Influencer Strategies

**Identifying, Employing, And Developing Influencers
For Communication Campaigns In Social Media And Beyond**

Instructor: Freddy J. Nager, MBA, fnager@usc.edu
Class Dates & Time: Tuesdays, January 9-May 8, 2018, 6:30-9:20 pm
Classroom: ASC 231
Office Hours: available by appointment
Units: 4

Throughout history, Influential individuals have shaped thought and behavior in politics, religion, business, even interpersonal relationships. Today, because of the democratizing effects of digital media, social influence is no longer limited to the traditional ranks of authority figures. Modern influencers include subject-matter experts (from scientists to non-credentialed bloggers), social media stars, even individuals who prefer to remain "anonymous."

These influencers have become critical components of modern communication campaigns, particularly given the fragmentation of audiences across millions of media outlets, and the formidable expense of mass-media/omni-channel advertising. True influencers can efficiently generate awareness in niche audiences, amplify messages, and also lead their followers to desired actions, whether that means buying, voting, or simply changing their minds.

To integrate influencers into campaigns, communication managers must know how to distinguish the truly influential — those who can motivate actual behavior — from the "merely popular." That is especially critical in social media, where commonly cited measures of "influence" — such as followers and likes — can be purchased and otherwise artificially inflated. Managers need to conduct qualitative and quantitative analysis, since many influencers may have little to no social media popularity.

At the same time, many individuals are looking to expand their personal influence, whether they're aspiring to fame and fortune, or seeking greater impact in their professional and personal circles. Gaining that influence entails far more than just sharing views on social media or getting published. In most cases, it requires a methodical approach that combines credible expertise, distinctive expression, and audience expansion.

In this course, you will learn not only how to work with influencers — including identifying, analyzing, approaching, managing, and measuring them — but also how to build personal influence, whether for yourself or someone else.

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

To facilitate understanding of influence management, you will analyze case studies, hear presentations from influencers and communication managers, read articles in both academic journals and business media, and practice using professional tools and tactics. By the end of this course, you will acquire expertise and experience in the following:

- Conducting qualitative and quantitative analysis to identify true influencers and recognize possible fraud.
- Critically evaluating influencer measurement tools and data such as Klout scores and Twitter followings.
- Applying frameworks such as the purchasing funnel to align influencers with objectives.
- Crafting communication approaches to influencers, including pitches and press releases.
- Employing and managing influencers in compliance with laws regarding paid endorsements.
- Implementing tracking mechanisms to gauge the effectiveness of influencer campaigns.
- Applying criteria to select opportunities for influence, including optimal communication media.
- Developing strategic plans to build personal influence based on expertise, expression, and expansion.

INSTRUCTOR

Freddy J. Nager has worked with influencers for over two decades, including major recording artists, YouTube stars, and subject-matter experts. He founded and currently runs the marketing and media company Atomic Tango LLC (AtomicTango.com), which serves entrepreneurs and executives in developing their brands and content. Prior to Atomic Tango, Freddy held lead creative positions at MCA Records/Universal Music Group and ad agency Saatchi & Saatchi. Freddy received his undergraduate degree from Harvard and his MBA from the USC Marshall School of Business. He has taught at Annenberg since 2012.

READINGS

Pages from the required texts below and various articles will be assigned, with discussions posted to Blackboard. Please see the Lecture Schedule in this syllabus for details.

Required

- *The Influentials*, **by Ed Keller & Jon Berry, 2003 The Free Press/Simon & Schuster**
  Written by two senior executives of the marketing research firm RoperASW, this pioneering book on influencers uses extensive data to identify and evaluate the "one American in ten [who] tells the other nine how to vote, where to eat, and what to buy."

- *Viral Marketing: The Science of Sharing*, **by Karen Nelson-Field, 2013 Oxford University Press**
  Written by a Sr. Research Associate at the University of South Australia's Ehrenberg-Bass Institute, this book explores not only why certain social-media videos go viral, but also what enables some to actually generate sales.

Recommended

- *Influence: The Psychology of Persuasion (Revised Edition),* **by Robert B. Cialdini, 2007 Harper Collins**
  First published in 1984, this seminal book by Professor Cialdini introduces six principles — reciprocation, commitment and consistency, social proof, liking, authority, and scarcity — used by skilled persuaders.

- *Made To Stick*, **by Chip Heath & Dan Heath, 2007 Random House**
  This book by the Heath brothers (professor Chip and consultant Dan) explores what makes an idea memorable, with elements such as emotion, storytelling, and specific concrete language.

ASSIGNMENTS

The following assignments will test your ability to apply in-depth research, academic theories, analytical frameworks, and critical thinking in support of plans and arguments. In addition, all papers will be partially graded on the quality of the writing and overall presentation (organization and formatting). Specific assignment instructions will be provided on each assignment prompt.

Assignment 1 (Individual Assignment): Macro Influencer Evaluation (10%)

Select one macro influencer (celebrity, politician, etc.) and in 500-1000 words evaluate:

1. The quantity and quality of their media reach (social and traditional).
2. The nature of their followers (demographics, psychographics, etc.).
3. How they developed their influence (relevant past activities and events).
4. How they use their influence now (commercial promotions or other causes).

This assignment is also a detailed writing assessment, with every sentence evaluated for clarity. Your first draft will receive an initial grade, then be returned to you for revisions. Note: revised papers are not guaranteed a grade increase.

Assignment 2 (Team Project): Influencer Campaign Analysis and Presentation (35%)

Your team will critically analyze a brand or campaign that uses influencers to achieve organizational goals. For example, this may be a business selling a product, or a government agency encouraging a certain behavior (voting, recycling, healthy living). In a paper (2000-5000 words) and a PowerPoint presentation of up to 20 minutes, your team will evaluate the following:

1. The objective of the brand or campaign, including the target audience.
2. The influencers and why they were selected.
3. The appropriateness of the match between objective, audience, and influencers.
4. The effectiveness of the campaign beyond whether it achieved the objective, including impact on the organization's brand, media buzz, and stakeholder behaviors.

Assignment 3 (Individual Assignment): Influencer Plan (35%)

Select one of the following options for your final paper (approximately 5000 words):

A. An original influencer campaign for an organization, product, or cause of your choice. Elements:
   o Your campaign S.M.A.R.T. goal.
   o The target audience.
   o The influencers you will employ (minimum 3) and why you selected them.
   o How you will approach and enlist each influencer.
   o The media and messages you will ask your influencers to promote.
   o How you will measure the success of your campaign.
   o A press release targeting a news media influencer.
   o Implementation timeline of dates and activities.

B. A development plan to build the influence of an individual (you or a client). Elements:
   o Your individual's area of expertise and their current level.
   o Short and long term goals as an influencer.
   o Their target audience and current influence status with this audience.
   o The mode and media for expression.
   o Their messaging, including their personality and perspective.
   o How they will amplify their message.
   o A press release promoting your influencer.
   o Implementation timeline of dates and activities.

Article Evaluations (10%)

Every week, you will have multiple assigned articles and chapters pages, which will be discussed on Blackboard. You should also attempt to stay atop industry developments by seeking out new articles on your own. In addition to commenting on each reading, you will work with your team to summarize and evaluate an assigned selection of articles, which you will then post online.

Class Participation (10%)

Each student must contribute to discussions in the classroom and on Blackboard. The full participation score cannot be earned simply by attending. In most class sessions, you must speak, ask questions, and debate respectfully. Preparation is essential: completing assigned readings before class; researching additional materials; and applying theories to personal and professional experiences. Staying silent is unacceptable behavior, especially in the company of guest speakers, since it conveys disengagement. Here is how your class participation is evaluated:

• Is the contribution relevant to the discussion and respectful of others?
• Does it address ideas offered by the reading and by classmates?
• Does it increase everyone's understanding or merely repeat facts?
• Are views supported with data, third-party theories, and research?

- Does the student test new ideas and challenge assumptions, or just "play it safe"?

In addition, you are expected to stay informed of current events, and may be called upon to discuss a major influencer-related story in the news. Finally, please note that use of phones or computers in class, tardiness, and absences will result in the loss of participation points.

GRADES + GUIDELINES

A	93.0% or higher (extremely rare)
A-	90.0%-92.9%
B+	87.0%-89.9%
B	83.0%-86.9%
B-	80.0%-82.9%
C+	77.0%-79.9%
C	73.0%-76.9%
C-	70.0%-72.9%
D	60.0%-69.9%
F	59.9% or lower

Grading Components
- Assignment 1 (Individual Assignment): Macro Influencer Evaluation: 10%
- Assignment 2 (Team Project): Influencer Campaign Analysis & Presentation: 35%
- Assignment 3 (Individual Assignment): Influencer Plan: 35%
- Article Evaluations (Team Project):   10%
- Class Participation: 10%

- **Criteria:** A's and A-minuses must be earned by "going the extra mile" to develop professional caliber work that could be presented to a client or CEO. A-level work is mistake-free, reflects in-depth research, shows creativity and superlative communication skills, and demonstrates a strong understanding of the course material. Personal recommendations will be provided on request to students who earn an A.

  B's are awarded to graduate-school caliber work, reflecting in-depth research and analysis, as well as a strong understanding of course material. The ideas would need to be stronger to succeed in a professional setting.

  C's and lower are given to amateur work, marked by insufficient research, many errors in writing and implementation of course material, or superficial analysis.

- **Attendance:** You must attend every class, arrive on time, and stay for the entire class (missing more than 10 minutes counts as a half absence). Makeup assignments will be given for any excused absences, such as illnesses or athletic commitments. Should you need to miss a class, notify the instructor in advance (except, of course, in the case of emergencies), and obtain what you missed from classmates and Blackboard. Two unexcused absences will result in a complete loss of participation points. More than two unexcused absences will result in a course grade of C- or lower. Note: unauthorized use of phones or computers in class will be counted as an absence, since you are in attendance but not truly present.

- **Critical Thinking:** In communication there are few "right" answers: what works for one company might fail for another — or even for the same company at another time. Assignments must describe "why" and "how," not just "what," and will be evaluated on the quality of the reasoning.

- **Professional Writing:** Since this a graduate program in communication, your writing and document formatting will be factored into all assignment grades, so please proofread to eliminate all errors. If you need help with fluency or simply polishing your work, contact Annenberg's Graduate Writing Coach: http://cmgtwriting.uscannenberg.org/

- **Research and References:**

- o   Your work must be supported by research from authoritative sources, such as academic journals, professional journalists and news publications, and credible experts. Please vet your sources.
- o   If you use Wikipedia, do not cite it as a reference. Rather, refer to the sources listed in the Wikipedia article, and cite if applicable.
- o   Do not limit your research to whatever Google turns up. Contact experts on campus or online. You may also conduct focus groups, interviews, and surveys; just make sure to include all contact information (dates, medium, etc.) and any disclaimers about statistical significance.
- o   Bibliography entries must include complete source information — a URL alone is never enough. You may use APA style, which includes the name of the source, article titles, author names, and dates of publication. In addition, in the case of websites, you should include the date you accessed the source.

- •   **Respect:** Treat classmates and speakers with courtesy. You may certainly question and criticize ideas — that is encouraged in the learning environment — but never criticize the person. Also, *be present*: **all computers and phones must be turned off and put away during lectures — no exceptions**. You may eat in class, but not when other students or guest speakers are presenting.

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Statement on Academic Conduct and Support Systems

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Academic Conduct:
Plagiarism – presenting someone else's ideas as your own, either verbatim or recast in your own words – is a serious academic offense with serious consequences. Please familiarize yourself with the discussion of plagiarism in *SCampus* in Part B, Section 11, "Behavior Violating University Standards" https://policy.usc.edu/scampus-part-b/. Other forms of academic dishonesty are equally unacceptable. See additional information in *SCampus* and university policies on scientific misconduct, http://policy.usc.edu/scientific-misconduct.

Support Systems:
Student Counseling Services (SCS) - (213) 740-7711 – 24/7 on call
Free and confidential mental health treatment for students, including short-term psychotherapy, group counseling, stress fitness workshops, and crisis intervention. https://engemannshc.usc.edu/counseling/

National Suicide Prevention Lifeline - 1-800-273-8255
Provides free and confidential emotional support to people in suicidal crisis or emotional distress 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. http://www.suicidepreventionlifeline.org

Relationship & Sexual Violence Prevention Services (RSVP) - (213) 740-4900 - 24/7 on call
Free and confidential therapy services, workshops, and training for situations related to gender-based harm. https://engemannshc.usc.edu/rsvp/

Sexual Assault Resource Center
For more information about how to get help or help a survivor, rights, reporting options, and additional resources, visit the website: http://sarc.usc.edu/

Office of Equity and Diversity (OED)/Title IX compliance – (213) 740-5086
Works with faculty, staff, visitors, applicants, and students around issues of protected class.https://equity.usc.edu/

Bias Assessment Response and Support
Incidents of bias, hate crimes and microaggressions need to be reported allowing for appropriate investigation and response. https://studentaffairs.usc.edu/bias-assessment-response-support/

Student Support & Advocacy – (213) 821-4710
Assists students and families in resolving complex issues adversely affecting their success as a student EX: personal, financial, and academic. https://studentaffairs.usc.edu/ssa/

Diversity at USC – https://diversity.usc.edu/
Tabs for Events, Programs and Training, Task Force (including representatives for each school), Chronology, Participate, Resources for Students

LECTURE SCHEDULE

This schedule may change depending on the pace of class discussions and the availability of guest speakers. For final requirements, please refer to the lecture slides, which will be posted to Blackboard. Readings should be completed prior to the *next* class. All articles are available on Blackboard unless otherwise indicated.

Part I: Managing Influence

Class 1, January 9: Influencers — Who Are They And Why Do They Matter?
- Beyond the stars: theories and definitions of "influence" and "influencers"
- Communication challenges posed by the marketplace + the influencer solution
- Case: The ALS Ice Bucket Challenge
- Assignment due next class: introduce yourself on Blackboard and bring in a printed bio
- Readings to be completed for next week:
    o The Influentials: Introduction + Chapter 1
    o Zhang, et al, "Who creates Trends in Online Social Media: The Crowd or Opinion Leaders?" *Journal of Computer-Mediated Communication*, 2016
    o Ho, et al, "Social Network Sites, Friends, and Celebrities: The Roles of Social Comparison and Celebrity Involvement in Adolescents' Body Image Dissatisfaction," *Social Media + Society*, 16 August 2016
    o Malcolm Gladwell, *The Tipping Point*, Chapter 2: "The Law Of The Few: Connectors, Mavens, and Salesmen," pp 30-89 (available online through the USC Library)
    o Michael Humphrey, "Influencer Marketing: What A Graduate Student's Deep Dive Can Teach You," *Forbes*, 21 September 2017, https://www.forbes.com/sites/michaelhumphrey/2017/09/21/influencer-marketing-what-a-graduate-students-deep-dive-can-teach-you/
    o Maria A. Rodriguez/Faces And Facets, "Documentary - New Kings: The Power Of Online Influencers," https://youtu.be/JiYdBLB90IM

Classes 2-3, January 16 & 23: Identification And Evaluation
- Identifying situational influencers by starting with the customer and using the AIDA funnel
- Macro influencers: celebrities, politicians, news media, and other thought leaders
- Evaluating the evaluators: how to analyze Klout and other influence measurement tools
- Why popularity is no guarantee of influence: qualitative and quantitative metrics that matter
- Cases: Emily Ratajkowski, Warren Buffett, Malala Yousafzai
- Assignment 1: Macro Influencer Evaluation — upload to Blackboard before class 3
- Readings to be completed by class 4:
    o The Influentials: Chapters 2-6
    o Abidin, "Aren't These Just Young, Rich Women Doing Vain Things Online?: Influencer Selfies as Subversive Frivolity," *Social Media + Society*, 11 April 2016
    o Kapitan & Silvera, "From Digital Media Influencers To Celebrity Endorsers: Attributions Drive Endorser Effectiveness," *Marketing Letters*, September 2016
    o Shixi Liu, et al, "Identifying Effective Influencers Based On Trust For Electronic Word-Of-Mouth Marketing: A Domain-Aware Approach," *Information Sciences*, February 2015
    o Trusov, Michael, et al, "Determining Influential Users in Internet Social Networks," *Journal of Marketing Research*, August 2010
    o Zhang, et al, "Identifying Influencers In Online Social Networks: The Role Of Tie Strength," *International Journal of Intelligent Information Technologies*, January 2013
    o Zhang & Li, "Relative Superiority of Key Centrality Measures for Identifying Influencers on Social Media," *International Journal of Intelligent Information Technologies*, October-December 2014
    o Mediakix, "Are Fake Instagram Influencers Deceiving Brands?" 4 August 2017, http://mediakix.com/2017/08/fake-instagram-influencers-followers-bots-study/#gs.9q4IsuM
    o Duffy & Hund, "'Having it All' on Social Media: Entrepreneurial Femininity and Self-Branding Among Fashion Bloggers," *Social Media + Society*, 30 September 2015

Class 4, January 30: Macro Influencers — Pitching And Managing
- The risks and rewards of social media stars and other celebrities
- Approaching and pitching macro influencers — including how to write a press release

- Influencer marketing vs Influencer advertising
- Setting S.M.A.R.T. goals and Key Performance Indicators
- Cases: Marques Brownlee, Lance Armstrong
- Assignment 2 (Team Project): Influencer Campaign Analysis — Presented In Class 7
- Readings to be completed for next week:
    - Booth, Norman & Matic, Julie Ann, "Mapping and Leveraging Influencers in Social Media to Shape Corporate Brand Perceptions," *Corporate Communications: An International Journal*, 2011
    - Langner, Sascha, "Social Persuasion: Targeting Social Identities through Social Influencers," *Journal of Consumer Marketing*, 2013
    - Turcotte, et al, "News Recommendations from Social Media Opinion Leaders: Effects on Media Trust and Information Seeking," *Journal of Computer-Mediated Communication*, 2015
    - Zhen Sun, "Cultural Values Conveyed Through Celebrity Endorsers: A Content Analysis of Chinese Television Commercials," *International Journal of Communication*, 2013
    - De Veirman, et al, "Marketing Through Instagram Influencers: The Impact Of Number Of Followers And Product Divergence On Brand Attitude," *International Journal of Advertising*, 2017
    - Carter, "Hustle and Brand: The Sociotechnical Shaping of Influence," *Social Media + Society*, 8 September 2016

Class 5, February 6: Mommy Bloggers and Other Micro Influencers — Pitching And Managing
- Micro influencers — less stardom but potentially more impact
- Qualitative and quantitative metrics that matter for micro influencers
- Approaching, pitching, and managing
- Case: Jimmy Wong/Alexandra Wallace at UCLA
- Readings to be completed for next week:
    - Case Studies: United Breaks Guitars, Red Bull
    - Shalev, Edith & Morwitz, Vicki G., "Influence via Comparison-Driven Self-Evaluation and Restoration: The Case of the Low-Status Influencer," *Journal of Consumer Research*, February 2012
    - Bene, "Influenced by Peers: Facebook as an Information Source for Young People," *Social Media + Society*, 28 June 2017
    - Abidin, "#familygoals: Family Influencers, Calibrated Amateurism, and Justifying Young Digital Labor," *Social Media + Society*, 5 June 2017
    - Orton-Johnson, "Mummy Blogs and Representations of Motherhood: 'Bad Mummies' and Their Readers," *Social Media + Society*, 18 May 2017

Class 6, February 13: Guest Speaker
Note: Individual guest speakers may appear on other days, with the lecture schedule adjusted accordingly.
- YouTube Star & Influencer Marketing Consultant Amanda Russell

Class 7, February 20: Influencer Campaign Presentations
- Teams will present the results of their analyses to the class
- Readings to be completed by class 8
    - Karen Nelson-Field, *Viral Marketing*

Part II: Developing Influence

Class 8, February 27: "So What Do You Want To Be When You Blow Up?" — Identifying Opportunities
- Options: celebrity, social authority, subject matter expert
- The risks and rewards of influence
- Criteria: opportunity, passion, credentials
- Assignment 3 (Individual Project): Influencer Plan — Due On Blackboard Before The Final Class
- Readings to be completed for next week:
    - Susie Khamis, Lawrence Ang & Raymond Welling, "Self-Branding, 'Micro-Celebrity' And The Rise Of Social Media Influencers," *Celebrity Studies*, 2017
    - Duffy & Pooley, "Facebook for Academics: The Convergence of Self-Branding and Social Media Logic on Academia.edu," *Social Media + Society*, 17 March 2017

- o Kuehn, "Branding the Self on Yelp: Consumer Reviewing as Image Entrepreneurship," *Social Media + Society*, 22 November 2016
- o Winter & Neubaum, "Examining Characteristics of Opinion Leaders in Social Media: A Motivational Approach," *Social Media + Society*, 5 September 2016

Classes 9 & 10, March 6 & 20: Expertise
- Professional credentials vs "street cred" vs self-anointed authority
- 3 elements: Education, Experience, Association
- LinkedIn strategies for communicating expertise
- Readings to be completed for next week:
    - o Sandford, Jeremy A., "Experts and Quacks," *RAND Journal of Economics*, Spring 2010
    - o Weiss, David J. & Shanteau, James, "Decloaking the Privileged Expert," *Journal of Management and Organization*, May 2012
    - o Akcura, M. Tolga, et al, "Expert Competition and the Internet," *International Journal of Electronic Commerce*, 23 September 2013
    - o Armstrong & McAdams, "Blogs of Information: How Gender Cues and Individual Motivations Influence Perceptions of Credibility," *Journal of Computer-Mediated Communication*, 2009
    - o Lee, "The Double-Edged Sword: The Effects of Journalists' Social Media Activities on Audience Perceptions of Journalists and Their News Products," *Journal of Computer-Mediated Communication*, 2015

Spring Break - No Class Meeting on March 13

Classes 11 & 12, March 27 & April 3: Expression
- Identifying the audience, medium, and message for sharing relevant and unique content
- Personality and perspective: defining your voice
- Integrating emotions and storytelling
- Media tactics for influence: blogs, Twitter, YouTube, Instagram, podcasts, and other platforms
- Readings to be completed by class 12:
    - o Karsh & Eyal, "How The Consideration Of Positive Emotions Influences Persuasion: The Differential Effect Of Pride Versus Joy," *Journal Of Behavioral Decision Making*, June 2014
    - o Griskevicius, et al, "Influence of Different Positive Emotions on Persuasion Processing: A Functional Evolutionary Approach," *Emotion* (American Psychological Association), 2010
    - o DeSteno, et al, "Discrete Emotions and Persuasion: The Role of Emotion-Induced Expectancies," *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 2004
    - o Beckett & Deuze, "On the Role of Emotion in the Future of Journalism," *Social Media + Society*, 5 September 2016

Class 13, April 10: Expansion
- How to amplify your message and grow your audience through collaboration and association
- Readings to be completed for next week:
    - o Galeotti & Goyal, "Influencing the Influencers: A Theory of Strategic Diffusion," *RAND Journal of Economics*, Autumn 2009
    - o Dasgupta, "China Reducing Massive Influence Of Social Media Celebrities," *Voice Of America*, 13 July 2017, https://www.voanews.com/a/china-social-media-celebrities/3942435.html
    - o Kaushik, "How To Suck At Social Media: An Indispensable Guide For Businesses," *Occam's Razor*, 2 November 2015, https://www.kaushik.net/avinash/social-media-marketing-success-guide-businesses/

Class 14, April 17: Guest Speakers
- Fox Sports Analyst + Former NFL Player Ralph Brown
- Celebrity Nutritionist Rachel Beller

Class 15, April 24: Presentations 2.0
- You will present your individual influencer plan to the class for discussion and feedback
- Assignment: final paper due before class