

A smiling man with a beard and glasses, wearing a red sweater, holds a laptop. He is in a modern office with brick walls and other people in the background. The text 'The Most Relevant B2B Influencer Marketing Guide for 2021' is overlaid on the image.

The Most Relevant B2B Influencer Marketing Guide for 2021

audiense:

About the author

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Michael Brito is the EVP, Digital & Analytics at Zeno Group, an integrated communications agency. He helps his clients reach their target consumer with laser-focused precision > the right story, at the right time, in the right channel and with the right media. He is a firm believer that audience intelligence and influencer analytics are the two most important ingredients to fuel data-driven content marketing programs. He is a TEDx speaker, adjunct professor, and business advisor for The Social Intelligence Lab.

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[illegible]

I have always prided myself with being a practitioner. Even as I was promoted throughout my career and started to manage teams, I never hesitated to roll up my sleeves and do the work. Doing so allowed me to stay at the top of my game.

The first and most important step in this process is to use data and analytics to identify the most relevant influencers for your business. And that means you must understand how influence is measured. If you get this wrong, your entire program won't perform as expected. It may not fail miserably but you won't see the return or full potential of a well-planned, influencer strategy.

How to Use Data to Identify The Right Influencers

Measuring influence is subjective. Too many marketers rely solely on influencer marketing platforms to do all the work. It's a good start but only tells half the story.

Here's why. Typically most platforms use three data points to measure influence:

- 1 Reach:** The size of their social community
- 2 Relevance:** How often are they talking about a topic
- 3 Resonance:** The engagement they get from posting and creating content

The B2B influencer marketing tools do a good job at this because it's counting numbers.

And even with different algorithms, most tools are consistent with each other when it comes to ranking topical influencers. The three data points are just weighted differently.



The one last step is reference.

Reference has two equal parts. First, it measures how often the media (or other influencers) reference the influencer in question. The second part is how often the influencer is mentioned by a specific audience, like developers, security engineers or CTOs. This can be a manual process unless you have access to a social intelligence platform which can save you time and money.

Also, everyone defines and values influence differently. Some view reach and engagement as the ultimate data point when activating influencer programs. Others are more rigorous with data and demand to see how an influencer program is delivering business value, through sales and/or leads.



REACH

How large is their social community across all channels—blogs, contributed articles, bylines and social?

RELEVANCE

How often are they talking about the topics that are relevant to your business?

RESONANCE

When they create content, how does it resonate with their broader audience and does it result in engagement?

REFERENCE

Are they referenced by other influencers and in the target media?

INFLUENCE

The 1:9:90 Model of Influence and Market Segmentation

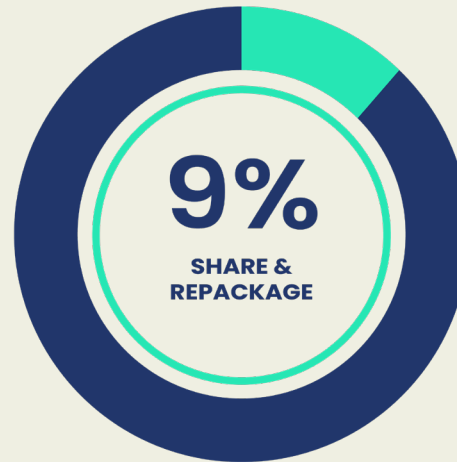
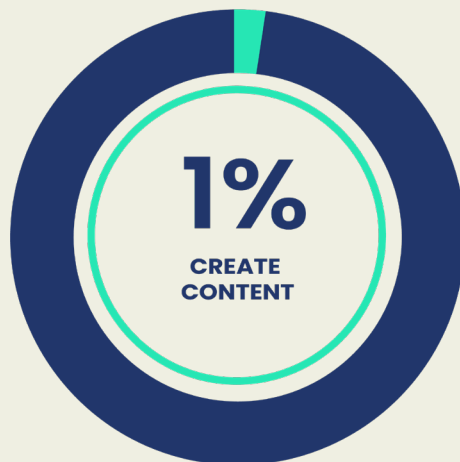
The [1:9:90 Model of Influence](#) can be used to segment influencers and audiences across multiple topics, industries and markets and is extremely useful for B2B influencer marketing. A market can be however you define it to be—SaaS companies, enterprise security, big data companies or more specific markets like AI-driven security monitoring or Robotics Process Automation (RPA).

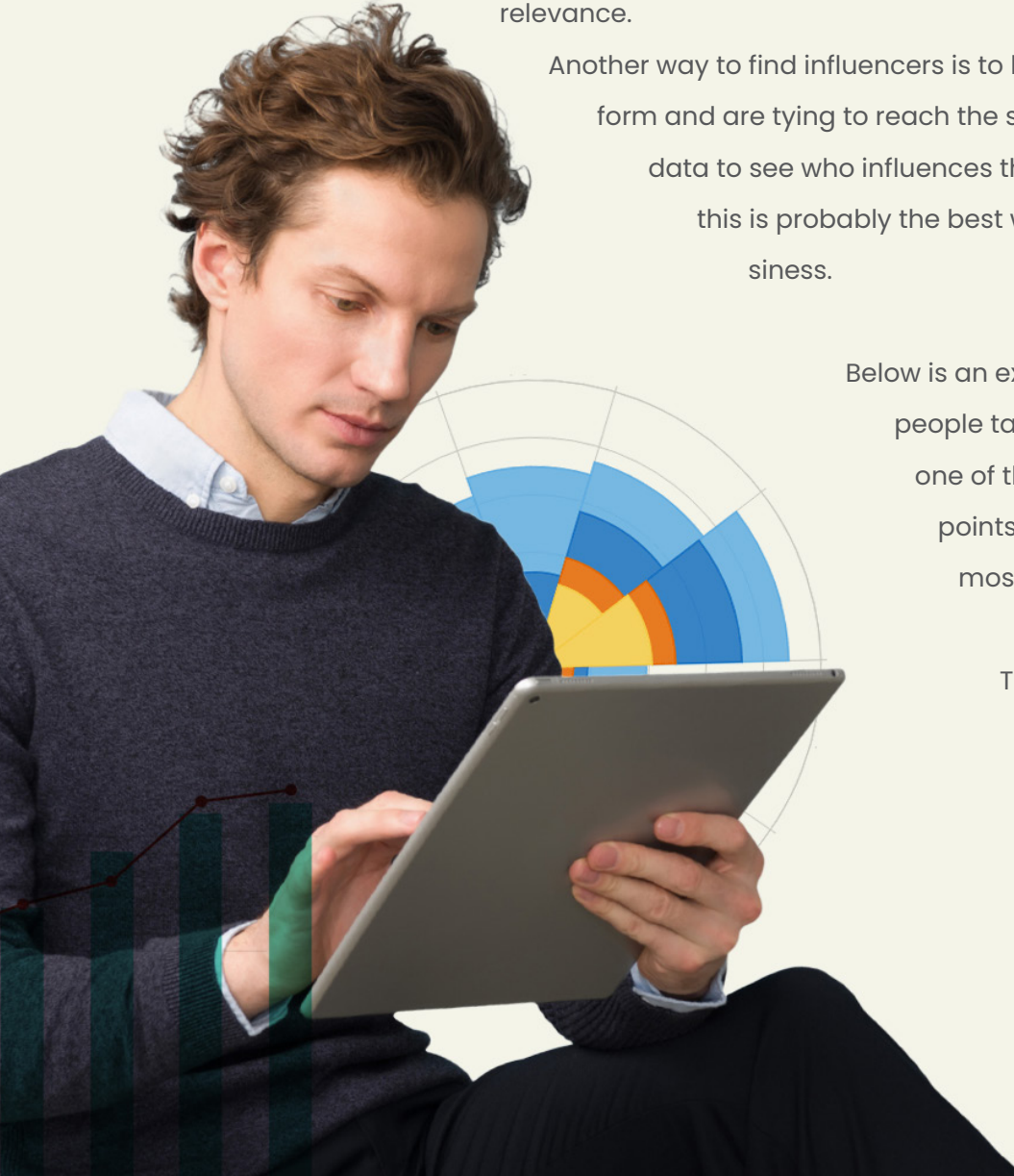
The model is broken down by the 1%, the 9% and the 90%.

The 1% creates new models, ideas, innovations and tells stories through content, blogs, webinars, videos and articles. They are quoted in the media, guests on podcasts and many have their own media platforms.

The 9% can be referred to as a specific audience. It could be engineers, developers or the average IT manager. They repackage influencer content, provide their own context and share it with their social communities. They are extremely vocal online, have large audiences and they are also influential.

The 90% are what I refer to as lurkers or in some cases, the “general market”. All they do is consume content and information. They Google everything, ask their peers and friends for recommendations, read G2 Crowd reviews and very rarely create their own unique content. They are highly influenced by both the 1% and the 9%.





The 1:9:90 Model of Influence works extremely well when you are looking for topical-based influencers, for example, security influencers or an audience talking about digital transformation. Since the model uses reach, relevance and resonance mentioned above, the common denominator for building an influencer list is the actual topic being discussed, which is relevance.

Another way to find influencers is to build an audience first. For example, if you are selling access to a cloud platform and are trying to reach the software developer audience, you would build an audience and then mine the data to see who influences them. Nine times out of ten it's not who you think it's going to be. In my opinion, this is probably the best way to find the most relevant and impactful influencers for your brand and business.

Below is an example of how influencer analytics can be used to identify the most influential people talking about data science. Below, you'll see Kirk Borne's influencer profile. He is one of the most influential data scientists on the planet. You'll also notice several data points that represent different variables about the topics that Kirk talks about the most.

The most important data point supporting Kirk's status as an influencer is reference, as mentioned above. In 2019, he was mentioned well over 176K times by a social listening panel of 10K self-identified IT decision makers. This means that the resonance of his content over indexes against a very influential audience—IT Decision Makers.

KIRK BORNE



Kirk is a Principal Data Scientist at Booz Allen Hamilton. He has a PhD in astrophysics and is a former professor of data science. Kirk has been featured in Fortune, TechTarget, Business Insider, Dataconomy, CIO Dive and ZDNet.



210k



500+

Total Mentions

176.3K

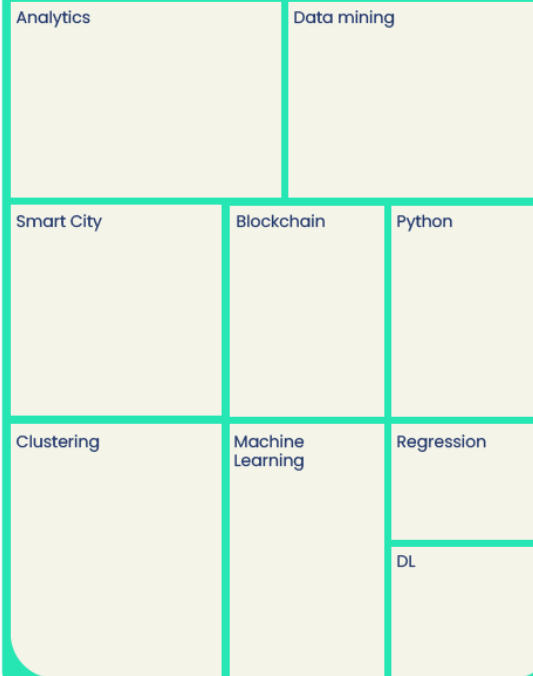
Total number of influencer mentions within the IT decision-maker panel surrounding relevant topics and categories.

Share of Mentions

15%

Mentions by influencer out of the total number of mentions across all influencers within the IT decision-maker panel

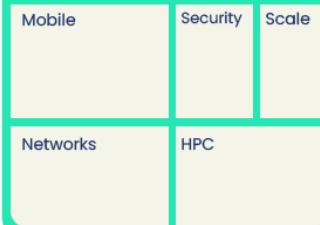
Data science



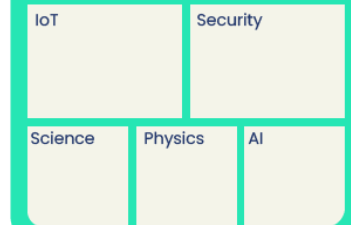
Artificial Intelligence



5G



Quantum

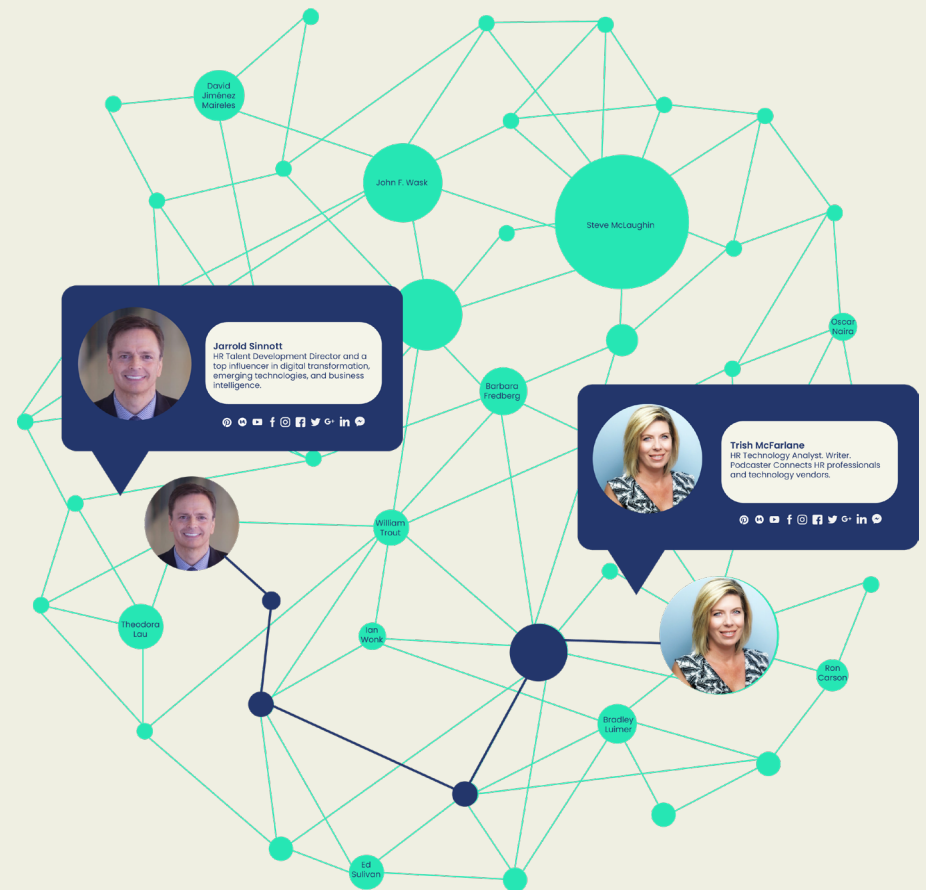


Influencer mapping is more than just a beautiful data visualization. It's a critical method that maps the connective tissue of a group of influencers. It visually shows relationships of data that you couldn't see in an Excel document. This type of data can surface new influencers, narratives, topics and audiences.

Influencer mapping can be done several different ways depending on what you are looking to do. In some cases, the connection can be based on affinities, interests and characteristics – what brands they follow, what industries they work in or where they live. It can also be based on topics – what themes, narratives and topics do they talk about publicly. It can be based on audience – which groups of people they influence and the connection points of each audience. Lastly, it can be done to identify new individuals in an effort to identify “who” is influencing your group of influencers.

Once you've identified the right influencers, it's important to focus time and effort on influencer analytics and research. It involves adding the group of influencers into a real-time listing panel and mining the conversations to understand what topics are most important to them. It's critical to look at historical conversations because it can help spot older trends as well as predict new ones. Influencer intelligence can surface several actionable insights like the following:

- 1 Conversational Trends** over time
- 2 Conversational Trends** in real-time (mission critical for organic influencer engagement)



- 3 Conversation Analysis** of the topics they care and talk about
- 4 Sentiment Analysis** about how they feel about certain topics or brands

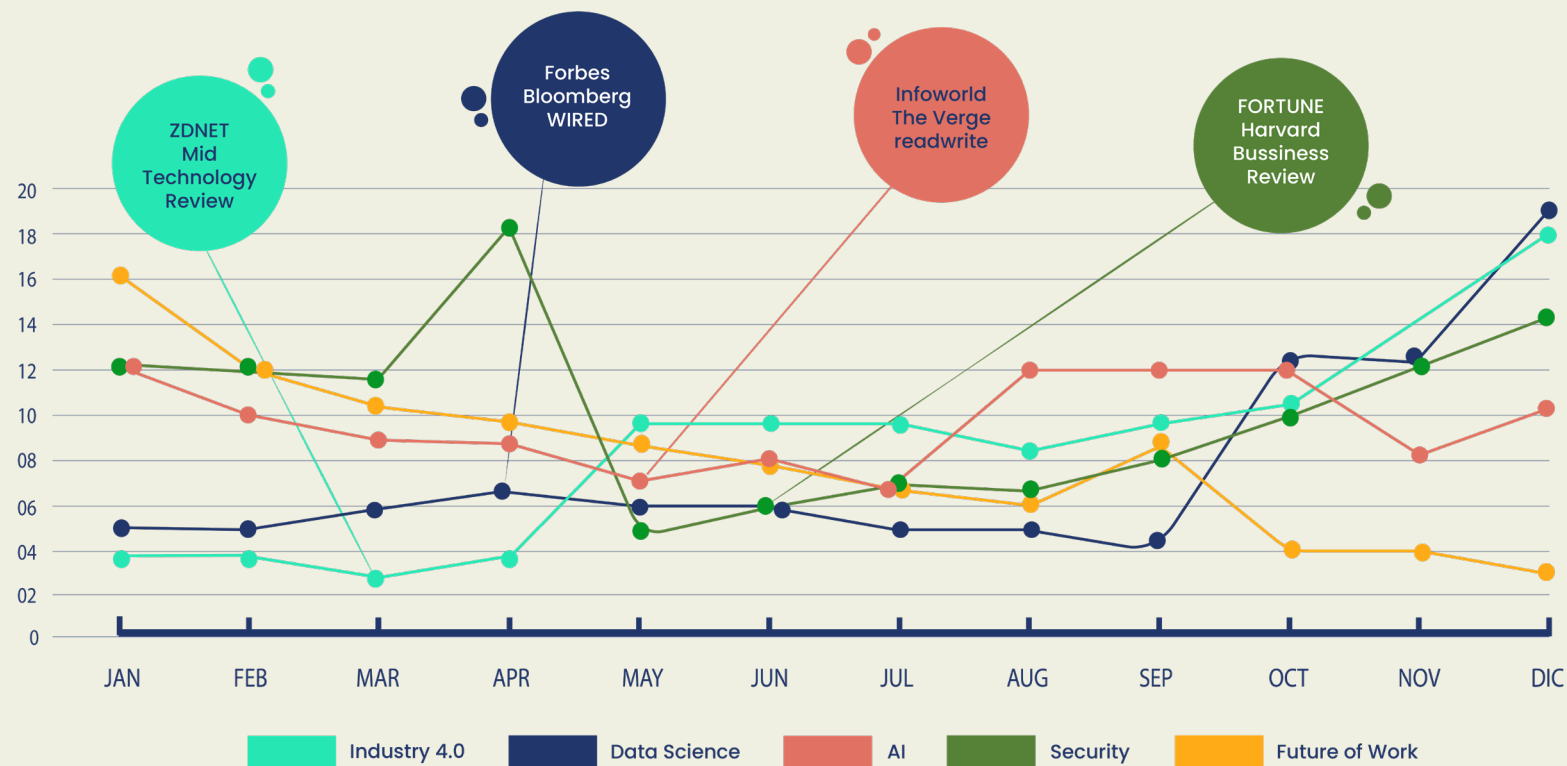
Here's an example of B2B influencer marketing trends analysis where we tracked 10 security influencers and their conversations over a 12 month period.

You'll notice the fluctuation in certain topics and how they increase/decrease in certain time frames.

Obviously, data like this will require you to have access to software but please don't invest in the first platform you hear about. You'll want to make sure that you invest in the right influencer software that can meet your business requirements and also help scale your program when you're ready.

Think of a real-time listening panel as a custom search engine. In Google, when you type in a query and hit "Enter", you will get the most relevant results back based on your search term. A listening panel works the same way. But in this case, when you type in a query, the results will be exactly what the influencers are saying about what you are searching for.

Most social intelligence platforms have the ability to do this. So, once you find the right influencers, you add the social handles to a dashboard (some social platforms call it a query) and use filtering to mine the data. This methodology is also effective for real-time content marketing and audience intelligence.



Choosing the Right Influencer Marketing Software

There is no shortage of [influencer marketing software](#) platforms in the market place. Sadly, the majority of the software is meant for influencer programs for consumer brands. There has been very little innovation in this space.

For B2B and technology brands, there are three software platforms that I would recommend taking a look at since their capabilities most closely align with B2B:

[Traackr](#) was one of the first software platforms available in the market and they continue to add new features. They have the ability to search for influencers several different ways:

- **Bio search.** How influencers self-identify within their social profiles.
- **Content search.** What topics and narratives are top of mind.
- **Bio & content search.** Combining the two is where it gets powerful. Imagine looking for influential developers talking about DevOps or security. The bio search would be something like “programmer, engineer, software developer” and the content search would be #devops, #infosec, #secops and #devsecops.
- **By audience.** Looking for influencers that reach audiences interested in a specific topic like business or technology.
- **All of the above.** Bio, content and audience is also very powerful and typically returns unexpected influencers.

On a scale of 1-10 for reporting, I would rank them a 7. There’s not a lot flexibility on the data and no filtering. One major drawback is that Traackr doesn’t allow for exporting influencer profiles until after they are added to a project.

[Onalytica](#) is similar to Traackr with a few differences. One, they support full Boolean logic when searching bios and content. This is a huge differentiator for power users like myself but may alienate those people that are new to data and analytics.

Second, their analytics and reporting suite is a lot more robust. The data can be sliced a lot of different ways allowing for multiple cuts and exports of the data. They also give users the ability to export influencer handles within the discover portion of their software.

[Audiense](#) is more of an audience intelligence platform. As mentioned above, the most effective way to find the relevant and impactful influencers is to build an audience and see who influences them. You can do this with Audiense.

In full transparency, I have not seen the back end of Onalytica in a few years so it’s possible that it has completely changed since I used it last.

[audiense:](#)



onalytica



traackr

What the Heck Is Organic Influencer Marketing Anyway?

Organic influencer marketing should not be confused with earned influencer engagement or influencer relations.

There is a difference. Huge difference.

Earned influencer engagement is closely aligned with traditional media relations.

It typically involves sending influencers products with the hopes that they write about it in a blog, feature it in an Instagram story or post photos of it on social channels. This is a solid strategy for consumer brands and it should always be included in a marketing plan.

Organic influencer marketing combines data & analytics with content and storytelling that positions your brand at the center of relevant conversations with people that matter.

It works like this.

To recap, you'll need to identify the most impactful influencers using the 1:9:90 Model of Influence. The quantity of influencers will depend on what your goals are but its typically between 25 and 200 (see image on next page).

From there, you'll want to add the influencer's social handles into a real-time listening panel and create filters using the topics and keywords that are important to your business.

This is where the engagement starts but it's more than just following influencers on social media and liking their content. It's about making the influencer the hero of the story and giving them credit for their perspective.

At the same time, it serves as an opportunity to provide unique context on the topics that are important to your business. It's a form of thought leadership but letting influencers take the lead, supplemented with a creative digital asset (animated video, gif, static image) and promoted to a larger, influential audience.



Identify The Top Influencers

Use the 1:9:90 to identify the most relevant influencers for your business.

Build A Real-time Listening Panel

Add influencers to custom search panel and monitor for real-time engagement opportunities.

Real-Time Influencer Engagement

Engage with influencers through liking, commenting and sharing content on social media.

Data-Informed Creative Content

Target, tag and mention influencers through creative digital assets e.g. animated videos, photos, and gifs.



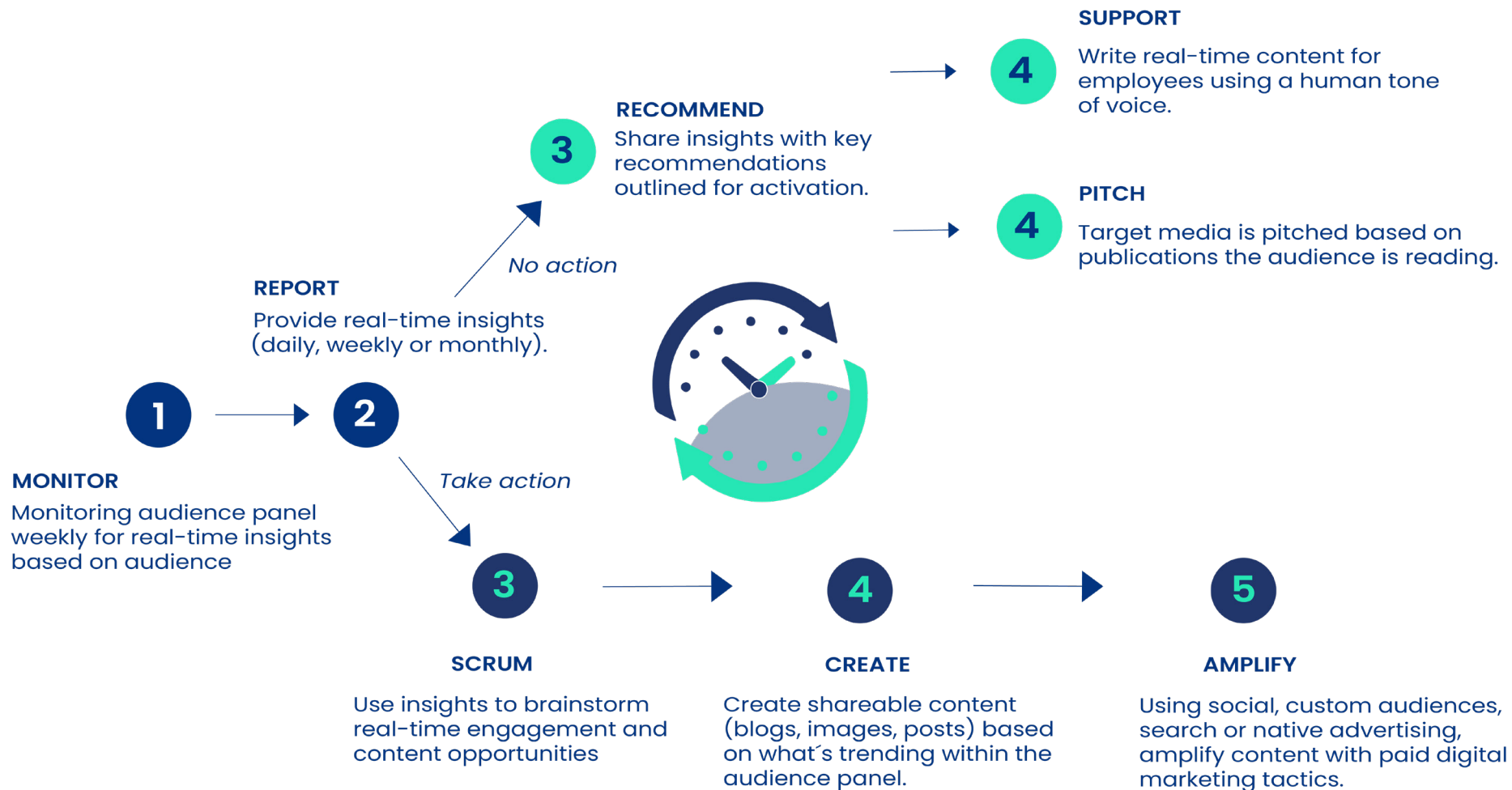
Activating Real-time Influencer Content

The goal of real-time content marketing isn't to be relevant to everyone. It's to be extremely relevant to your audience. Everyone remembers the Oreo Tweet in 2013 during Super Bowl XLVII. Since then, many brands have tried to "hijack" cultural moments to insert themselves into an existing narrative and reach a broad audience. Sometimes it works, but most times it doesn't.

This is where real-time listening to influencers' conversations becomes valuable. Rather than trying to align your brand with everyone, this approach leverages the target influencers that are most important to drive relevance with your brand.

Once you identify the right influencers and add them to a real-time listening panel, the content engine works something like this:





There are two paths that can potentially be taken based on what it is you are trying to do. The first path requires no action other than reporting and making recommendations. The second path requires immediate action where you will activate the real-time content engine.

Reporting & Recommendations

- 1 **Monitor** the influencer conversations in real-time to see what's trending.
- 2 **Provide** daily, weekly or monthly influencer insights.
- 3 **Recommend** activation opportunities based on the insights.
- 4 **Provide** content recommendations for employees and executives to be used for [employee advocacy programs](#) and executive activation.



Real-time Influencer Content Engine

- 1 **Monitor** the influencer conversations in real-time to see what's trending.
- 2 **Provide** daily, weekly or monthly influencer insights.
- 3 **Scrum** with a team of analysts, creatives, community managers, content strategists and paid social experts to brainstorm influencer content and activation opportunities.
- 4 **Create** the shareable digital assets usually consisting of an animated video, gif or digital asset. In some cases, a blog post could be produced.
- 5 **Post & amplify** the content with strategic paid social targeting larger audiences.

Campaign-based Paid Influencer Marketing Can Reach Untapped Audiences

Paid influencer campaigns guarantee content will reach a desired audience. With the recent challenges of COVID-19, technology brands are having to cancel customer and industry events, which is crippling their sales pipeline. Below are four ways to [activate influencers](#) virtually and still generate the same business impact, if not more.

1 1:1 Topical-Based Interviews: Pre-recorded or live conversations between influencers and executives or subject-matter experts discussing technology, trends and predictions. The content can be cut into smaller digital assets for distribution on brand channels, given to influencers to share and promoted with paid social media.

2 Collaborative Content: Co-creation of long-form digital assets where influencers will provide unique perspectives on a topic or trend. The content can be cut into smaller digital assets for distribution on brand channels, given to influencers to share and promoted with paid social media.

3 Virtual Panel Discussions: Pre-recorded or live conversations between a group of influencers, partners and executives discussing trending business topics of the day. The content can be cut into smaller digital assets for distribution on brand channels, given to influencers to share and promoted with paid social media.

4 Social Chat Activation: Enlist influencers to moderate and participate in planned chats about a specific topic or trend in technology. Seed all questions with participating influencers, ensuring they have an adequate and timely response. The content can be cut into smaller digital assets for distribution on brand channels, given to influencers to share and promoted with paid social media.

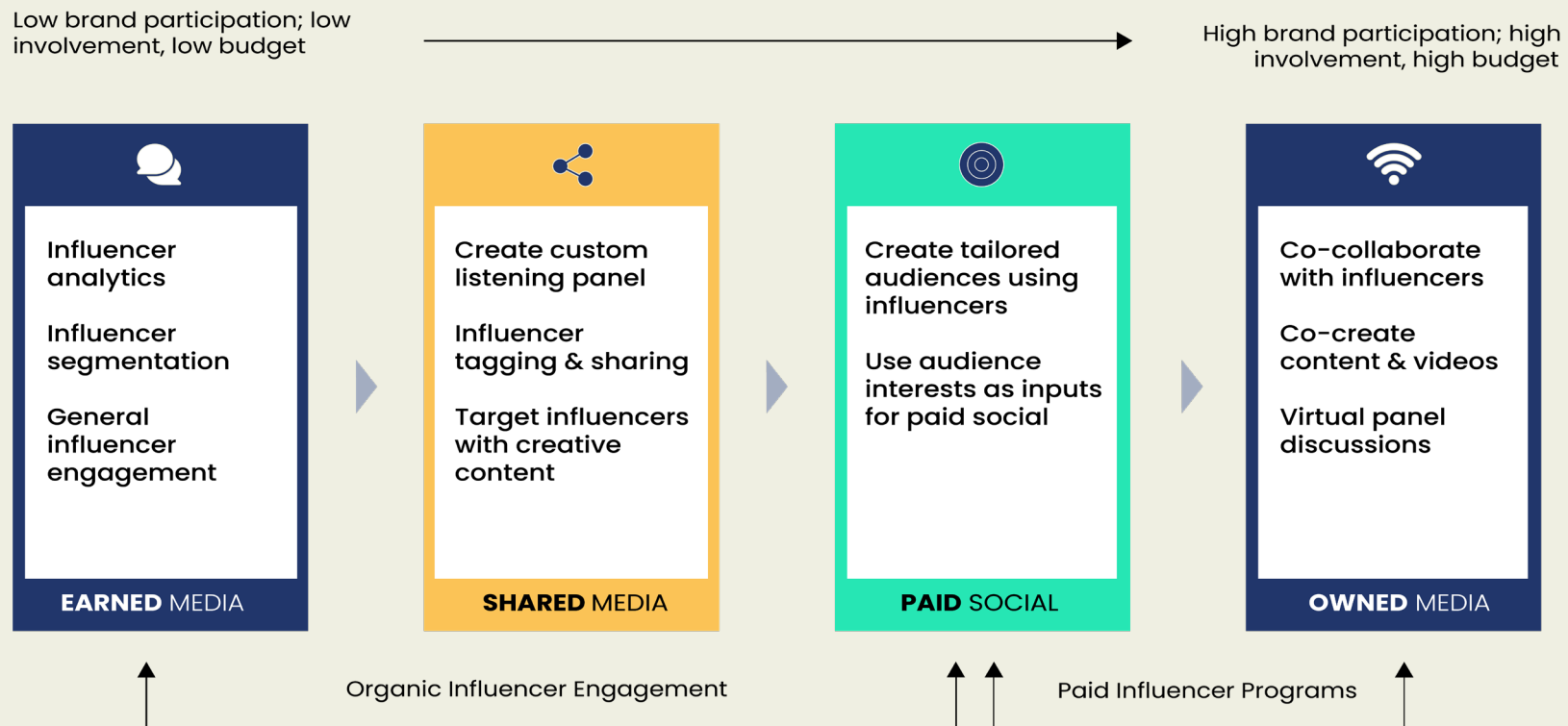


Organic engagement + paid activation = better together

Branded content doesn't work the way it used to. Influencers aren't attracted to marketing messages and will typically ignore them on social media.

To reiterate, organic influencer engagement means creating digital assets (animated videos, infographics, storytelling videos) based on data-informed influencer conversations and distributing that creative content into the marketplace.

And since influencers will only go so far in helping brands to tell their stories, paid activation programs are critical for tentpole moments such as product launches, events or specific campaigns.



How Clubhouse & Social Audio Will Change Influencer Marketing

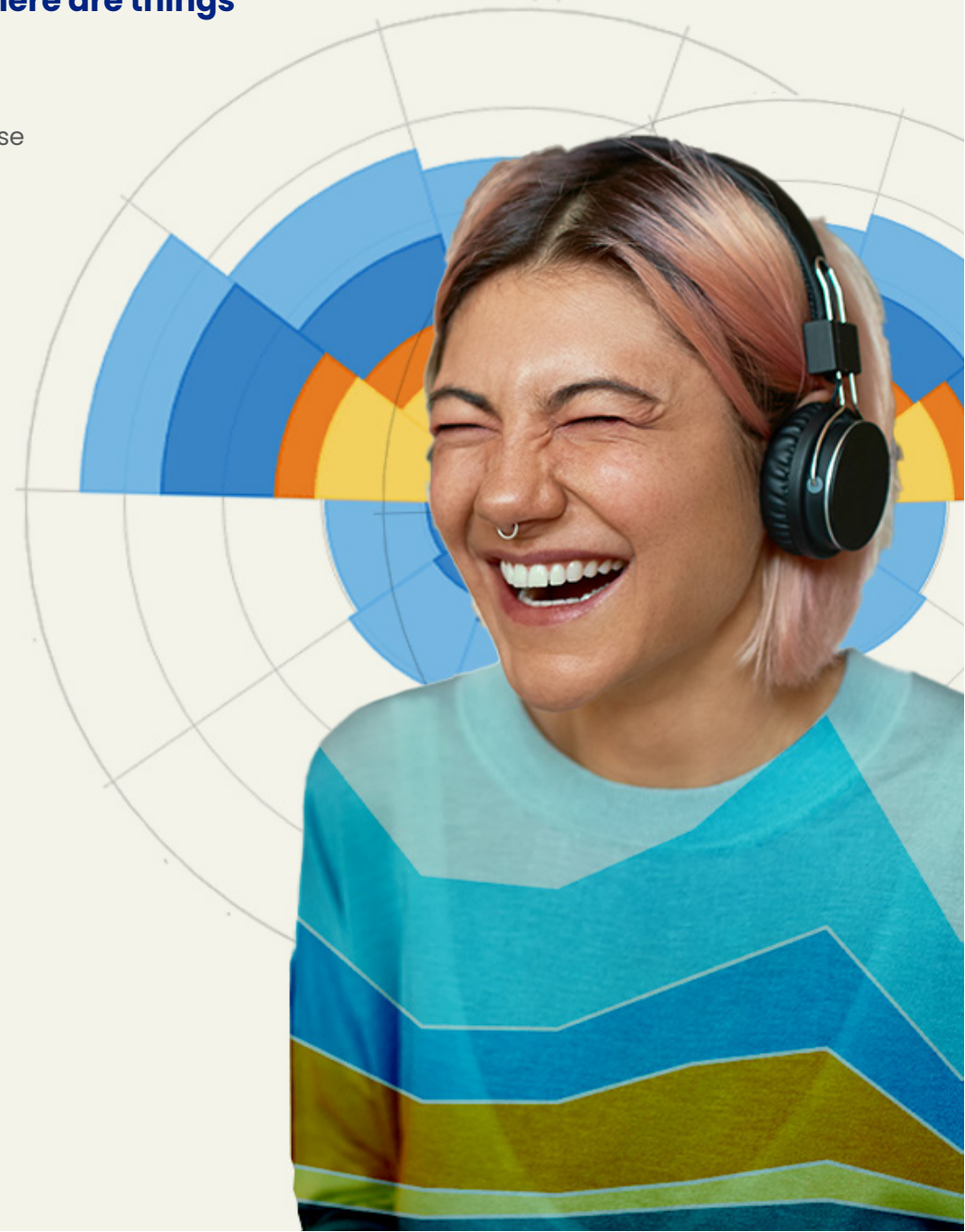
The rise of social audio influencer marketing is exploding but there are things that brands should consider before activating them.

I haven't seen a lot of posts yet about social audio influencer marketing on Clubhouse but I'm sure that they are being prepared as we speak. I guess I'll be one of the first to jump on the bandwagon.

I have been in the influencer marketing space for a long time and I'm always looking for ways to innovate, find new influencers, analyze their performance, conversations and determine real influence. Most of my experience has been working on B2B/Tech and healthcare brands, although I have worked with a few CPG companies in my experience with brands like Tejava, Idaho Spuds to name a few.

With all the hype about Clubhouse, I've been thinking how this new social audio platform is going to change the way marketers work with influencers. I believe it's going to give birth to a new type of influencer. It's also going to expose some influencers who rely solely on sharing other people's content and flooding their tweets with hashtags.

Here are three ways that Clubhouse is changing the influencer landscape and what brands should expect from working with them if they do.



1 Creators of Community

In Clubhouse, there are no takes. No “do overs” of post production editing. No “in app” link sharing or hashtags (well at least not yet). It’s a conversation. And whether participant or a moderator, being able to read the room, solicit feedback, interject when needed, and cultivate others to speak is a critical skill.

In the early days of social media, community managers were the epitome of connecting brands to customers. And today’s influencer must have a similar skill —connect people to other people, spread ideas, and do so verbally and on the fly.

Creators of community is something that cannot be learned overnight. It takes time to understand not just a platform, but the behavior of the users, how they interact with each other and the norms of the app. Each platform is different.

2 The Gift of Gab

Some people call this storytelling and that’s certainly part of it. The gift of gab is about influence and persuasion. It’s about being able to articulate a point or argument effectively.

Please don’t confuse this with being a bullshitter. Most early adopters of technology and social media users in general have really high BS detectors.

Someone who has the gift of gab can articulate very complex ideas so that anyone can understand it. With social audio platforms this is a very important skill to have simply because the media is audio which means you cannot use visuals to present a point.

3 Multi-Channel Influence

The days of hiring an Instagram, TikTok or Snapchat influencer is coming to an end. It’s not a scalable, long-term solution and it’s not smart. Here’s why.

Whenever new platforms emerge, there’s typically a flood of new users who desperately try and grow their followers and be as influential as possible. They jump from one platform to the next in hopes of being coined the next “insert social network” influencer. I see this already happening on Clubhouse and other social audio platforms.

Most of the time, this type of influencer has very little substance or domain expertise. The only advantage they have is being an early adopter of new platforms and growth hacking.

When brands want to build [influencer marketing programs](#), they must find topical based influencers multi-channel influence. This simply means that they should be active and participating in more than one channel.

Watch Out for the Snake-oil

The rush to Clubhouse influence is well on its way. If you don’t have access to influencer data or research, I would suggest doing a quick Google search on The Clubhouse user that you are interested in partnering with. While qualitative in nature, it is the first step at separating true influencers with Clubhouse perpetrators.

Social audio is just one media. And while it’s hot right now, marketers must look at all channels before launching a social audio influencer marketing program in order to surround sound audiences with integrated [brand storytelling](#).

At the end of the day, social audio platforms like Clubhouse and Twitter Spaces is one of many channels marketers can use to influence behavior.

About Audiense

Audiense is a pioneering Audience Intelligence platform, trusted by enterprise brands across the globe. We help marketers and consumer researchers to be innovative and develop relevant audience-centric strategies. Through proprietary social consumer segmentation, Audiense provides insights on who your audience really is, and how to engage with them in the most meaningful way.

Culture is always on the move, making it difficult for your existing consumer preconceptions to keep up. Audiense's social consumer segments are derived from consumers' behaviour "in the wild", making it reflect what really matters to them.

Marketers use Audiense to rapidly identify unique approaches to connecting with consumers. Because our insights stem from rich and varied social data, we provide a direct line to strategies that foster competitive differentiation.

TRY AUDIENSE FOR FREE

