

A Toolkit for Organic Influencer Marketing

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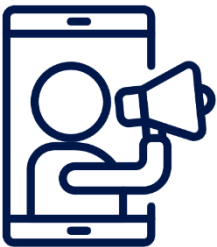


Introduction

Do you want to try something new with your marketing strategy? Perhaps when you think ‘influencer’ you think of a reality TV star whose fee for a social media post would be your entire year’s marketing budget. Or maybe you think influencers are only for selling products and have nothing in common with arts and culture organisations.

In this toolkit, we’re going to debunk myths about influencer marketing and show how they can be an integral part of an arts organisation’s marketing efforts.

What is Influencer Marketing?



Put simply, influencers are **trusted voices** on social media who have the potential to become champions for your organisation.

There is no minimum follower number someone needs to have for them to be an influencer. If they make content which is viewed by an engaged audience who trusts their opinions, they’re an influencer.

Influencer marketing is collaborating with one of these individuals to gain increased exposure for your brand or organisation.

Why it matters



34% of consumers discover products via social media research ([Sprout Social](#)).

Social search is the hot topic on social media marketing at the moment. People are increasingly using social media platforms such as TikTok and Instagram in place of search engines.

For example: someone searches for ‘family things to do in Belfast’ and a local museum features in the first video to appear, with a user-generated video showing their day out with their kids.

If you want your venue to appear high in specific search results, influencers can help you to do that.

What is Organic Influencer Marketing?

We're using the word 'organic' to mean **unpaid**.

An organic campaign means you reach out to an influencer, invite them to experience something at your venue – it could be a creative workshop, the launch of an exhibition, or the opening night of a theatre show. You have no control over whether or not they attend, and if they do, you have no control over whether or not they post about your event.

Working with influencers in a **paid** capacity means you have full control over what content is posted, when it is posted, and access to social media analytics afterwards.

Note: a gifted experience does count as payment. A gifted experience *plus* brand control over the content qualifies as an ad. You'll often see this type of content labelled as 'gifted'. Make sure you're familiar with ad guidelines – the [ASA](#) have some useful resources.

Why use Organic Influencer Marketing?

Pros

- Low financial cost
- User-generated social media content
- Content can be produced in a quick turnaround
- Exposure to a wider audience
- Exposure to a relevant audience
- Increased social media followers/engagement
- Potential to create an ambassador for your venue
- A low-risk way to experiment with a new type of marketing

Cons

- Time investment
- Limited access to social media analytics
- Risk of influencer not attending or not posting content
- Risk of content not meeting your expectations

Planning an Influencer Campaign

Build influencers into your marketing plans from the get-go. Having a successful influencer campaign means spending time researching and planning. You don't want to see an event is selling poorly, panic, and think 'call in the influencers!' Here are the steps you should take:

Set a goal

Decide what you want to achieve from collaborating with influencers. Here are some examples:

- Increase follower number on a social media platform
- Increase ticket sales/attendance at an event or activity
- Increase awareness of an event or activity
- Pivot to attract a new audience segment

Think about the experience

Influencers care about **experiences**. When they experience something interesting and visual with a good story attached to it, it generates engaging content for their social media channels. Therefore, attending exciting local events is in their best interest as well as yours.

Examples of experiences you could invite influencers to:

- Creative workshops
- Theatre shows
- Art exhibition launches
- Immersive or interactive activities
- Museum exhibitions

Finding influencers who are a good fit

Household name influencers are probably not going to be as keen to do organic campaigns, and will have management companies who manage enquiries on their behalf. Small influencers who have high engagement on their posts are going to be a more promising option. Many influencers create content in a niche: family activities, fashion, beauty, travel, food and drinks, to name a few.

To find the right influencers for your project:

- Go to the social media platform (TikTok or Instagram are best)
- Use the search function to search for keywords relevant to your organisation or event
- Click through to the profiles of the videos which appear in the search results
- Ensure the influencer is based near your venue
- Ensure the influencer has a good engagement rate on their posts
- Scroll through their other content to ensure they're a good fit for your campaign

Reaching out

The recommended method of reaching out to influencers you'd like to work with is by sending a friendly Direct Message on a social media platform you know they use. You can move to email once you've built up a rapport via direct messages.

Do say: we have an event coming up that we think you and your TikTok audience would really enjoy, we'd love for you to come along on this day and time.

Don't say: we are offering exposure in lieu of payment.



Meeting offline

An influencer has agreed to attend your event, great! Make sure you tell them the information every audience member wants to know in advance of coming to your space:

- Start and end times
- Accessibility information
- Car parking
- Public transport
- Food and drink options

Making sure the influencer has a great time at your event increases the likelihood of them posting content about it. So, give them a warm welcome, make sure someone is available to answer any questions they have, and make sure they know who to reach out to if they have any questions afterwards.

Creating Content

Integrating key messages

Once again, for organic campaigns, you have no control over what the influencer posts about your experience. However, there are some steps you can take to help get your key messages out there:

- Include your key messages, hashtags or talking points in your liaisons with the influencer so they're on the same page as you.
- Share your social media handles with them and let them know you'd appreciate a tag in the post.
- Be consistent with your key messages on your own social media content.
- Comment on the influencer's post about your event to make it easy for their followers to find you.

Tip: Want your videos to appear higher in social media search results? Include your keywords in the caption, the closed captions, in any on-screen text and hashtags.

Sharing the content

Sharing is caring! Utilise the repost feature to share the influencer's content with your followers. If you want to upload any of the influencer's video to your own social media channels in the future, you must ask for permission.



Measuring Success

We all know how important it is to be able to measure the impact of our marketing efforts. People worry that influencer marketing isn't measurable, but this isn't true. Influencer marketing can be even more measurable than traditional PR! Here are examples of a framework of outputs, outcomes and impact you can use to assess and prove the success of an influencer marketing campaign.

Outputs

- The number of posts
- The type of posts
- Key messages
- Links
- Sentiment

Outcomes

- Reach
- Engagement rate
- Video views
- Saves/shares
- Click-throughs

Impact

- Follower growth
- Database growth
- Footfall
- New audiences
- Enquiries
- Purchases
- Web traffic

Once you have an established relationship with an influencer, you could consider future collaborations which use affiliate links, UTM tracking or discount codes which will allow you to directly measure the engagement the individual is generating for your brand.

Tip: a good engagement rate on a post is between 1% and 3%. Anything over this is very good. Measure engagement rate on social media by taking the total number of likes and comments on a post, dividing that by the total number of followers and multiplying it by 100 to get the percentage.

Moving Forward

Building and maintaining relationships

If an influencer attends an event and shares content about your venue, don't forget about them. Maintain a contact list of influencers much like you would keep a traditional PR list. Then, stay in touch. Don't just add them to your generic mailing list – send them personalised emails about events or projects you know they'll be interested in.

You also might consider working with the influencer in the future on a paid campaign!

Case Study

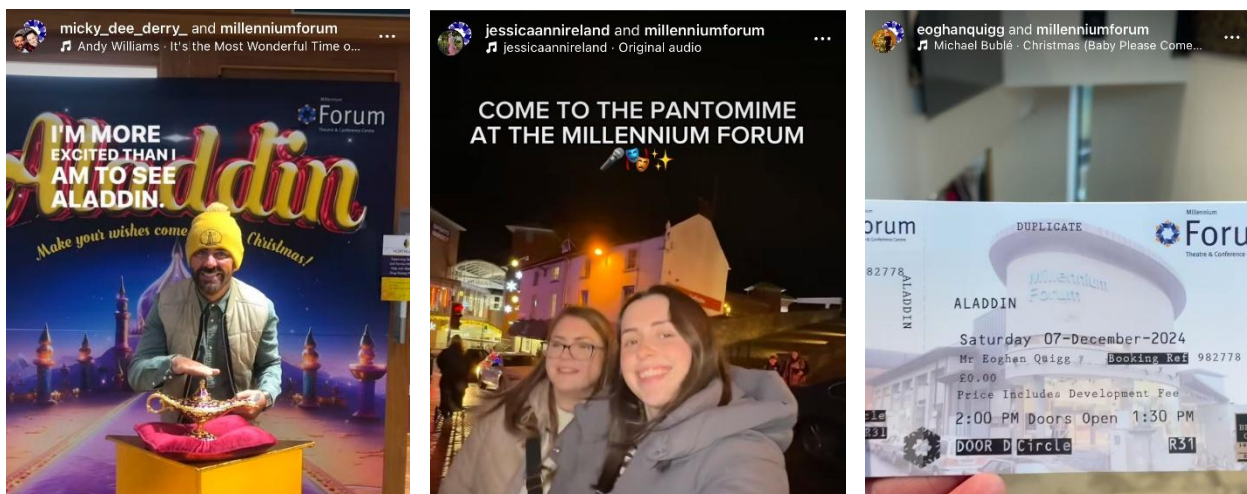
[The Millennium Forum](#) in Derry used influencers for Instagram marketing of their Christmas pantomime, Aladdin, in 2024. Here's a Q&A with their Senior Marketing Officer, Catherine.

How many influencer collaboration posts did you achieve for Aladdin?

We ran four in total - we did pitch to a number of others who we had worked with in the past, but they couldn't make it along on the night. I guess that's just the nature of these kind of events.

Was it a paid campaign or were the influencers only gifted free tickets?

Only one was a paid campaign (we are dipping our toes in this), but the others were gifted free family passes plus VIP reception (pre and post-show), so they did receive a high value gift that was similar in value to the paid one.



How did you go about finding the influencers?

Most of them we sourced ourselves, but we did also use an agency for a few others. Most of the influencers we were suggested by the agency had high expectations in terms of cost, with some wanting travel expenses/hotel accommodation. We will consider this for future shows, but for our panto, we decided to keep things more local and use Derry-based influencers instead.

Was it a success? If so, how did you measure the success of it?

Yes, it gave us a lot of exposure as the influencers we chose had a lot of followers, mostly within our locality, so they fit within our target market. We asked them to tag us in their posts which meant that we could also track the impact in terms of engagement. It's always difficult to fully track in terms of sales impact without directly linking to a show campaign, but that could be something that we look at for the future. For now, I'm using 'influencer marketing' more as a PR tool to spread awareness.

Are you planning on doing similar campaigns again in the future?

Yes, this is something that we want to grow and develop. We will use it for our larger and longer-running shows and get them in to see the show at the start of the run, asking them to post their review content within 48 hours. This should then have some impact on the remainder of the run. We have been dipping our toes into this for the past few years, with varying success rates. I guess it all depends on the show, the timing and, possibly, the cost as each influencer has their own rates for the different types of content. Over the years, we have focussed on digital marketing, so 'influencer' marketing, if we can identify the right accounts that align with our target audiences, offers great potential for us in terms of PR and, ultimately, audience development.

Influencer Campaign Checklist

1. Set Clear Objectives

- Define your goals

2. Plan Your Campaign

- Decide on the experience to offer
- Align the campaign with your marketing strategy
- Identify the key messages

3. Identify Influencers

- Research influencers on your chosen social media platform
- Focus on small creators with good engagement rates
- Ensure influencers are relevant to your organisation
- Create a shortlist of influencers to reach out to

4. Reach Out To Influencers

- Send personalised, friendly messages via DM
- Be transparent about the experience you're offering

5. Collaborate on content

- Give influencers a warm welcome when they attend your event/activity
- Share your key messages with influencers, including hashtags or key facts

6. Measure Success

- Record outputs (number of posts, type of posts, channel)
- Track available statistics (likes, comments, views)
- Assess impact on goals

7. Build Relationships

- Maintain contact with influencers
- Create an ambassador list

8. Reflect

- Evaluate what went well
- Consider the resources needed to continue/expand influencer marketing efforts in future

Additional Resources

Recommended reading:

[An Influencer's Guide to making clear that ads are ads](#) by the Advertising Standards Authority.

Need help with your marketing strategy? [Book an audience appointment](#) with thrive.