# Identifying, Approaching and Cultivating Digital Influencers

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With the myriad of responsibilities that come along with managing a social community, it can be easy to get into the habit of solely focusing on pushing out content to your own followers through your own accounts. There is a whole world of brands and users outside of your first-thought social posts who wield influence that you can tap into. These influencers can reach audiences that you can’t, in a way that you can’t. They can be industry professionals, niche experts, celebrities, professors, media members or even students.

By partnering with them, and having them share your content from their accounts, you’re spreading your reach exponentially. You’ll learn practical steps to identify, approach and cultivate digital influencers, and you can do it all without having to pay for expensive tools or the help of an agency. You’ll also hear success and failure stories within higher ed.

**The latest in influencer marketing**

* Influencers are digital leaders in a specific field or niche market with a highly engaged following
* Utilizing influencers to share your content increases your reach exponentially
* Big celebrities can wield big influence, but it could cost you in $$$ and disclosure
* There’s a better way to do influencer marketing, without having to spend any $$$

**Identifying influencers**

* Look at the audience you’re trying to reach and identify who is influential to them
* Influence does not always mean popularity and popularity does not always mean influence
* True influence drives high levels of engagement
* Leverage the relations you already have
  + Current students
    - Monitor social conversations happening on campus
      * Hashtags, location searches, etc.
      * #FutureSunDevils (high point for incoming students)
      * Comment on these images, but be authentic
      * Look through profiles to find potential influencers
    - See who is getting engagement
    - Form a street team (student ambassadors)
      * Harness influence of current students
      * How has our street team has helped us at BYU?
        + 90% of our Instagram content is user generated
        + Our Instagram following grew from 24K to 72K in a year
        + We’re now in the top universities for engagement
        + Students are not paid, they are just good on social
        + Outreach to students through Instagram meddages
  + Professors
    - You have some of the most influential human beings teaching on your campus
    - Know who they are and know what they’re studying
    - Are they on social?
      * Yes, work with them! Collaborate on posts. Ask for posts.
      * No, work with them! You can capitalize on their influence.
        + Feature their research, words, images, etc.
  + Alumni
    - Keep tabs on influential alums
    - Know when they’ll be visiting campus and collaborate
* Look at the guest speakers you have coming to campus, contact for social posts
* Dig into some robust online tools
  + Brand index and influencer index on Iconsquare Pro
* Influencer attributes to weigh
  + Reach
    - How many people can this influencer potentially reach?
    - On what channels?
    - What’s their engagement rate?
  + Relevance
    - Does this influencer and their audiences align with your objectives and image?
* Make sure you’re comfortable with the image and reputation your potential influencer has

**Approaching influencers**

* Be strategic
* Be professional
* Be straightforward
* Look for the win-win

**Cultivating influencers**

* Don’t be satisfied with a one-and-done
* Look to build a relationship

***Social media and media relations can learn a lot from each other.***

**View presentation slides at** [**Identifying Digital Influencers**](http://www.slideshare.net/mcbridejon/identifying-approaching-and-cultivating-digital-influencers)**.**