

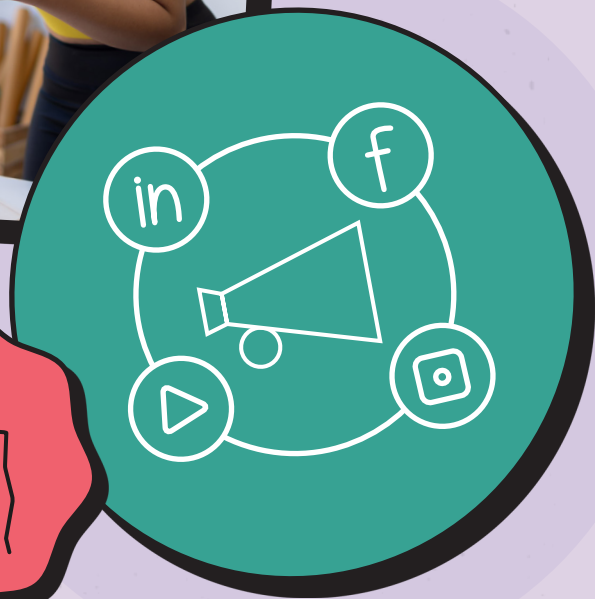
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A GUIDE TO WORKING WITH INFLUENCERS



Influencer Marketing: How can working with influencers impact campaigns for social change?

Brands and businesses across the world are using influencers in their marketing, though it's arguably existed for as long as celebrities have. But the question remains, is it any better than other strategies or is it just another option to consider? Understanding the potential impact, as well as the risks and rewards, is crucial when deciding if influencers can drive success in your campaign for positive social change.

Firstly, what is influencer marketing?

Influencer marketing is a communication tactic that uses individuals with dedicated social media followings to endorse brands, campaigns, or products. These influencers, ranging from smaller micro-influencers with thousands of followers to popular celebrities, are seen as culturally influential within their niches. Often, celebrity influencers have extensive sponsorship deals with major brands, whilst smaller influencers are more useful to smaller businesses.

The major selling point of influencers is their ability to endorse, using social proof as the main ingredient to reach people. Influencers will often have a large and loyal following, meaning that people are more likely to take notice of something, even if it's still technically an advertisement.



Why work with an influencer?

Word of mouth is still regarded as the best form of advertising, so hearing recommendations and seeing endorsements from influencers is a fantastic way to implement targeted advertising. Especially in younger people who may be harder to reach through different media.

You may also be able to take advantage of 'copycat behaviour' where fans try to emulate the influencer, whether they're spreading a particular message that you want to share with your audience or promoting a specific product.

Ultimately, working with influencers can allow small budgets to go far – and targeting context, rather than interruption.



Where's the proof?

Influencer marketing can have impressive results when done right. Just look at MrBeast's #TeamSeas campaign, which raised over \$30 million for ocean cleanup, or GymShark's successful partnerships with multiple fitness influencers. These examples show how influencers can drive meaningful outcomes. Similarly, during the COVID-19 pandemic, the UK Government used former **Love Island contestants to promote the Test and Trace scheme**, reaching up to 7 million people.

However, the risks are real. Many mistakes have been made by both brands and influencers leading to damage to reputations. For example, Pepsi's controversial Kendall Jenner ad, which trivialised social justice movements, or the disastrous 2017 Fyre Festival, where influencers promoted a luxury event they'd never attended. Even simple mistakes, like Little Mix's Instagram promotion that included a copy and paste, can erode authenticity.

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Types of social media influencers for positive change:

Activists

These influencers are deeply involved in social justice causes, advocating for issues like climate change, human rights, gender equality, and racial justice (e.g., Greta Thunberg).

Educators

These influencers raise awareness and educate their audiences on specific social issues. They often provide factual information, resources, and actionable steps.

Lifestyle Influencers with a Social Focus

These influencers integrate social change into their daily lives and content. They may promote sustainable living, ethical fashion, or mental health awareness, like Kathryn Kellogg's zero-waste lifestyle.

Celebrities and Public Figures

Well-known personalities who leverage their fame to support social causes like environmentalism (e.g., Leonardo DiCaprio) or gender equality and feminism (e.g., Emma Watson).

Micro-Influencers

These individuals have smaller, highly engaged followings and focus on niche social issues. While their reach is limited, they effectively drive change within specific communities. Targeting these influencers is often more cost-effective, like a local charity for autistic adults might use an autism advocate influencer to promote a fundraiser.

Choosing the right influencer for your cause

Influencers with the greatest reach often demand higher fees, which can vary according to their audience and following. Smaller influencers may work for free or a smaller rate if they connect personally with the cause or receive products or services.

However, choosing an influencer shouldn't be based entirely on price, but who relates to the audience that you are trying to communicate with. For example, the UK Government's use of Love Island stars for the Test and Trace campaign may seem unconventional (many may believe that Love Island stars are not the right people for medical advice), but it effectively reached the intended audience.

Successful campaigns like Jameela Jamil's "I Weigh" movement show the positive impact of authentic influencer marketing. Using her social media presence, she promoted body positivity, challenged harmful beauty standards, and advanced mental health and self-acceptance.

In the context of social causes and making a positive impact in the world, it's crucial to research and understand who influences the community. It might not be as simple or clear as looking at follower counts. Marcus Rashford, who was considered "just a footballer," proved this by making a huge impact socially with his work to support underprivileged children during COVID-19.

Remember to apply the three Rs of influence:

- **Relevance:** Choose influencers whose content aligns with your industry and cause.
- **Reach:** Ensure a significant following, but remember that smaller, targeted audiences can also be effective.
- **Resonance:** Assess the influencer's engagement and their followers' genuine interest in their content. It's really important to consider the type of audiences that follow the influencer - are they genuinely interested or just following because their profile is popular?



Choosing the right influencer for your cause; the financial and reputational costs

When selecting an influencer for your cause, many organisations overlook a key factor: the cost. Contrary to popular belief, very few influencers will work for free—even for charitable initiatives. It's crucial to budget for these expenses right from the start. For instance, a former Coronation Street star might charge around £1,000 for a single post, while a Love Island contestant could command upwards of £3,000. Rates can vary significantly based on the influencer's profile, audience size, and engagement levels.

To give a clearer idea, smaller influencers with niche followings may charge between £100 and £500 per post, while mid-tier influencers could ask for anywhere from £1,000 to £5,000. High-profile influencers or celebrities may demand £10,000 to over £50,000 per campaign.

We recommend allocating a specific percentage of your media or paid budget to influencer partnerships to ensure that your campaigns remain cost-effective and aligned with your overall marketing strategy. Planning for these costs in advance allows for a realistic approach and helps maximise the impact of your investment.

While influencer marketing can significantly boost visibility and engagement, choosing the wrong influencer can lead to serious reputational damage. The ideal influencer should not only promote your brand or cause but also genuinely align with your message, values, and audience. It's vital that they communicate your message clearly and authentically, remain committed to your campaign goals, and avoid any behaviour that could reflect poorly on your brand.

Recent examples from Taylor Swift's Eras Tour illustrate both the potential pitfalls and successes of influencer partnerships. Louise Thompson, an influencer from Made in Chelsea, attended one of Swift's concerts, likely sponsored by a brand. However, her social media post featured a lengthy caption expressing her dislike for Taylor Swift, which drew hundreds of negative comments from fans who struggled to secure tickets. Additionally, the post failed to mention the sponsoring brand, believed to be Nobody's Child, missing a crucial opportunity for effective promotion and creating a perception of inauthenticity.



On the other hand, some brands got it right. ELF Cosmetics partnered with Hannah Townsend, a fashion influencer and dedicated Taylor Swift fan. In her “Get Ready With Me” (GRWM) video, Hannah showcased ELF products while expressing genuine excitement for the concert. This content resonated well with both her followers and ELF’s target market, resulting in positive brand visibility and alignment with the event’s audience.

These examples underscore the importance of thorough research, careful influencer selection, and clear communication of expectations between brands, PR teams, and influencers. Collaborating with influencers who genuinely reflect your brand’s values and have a true connection to your cause or product can mitigate reputational risks, enhance authenticity, and create meaningful, positive exposure. It is also essential for brands to set clear guidelines to ensure that the influencer’s content remains consistent with campaign objectives, avoiding any tone-deaf or off-brand messaging that could backfire.

How can behavioural science help you work with influencers?

To maximise the impact of your campaign, it’s crucial to clearly define your audience. Are you focused on engaging your current followers, or are you aiming to reach a new demographic?

Reaching a new audience involves more than just selecting influencers with the largest followings. It requires a deep understanding of who these people are, what drives them, and what resonates with them. Behavioural insights can help uncover your audience’s feelings, values, and motivations, allowing you to craft messages that connect deeply and choose the most effective channels.



The role of behavioural science in influencer marketing

By applying behavioural science, you can transform your influencer campaign into a powerful force for social change. Understanding your audience’s psychological triggers allows you to design campaigns that not only capture attention but also inspire meaningful action. Integrating key behavioural principles, like Nudge Theory and Reactance, can significantly enhance the effectiveness of influencer marketing, particularly when the goal is to drive positive change.

Nudge Theory: Steering behaviour subtly



Nudge Theory, popularised by behavioural economists Richard Thaler and Cass Sunstein, is all about subtly guiding people towards a desired behaviour without restricting their choices. In the context of influencer marketing, nudges can be powerful. For example, an influencer might nudge their followers towards sustainable practices by regularly showcasing eco-friendly products or habits in their daily lives. This kind of subtle endorsement can create a ripple effect, encouraging their audience to adopt similar behaviours almost unconsciously.

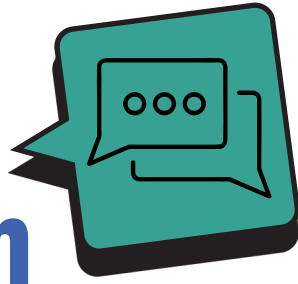
Imagine a fitness influencer who subtly incorporates messages about mental health into their workout

routines. By normalising conversations around mental well-being, they nudge their audience to consider both physical and mental health as integral to their fitness journey. This approach can be particularly effective on platforms like Instagram or YouTube, where influencers can share their personal experiences and tips, creating a sense of trust and relatability.

However, nudges can also be used more directly in social campaigns. For instance, an influencer could highlight the benefits of donating to a cause by demonstrating the ease of the donation process, removing barriers that might otherwise deter people from giving. This subtle encouragement can increase participation without making followers feel pressured.



Reactance: The rebellion against persuasion



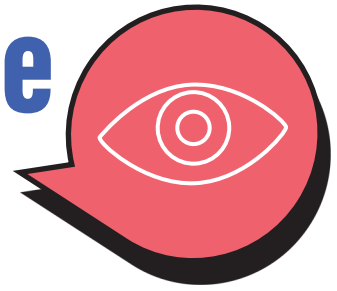
While nudging can be effective, it's also essential to be aware of Reactance—a psychological phenomenon where people resist being told what to do, particularly if they perceive their freedom to choose is being threatened. This is a crucial consideration in influencer marketing, especially when the goal is to drive social change.

For example, if an influencer is too forceful in promoting a cause, their audience might experience reactance, leading them to reject the message entirely. This is especially prevalent on social media, where users are constantly bombarded with content and are quick to detect and resist anything that feels overly prescriptive or inauthentic.

To overcome reactance, influencers need to approach their messaging with subtlety and authenticity. Sharing personal stories, expressing genuine passion for the cause, and positioning themselves as relatable peers rather than authoritative figures can help to diminish resistance. By making the audience feel like they're part of a community or movement, rather than being told what to do, influencers can foster a sense of autonomy and empowerment, which can be far more effective in driving positive change.



How social media can be a double-edged sword



Social media's ability to drive social change is undeniable, but it's not without its downsides. On the positive side, platforms like Instagram, TikTok, and X (Twitter) allow influencers to reach vast audiences quickly, creating movements almost overnight. A well-crafted message from a trusted influencer can inspire millions to take action, whether it's supporting a charitable cause, adopting a healthier lifestyle, or advocating for social justice.

However, the same mechanisms that make social media so powerful can also lead to negative outcomes. The viral nature of social media means that misinformation can spread just as quickly as accurate information. Additionally, the pressure to conform to popular trends or to participate in certain movements can sometimes lead to performative activism, where influencers and their followers engage in superficial support for a cause, rather than meaningful, sustained action.

Moreover, the echo chambers that often form on social media can amplify groupthink, where individuals are influenced more by the opinions of others within their social circle than by their own critical thinking. This can be both a blessing and a curse. On one hand, it can foster solidarity and collective action; on the other, it can stifle diversity of thought and discourage genuine engagement with the issues at hand.



Harnessing the power of behavioural science for positive change



To truly harness the power of influencer marketing for social change, it's essential to blend these behavioural insights with careful planning and ethical considerations. By understanding and applying Nudge Theory, you can encourage positive behaviours subtly and effectively. At the same time, being mindful of Reactance ensures that your messages are received in the spirit they're intended, without provoking unnecessary resistance.

When executed thoughtfully, influencer marketing - backed by behavioural science - can be a formidable force for good. However, it's vital to navigate this landscape with care, always striving for authenticity and genuine connection with your audience. This approach not only mitigates risks but also maximises the potential for creating real, lasting change.

By incorporating these behavioural science concepts into your strategy, you can make influencer marketing an even more powerful tool for driving social change, ensuring that your campaigns are not only effective but also ethical and impactful.

At Social Change, we use behavioural insights to create impactful campaigns that drive genuine, positive behaviour change. Our approach utilises behavioural science and models like COM-B to thoroughly understand audience's behaviour, their capabilities, opportunities, and motivations. This ensures partnering with influencers who make a real difference, focusing on creating meaningful change rather than just boosting visibility.

Get in touch today

Find out how we can help your business reach the right audience using behavioural science and influencer marketing. Get in touch at hello@social-change.co.uk or [visit our website](#) to start making an impact!



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