

Influencer Relations Has Grown Up

B2B technology still talks about influencer relations as if it is a social add-on. A useful extra. A campaign tactic. But in a world where buyers form opinions through expert creators, podcasters and practitioner communities long before they speak to sales, the channel has become something that delivers far more impact.

A RESEARCH REPORT BY RESONANCE + AGENCY · 2026

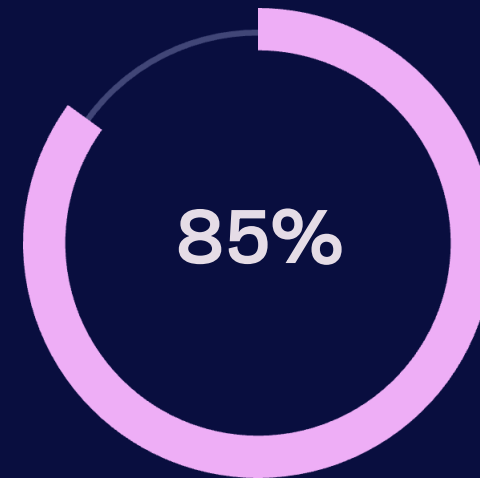


The Adoption Curve Has Already Shifted

AI is changing the way trust is built and influencers are becoming a key part of the programme.

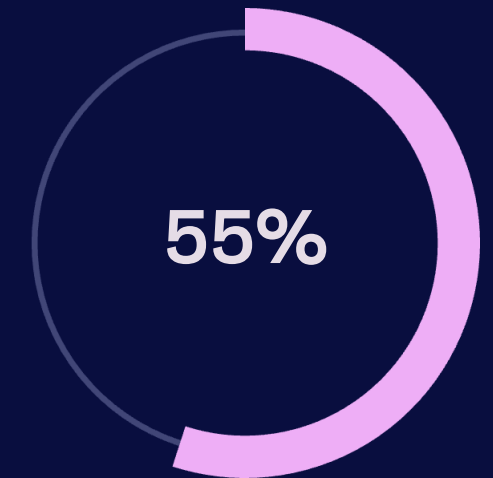
Buyers are forming opinions through expert creators, podcasters, newsletter writers, technical educators and practitioner communities long before they speak to sales. In many categories, these voices now shape discovery, credibility and demand more directly than branded messaging ever could.

Resonance + Agency's April 2026 research confirms that Influencer relations is no longer a fringe experiment in B2B technology, it has moved decisively into the mainstream marketing mix.



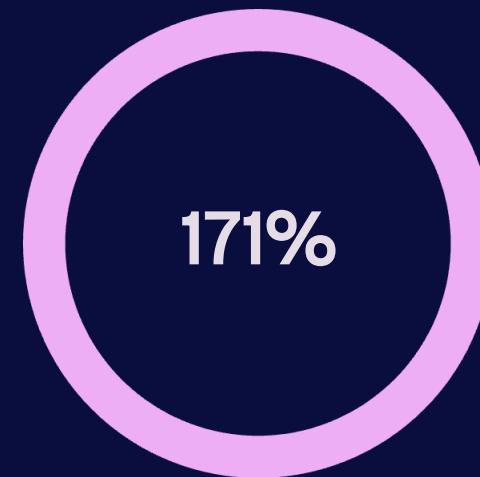
B2B Marketers Using Influencers

TopRank, 2023, up from just 34% in 2020



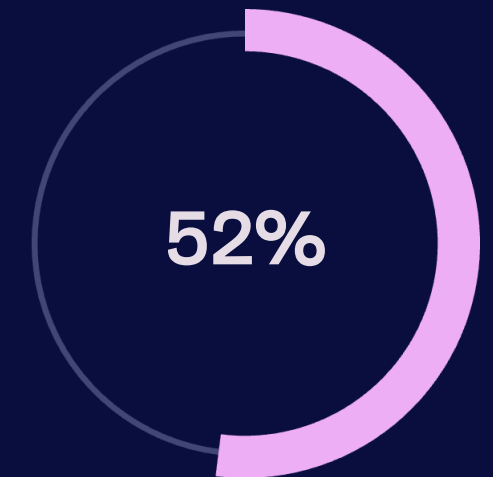
Partner with Creators

LinkedIn, 2025, B2B marketers leveraging influencer marketing



YoY Spend Increase

CreatorIQ 2025-26 survey of 1,723 respondents



Rate It Strategically Important

Agency April 2026 B2B Influencer Relations research (100 senior marketers)

From Creator Campaigns to Trust Infrastructure

The biggest mistake in B2B technology is to interpret influencer relations through a consumer lens. In B2B, it's not about celebrity transfer, lifestyle reach or surface-level brand awareness. You must start with an understanding of who you need to influence - your target buyer, your ICP. In B2B, the most valuable influencers are usually trusted practitioners, educators, operators, analysts, hosts and technical experts. Their credibility comes from usefulness. It comes from knowledge and expertise, not fame and millions of likes and followers.

B2B buyers are looking for guidance, information and confidence. LinkedIn's 2025 Influence Report found marketers rate peer and influencer recommendations above price competitiveness, household-name fame and advanced product features when thinking about what makes a B2B brand influential.

That is why podcasts, LinkedIn, YouTube, specialist newsletters and technical communities are emerging as a key influence channel. It's why Substack is exploding, YouTube is becoming a dominant source. They are not just a place for entertainment, they are channels where trust and influence is built.



The B2B Influencer Is a Different Animal

What LinkedIn's 2025 Influence Report Found

Marketers rate peer recommendations above price competitiveness, household-name fame and advanced product features when thinking about what makes a B2B brand influential.

Agency Research: April 2026

59% said industry practitioners and hands-on experts are among the most valuable independent voices.

45% each for LinkedIn creators and YouTube. These are the joint top priority channels.

These are not vanity channels. They are where trust is built.

Influencer relations is about narrative, reputation, third-party validation and share of voice. It is about building relationships. It is also highly reusable. A strong creator collaboration can become social proof, sales enablement, event content, paid media, newsletter content, podcast clips, executive thought leadership and source material that shapes wider digital discovery.



The Economics Are Starting to Stack Up

Influencer relations has faced a significant objection for a number of years. It's a fun and experimental tactic, but it's traditionally been difficult to prove. While public case studies are still few and far between, and the market is nowhere near full transparency on CAC, pipeline and payback, the direction of travel is becoming clearer, and the results are increasingly hard to ignore.

Dell Technologies

2x engagement and more than **8,000 landing-page views** by amplifying research through tech influencers.*

Adobe

150% more LinkedIn form completions through expert-led activation on the platform.*

SAP Tech Unknown Podcast

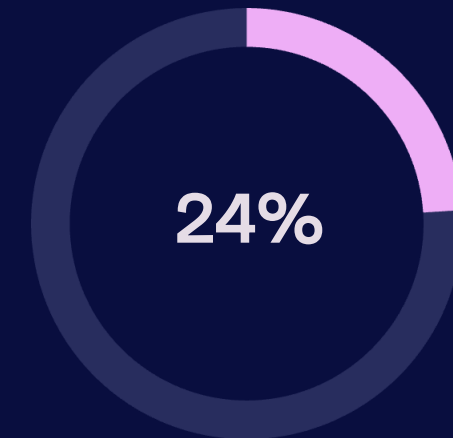
66% increase in downloads and more than **52 million social impressions** from a creator-led content programme.*

Sprinklr

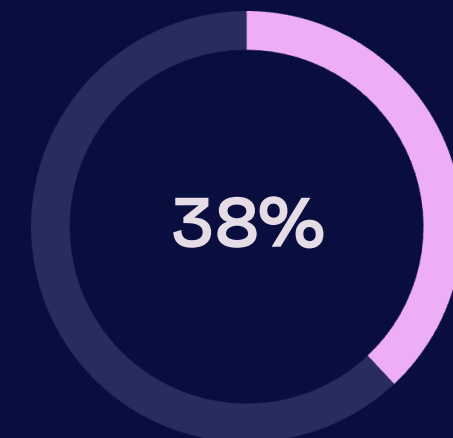
Reached **23.4 million people**, nearly **100,000 engagements**, exceeded MQL benchmarks and tied creator activity directly to ARR contribution.*

Goodcall

Reduced CAC from **\$185 to \$7** and generated more than **6,000 sign-ups** through creator-led TikTok ads, one of the clearest hard-performance examples to date.*



Track Pipeline or Revenue Influence



Track Leads or MQLs

Agency Research: April 2026

* <https://www.toprankmarketing.com/blog/b2b-influencer-marketing-rise>

Always-On Beats One-Off. Every Time

The best-performing programmes are not using creators as one-off media buys. They are building long-term relationships and sustained content programmes, repurposing creator content across paid, owned and earned channels, boosting the strongest assets, and looking beyond impressions to registrations, form fills, lead quality, pipeline influence and revenue contribution.

57%

Mid-market brands running creator programmes from a central team or centre-of-excellence model (*CreatorIQ*)

61%

Industry leaders now centralise creator programme management into a dedicated function (*CreatorIQ*)

The problem is that many B2B organisations are still trying to manage the channel with campaign-era workflows, spreadsheets, static lists, screenshots, disconnected platform data and ad-hoc outreach.

Trust isn't built in a day. One-off creator activity creates a spike. Always-on builds narrative position over time.

Agency Research: April 2026

45% said influencer-relations investment had increased over the last 12 months.

Yet only **10%** have an established programme with defined budget and process.

48% are still campaign-led or entirely unstructured.

35%

Spreadsheets & Manual Tracking

17%

General CRM or Project Tools

10%

Dedicated Influencer Platform

Agency Research: April 2026:
How B2B teams manage programmes

Three Structural Gaps Holding B2B Teams Back

1

Discovery Is Weak

Teams often do not know which expert voices actually shape their category across LinkedIn, podcasts, Substack, YouTube and technical communities.

2

Context Is Weak

Even when teams know the names, they lack a live view of what those people are saying, which topics are rising, or where a brand contribution might credibly fit.

3

Measurement Is Weak


Most organisations still cannot connect creator activity cleanly to CRM, pipeline, revenue influence or wider brand visibility signals.

Agency Research: 31% said measurement and proving ROI is the biggest blocker to scale. 41% said better measurement and reporting would most improve their programme.



Too many brands still approach influencer relations as outsourced hype.

- Largest audience over strongest authority
- Brand messaging over useful expertise
- Reach over business relevance
- Creators as campaign inventory, not relationship assets
- Influencer activity siloed from the wider comms and demand engine

 In AI, cybersecurity, cloud, infrastructure and developer tooling, the wrong creator can be worse than no creator at all. A technically weak voice may deliver reach while actively reducing trust. A technically strong voice with poor governance can create brand, compliance or security risk. Sprout Social's contract guidance now treats deliverables, compensation, usage rights, disclosure requirements and exclusivity as core clauses, while the FTC in the US and the ASA/CAP in the UK continue to stress that influencer ads must be clearly identifiable. A campaign with no content rights or measurement design can generate noise without leaving a usable asset behind.

The brands getting this right treat influencer relations as a blend of media intelligence, relationship strategy, content operations and measurement design.



Know which creators matter



See which topics are accelerating



Write proper usage rights and disclosure terms



Understand what those creators are publishing



Identify where spokespeople can contribute credibly



Measure across trust and visibility through to demand capture and commercial impact

Why This Matters Even More in the AI Era

The job is no longer just to secure coverage or run campaigns. It is to understand and influence the full ecosystem of voices shaping brand perception.

The stakes are rising because influence no longer stops at the original post. A credible creator mention can shape how a buyer sees a category on LinkedIn, hears about it on a podcast, encounters it in a newsletter, searches it on YouTube, or later asks about it in an AI assistant.

- ① Creator-driven trust signals are now part of the wider discovery environment — whether or not every post becomes a measurable pipeline event.



The most forward-looking teams are connecting influencer activity with broader visibility systems.

LinkedIn BrandLink — Expanded into a more formal publisher-and-creator environment

TikTok × HubSpot — Lead quality and pipeline measurement through its HubSpot integration

YouTube Creator Partnerships — Creator discovery, permissions and performance analysis far more native

They want one view of how their brand is showing up, where authority is being built, and which external voices are moving the conversation.

From Influencer Marketing to Influencer Operations



B2B technology does not need more random creator activity. It needs better systems for discovering relevant voices, monitoring what they publish, spotting trend shifts, identifying guest opportunities, managing outreach, and linking creator activity back to measurable business outcomes. That is where the conversation moves from influencer marketing to influencer operations.

The stakes are rising because influence no longer stops at the original post. A credible creator mention can shape how a buyer sees a category on LinkedIn, hears about it on a podcast, encounters it in a newsletter, searches it on YouTube, or later asks about it in an AI assistant. That does not mean every creator post becomes a measurable pipeline event, but it does mean creator-driven trust signals are now part of the wider discovery environment.

For comms and marketing leaders, that changes the brief. The job is no longer just to secure coverage or run campaigns. It is to understand and influence the full ecosystem of voices shaping brand perception.

LinkedIn has expanded BrandLink into a more formal publisher-and-creator environment. TikTok is now talking explicitly about lead quality and pipeline measurement through its HubSpot integration. YouTube's Creator Partnerships tooling is making creator discovery, permissions and performance analysis far more native. The most forward-looking teams want to see how creator conversations overlap with journalist attention, social discussion, category momentum and AI-era brand discovery, one view of how their brand is showing up, where authority is being built, and which external voices are moving the conversation.



How Agency Operationalises Influence

Resonance built Agency to help B2B tech brands with today's challenges. Agency is built around the idea that PR and brand visibility now need operational infrastructure. Its PR-Ops model is designed for a market where influence is shaped across media, social, influencer channels and AI answer engines, not just in a press release or a campaign report.

Influencer Intelligence

Monitors content across LinkedIn, YouTube, Substack, podcasts, Instagram and TikTok. Ingests and analyses content, ranks posts by relevance, and surfaces trending topics in your category before everyone else sees them.

Opportunity Identification

Spots where podcasts, newsletters and creator formats create credible guest and contribution opportunities for your spokespeople, aligned to rising topics, not just available slots.

Integrated Measurement

Connects creator activity to a wider PR-Ops stack covering journalist intelligence, news intelligence, competitor intelligence, social intelligence and AI visibility - one view of how your brand is showing up.

- ✔ The brands that win will not have the flashiest one-off creator budget. They will have the best system for understanding which voices matter, where trust is being built, and what effect that activity is having on visibility, demand and pipeline.



The New Competitive Advantage

Influencer relations in B2B technology is no longer early. Adoption and spend are up. Always-on models outperform campaign-led ones. The most relevant channels are increasingly clear. And the measurement conversation has moved well beyond vanity metrics.

Side Tactic

Campaign-era workflows. Spreadsheets. Ad-hoc outreach. One-off creator buys. Reach without business relevance.

Operational Muscle

Always-on programmes. Systematic discovery. Content rights. Measurement from trust through to pipeline and revenue contribution.

The real divide is not between brands that believe in influencer relations and brands that do not. It is between brands that still treat it as a side tactic, and brands that are building the operational muscle to use it properly. **That is where Agency can help.**

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