

# ARKETI INSIGHTS BRANDING BY TRUST: THE RISE OF THE B2B INFLUENCER

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B2C brands are seeing impressive results from influencer marketing – up to twice as many conversions and more than six times as much website traffic as conventional advertising.

And there's no reason metrics like these shouldn't apply in the B2B space. So what is influencer marketing and how can it work for B2B?



Marketing circles are abuzz about influencer marketing. Tapping into top influencers like Lilly Singh, Brian Kelly, Zoe Sugg and Mark Fischbach to help advance a brand's message is all the rage.

Why all the fuss? Well, when Kim Kardashian West tweets about her favorite hair care product or posts an Instagram selfie wearing a new pair of jeans, the products fly off the shelves. Today's savvy consumer increasingly tunes out conventional advertising such as TV commercials, radio spots and online ads. Endorsements by respected individuals seem more authentic and break through the filters.

Influencer marketing is when an organization uses paid influencers to promote their brand. Typically, these are individuals with recognized expertise – and, most importantly, a large and engaged social media following. The influencer may generate the promotional content themselves, or it may be co-produced by the brand.

This powerful technique is now well established among B2C marketers. And increasingly, B2B brands are waking up to the idea. But the truth is smart B2B marketers were early pioneers of influencer marketing. For instance, at Arketi Group, we've been hiring third-party subject matter experts to talk meaningfully and substantively about our clients' products for more than a decade.

## **A Guide to the B2B Journey**

The buyer's journey has changed dramatically since the arrival of the internet, with a seismic impact on B2B sales and marketing. Gone are the days when enterprise sales teams drove the buying process – determining what information was presented to prospects, when and how.

Now the buyer is in control of their own journey.

Even for large-ticket enterprise purchases, the majority of B2B buyers don't contact a company they're considering buying from until after they've drawn up their shortlist. This upends the traditional role of the sales team. On the one hand, the prospects they come into contact with are now more (self-)qualified than before. On the other, since they never get to know early-stage prospects, they miss the opportunity to persuade and convert them.

The role of that persuasion now shifts to the influencer. As buyers are sifting through information to research their purchasing decisions, content shared by industry insiders is given much more credibility. In fact, 87% of buyers give more credence to industry influencer content.

## **Influencer Marketing in the Real (B2B) World**

A few years ago, we at Arketi Group were working with a technology provider in the contact center industry. We brought together a panel of influencers – an author, an academic and a former trade journalist turned blogger – to help advance a new way of thinking about downtime in call centers. The panel blogged on topics relevant to our client, led webinars and hosted in-person, invite-only roundtable events across the country. The results were impressive: Brand awareness and customer acquisition increased, while contract revenue grew in excess of 30% year on year.

For a provider of VoIP and broadband solutions to small businesses, we partnered with an entrepreneur-author and a small business growth expert to develop a multi-part webinar program. This was followed by a series





of how-to guides for SMBs on topics ranging from technology to accounting. The thought leadership content engaged thousands of prospects and customers, adding more than \$100,000 in new and additional recurring annual subscriptions.

These quick snapshots demonstrate two important points for B2B marketers: First, we've been using influencer marketing for years, we just didn't call it that. And second, using influencers as part of a marketing program can generate some serious business results – which makes it all the more surprising that only 15% of B2B companies say they are currently engaged in influencer marketing.

## Becoming Fluent in Influence

Now's the time for B2B companies to start exploring influencer marketing, even if it's a small program with only one or two influencers. As influencers become more knowledgeable about your business, they and you will find new ways for them to authentically attach themselves to your brand. This will give more impact to the amplification of your messages.

It's important to understand that the experts' role in an influencer campaign is not to explicitly endorse or promote your products. Rather, they should be educating potential buyers on the topics and ideas that are important to your brand. Once in place, these third-party experts can fuel content marketing programs inside your organizations by creating rich, valuable content that prospects will not find elsewhere.

## Finding Potential Influencers for Your Brand

So where does one find an influencer? One place to start is an online search to see who is trending on key topics relevant to your company. To see if these individuals are considered subject-matter experts, examine their social media following – Twitter, LinkedIn, Facebook and even Instagram and Snapchat. Then look for blogs, podcasts and videos they have created or participated in; these will give you a feel for the individual and whether they will be a match with your organization.

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Don't limit yourself strictly to social media professionals. Also look where one traditionally finds experts: in universities, trade and industry associations, journalists and authors.

Think your industry is too specialized to have such influencers? Think again. Check out the listing of 40 B2B tech influencers at [arketi.com/blog/40-b2b-tech-influencers-know](http://arketi.com/blog/40-b2b-tech-influencers-know). In fact, the more specialized the industry, the more powerful the voice of its recognized experts.

B2C brands are seeing impressive results from influencer marketing. Some reports cite twice as many conversions and more than six times as much website traffic as conventional advertising efforts. For every \$1 spent on B2C influencer marketing programs, companies earn \$6.50 back. And there's no reason metrics like these shouldn't apply in the B2B space.

Influencer marketing is a powerful way for businesses to establish credibility, raise brand awareness and, ultimately, generate sales. With these expected payoffs, it's unquestionably worth the effort for B2B CMOs to start experimenting with influencer marketing.

## STOP SELLING. START LISTENING.

*Arketi Insights* is part of **Stop Selling. Start Listening** – a way of thinking that reorients BtoB marketing to place buyers and their needs at the center of all marketing priorities.

Understanding what buyers care about, how they make their decisions, and how they want to receive information, makes marketing about them, not about us.

We believe that, going forward, our first question must be: *will the buyer care?* And the way we'll know that is not by emailing more, tweeting more, or lead-nurturing more. It's by asking questions, observing behavior, measuring results – and listening to what buyers are telling us.

For more on this movement, and to add your voice, visit [arketi.com/stopselling](http://arketi.com/stopselling).



where  
marketing  
generates revenue

**Arketi Group** is a public relations and digital marketing firm that helps business-to-business technology organizations accelerate growth through intelligent strategy, messaging, public relations, digital marketing, branding, and lead generation and nurturing. Consistently recognized by *BtoB* magazine as one of nation's "Top BtoB Agencies," Arketi's core belief is that marketing generates revenue.

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