



# HOW TO WRITE YOUR FIRST INFLUENCER MARKETING STRATEGY

by Kirsty Sharman





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Before we get started, I thought it might be best to introduce myself. My name is Kirsty Sharman. I've been helping brands connect with influencers, tell stories, and positively influence customers for more than four years now.

A few weeks ago I wrote an opinion piece for SocialMediaToday.com entitled: 'What, exactly, do brands want out of Influencer Marketing?'. I wrote it to help marketers get to the root of what they are truly after when they include influencers in their marketing strategies. Since then I've been inundated with emails from marketers who are looking for advice on how to write their first Influencer Marketing strategy. This eBook is my attempt at helping them do just that.

Marketers know, as well as I do, that the role of the influencer has shifted from the initial question of how to include the influencer in the strategy, to how to write a strategy that harnesses the real power of the influencer.

When I first started interacting with influencers, we worked off Excel spreadsheets, emails and even the occasional fax. Yup, you read that correctly - even the occasional fax! We have come a long way since then. The marketing industry has gained more knowledge, the influencers have gained fame and technology has (and continues to) help us make smarter decisions when it comes to Influencer Marketing.

Even though we've advanced as marketers and we have the technology to help us be smarter, the principles behind any marketing campaign remain the same. Without a solid strategy, which maps out your road to the top, it's almost impossible for your brand to get there.

For those of you who don't have an Influencer Marketing strategy yet, this eBook will help you write your first one.

Before we get into the detail, there is one reality I need to highlight. Consumers have changed. With social media and technology flooding the internet with over 200 million pieces of content a minute, it's essential that brands find a way to break through the noise. Influencer Marketing is one of the proven ways to do this.

**"A brand is no longer what we tell the consumer it is - it is what consumers tell each other it is"**  
- Scott Cook

For this reason, I believe that every brand in the world should have an Influencer Marketing element to their overall strategy. The next six chapters will walk you through the detail of how to build your first Influencer Marketing strategy from scratch.

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# CHAPTER 1

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## Understanding what, exactly, your brand wants out of Influencer Marketing

As an industry, we've figured out that Influencer Marketing is no longer just a trend: it's a reality. Everyone in the marketing world is talking about it. From BuzzFeed to Bloomberg, the comments are all the same - if brands can get Influencer Marketing right, the return on investment is huge.

**"We know some of the brands getting Influencer Marketing right are generating at a 6:1 return on investment"**

- 2014 Influencer Marketing Benchmarks Report, Burst Media.

This chapter is your first and most important step to understanding how to use Influencer Marketing effectively to get your brand, and or product, noticed by the right people for the right reasons.

But it's hard to get something right if you don't fully understand what you really want to achieve. If you don't know what exactly your brand wants out of Influencer Marketing, you'll struggle to create a great strategy that works. Getting it right is important - strategies that are built around grey areas usually lead to grey campaigns. So you have to be absolutely sure about what, exactly,

you want to achieve with your Influencer Marketing campaign before you take the first step.

You might not know what you're after just yet, but I can help you define what it is that you're not after. As marketers, what we're not after when we run an influencer campaign is clicks, shares or likes - that's just the result that proved it worked. What we're really after when working with influencers is to harness the power of conversation - because we know that in the long term, conversations will bring more value to our brand than clicks.

An important lesson is to not be short-sighted and forget the value of these conversations because you are looking to prove the value of your investments right now. You will be missing out on mining the black gold of the online world if you do.

Mark Zuckerberg correctly defined the effect of conversations on brand building when he said:

**"People influence people. Nothing influences people more than a recommendation from a trusted friend. A trusted referral influences people more than the best broadcast message"**

The diagram below shows us how we can use influencers to create these conversations. The small triangle at the top is ultimately where your brand wants to be.



Long-term content marketing and media efforts were the old-fashioned ways of getting to the top, but this took time and patience and in the fast paced world we live in today it's rare that brands have the patience needed to go this route. Influencers are simply a shortcut - or a "smartcut" if you want to call it that - to get you to the small triangle at the top quicker.

As marketers we're all just trying to create conversations that will ultimately increase our popularity in the online world. We know that if our service or product are the most popular - consumers will be more likely to choose us. Getting Influencer Marketing right means that the conversations we create lead to audiences that are more likely to react to our advertising, more likely to care and ultimately more likely to buy our service or product when the time is right.

Now that we've covered the what, let's move onto the when.



**"Word of mouth generates two times the sales of paid advertising"**

- McKinsey

# CHAPTER 2

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## Knowing when to use Influencer Marketing

This chapter will help you understand when the time is right to use Influencer Marketing. We know that we're looking to create conversations through influence, but now it's time to narrow that down with your brand's objectives and see where Influencer Marketing fits in.

By recognising that influencers need to be part of a bigger strategy, we should then ask ourselves how influencers could support that strategy through conversation. Below are six of the most common reasons why brands will turn to Influencer Marketing. If your brand is looking to achieve any of the objectives listed below, then you're on the right track.

### 1 You're looking for amplification through conversation

Marketers are starting to understand that their content will only travel organically as far as it is worth. It's rare that every campaign we run as a marketer will have remarkable content - sometimes we need to look at alternative ways to amplify it. Influencers are a great way to do just that.

### 2 You're looking to build loyalty through conversation

There is no better way to influence your consumers than by word-of-mouth. We know that people are more likely to make a purchase based on what their peers recommend, and most importantly, they are most likely to feel loyalty to a brand thereafter.

**"Customers acquired through word-of-mouth have a 37% higher retention rate"**

- Deloitte

### 3 You're trying to reach new audiences through conversation

It's important that you know who your target audience is. But it's also important that you understand that we can't put everyone into the same category. Working with influencers is a great way for brands to explore how their content resonates with people outside of their exact target audience. Let's use Lego as an example. We'd assume that Lego should only use parenting bloggers to talk about their new product line - but we'd be assuming wrong. Gamers, tech fans and even businessmen looking for something to do at their desk

might be interested in their new product line. If we use the right influencers, with the right angles, you can spread your brand's message to an audience you never knew existed.

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#### **You're looking to create content that generates conversation**

Historically brands are used to owning their own content because they find it easier to control the messaging and seed it through specific channels. It also allows the brand to keep a tight hold on the conversations that take place.

However, just because it is easy it doesn't mean that this is the best way to do it.

The most successful Influencer Marketing campaigns I've run (and seen) have been ones where the influencers worked with the brand not for the brand. This allows them to leverage their audience in a considerate way, while maintaining their own reputation at the same time. I've said it before and I'll say it again - a successful campaign is one where both the influencer and the brand win. The influencer gets the opportunity to create content they know their audience will enjoy, and the brand gets to benefit from the conversation that happens thereafter.

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#### **You're looking to disrupt the path to purchase through the power of conversation**

Consumers sift through an incredible amount of noise online. Brand chatter is everywhere - on television, social media, radio and print. Your customers have learned to filter this constant stream of data down to a dull

roar. For your brand to leap out and be noticed, you have to disrupt their path to purchase. This is where the influencer's value really steps up, because consumers trust a peer-to-peer recommendation far more than brand ads.

**"90% of consumers trust peer recommendations; only 33% trust ads"**  
- Nielsen

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#### **You're looking to build brand awareness through conversation**

The final, and probably most common use for Influencer Marketing is simply using influencers to create mass brand awareness about a new product, service or launch your brand is having.

Influencer Marketing allows you to create awareness in the most relevant areas possible.

For example, if you're launching a new type of gaming console, the best people to reach your target audience are the people who already write, Tweet and make videos about gaming. It is often quicker to contract relevant influencers, than it is for your brand to try build up an audience interested in gaming, and then target them with your content.

No two marketers or brands will have the exact same reasons for using Influencer Marketing but the one thing they will always have in common is that they'd want to generate conversation through influence. By the time you've completed reading this eBook you'll have a strategy to do just that!



# CHAPTER 3

## Create your Influencer Marketing strategy framework

Now that you've established what you want to achieve through influencer marketing and when your brand should use it, it's time to put pen to paper - or more likely fingers to keys. This is where we start building the framework for your Influencer Marketing strategy, which will cover your goals, the message you'd like to convey and how you plan to integrate all this into one strategy.

There are six phases to this chapter. We're going to work through them one at a time, but it's important that you cover all six phases if you want to ensure a bulletproof Influencer Marketing strategy.

### Right, let's get going!

No marketing strategy worth its salt or weight or any other cliché that you fancy throwing at it, ignores the value proposition. You should have a realistic view of what your strategy is setting out to achieve, the time frame in which this is expected to work and the return on investment. So, you'll need to:

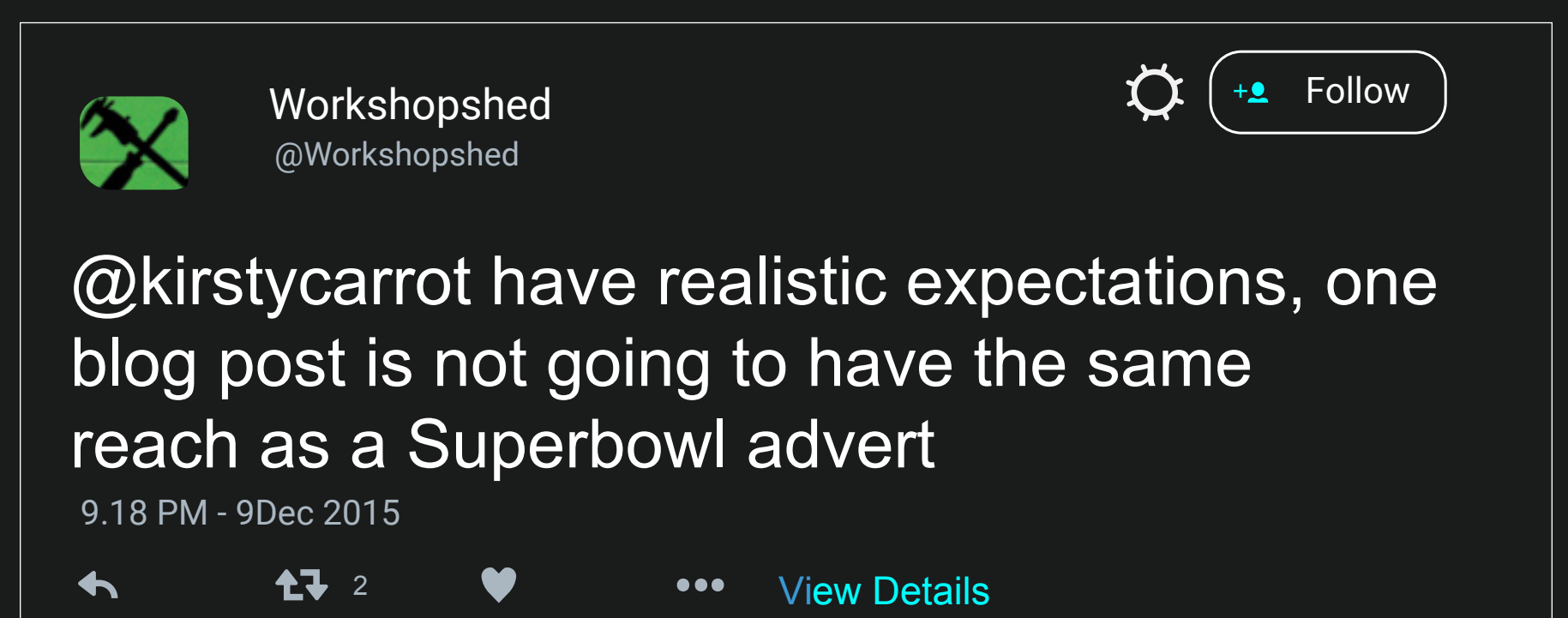
### Phase one: Determine your goals

A great way to get going here is to select two or three top line campaign goals - you can use the guidelines outlined in chapter two for this phase. 95% of influencer campaigns run

because of one of the reasons mentioned in chapter two. All you need to do is ask yourself this series of questions:

- Does my brand need amplification?
- Does my brand need to build consumer loyalty?
- Should my brand be reaching new audiences?
- Would my brand benefit from content creation?
- Is my brand looking to disrupt the path to purchase?
- Does my brand need help getting awareness?

If you answered yes to any of the above, they should become the goals for your campaign. If you answered yes to all of the above then narrow down your focus to the three most important ones. But remember the Tweet below when setting your KPI's.





Now that you have a maximum of three goals your strategy should start coming to life!

## Phase two: Finding the most relevant influencers

Partnering with the right and most relevant influencers to share your story, is the backbone of any solid Influencer Marketing strategy. The success of your campaign depends on your relationship with each influencer and how well they understand and relate to your brand. A strong influencer is one that believes in your brand, has an already established audience, and is proud of their association to your campaign.

I usually use this simple diagram to understand what relevance means for my clients. If we can find the overlap of what the brand wants to say, and what the consumers are actually interested in, then all we need to do is find the influencers who are most relevant to tell that story.

If you use a method like this it's quite simple to define the type of influencers you should be looking to partner with. Too many brands only work with influencers they know and like, but that's a very dangerous approach. Not only is it

limiting their reach, but it is effectively eliminating future potential influencers. It's important to challenge what you know and step out of your comfort zone as a marketer. Highlighting new influencers whom you don't (personally) follow on Twitter is the first step to doing this.

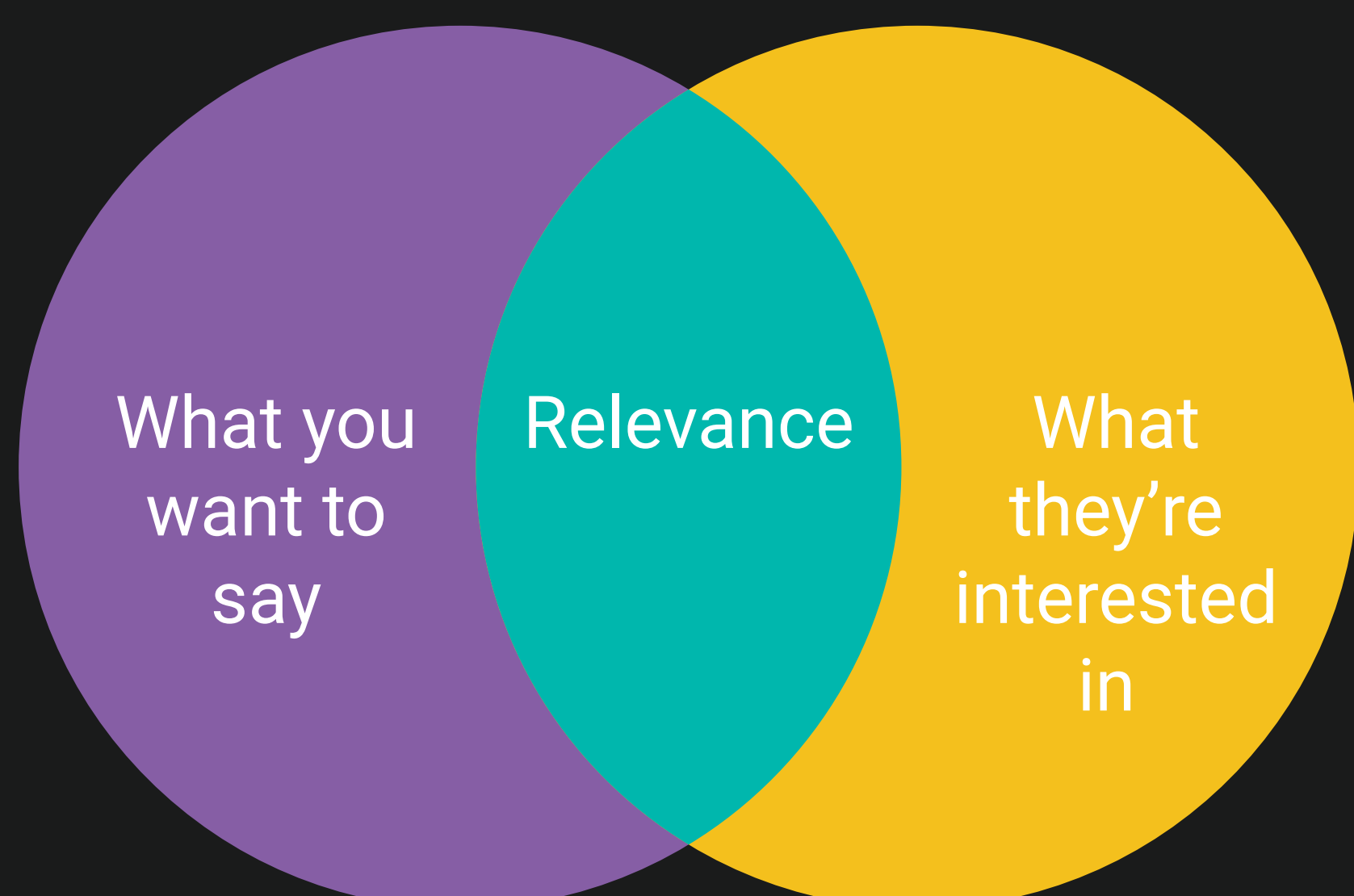
**“Good digital marketers understand the landscape. Great digital marketers challenge it”**

- Kirsty Sharman

The next step is to find and connect with these relevant influencers. Just like brands, influencers come in all shapes and sizes. There is no one-size-fits-all dynamic and brands can mix and match across tier one, two and three influencers to achieve their goals. When it comes to influencer outreach, you can either use the old-school method or the new-school method - the choice is yours.

### Old school method:

- Google and research influencers who have created content that aligns with the overlap above.
- Reach out via social media and engage with them. Request an email address when the time is right.
- Email each influencer individually and give them a top line brief of what your campaign entails and why you'd like to partner with them.
- If they are interested, negotiate pricing and terms for upcoming projects.
- Secure and seal the deal!



## New school method:

- Use an Influencer Marketing platform that automates the search, pricing negotiations, project management and reporting all in one place.

There could be untapped influencer networks out there which are hugely relevant to your brand. Don't make the mistake of limiting yourself only to influencers you know and follow. The technology exists to help brands identify the most relevant influencers who already speak to the overlap market - use it!

It's worth noting that while the higher ranked influencers have impressive reach and audience engagement, lower ranked influencers can be just as valuable. Sometimes those that sit on the middle tier are valuable additions to a campaign as they are often easier to engage with, offer new insights and sub-communities to the mix and can allow for a campaign to scale rapidly. They may also one day be sitting in the upper tiers of influencers so what better time to build a long-term relationship?

## Phase three: Building the story

Now that we've highlighted how important it is to partner with the most relevant influencer, who will share or create content on behalf of your brand, it's time to start planning a creative and story with the help of the influencer, which they will share with their audiences.

The following formula is a tried and tested

recipe for a successful Influencer Marketing strategy:

**Relevant influencers**  
+  
**Remarkable stories**  
=  
**Conversations to be remembered**

Influencers across the globe are building niche followings on social channels like Instagram, YouTube, Snapchat, Twitter and Facebook. They do what every brand can only dream of - captivating their audiences and driving conversations with real customers every day.

"Every niche has influencers who have cultivated huge audiences. The goal of the marketer is borrow that audience and credibility in a sensitive and considerate way."

-Andy Crestodina, Co-Founder of Orbit Media



They know what works and what doesn't, let's use that to our advantage as marketers. When it comes to building the story for your strategy let's be clear about what you, as a marketer, are responsible for.

Your job as a marketer is to write an effective brief, one that will allow each influencer to build the right story on behalf of your brand. I know this seems scary but remember the reality I mentioned in the introduction? Consumers have changed. This means you, as a marketer, need to change your thinking too. This phase is not going to guide you

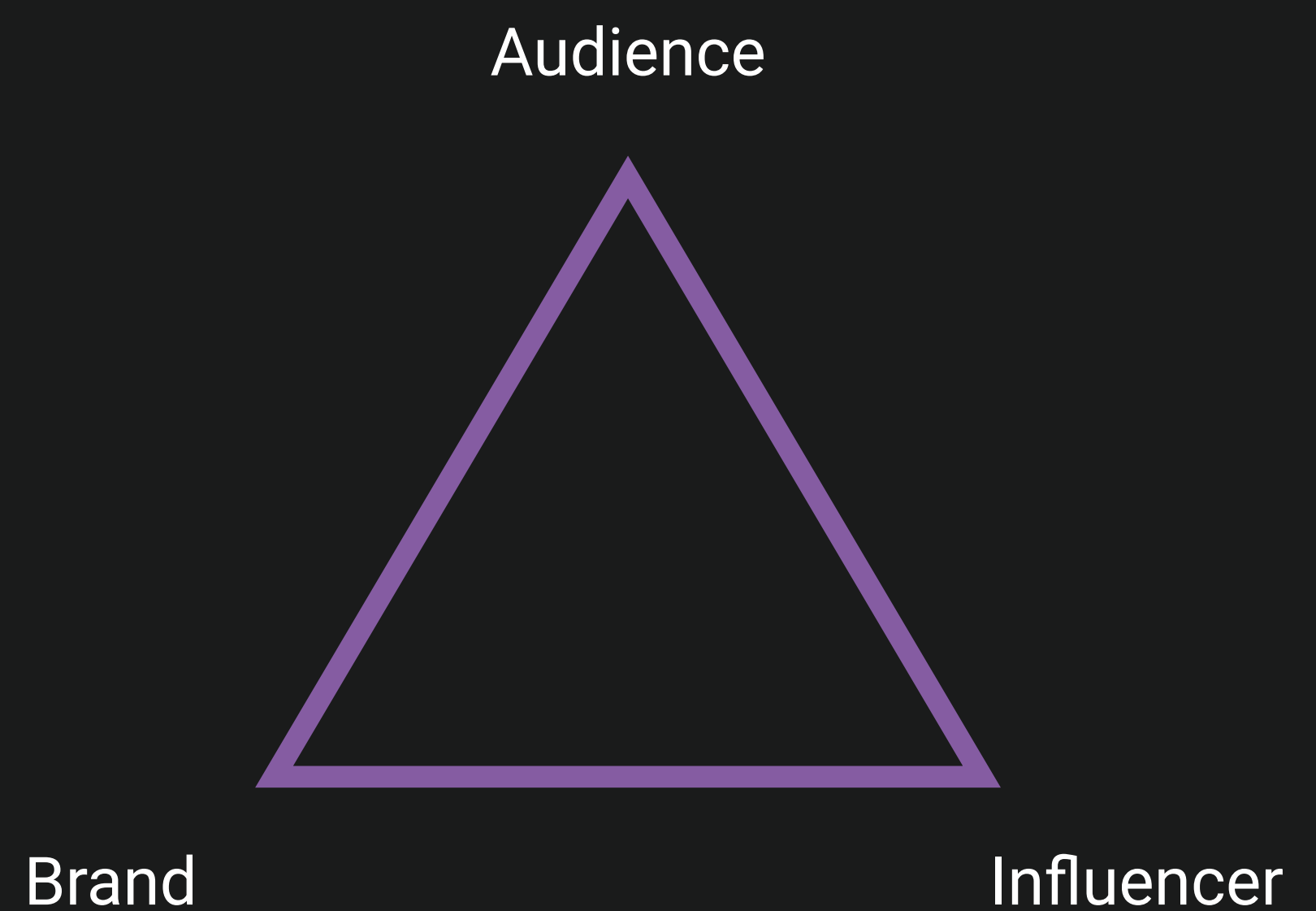
down the comfortable path of crafting the right story yourself. It's going to help you guide the influencer to do this for you.

**When creating a brief for influencers, remember these five crucial points:**

- It's essential to give them only the most relevant information. Remember that they don't know your brand as well as you do so it's unlikely that they will be able to prioritise the most important information even if you flood them with history and content.
- Share with them the other creative assets you're building for the campaign - so they understand the tone and messaging behind the campaign.
- Share with them the goals that you set out in phase one of this campaign.
- Let influencers know how you plan to measure the campaign (ensure they understand the importance of driving conversation).
- Give them a fair timeline to craft a story (3 to 6 working days is fair depending on the scale of your campaign).

The brief will then become part of your Influencer Marketing strategy. Add a checklist to your brief to ensure that the content you get back from each influencer ensures a happy medium in the triangle below.

A campaign where everybody wins is what you should aim for, the triangle below explains this.



The brand wins because the campaign meets business objectives, the influencer wins because they are proud to post the content, and the audience wins because they enjoy the experience.

This simple checklist should help you ensure that your Influencer Marketing campaigns are filled with great stories:

- Does this story highlight the brand values?
- Would the influencer be proud to share this story?
- Would the audience enjoy reading this story?
- Does the story align with your goals?

**“Real influencers do not sway our decisions because of how high they score on a digital scale. They do because they make their stories relevant to us”**

- Cendrine Marrouat, Social Analyst



## Phase four: The hook

The influencer might craft the story but as the brand it's important that you ensure it has a hook. This is the talking point that can transform social customers into paying ones.

But keep in mind, the hook is not something you care about. It's something the consumer cares about. You need to capture the audience by using a hook to get their attention and inspire them to take action, even if it's not right now.

This means allowing the influencers to tailor their stories, while ensuring that the hook is good enough to spark and prolong conversations. It needs to be powerful and engaging enough to inspire the market to listen more intently and engage more directly, without controlling the conversation or shifting the tone.

**"I often see brands jump from phase one to phase four overnight. They just end up disappointed. We're marketing to humans here, not robots. Let's start acting like it"**

- Kirsty Sharman, Webfluential

To ensure you have the right hook, ask yourself. What will happen after the influencer posts? Will consumers talk? Will they care?

If they won't, you need to go back to the drawing board and make sure you have a strong enough hook to ensure the





campaign lives on long after the influencer's initial conversation, and continues to be a talking point among consumers as they spread the word. The hook can propel you from the middle of the triangle to the top - so it's important that you get it right.

### **Phase five: Integration into your overall strategy**

Now that you know who your influencers are, how to create the perfect story, and how to ensure the right hook is used, you need to integrate your influencer campaign into every part of your content strategy.

Every last piece of content from your newsletters to your brand's Facebook posts must be part of a cohesive whole - a content ecosystem, if you will. You're working with people who your consumers feel are the best content creators of our time, it only makes sense to ensure you get maximum value out of that relationship. Integrating your influencer campaign into your overall strategy will ensure you do.

Always refer back to the goals you wish to achieve with your Influencer Marketing campaign and nurture the relationships which support these goals. Make them part of each stage of your marketing and content strategies and be prepared to adapt and expand your influencer network as you go.

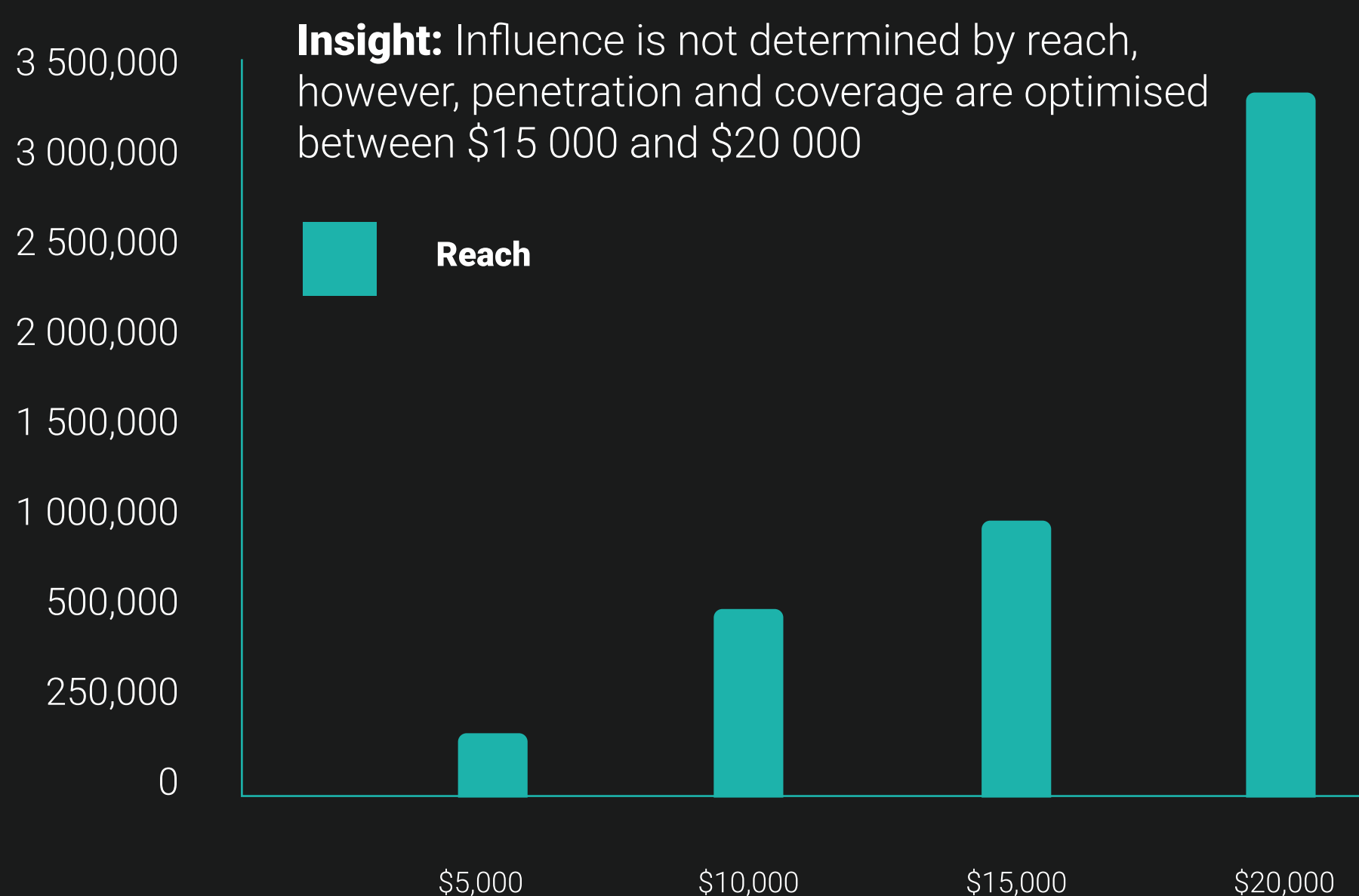


# CHAPTER 4

## Let's talk about money

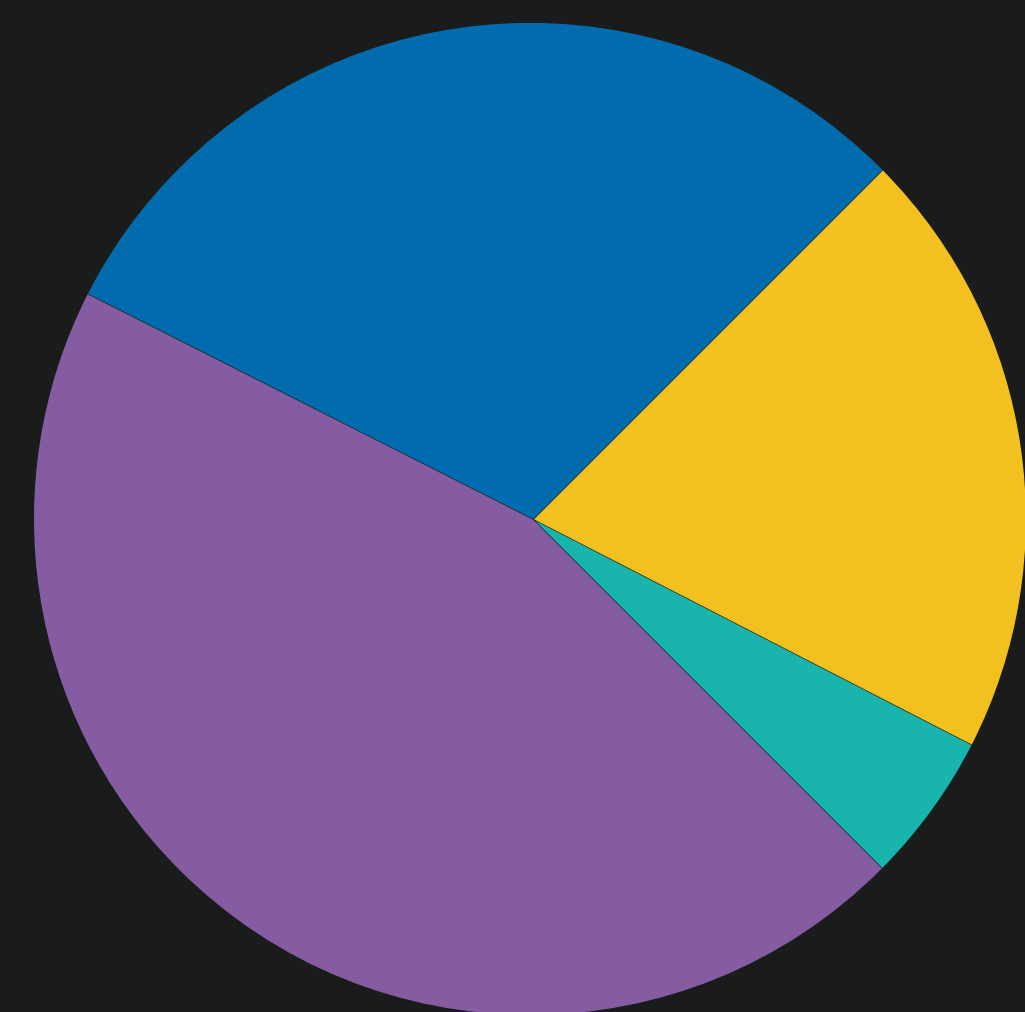
We've gone through great trouble to ensure your campaign strategy covers all the bases. We've got a list of influencers, the perfect way to craft a relevant story and even a hook to ensure the conversation grows wings and travels further. Now it's time to talk about the part of the strategy everyone likes to avoid, money.

First up is the part where I give you the tools to go out there and fight for the influencer budget you deserve. In 2015 we analysed over 100 Influencer Marketing campaigns using Webfluential data to find out where the optimal spend sits. The graph below details just that.



Now that we understand the the costs associated with carrying endorsements to millions of people, it's time to break that figure down. Having worked in this industry for four years now, and run hundreds of influencer campaigns, I've

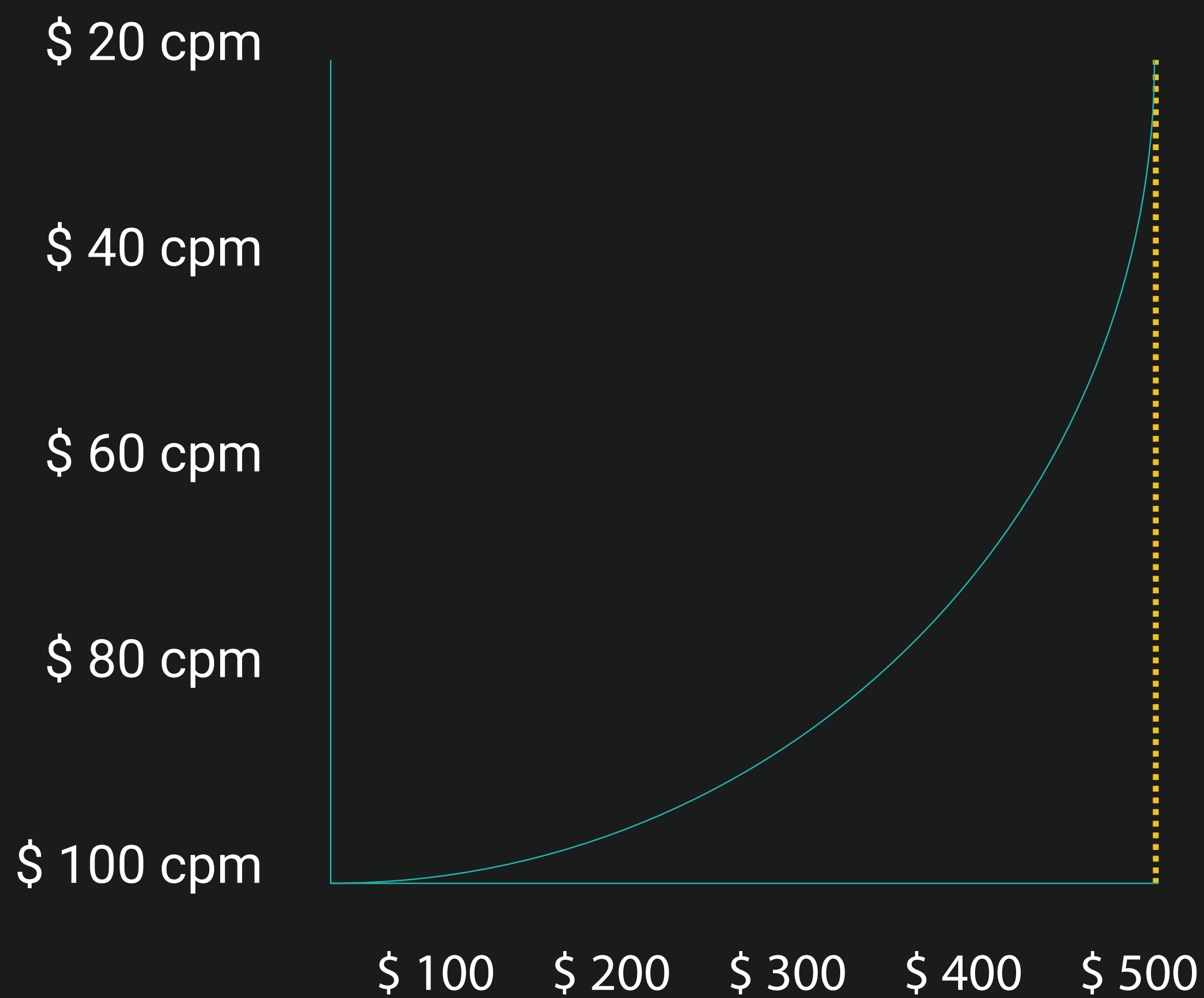
come to align to a certain formula. Please note this formula is flexible depending on the campaign but it's a great starting tool to include in your strategy.



- 20% to admin, management and campaign fees
- 5% to reporting and tracking fees
- 45% to influencer fees (including content creation)
- 30% to paid media fees

You'll notice the addition of paid media into the chart above - it isn't something we discussed in the strategy steps above but it is something that every Influencer Marketing campaign needs.

With social media becoming more of a pay-to-play environment, results are further secured by boosting influencer content to



new audiences. Paid media guarantees prime real estate positioning of your branded endorsements, ensuring that each influencer content gets enough opportunity to spark those valuable conversations.

But most importantly, and this is the reason I think most people haven't figured it out yet, is that influencers are a premium media. A well-deserved premium media, but a premium media nonetheless. The addition of paid media

effectively helps you carry your branded endorsement further - at a lower CPM rate.

I've drawn a graph above to illustrate.

Although we don't usually include budgets in our overall strategies I think it's important to highlight the points above. Much time will go into creating your first Influencer Marketing strategy - understanding how to budget accordingly is the key to a successful campaign.

# CHAPTER 5

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## Added Value

So what else can you get out of Influencer Marketing? Surely there is more to it than just starting and spreading conversations? You're right. There are a ton of extra, value-added bonuses which make Influencer Marketing even more valuable for the brands that are doing it right.

When writing your strategy, make a note of the points below so you can be sure to deliver some added value to your overall campaign.

### **Insights:**

Every Influencer campaign has different goals. The common ones in the past have usually focussed on reach and engagement levels, but there is one metric that hasn't pulled enough attention. I stressed it earlier in this eBook and I'll mention it again: it's not the click-through rate or the blog readership, it's not the famous engagement rate either. Nope. It's the conversation, and along with that the conversation insights. With that data, brands can learn about their target audience from conversations sparked by influencers. As digital marketers, it's

important to see how people react to your content, the questions people ask, and the paths your shared content travels. This data can be more informative than your own analytics - because people tend to react differently when in conversation with a trusted source.

### **SEO:**

Google wants authentic voices which it can use to guide its search choices. Smart Influencer Marketing adds that extra SEO bonus which boosts rankings and content linkings back to your brand. Credible influencers sharing your content is powerful and effective, not only today but also months down the line when consumers start searching for your brand on Google.

### **Production:**

As the Influencer Marketing industry evolves and more brands are willing to experiment and entrust their campaigns to relevant influencers, we're seeing a rise in the strategic use of creative production elements. Influencers are naturally creative when churning out content and they know exactly how to speak to (and capture) the







audience you're trying to target. By creating videos, images and supporting the influencers' stories with professional production elements, brands are more likely to strike the balance between professional branded content and stories that their consumers actually want to watch.

### **Market research:**

The traditional way to conduct market research involves rooms with one-way glass, focus groups and often a series of questions asked by a group leader. The internet has given us the tools to do things quicker, and in a more efficient

way - why not use them?

Social influencers already have established audiences in the niche demographics you're looking to survey. Working closer with influencers can be valuable not only to share data, but also to collect it. Influencers allow you to ask more people questions, track reliable data, and look into the conversations that happen when people think your brand isn't watching.

Each of the value added points below could have a chapter dedicated to themselves. But I'll save that for the next eBook.

# CHAPTER 6

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## Reporting

Remember the campaign goals you set? Now it's time to figure out how we're going to measure them.

In order for you to effectively measure your campaign ROI (return on investment), you'll need to put metrics in place and track these during the rollout of your Influencer Marketing campaign. If you're using an Influencer Marketing platform, the reporting metrics are usually included - if you aren't then ensure each influencer knows the data you'll need back from them at the end of your campaign.

Reporting correctly is one of the most crucial steps to any marketing campaign - if you're clear about the process you'll follow in your strategy, the process of post-campaign reporting will become a breeze.

Keep in mind that as much as the results will allow you to measure the past, they will also enable you to optimise your future Influencer Marketing strategies.

The things you should look to highlight through reporting are:

- The influencers that generated the most conversation
- The content that traveled the furthest
- The reach and conversations in comparison to budget spent

If you're looking for some case studies and resources to help you benchmark in the future, a great place to start is the resource page over at Webfluential.

[webfluential.com](https://www.webfluential.com)

# Conclusion

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“Vision is a destination  
- a fixed point to which we  
focus all effort.

Strategy is a route  
- an adaptable path to get us  
where we want to go.”

- Simon Sinek, author & motivational speaker

I hope you've enjoyed reading this eBook, and I'm confident that you're already well on your way to writing your first Influencer Marketing Strategy. The simple truth is that a solid strategy will yield great benefits to your brand, helping you connect with the right influencers who ignite meaningful conversations with your preferred target market.

Call it buying an audience before they buy your product, call it Influencer Marketing, call it what you like. At the end of the day as marketers we're all just trying to create conversations that will ultimately increase our popularity in the online world - because we know that if we're the most popular, consumers will come to us.

For more information on Influencer Marketing, follow me on Twitter @KirstyCarrot or visit our website:

[webfluential.com](http://webfluential.com)

Good luck with your first Influencer Marketing strategy!

