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# ROAD TO INFLUENCE

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*Be it a brand, service, product, or individual, establishing influence is a major goal.*

You want to influence consumers to purchase your products or offerings. You want to influence an audience to think about issues important to you. But you have to find the right balance of being an influencer while aligning yourself with other parties who can help boost your influence.

Everyone understands that social media is a powerful and evolving tool to do this. Social media also makes the communicator's role more powerful and effective. However, those realizations are just the tip of the iceberg.

To establish true influence through social media, many factors need to be considered. On the pages that follow, we present an octet of tips that will help you establish maximum influence on social media.

TIP #1

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# YOUR AUTHENTIC VOICE

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*One of the most important factors in establishing a brand is authenticity. In social media, nothing matters more.*

You have to be true to yourself and make sure the real you shines through in your social voice. For brands seeking to be influential, social content must capture the brand essence by being authentic. Social is all about being real. And if you're not – you will be quickly exposed to everyone.

*"Figure out who you are; then do it on purpose. Strive for authenticity instead of popularity. Don't try to sound like anyone or anything except who you already are."*

*- Country music superstar Dolly Parton as highlighted in a feature entitled "Find your ideal writing voice" by Joy Tanksley for Copyblogger*

TIP #2

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# IDENTIFY INFLUENCERS AND WORK WITH THEM DAILY

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*To become an influencer, you need to know other influencers – and not just the well-known bloggers everyone knows.*

They are important, of course, but social influencers exist in almost every category – and not all of them have blogs. You need to understand how an always-on influencer program can positively impact your business. And if you keep your finger on the pulse of influence, you might even identify a “rising star.” That’s a relationship that truly proves beneficial if it’s established before that influencer gains his or her ultimate renown.

Among *Forbes’* top 50 social media influencers of 2013 are some non-bloggers: Laura Fitton and Jonathan Nafferete. Fitton (#25) is an online marketing generalist who co-authored *Twitter for Dummies* and Nafferete (#29) is an Instagram expert.

TIP #3

# MONEY IN THE MIDDLE



*Many of the tools being used to measure influence focus on how to best target and engage high-ranking influencers.*

But recent research has underscored how a focus on middle-level influencers – the “power middle” – is actually much more effective and cost-efficient in terms of engagement and driving earned media. The “power middle” might have a smaller following than A-list influencers, but they are much more loyal.

According to a SocialChorus analysis of more than 200 social word-of-mouth campaigns, “power middle” influencers drive an average of 16-times higher engagement rates than paid media and owned alternatives.

TIP #4

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## FACE-TO-FACE STILL MATTERS

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*While social media enables connections to be established between parties anywhere in the world, live events still matter.*

Real-life gatherings are crucial to developing relationships – and relationships fuel social media. To be a true influencer, you need to be a true part of a community. Face-to-face is still the best way to establish that.

*“Face-to-face skills complement the social media connection. I am a massive fan and evangelist of social media. However, the relationship that is formed by meeting people in real life and connecting with them on a face-to-face basis can never be replaced.”*

*- Douglas Lim, social media marketing and SEO expert, originally published on [douglaslim.org](http://douglaslim.org) and then posted on Leaders West Digital Marketing Journal.*

TIP #5

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## A HELPING HAND

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*A key to becoming an influencer is providing information that will empower your audience to improve in a tangible way.*

On a very practical level, this means offering information that helps your audience find a solution for a need or problem. On another level, you should look to help your audience members grow their own networks and share the spotlight with them. Many long-lasting relationships come from a sincere desire to help others.

*“One thing that helps one become influential is to work on helping others rise up.”*

*- Chris Brogan, CEO of Human Business Works*

TIP #6

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# LEARN TO LOVE YOUR DATA

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*Measurement is often thought of as an activity that culminates a project. However, measurement is a critical part of an ongoing process.*

It should inform strategy at all points of any project. Digital media gives you the ability to immediately understand what your audience relates to, what it wants to hear from you, and so on. Data, when used most effectively, will actually tell you how to increase your influence.

HubSpot's social media manager Brittany Leaning writes on DataSift, "If you want to actually know the level of success you've achieved instead of guessing, you'll need to use some level of metrics to analyze your influence."

Though brands were the focal point of that statement, it holds equally true for individuals.

TIP #7

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# SOMETIMES YOU NEED TO TRUST YOUR GUT

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*Data will give you valuable insight into what your audience needs to hear from you.*

Paying attention to trends and the news will certainly inform the content you put out there. But a key reason you become – and stay – an influencer is because of your original thoughts and ideas that bring a new subject into the social media conversation. Sometimes you need to listen to that inner voice and be brave enough to introduce something new and exciting.

*“If I had asked people what they wanted, they would have said, ‘Faster horses.’”*

*- Henry Ford, founder of Ford Motor Company, who is very much responsible for making the US a nation of car owners.*

TIP #8

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# IT'S A MARATHON, NOT A SPRINT

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*While social media understandably conjures up thoughts of immediacy and speed, success on social media rarely happens overnight.*

You won't attain influence after a couple of months. And there are no shortcuts. You could try things to boost your Klout score, but that doesn't mean you have clout. If you want to be a social media influencer, you need to put in the time and earn your "influencer" status.

Jay Baer, social media and content strategist and author of *Youtility: Why Smart Marketing is About Help not Hype*, says, "I have interacted with a lot of people who are considered influential in social media. The only thing universal among them is that they worked extremely hard to make it happen."

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# ABOUT MARKETWIRED

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Marketwired is a social communications leader offering best-in-class news distribution and reporting, as well as state-of-the-art social media monitoring and analytics. We open up new opportunities for our clients – helping them tune into the conversations that count, find insights that matter, and influence the right people.

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