

# Who's Influencing You?!

Social Influence Marketing and  
the Brand-Influencer-Fan Connection



Moxie 



## CONTENTS

- 1 Introduction
- 2 Moxie Influencer Spectrum™
- 3 The Value of Influencers
- 4 The Influencer-Fan Value Exchange
- 5 The Brand-Influencer Value Exchange
- 6 A Look at Influencer Networks
- 7 Brand Takeaways
- 8 Methodology
- 9 About Moxie





## INTRODUCTION

Why are you reading this paper? Don't get us wrong, we're glad you are, but we're still wondering: What made you want to read this paper? Was it a person? Perhaps a colleague or your boss? Or maybe you came across it on a blog or saw a link in your Twitter feed. All of these are examples of the very subject that inspired this paper: influence.

While it's not often top of mind, we have many influencers in our lives — from family, friends and acquaintances to actors, athletes and celebrities. They're online, next door, on TV, in your news feed, at the dry cleaners, up the street and everywhere in between. And in the evolving and expanding world of social media, this influence reaches further than ever.



## REVISITING THE SLIGHTLY DISTANT PAST

About a year ago, we dove into the topic of Social Influence Marketing. We conducted comprehensive qualitative and quantitative research to better understand the connection between brands, influencers and their fans. Some of what we learned surprised us, while other insights simply confirmed our conjecture.

365 (plus about 47) days later, we revisited the subject.

## SOCIAL INFLUENCE MARKETING: THE SAME (BUT DIFFERENT)

Overall, our research revealed that Social Influence Marketing is growing at a slow, steady pace. A lot of the insights we gained about the brand-influencer-fan connection during our 2013 research are holding fast, while others are gradually expanding or evolving. But before we get into that, let's do a quick refresher.





## What Is a Social Influencer?

**A social influencer is a person who drives awareness, engagement and purchase decisions.**

Before digital became the life of the party, social influence was limited to word of mouth, and it only existed within social circles populated by friends, family members and acquaintances. In today's hyper-connected world, those circles have expanded into networks whose communities and influence span the globe, online and off. As a result, word now travels staggeringly fast.

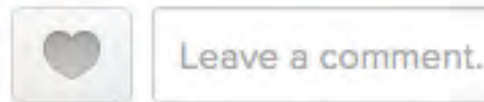
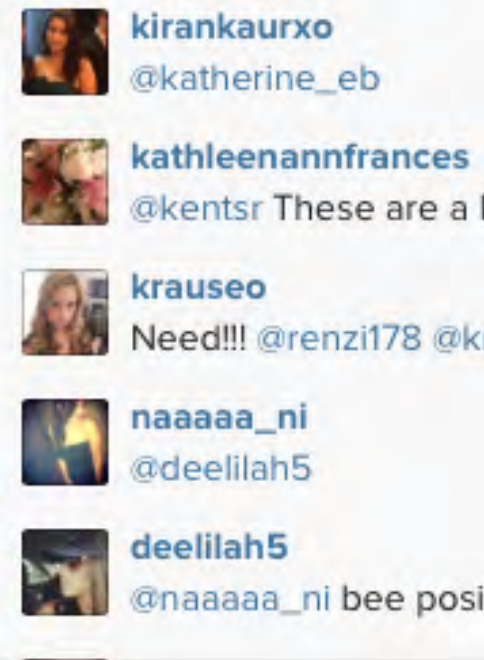
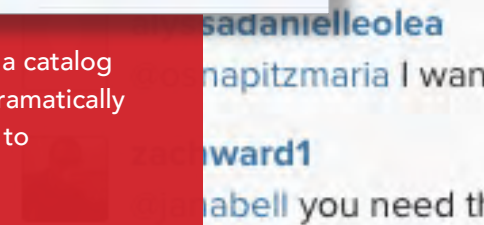
Say, for example, that you joined your best friend for coffee at 8:30 this morning. (It's worth mentioning that you were originally planning to just grab a quick cup o' joe at the café on 7th until you saw that your friend checked in at the one on 10th. "I'll swing by and see her," you said to yourself. "Plus, that place got great reviews on Yelp!" Yep. You're, like, so socially influenced.) So while chatting with said friend over your two-shot, half-caff, skinny latte, she mentions how much she adores **C. Wonder's new Bee Happy Smoking Slipper**. You make a mental note. But you don't have to. Because two seconds later, another friend posts a pic of said footwear on Facebook. Then someone else **retweets a promo from C. Wonder's Twitter account**. There's also an editorial on **E. Online** and pictures posted to **the College Prepster's Instagram account**.



It's barely 9 a.m., your latte is only half finished, the shoes are suddenly everywhere and — as experience has taught you — soon to be nowhere. You quickly hop on C. Wonder's mobile site, only to be greeted by the words "out of stock." You take a screen grab, add a sad face and post it to your Facebook account. That's Social Influence Marketing coming full circle.

And you're not the only one who's missing out on the "Bee Happy" fun.

Before social media, you would've just heard about the slippers from your friend, potentially a magazine ad and maybe a catalog (ah, how we miss you, 2002.) Lucky for C. Wonder and every other brand on the planet, word of mouth has advanced dramatically over the past 12 years. And while it's grown more complicated along the way, Social Influence Marketing's greatest gift to brands is its ability to reach a mass audience of consumers with more targeted, meaningful, relevant messaging.





# Why Are Social Influencers Important to Brands?

Brands can partner with social influencers to help drive a target audience's awareness, engagement and purchase decisions.

Social influencers' capacity to impact behavior, both inside and outside of their fan bases, depends on what Moxie refers to as the Four R's.™ As you're reading through these, keep in mind that one must possess all four R's to be a true influencer. Anything less than the full quartet won't do.

## RELEVANCE

What subject(s) do they cover?

Focus on those that align with your brand. You don't want someone promoting dog food, if they don't have a dog. It isn't logical and won't make sense to the audience. Worse, they won't be able to create authentic content, share firsthand stories or post quality photos.

## REACH

How many people do they reach?

Try to maximize reach without compromising the remaining R's. Don't just look at reach as a way to drive views. Take coupon influencers, for example. Their reach is impressive, but their content is not. As such, they may not be a relevant, engaging, value-added opportunity for your brand.

## RESONANCE

Do they engage with their audiences?

This is the difference between celebrity and everyday influencers. Justin Bieber doesn't respond to every fan. That's why someone with everyday (versus celebrity) influence can be a more powerful conduit for promoting your brand.

## RELATIONSHIP

Are they an authentic brand advocate?

This is where the magic happens. Does the influencer really purchase the product? Is that person truly excited about sharing his or her experience? Authentic enthusiasm always shines through. For example: Do they really feed their pooches the dog food they're promoting?

### BRANDS: Don't forget to consider what you stand for.

Influencers are representative of your brand. During the influencer identification process, remember to consider a person's innate character traits, language (such as slurs and swearing), social reputation, legal record and propensity to share polarizing beliefs (e.g., political or religious). Influencers are meant to share authentic brand messaging with their audiences in their personal voices, and the selected voices need to be representative of that brand.

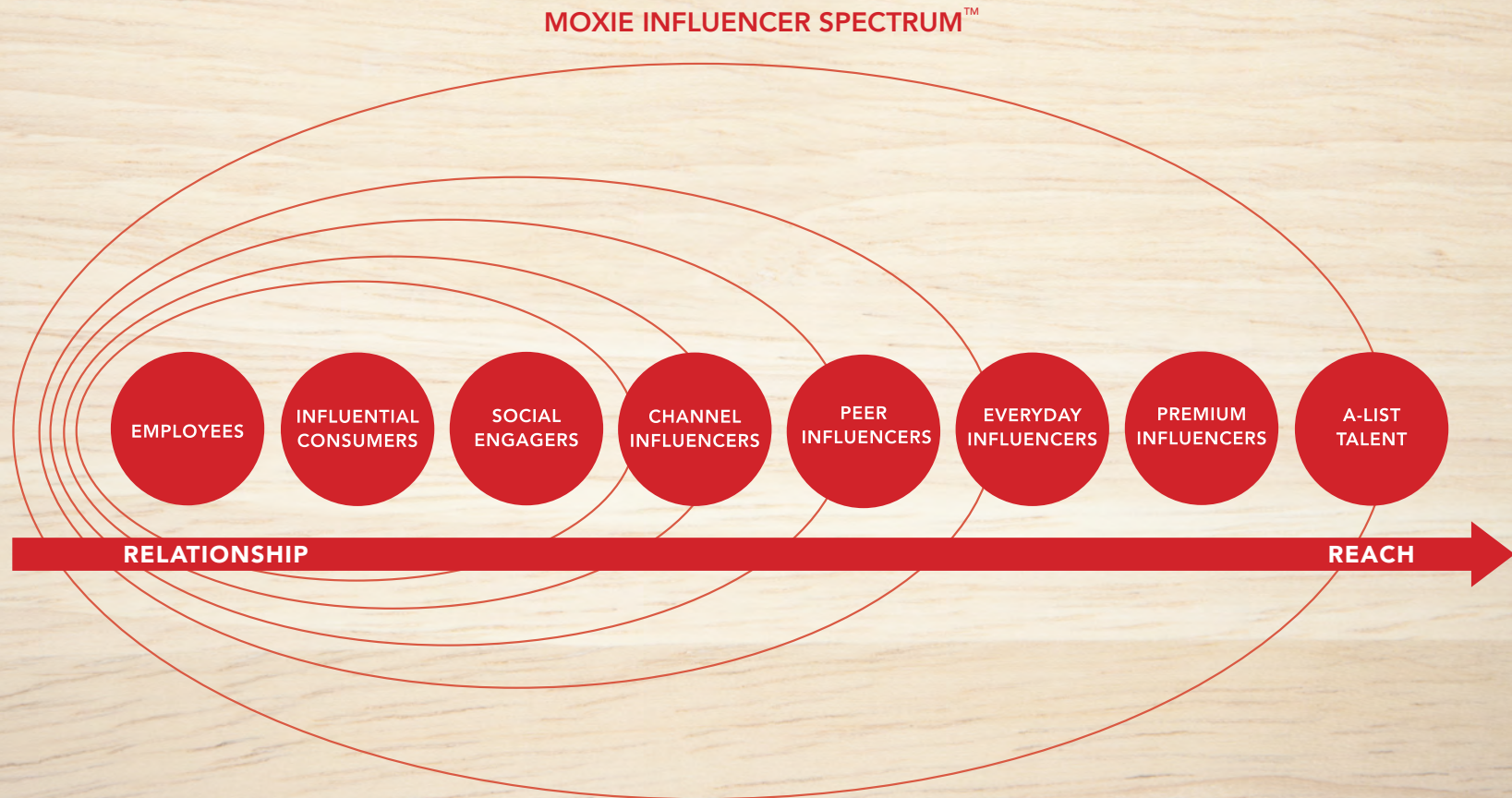


# MOXIE INFLUENCER SPECTRUM™

## From Jane Doe to Jay Z

The spectrum of influencers ranges from your Employees and Social Engagers to Everyday Influencers and A-list Talent. **Michelle Phan**, for example, started out as an unknown yet enthusiastic cosmetics aficionado. As her inventive instructional makeup videos gained popularity, so did she. Others influencers, like music magnate **Jay Z**, arrive on the scene with their celebrity — and the inherent influence it wields — already in hand.

Wherever they fall on the spectrum, each type of influencer can be activated in a unique way over time, depending on the brand and objectives.





# MOXIE INFLUENCER SPECTRUM™



EMPLOYEES

Employee influencers **work for a brand**. As part of the organization, they can be genuine ambassadors for the brand and can educate the general population about its products and services. **Procter & Gamble, Cisco Systems and Salesforce all have formal employee influencer programs.**



INFLUENTIAL CONSUMERS

These folks are your brand's consumers. They **purchase your products/services** and — here's the most important part — are active on social media. They influence by sharing their personal "brand stories" with their audiences.



SOCIAL ENGAGERS

These influencers **mention your brand on social channels** and may or may not be **current fans/followers**. Social Engagers thrive on real-time attention, so brands should give it to them. The ultimate goal: Acquire them as fans/followers and encourage them to advocate on your brand's behalf.



CHANNEL INFLUENCERS

These are **passionate fans and followers who actively engage and converse with your brand and its content**. Community managers know these people well. They are the individuals who religiously comment on a brand's status messages, frequently respond to community questions and often serve as a brand's supporter. To harness the power of these influencers over the long term, brands should develop and nurture a "friendship" with them.



# MOXIE INFLUENCER SPECTRUM™



These are **opt-in influencers** who want to receive rewards or samples for basic social tasks (e.g., posting a brand-themed picture or a short review of a product). These influencers want to be the “first to know” and seek fresh content to share on their social channels. Examples of platforms for activating Peer Influencers include **Crowdtap**, **Influencer** and **Smiley360**.

These influencers **have made (or are in the processing of making) a name for themselves in the influencing arena**. Either independent or part of an influencer network, Everyday Influencers are moderately selective about the brands and products they work with because of how the brands can affect their reputation. These influencers range from folks just starting out to those who are quickly rising up the ranks. **Their approximate reach varies from 5,000 to 50,000.**

Typically represented by a major media network or an agent (yes, these folks have agents), Premium Influencers are highly selective about the brands and products they work with. Their high-caliber content often features professional quality graphics and photography, and **their approximate reach ranges from 50,000 to several million.** Some examples of Premium Influencers include Grace Bonney of **Design Sponge**, Devin Graham of **Devin Supertramp** and Victoria Smith of **SF Girl by Bay**.

Many of these folks are household names. They are mostly musicians, actors, athletes and models, with a smattering of reality TV stars thrown in for good measure. Three examples are Katy Perry, Kim Kardashian and LeBron James. They’re top influencers, and **big brands will pay them millions to make a mark for mass awareness.**





## Brand Takeaway 1:

### Learn the Moxie Influencer Spectrum.™

The spectrum of influencers ranges from your Employees and Social Engagers to Everyday Influencers and A-List Talent. Take a look at your brand's business needs and activate influencers across the spectrum for maximum results.



## So There's a Quick Refresher on Social Influence Marketing

### > Now Back to Our Research

To build on our [2013 paper](#), we once again explored the brand-influencer-fan relationship. Our previous research revealed what we'd already suspected: A balanced relationship and value exchange between the three parties is key when it comes to successful Social Influence Marketing. For this next round, we wanted to see how those parameters might have shifted, if at all, over the past year.





# THE VALUE OF INFLUENCERS

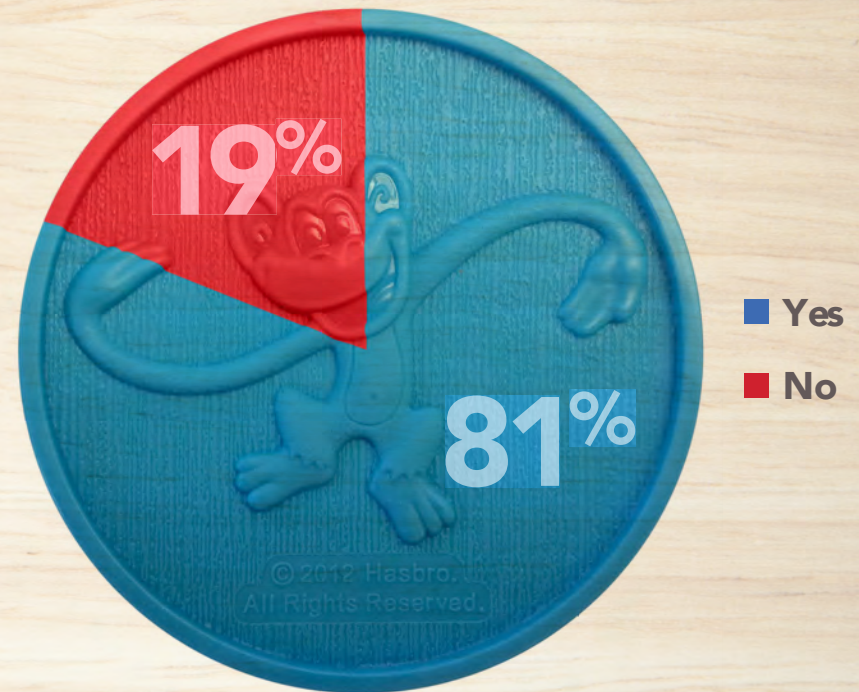
## > Influencers Drive Purchase

According to our research — and consistent with supposition plus several other studies — influencers inspire their fans and followers to purchase products or services. Our results revealed that **81% of fans purchased a product based on an influencer's recommendation.** This is an 8% increase from our research last year.

### TRUST TRUMPS DISAPPOINTMENT

Even though 39% of fans say they have been disappointed by a purchase made based on an influencer's recommendation, 70% of those earned trust back. That shows a solid connection between an influencer and their followers. Like a dependable friend, an influencer who has proven to be trustworthy has to consistently let a fan down before that fan will "sign off."

**PURCHASED PRODUCT BASED ON INFLUENCER'S RECOMMENDATION**  
(2014 Results)



- > 2013 – 73% of fans purchased a product based on an influencer's recommendation.
- > 2014 – 81% of fans purchased a product based on an influencer's recommendation.



# THE INFLUENCER-FAN VALUE EXCHANGE

## Why Do Fans Consume Influencers' Content?

Our research reveals that fans consume influencers' online content for the same reasons they engage with others face-to-face: They want a personal connection. They like reading the stories of "average" (or close to it) people's lives — people that they understand and can relate to. People like them. Fans feel a sense of kinship with influencers, a personal bond that's more like friendship than following.

When we began this study, we hypothesized that most fans consumed influencer content for giveaways. To our surprise, this is the lowest ranked characteristic. It is perceived as a much more meaningful connection. When people consume influencer content, they seek to "personally connect with the author" above all else.

### MOST IMPORTANT CHARACTERISTIC OF INFLUENCER CONTENT





# THE BRAND-INFLUENCER VALUE EXCHANGE

## Influencer Incentives

### Money, Please

Money is by far the #1 way that influencers want to be incentivized.


And rightfully so, wherever an influencer falls on the spectrum, he or she is providing a valuable service to brands. They should, therefore, be compensated for their work. Influencers put in a significant amount of time, resources and effort into building and maintaining their social presences. **Independent influencers support themselves and rely on brand partnerships to help them maintain their presences.** Unlike journalists, they don't have a publication footing the bill (or ensuring they're able to put food on the table). **Paying influencers enables them to do what they do best: Create content.** This content, in turn, inspires people to try — and frequently buy — a brand's products and/or services.

And there are other benefits, too.

Influencers write about brands they like even without compensation. Yay — free advertising! But it could be so much more: **If one of an influencer's favorite brands reaches out and offers to compensate him or her, the influencer will post about the brand when the brand wants them to and incorporate key brand messages.** Contracts can include links to that brand's website and specific products and services. These links can be as basic as a brand/product URL or as strategic as a tagged link that tracks traffic or even traces a user's journey from consideration through conversion. In other words, it's an even more valuable endorsement with even more strategic content.



"Trust can't be bought — but it deserves to be rewarded." – Danny Brown @DannyBrown



"Make sure [the program] is valuable for the person of influence. Do your homework on me, find out who I am, what I talk about, and then go from there."  
– Peter Shankman @PeterShankman

Photo: <https://twitter.com/DannyBrown>

Photo <http://www.bu.edu/bostonia/web/connector/>

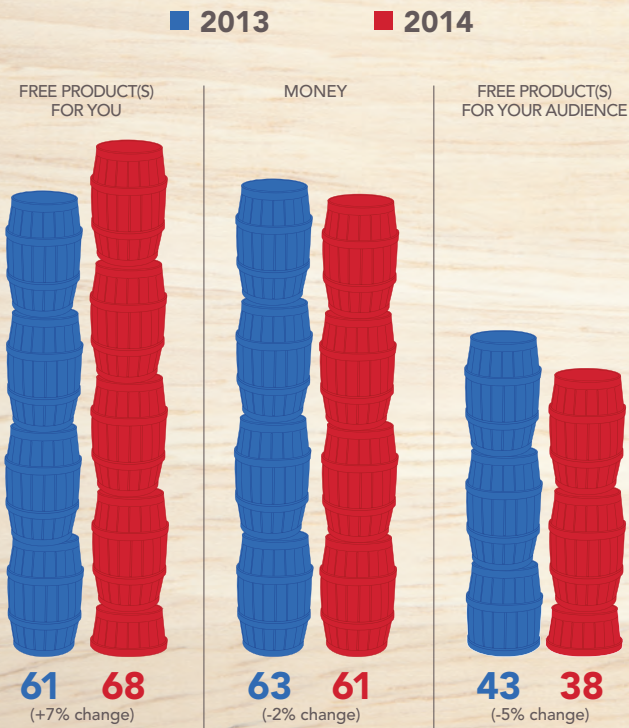


# Top Incentives: Money and Free Products Still Reign Supreme

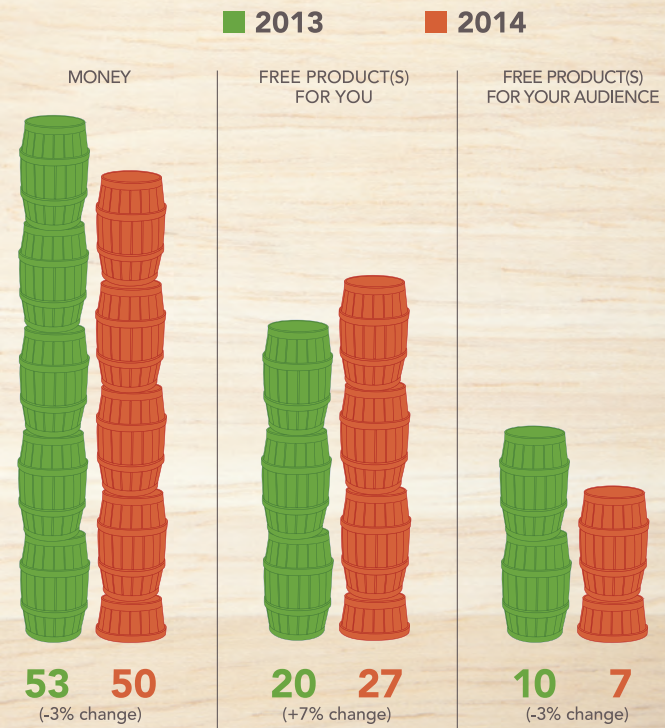
**A MAIN DISCREPANCY:** Free products have taken over the top spot as **THE MOST COMMON INCENTIVE** by a brand, but money is still the #1 way influencers **WANT TO BE INCENTIVIZED**.

It is very important for brands to re-evaluate the way they are structuring the value exchange for their current influencer programs. When compensating influencers for their time, influencers prefer money and free products.

## HOW INFLUENCERS SAY THEY ARE BEING INCENTIVIZED



## HOW INFLUENCERS WANT TO BE INCENTIVIZED







## Brand Takeaway 2:

### **Pay influencers and strive for a robust and well-rounded value exchange.**

Our research shows that money is the number one way influencers want to be incentivized, so this should always be part of the compensation package. Factor in their wants, needs, behaviors and fans to consider a balanced and effective incentive plan.



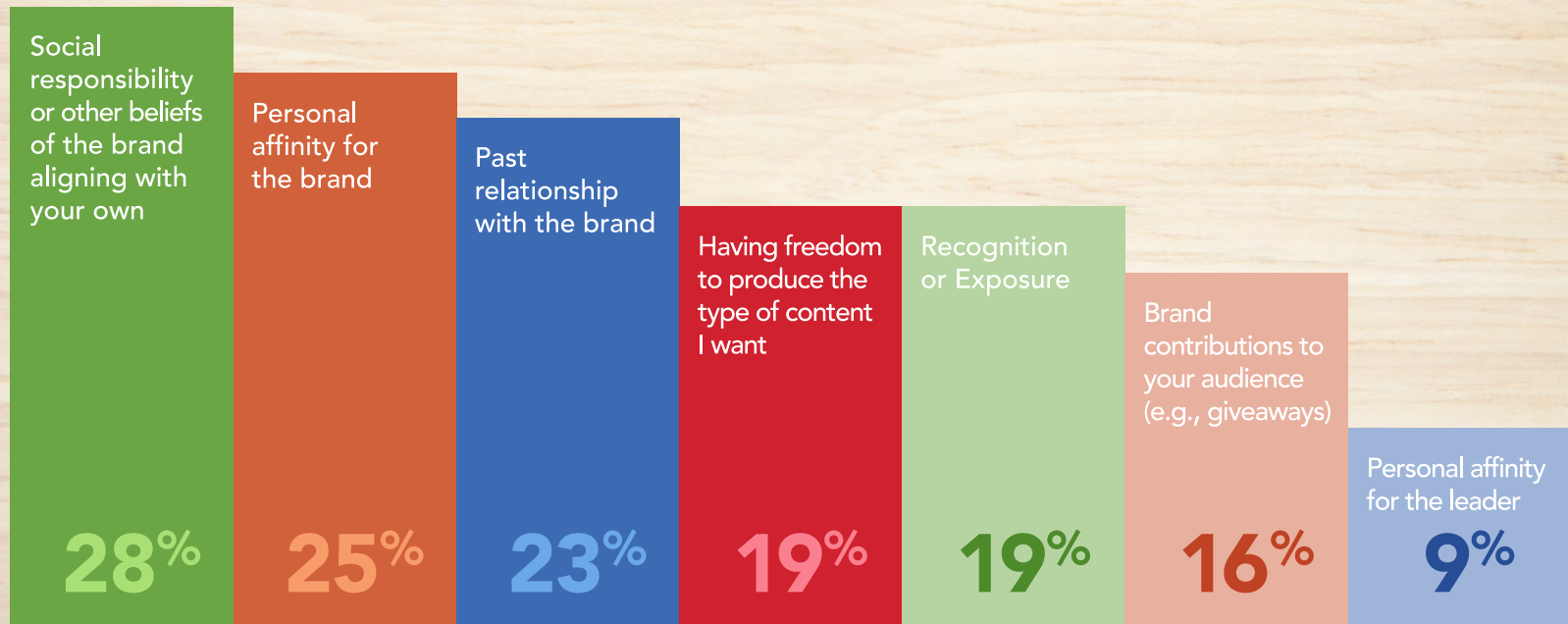
## Relevance Is Important for Brands and Influencers

When evaluating influencers, we look at relevance to the brand. But it is equally important to influencers that the brand is relevant to them. It works both ways. **Relevance is important for brands and influencers.**

Beyond tangible incentives, influencers view the brands they represent as a reflection of their personal brand. Like any person considering a job, there are several factors that influencers consider in addition to incentives.

Our research identified these as the top three:

1. Social responsibility or other beliefs of the brand aligning with your own (up 2% from last year)
2. Personal affinity for the brand (up 2% from last year)
3. Past relationship with the brand (up 4% from last year)







### Brand Takeaway 3:

## Trust that brand relevance is as important to your influencers as it is to you.

When approaching successful influencer-brand engagements, we consider a balance of reach, relevance, resonance and relationship. Looking at relevance specifically, this means the relevance of the person's content to the brand. Turning that around, influencers are also looking at the brand and how that authentically fits into their content, as well as the brand's social responsibility.



## How Do You Find Influencers?

This question is common and complex. Influencers can be found in a number of ways, but defining them depends on the objectives and nature of the program. The Moxie Influencer Spectrum™ is a great place to start. For example, if, based on objectives, the plan is to identify Social Engagers, then your best option is to use social listening and community management tools. Alternatively, if the plan is to identify Everyday Influencers, your options include social influence identification tools and organic research, which can be effective yet inefficient.

This is where influencer networks can help.

## A LOOK AT INFLUENCER NETWORKS

In a basic sense, influencer networks are companies that connect influencers with brands. A new topic for this year's research, these networks range in size and have various requirements for the type of influencers they represent. Some are very selective when they vet potential candidates, while others have a more open policy. They're a great way to find Peer, Everyday and Premium Influencers.

"Influencers recommend networks for a number of reasons, but the primary motivation is a desire to focus on their content versus the business side of things. When an influencer can depend on a network for steady, high-quality work, he or she will readily recommend it to his or her friends." – Danielle Wiley, CEO, Sway Group

## Why Partner With an Influencer Network?

Influencer networks are playing a major and expanding role in Social Influence Marketing. Brands and agencies partner with networks to increase efficiencies in identifying influencers who want to work with brands, often serving as their "agents" and brokering their deals. Depending on the network and complexity of the program, some provide consulting services, strategic support, media resourcing and events services as well.





## It's Typically a Win-Win Relationship

Our research shows that influencers have a very favorable attitude toward influencer networks. They highly recommend (yes, influencers can influence influencers, too) and trust them. **Money and free products are the top two ways these networks incentivize influencers.** Sound familiar? It should, as **it aligns with the way influencers want to be compensated,** and contributes to each network's popularity and favorability among influencers. One caveat: Not every single experience is positive. Out of those we surveyed, 20% of influencers who have worked with networks have had a negative experience (e.g., bad publicity from working with a network or as the result of a miscommunication). But overall, the sentiment is very positive.

70% OF INFLUENCERS HIGHLY RECOMMEND WORKING WITH A NETWORK (8 OUT OF 10 OR HIGHER)

62% HIGHLY TRUST WORKING WITH A NETWORK (8 OUT OF 10 OR HIGHER)



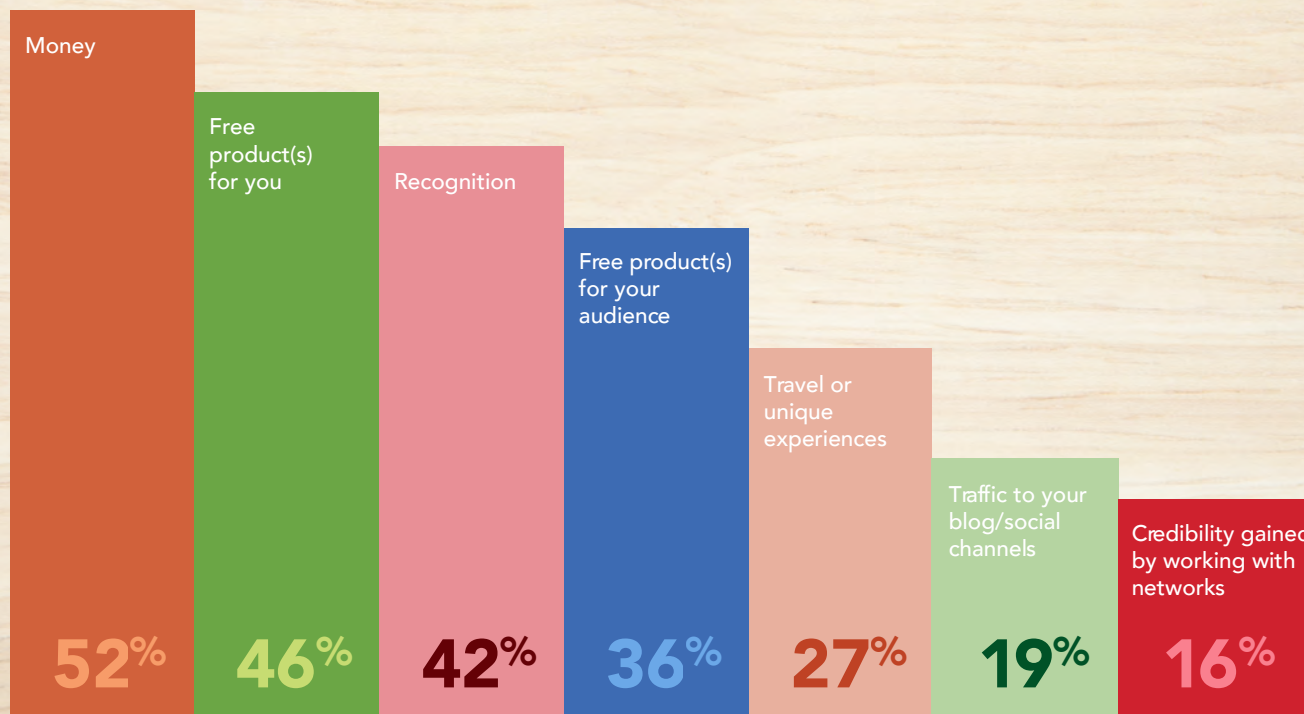


## How Would You Most Like To Be Incentivized by a Network (#1)?

Unlike the discrepancy we described earlier regarding the way brands incentivize influencers, influencer networks have the incentive structure spot on. They primarily incentivize influencers with money, followed by free products. This reflects their commitment to supporting influencers. It also proves their worth to brands while demonstrating their dedication to facilitating business partnerships on their behalf.

### NETWORK INCENTIVES

The Most Common Way Influencers Are Incentivized by a Network: Money







#### **Brand Takeaway 4:**

**Consider influencer networks as key partners in influencer programs for optimal results.**

Our research shows that influencers have a very favorable attitude toward influencer networks. Our experience shows this can be an efficient model for maximizing results.



## BRAND TAKEAWAYS

- 1** Learn the Moxie Influencer Spectrum™. The spectrum of influencers ranges from your Employees and Social Engagers to Everyday Influencers and A-list Talent. Take a look at your brand's business needs and activate influencers across the spectrum for maximum results.
- 2** Pay influencers, and strive for a robust and well-rounded value exchange. Our research shows that money is the number one way influencers want to be incentivized, so this should always be part of the compensation package. Factor in their wants, needs, behaviors and fans to consider a balanced and effective incentive plan.
- 3** Trust that relevance is as important to your influencers as it is to you. When approaching successful influencer-brand engagements, we consider a balance of reach, relevance, resonance and relationship. Looking at relevance specifically, this means the relevance of the person's content to the brand. Turning that around, influencers are also looking at the brand and how that authentically fits into their content, as well as the brand's social responsibility.
- 4** Consider Influencer networks as a key partner in influencer programs for optimal results. Our research shows that influencers have a very favorable attitude toward influencer networks. Our experience shows this can be an efficient model for maximizing results.



## METHODOLOGY

### Influencer Research

We sent a questionnaire to members of an online survey panel. Influencers were defined as individuals 18 years of age or older who create content on the Web (on Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, YouTube, personal blog, Pinterest, etc.) at least once per day, a few times per week or weekly. Participants were a mix of those who have worked with a brand, worked with a network, worked with both and worked with neither. Their network on their most prominent channel is 2,500+.

### Fan Research

We sent a questionnaire to members of an online survey panel. Fans of influencers were defined as individuals 18 years of age or older who consume content posted online by other individuals (on Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, YouTube, personal blog, Pinterest, etc.) and read this content at least once per day, a few times per week or weekly.





## ABOUT Moxie

Moxie is a digitally centered, full-service agency that pushes the boundaries of what's possible to outperform the competition in the areas of strategy, creative, social marketing, media, analytics and technology development. Founded in 2000, Moxie has nearly 600 talented employees in Atlanta, Columbus, Los Angeles, New York and Pittsburgh. In August of 2013, Moxie acquired Engauge Marketing, a digital agency with full-service capabilities and an award-winning social practice. In March of 2014, Engauge and Moxie united under the Moxie name to become a digital powerhouse. Moxie is owned by global media giant Zenith, which is part of Publicis Groupe, an international communications organization whose network and operations span 108 countries on five continents. Moxie's client roster includes Verizon Wireless, Verizon FiOS, The Coca-Cola Company, 20th Century Fox, Georgia-Pacific, Chick-fil-A, Nike, Nationwide Insurance, UPS, Ainsworth Pet Nutrition, South Beach Diet and Cisco Systems.





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