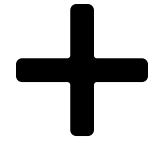


ACRO
NYM



THE INFLUENCER TOOLKIT

FOR CAMPAIGNS & CAUSES

INTRO

A man with short dark hair, wearing a dark jacket with a 'THINK' patch on the left chest, is looking down at a smartphone in his hands. The background is dark and out of focus.

Campaigns are more online than ever, and the dramatic shift to campaigning online is going to last far beyond the COVID-19 quarantines. While the private sector has been using influencer marketing to sell products for years, campaigns have been relatively slow to build influencer partnerships into digital programs. And for good reason — how are digital staffers supposed to get campaigns to invest in something new when getting budget for the digital basics is still an uphill battle?

Here's the thing though — large campaign or small, an influencer program should be a non-negotiable part of your strategy. When done right, it is absurdly cost

effective, reaches beyond your echo chamber, builds trust in your campaign's brand, grows your social audience, and gives you original creative and targeted distribution all in one package. Influencer partnerships are also a great way to put money into the communities you care about instead of giving it to Facebook and Google.

If you're new to influencer marketing or if you just want to learn more, here are all the reasons not to overlook this tactic — **and how to get it done.**

1 MAKING THE CASE

Are you trying to make the case for an influencer program? Here are some arguments that may work for you:

It's cost-effective.

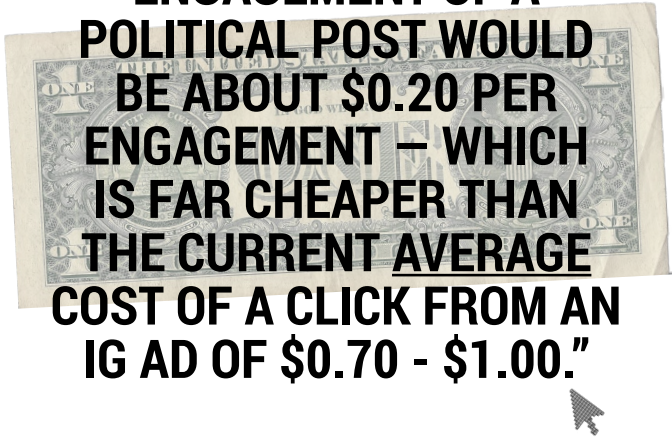
The costs of an influencer program (the kind outlined in this toolkit, anyway) include staff time and payments to influencers. The return on investment includes:

- Original creative
- Organic distribution to influencer audience
- Name ID/issue salience/narrative benefits
- Audience growth on your owned channel

One way to think about the return on investment of an influencer program is to consider the cost-per-action compared to paid media.

The price of influencer partnerships vary wildly, but there is an oft-cited industry average of \$10-per-thousand-followers/post on Instagram. Based on this, the cost of a post from a local influencer with 10,000 followers would be \$100. While the average engagement rate on Instagram is about 1.2%, NextGen America found the engagement rate on political posts from

their micro-influencer partnerships to be 8.3%. Assuming something in the middle, around 5% engagement, the cost-per-engagement of a political post would be about \$0.20 per engagement -- which is far cheaper than the current average cost of a click from an IG ad of \$0.70 - \$1.00.



“THE COST-PER-ENGAGEMENT OF A POLITICAL POST WOULD BE ABOUT \$0.20 PER ENGAGEMENT – WHICH IS FAR CHEAPER THAN THE CURRENT AVERAGE COST OF A CLICK FROM AN IG AD OF \$0.70 - \$1.00.”

Comparing paid clicks and organic engagements is certainly a bit apples-and-oranges, and it's important to keep in mind that IG ads drive traffic to landing pages and forms, whereas influencer posts are driving likes and conversation around the post's content. But if persuasion or narrative are some of your core campaign goals, then you're getting a significant return on investment even before considering all of the secondary benefits the influencer partnership brings to your campaign.

The startup costs are as low as you need them to be.

To run an influencer program in-house you need some dedicated staff time, access to Google Sheets, and — that's about it. If you have some budget to do paid influencer partnerships, even better, but literally any

campaign willing to dedicate some staff time to an influencer program can (and should) start one.

For example, in 2019, with one part-time staffer and a budget of \$700, NextGen America ran an influencer campaign around the Wisconsin Supreme court race, recruiting 19 local micro-influencers with a combined audience of more than 100,000 followers to post content encouraging their followers to vote in this local election. That return on investment led the organization to scale that program in 2020, eventually recruiting more than 1,700 influencers with a following of 83 million.

The startup costs for your influencer program will depend on your goal, and the benchmarks for recruitment and follow-through below are based on conversations with the folks running these types of programs. Not scientific, you say? Agreed! But they're conservative estimates based on experience, and until there are benchmarks, we gotta start somewhere.


You should estimate that in order to hit your goal, you need to:

- Send DMs to 5 people for every 1 person
- Assume 50% of your recruits will follow through with posting

So if you have a goal of 10 active micro-influencers, you need to send 100 initial messages. In order to calculate staff time needed, you can estimate 2 staff hours a week per active influencer (again, anecdotal but it works!). Once you've recruited your influencers, keeping up the relationship takes about 1 staff hour per week per active influencer. If you want to keep building the number of micro-influencers in your program, stick with

the original estimate of hours per week instead of the "maintenance" hours.

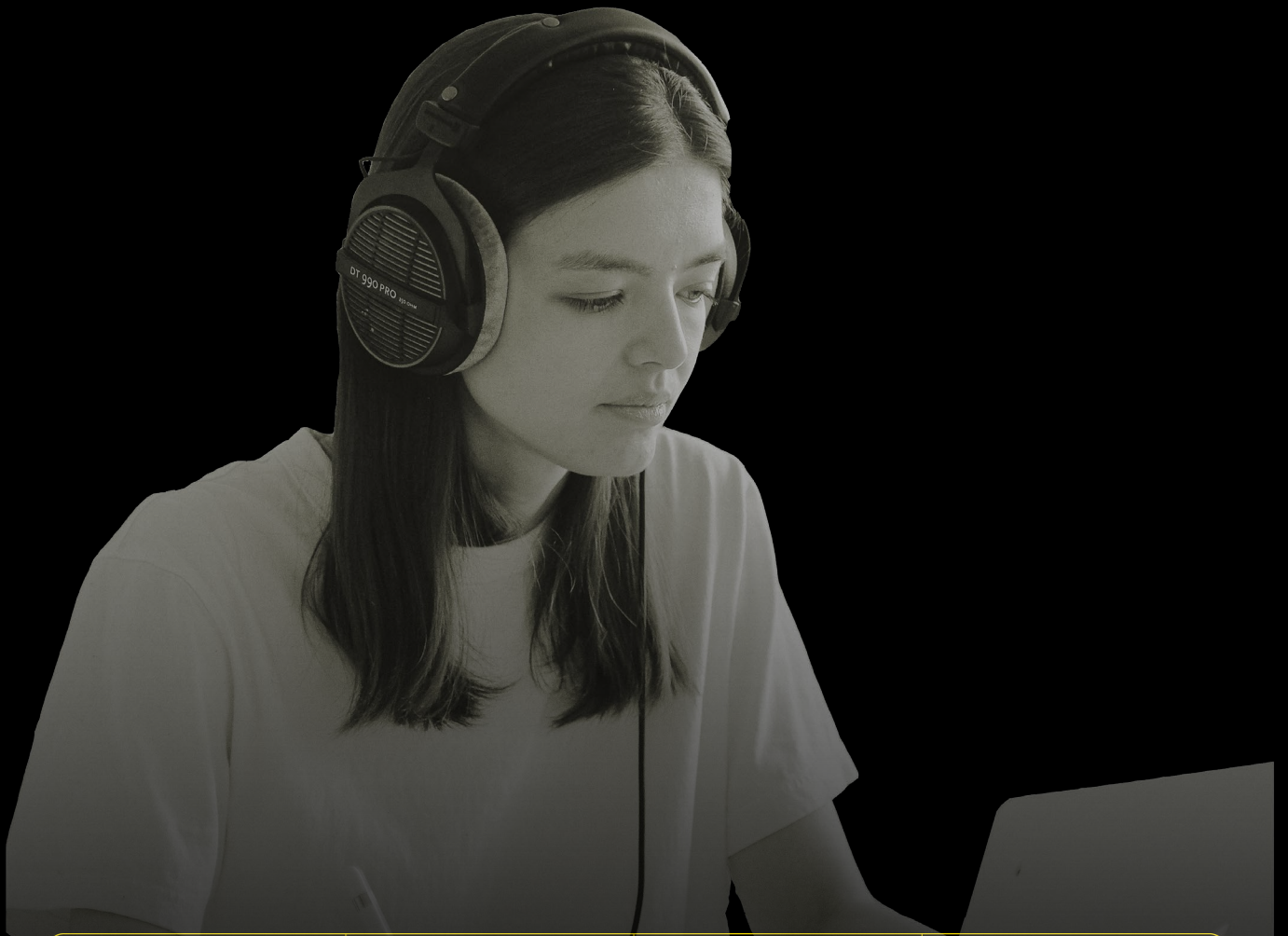
A disclaimer on this guide to staff hours: influencer programs reflect what you put into them. These staff hour estimates represent the **bare minimum** needed to discover, DM, and correspond with micro-influencers—but if given more staff time, influencer programs can grow exponentially with creative events, campaign ideas, and all the other great stuff that happens when digital staffers have the breathing room they need to be creative.



“FOR EXAMPLE, IN 2019, WITH 1 PART-TIME STAFFER AND A BUDGET OF \$700, NEXTGEN AMERICA RAN AN INFLUENCER CAMPAIGN AROUND THE WISCONSIN SUPREME COURT RACE, RECRUITING 19 LOCAL MICRO-INFLUENCERS WITH A COMBINED AUDIENCE OF MORE THAN 100K FOLLOWERS”

It's a necessary backup to paid media

In 2020, a shocking number of progressive candidates and campaigns were caught without a backup plan when Facebook and Google announced and changed platform policies. Social media companies are constantly changing the rules around political advertising, and several platforms, including Twitter and Spotify, have already ruled out political ads altogether.



| number of active influencers desired | number of DM's and accounts to source | number of staff hours/week needed to start | number of staff hours/week needed to maintain |
|--------------------------------------|---------------------------------------|--|---|
| 10 | 100 | 20 | 10 |
| 25 | 250 | 50 | 25 |
| 50 | 500 | 100 | 50 |
| ... | ... | ... | ... |

Running an influencer program alongside your paid media means you can avoid putting all your eggs in the digital ads basket. While it's certainly possible that regulations around influencer partnerships may change over the coming years, having multiple ways of reaching your audience layered on top of each other reduces the likelihood that a change in one or the other will have a huge impact on your program.

It builds trust

Influencer content, like advertising, can reach your target audience with a high degree of granularity. Is it 1:1 targeting? Nope! But by working with influencers who are themselves a part of the communities that power your campaign, you're reaching audiences that have something in common with each other, who already have a connection with the messenger and the content, and who are viewing this content by choice. If your influencer program allows your partners to be their authentic selves on their platforms, then the program will build trust in your campaign.

A word of caution though -- influencer programs also have the potential to undermine trust, both in the influencer and in your campaign or cause, if the content is forced or inauthentic. See below: **never write an influencer's script.**

Equity

Putting your money where your mouth is applies to the internet, too. Paid influencer partnerships allow you to direct your campaign resources into the community. Paying influencers instead of social media platforms can also help encourage a virtuous circle of fundraising, since people can be confident their donations are staying in the community and not lining the pockets of tech executives.

It grows your channel too

Influencer programs are designed to reach beyond your own social audience, but they do have the happy side effect of growing your own channels. When influencers tag you as a partner, they drive traffic to your properties and also give you content to share to your stories.

A dark, grainy photograph of a street corner. On the left is a multi-story historic building with a sign that reads "R.C. SCRIPTURE" and the year "1940" above the entrance. The building has several windows and a decorative cornice. In the foreground, there are some large planters. To the right, a traffic light pole stands at the intersection, with traffic lights and street signs visible. The street is paved, and there are some cars parked or driving in the distance. The overall tone is dark and moody.

**“PAID INFLUENCER PARTNERSHIPS
ALLOW YOU TO DIRECT YOUR CAMPAIGN
RESOURCES INTO THE COMMUNITY”**

2

NOW DO THE THING

Step 0 is to get your database set up. Google Sheets works great for this, but you could use Asana, Monday, Trello -- any tool you're comfortable with that has some tagging and spreadsheet functionality. You can use this database to keep track of influencers you'd like to reach out to, draft your DMs for outreach, mark folks in or out, keep track of correspondence, posts, and post performance. You can also use it to generate weekly hard reports for your leadership team to demonstrate.

FEEL FREE TO USE THIS TEMPLATE DATABASE

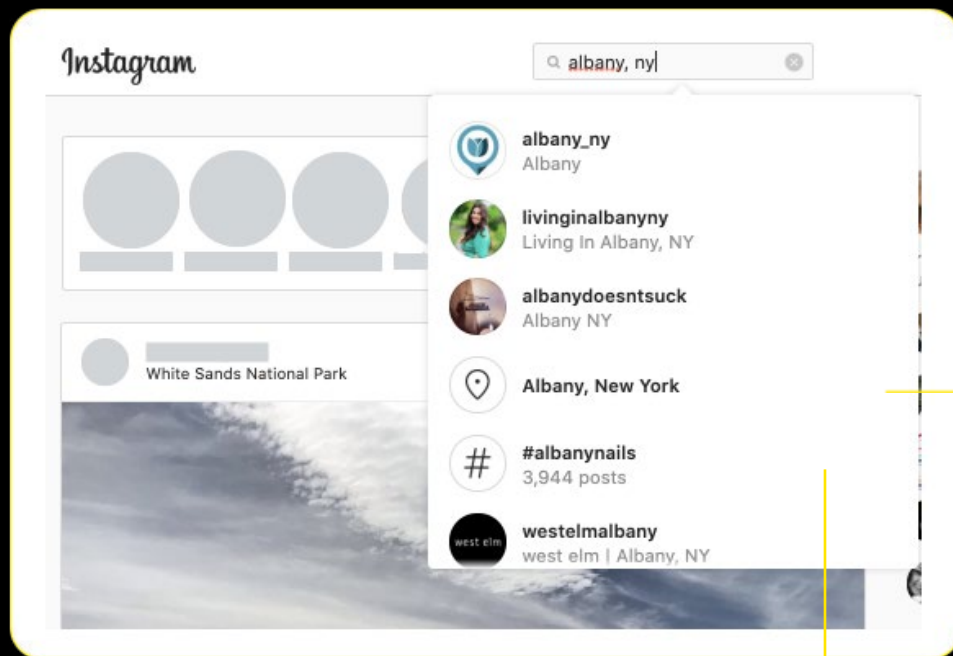
Step 1 is discovery, or the process of finding the influencers whose audience and brand aligns with your goals. These tips apply to finding local and regional influencers, since most campaigns operate within specific geographies. We'll cover Instagram and TikTok here.

Instagram search

This guide will cover in-app search functions. While there are several tools on the market that are designed to find local influencers, Instagram's changes to its API last year shut down most tools' location search abilities. In-app search is straightforward and doesn't rely on (often expensive) tools that could be shut down any minute.

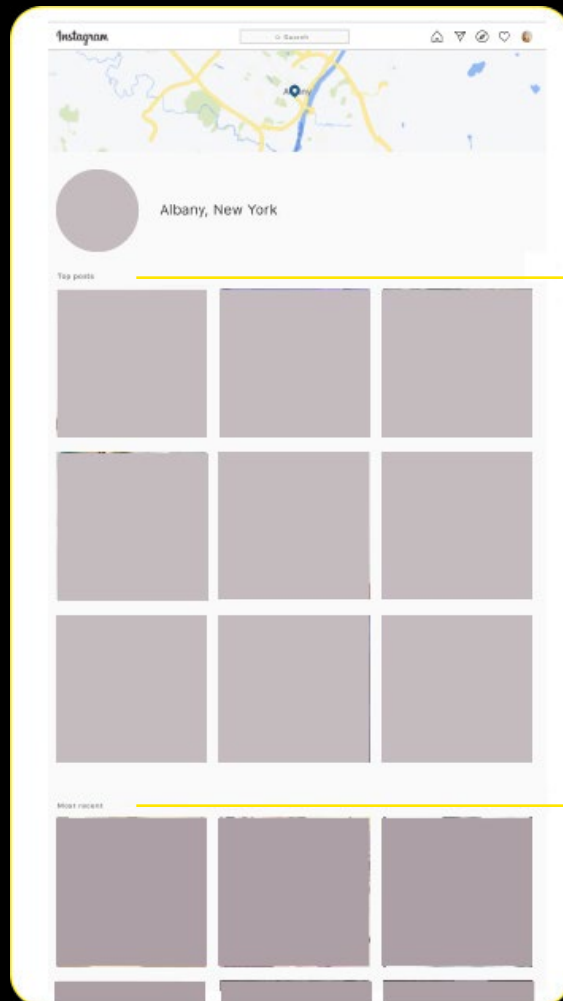
There are a few ways to search IG for local or regional influencers in the app. The first (and obvious) one is to type your geography of interest into the Instagram search bar. Desktop is best for this since mobile often truncates results.

Look for the map location icon.
This will take you to top posts
tagged in this location.



Don't ignore random hashtags that pop up in this first location search. These are typically popular local tags and can help you find influencers who are local but don't tag their location.

This will produce a few types of results, the most useful of which are the result with the map icon, and a list of hashtags that include the name of the place you searched.

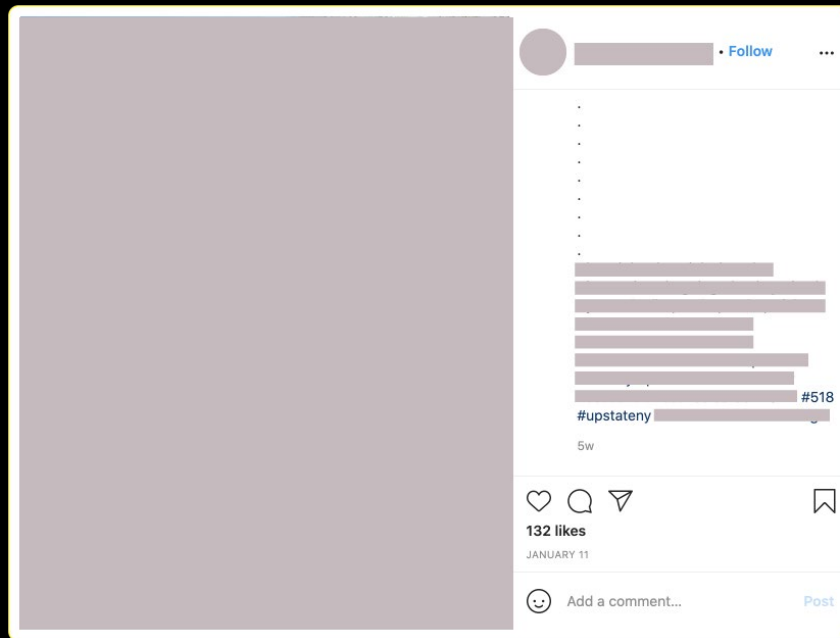


The “top posts” section shows the most popular posts that recently tagged your geography. If you’re looking for the biggest influencers, this is a good place to look. BUT keep in mind that in cities or travel destinations, top posts are often vacation/travel photos and not local influencers.

The “most recent” section is your best bet for finding local micro-influencers who have tagged your geography.

Once you’ve found some accounts that tagged your location, head to their profiles to see if the influencer consistently tags that location or was just dropping by.

Once you've compiled an initial outreach list of influencers who are consistently posting from your geography, start combing through post copy to find less obvious local hashtags.



Area code hashtags are super common.

Here are some common local hashtag conventions:

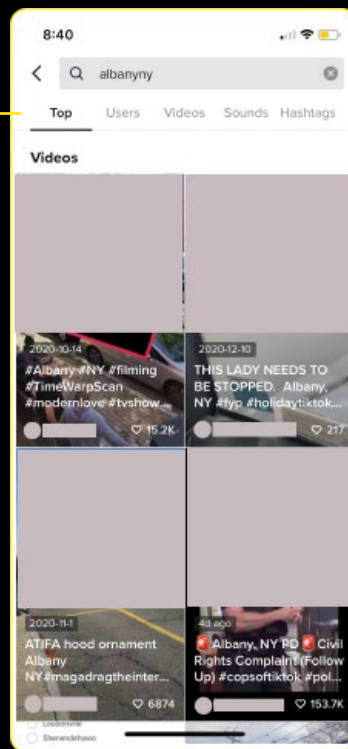
- City name, state abbreviation (#AlbanyNY)
- Local nicknames for a region (#UpstateNy #CapitolRegion)
- Area code (#518)
- Popular business names, landmarks, interests, events (#washingtonpark #518hikes #518hair #larkfest)

As you add influencers to your outreach list, keep looking for new local hashtags and keep a running list in your database.

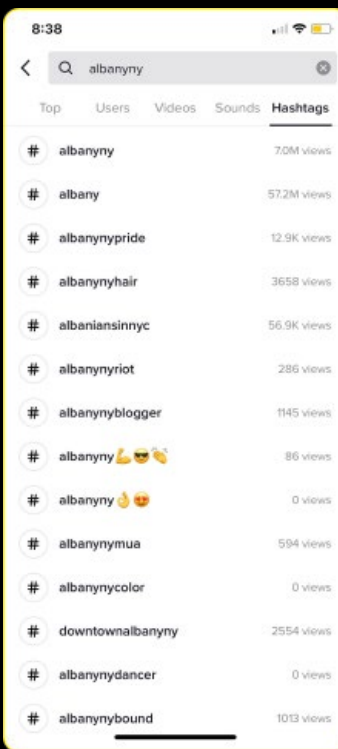
TikTok hashtag search

TikTok is more difficult to search by location than Instagram, but you can use the list of local hashtags you compiled from Instagram to start your search on TikTok.

The 'top' section shows you the TikToks with the most views that use the word you searched in the description.



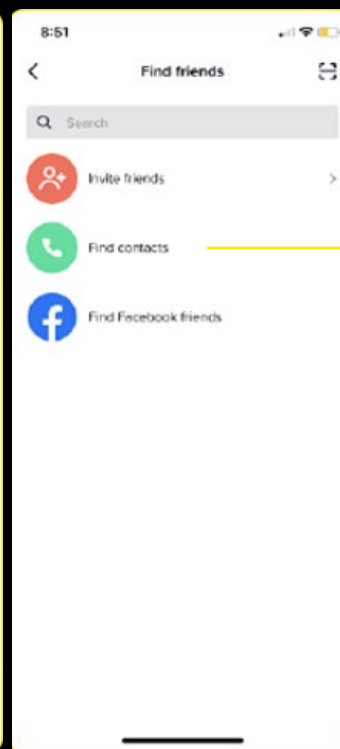
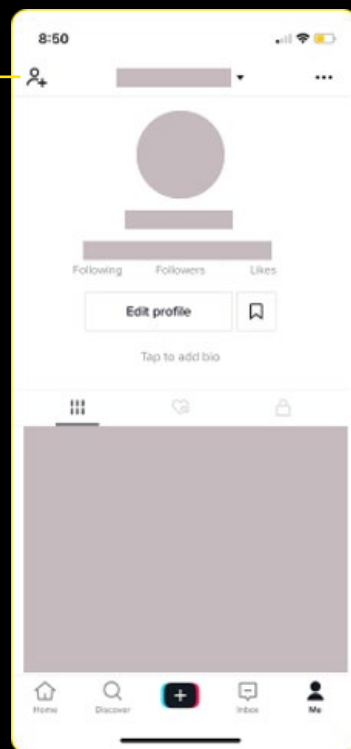
The hashtags section shows top hashtags containing the word you searched, with the number of views of posts using the hashtag, plus other popular hashtags containing the word.



If you have a list of local phone numbers **and permission to use those numbers in this way** you can also upload those contacts to TikTok and find any TikTok accounts associated with those numbers.

Remember to record the usernames of local accounts you'd like to reach out to in your database!

In the "me" sections, tap on this "add friends" icon.



This option will find TikTok accounts associated with contacts in your phonebook.

Step 2: Recruitment

Now that you have your list of local influencers, it's time to start recruiting folks to engage with your campaign or cause. You can recruit influencers by sending them DMs on Instagram, emailing them (if they list an email address in their bio for partnerships), or commenting on a public post on Instagram or TikTok.

When deciding which account to DM a prospective influencer from, consider:

- If you don't have a verified (blue check) Instagram account for your campaign or organization, you should start by requesting one ([follow these steps](#)). Verified accounts stand out in inboxes.
- If you can't get verified, that's fine! Just make sure your organization's IG account is up to date and showcasing the best content you can at the top of your IG grid.
- If you or a team member has a large IG following or really great account, consider sending introductory messages from their account (if they're ok with it!) A verified organization account works best, but a really compelling personal account can work really well too.
- Experiment with your accounts! If you aren't sure whether influencers will respond better to one account or another, or if you are having little luck with your organization's DMs, try "split testing" your introductory DMs, sending 50% from one account and 50% from another, and comparing response rates.

When drafting your introductory DMs, make sure to:

- **Customize the message to each account.** It's worth the time! Take a look at a few posts and work something into the message about the account's content.
- **Introduce yourself** (especially if you're messaging from an org account). Say your name and a (short version of) what you do for the org
- **Be a bit informal** — use language that feels natural on the platform.
- **Keep it short!** Long DMs in an inbox are overwhelming, and can turn off an influencer right out of the gate. Before explaining in detail what you'd like the influencer to do, use the first DM to share who you are, that you're reaching out because you're working on X campaign and think this influencer could make a huge difference, and ask if they'd be open to working with you on a post about the issue.

Here's a sample DM to try.

Hi [influencer]!

I'm [name] I work on social media for[org].
We LOVE your account, [something specific
you enjoy about the account].

We're working on a campaign to [issue] and
we think you could have a HUGE impact by
sharing some information about this issue
with your followers. Would you be open to
working with us on a post?

IG Tip: To save time drafting and sending DMs, draft your messages in your database first, and then copy and paste DMs to the correct influencer using the desktop version of Instagram.

A note about Instagram message limits:

Instagram tries to discourage what they see as “spam” DMs, so if you have a high number of DMs you need to send in a week, make sure you plan ahead to space out the DMs over multiple days or across multiple org or personal accounts. The message limit varies by account and can change day to day without warning, but the average limit for some accounts in 2020 was about 40 DMs per day. Plan ahead in case you hit your DM limit! Have backups, like recruiting on TikTok until your message limit is removed, prioritizing influencer accounts with email contact info in the bio, etc.

Step 3: Managing influencer partnerships

Once an influencer has agreed to participate in your campaign, you can mark them as participants in your database, and start working with them on crafting content!

Track progress towards posting in the database as you go, highlighting blockers or requests from the influencers to make sure you’re getting everyone what they need. Once posts are live, ask influencers for a screenshot of the post reach and engagement rate from their insights, or record the number of likes and comments on the post if the influencer doesn’t agree to share insights.

Some key things to keep in mind when working with influencer partners:

- Timely response is everything: respond quickly to questions and messages from

influencers. If the conversation goes cold, it is possible you’ll lose their attention completely and not hear back from them again.

- **Keep the conversation on the platform if possible:** only move a collaboration to email if the influencer requests it specifically. Keeping your conversations on the platform helps keep the collaboration moving, and reminds influencers of their commitment when they’re using the app, making follow-through more likely.
- **Don’t send canned content, talking points, or a script:** Influencers will often ask for a graphic to share, or a script to record. Don’t go down this path unless it’s a last resort! The whole point of working with influencers is their creativity, and their understanding of their audience. They really know best, even if they’re new to the issue or campaign. Instead of sending canned content or lines, explain the goal of the campaign or the important information you’re trying to get across, and ask them what kind of post they think might get through to their audience.
- **Show influencers examples of other influencers posts for your campaign!** Once you have a few good posts out, you can start sending those posts as examples to new influencers to spark ideas. This also helps with follow through by showing that other influencers have posted content about your issue or campaign, and the content was well received by their audience. Often the fear of how an audience will react is a strong barrier to posting -- showing others who have done it successfully really helps.

Step 4: Measuring impact

While it's difficult to gauge the impact of your influencer program on some campaign outcomes like voting behavior, there are metrics you can use to track reach, engagement, and link traffic.

Reach and engagement:

- Add your influencers as “competitors” in Sprout or your social analytics platform to track their publicly available metrics over time
- Ask influencers to send screenshots of post performance from their dashboard 24 hours or so after each post, and record reach and engagement rates in your database.
- Compare your influencers’ engagement rates to Instagram benchmarks to see how well your content is performing. The average IG engagement rate, for example, is 1.22%, although this is higher for smaller accounts.

Link traffic

- Use custom shortlinks (shortswitch is good if you don't already have a tool for this) to track how many clicks each of your influencers is driving to your pages. Create a custom link for each influencer (or if you want to get even more granular, for each post).
-



If you're interested in digging deeper and trying to measure the impact of your influencer program on issue or name recall, attitudes, and salience, consider using direct response ads on Instagram to serve surveys to your influencer's audience and "control" audiences, and comparing results. There are also testing possibilities to explore using social matching on the voter file if you're

interested and have the resources. There is a **SERIOUS** need for research and development to help measure influencer programs! If your organization is considering investing in measurement research around your influencer program, **THANK YOU!** **And please, shout your results from the rooftops.**