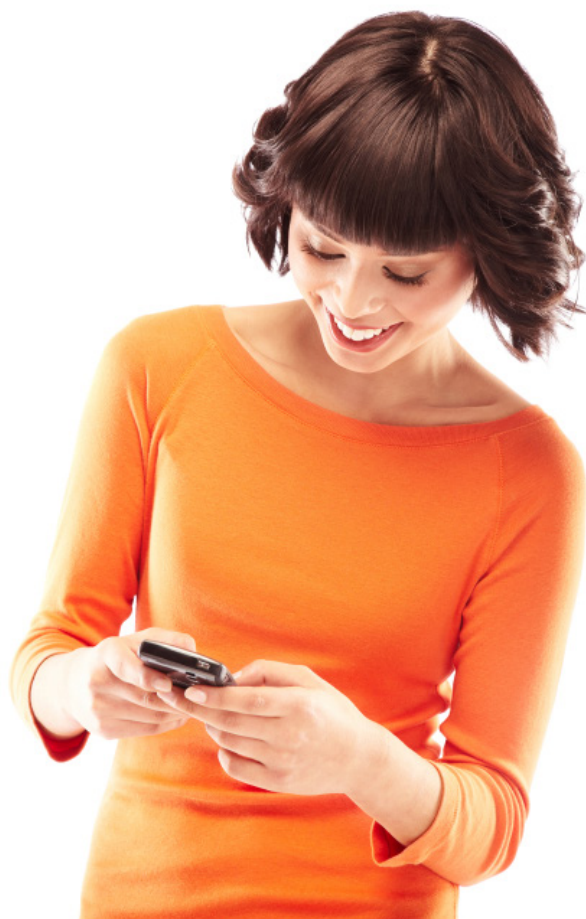
- **Building long-term positive word of mouth.** A dedicated community of advocates will continue to talk about your brand – even outside of marketing campaigns.
- **Prioritizing one-to-one referrals over reaching lots of people.** Advocates refer you to their networks because they've had a positive experience with your brand. Their reach may be smaller than influencers, but it can also be more personalized.
- **Keeping expenses low.** Influencers typically expect to be paid for creating content for your brand; advocates are intrinsically motivated to spread positive vibes because they've had a good experience with your company. They may not expect compensation, but will probably be pleasantly surprised, and become even more engaged with your company, if you reward them in a meaningful way.

WHEN TO USE INFLUENCERS VS. ADVOCATES

	<i>Influencer Marketing</i>	<i>Advocate Marketing</i>
Launch a new product	X	X
Drive awareness for existing products	X	X
When you have no or minimal compensation		X
Build relationships with existing product champions	X	X
Support during PR crisis (i.e. product recall)		X
Build followers on branded social platforms	X	X
Create content	X	X
Promote new content	X	X
Celebrity endorsement	X	

WHEN TO MOBILIZE INFLUENCERS

- **Launch a new product:** Influencers can be a powerful partner when brands want to get the word out about a new product. When products are new, consumers have little or no experience with them so it's difficult to utilize customers as a product champions. Influencers who reach a target segment can help create buzz and awareness for something new. They can help a brand scale reach and engagement with a new product, flavor, service offering, or branch location.
- **Drive awareness for existing products:** Influencers have the trust of their followers and care deeply about providing authentic opinions that are valuable to their readers. Content creators that are influential on visual platforms like Pinterest, Instagram, or YouTube can help amplify the introduction of a new product by sharing photos, videos, and recipes. Followers can then click, watch, like, tweet, share, and pin.
- **Build relationships with existing product champions:** This is where influencers can also act as advocates. Product champions have a deep affinity for a brand and share their passion with their followers, who often grow to be champions themselves. Brands can identify and nurture these relationships. As the brand/influencer relationship grows, the followers' affinity for the brand can be nurtured, too.
- **Create content:** A common challenge for brands is creating content at the volume and pace that consumers want in the format they want it. Consumers' appetite and need for content is very high. Influencers represent an "army of content creators" that can help brands and agencies amplify and distribute on platforms that matter to consumers like Pinterest, YouTube, or even Google+.
- **Celebrity endorsement:** Sometimes brands need a quick, dynamic voice behind their brand that gets the instant attention of thousands or millions of like-minded people. Celebrities, such as movie personalities, musicians, and professional sports players, who align with the brand's values can help create a deep impact over a wide audience.



WHEN TO MOBILIZE ADVOCATES

- **Launch a new product:** Giving your advocates exclusive, early access to a new product turns them into the perfect candidate to help with every aspect of a new product launch. From gathering product feedback, to beta testing, to spreading the word about your new offering, advocates can help every step of the way.
- **Drive awareness for existing products:** Unlike influencers, advocates tend to already be dedicated users of your products or services. Whether through social media, user reviews, or 1:1 conversations with peers, advocates are genuinely passionate about your products and are excited to help you drive greater awareness about them.
- **When you have minimal or no compensation:** Advocates are more interested in other types of recognition. While a simple “thank you” will often do, the best advocate marketing programs reward advocates with access to exclusive experiences or opportunities, or give them special privileges that others don’t have.
- **Build relationships with existing product champions:** Advocate marketing is not a campaign – it’s ongoing engagement with your company’s biggest fans that strengthens your relationship with them over the long term.
- **Support during a PR crisis:** Advocates can be your biggest defenders in a time of crisis or when someone is bashing your brand online. Arm them with information and ask them to support you when it counts most.
- **Build followers on branded social platforms:** Advocates provide the social proof people need in order to jump on the bandwagon and start engaging with your brand online.
- **Create content:** Content creation can be time consuming and expensive, but your advocates can help by contributing user-generated content. Not only will their participation help you accelerate your content creation process, the content you produce with them will be more interesting and engaging.
- **Promote new content:** Advocates want to be seen as mini-influencers, sharing relevant content with their networks. All you have to do is ask them to share it.



IMPORTANT DO'S AND DON'TS TO KEEP IN MIND

Influencer Marketing DOs

- ✓ Choose the platforms and content that matter to your customers
- ✓ Select the right influencers by looking at content, relevance, and engagement
- ✓ Repurpose content to your owned assets, like your owned assets, like your website or blog
- ✓ Create a value exchange



Influencer Marketing DON'Ts

- ✗ Don't disrupt them by trying to sell something
- ✗ Don't try to control every aspect of the content and messaging
- ✗ Don't just measure influence on reach alone
- ✗ Don't stop at short-term gain – think long-term and "always on"

Advocate Marketing DOs

- ✓ Offer a wide range of advocacy opportunities so they can choose the best match for their interests, time, and skills
- ✓ Segment advocates and target requests
- ✓ Provide recognition and feedback



Advocate Marketing DON'Ts

- ✗ Don't forget about the benefits to the advocates
- ✗ Don't allow your program to become stale – keep it fresh with new content, campaigns, and incentives
- ✗ Don't focus only on monetary rewards – ask advocates, "What would you value or like?"

BRANDS THAT ARE DOING IT RIGHT

Influencer Marketing Examples

Many brands integrating influencer marketing into their social content strategies. Here are a few examples of how these companies used influencers to drive engagement, reach, views, and social media mentions.



Black Box Wines Scales Their Reach Across Channels for "Always On" Results

Black Box Wines wanted to increase their reach so they engaged 50 bloggers to create posts, photos, and videos using their product. They cross-posted content created by their influencers to Black Box's own website, which continued to get many views, even after the campaign ended. Views on their site increased 31%, time on the site increased by 56%, social mentions jumped by 44%, and positive mentions grew by 221%.



Kraft Drives Costs Down and Boosts Their Reach with Scalable Content

Kraft Foods wanted to scale their content efforts and reduce the cost of internally creating recipes, distributing them, and offering coupons (the average cost of internally developing recipes was \$500 each). They engaged influencers to create and distribute recipes using social media. The result was a highly effective campaign that engaged consumers and brought the cost per recipe down to \$200 each. ROI was 3,100% and social media response was phenomenal: 760K blog post views, 178K pins, 16K clicks to coupons, 7,700 shares, and 1,700 tweets.



Silk Successfully Launches a New Brand with the Help of 1,700+ Global Advocates

Silk, maker of non-dairy milks, utilized both influencers and advocates to promote their new product, cashew milk, to a previously untapped audience. Their goal wasn't just reaching a bigger audience, rather they utilized influencers who were true advocates of their product. In one month, they achieved \$1.04 million in estimated media value, 29.4 million in reach, 1.4 million views, and 52,900 engagements.

BRANDS THAT ARE DOING IT RIGHT

Advocate Marketing Examples

Brands have also discovered the advantages of engaging advocates to drive referrals and social content. Here are a few examples of how companies mobilized advocates:



How Mitel Launched a New Brand with the Help of 1700+ Global Advocates

Mitel, a high-tech company that provides unified communications solutions, had thousands of happy customers, partners and employees. They designed an advocate marketing program and leveraged advocates in the launch of their new global brand. The program quickly scaled to nearly 2,000 advocates – becoming the fastest-growing international advocate program.

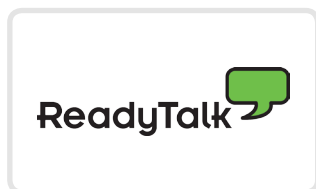
Within five months of launching, the Mitel Champions program was delivering fantastic results:

- 151 referrals
- 130,250 advocacy activities
- 1,719 advocates
- 102,000 social media interactions



The Award-Winning Bomgar Insider Program

Bomgar, a remote support solution that allows support technicians to remotely connect to end-user systems, has always had amazing customers. But their marketing team needed a more efficient way to identify their biggest fans and turn them into active advocates. Within the first few months after launching the Bomgar Insider program, advocates submitted 231 testimonials to be used in Bomgar content. They've also boosted case study output by 50%, as well as significantly increased their customer-submitted blog content. Advocates have submitted over 400 new prospect contacts that meet Bomgar's criteria for a marketing lead.



How ReadyTalk Shortened Their Sales Cycle by Putting Customers in the Driver's Seat

ReadyTalk, a web conferencing solution, had a huge base of happy, loyal customers. But they didn't always know what to do with those customers, their feedback, or their love for the company. They implemented a formal customer-driven marketing program to engage with and mobilize their biggest advocates. Their ReadyTalk Summit Club recruited 470 customers join their new Summit Club. The program drove 1843 acts of advocacy, resulting in 190 referrals and 70 advocates offering to be a sales reference. What made this even better? One third of the leads referred through the Summit Club closed within 60 days – which is half the typical sales cycle of 120 days.

BEST PRACTICES: INFLUENCER MARKETING

Getting Started with Influencer Marketing

- Determine what platforms matter most to your audience
- Choose relevant influencers – audience, content, compensation
- Accurately measure the effectiveness of the content so you know what's working

8 Keys to Working with Influencers

When working with influencers, follow these steps to build a collaborative, positive relationship:

- Let them tell authentic stories
- Think of them as partners
- Showcase their content on various platforms (Facebook, Pinterest, Twitter, YouTube)
- Give proper attribution to influencers' content
- Clearly explain the actions you want your audience to take
- Be "always on"
- Increase value (and exposure) of their content by using it in eBooks, blog posts, webinars, email marketing, advertising, and case studies.
- Understand that many will require compensation

9 Questions to Determine if an Influencer is a Good Fit



Is their content relevant to your brand?

Do they post frequently?

Do they have audience data?

Is their content high-quality?

Do they have high audience engagement?

Are they professional?

Do they have the ability and desire to build a relationship?

Do they have clear expectations, and do they understand your objectives?

Do you have similar compensation objectives?

BEST PRACTICES: ADVOCATE MARKETING

Getting Started with Advocate Marketing

- Identify groups of potential advocates
- Understand what you'd like each group to do
- Determine what you can do for them in return

Where to Look for Advocates

- High Net Promoter Scores (NPS) score
- Social media
- Recent support case resolution
- Beta testers
- Advisory boards
- Sales references
- Suggested by field team
- Partners
- Blog comments
- New customers

8 Keys to Working with Advocates

To build and maintain positive relationships with your advocates, keep these guidelines in mind:

- Ongoing engagement builds momentum
- Keep your communication fresh
- Personalize the program
- Offer regular feedback
- Make your requests as clear and easy as possible
- Balance value to your advocates with value to your organization
- Say 'Thank You' with recognition and perks – ask them what they'd like
- Remember: what they value might not be monetary

What to Look For in an Advocate



Understands and received value from your solution or services

Willing to share value metrics

Storyteller

Network Builder

Rising Star

Ready to Engage

Values access to your company and team

Has something to prove

THE POWERFUL INTERSECTION OF INFLUENCERS & ADVOCATES

It may not be a question of either/or for your brand. Depending on your goals, using both influencers and advocates can be very beneficial to your marketing strategy. By mobilizing influencers and advocates, you have diverse voices talking about your brand, and you can drive conversions and build awareness at the same time.

The ultimate Holy Grail is finding an influencer who's also an advocate or turning influencers into advocates. Often there are unique folks who can, and want to, serve both roles for your brand. Nurture those relationships well as they can be incredibly valuable.

Ultimately, however, don't ignore advocates who won't be large-scale influencers and vice versa. Both groups can serve your goals in a powerful way if you understand how to work with them using the best practices are outlined in this eBook.

NEXT STEPS

By utilizing influencer and advocate marketing with these best practices from [TapInfluence](#) and [Influitive](#), you'll increase your brand's credibility while building goodwill and trust with potential customers. Including the expert voices of industry influencers and the passion of advocates engages your audience, drives brand integrity, and helps further your marketing goals.

Want to learn more about how leading brands are influencing their audiences?

[Get a personalized TapInfluence demo today.](#)

Learn how to build your own advocate marketing program:

[Download Influitive's Advocate Marketing Playbook now.](#)

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