

**Influence at Scale**

# The Ultimate Guide to Influencer Marketing for B2B Brands



**87%** say their influencer marketing is successful.

There are trade-offs to being a B2B marketer for a large enterprise brand. On the one hand, you're insulated from economic shake-ups that capsize smaller businesses.

But you also have increased scrutiny, a risk-averse executive suite, and a mandate to prove your efforts are paying dividends. If you're going to experiment with something new, it can't be a random one-off—it needs to be a strategic, disciplined, proven approach to driving ROI.

Influencer marketing is a great fit for B2B brands of all sizes, but especially big well-known brands. You have the brand recognition that makes influencers want to work with you. You have social media and content infrastructure in place to publish and promote influencer content. All you need is the knowhow to do it right, from influencer identification all the way to measurement.



**The largest organizations often need influencers the most to help elevate the brand with new ideas, fresh energy, validated thought leadership and creativity that pushes the brand outside the box to find unexpected ways to connect with their audience."**



**Debbie Friez**

*Associate Director, Influencer & Social Media, TopRank Marketing*

TopRank Marketing has helped bring strategy, sophistication, maturity and measurement to B2B influencer marketing. And while influencer marketing can adapt to fit any budget, we have seen striking success with enterprise organizations.

**The secret is SCALE:**

- S - Strategy**
- C - Collaboration**
- A - Authenticity**
- L - Long-term relationships**
- E - Experience**

With our help, brands like Adobe, Dell, and LinkedIn have created influencer programs that smash benchmarks for awareness, engagement, and even lead generation.

Our recent findings from the **B2B Influencer Marketing Report** illuminate the best practices that can truly elevate the practice for B2B brands. This guide dives deeper into the data behind that report, specifically for enterprise brands. Whether you are already working with influencers and looking to level up, or just getting started, we can help you elevate your B2B marketing with influence.

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**When it comes to where B2B influencer marketing can take business in the next few years, our only limitations are our imaginations."**



**Brian Solis**, *Head of Global Innovation, ServiceNow*

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# Strategy: Full-Funnel B2B Influencer Marketing

When many marketers think about influencer marketing, they think top-of-funnel—splashy content meant to raise awareness and grow their social media audience.

While B2B influencer marketing can definitely accomplish these goals, it can also reach customers at every stage of their journey. B2B influencers are subject matter experts, not just celebrities (more on that later), so they can speak with authority to customers who are close to making a purchase decision.

Our data shows that full-funnel influencer marketing is still in the early stages of adoption. The majority of B2B marketers report success in top-of-funnel metrics.

However, less than half say they generated leads, and a little over a quarter can directly attribute sales and revenue to their efforts.

Cherwell Software saw a **22% increase in pipeline** through their influencer marketing program.

*The key takeaway:* It's entirely possible to prove your influencer marketing contributes directly to the business' bottom line—it's just a question of measurement and attribution.

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**People trust people, not brands. B2B influencer marketing is fundamentally helping us reach and build trust with new audiences in the buying committee."**



**Katrina Neal**, Data and Analytics Marketing Strategist, Adobe

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To create an authentic connection, you have to be authentic...Brands need to innovate and find champions and influencers to partner with who are going to collaborate and drive impact with the customer in mind."



**Luxy Thuraisingam**  
vice president of global SMB and partner marketing, Cisco

## Goals B2B marketers have achieved with influencer marketing:

- 72% raised brand awareness
- 88% increased brand reputation
- 59% inspired brand advocacy
- 41% generated leads
- 28% directly attribute sales and revenue

## Enterprise Influence in Action:

The Adobe logo, consisting of the word "Adobe" in white lowercase letters on a red rectangular background.

## The Client:

Adobe is a Fortune 500 enterprise with nearly 30,000 employees and over \$14 billion in total equity. Solutions include the Adobe Creative Cloud, Adobe Document Cloud, and Adobe Experience Cloud.

## The Challenge:

Adobe Experience Cloud is a robust platform for intelligent, automated marketing and analytics. But despite acclaim from industry analysts and multiple industry awards, Adobe wanted to increase brand awareness for their Analytics Portfolio to more than Adobe Analytics.

The brand wanted to reach out to B2B marketers in the EMEA region, in over 900 targeted accounts. Their goal was to raise awareness and capture leads for their marketing and customer experience solutions, including Adobe Real-Time CDP, Adobe Journey Optimizer, and Adobe Customer Journey Analytics.

## The Solution:

TopRank Marketing identified the influencers who were truly influential within Adobe's B2B marketing audience. As a group, these influencers had the combination of reach, relevance and resonance to make a fruitful collaboration.

The final asset included contributions from industry experts, professional influencers and more, The asset was promoted through influencer amplification on social media, paid and organic LinkedIn posts, and email.

## The Results:

The influencer-led content generated:

**2x**  
the engagement of comparable  
Adobe campaigns

**150%**  
increase in form completion  
rate on LinkedIn

Check out the full case study now

Downloadable Guide



Social Asset



**We saw a 150% increase in form completions on LinkedIn from the influencer hero asset and ads."**



**Katrina Neal**, Data and Analytics Marketing Strategist, Adobe

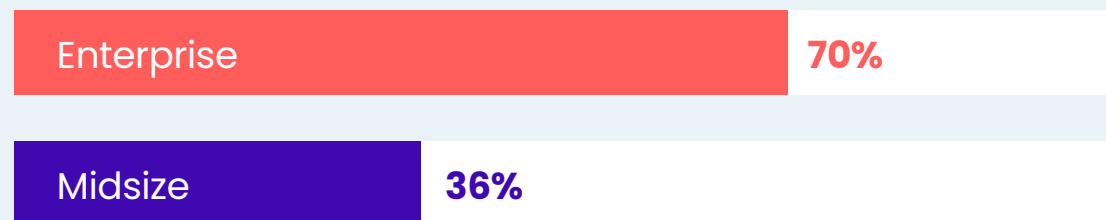
# Collaboration: How Big Brands Work with Influencers

What makes enterprise B2B influencer marketing different from how midsize businesses do it?

Our data found a few key areas of differentiation:

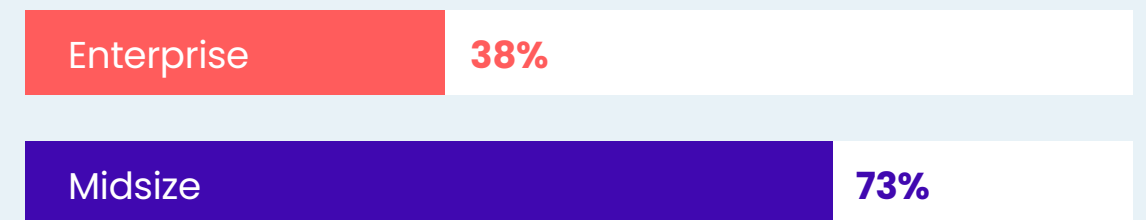
## Large brands are more likely to work with influencers to grow thought leadership

Over 70% of enterprises say growing thought leadership is a primary goal, compared to 36% of midsize companies. Enterprises are also less likely to use influencers as brand ambassadors or advisors, and more likely to collaborate on events and content.



## Large brands are less likely to use professional influencers

Given the emphasis on thought leadership, it makes sense that enterprises tend toward subject matter or industry experts rather than professional influencers. Only 38% of respondents say they use professional influencers in their content (By contrast, 73% of midsize said the same).



**Professional influencers** can bring prestige and big audiences to an influencer campaign. But **subject matter experts** and **industry insiders** can offer greater credibility and more substantial, practical content. A good mix of the two types of influencer can round out your content and promotional efforts.



## Events are the most successful way large B2B brands collaborate with influencers

Our enterprise respondents said events were their most successful tactic, with co-created content running a close second.



**Many brands leverage influencers for large events, but may be missing out on building long-term impact with ongoing influencer communities to co-create content and amplify brand campaigns with B2B influencers.”**



**Alexis Hall**, VP of Client Accounts,  
TopRank Marketing

If your enterprise has an industry event that your team hosts, sends speakers to, or even attends, it makes sense to invite influencers. You can collaborate with influencers in multiple ways at an event:

- **Speaking or leading a discussion**
- **Live interviews on LinkedIn Live or YouTube**
- **Livetweeting/blogging**
- **Takeaways and analysis after the event**



## Authenticity: How B2B Brands Find Authentic Influencers

The most relevant influencers for your brand might not be the ones with the highest follower count. When you're aiming for expertise and practical experience, it takes a more nuanced approach to influencer identification.

Our enterprise respondents keep it personal: 50% ask personal connections, and 38% ask their audience who influences them. It's a valid way to find people of influence in your established circles, albeit one with limitations and a lack of scalability.

### Influencer marketing tools are an area of opportunity

Only 31% of enterprises use software to identify influencers; this is a major opportunity to put your marketing resources to good use. Tools like Traackr are developed with B2B marketers' needs in mind, making it easier to find the experts who are already influential in your industry and subject matter.

LinkedIn achieved a reach of **133 million** and **5.3k brand mentions** with their influencer program.

## Don't overlook internal influencers

While you look for subject matter experts outside your organization, make sure to look closer to home, too. Your executives may already be influencers and thought leaders, or they could increase their thought leadership with a little guided effort.

We found that the vast majority of enterprises are working with their internal executives to build their thought leadership, credibility and social influence.

**72%**

of enterprises say they work with internal executives to grow thought leadership

**90%**

said to build credibility and social influence

**Over half (52%)**

said their thought leadership was extremely or very effective in increasing the brand's influence

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**Pairing executives with influencers is a great way to elevate their platforms to a new audience, share relevant industry expertise and thus getting a 'stamp of authority' from the influencer and their community."**



**Janine Wegner**, *Global Integrated Thought Leadership Strategist, Dell Technologies*

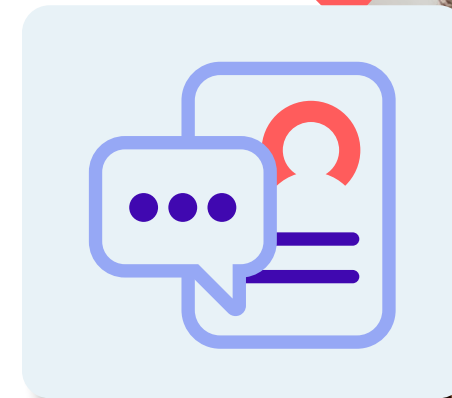


# Long-Term Relationships: Building a Community

Creating a community of influencers is the natural progression for a strategic influencer marketing program. You have already been nurturing relationships with influencers, helping promote them, sharing their content, and working together on co-created projects. The next step is to bring these influencers together in a purposeful way.

A community of influencers provides substantial value for everyone involved:

- 1. Influencers** can connect with each other to network, communicate and collaborate
- 2. Audiences** can expect reliably valuable content from a familiar set of thought leaders
- 3. Brands** can call on the community to co-create and promote content, participate in webinars and in-person events, and beyond.





## **Influencer community is a major opportunity**

**Only 20% of our respondents said they had an always-on community of influencers. But another 50% said they would like to develop one.**

Of those who have a community, 76% say they provide a platform to connect with the brand, but only 41% provide a way for influencers to connect with each other. This is a key opportunity for brands, as helping influencers network and make meaningful, mutually beneficial connections is a major way to add value.

## **Always-on programs perform better**

Our study showed a high correlation between always-on programs and overall success. For those with campaign-based strategies, 24% said their marketing was “not successful,” and only 19% said it was “very successful.”

For always-on campaigns, 0% reported “not successful,” while 31% said “very successful” and 69% reported they were “moderately successful.”

It’s easy to see how an always-on program with a community of influencers would out-perform one-off campaigns over time. With always-on, you don’t have to duplicate the startup overhead of identifying and nurturing influencers. Each individual project can launch faster without this overhead, and it’s easier to activate the community for one-offs like social posts or virtual events.

# Experience: Overcoming Influencer Marketing Challenges

B2B marketers have advantages when it comes to influencer marketing, but are also more likely to face a few specific challenges than their midsize counterparts. Our data showed stark differences in a few key areas:

## Difficult to qualify and activate influencers

When you're looking for niche subject matter experts, it can be challenging to find people both knowledgeable and willing to share their expertise with your audience. Nearly half (47%) of enterprise respondents said qualifying and activating influencers was their top challenge, compared to just 27% of midsize.

Tools to identify, qualify and activate influencers can help overcome this challenge—but choosing the tools and learning to use them is its own challenge. It makes sense, then, that enterprise respondents were nearly twice as likely to work with an agency for help.



**34%**

of enterprise respondents work with an agency, vs 18% of midsize



## Lack of executive sponsorship

Large brands were nearly 5x more likely to say they lacked executive support, compared to midsize: 44% of enterprises versus 9% for smaller organizations. Influencer marketing works best when it's supported from the top down, with executives fully bought in and engaged.

One way to secure more executive buy-in is to add them as contributors to your content. If you can show executives how their expertise will be displayed alongside respected and influential industry leaders, it can go a long way towards building enthusiasm.



**When trying to get executive buy-in for a new program, my advice is always to check in early and often. Share your plan and communicate status, reinforce the strategy and show results. Share the optimizations and what is working and where there's opportunity to pivot."**



**Dan Cafiero**, Senior Program Manager, ABM and Paid Media, Seagate Technology





**People think that because we're [Fortune 100 brand name redacted], that we have an unlimited budget. But, if anything, we have to fight HARDER for our budget."**

*B2B Enterprise Tech Marketing Manager*

## **Lack of budget**

We've already seen that it can be harder for enterprise marketers to secure budget increases compared to their midsize counterparts. While budget isn't the biggest challenge for the majority of our respondents, 34% said it was their top difficulty, versus 27% of midsize respondents.

However, nearly half of respondents expect budgets to increase in the coming year, while only 9% anticipate a decrease. A small pilot program now can provide the proof points your marketing team needs to justify a bigger investment down the road.

**47%**

expect budgets to increase

**34%**

expect budgets to stay the same

**9%**

predict budgets to decrease



# Are You Ready to Elevate Your B2B Marketing with Influence?

B2B marketers are already seeing results from influencer marketing. In fact, 87% said they expect interest in working with influencers to grow over the next year.

It's time to level up your marketing and join top B2B brands like Adobe, Dell Technologies and LinkedIn, who are leveraging the power of influence.

**Connect with our team now to elevate your enterprise brand with influencer marketing at scale.**

LET'S TALK

