

How to grow an audience and influence them

 By [Steven Murray](#)

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Creating an online profile is easy, but cultivating a trusted online presence is hard work. It is not as simple as creating a blog and hoping someone will read it, or signing up to Twitter and gaining a few followers. If you - whether an individual or brand - want to build a successful influencer profile you need to create and share messages, pictures or content that appeals to people. This can be via your Twitter handle, Facebook wall, Instagram profile or blog.

Building and maintaining a respected, credible online presence is also an art that takes time to do properly. It won't happen overnight and takes commitment and diligence. Brands and individuals aren't considered influential simply because they have a large following - as followers and fans can be 'bought' via various online sites - instead they are considered influential only when they are backed by an authentic, participatory, audience that gives feedback or engages in conversation on a regular basis.

South Africa has many credible online influencers, who have successfully built up their profiles over the past few years (see, it doesn't happen overnight). These influencers can also be considered new journalists, brand ambassadors, product endorsers, impartial commentators, as they have an audience who generally believes in and trusts what they have to say.

That said, how do you as an outsider know which online profiles are considered influential?



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Up until about a year ago, no platform existed to measure the authenticity and impact of online influencers. This led to us launching [Webfluential](#), a platform that connects brands and consumers via credible social media influencers. Influencers sign up and are then ranked according to the system's algorithm that generates their influencer score which is based on reach, resonance and relevance. Brands are then able to target appropriate influencers for their campaigns.

1. Great influencers have a personal brand

Whether it's a look and feel, a sense of style or content, or even just the vibe they create around their online persona, successful influencers create and cultivate a recognisable brand of their own, that their readers can easily identify and relate to.

2. Successful influencers know their audience

Successful influencers know who is following them, and why. They immerse themselves in the interests of their audience, and create content that their audience will respond to. They use their platforms to engage with their audience, to learn more about what they would like to see.

3. Real influencers interact and engage

Influencers know that their audiences are so much more than numbers - they are people who want to be acknowledged and engaged with. They know that a reply or a simple "thank you" will earn substantial goodwill.

4. Influencers are pedantic about numbers

Google Analytics is one of the most powerful tools around to measure page views and unique visitors. Even though a successful influencer might tell you that they have 'roughly 12,000' followers on any particularly platform, they will know their exact stats because they track them every day.

5. Clever influencers stay informed on their audience

Successful influencers use tracking tools to see when their audience engages with them the most, and what times are the best to post content on which platforms. They use this information to set up content plans, posting schedules, and they stick to these in order to produce regular updates for their loyal followers.

6. Influencers are masters of their craft

An artist is only as good as their tools, and any influencer posting to a social media platform needs to know the nuances of all the tools at their disposal. For example, any top-tier Instagrammer will use a top-notch photo-editing app like Camera+ or Snapseed, while video bloggers will know their way around the best video editing suites. Bloggers will know how to wiggle their way around WordPress and its plugins - using the tools at their disposal to create memorable content.

7. Respected influencers know their worth

Creating great content takes time, as does building the respect of your followers and brands. Top influencers know their value, and have a rate card prepared, that offers rates for everything from advertising to sponsored posts. Some even have a minimum prize value for giveaways on their blog, so that they maintain a certain level of value for their followers.

8. Involved influencers know their audience

No influencer can be everything to everybody - and successful influencers know their niche and their readership, and they are choosy about the brands that they associate with. Successful influencers are not tempted to take freebies from brands that operate outside their niche, because they know that their followers will lose respect for them - and that they will look for trustworthy, relevant content elsewhere.

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